The Mental Health of Slaves from the Republic to Early Principate: How Psychological Approaches to Ancient Subjects can Illuminate Lived Experience

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Abstract

The conditions of Roman slavery were clearly, objectively, horrific. But how can we know what that actually felt like for the human individual who experienced such levels of extreme subjugation?

Previously, scholars have relegated slavery to the 'objectively terrible but subjectively unknowable' pile of history. Hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of humans suffered and died because of the Roman slave trade, yet we know nothing about their first-hand experiences.

Until now. By comparing what we now know about psychological responses to similar traumas in modern-day contexts with the ancient evidence, we can gain an insight into those lives that were so harsh, yet rarely documented.

This thesis reveals the reality of life for those invisible slaves. It employs a new methodology for studying sources from antiquity; one which goes beyond basic psychological comparisons to delve into the deep, evolutionary and biological psychological processes of human beings; processes that unite us all.

In doing so, the lived experience of so many undocumented slaves from antiquity is illuminated, and it is a sorry tale.

PART 1 - DEVELOPING A NEW METHODOLOGY

Foreword

Abbreviations follow the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* 4th edition.

Unless stated otherwise, all translations are my own.

Content warning

The following discussion will constitute an in-depth analysis of some of the most brutal and traumatic aspects of Roman slavery. Comparisons between slaving practices from antiquity and similarly traumatic abuses throughout human history up to the present day will be referred to consistently throughout the entirety of this work.

Subjects under discussion include suicide, rape, sexual abuse, physical and psychological torture of adults and children in ancient and modern contexts.

Acknowledgement

This idea has been percolating for quite some time.

During the summer holidays of my 2nd year undergrad, I found myself sitting on a deckchair in the Devonshire sun, reading Marcus Sidonius Falx (a.k.a. Jerry Toner)'s *How to Manage your Slaves.* A passing reference to a law concerning slave suicide really struck me and was the point at which I started thinking about slaves' mental health; that was the point at which I knew I had to write this thesis.

I had been loaned the book by David Fergus: a retired lecturer in Roman Law at Glasgow, whom I met through my part-time job, for some 'light reading' over the holidays. Little did he know that this was the beginning of the heaviest reading I have ever undertaken.

I tested the waters during my undergraduate dissertation and casually suggested to my (then) supervisor Costas Panayotakis that I was thinking about a PhD. I had thought that perhaps I was thinking too far ahead, but he disabused me of that notion in the kind and encouraging manner that is characteristic of his style. I got the message, though: it's never too early to think ahead.

Matthew Fox took over that supervision and has been a mentor to me ever since. Words cannot express how grateful I am for the continuous support and (seemingly infinite) knowledge that he has offered me over the years.

Around the same time, I got to know Lisa Hau. She has a clarity and directness of thought that is incomparable. I have learned a *huge* amount from Lisa, and not just in an academic sense. She is one of my favourite people, and joins Matthew as being one of the greatest influences on my academic career (probably *the* greatest influence on my teaching career).

That said, none of this could have happened without the encouragement and (perhaps?) blind faith that Jane Draycott showed in my project. Jane was my original supervisor, and this would never have happened without her backing and subsequent support. This whole project would never have even got off the ground were it not for her belief in me and, for that, I am forever grateful.

When Jane could no longer supervise, I could not have wished for a better team to take up the reins than Lisa and Matthew.

Lisa; Matthew: Thank you for everything. You have both been more influential than I think you will ever know.

As you might have guessed by now, I have been a student at the University of Glasgow since (what feels like) the beginning of time itself. So, in many ways, this work reflects the efforts and care of the entire Classics department, all of whom have had, in some way or another, a hand in my academic development: Thank you all.

Other thanks must go to the guys at my part-time job with the Good Spirits Co.: Jeau Cibau! Scott, Stevo, Eli, Matthew, Shane and the rest (honourable mention to Lorna 'Jackie' Baird!). You have kept me in Good Spirits, both metaphysical and distilled, and you have looked after me when I've struggled (thanks Sam). Your support and flexibility has been a massive pro for the entire time I've been doing this scholarly jazz. I raise my glass to you all: Cheers.

Final thanks must go to my family. 9 years ago, I left my career in hospitality management to come to university (I think I might be the only classicist who is also a classically trained chef and licensed bouncer…). It was a big step, and we knew it was going to be hard for a while, but Jenny (my wife) could not have been more supportive…and when she wasn't around, my son Sam has been very generous with his X-Box!

Jenny deserves special thanks. She inspired me to think about psychology, she inspired me to pursue a PhD, she has been a constant source of inspiration but also of love, support and the occasionally necessary kick up the κώλον over the years. I quite simply could not have done this without her.

Noice.

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PART 1 – DEVELOPING A NEW METHODOLOGY

1 – Introduction

1.1 How human universals can illuminate history

This is a study on the subjective experiences of an invisible group of people. It will apply modern psychological theory to ancient sources and extrapolate those findings to the wider slave populations from the Republic and early Imperial periods in Rome. In doing so, this will illuminate how those undocumented individuals experienced their abuse and suffering in a psychological context, thus giving greater clarity to our understanding of their subjective experience. The central problem that this work will address is the lack of available evidence for such a significant section of the Roman population and whether or not modern observations on mental health and trauma can be applied to those ancient subjects.

Few people could read about the plight of slaves in ancient Rome without experiencing a degree of sympathetic self-projection. Whether it be the brutal separation from one's family and homeland, forced labour in the harshest of environments, rape, torture, sexual abuse – even murder; to say that slavery was a horrific and oppressive experience is simply to state the obvious. And yet, that statement is so grounded in modernity and anachronistic concepts of rights to freedom, that it renders those same sympathies redundant when attempting to delineate the subjective experience of an enslaved individual from antiquity. It is easy to imagine how we, as 21st century scholars, might react to that suffering. Far harder, is taking the cognitive leap that can transcend the millennia and illuminate the first-hand experience that has been denied a voice in the only sources that describe that condition. Some consider that leap to be impossible;[1] the following discussion will show that it can, in fact, be done.

Central to that aim is the conviction that all individuals share some common features of human nature. Were the differences in cultural and social values to be stripped away, there would be fundamentally no difference between a slave from the Roman Republic and any one

[1] Schiavone (2000) 123

person from any one global society in the 21st century. It follows, then, that if historians can identify aspects of universal human behaviour in both ancient and modern contexts, it will be possible to apply some of the conclusions from modern research on those universals to historical subjects. This is because individual human beings are a product of biological as well as cultural and historically specific forces. Whilst the culture in which an individual is raised will determine a considerable amount of their personal identity, that identity is effectively 'mapped' onto a biological blueprint that is shared by everyone regardless of their background.[2] It is those commonalities that will be appealed to throughout this thesis in order to create a case study of how slaves experienced their suffering.

1.2 Towards a new methodology

The process of identifying behavioural factors that are universal to the human experience whilst distinguishing them from those that are culturally relative is not a straightforward one. An interdisciplinary approach must be adopted that combines classics and psychology as the two primary disciplines that guide this research, whilst also incorporating aspects of sociology, sociobiology and anthropology. Naturally, this requires an understanding of each respective discipline's research conventions and the potential limitations that might arise when combining different approaches.

For example, chapter 5 discusses the rape and sexual abuse of slaves and questions how that impacted upon the individual. The specific case studies and research models that can be applied in this instance will be discussed in due course, but a brief overview of the methodological process will be useful for the time being. It is self-evident that a classics-based approach is necessary for identifying the prevalence of slave rape throughout the Roman world. However, that evidence tells us nothing about the impact that rape had upon the slaves who suffered it. Leaving aside, for now, any questions regarding the way in which rape was contextualised in Roman thought, the fact remains that first-hand accounts from

[2] There is a considerable body of research on this subject. For an illustrative selection of works, see Lundh (2021); Morioka (2020); Henriques (2019); Dunbar & Barrett (2007); Ossorio (2006). *C.f.* Zagaria *et al.* (2021) for discussion.

slaves who were raped do not exist in the sources. Therefore, classics alone cannot answer that question and the subjective experience of those slaves remains elusive.

Psychological research that assesses the impact of rape upon victims offers a possible answer to that problem. A number of studies have been conducted with rape victims in modern-day societies, including follow-up studies that have monitored the developing and on-going impact of their trauma. These might suggest a possible range of experiences which the slave women could have suffered, but it would be unwise to assume the same outcome for those individuals without considering the culturally relevant nature of those outcomes. Understanding the sociology of rape is therefore crucial. This means that various sociological factors that associate rape with shame, guilt, family honour or other culturally determined harms may require reconsideration when applying the findings of modern mental health research onto ancient subjects. Evolutionary psychology can assist in that process by identifying the types of harm and the responses to those harms that are more likely to occur in a universal context, but those findings must also be corroborated with comparative studies from anthropology. If the same phenomenon has the same observable effect upon humans from different cultures, then those same observations can be applied to the classical world, thus providing an appreciation of how slaves from ancient Rome would likely have experienced their rape, regardless of what the slave-owning sources might otherwise say. No one discipline can answer the question alone, but combining their various approaches can shed light upon previously unknown experiences.

1.2.1 Previous psychological methodologies

Psychology is the discipline that readers from a classics background will perhaps be the least familiar with in a formal research capacity. However, this is not the first study into the ancient Mediterranean that has adopted modern psychological approaches to uncover new information.

Jerry Toner's research on social life in ancient Rome draws clear connections between adverse conditions resulting from socio-economic status and the impact that those would

have had upon an individual's mental health.[3] Although he does briefly consider slavery in his study,[4] his focus is most concerned with freeborn cases of individuals who suffered (what we would now call) acute psychosis and how the sources try to understand that with reference to humoral theory and religion.[5] However, he is restricted by a reluctance to overcome the barriers presented by the cultural relativity of mental illness.[6] His discussion on mental health in antiquity is thus limited to ancient concepts of 'madness' and the extent to which modern classifications of mental illness can (or cannot) illuminate those cases.[7]

Whilst Toner's work is undoubtedly informative, his focus on the social context of acute mental illness does not advance our understanding of mental health as a more general facet of the subjective human experience. Despite occasionally promising to explore that avenue of research, any observations in that regard are kept to being rather general and thus inconclusive. He does, however, introduce the idea that mental health in antiquity was affected by wider social factors and that it can be studied from a position that is informed by modern psychological research. This offers a useful basis for further scholarship to build upon by adopting an approach that is more comprehensively informed by the psychological literature.

Garrett Fagan's work on the driving attraction behind the spectacle of the Roman arena was the first to use such a dedicated and explicit psychological approach to ancient evidence.[8] Sadly, Fagan died before he could develop his work into anything more substantial and wide-ranging, thus his monograph *The Lure of the Arena* remained the sole exponent of that specific type of interdisciplinarity for some years. Despite this, since the publication of Fagan's work there has been a growing body of scholarship that has used recent psychological observations to inform its conclusions. Jason Crowley's *The Psychology of the Athenian Hoplite* adopts a social psychology approach by applying primary and secondary

[3] Toner (2009) 54-64
[4] Toner (2009) 70-73
[5] Toner (2009) 74-84. Laes (2018) 44-46 takes a similar approach when he considers how mental disability could cause disorders that were perceived as madness by ancient observers.
[6] For a psychiatric perspective on the cultural relativity of diagnosis see Sadler (2005) 255-264.
[7] For his overview of modern models of mental health research see Toner (2009) 54-58, for the cultural relativity of mental illness see p74. For the limitations of retrospective diagnosis see chapter 2.3 of this thesis.
[8] Fagan (2011)

group theory to the organisation of the citizen militia in Classical Athens. In keeping with Fagan's approach to crowds attending the *ludi*, Crowley uses the psychology of group behaviour as a means of tapping into the subjective experience that was shared by Athenian hoplites. Observations on group behaviour are a useful means for understanding the *general* experience of individuals, where no further evidence is forthcoming. Even now, behavioural science is a flourishing research area that is fundamentally based on the acceptance that human behaviour is heavily influenced by wider social groups.[9] That is not to suggest that individuals do not operate with a degree of autonomy, nor to say that humans are homogenous, but it does understand that group forces can have a strong influence on the way that humans as individuals conceptualise and act upon their experiences.

Crowley's work contributes to a wider body of scholarship that adopts psychology as a methodology for studying the military experience of ancient men. Ever since Jonathan Shay published *Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character*,[10] there has been an ongoing interest in identifying and diagnosing mental illness in the ancient world.[11] The limitations of retrospective diagnosis are discussed elsewhere in this thesis,[12] but the contribution of such works has been to emphasise that ancient societies did experience and understand the concept of mental illness, despite not always employing the same conceptual framework for those experiences as more recent societies do. However, informative as those approaches may be, the ancient sources are replete with medical texts that demonstrate a contemporary understanding of mental illness.[13] As such, it is not always necessary for scholars to attribute modern diagnoses of mental illness to ancient subjects – ones that are often fictional - in order to understand that mental illness had an impact on those societies and that mental health was an identifiable facet of the ancient experience.

[9] Though it had not been developed in time for either Fagan or Crowley to apply it to their own research, the COM-B model for human behaviour is regularly adopted by UK government policy makers when determining the efficacy of public legislation or social engineering: West & Michie (2020)
[10] Shay (1995)
[11] Meineck & Konstan (2014); Abdul-Hamid & Hughes (2014); Harris (2013); Melchior (2011)
[12] See chapter 2.3: 'Clinical psychology and the limitations of retrospective diagnosis'.
[13] Thumiger & Singer (2018) and Bosman (2009) bring together a wide range of scholarly perspectives on those sources and are comprehensive resources for the field of ancient medicine more broadly. See also van Lommel (2013); Gazmuri (2006)

What makes Shay's work stand out, is that he recognised in Achilles' rage the symptoms of a mental illness (PTSD), even though those same symptoms were viewed differently by contemporary Greek society. The impact of combat trauma - as understood by 20th century clinical psychiatrists such as Shay - was apparent in the way that Homer typified the behaviour of Greek war veterans such as Achilles.[14] The central role that such behaviour played in shaping the experiences of those characters and in driving ancient narratives such as *The Iliad*, despite the absence of nosology, was testament to the prevalence of that type of trauma in such warrior-societies.[15] Ultimately, Shay's work adheres to the following basic principles: a fictional character (Achilles) displays symptoms that are recognised by modern psychiatrists as a type of adverse mental health. That same character also represents a way in which ancient audiences could relate their own personal experiences of warfare to the character. Therefore, despite the character being fictional, his experiences and the way in which they are characterised by the poet can be seen as broadly reflecting the experiences that would have been a reality for many of the poet's contemporaries.

There are undoubtedly some issues with Shay's approach - not least, he assumes an easy identification between the ancient reader and the heroic character. The problem here is that this neglects to take into account any belief held by the ancient male audience that heroes such as Achilles represented something idealistic in terms of character, and then untangle that belief from their more realistic expectations regarding their own capabilities. Likewise, as noted by critics of Crowley, the Greek belief in pre-destination and Fate would have also had an impact upon the psychology of those warriors, thus influencing their experiences of combat trauma.[16] Nevertheless, those are criticisms derived from the chosen subject matter, rather than the methodology itself. Perhaps a perspective that paid more attention to the ancient audience's emotional context and how that might have influenced their engagement with these texts would have helped Shay to iron out those wrinkles.

[14] Shay (1995) 21
[15] Shay (1995) 121-135
[16] Matthew (2014)

Ulrike Roth does just that, when proposing a novel reading of Petronius' character Trimalchio.[17] Being clear from the outset that the historian must be mindful of the risks surrounding anachronistic readings of mental health, Roth nevertheless makes a convincing argument for the possible signs of PTSD in the fictional freedman. Her conclusions are less concerned with diagnosing a specific condition, despite the clear similarities between Trimalchio's abuse and that of later comparative subjects that are put forward in support of this argument. Instead, Roth's purpose is to highlight that the way in which Trimalchio is characterised can be taken as a 'reliable guide to an elite perspective on "freed life".'[18] Consequently, the abuses that are so prevalent throughout the (fictional) *cena* and the impact that sexual abuse has had on Trimalchio are indicative of a historical reality that is not attested to in other (non-fictional) sources. The similarity between Shay's approach and Roth's are notable, in that both scholars make a convincing case for the extrapolation of a fictional representation of mental ill-health to real-life subjects from antiquity. The difference between the two scholars is that Shay applies his findings to subjects for whom there is a readily available body of evidence (military age male citizens), whereas Roth applies hers to the considerably less-well attested Roman freedmen.

Although Roth opens the door for applying psychological observations to invisible groups, she is careful not to be too diagnostic in her approach. Therefore, methodological challenges surrounding how accurate psychological findings can be when applied to antiquity remain to be conclusively addressed. Those challenges are met by Jacob Mackey's recent work *Belief and Cult: Rethinking Roman Religion.*[19] Common to much of the foregoing body of scholarship is the application of ready-made psychological findings to clearly observable evidence that is taken from the ancient sources. Mackey's work adopts a contrasting approach by employing cognitive science to help understand the subjective ontology of belief that would have been experienced by religious Romans, where specific evidence is lacking.[20] Rather than applying specific knowledge of group behaviour to groups from antiquity and arriving at general conclusions that apply to a wide population, as Fagan and Crowley have done, Mackey takes specific knowledge about individual behaviour, that is observable

[17] Roth (2021b), see chapter 5.3 for a more detailed consideration of Roth's views regarding slavery and sexual abuse.
[18] Roth (2021b) 229
[19] Mackey (2022)
[20] Mackey (2022)

universally in human subjects, and applies that to individuals from antiquity to arrive at general conclusions concerning their experiences.[21] There are evident similarities between Mackey's approach and the one that will be adopted here. Both are predicated on the universality of certain facets of the human experience;[22] both use modern psychological approaches to identify and understand those universals; both do so with the explicit intention of understanding a subjective experience that is irretrievable from a face-value reading of the available evidence. Although 'belief' and 'mental health' are clearly separate concepts from a cognitive point of view, each shares a similar role as part of an individual's subjective experience, as they both exert an existential influence on one's conscious frame of mind.

In line with Mackey, then, the methodology adopted here takes aspects of human psychology that constitute universal experiences and applies those to ancient subjects where the evidence does not offer the required insight. That insight is achieved by assessing the sources that do remain and making sensible extrapolations that can be applied to the wider group, in the same way as Roth and Shay have done in their readings of Trimalchio and Achilles. Similarly, as Fagan and Crowley have both exemplified, the findings of psychological forces that are attributed to group experiences can be similarly applied to wider groups in antiquity. Slaves were one such group. Doubtless the experience of various slaves could differ, and those differences are outlined in chapter 3, but there remain shared aspects of enslavement that can be attributed to all Roman slaves, thus the psychological method being employed throughout this work is applicable to that group as a whole. This, naturally, leaves the question of how to gather that evidence when the sources are not forthcoming. Fortunately, there exist a number of techniques for overcoming that problem.

1.2.2 Alternative methods for uncovering invisible groups

The point at which the present study diverges from previous research is that the psychological approach is applied to 'invisible people'; subjects for whom there is scant evidence. It is

[21] 'We can neither capture nor recapture the intrinsic first-person subjectivity of ancient experience, in all its ineffability, but we can surely glean some factual *understanding* of it.' Mackey (2022) 57.
[22] Mackey (2022) 57 *n.*128 highlights Henrich (2020)'s caution regarding the application of Western findings in universal studies. Aside from the obvious paradox of attributing universality to Western-only findings, those concerns are not pertinent to the current research, which consistently relies upon cross-cultural findings to support any universal hypothesis, as is made clear *passim.*

hardly ground-breaking to note that the sources for slavery in Rome are fragmented and often require scholars to notice references to slavery that are not explicit in the original text.[23] Reading against the grain and using comparative techniques are common methodological approaches that have been employed to uncover information about slaves as an invisible group. Keith Bradley regularly uses comparisons from later slave-owning societies to support his conclusions on ancient slave rebellions,[24] whilst Kathy Gaca has often employed the same technique to investigate the sexual abuse of free women and slave women in the ancient world.[25] Kostas Vlassopoulos offers a comprehensive discussion on the benefits and pitfalls of the comparative slavery debate in his recent work *Historicising Ancient Slavery.* He provides a comprehensive overview of the current state of the literature and is essential reading for understanding the development of the discipline, though that need not be re-stated in full here.[26] Sara Forsdyke uses a comparative, occasionally imaginative approach to studying slavery in ancient Greece.[27] Her frequent comparisons between slaving practices in Classical Athens and those from the Antebellum South can, at times, be illuminating. However, there are occasions where there is too much eagerness to notice a particular phenomenon in African American slavery and assume that it can be attributed to that of ancient Greece based on tenuous similarities.[28] Forsdyke acknowledges that she occasionally requires 'liberal use of the imagination' in her work, but an imaginative method must be approached with care and integrity, lest the findings be dismissed as inconclusive or, worse, the whole method become an object of ridicule.

1.2.3 Telling tall tales: 'critical fabulation' and 'faction' as flawed methodologies

1.2.3.1 Critical fabulation

Although it is not done explicitly, Forsdyke touches upon a recent trend in scholarship towards adopting the 'critical fabulation' approach. Critical fabulation is an historical

[23] Glancy (2013) 498 highlights this problem and commends Keith Bradley for his contribution to the field of slavery research by simply *noticing* when slaves are casually alluded to in the sources.
[24] Bradley (2011), (1989)
[25] Gaca (2021)
[26] Vlassopoulos (2021)
[27] Forsdyke (2021)
[28] For example, see Forsdyke (2021) 73, where a particular practice of 'fattening up' slaves for sale by New Orleans slave traders is assumed to also have taken place in Greece, simply because slave trading was undertaken by both societies. Gaca (2021) and Richlin (2018) are both similarly eager to make comparisons with African American slavery that occasionally require the reader to make a leap of faith in regard to the evidence.

methodology for uncovering invisible groups that was initially developed by Saidiya Hartman in her research into enslaved African American voices.[29] Hartman developed her methodology in response to the under-representation of enslaved individuals in the historical archives and the predominance of an objectified enslaved experience that was determined by white enslavers, rather than one which denoted the subjectivity of those people who suffered because of them. In order to combat that uneven representation, Hartman re-interprets the various archival sources and uses that information to create a new story. She fills in the gaps through imaginative interpretation of the genuine historical source-material. It is absolutely not within the remit of this thesis to make any critique on Hartman's method when it is applied to the subject matter for which it was initially intended. However, it has recently been adopted by some scholars of ancient slavery as a means of accessing the subjective experiences of slaves from antiquity by using an initial scrap of evidence as the basis for what is essentially a piece of creative writing.[30]

For historical research into ancient slavery, this is surely a step too far. Firstly, and most obviously, the body of evidence for enslaved African Americans is considerably more substantial than for that of Roman slaves; not only from a position of sheer volume but also by the nature of that evidence itself. The lack of first-hand accounts from Roman slaves means that there is nothing on which to base any imaginative reconstruction of an individual's character or sentiment. Conversely, the WPA Federal Writers' Project recorded 2'300 first-hand accounts of formerly enslaved people during a research initiative lasting from 1936 to 1938.[31] Whilst this resource cannot tell every personal story coming from the experiences of slavery, it does provide a wealth of alternative views from which a modern historian of African American slavery can create a (more-or-less accurate) imaginative first-hand account. Crucially, any critical fabulation of African American slavery that has engaged with the WPA project is informed by genuine enslaved voices, whereas any critical fabulation

[29] Hartman (2007), (2008). See Kamen & Levin-Richardson (2022a) 25-27 for discussion.
[30] Kamen & Levin-Richardson (2022a), (2022b). See also Ahuvia (2023) for its application in scholarship on late antiquity Jewish communities. At the time of writing, Gaia Gianni is scheduled to deliver a paper to the annual meeting of the Association of Ancient Historians being held at Florida State University, entitled *Beyond the Stone Archive: Critical Fabulation and Stories of Emancipation,* which further indicates that, although within the field of classics the methodology might be *avant-garde*, it is growing in popularity.
[31] Work Projects Administration (WPA): loc.gov/collections/slave-narratives-from-the-federal-writers-project-1936-to-1938/about-this-collection/

of Roman slavery can only be informed by the voices of the modern-day storytellers themselves.

This is highly problematic. Any imaginative version of the ancient experience that is 'fabulated', without any prior reference to a subjective account of that ancient experience, becomes unavoidably influenced by views and opinions of the storyteller that are irrevocably grounded in modernity. The most relevant case study in this instance would be that of the slave Eutychis, recorded in a pair of graffiti from the House of the Vetti at Pompeii and which form the genesis for a fabulation by Deborah Kamen and Sarah Levin-Richardson.[32] The (factual) epigraphic record denotes that a *verna* called Eutychis was being prostituted for two *asses*, plus a later addition indicating that she was Greek. This then results in the story of a young girl who played hide-and-seek and felt loved by the family of her household when young.[33] However, as she grew older, her doubts and fears regarding the room where slaves were taken to be raped became realised and suddenly her life was turned upside-down. Men who had previously been kind to her were now her rapists and their wives were cruel towards her out of jealousy. She sees slaves who sympathise with her plight as she goes about her business and she even demonstrates initiative and business acumen in trying to secure more clients to rape her,[34] so that she can make enough money to buy her freedom. We are not told how her story ends, but we are left with a vision of Eutychis trying to take control of her own situation as best she could in the most adverse of circumstances.

The choice of graffiti itself represents an immediate bias in the subject matter. Pompeii provides a rich source of epigraphic material for the critical fabulist to work with, thus a number of possible stories could have been told. This therefore raises the question: why choose Eutychis for a case study in critical fabulation over any of the other inscriptions? That is not to criticise the choice that has been made – *CIL* 4592-3 can reveal as much or as little about slave subjectivity as any other graffito, given the circumstances – but the choice made by the researcher nevertheless reflects a personal preference of subject matter, based upon their own, modern sensibilities. Kamen and Levin-Richardson *chose* those graffiti because it

[32] *CIL* IV 4592, 4593; Kamen & Levin-Richardson (2022a) 34*ff*

[33] The following account is heavily paraphrased. See Kamen & Levin-Richardson (2022a) 35-37 for the fabulation in its entirety.

[34] My use of the term 'rape' when referring to 'sex with a slave prostitute' is intentional is explained in full in chapter 5.

was a story that *they* wanted to tell.[35] In other circumstances, historians are bound by the evidence that remains and must interpret that as far as possible. With critical fabulation, those restrictions are removed and the experiences they recount are limited only by the bounds of plausibility.

This leads on to the second main pitfall of applying critical fabulation to antiquity: the subjective experience it reveals can only ever be one person's interpretation of non-existent information. To stay with the current story as an example, Kamen and Levin-Richardson's version of events shows Eutychis choosing to adopt a Greek persona in order to charge a higher fee. She learns a few Greek phrases from a fellow slave who knows the language and then scratches '*Graeca*' onto the wall advertising her services.[36] This is ostensibly done because Eutychis is taking control of her situation, as best she can, and attempting to make more money so that she can buy her freedom. However, an alternative version of the story could just as easily be that her *owner* was the person who scratched *'Graeca*' on the wall, knowing full well that it would increase her prices and so make him more money. Eutychis would see none of that extra profit and would not have been able to buy her freedom. Either story is equally plausible; they both draw on knowledge of Roman prostitution that can be found in a range of other sources but, in the end, both interpretations are intentionally made up to fit an agenda chosen by a modern individual.

Now, that is not to denigrate the value of literature in uncovering aspects of the human experience. The ability to engage with fiction in a way that places the reader in situations in which they would otherwise not find themselves, thus enabling them to reason-out those circumstances, goes back at least as far Aristotle's tragic *katharsis*,[37] and doubtless further still. Indeed, if the purpose of one's historical inquiry is only to make a value judgement on the behaviours of the past, thus revealing something about our own, modern sensibilities, then

[35] Kamen & Levin-Richardson (2022b) 211-216 offers 3 further tales based of different graffiti from Pompeii. The same criticism can be directed at each of those.

[36] It is interesting that the writers felt the need to explain in their story where she learnt her Greek phrases from, but not where she had learned to read and write. As a slave-girl working in the kitchen, it seems unlikely that her owner would have educated her in literacy any more than in Greek. Perhaps the writers did not think it relevant to their story, perhaps it is just a plot-hole, but one wonders about the creative process that results in such an omission.

[37] Arist. *Poet.* 1449b

it is arguably irrelevant whether the behaviours that are to be judged are historically accurate or not; the goal is self-realisation, not a deeper understanding of historical subjects. If proponents of critical fabulation were clear that such a fictional engagement with the subject matter was their intention, then there would be little need to criticise the method. However, that is not the case.

The three main goals of applying critical fabulation to ancient case studies are stated as being: 'to offer ways to think about the least powerful members of society'; to force historians to face the 'uncomfortably visceral' reality of their subject matter (slavery) by engaging with the creative process; to act as a corrective to the dominance of slaveowner perspectives in the source material.[38] These are all entirely sensible research aims, but not one of those aims necessitates the almost complete abandonment of historical integrity in order to be achieved. Perhaps most concerning is the further, explicit intention to 'add the experiences and hopes of enslaved women like (Eutychis, or any other case study) to the historical record.'[39] Clearly, this is not adding anything of the sort to the historical record, but is instead contaminating that record with 'sources' that are the invention of modern minds. In a world where the spread of misinformation is becoming of increasing concern, to actively promote such a practice would seem unwise. Far better to adopt any of the less fanciful approaches that are already being used by scholars of ancient slavery, in order to think about those least powerful members of society in a real and visceral way. And perhaps to simply accept that, whilst the slaveowner bias in the extant sources is frustrating, it can never be adequately redressed by what is essentially 'fake news'.

1.2.3.2 Faction

A similar methodology has been adopted by a separate group of ancient historians who direct their attentions towards the experiences of children in antiquity. As with critical fabulation, proponents of this methodology, sometimes referred to as 'faction', use fiction as a tool for delivering the findings of historical research. Christian Laes and Ville Vuolanto offer a useful discussion on what has been termed 'faction' and its historical examples that go back

[38] Kamen & Levin-Richardson (2022a) 40-41
[39] Kamen & Levin-Richardson (2022b) 217

as far as the 19th century literary work of Giovanni Pascoli, who wrote poems from the perspective of ancient subjects.[40] In a similar manner to critical fabulation, 'historical factionists' also seek to uncover invisible people from the past and adopt interdisciplinary approaches that help the writer employ a wider range of materials to 'build up a scenario that, historically speaking, can be sufficiently plausible and representative.'[41] However, as with critical fabulation, it is not clear what faction actually *adds* to historical research.

Bernadette Brooten offers one such example in her story of Tryphosa.[42] The aim of her story is to make readers think about how individuals in various different circumstances might have interpreted and reacted to hearing the exhortations in Colossians (in this case a child slave and prostitute, though Brooten does briefly consider whether a street hawker might have experienced that differently).[43] However, that question can be posed to the reader perfectly adequately without the need to supply the answer through imaginative fiction. In doing so, the 'factionist' goes beyond considering how those individuals *might* have reacted to hearing the exhortations, and instead tells the reader how they *did* react. Consequently, the imaginative work being performed by the historian becomes didactic where there is little clear evidence for the subjective experiences being described.

The more convincing examples of the approach tend to avoid focussing on the subjectivity of their characters and instead use their imagined experiences as a basis from which to describe historical and archaeological findings. Hagith Sivan creates a fiction through which the topography of the city of Tiberias in late ancient Palestine can be imagined.[44] She describes that topography through the eyes of a child, 'Eleazar', and details aspects of the Sabbath – especially those pertaining to children. Importantly, the invented child of the story is used as a vehicle for delivering historical information to the reader and is not the specific object of

[40] Laes & Vuolanto (2017) 1-2. It is questionable how much Pascoli can truly be associated with faction, given that he was using history to inspire his art rather than using his art as an historical method, but he is the point at which Laes & Vuolanto identify the paradigm's genesis nonetheless.
[41] Aasgaard (2017) 320. See also Cojocaru (2017) and Sivan (2017). Interestingly, Huntley (2017) 140 adopts developmental psychology when assessing the stages of artistic realism of human figures in children's graffiti. She, too, is keen to emphasise the cross-cultural applicability of that psychological subdiscipline (see chapter 2.2.1.2 for an overview of developmental psychology).
[42] Brooten (2015) 129-130
[43] Brooten (2015) 130
[44] Sivan (2017)

interest himself. Equally, the broader details of the childhood experience in late ancient Palestine are described, not for their imaginary ontological value, but for their basis in Sivan's factual analysis of the evidence for those experiences.

Oana Cojocaru takes a similar approach to describing the lives of children in ninth-century Byzantine monasteries and is careful to be explicit about the limitations of faction when she states that 'we do not know what they thought of this way of life or how they felt in certain circumstances.'[45] As with Sivan, Cojocaru uses the children of her stories as a means of presenting historical observations via fictional literature, rather than focussing on their subjectivity. She is extremely diligent in providing comprehensive literary and archaeological references for all of the historical elements of her work, which lends a strong sense of reliability to the story that she tells. The imaginative aspect never strays into the realm of the subjective experience, unless perhaps when she suggests tiredness or fatigue, which has its basis in biological (thus reliable and universal) human processes. However, for that reason, arguably the only additional value provided by her repackaging of that information into story-telling is that it absolves her readers of the need to interpret that evidence themselves.

Cojocaru's diligence with the historical source material is a clear example of why faction, though it might be an enjoyable thought-exercise, makes very little reliable contribution to historical understanding. Quite simply, it would be entirely possible to set out the evidence for the practical realities of these various characters just as clearly without embarking upon an imaginative journey that is dictated by the historian.[46] As stated above, I have no intention to dismiss the value and contribution to human understanding that fictional literature offers, including that which is inspired by history. However, from a position of historical inquiry, if a work continuously raises the question: 'where does fiction end and historiography begin?', then it risks sowing doubt and confusion in much the same way as critical fabulation. For that reason, emphatically, the aim of this thesis is to avoid the imaginative element by using the findings of psychological research that are grounded in scientific processes to inform what

[45] Cojocaru (2017) 248

[46] Aasgaard (2015) 161 does raise the problem of fictionalising history, noting that it enables historians to take a 'broader set of factors into account' and that it offers a variety of intersectional perspectives. What he does not do, though, is make a convincing case for why creative writing is necessary to achieve either of those goals.

can be known about slave subjectivity in antiquity, and to thus arrive at a more historically rigorous conclusion.

1.3 The 'humanity' of slaves[47]

The foregoing discussion may well read as something of a polemic against critical fabulation in classics, but the intentions behind using that methodology are true of much of slavery research. Illuminating the subjective experience of slaves in Rome, or indeed any other time period, is something of a holy grail for scholarship on the subject. That desire is grounded in the conviction that slaves' experiences can add value and depth to our understanding of antiquity and that their humanity *matters* for our own understanding of the past. In fact, the continued attempts by academics to uncover this most elusive of experiences is testament to the hypothesis that one can empathise with slaves precisely *because* there are universal facets to the human condition.

The discussion surrounding the humanity of slaves has its roots in Postcolonialism - a postmodern critical theory, the origin of which is often accredited to Edward Said's 1978 work *Orientalism*.[48] Said's focus was on the contrast between the 'the Orient' and 'the Occident' and the way that white cultures used 'Orientalism' as a Western style for dominating, restructuring and having authority over the Orient. He employed Foucauldian notions of 'power-knowledge discourse' to emphasise the way in which 'European culture was able to manage – and even produce – the Orient politically, sociologically, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period.'[49] In basic terms, Said argued that history could be 'unmade and rewritten' in order to combat power imbalances present in knowledge production and promote the voices of marginalised cultural groups.[50]

[47] Johnston (2003) makes a strong case for the abandonment of the term 'humanity' when discussing slaves due to its inherent nature – slaves were humans, thus their humanity is not up for debate. While this makes complete sense from a moral perspective, central to my argument is the fact that Roman slaves did *not* have any recognised humanity (see chapter 3), thus I will continue to use the term throughout this thesis.
[48] Earlier foundations for Postcolonialism can be found in Fanon's work from 1950s and 60s but Said is typically considered the father of postcolonialism.
[49] Said (1978) 3
[50] Said (1978) xviii

The impact that this development in critical theory made on the study of historical slavery was to encourage a more empathetic and individualistic approach to the lives and experiences of slaves. Prior to this, classicists' views concerning slavery in antiquity could be broadly divided into two categories: 'moral and spiritual' or 'sociological'.[51] These two scholarly viewpoints had been influential from the beginning of the 19th century. Arnold Heeren, writing whilst European Neoclassicism was still in full swing, typified the sociological approach by suggesting that although slavery was undoubtedly an evil, it had facilitated the political, economic and cultural progress of slave-owning societies in antiquity. These were inherited and developed by later European nations, who were thus indebted to their ancient cultural forebears. Ultimately, this meant that from a wider humanitarian perspective, ancient slavery was an acceptable price to have paid for the sociocultural progress that it had provided.[52]

Conversely Henri Wallon, writing in 1847, argued that the moral and spiritual cost could never justify ancient slavery and used this as a model to argue for the abolition of contemporary slavery.[53] However, it is important to emphasise that this position found its basis in religious morality, rather than any specific concern about the experiences of ancient slaves. A cynical reading of Wallon's argument might conclude that its intention was more focussed upon highlighting the moral virtues of 19th century European Christianity, rather than any real desire to better understand ancient cultures through the experiences of the individuals who constituted them. Indeed, the 19th century saw scholarly competitions that encouraged academics to explain and justify the continuation of slavery after Christianity had become the dominant religion throughout Europe.[54] Some contended that slavery was preferable to the alternative 'barbarian practice of killing war captives',[55] although this argument does take the wholly religious (and anachronistic) viewpoint that human life is sanctified by God and is thus always preferable to death. The high prevalence of suicide attempts in Roman slaves would appear to contest that opinion.[56]

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[51] Finley (1980) 11
[52] Heeren (1826) 234
[53] Wallon (1847)
[54] Finley (1980) 15-16
[55] Finley (1980) 154 *n.*41
[56] These were at least regular enough to warrant legislation: *D* 21.1.1; Joshel (2010) 104

Towards the end of the 19th century, Marxism began to inform the sociological view. Although Marx and Engels themselves wrote very little on the subject of ancient slavery, the idea of the slave as a tool for production took hold and was developed by a number of Marxist classicists.[57] The early 20th century saw this more dispassionate, economically based approach to the study of ancient slavery take precedence and it was not until post-war German humanism, in reaction to a 1950s Soviet revival of Marxist scholarship, that there was a resurgence in moralist approaches to slavery. In particular, Joseph Vogt was fundamental in moving away from theories of the ancient economy towards more humanitarian concerns – something that Moses Finley criticised as being restorative and reactionary.[58] Finley argued that the focus on the humanity of slaves was adopted as a rejection of the inhumane economic model being adopted by the Soviets, rather than any true concern for the humanity of the individual. Scholarly debates between East and West Germany centred on using slavery as the battleground for a Marxist debate.[59] Finley's account of the scholarly debate focusses entirely on the influences of the Cold War; essentially, any argument for the socio-economic importance of ancient slavery was Marxist (read: Soviet) and thus was rejected by West German scholars in favour of a more humanist approach.[60]

This division in theoretical approaches to ancient slavery research was taking place alongside wider philosophical paradigm shifts in academia. The development of Postmodernism during the late 20th century evolved into various sub-categories of critical theory that focussed upon specific areas of knowledge production that required refinement. Relevant to slavery was Postcolonialism, which took inspiration from some of Frantz Fanon's works,[61] and

[57] Finley (1980) 40-44 gives a more detailed discussion on this period and the main influential works.
[58] Heinen (2012) 8. For a collection of his most influential essays on the subject see Vogt (1972). *C.f* Heinen (2012) 2-14 for a full discussion of Vogt's contribution to scholarship and his crucial role in the Mainz project (see n.61, below). For a collection of works that explain the disagreements (and misunderstandings) between Finley and Vogt, see Heinen (2010) *passim* and Wiedemann (2000) 155-156.
[59] Finley (1980) 62
[60] Vogt's concern with slaves' humanity led him to establish a programme of research into ancient slavery via the *Mainz Akademie Projekt* entitled *Forschungen zur Antiken Sklaverei* in 1950. This resulted in the creation of a body of research on slavery in antiquity that continued, in some form, up to the 21st century. According to Thomas Wiedemann, this research is 'unparalleled' in its quality, though its impact has been somewhat limited to the German-speaking world and the project itself is largely unknown to scholars working on slavery of later historical periods: Wiedemann (2000) 152.
[61] Fanon (1961); (1959); (1952)

culminated in Said's *Orientalism*, discussed above. Finley demonstrates an awareness of developing Postcolonial thought in his own writings, but he also challenges the idea that later uses of the term 'slave' have ownership of that classification.[62] Essentially, Finley argues for a fundamental difference between the nature of slavery in antiquity and in later societies, and that the sensitivities of one should not inform approaches to the others. His approach does not deny the humanity of slaves but it does focus on their economic utility in ancient societies, asserting that 'the fact that a slave is a human being has no relevance to the question whether or not he is also property; it merely reveals that he is a peculiar property'.[63] This approach to the ancient slave was to be roundly rejected by Orlando Patterson, who asserted that 'property' defines the power that an owner holds over a possession (human or otherwise), but that it does not define the possession itself.[64] Therefore Finley's property definition notwithstanding, there remained ample space to consider how an individual slave conceptualised their existence. However, Finley was writing at a time when Postcolonialism as a critical theory was still in its infancy; Said had only written *Orientalism* the previous year, and Patterson's influential work on the topic was yet to be published.[65]

Patterson's work was ground-breaking in that it discussed slavery as a worldwide phenomenon and drew comparisons between slave-owning societies throughout history. He rejected the previously held notions of property and ownership and focussed instead upon concepts such as 'deracination', 'social death' and 'natal alienation'. This emphasised the selfhood of the slave and the way in which slavery denied the individual that sense of personal identity. In particular, Patterson argued that natal alienation – being denied any claims to parentage or ancestry – was an aspect of slavery that was universal to slave-owning societies. Natal alienation leads to social death – where an individual is kept outside of the society they inhabit – and is fundamentally based in power relations between the individual and the dominant culture. Postcolonial theory is clearly present as an influence on Patterson's reasoning. He states early in his work that all cultures that exercised total power over an individual did so by using different symbolic tools (such as religion, ethnicity, skin colour,

[62] Finley (1980) 69-70
[63] Finley (1980) 73
[64] Patterson (1982) 20-21. Lewis (2017) 32 *ff.* discusses the semantics of property in more detail whilst Bodel (2019) details the amicable disagreements between the two scholars.
[65] Patterson (1982). Patterson was a visiting fellow at Cambridge in 1978-79 and did converse regularly with Finley whilst there, *c.f.* Bodel (2019), so despite being unpublished at this stage, there was still much discussion and influence between the two scholars.

clothing, hairstyles) to emphasis a sense of apartness from the dominant culture and that the authority of the slaveowner relied upon their control of those symbols.[66] Essentially, the dominant culture chose which aspects of identity belonged to that culture, and which were servile. As Said had argued that European culture had managed and even produced the 'Orient', so did Patterson argue that slave-owning societies managed and produced the identity of the slave. Grounded in Postcolonial theory, Patterson's work was amongst the first, and was certainly the most influential,[67] to attempt a consideration of the slave's personal identity as being at a dissonance with the identity that was assigned by their enslaver.

Subsequent work on the literary and dramatic depiction of slaves takes Patterson's work as its starting point. In particular, Amy Richlin's work has continued to develop the notion of slave subjectivity as seen through the performances of Plautus' comedies.[68] Her most influential work *Slave Theatre in the Roman Republic: Plautus and Popular Comedy* is a culmination of years' worth of research on the subject.[69] In that, Richlin argues that Plautine comedies were essentially a form of 'slave theatre' that were written and produced by slaves and others from the poorest levels of Republican society. The performances offered a two-tier script with hidden subtexts found throughout the on-stage dialogue. Richlin argues that those reveal slave narratives that were delivered by slave actors and received by slaves in the audience, unnoticed by their owners, for whom a different register of comedy was operating simultaneously. Despite being widely accepted, Richlin's work has encountered a small amount of criticism - notably from the late Peter Brown whose response is a clear but respectful rebuttal of her views on the audience demographics of Roman theatre.[70] However, the specific make-up of Plautus' audiences is less pertinent to this present study than are her views on the realism of the content of his plays.

One of the most illuminating arguments to come from work like Richlin's is the assertion that scholars can read the fictional representations of slaves as indicative of their true feelings

[66] Patterson (1982) 7-8
[67] Bodel (2019) 287
[68] Richlin (2018), (2017), (2014), (1983)
[69] Richlin (2017)
[70] Brown (2019)

with a degree of reliability. This idea was first propounded by Keith Hopkins,[71] whose reading of *The Life of Aesop* as a source for real-life thoughts and feelings of the eponymous slave, opened the door to a range of new interpretations of slave characters by later scholars.[72] Ultimately, this body of work has been influential by making a convincing case for the judicious interpretation of fictional slaves as a key to unlocking the true, lived experience of actual slaves.

Despite the number of scholars who support that position, there are some who advocate a less accepting approach to theatrical verisimilitude. Of particular note is Wolfgang de Melo, whose introduction to his Loeb volume of Plautus' comedies is clear that theatrical realism is a modern phenomenon.[73] Importantly, he argues that Plautus never intended to represent the reality of Republican Roman society in his plays and that the farcical events on-stage specifically rely upon an unreal setting for the comedy to work.[74] That is all well and good when considering the plots of these plays in their entirety, but farce by its very definition requires from its audience an assumed, collective understanding of what *is* real and acceptable in order for the improbable events onstage to appear comical. The humour is achieved through subverting the norm, thus it is entirely possible to take that subversive representation as a basis from which to 'read against the grain' and infer what the reality of a given situation might have been. Similarly, as shall be argued repeatedly throughout this thesis, representations of slaves needed to be identifiable as such to their audience. Therefore, there must have been *something* realistic in their behaviour or characterisation. Consequently, the views of Richlin, Hopkins *et al.* are not incompatible with de Melo's, if we are sensitive to historical contexts that can be ascertained by engaging with further ancient sources. This is the view that Hopkins initially advocated in *The Life of Aesop* and it is the one that I shall adopt here.[75]

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[71] Hopkins (1993)

[72] Sabnis (2021), Stewart (2012), Joshel (2010), McKeown (2007), Fitzgerald (2000). See also Fischer (2017) 2525-2536 for a brief, general discussion and Bradley (2012) for similar observations regarding Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*.

[73] de Melo (2011) *li - liv*

[74] *ibid*

[75] My thanks to Costas Panayotakis for his views on this subject.

The emphasis on the individual identity of slaves that arose from the aforementioned works has led to a focus on more personal aspects of enslaved life in recent years. Most notable is the collective volume *Slavery and Sexuality in Classical* Antiquity, edited by Deborah Kamen and C.W. Marshall,[76] which takes a range of sources that offer insights into the sex lives of slaves from both the position of abused object and victim, but also from the perspective of subjective and autonomous actors who are occasionally seen making proactive choices in their own sex lives. Likewise, Peter Hunt[77] and Niall McKeown[78] take steps to reinterpret the sources and to make comparative studies with later slave-owning societies in order to pay more attention to slaves as active agents in their own lives rather than merely the passive objects that the sources depict them as being.

1.4 New directions in slavery historiography

These new efforts to divulge the personal lives of slaves has aided in creating a more multifaceted view of ancient slavery that incorporates a range of experiences and conditions. While this more comprehensive appreciation of slavery is clearly to be welcomed, it comes with new methodological challenges that must be respected. Kostas Vlassopoulos sets out those challenges clearly in his recent work on *Historicising Ancient Slavery*.[79] In that work, he questions the usefulness of Patterson's term 'social death',[80] challenges the predominance that the views of Patterson and Finley have exerted over the field for so long, and he rejects the 'top-down approach' to slavery that is too easily swayed by the views of slaveowners. Ultimately, Vlassopoulos attempts to realign scholarly approaches to ancient slavery in order that they reflect the diverse nature of 'slaving strategies' that were employed by enslavers throughout antiquity and into the early Middle Ages.

His rejection of established trends is predicated on the diverse relations that constituted slaves' experiences. Much of the most recent scholarship that is considered in the foregoing discussion is in line with his views (though published beforehand or contemporaneously); Kamen and Marshall's edited volume on sexuality is particularly notable for its similar

[76] Kamen & Marshall (2021)
[77] Hunt (2018), (2017)
[78] McKeown (2019)
[79] Vlassopoulos (2022)
[80] Vlassopoulos (2022) 4

rejection of 'top-down' analysis. Consequently, the undoubtedly positive contribution that Vlassopoulos makes is more one of codifying a paradigmatic shift that is already established, rather than actively shaking the foundations of Finley's and Patterson's tower himself.

There are some aspects of Vlassopoulos' approach that are less relevant for the current study. Overall, his approach is concerned with slavery as a social category within which the various modalities of slavery can either be identified or further sub-categorised. This is a useful process when looking at the considerably large, complex and unwieldy subject that is 'slavery throughout human history', as Vlassopoulos does, but it is unnecessary for more specific research. Equally, while he rejects the term 'social death', and consequently Patterson's main argument, he does so within the context of studying ancient slavery in its entirety rather than concentrating on one specific society, as shall be the focus here. There is no doubt that Roman slaves *did* suffer social death, and so the implications of Patterson's argument remain salient to this research. Similarly, though certain aspects and conditions of slavery did change over time, those individuals continued to be slaves. They continued to be socially outcast, they continued to perform forced labour and they continued to have no legal rights (with a few limited exceptions regarding punishment).[81]

Fundamental to these views is the concern with identifying, and emphasising, slave agency. This has been a driving concern in much of the most recent scholarship on slavery in antiquity. However, care is required when talking about the impact of slave agency. What does agency mean? How effective were slaves in shaping the motivations of their owners as a large-scale demographic? Of course, there might have been one or two situations where a slave could negotiate with their owners, but if that were the norm, or anywhere near commonplace, then presumably there ought to be more evidence for that in the sources. It seems rather unlikely that slaves were able to negotiate terms or conditions with their owners in any significant sense. Otherwise, the idea of negotiating with slaves would not have been viewed as demeaning for the owner and there would be more evidence to that effect in the sources as a consequence. Instead, the sources tell a different story. They tell us that, whilst

[81] It is doubtful how many were aware of those changes to their legal status in any case. Such changes in legal protection for slaves were likely more a statement of cultural values and expectations of freeborn behaviour, than one that cared about the wellbeing of slaves. See Gardner (2011) for discussion.

one or two exceptions do exist to prove the rule, that rule is one of domination in a social, financial and bodily manner. This brings us *back* to Finley's view of a unilateral 'top-down' approach to slavery, and one in which Patterson's theory of social death still dominates.

Vlassopoulos is correct in emphasising the changeable nature of slavery over time and across cultures. Likewise, the works of later scholars who focus on subjectivity do well to highlight that slaves could develop social relationships, professional statuses and even negotiate terms with their owners. However, the evidence for such relationships is exceptional. That is not to dismiss what it can tell scholars of slavery in antiquity, but to suggest that evidence for one or two slaves 'making it' in their world is enough to dismiss the far more abundant evidence that suggests that slaves typically did not, would be unwise.

1.5 Methodology employed by this thesis

Taking Vlassopoulos' work into account and accepting that a variety of slaving strategies existed throughout antiquity, an example of a 'successful' slave is still not incompatible with poor mental health. There will be no attempt herein to suggest an 'either/or', zero-sum approach to studying the subjectivity of slaves and it is entirely possible that a slave could have been suffering from PTSD, depression or anxiety whilst also forming a *contubernalis* relationship with another slave, or carrying out the business demands of their owner. What this thesis does do, is take some of the most abundant and reliable evidence for slavery that remains extant – that of slaveowners' accounts of how they treated their slaves – and considers how that treatment might have affected them on an individual level. It is reasonable to assume that what Roman slaveowners tell us that they did to their slaves was in fact true. At the very least, they are unlikely to have exaggerated their cruelty, so if there is any room for doubt, the likelihood is that conditions were *worse* than those described.

This brings the discussion back to the subject of invisible groups. The evidence for individual slaves in Rome does not come anywhere near approaching the number of actual slaves that is known to have existed.[82] Therefore, in order to assess the impact that slavery had on a slave's

[82] Exact numbers are impossible to deduce but see chapter 3.4.3 for discussion on population estimates.

mental health it is necessary to make observations about the actual conditions that they endured (for which there is considerably more evidence than for specific slaves), compare those with modern research into the mental health responses of individuals to similar conditions, and then extrapolate those findings back to the wider, invisible group. Naturally, this can only be successful in a general context, and it requires that the psychological findings operate in a group environment. Therefore, after explaining the psychological methodology in full and discussing the nature of the evidence for slavery in chapters 2 and 3, the following three chapters - part 2 of this thesis - will take specific themes as case studies.

The topics for each of those chapters have been chosen to reflect some of the most traumatic aspects of slavery, but aspects that were at least commonplace, if not actually common to all. The initial case study will focus on the process of enslavement. By its very nature and regardless of the specific evidence, enslavement is something that every single Roman slave experienced to some degree. This discussion relies heavily on Patterson's model of social death and the way in which that phenomenon impacts upon the mental health of the social outcast. There will also be a consideration of how individuals who were born into slavery might have viewed their conditions in a different manner to those who were actively enslaved after having lived a previous life of freedom. The differences that such processes of enslavement might have had upon the mental health of the individual will be compared and the repercussions discussed at length.

Following enslavement, the next case study will address the nature and impact of sexual abuse. While sexual abuse might not have been the experience of every single slave, as was the case with enslavement, nevertheless it was rife throughout Roman society. In particular, the discussion will focus on what types of abuse can be considered within that remit and how the ancient mind might have contextualised those abuses differently to modern sensibilities. Comparative studies from survivor accounts by victims of rape, sexual abuse and human trafficking will be considered, which will offer an insight into the likely responses that Roman slaves who suffered similar abuses would have demonstrated.

A recurring theme in both of these case studies, is that of suicidal ideation and behaviour as a common response to severe mental trauma. As such, the final case study chapter will consider the prevalence of suicide in slaves from ancient Rome in more detail. Various theories of suicidology will be discussed in order to assess how best to approach the evidence for such behaviour, with a particular focus on the nature of bias in the sources. As shall be made clear, the way in which an instance of suicide is memorialised by a society can often say more about that society itself than it does about the victim or their motivations behind such a self-destructive act.

To be clear, this project is not concerned with trying to pick a specific slave and identify a mental illness within them. More pertinent is identifying common behaviours that indicate mental illness or poor mental health. It is important that we move away from the idea that slavery was a horrific but ultimately unknowable experience for hundreds of thousands of humans, and start emphasising that slavery caused mental illness, even if that illness went undiagnosed. If we accept that the conditions of slavery were likely to cause mental illness in humans generally, then we can start to approach Roman society from the perspective that mental illness was endemic within the slave population. Naturally there will be outliers to that conclusion, but to state once again: this is a study on group behaviour, not that of the individual.

Upon concluding these thoughts, I will have demonstrated that identifying universal behavioural responses in more than one source, and across sources can illuminate what was *common behaviour* and therefore was a *common experience* for slaves. This has important implications for how later historians consider ancient Rome. Some later European cultures have used aspects of Roman society (and indeed classical antiquity more broadly) as a model for their own operations and values. However, if Rome was a society where a significant proportion of the population were labouring under endemic mental stress, then such findings ought to encourage a reconsideration of how we engage with those societies. In order to do that, we must uncover the reality for the majority of the population. That population is largely unattested in sources that are biased towards the elite male experience. Illuminating the slave experience in this way, is a first step towards obtaining that fuller picture.

1.6 A note on terminology

There is currently some discussion amongst scholars concerning how best to write and talk about slavery. Specifically, the debate focusses on the terms that are used to describe enslaved people in a way that is most respectful. The most common feature of that discussion is that the term 'slave' is an objectifying and degrading term which ought to be replaced with 'enslaved person' or 'enslaved individual'. This, it is argued, denotes the condition of slavery whilst emphasising the human nature of the individual, thus acting as a corrective to the dehumanisation and objectification that they suffered during their enslavement. Such changes will not be adopted throughout this thesis, which will intentionally use the objectifying terms 'slave' and 'slaveowner' when discussing ancient slaves. The following section will set out my reasoning behind that decision when writing about ancient slavery specifically.

The debate has its basis in the Postcolonial North American classroom. A number of writing and teaching resources have been made available by US and North American classicists and historians that help to address the nuances in teaching difficult topics such as slavery to students.[83] This approach is very much in agreement with Said's intentions discussed earlier: to rewrite history and promote minority experiences. However, these resources inevitably do so from a US perspective and often create explicit links between writing or teaching about slavery in classical antiquity and the social repercussions of New World slavery that remain pertinent to modern-day US culture. Whilst this is an entirely sensible pedagogical approach when teaching school children in the US, we should be wary of conflating the two different slave-owning cultures in scholarship.

There was no racial aspect to slavery in antiquity.[84] New World slavery and Roman slavery differed in that the slave was immediately identifiable by their skin colour in the former, whereas in the latter they were intentionally made to be unnoticeable;[85] an invisible omnipresence. In Roman society, 'slave' was not a statement of racial predetermination but a

[83] Bostick (2018); Park (2019); https://classicssocialjustice.wordpress.com; https://rfkclassics.blogspot.com/p/teaching-race-and-ethnicity.html; https://multiculturalclassics.wordpress.com/blog/; https://naacpculpeper.org/resources/writing-about-slavery-this-might-help/; https://pharos.vassarspaces.net/category/teaching-resources/

[84] That is, race as the 'culturally invented ideas and beliefs' about 'differences marked out by physical characteristics': Smedley & Smedley (2005) 19-20. *c.f.* Bodel (2019) 831

[85] George (2002) 43-45

term that denoted legal and social status. Furthermore, it is a *translated* term that is used to denote individuals of that status. Roman slaves were not aware of themselves as 'slaves', but as 'saved'. The Latin term '*servus*' is derived from the idea that rather than killing an individual, as was the prerogative of the dominant oppressor, that individual was saved from death for a life of servitude. This has some unsettling implications for identity and selfhood when one considers that a slave in ancient Rome was continuously reminded, by their very title, that they were not only subjugated but ought to consider themselves somehow indebted to their enslaver for that subjugation – the alternative of death supposedly being worse.[86] This is not to suggest that we should start using the term 'saved' when discussing Roman slaves,[87] merely that the modern term 'slave' would have held no relevance to the actual individuals whom we are discussing, which is not the case when discussing New World enslaved individuals who were actually defined by the same term that is still in use today. Essentially: 'slave' is the terminology of white enslavers, not Roman enslavers, thus its offensive associations are anachronistic when discussing antiquity.

Furthermore, Roman slavery was no less dehumanising, degrading and miserable an experience than it was for later enslaved groups, yet the distance in time from the subject matter serves to exacerbate the disconnect between the suffering of the individual and that of the reader. This is less often the case with later examples of slavery, as highlighted by Keith Bradley who notes that a case study of the brutal torture of eighty-eight enslaved individuals in Antigua in 1736 'strikes the modern reader as barbaric and shocking in a way that Roman torture of slaves does not, given its remoteness in time.'[88] As such, it is necessary to highlight the brutality of the Roman slave's existence in order to emphasise their humanity to the modern reader. Any discomfort that arises from the terms 'slave', 'freedman', 'freedwoman' or 'owner', when used in an ancient context, finds its basis in an appreciation of the humanity of the slave and the affront that such terms represent to that humanity.

[86] This assumes that the slave could understand Latin and is clearly from the enslavers' perspective. See chapter 6 for details on suicidal behaviour.
[87] Aside from it being an absurd proposition, the modern connotations of the word would actually serve to sanitise the meaning in the reader's mind, which runs contrary to the purpose of this entire discussion.
[88] Bradley (1989) 2. It is worth noting that Bradley was writing at a time when Postcolonialism was very much gaining traction as a theoretical model and thus was a cutting-edge methodology.

Foreman *et al.* recently produced a community sourced document that notes the importance of using inelegant or awkward terms in scholarly work, in the pursuit of delineating an accurate description of the condition.[89] This document and the recommendations therein have been adopted by a number of classicists in their own work on ancient slavery. This is absolutely the prerogative of the individual researcher, yet some academics who suggest that those recommendations ought to be adopted do so in a manner that could be considered unnecessarily divisive.[90] I do not believe that this is in the spirit of the original document. Foreman *et al.* are explicit in their very first paragraph that they are not offering a 'checklist that enforces any set of orthodoxies',[91] yet that appears to be the way in which their work has been received by certain scholars. Rather, they offer guidance that will encourage people to think about whether the language they choose should be more sensitive.

Particularly relevant to the context of the ancient world, written language is the 'means by which a particular language transmits the images of the world contained in the culture it carries.'[92] Thus, changing the terminology that was used obscures the original definition to which that term is referring, and in this case the signifier 'enslaved individual' (for example) becomes attached to a signified concept that is somewhat divorced from its original meaning. In ancient Rome an enslaved individual was conceptually a slave, with all of the dehumanised connotations that this carries.

Therefore, when discussing Roman slavery, I intend to use the dehumanising terminology that might be considered contentious by some. This is a purposeful choice that is made with an awareness of the discourse surrounding the terminology of slavery. When any comparisons are to be made with New World slavery, I will adopt the current conventional terms that pay due respect to the humanity of the enslaved individuals whom I am discussing. Conversely, when discussing slaves from antiquity the intentional use of dehumanising terms such as 'slave' and 'owner' will force the reader to face the stark brutality of that existence

[89] P. Gabrielle Foreman, *et al.* "Writing about Slavery/Teaching About Slavery: This Might Help" community-sourced document, 11/5/21, 17:02, https://naacpculpeper.org/resources/writing-about-slavery-this-might-help/

[90] An unfavourable reading of Emily Wilson's views on the matter might conclude that, if one does not adopt her preferred terminology, one is *actively complicit* in the harms of slavery: Wilson (2021) 16-18.

[91] P. Gabrielle Foreman, *et al.*

[92] wa-Thiongo (1986) 15

and in doing so will actually help to rehumanise those individuals about whose personal experiences so much is already lost to history.

2 - Adopting a psychological approach to antiquity

The previous chapter set out some of the more recent methodological developments in the discipline of ancient slavery research. A notable gap resulting from that body of scholarship is the lack of a suitable means for understanding how ancient slaves contextualised their own experiences. Strict historical analysis can reveal the conditions under which slaves suffered but does not provide an insight into how slaves *felt* about that suffering. Comparative approaches can reveal how enslaved individuals from more recent time periods felt about their abuse, but directly attributing those same feelings to slaves from antiquity fails to account for conceptual variances stemming from culture or social constructivism. None of the efforts taken thus far offers a clear path towards understanding ancient slaves' subjective experiences from a mental health perspective. Furthermore, comparative research is predominated by analyses of New World systems of slavery, with a typical focus on the U.S. Antebellum South. Those sources are still hampered by their historical context regarding the recognition of mental health generally, and the enslaver-bias that influenced how subjects were recorded at all. This means that, whilst comparative methodologies can be suggestive of how a slave in Rome might have reacted to (for example) being separated from their family, it can only go as far as the understanding that is provided by the comparative source itself.

Clearly, a new methodology is required. Certain psychological approaches have already been employed by ancient historians, which goes some way towards showing that a more scientific approach to ancient behaviour can yield positive results.[93] Therefore, if other, alternative psychological approaches can provide a new and beneficial interpretation of the ancient evidence - one that says something about the mental health of slaves - then that will take the discipline one step closer to understanding that slave experience from a first-hand perspective. Therefore, the following two chapters will set out how the methodology employed in this thesis is constructed.

This current chapter outlines the philosophical and psychological aspects of the methodology. The philosophy of materialism is fundamental to understanding how the mind of a slave is

[93] See chapter 1.2.1

conceived throughout this thesis, hence that is the first element that will be set out. A materialist view influences the psychological subdisciplines and approaches that will be adopted when attempting to access the mental health of slaves; once we have established how we conceptualise 'the mind' of a slave, we can then consider how best to assess that from a psychological viewpoint. Consequently, the psychological subdisciplines and approaches will also be set out in more detail, thus demonstrating their efficacy for the study of historical subjects. This will lead on to an analysis of the debate surrounding retrospective diagnosis and how useful that will be for this research – importantly highlighting why the diagnosis of specific mental illnesses is not the intention of this research. Finally, a discussion on the nature of trauma will delineate how Roman slaves would have contextualised their own abuse; an essential factor in accessing the psychological harm that they had to endure.

2.1 Philosophy, psychology and theoretical approaches

Any inquiry into the mental health of slaves from the Roman Republic must first establish exactly what is meant by the term 'mental health', which itself relies upon a definition of what the mind is. In its most basic sense, approaches to this subject can be divided into two different schools of thought: dualism or materialism.[94] A brief overview of these two opposing theoretical systems will demonstrate why this thesis rejects dualism and follows a materialist methodology.

Fundamental to the debate between dualism and materialism is whether or not the mind is seen as having a physiological, or metaphysical basis. Dualism adheres to the latter, asserting that mind and body are separate and distinct identities. This lends itself to expressions of an identifiable soul that is separate from the body and unique to each individual. Thus, the dualistic approach holds a natural affinity with theological beliefs and the way in which those explain our psychic realities. More scientific approaches tend to reject dualism in favour of something more clearly verifiable, yet a dualistic approach continues to be adopted by some researchers.[95]

[94] Glassman (1995) 38
[95] Lavazza & Robinson (2014)

Materialism, on the other hand, holds to the fundamental tenet that all mental entities are 'entirely physical in nature'.[96] A materialist approach to understanding the psychology of slaves from historical time periods is therefore a natural epistemological fit. If the psychology of a slave - that is, the mind of the slave – were to be seen as a disconnected, wholly subjective and indeed spiritual entity (as dualism would propose) then it would be impossible to understand. It would have been unique to an individual who is long-dead and would be unobservable outside of that individual's own physical existence. However, if the mind of the slave was in fact a physical entity, as materialism asserts, then it would have been governed by the same scientific rules and processes that govern our own biology (accepting that the human brain has not likely evolved in the last two millennia).[97] Therefore, the reactions of that mind to various stimuli can be predicted with a degree of accuracy.

This insistence on the physical nature of the human experience supports the assertion that there are universal aspects to human psychology. Consequently, if those universal aspects can be identified in contemporary case studies, they can be generalised to slaves from Roman anitiquity. The human body is not a cultural construct; it is a biological organism.[98] This organism reacts to external stimuli with chemical and electrical responses that we contextualise as our conscious experience, but that experience is rooted in the physical nature of our bodies. Essentially, materialism seeks to explain consciousness through physical processes (e.g. the release of hormones such as cortisol and adrenalin), but our conception of those physical processes also manifests itself as psychological (e.g. feeling stressed). The interrelation between the physical processes of the body and their psychic results it hugely important for the way that we attempt to unpick the psychological realities that Roman slaves experienced.[99]

The prevailing scientific consensus is that there has been no notable evolutionary developments in the human body, nor specifically the brain, over the past two millennia.[100]

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[96] Lund (2014) 56
[97] A notion that underpins evolutionary psychology: Swami (2011); Gaulin & McBurney (2001); Carruthers & Chamberlain (2000)
[98] Eagleton (2016) ix
[99] For a more detailed analysis of the crossover between neuroscience and psychology, c.f. de Vos (2014) 77-79
[100] Swami (2011); Gaulin & McBurney (2001); Carruthers & Chamberlain (2000)

We can infer from this that the internal biological reality that humans experience in modern times (such as the hormonal stress response discussed above) would be, if not identical, very closely related to that which was experienced by human beings throughout history. It is important to emphasise that this relates to the physical processes of a stimulus or response; the external causes of those physical sensations (which could be either material or cognitive) would of course vary, depending upon the nature of the world with which the human was interacting. Eagleton makes just such an observation in his argument for materialism by noting that, with regards to the human body, 'if it is true of Hillary Clinton, it was equally true of Cicero.'[101] The only difference is that this thesis will be comparing the biopsychological realities of individuals from a considerably more stressful existence than that of a privileged member of elite Roman society.

The study of human psychology is often concerned with identifying trends or typicalities in behaviour. Successive testing and research can observe common human behaviour in response to specific stimuli. Naturally, there are always outliers that do not conform to that model, but those outliers do not invalidate general findings. This helps to give a strong indication of how an individual is likely to behave in a given situation. The question is: can this be applied to Roman slaves in a way that will help us to understand better how slaves experienced their condition and explain some of their resultant behaviour?

Even in modern psychological situations, there are instances where an individual cannot answer 'why are you behaving the way that you are?', at which time 'the psychologist must be creative in finding ways to better understand the behaviour.'[102] Obviously this applies to Roman slaves, who cannot answer that question either, so the historian has to be similarly creative. The inexactitude of some branches of psychology as a *science* actually lends itself rather well to studying the thoughts and behaviours of ancient subjects. The paucity of evidence for much of the ancient world requires historians to look for trends and likelihoods, with the aim of arriving at the most accurate conclusion, rather than providing a definitive truth of events. Ancient historians, particularly, are consistently faced with the job of trying to figure out the most likely explanation for a set of circumstance based upon scant evidence

[101] Eagleton (2016) ix
[102] Spielman *et al.* (2021) 58

and a broader understanding of the context of those circumstances. That being the case, why should it not also be reasonable to consider the most likely way in which a slave would respond to their experiences? Essentially, dismissing the usefulness of psychology for understanding the minds of ancient individuals misunderstands how psychology is applied in modern-day society as well.

It is important at this juncture to highlight that this is not to say that biological processes are the only influences on human psychology, merely that the way in which we experience that psychology is the product of biological processes.[103] In certain cases, cultural background will influence the way in which an individual responds to psychological (and indeed physical) stimuli.[104] Therefore, any model of mental health that can be usefully applied to the ancient world must also operate on a cross-cultural basis. If a psychological model is shown to apply to modern-day humans regardless of cultural differences, then that is reasonable evidence for it operating as the sort of universal human characteristic that was discussed at the outset of this thesis.[105] Cross-cultural observations in psychology transcend social constructivism, thus variations in cultural understandings of a specific phenomenon will have little, if any, impact on an individual's experience of that phenomenon. Fortunately, psychology is no longer the preserve of Western academics and understanding the differences and similarities between individual psychologies from different cultures is well researched.[106]

The three main theoretical approaches to cross-cultural psychology are essentialist, absolutist, and universalist. Essentialism rejects the idea of universal human behavioural characteristics. Adherents to essentialist values assert that different cultures are fundamentally incompatible.[107] This follows a methodology that is heavily influenced by post-modernist philosophy and that rejects the existence of an objective reality that is experienced subjectively by individuals. The opposite end of the theoretical spectrum to essentialism is absolutism - an extreme belief in biological determinism that considers cultural influences

[103] Pollock (1983) 34-43 adopts a similar, interdisciplinary approach by applying sociobiological theory to uncover historical parenting strategies, though she notes (p36) that the social aspect presents clear limitations.
[104] See the discussion on trauma at chapter 2.4 for more detail on this topic.
[105] See chapter 1.1.
[106] Fernando & Moodley (2018); Vignoles *et al.* (2016); van de Vijver (2011); Markus & Kitayama (2010); Sadler (2005); Triandis *et al.* (1988)
[107] van de Vijver *et al.* (2011) 11

(nature v nurture) to have no bearing on an individual's psychology whatsoever.[108] Universalism takes a more nuanced approach to human psychology by asserting that there remain commonalities in all human behavioural responses and that these can be usefully analysed through psychological research.[109] Whilst accepting that subjective experiences, and thus cultural differences, will influence the way that an individual will contextualise their existence, there remain biological traits that influence that contextualisation in a similar manner. Most typically this is explained through examples such as hormonal responses to (e.g.) stress, or the way in which the brain develops and processes information, and the influences that those have upon behaviour. Indeed, it is not uncommon for psychological characteristics to vary more frequently within a specific group, than between specific groups.[110]

All of this relies heavily upon the conviction that human beings are purely biological organisms, thus the mind is a facet of that biology and is therefore objectively observable. Wider theological discussions regarding the existence of a 'soul' that is both personal and unique to the individual are incompatible with this methodology, as if we accept that humans are endowed with a unique metaphysical identity then it becomes impossible to consider that identity from a temporal distance. Therefore, the approach being employed here is firmly grounded in materialist philosophy and assumes that all behaviour has a physiological basis, as opposed to the dualistic belief that mind and body are separate and distinct entities.[111] Dualism should not be confused with social constructivism in this instance; a universalist approach to psychology that has its basis in materialist philosophy does not preclude the influence of social constructs, it merely holds that the responses to various influences originate from a physiological process.

[108] This approach is widely discredited by psychologists; I include it here simply to depict the methodological landscape.
[109] Stankus (2011); van de Vijver *et al.* (2011) 11; Burnham & Phelan (2000)
[110] van de Vijver *et al.* (2011) 18
[111] Glassman (1995) 38

2.2 Subdisciplines and approaches in psychology

Given that this thesis understands the mind from a materialist perspective, this then serves to indicate which psychological subdisciplines are relevant and which approaches should be adopted when studying the experiences of Roman slavery and its impact upon mental health. Subdisciplines are primarily concerned with *what* we want to discover about an individual's psychology, whereas approaches determine *how* we find that out. For example: the linguistic capabilities of a slave would have had a notable impact on their overall experience and subsequent mental health. What that impact was and how we can assess that requires a combination of psychological subdisciplines and approaches.

We know that slaves were captured from all over the known world during the Republican period and can safely assume that only a small proportion of that number would have known Latin or Greek from the outset.[112] Bradley considers the likelihood of linguistic isolation as part of his broader discussion on the cultural dislocation of slaves.[113] In particular, he highlights that prior to attaining any proficiency in Latin, slaves would have been 'completely marooned and scarcely able to communicate in any normal way except with one another.'[114] It obviously follows that even the small comfort of being able to communicate with one another was an uncertain one, due to the prospect of being separated and sold to different slaveowners. Furthermore, Varro recommends that prospective slaveowners should not buy too many slaves of the same nationality: *Neque eiusdem nationis plures parandos esse; ex eo enim potissimum solere offensiones domesticas fieri* ('nor should many slaves of the same nationality be purchased, as domestic disputes are very likely to arise from that practice').[115] Even though this is ostensibly about preventing disorder in the enslaved ranks, Varro's advice is evidence for the clear intention of some slaveowners to isolate their slaves on a cultural (and so also linguistic) basis in order to prevent free communication between individuals.

[112] For a more detailed analysis of language distribution throughout the empire *c.f.* Harris (1989) 175-190. For a more recent study on levels of literacy and their relation to social class *c.f.* Eckerdt (2018)
[113] Bradley (1994) 46-48, see also Toner (2009) 73-74 for discussion on the general impact of isolation and loneliness.
[114] Bradley (1994) 47
[115] Varro *Rust.* 1.17.5

Varro does also note that some slaves could become proficient enough in Latin that they could learn declensions.[116] This perhaps indicates that slaves were able to 'pick up' the new language that they were immersed in, but it gives no indication of the extent to which this language acquisition occurred. Given the unlikeliness that slaves who were subjugated as a result of imperial expansion understood Latin at the point of capture, they would need to pick up the language, and quickly, if linguistic isolation were not to exacerbate an already traumatic set of circumstances. Equally, if we accept Harris' argument that there was little need for Latin to be spoken by more than a handful of individuals in any one provincial settlement, then the same would apply to a significant number of individuals who were enslaved within the Empire from piracy or by some other means.[117] Some rudimentary learning of Latin might have taken place at the slave market,[118] but this was by no means a guarantee that any sort of proficiency would be arrived at. Indeed, the *Digest* is explicit in differentiating between an 'experienced' and a 'novice' slave for the purposes of sale and states that it makes no difference to their level of experience whether a slave understands Latin or not.[119]

Clearly, then, it was entirely possible to purchase slaves who had been subjugated for long enough to qualify as experienced but who had never learned how to speak Latin during that time. Consequently, whether newly enslaved or experienced, without explicit linguistic instruction we can conclude that difficulty in language acquisition presented a barrier to slaves that clearly falls within Bradley's argument for the harmful effects of linguistic isolation. Understanding those effects from a psychological perspective, alongside how a newly enslaved individual would have been able to interact with other people from their new environment when they had not yet (or perhaps ever) learned to speak the same language as their owner falls under both the cognitive and developmental subdisciplines in psychology.

The cognitive subdiscipline focusses on understanding the impact of the external environment on the slave: how would they have perceived an owner that they could not understand? How would they have contextualised their surroundings without having anyone

[116] Varro *Ling.* 8.6
[117] Harris (1989) 175-190. The various methods of enslavement are discussed chapter 4.1 of this thesis.
[118] Gel. *NA.* 4.1.4-6
[119] *Dig.* 21.1.65.2

to explain that to them in a language that they were familiar with? However, this only highlights the questions that we wish to answer. A behavioural approach is required in order to find out how the slave would have reacted to specific stimuli from within that environment, thus informing us about the likely reactions of the slave. Similarly, the developmental subdiscipline will help to determine what the linguistic capabilities of the slave would have been, but we require a biological approach in order to ascertain whether, due to the slave's stage of physical maturity, their brain would have developed past the critical stage of natural language acquisition.[120] As such, there now follows a brief overview of the subdisciplines that are most relevant to this research alongside the various approaches that will be adopted.

2.2.1 Subdisciplines

The key subdisciplines within psychology that apply to this thesis are cognitive, developmental, and social psychology. A subdiscipline determines what it is about the psychology of an individual that is to be assessed. Naturally, there are often areas of crossover between the various subdisciplines, but a basic discussion of the main concerns of each will indicate their relevance. Cognitive psychology focusses on topics such as perception, learning, memory, thinking, language, consciousness and cognitive neuropsychology.[121] As the name would suggest, how an individual thinks about their own experiences and how those thoughts influence their behaviour is paramount. Developmental psychology is more concerned with the scientific study of development across a lifespan. Childhood, adolescence and lifespan development, attachment theory, social relations, cognitive and language development, and social and cultural contexts of development[122] all impact upon how an individual contextualises their experiences and behaves as a result. Finally, social psychology researches the way in which social cognition, attitudes, group processes, intergroup relations and social constructionism influence behaviour.[123]

[120] Assuming that most slaves were not intentionally taught languages, their only method of second language acquisition would have been through immersion.
[121] Holt *et al.* (2015) 28-29
[122] Holt *et al.* (2015) 28-29
[123] Holt *et al.* (2015) 28-29

2.2.1.1 Cognitive psychology

Cognitive psychology pertains to the study of our thoughts and how those thoughts relate to our actions as we go through our daily lives. As a subdiscipline of psychology, this can be applied to the study of human or animal psychology and is fundamentally concerned with the way in which we process information through the acquisition, storage, retrieval and application of knowledge.[124] This is closely related to how external stimuli are received by an individual and how that individual subsequently reacts. This has clear implications for the way in which a Roman slave would have interacted with their outside environment. One example of this might be when an individual was enslaved through capture. This topic is the focus of chapter 4 and will be considered in more detail at that stage in the discussion, but a brief overview will suffice to demonstrate the relevance of cognitive psychology for studying this aspect of Roman slavery.

From the point of capture, the combination of catastrophic changes in status, environment and treatment would have required a significant alteration in the way that the individual understood themselves and the world around them.[125] In particular, sudden, forced changes in identity can result in a cognitive dissonance in the individual that can exacerbate mental health problems. Cross-cultural studies on identity have shown that it is our experiences held at a collective level, not a personal, idiosyncratic level, which determine social behaviour.[126] Essentially, all humans shape, perform and experience their identity at a social level. Echelroth and Reicher discuss this reflexive self-awareness as being crucial for human identity through 'the human capacity to simultaneously process information from two perspectives (egocentric and allocentric).'[127] Fundamentally, it is not only what we think of ourselves that shapes our identity, but also what we think of others and what we think others think of us. This reflexive dialogue is central to an individual's sense of self, their mental wellbeing and is entirely reliant upon the cognitive psychological processes that they experience. Consequently, the level and quality of interaction that a slave had with other individuals would have had a profound impact upon their own sense of self and wellbeing.

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[124] Gilhooly *et al.* (2020) 24-26

[125] Commonly referred to as 'social death', the mental health implications of enslavement are discussed in more detail in chapter 4.

[126] Echelroth & Reicher (2017) 77

[127] Echelroth & Reicher (2017) 81; see also Truka (2021) 131-132

The connection between reflexive self-awareness, social interaction and the impact that those have on mental health is supported by Çiğdem Kağıtçıbaşı, whose work takes an evolutionary approach to cognitive psychology and identity construction.[128] Her research into cross-cultural selfhood asserts that there is an evolutionary basis for two spectrums – relatedness/separation and agency/heteronomy – which 'have long been considered as basic human needs…(that)… point to a universal human commonality.'[129] This dual-spectrum model (fig. 2.1) improves on late 20th century approaches that have typically viewed relatedness and autonomy as being incompatible, as those models are unduly influenced by Western concepts of individualism that do not apply to a cross-cultural approach.[130] These new spectrums exist and influence mental health irrespective of sociocultural contexts, which merely determine one's place upon the spectrum. Consequently, they are as relevant to considering the mental health of a slave from the ancient world as they are for considering modern-day patients. An individual that has high relatedness and high agency is classed as being an 'autonomous-related self', which is the optimal position for mental health as both of the basic human requirements are being met.[131] Conversely, high separation and heteronomy scores (a 'heteronomous-separate self') meet neither of those requirements and is a pathological model that reflects the impact of social death upon an individual.

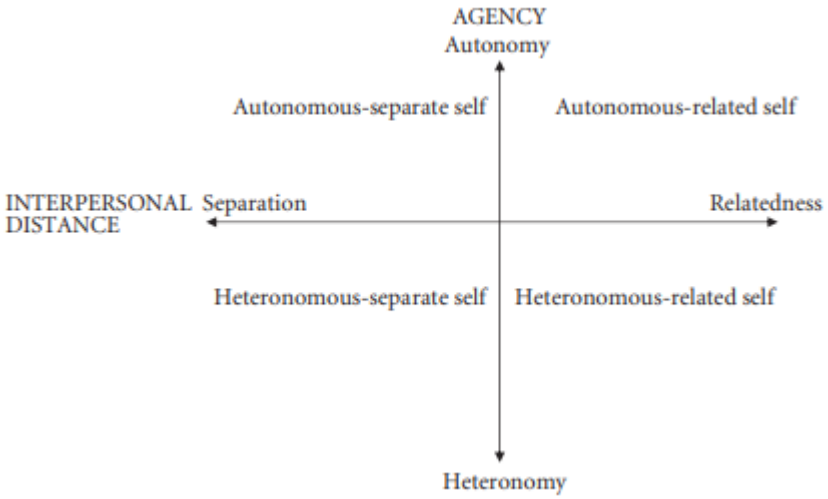

Fig. 2.1. Agency, interpersonal distance and the types of selves (Kağıtçıbaşı, 2011)

[128] Kağıtçıbaşı (2011)
[129] Kağıtçıbaşı (2011) 289
[130] Kağıtçıbaşı (2011) 290
[131] Kağıtçıbaşı (2011) 291

The following four examples, though basic, will serve to illustrate what Kağıtçıbaşı's model might look like when applied to Roman society: a typical freeborn citizen male would likely score somewhere on the 'autonomous-related self' end of the axes, as he has both the autonomy to exert agency throughout his daily life and a position of social relatedness within the wider community through his business dealings and his role as *paterfamilias* in the household. This is the most secure and advantageous position to occupy. Conversely his wife, a female citizen, might score somewhere on the 'heteronomous-related self' axes, as she lacks the same level of autonomy that males enjoyed on account of her gender, but still has a clearly defined role within the *familia* and wider society, thus giving her a sense of belonging to the wider community. A travelling tradesman who lacked citizenship might score on the 'autonomous-separated self' axes, as whilst they might be able to exert more agency throughout their daily lives, they lack the social position that citizenship affords. Finally, a slave would score on the heteronomous-separated axes, as they lacked both agency and social connections. This positioning is the least advantageous and has direct implications for the slave's mental health.

Kağıtçıbaşı's dual-axis model is useful for demonstrating the impact that a slave's social status would have had upon their mental health. However, the role of reflexive dialogue that Echelroth and Reicher discuss is of particular relevance when considering child slaves. Whether captives or *vernae*, a child slave's ability to negotiate a reflexive identity within a wider social group would have been reliant upon having developed a 'theory of mind', which is discussed in more detail below. If a child slave was unable to understand how others viewed them, a view which was entirely determined by their social status, then the concomitant shame that resulted from that servile status would not have impacted upon the individual in the way that it did with adult slaves. This aspect of a slave's cognitive processes neatly exemplifies the interrelated nature of the subdisciplines that must be employed when assessing a slave's psychology. Whilst the initial process of identity construction for analysis falls under the cognitive subdiscipline, the way in which that cognition operates is dependent upon the developmental stage of the slave, thus developmental psychology must also be taken into consideration.

2.2.1.2 Developmental psychology

Developmental psychology is a subdiscipline that is primarily concerned with the following four main areas:

1. Stability versus change: how do psychological abilities and characteristics change as we develop?
2. Continuity versus discontinuity: is psychological development gradual or does it occur in qualitatively distinct stages?
3. Nature versus nurture: possibly the most commonly known debate in developmental psychology, this attempts to understand what the respective influences of heredity and our environment have upon psychological development.
4. Critical and sensitive periods of psychological development. A critical period indicates a point by which certain experiences must have occurred in order that normal developmental growth continues. Sensitive periods are more flexible, but indicate a point at which it is most advantageous for experiences to have occurred for normal development.[132]

The first and second areas are clearly concerned with the way in which human psychology develops over time. Indeed, their relevance to the subdiscipline shows that it has been established that human psychology *does* develop over time. This might seem to be a rather obvious statement of fact, yet the importance for the study of slavery should not be overlooked. Child slaves constituted a significant proportion of the Roman slave population and it is likely that they were working in similar roles to those of adults.[133] Understanding the differences between those children's psychology, as compared with the more commonly considered adult psychology, is an essential criterion for considering the impact that slavery had upon children more broadly.[134] In particular, this serves to illuminate the processes of psychological indoctrination that children suffered during enslavement, which will be discussed in chapter 4.3.2 of this thesis.

In a similar vein, an awareness of the importance of critical and sensitive periods of growth in modern-day case studies is equally important when approaching slavery. One area of intense

[132] Holt *et al.* (2015) 499-500
[133] Roth (2021a)
[134] For a collection of essential works on child slavery in antiquity see Heinen & Deissler (2012).

discussion on this subject is that of language acquisition. It is rare that psychologists have been able to study the impact of critical periods in language learning, as to deprive a child of linguistic development for research purposes would be unethical, yet some case studies do exist. Genie Wiley was a badly abused and neglected child who came to the attention of Los Angeles child welfare authorities in 1970, at the age of 13. By this stage she had been kept wholly isolated from society by her father and had not developed any language capabilities. This offered psychologists the opportunity to study her linguistic attainment as she became exposed to language from this later stage in her neurological development, thus demonstrating that critical stages in growth do influence the ability to attain linguistic aptitude.[135] Central to this case study and its relevance to the study of Roman slavery, is that Genie's inhibited ability to acquire language at a later stage was not the result of socio-cultural factors, but rather her biological development. As such, the observations made about her developmental psychology can be generalised to other individuals with reasonable a degree of accuracy. As previously discussed, the ability of a newly enslaved individual to learn the language of their captors is an area requiring further research. However, any study on that topic must be sensitive to the implications of critical and sensitive developmental periods. This would, in fact, mean that child slaves may well have fared better than their adult counterparts, as their ability to attain language through immersion remained developmentally more possible.

Perhaps the most relevant aspect of developmental psychology, for the purposes of this thesis, is that studying the changes in human psychology that result from physical growth supports the assertion that aspects of psychology can be predicted due to their biological nature. This is closely related to the subdiscipline's third main area of concern; nature versus nurture. One example of this is the human capacity for 'theory of mind', which is the ability to understand another individual's mental state and is one of the major features that sets humans apart from other animals.[136] Crucially, theory of mind is not present from birth, but develops between three and five years of age.[137] Further, tests on chimpanzees have shown the most basic facilities for theory of mind beginning to develop, indicating that the

[135] Curtiss (1977)
[136] Dunbar (2000) 238; Goldman (2013) 19-40 gives a comprehensive overview of the theory and its development. See also Causey & Bjorklund (2011) 42-44
[137] Indeed, some autistic individuals never develop this ability, see Dunbar (2000) 238

capability is reliant upon brain size rather than some intangible human characteristic.[138] This supports the materialist approach to the mind as it indicates that what sets human psychological capabilities apart from other animals is neurological development, rather than a unique human soul that exists independent of the body as a biological organism. Eagleton makes just this point when comparing the reasoning faculties of animals with those of toddlers, concluding that in our earliest stages of development human beings are no more rational than other animals.[139] The development of rationality and theory of mind is closely linked to language acquisition, and thus developmental psychology more broadly. As language capability develops in an individual it allows them to access cultural learning[140] and develop a psychology that is more identifiably 'human'. Therefore, the advanced capabilities that sets human psychology apart from other animals is fundamentally based on developmental neurological growth, thus the mind is a material property and can be studied as such.

2.2.1.3 Social psychology

Whilst the importance of biology and development on human psychology allows opportunities to make comparative assessments between modern-day case studies and slaves from the Roman Republic who suffered similar stressors, the importance of external factors should not be overlooked. Social psychology is the third subdiscipline that informs this thesis and its focus is on the way in which life circumstances, experience and environment can influence behaviour.[141] In particular, social psychology adheres to George Engel's interactive perspective on health, termed the 'biopsychosocial model', that assesses the combined impact of physical, psychological and social factors upon an individual's health.[142] This interactive perspective is wholly appropriate for the study of Roman slavery. The physical stresses that slaves had to endure would have had a demonstrable impact upon their mental health as well.[143] In its most basic form that impact manifests itself as stress,[144] yet that stress, if borne over a long period of time (as was indeed the case in Roman slavery), could in turn have

[138] Dunbar (2000) 242-244
[139] Eagleton (2016) 53
[140] Pagel (2012)
[141] Heinzen & Goodfriend (2021) 10
[142] Engel (1977)
[143] Scarry (1985)
[144] Heinzen & Goodfriend (2021) 394

impacted upon the physical health of the slave. Hans Selye's three-stage theory of general adaptation syndrome[145] describes how the body reacts to persistent stress by becoming more vulnerable to disease.[146] Effectively, if an individual does not experience an alleviation of stress-inducing stimuli then their coping resources become depleted which impacts upon physical health. Further, the 'weathering hypothesis' posits that multiple chronic stressors and long-term high-effort coping has an observable impact upon physical health.[147] Within the context of Roman slavery, it is clear that this reciprocal interrelation between physical and mental wellbeing would have created a vicious and unrelenting cycle of poor physical and mental health.

However, a further important aspect of social psychology is the understanding of how wider group behaviour influences the individual. The relevance of this for identity formation has been discussed above, but group behaviour is not limited to this one topic. In particular, a number of well documented psychology experiments from the 20th century that looked at obedience and group docility could shed more light upon why so few slave revolts are attested in the ancient sources.[148] Equally, the interactive nature of the biopsychosocial model is important when considering the nature of trauma more broadly. Trauma as a specific topic is discussed in more detail below, but the way in which group attitudes shape how we view our experiences will be particularly relevant for research on sexual abuse and the extent to which a slave (especially one who had been born into slavery) would have contextualised their sexual abuse as traumatic. This topic is addressed in chapter 5, which considers the interplay between the social psychology of culturally defined trauma and the developmental and cognitive aspects that influence habituation and conditioning of an individual by external stimuli.[149] This conditioning could in fact have resulted in an increased coping capability in the individual[150] and highlights the importance of a multidisciplinary approach to the psychological impact of slavery.

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[145] Selye (1973)
[146] Heinzen & Goodfriend (2021) 394-396
[147] Geronimus (1992); see also developingchild.harvard.edu for the way in which toxic stress specifically impacts upon children.
[148] Gibson *et al.* (2017); de Vos (2010)
[149] Lieberman (1993) 85-90, 133-136 and *passim.*
[150] A phenomenon termed 'post traumatic growth' by Tedeschi & Calhoun (2004). See also Heinzen & Goodfriend (2021) 445-447; Jayawickreme & Blackie (2014). On slaves' coping strategies more broadly see Hunt (2017). On the role of gender in traumatic responses see Maguen *et al.* (2012); Breslau (2002)

2.2.2 Approaches

The foregoing discussion has set out *what* about the psychology of Roman slaves can be analysed, through the subdisciplines of cognitive, developmental, and social psychology. Broadly speaking, that is: the way that slaves perceived their environment, the ways in which they could respond (or not) to new challenges posed by their change of circumstances, and the ways in which wider social pressures would have influenced how they contextualised their experiences. *How* that psychology is to be analysed, when the individuals in question are no longer alive, is determined by the psychological approach. The approaches to be used will offer different ways of thinking about the influences on how an individual thinks, feels and why that individual behaves in the way that they do. The two approaches that are most relevant to this research are the biological and the evolutionary approaches. Closely related to the materialist philosophy discussed above, these approaches assert that biological processes affect behaviour and cognition. If the mind and its resultant behaviour are physical phenomena, then they can be studied across a distance of time due to the unchanging nature of human biology within that time span.

Materialism and heredity are foundational concepts of the biological approach, which asserts that the mind has a physiological basis and that behaviour can be inherited.[151] Whilst we cannot know the genetics of the slaves involved, we *can* consider how biological aspects that are universal in humans can influence behaviour. Such aspects that are easily relatable to Roman slavery will include hormonal responses to stress and trauma,[152] how malnutrition might impact on our cognitive ability,[153] and how sleep deprivation can interrupt other biological aspects that affect our thoughts, feelings and behaviours.[154] Clear examples of the efficacy of a biological approach in a modern context would be the study of how drug use can influence behaviour and perception, or how cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) offers breathing and muscle relaxing techniques as a way of calming the mind and reducing stress or anxiety.[155] Psychological research is often concerned with what has been termed the 'nature versus nurture' debate; the biological approach focusses on the way in which nature influences behaviour.

[151] de Vos (2014); Gergen (2010); Garza & Smith (2009); Glassman (1995) 39
[152] Russell & Lightman (2019); Christopher (2004)
[153] Schmitt *et al.* (2005)
[154] Schnyer *et al.* (2009); Blagrove *et al.* (1995)
[155] Sheldon (2011) 26-70 and *passim.*

The evolutionary approach is closely linked to the biological and suggests that some behaviours are a result of evolutionary adaptations that proved beneficial for the continuation of our genes from a pre-social stage in our development. This results in elements of human behaviour that are universal to human beings (and indeed animals, e.g. fear responses). Evolutionary psychology tends to focus more on the behaviours themselves, rather than the biological causes of those behaviours. For both, the applicability to slaves is self-evident, in that slaves were human beings and these approaches study universal aspects of the human psychological condition.

2.3 Clinical psychology and the limitations of retrospective diagnosis.

As with any research methodology, there are limitations to what can be uncovered by following a bio-evolutionary approach to the psychology of Roman slaves. In particular, it is not the aim of this thesis to diagnose specific individual slaves with specific mental illnesses. As such, clinical psychology would be unsuitable as that requires a medically scientific approach, attempting to diagnose and treat mental health problems through understanding causes and changes in behaviour. The methodological problems surrounding the nature of what exactly a 'specific individual slave' looks like will be addressed in due course. However, at this juncture, it will be useful to outline the debate surrounding the efficacy of 'retrospective diagnosis': the diagnosis of specific medical conditions (using modern nosological terms) in relation to specific individuals from the past, based on the observation of symptoms described in historical sources. This will explain why such an approach will be generally avoided for this research, but also why certain diagnostic terminology is not wholly inappropriate for the wider discussion.

Mental illness in antiquity is still a comparatively new research area for classics. In its current state, much of that research has thus far focused on topics such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in soldiers, the mental health of mythological figures and contemporary concepts of mental illness.[156] However, some medical historians reject any attempt at retrospective diagnosis as being medically unsound.[157] This rejection is predicated on

[156] Meineck & Konstan (2014); Abdul-Hamid & Hughes (2014); Harris (2013); Melchior (2011)
[157] Karenberg (2009); Moog (2004); Leven (2004)

examples that focus on physical ailments, stating that an illness requires a visual assessment of the body in order to make a diagnosis, which clearly cannot be achieved with ancient evidence. Likewise, Karenberg addresses mental illness specifically and highlights the inexactness of a retrospective diagnosis when describing the changing diagnoses of Chopin's mental illness throughout history.[158] He proposes that the changing terminology used to reflect the developments in modern medical understanding prevents modern research from fully appreciating how an illness was conceived by those who were contemporary to the sufferer. Similar concerns are often cited in the wider debate surrounding the diagnosis of historical cases of PTSD,[159] noting the changing terminology of what has previously been known as shellshock during World War I and even earlier as railway spine, during the Industrial Revolution.[160]

Most recently, Owen Rees offered an account of the development of retrospective diagnosis of PTSD throughout the 20th century. He argues that there has been a lack of diligence in those approaches and that they neglect the respective academic disciplinary conventions when attempting to diagnose PTSD in ancient individuals, thus creating an insecure conclusion.[161] He is correct in his assertion that any approach must be sympathetic to the sociological and psychological framework within which an individual case study existed, thus making an accurate diagnosis (from a medical perspective) impossible. However, this work joins previous studies into the topic[162] by consistently focussing upon either military individuals, fictional individuals, or fictional individuals that might offer insight into real life experiences of soldiers; slaves are ignored.

Crucial to this omission is that slaves were not in a position to rely upon social coping strategies in the same way that military citizens could; a result of the deracination that they experienced during the enslavement process.[163] Rees' argument focusses on Epizelus: the Athenian hoplite

[158] Karenberg (2009); whilst this case study is considerably later than the period under discussion, the methodological process is the same, thus Karenberg's concerns remain pertinent.
[159] Rees (2020)
[160] Gaulin & McBurney (2001) 299-300
[161] Rees (2020); also Micale & Lerner (2001) 6-7 and *passim*, assess the different approaches to historical research on PTSD in more detail, as discussed below.
[162] Rees (2020); Toner (2013); Karenberg (2009); Karenberg & Moog (2004)
[163] The enslavement process and the impact of deracination is discussed at length in chapter 4.

whose sudden blindness whilst fighting at the battle of Marathon[164] has been occasionally put forth as an example of combat-related PTSD in the ancient world. However, central to his focus (and rejection of that diagnosis) is that the social psychology context of the Athenian military, as set out by Crowley, created a notably different framework within which the stressors associated with a PTSD diagnosis operated.[165] Essentially, the differences in social context are significant enough between ancient Athens and 20th century Western societies - where combat trauma diagnoses were first identified - that even when other biological stressors might be the same, a diagnosis cannot be made with any useful degree of certainty because the influence of social coping strategies is missing.

As a challenge to the accuracy of retrospective diagnosis concerning specific individuals, the argument is convincing. However, as has just been highlighted, the social coping strategies of slaves were considerably reduced or inhibited by the unique set of circumstances under which those slaves suffered.[166] As such, the concerns that Rees raises are less applicable when considering slaves specifically. Similarly, the trauma that slaves suffered was one that the individual experienced in a wholly passive manner, whereas soldiers were active in their engagement with their trauma and, to an extent, held some control over this.[167] Therefore, any comparison between scholarly approaches to military PTSD and to slave mental trauma is insupportable.

Further, concerns such as those raised by Karenberg, that the nature of an illness with a developing terminology is problematic when discussing historical cases, can be set aside. Such changes do not alter the illness or experience, merely how it is described by contemporary practitioners. The change in terms used to describe an illness such as shellshock, one that ultimately arrived at PTSD, does not reflect a change in the symptoms of

[164] *Hdt.* 6.117
[165] Rees (2020) 46. On the socio-psychological context of the Athenian military see Crowley (2011) 105-130. For a broader view of combat trauma and PTSD throughout history see Rees *et al.* (2022).
[166] Hunt (2017) does attempt an assessment of slaves' coping strategies, though his focus is on low-level insubordination and none of the examples considered represents a psychological process.
[167] Garland (1998) 23-24 provides a useful analysis of how a trauma response is affected by the intersection between the predictability of a traumatic event and whether that event was deliberately sought out (e.g. in high risk sporting injuries versus a major car accident).

the illness itself, merely our own understanding of that illness.[168] In a similar vein, the introduction of a term that describes a particular psychological condition does not preclude the existence of that condition prior to its identification.[169] Given the biological nature of human stress responses detailed above, it therefore follows that traumatic stress levels that result in (for example) PTSD symptoms today, would have had a similar impact upon an individual from ancient Rome. This then raises the problem of how to assess the levels of trauma that were experienced by slaves and how to contextualise that trauma in an appreciable psychological manner.

2.4 What is 'trauma'?

Much of the debate amongst psychological and psychiatric practitioners surrounding what constitutes trauma focusses on its relation to PTSD.[170] This is understandable, as much of this debate comes from a clinical perspective which aims to identify trauma in patients and how best to treat them. It is worth emphasising that PTSD is a *result* of experiencing a traumatic event, rather than constituting the trauma itself. To that end, clinicians are required to identify the nature of trauma in order to recognise its effects in a patient.

The American Psychiatric Association's (APA) *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM), now in its 5th edition,[171] is the most commonly used manual for this purpose and identifies traumatic events within a wider diagnostic framework that is referred to as 'Criterion A'. Within that framework, Criterion A1 specifies a number of experiences that constitute a traumatic event for any patient, and which might result in the development of PTSD (or indeed other stress related illnesses).[172] The list is comprehensive and naturally includes events that would never have been experienced by Roman slaves (e.g. 'severe automobile accidents'). Pertinent to the subject of Roman slavery, however, are events such

[168] In the two earlier examples of railway spine and shellshock, the terms that were used described typical causes of the illness, but the symptoms remained the same.
[169] Gaulin & McBurney (2001) 307-308 discuss the evolutionary nature of autism.
[170] The literature on this topic is vast, but a useful overview of the various approaches includes Fitzgerald (2016); Craps (2013); Zayfert (2008); Weathers & Keane (2007); Dohrenwend (2006); McNally (2004); Avina & O'Donohue (2002); Breslau & Kessler (2001); Micale & Lerner (2001); Garland (1998); Marsella *et al.* (1996); Foa *et al.* (1992); Herman (1992)
[171] DSM-5 (2013)
[172] DSM-5 (2013)

as military combat, violent personal assault (including sexual and physical assaults), being kidnapped, being taken hostage, torture, incarceration as a prisoner of war, and sexual experiences that take place without threatened or actual violence or injury but which are developmentally inappropriate.[173] Interestingly, a revision of Criterion A from DSM-3 to DSM-4 also introduced the provision for merely *witnessing* such events as having the potential to be clinically traumatic.[174]

However, despite the DSM classification, it has proved difficult to achieve a consensus definition of trauma due to the variable dimensions that stressors can have. 'Variable dimensions' are significant for evaluating the intensity of any trauma and are defined as being the magnitude of the trauma, its complexity, frequency, duration, predictability and controllability, and these all factor into determining whether an event becomes traumatic for an individual, or not.[175] Fortunately, this is one area where it is possible to connect modern classifications to ancient experiences with a degree of certainty. The enslavement process and its impact upon an individual is discussed in more detail in chapter 4, but it worth considering briefly here in relation to those variable dimensions.

Other than those who were born into slavery, being captured was the primary source of Roman slaves. After capture the individual experienced social death, where they lost all sense of belonging and security, the were likely separated from anyone they knew and might also have been linguistically isolated in the process. The new slave would have suffered considerable levels of uncertainty regarding future treatment and their immediate safety. Violence, objectification, sexual abuse and rape were common, whilst fatigue, hunger and thirst were likely. This was just the beginning of the slave's experience, yet already the evidence points to comprehensive abuses that pervaded every physical and mental aspect of the individual's identity. Consequently, it can be safely assumed that regardless of an individual slave's subjective appraisal of the impact of the traumatic event,[176] the magnitude

[173] This last criterion is particularly relevant for the consideration of *vernae* and will be returned to in chapter 5, which focusses on the sexual abuse of slaves.
[174] Weathers & Keane (2007) 108-112
[175] Weathers & Keane (2007) 108
[176] Weathers & Keane (2007) 108 emphasise the importance of subjectivity in determining whether an event becomes traumatic or not. This is addressed below.

and complexity of their abuse was extreme. Likewise, the variable dimension of controllability was so low as to be non-existent; the slave had absolutely no control over their treatment. Similarly, the frequency and duration of their trauma was regular (arguably constant) and long-term, by the very definition of the experience. Predictability perhaps requires a little more consideration, as for those who were enslaved through military conquest it is just about possible to argue that wider military conventions in antiquity, which included the enslavement of conquered peoples, would have been understood and thus expected by members of a defeated society. However, Caroline Garland, a consultant clinical psychologist, notes that even when traumatic events *are* somewhat predictable, the reality of the event is no less traumatic when it is of a high order of magnitude.[177] In a similar vein, critics of the DSM's emphasis on 'unexpected trauma' when arriving at a PTSD diagnosis argue for a broader definition for Criterion A that includes more insidious or oppression-based traumas and that de-emphasises the 'event-based trauma as the exemplary scene of trauma *par excellence*'.[178]

Further analysis of these criticisms confirms the usefulness of Criterion A for assessing the level of trauma that would have been experienced by a Roman slave. As previously discussed, any model of mental health that can be usefully applied to the ancient world must also operate on a cross-cultural basis in a modern context. That same requirement for a cross-cultural approach to psychological assessment is fundamental to those who criticise the DSM framework. However, importantly, proponents for an approach by the DSM that emphasises the cultural context of traumatic events[179] *do not* consider Criterion A to be unsuitable in a non-Western context. Diverse cultural case studies, such as the Latin American and Chinese examples offered by Zayfert or 2004 Sri Lankan case study discussed by Watters,[180] demonstrate the influence that varied cultural attitudes have on the provision of treatment, but those same attitudes do not alter what an individual considers to be a traumatic event.

[177] Garland (1998) 25
[178] Craps (2013) 33; see also Caruth (1995)
[179] Zayfert (2008) 69
[180] Watters (2010) 3; Zayfert (2008) 70. See also Craps (2013) 22

There are some criticisms of Criterion A that do emphasise culturally specific traumas[181] and suggest that the narrowness of the DSM's definition is prohibitive to a broader cultural application. This narrowness is addressed by Weathers and Keane,[182] who discuss the debate in an objective manner but are clear about the need to set a 'threshold of severity' in the diagnostic criteria. This is partly in response to previous concerns that had been raised concerning 'conceptual bracket creep',[183] which would effectively diminish the diagnosis of PTSD by stretching the definition of trauma to include events that are relatively minor. Stressors of such lower severity are still included within the wider scope of mental illness diagnosis, but within the context of an adjustment disorder, rather than PTSD.[184] Crucially, these low-level stressors do not include the same stressors that were experienced by Roman slaves. Nor does the requirement for a broader definition of trauma that includes culturally sensitive criteria preclude those same stressors. As such, regardless of which side of the Criterion A debate one agrees with, the Criterion A definitions for trauma as they stand remain pertinent to those experienced by Roman slaves.

The conditions of Roman enslavement, which are discussed above and are evidenced by the ancient sources, align perfectly with the specific events detailed in the DSM's Criterion A as traumatic events that can contribute towards a diagnosis of PTSD. Equally, those experiences sit at the extreme end of the spectrum for each of the variable dimensions that Weathers and Keane consider problematic for achieving a consensus definition of trauma.[185] Cross-culturally based criticisms of the DSM framework do not contest these criteria as traumatic events and are thus entirely compatible with the idea that Roman slavery constituted a traumatic event of the most severe, complex and continuous type. There remains one final, important, variable to consider: did the individual contextualise the event as traumatic?

Wider debates on the historiography of trauma are largely split between those who take the view that PTSD is the most recent term for the same medical phenomenon but which has

[181] Craps (2013) 25-27 discusses Spanierman & Poteat (2005); Poussaint & Alexander (2000); Turia (2000); Duran *et al.* (1998); Janoff-Bullman (1992); Terr (1991)
[182] Weathers & Keane (2007) 112-114
[183] McNally (2004) 3
[184] Weathers & Keane (2007) 114
[185] Weathers & Keane (2007) 108

been observed throughout history in various guises, and those who argue that it is 'the latest in a series of historically contingent, socially and culturally constructed theories.'[186] The former view is predominantly held by those from medical and psychological backgrounds, the latter by those from the anthropological, sociological and historical.[187] Considering this clear division between academic disciplines and their approach to the subject, it is worth noting their respective inherent goals. Given that the human body and its brain has not changed in any significant manner over the past few millennia, it is little wonder that medical professionals would adopt a viewpoint that considers PTSD to be the most recent evolution in our understanding of how objective trauma affected the objective human body, as they take a diagnostic approach to the problem. The socio-historical approach, conversely, takes the perspective of how different societies viewed both the cause of the phenomenon (trauma) and its effect (PTSD/shellshock etc.), thus its social context is emphasised.

Realistically, though, these two viewpoints need not be mutually exclusive. A biological psychological approach to trauma clearly demonstrates that an individual who is undergoing a stressful event will experience the same bio-chemical processes, regardless of which time or place they are living in.[188] Equally, the way in which that process is contextualised will be culturally relative. Importantly, to argue that there exists a number of 'historically contingent' contexts, is to argue that each of those contexts exhibits an identifiable common factor. That is: that an individual has experienced a traumatic event which has elicited some sort of recognisable trauma-response.

That response, however one might choose to term it, is the result of an individual's culturally learned defence mechanisms being overwhelmed, resulting in a 'massive disruption in functioning, amounting to a kind of breakdown.'[189] It is especially relevant to note that the potentially endemic levels of violence and trauma that *might* have existed in the life of a Roman slave prior to subjugation would not have protected them from being psychologically

[186] Micale & Lerner (2001) 6-7
[187] *Ibid*
[188] Marsella *et al.* (1996) notes that the arousal systems of PTSD represent a 'universal biologic response to trauma', which is thus not a culturally dependent response. I explain the specific biological processes of stress-responses in more detail in chapter 4 which discusses the enslavement process.
[189] Garland (1998) 11

impacted by any new trauma associated with their enslavement – for example by desensitising the individual to the impact of violence. Garland's points concerning expected and sought-out traumatic events remain salient here.[190] Further, Herman is explicit that 'traumatic events are extraordinary, not because they occur rarely, but rather because they overwhelm the ordinary human adaptations to life…they confront human beings with the extremities of helplessness and terror and evoke the responses of catastrophe.'[191] This clearly shows that the regularity of a traumatic event does not desensitise an individual to that trauma if it is of a severe nature. Indeed from a biological perspective, the opposite is the case, as detailed once again by Hans Selye's three-stage theory of general adaptation syndrome, discussed above.[192]

In the previous quote, Herman's use of the term 'helplessness' is revealing. Helplessness is a specific facet of 'automatic anxiety' – a concept first introduced by Freud in 1926 that remains an important term in psychoanalysis today.[193] Automatic anxiety manifests as 'an infant's psychological feeling of helplessness, arising from biological helplessness, experienced as anxiety, or a reproduction of that in older children or adults in response to situations that are difficult to cope with.'[194] Effectively, when an individual experiences automatic anxiety, they experience anxiety arising from real danger, as opposed to perceived danger.[195] When an individual experiences a traumatic event that overwhelms their coping mechanisms, it weakens their ability to protect themselves against further traumas and the traumatised ego treats all subsequent threats by being 'flooded with automatic anxiety'.[196] Consequently, even if a Roman slave had previously witnessed regular violence,[197] this would not have protected them from contextualising their own violent trauma as being exactly that: traumatic. Further, had they been a *victim* of consistent violence prior to enslavement, they would have been even less prepared to protect their psychology against that most traumatic event. Therefore, the possibility that a slave might not have

[190] Garland (1998) 24-25
[191] Herman (1992) 33
[192] Heinzen & Goodfriend (2021) 394-396
[193] Colman (2015)
[194] *Ibid*
[195] Perceived danger arouses 'signal anxiety', as it is a signal of potential danger.
[196] Garland (1998) 16-17
[197] Discounting, for now, the fact that witnessing such violence still falls within the Criterion A categorisation of traumatic events.

contextualised their abuse as traumatic due to cultural differences or prior exposure to trauma must be rejected.

This has significant implications for the way in which we approach the mental health of a Roman slave. There is no doubt that the process of enslavement was a traumatic event for the individual. There is no doubt that this would have left them more vulnerable to subsequent traumas. Every single one of the traumas that Roman enslavers inflicted upon their victims comes under Criterion A's definition for PTSD inducing events, and every single one of those traumas sits at the most extreme end of the variable dimensions spectrum. Breslau and Kessler conducted a comprehensive survey of the likelihood that experiencing Criterion A events would lead to a diagnosis of PTSD and found that the conditional probability of developing the mental illness was 12% of cases.[198] It is worth highlighting that those cases were from a group of individuals who were *post* traumatic stress; they were no longer experiencing the stressor that caused their trauma in the first instance. Further, they were living in a society that offered help and medical support (hence they received a diagnosis). Slaves had no such recourse to targeted mental health support services and their abuse continued indefinitely, thus it indefinitely compounded the traumas that they experienced. It should therefore be remembered that, even if we take 12% as being the 'likely' figure for a percentage of the population developing symptoms that would now be diagnosed as PTSD, the true figure was, in all probability, significantly higher.

[198] Breslau & Kessler (2001)

3 – How to see an 'invisible slave'

3.1 Creating a hypothetical individual

The previous chapter set out the psychological approaches and subdisciplines that combine to create a 'mental health lens' through which we can view Roman slavery. Applying that lens to the evidence for the conditions of slavery will illuminate the subjective experiences of Roman slaves who are not recorded in the sources. In order to do that, we must first establish a hypothetical model for invisible slaves that offers a realistic impression of their typical experiences. However, the question is: do the extant sources for slavery offer an accurate portrayal of the experiences of slaves?

This chapter will argue that they do. A basic hypothesis for answering that question is that, regardless of their relative conditions, almost all slaves were marginalised, dehumanised, and even animalised by their Roman enslavers. This means that whether male or female, urban or agricultural, the invisible slave was an isolated and mentally vulnerable individual who lacked the ability to rely on coping strategies in order to combat the traumas that they endured as a result of their enslavement. This clearly aligns with Orlando Patterson's theory on deracination and social death, which is in turn supported by Çiğdem Kağıtçıbaşı's intersectional axes of identity construction in relation to autonomy and social relatedness.[199] Both of those theories form the basis of the hypothesis employed here. If that hypothesis is shown to be sustainable, it suggests that any hypothetical model for invisible slaves must be one where the individual lacked access to support networks, thus had limited coping strategies, hence was vulnerable to the adverse mental health stressors that are the subjects under analysis in part 2 of this thesis.

But what do the sources for slavery tell us about that experience? Compared with the huge numbers of people who were enslaved during the Republic and early Imperial periods, the number of individual slaves that are observable in the sources is tiny. None of the extant sources is dedicated to discussing slaves as a specific subject. More often than not, slaves are

[199] For Patterson, see chapter 1.3; for Kağıtçıbaşı, see chapter 2.2.1.1.

incidental characters in the literary sources, occupying the same peripheral space in the minds of ancient writers as they did in the reality of their daily lives. When slaves are considered in more detail, it is always within the context of a wider discourse where slavery adds something to the main point the writer was making.

This creates a number of challenges for the historian of Roman slavery. Firstly (and perhaps most obviously), any evidence for the behaviour of an enslaved individual from Rome is incomplete. Snippets of information are scattered throughout the sources and must be gathered together to create an impression of slavery that is somewhat piecemeal. This results in a second methodological challenge whereby any 'complete' image of a slave does not represent one specific individual. This is clearly problematic when making an assessment of a slave's individual circumstances, behaviour and any psychological implications that can be attributed to those. Finally, the peripheral nature of slaves in the source material does not merely show that they were only included by ancient authors for some specific action that they carried out, but that occasionally they were a complete fabrication and thus the behaviour that we *do* have evidence for is perhaps unreliable from the perspective of historical accuracy.

Regardless of whether it is Republican or Imperial slavery, Roman slaveowners are predominantly the authors of the literary sources available on the subject. The following analysis of those will demonstrate that, with only a few notable exceptions, Roman slaveowners looked upon their slaves as being subhuman. The fundamentally dehumanised concept of *servus* enabled slaveowners to treat their slaves with extreme cruelty, practical indifference or even benevolence, but always within the context of the freeborn owner possessing a human capacity that was denied to the slave, rendering them little more than domesticated animals. In support of this, comparative evidence from other slave-owning societies alongside 18th century anthropological studies will be set out to show that the ability to relegate whole groups to a less-than-human status was not unique to the Roman psyche. Instead, this is a cognitive process that has been utilised throughout human history as a means of subjugation and oppression.

That conclusion will then be consolidated by a further analysis of the ways in which slaves were conceptualised in Roman legal and philosophical thought. Regardless of whether individual slaveowners' views varied, the legal definition of a *servus* was a clear statement of established attitudes towards slaves that dictated slaveowner perspectives. Conversely, philosophical views that were informed by the increasing influence of Stoicism in elite Roman thought offer an alternative perspective – one in which slaveowners did take the humanity of their slaves into consideration. However, I will argue that those philosophical opinions were atypical, thus they can be discounted when constructing a hypothetical model for an invisible slave.

Having established that my initial hypothesis aligns with the general view of slaves that was held by Roman slaveowners, it then remains to consider the differences between the treatment of slaves in agriculture and those who lived urban lives. This will ascertain whether the differences in one slave's environment might have resulted in slaveowners viewing them more or less favourably than in an alternative one. In particular, the notion that urban slaves were more fortunate due to their increased opportunity to obtain freedom will be challenged in respect of the levels of abuse that they received and the continued dehumanisation that they suffered despite their proximity to their owner. Finally, depictions of slaves' humanity as seen in the works of Plautus will offer an alternative 'view from below'. That view offers a more humane, though no less traumatised depiction of slaves, and it completes the picture of slaves as they are presented by the sources.

The discussion then changes direction to consider types of slavery that might challenge the dehumanised view. Specifically, did the freeborn individuals who shared in the socio-economic deprivation that many slaves lived not suffer similar challenges to their mental health? Status is the crucial factor in that situation and, whilst not dismissing the difficulties that *proletarii* faced, it will become clear that slavery caused trauma that was specific to that experience. In a similar vein, the status of high-ranking slaves will be shown to be less of a mitigating factor in their trauma than might at first appear to be the case, with evidence showing that those slaves were often treated just as harshly as any other, thus detailing that they were similarly dehumanised.

Two types of voluntary slavery will then be considered against the hypothesis of dehumanisation. I will argue against the idea that debt-slavery was a type of subjugation that represented the same loss of autonomy and status as other forms. This was outlawed early in Republican history, so it was a less common practice than might at first be expected. Further, the status of those individuals was distinct from other slaves in Roman thought. Likewise, gladiators might appear to have enjoyed a celebrity status that elevated their experiences above those of regular agricultural or urban slaves. While that may well have been the case for those who volunteered for the arena, the majority of gladiators were slaves who fought under duress. Consequently, any potential benefits arising from that unique role will be shown to be insignificant in comparison with the associated negative mental health impact.

The final challenge to the hypothetical model for the invisible slave is whether the extant sources accurately describe the *common* slave experience. Were the slaves that are described in the sources typical, or exceptional? This necessitates a wider analysis of the demographics of slavery. Population studies will be brought in to support the argument that slaves were, by a considerable margin, the preserve of the wealthy elite. Naturally there were some slaves living in less wealthy households, but their numbers were small enough as to have little effect on wider assessments of the psychological impact of the typical slave experience. This high concentration of the slave population within elite ownership allows for a more accepting reading of the literary sources. If most of those sources were written by elites, and the majority of slaves were owned by elites, then it follows that elite literary representations of slaves can be viewed as reliable representations for the circumstances that the majority of slaves experienced.

Ultimately, this chapter will conclude that within the literary sources, there are various models of a ‘representative slave’, all of whom were seen as subhuman by their owners. However, those representations were created by slaveowners and had to be realistic, even within the more exaggerated genres of fiction and comic drama. The realism of the representative slave relied upon an intimate understanding of genuine slave behaviour that Roman slaveowners had. They gained that understanding through their own first-hand experience of seeing how their slaves behaved under various circumstances. Importantly, they do not accurately represent *how the slaves experienced their enslavement* from a

subjective point of view, which is the subject of part 2 of this thesis. It does, however, offer a solid basis for using literary sources and constructed models of the slave experience to facilitate an understanding of that first-hand experience.

3.2 The (sub)humanity of slaves

3.2.1 Othering and animalising throughout human history

The mindset of elite Roman slaveowners did not afford their slaves any true sense of humanity. As shall be demonstrated, that phenomenon is observable throughout human history, thus its application to Roman slavery is apt. Slaves in Rome were viewed along a spectrum that ranged from domestic pets at one end to articulate tools at the other. There is little doubt that the elite Roman slaveowner did understand that their slaves were human beings in a basic sense; discussions on how best to maintain one's slaves on the farm clearly show that level of awareness.[200] However, maintaining a human being as little more than a domesticated animal did not require slaveowners to empathise with their suffering or care about the deeper psychological harm that was being done to them – so long as they could continue to perform their basic tasks. Effectively, a slave suffered an extreme type of 'othering' that categorised them as subhuman; capable of behaving in uniquely human ways by virtue of their species but incapable of feeling, thinking and acting on a higher level akin to that of their freeborn enslavers.

'Othering' is a well-established term in social history, although discussion tends to focus on the results of othering on a specific group, rather than the actual process itself. [201] That process is the separation of different social groups by creating a hierarchy of empathy in the minds of the dominant 'ingroup' (in this case: slaveowners).[202] It relies upon a clear distinction between social categories that are defined as 'ingroup' and 'outgroup'[203] and takes place in all sorts of human social interaction. Notably, regardless of the severity of the othering, the outgroup is consistently characterised as having a level of homogeneity in the

[200] Cato *Agr.*5; Varro *Rust.* 1.17, 2.10; Columella *Rust.* 1.8-9
[201] e.g Jensen (2018), Shaw (2000)
[202] Billig & Tajfel (1973)
[203] Fagan (2011) 80-93 gives an in-depth analysis of social categorisation.

minds of the ingroup.[204] This automatically denies outgroup members the recognition of their personal identity, but at its most extreme this has enabled an ingroup to view the outgroup as subhuman, thus it creates an empathy gap. Research into empathy and emotional prejudice[205] suggests that dehumanised groups are believed not to experience human emotions to the same extent as those who dehumanise them, nor to share in-group beliefs.[206] A recent study into the neuro-science of social categorisation has found that extreme outgroups actually elicit a significantly lower neurological response from other social groups.[207] This means that the actual biochemical processes of the brain that recognise and respond to human interactions are less responsive when viewing an individual who is an extreme social outcast. This results in them being viewed with lower levels of social cognition and exaggerated reactions consistent with disgust by individuals from more accepted social groups. In short: in human societies, extreme outgroups are not considered to be 'as human' as other groups. Those other socially accepted groups find the extreme outgroup repulsive, thereby justifying existing dehumanisation, whilst simultaneously enabling that process to continue. This clearly indicates that once an individual is designated as outgroup, they no longer elicit empathy from ingroup individuals.[208]

This is not unique to Roman slavery. The Greek term *andrapodon* ('man-footed creature'), used to denote slaves, is clearly animalising in its tone.[209] Likewise Aristotle, when not classifying slaves as 'living tools', asserted that they inhabited the same position in the natural order as animals.[210] Racial distinctions constructed in the U.S during the Revolutionary period were used to justify the enslavement of Africans and African Americans by denoting them as subhuman in a similarly animalised way.[211] This coincided with an increasing fascination by European enslavers and colonisers with the human capacity (or lack thereof) of the people they were subjugating. To be clear: such racial distinctions did

[204] Haslam *et al.* (1996), see also Baysha (2020).
[205] Ritter *et al.* (2011) 242; Leyens. *et al.* (2003); *c.f.* Fagan (2011) 159-166 for discussion on ancient prejudices.
[206] Harris & Fiske (2006) 848; Leyens coined the term 'infrahumanisation' to describe this process.
[207] Harris & Fiske (2006) 849-852
[208] Baron-Cohen (2011) 2-9; 81-83 makes some interesting observations on the early 20th century Austrian philosopher Martin Buber's hypotheses on empathy erosion and 'turning people into objects'.
[209] Roman animalising of slaves is discussed below. Bradley (2000) gives an in-depth analysis of the animalising process as seen in Roman society more broadly, before then focussing on Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*.
[210] Arist. *Pol.* 1.1254b25-34, 1256b20-25, 3.1280a31-35. For a full discussion on slave terminologies *c.f.* Zelnick-Abramovitz (2018)
[211] Smedley and Smedley (2005) 19. Also Zelnick-Abramovitz (2018) 6-7; Bradley (2000) 111-112; Spiegel (1996); Jacoby (1994)

not apply to slavery in antiquity, but the cognitive process of dehumanising an individual because of a perceived difference – regardless of what that difference was – remains salient to both societies.

The publication of *Systema Naturae*, in 1735 by Carl Linnaeus, provided a taxonomy of humanity whereby different human 'varieties' were classified by skin colour.[212] This contributed to the development of the late 18th century scientific concept of the 'Great Chain of Being', which posited that all species occupied a pre-ordained position in a hierarchy of the natural world.[213] This was not universally accepted, and one Professor Blumenbach wrote about the manifestly human qualities of an enslaved Black woman and man that he had met.[214] However, he strikes a clear tone of surprised interest in, and curious admiration for, their humanity, which betrays a preconceived expectation that such characteristics ought to have been absent. Consequently, his entire argument hangs upon the premise that his readership would not, at first, share his views and that the typical assumption was that Black humans were subhuman. Although not universally accepted, adherents to phrenology advocated an observable link between physical characteristics of the skull and facial features with psychological characteristics of behaviour and personality. During the 19th century this was used to justify racial distinctions in South Africa that were the precursors of 20th century apartheid by denoting Black individuals as, once again, subhuman.[215] Even less oppressive manifestations of othering, such as the fetishization of the 'noble savage', reduced those individuals to something lesser than the supposedly more developed and intellectually advanced European norm.[216] The history of European colonialism is replete with examples of indigenous peoples being classified as subhuman and therefore suitable for treatment that would have been considered insupportable had they been Caucasian. Equally, the manner in which those attitudes filtered into the trans-Atlantic slave trade requires little further explanation.

[212] Linnaeus himself was heavily influenced by Aristotle's writings: Müller-Wille (2013) 310-313
[213] Waites (2004) 97-98
[214] Blumenbach (1799)
[215] Bank (1996)
[216] Munro (2003); Elingson (2001); Gilroy (2000)

Whilst these comparative examples should not automatically suggest that a similar process occurred with the Roman slave trade, they do make that argument more compelling. Time and again throughout human history, the othering of specific groups has taken a more sinister turn and become a process of dehumanisation that enabled individuals to dissociate from the suffering that they caused. Knowing that humans are capable of viewing others as subhuman encourages the notion that Roman slaves and slaveowners conceivably underwent that same process. To that end, it remains to demonstrate that this hypothesis is indeed supported by the sources for Roman slavery.

3.2.2 Slaves in Roman law

The ways in which slaves are detailed in Roman legislation is a clear indicator of wider social attitudes towards them. Slaves and freedmen are variously specified as having a different legal status from one another, particularly concerning punishment, throughout the *Twelve Tables.*[217] This shows that they had a clearly defined status that separated them from each other and from the rest of Roman society from the earliest days of the Republic.[218] Throughout the Republican period, slaves remained notable by their complete lack of legal protection against their owner.[219] Some later developments in Imperial law did allow for a small amount of legal protection regarding the extent to which a slaveowner could reasonably punish a slave,[220] but this should be viewed within the context of policing a lack of restraint in the owner, rather than from any sort of altruistic motive towards slaves themselves.[221] Any humanitarian basis for such legislation is brought into further doubt by the fact that using torture to extract witness testimony was reserved exclusively for slaves and was never officially abandoned despite the development of these Imperial legal protective measures.[222] The *Senatum Consultum Silanianum* of 10 CE ensured that all the household

[217] *XII Tables*: 5.8, 7.12, 8.3, 8.14, 10.6, 12.2
[218] Gardner (2011) 415
[219] Buckland (1963) 64, Gardner (2011) 432
[220] For limits on 'reasonable chastisement': *Cod. Theod.* 9.12.1.1; *Inst. Iust.* 1.8.2. For criminal slaves being tried by court rather than their owner: *Dig.* 48.2.12.3. For the *lex Petronia: Dig.* 48.8.11.2. For Hadrianic requirement for magisterial permission to execute slaves: *Dig.* 1.6.2, 48.8.4.5. For Antonine provision of religious sanctuary and potential re-sale from an abusive owner: Gai. *Inst.* 1.53.
[221] Gardner (2011) 432 questions the efficacy as well as the 'humanitarian intent' of such laws. Further, the expectation of self-control in freeborn males was widely held, thus the unrestrained and violent punishment of slaves was explicitly used as a negative exemplar: Sen. *Ira*. 3.32.1-2; Gal. *Anim. Affect. Dign.* 4 (5.17k), 4 (5.18-20k). *c.f.* Lenski (2016) 281 for the relation between those expectations and Stoicism.
[222] *P.* 5.16.2; *Dig.* 48.12.1, 5.1.53

slaves were tortured *before* the will of their murdered owner was read out, thereby ensuring that no slave freed by testament would escape that process as newly emancipated citizens.[223] Not everyone agreed with that *SC*, as the riots outside the courthouse after P. Secundus' murder testifies.[224] It is worth emphasising that the elites who both established the *SC* and upheld its ruling, held the subhuman view of slaves, whilst the mob that protested constituted the lower classes, who likely considered slaves in a more humane light.[225] Nevertheless, that only goes to prove that the line between slave and free, which was clearly demarcated in Roman legal thought, was equally visible to the common freeborn citizen.

Roman slaves were the property of their owners and could be sold or exchanged as that owner saw fit.[226] As property, slaves had no legal rights of their own; the few, sporadic items of legislation passed during the Imperial period had little notable effect and slaves only had recourse to the courts in very specific circumstances surrounding freedom or castration.[227] Their dehumanisation is further evidenced by the common use of the term '*puer*' to refer to a slave, or indeed the broader practice of renaming a slave in the same way that one might expect a pet animal to be given a name by its owner.[228] Regular terms of address seen in the works of Plautus, which is replete with examples of slaves being called 'whipping post' or 'human punchbag', objectify the slave on stage as well. The message that was played out on stage - that a slave's humanity need not be acknowledged - would not have been lost upon the audience and is corroborated by these other examples from real life.[229]

Finally, the dissociation of the slaveowners and the objectification of the individual slave that took place was further cemented by the way in which Roman law conceptualised slaves within its legislation. The conventional tripartite division of the law into laws of persons, things (*res*) and actions saw slaves predominantly featuring as *res* – that is: property. When slaves do appear in the laws of persons it is either with relation to their owner, or regarding

[223] Ulp. *Dig.* 29.5.1.19; Gardner (2011) 430.
[224] Tac. *Ann.* 14.42-45
[225] And it was the elite, not the mob, who determined how the majority of slaves lived. See chapter 3.3.3, below.
[226] Lavan (2021) makes an interesting argument for the re-sale of slaves and their lack of perceived 'quality' as merchandise.
[227] *Dig.* 48.8.4; Gardner (2011) 432
[228] Zelnick-Abramovitz (2018) 9-11; Laes (2003) 298,317; Veyne (1987) 79
[229] Richlin (2017) 71-137 comprehensively discusses on-stage objectification of the slave's body.

manumission.[230] In both cases therefore, the person to whom the law relates is not a slave, but is either a slaveowner, or a *libertus.*

Clearly, in the eyes of the law, a slave in Rome was a non-person. This is evident from the wording of the *Twelve Tables* - codified during the early Republic - right through to the Imperial period. In particular, it is worth remembering that much of the evidence for Roman legal thought comes from the *Digest of Justinian*, thus we can infer that this dehumanised view of slaves was maintained by jurists as late as the 6th century CE. Although we must be cautious when using the *Digest* as evidence for specific laws from earlier periods, the choice to include slaves as *res* is corroborated by earlier sources which similarly dehumanise the slave.

3.2.3 A philosophical view

However, some voices from elite slaveowners challenged the dehumanising views of slaves. Seneca's philosophical treatise *De Beneficiis* broadly addresses themes surrounding gratitude and the propensity of humans to do good to one another. He singles out slaves during a section of his discourse, arguing that they are just as capable of doing a benefit towards their owner as a solider is to his general, or a subject to their king.[231] In particular, his dualist beliefs clearly influence his view of slaves when he asserts that:

> *Errat, si quis existimat servitutem in totum hominem descendere. Pars melior eius excepta est. Corpora obnoxia sunt et adscripta dominis; mens quidem sui iuris, quae adeo libera et vaga est, ut ne ab hoc quidem carcere, cui inclusa est, teneri queat, quominus impetu suo utatur et ingentia agat et in infinitum comes caelestibus exeat.*

> It is a mistake for anyone to believe that the condition of slavery penetrates into the whole being of a man. The better part of him is exempt. Only the body is at the mercy and disposition of a master; but the mind is its own master, and is so free and unshackled that not even this prison of the body, in

[230] Gardner (2011) 415; Rawson (2003) 73-74
[231] Sen. *Ben.* 3.18

> which it is confined, can restrain it from using its own powers, following mighty aims, and escaping into the infinite to keep company with the stars.[232]

Clearly, Seneca is at pains to emphasise the humanity of slaves, but the wider context for his argument is whether or not a slave is capable of behaving benevolently towards his owner:

> *Quamquam quaeritur a quibusdam, sicut ab Hecatone, an beneficium dare servus domino possit.*
>
> Yet it is asked by some, such as Hecaton, whether a slave is able to do a kindness for its master.[233]

Therefore, despite stating that slaves have an essential and untouchable human nature, Seneca only does so within the bounds of potentiality. It is only through benevolent actions towards their owners that slaves could demonstrate their human capacity. The logical extension of that position is that slaves who do *not* demonstrate that human capacity remain subhuman. However, Seneca rather naively goes on to support his position by claiming that their human, unshackled mind meant that slaves would not carry out orders from their masters that were hostile to the state (*contra rem publicam imperata non facient*) or turn their hands to criminal activities (*nulli sceleri manus commodabunt*).[234] This rather conveniently avoids the problem of slave rebellions, but even if those were to be discounted, examples of both such transgressive behaviours can be found in a number of sources. Appian notes a considerable number of instances where slaves help their proscribed owners to avoid the hunters (who, acting on state orders, were effectively 'the law')[235] and securing the support of slaves was a primary aim of Catiline's in order to destabilise the city.[236] Even within Seneca's own lifetime, slaves were implicated in the poisoning of the emperor Claudius, though acting upon the orders of his political rivals.[237] Doubtless there are others, but these few cases exemplify

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[232] Sen. *Ben.* 3.20
[233] Sen. *Ben.* 3.18
[234] Sen. *Ben.* 3.20
[235] App. *BC.* 4.36-47 has a number of examples that are considered in more detail in chapter 4.4.2.
[236] Sal. *Cat.* 24. In any case, the chances that no slave was ever present during the meetings of the conspirators is most unlikely.
[237] Suet. *Cl.* 44

that slave behaviour often runs contrary to Seneca's beliefs concerning the unshackled mind and its loyalty towards state security.

Aside from these more detailed considerations, there remains the question of how representative Seneca's views actually were in relation to other slaveowners.[238] He constructs this section of his treatise as an argument against the views of, amongst others, the earlier Stoic thinker Hecaton of Rhodes. The very fact that these views must take the form of a counter argument implies that Seneca's belief in the humanity of slaves was not a widely held one, even by his fellow Stoics. Although little is known about Hecaton of Rhodes, Cicero writes that he was a pupil of Panaetius, thus we know that he was active around the end of the 2nd century BCE.[239] Consequently, the views held by Hecaton and the other, unspecified 'some people' (*quibusdam*), that doubt whether a slave could have the humanity required to act benevolently towards their owner, must have been present in philosophical discourse for a considerable length of time – at least 160 years - prior to Seneca writing *De Beneficiis*.[240]

Therefore, despite his own philosophical position on the matter, it can be assumed that for the majority of Romans in elite society for whom Seneca was writing, slaves were *not* viewed as having human capacities that were equivalent to those of freeborn Romans.[241] Valerius Maximus corroborates this point. He was roughly a contemporary of Seneca's and his only extant work, *Facta et Dicta Memorabilia,* notes that although slaves could demonstrate loyalty, due to their inherent nature it was especially praiseworthy when they did so (*minus exspectatam hoc laudabiliorem*).[242] An alternative reading of both Seneca and Valerius Maximus would be that their emphasis on the human potential of slaves' behaviour came from a position of insecurity that had previously not been experienced by the elite of Rome. The establishment of Imperial monarchy and the descent of the emperors into seemingly ever more despotic rule during the 1st century CE led to something of an existential crisis in elite

[238] Aristotle's theory of natural slavery (*Pol.* 1254a17-b39) continued to influence the views of most slaveowners well into the Imperial period, *c.f.* Bradley (2012) 59-60.
[239] Cic. *Off.* 3.89
[240] Sen. *Ep.* 81, written in 64CE, refers to the recent publication of *De Beneficiis,* whilst Panaetius reportedly died around 109BCE.
[241] Nor indeed did it prevent Seneca from owning slaves himself; at no point does he take an abolitionist stance in his writings.
[242] *V.Max* 6.8

thinking, as they suddenly found themselves subject to a supreme authority in much the same way that slaves were held under their owners.[243] If that were indeed to have been the case, then even these two elite opinions that challenged the wider consensus on slaves' humanity must be read with a dose of scepticism.

3.2.4 - The agronomist view

If slaves were considered to lack humanity, then it becomes easier to objectify and animalise them throughout their daily lives. Possibly the most explicit sources for that process comes from the agronomists. Agrarian writers such as Cato and Varro offer a considerable amount of detail on the way in which slaves should be treated whilst working on a farm. Naturally, these instructions are also useful sources of information on the views held by slaveowners concerning the nature of their slaves. Cato's recommendations regarding the role of the overseer is illuminating in the way that it demonstrates how much control was exerted on the overseer's behaviour.[244] Even a supposedly trustworthy slave, one who had earned a position of relative authority, was clearly expected to misbehave unless clear boundaries were set that limited their behaviour. In a relatively short passage on the farm overseers (*vilicii*), Cato demonstrates a deep mistrust of those individuals.[245] He emphasises twice the possibility that one might go wandering off[246] and further highlights the risks of theft,[247] drinking,[248] insubordination[249] and personal religious observance.[250] It is unlikely that Cato was promoting slaves to the position of *vilicus* who had a track record of untrustworthiness and poor performance, so it is reasonable to assume that he considered these characteristics to be inherent in slaves more broadly. Even a slave who had excelled themselves and risen to that position of authority was still base and untrustworthy by their very nature. Furthermore, this is a list of commands and limitations on the behaviour of the *overseer*. By virtue of holding

[243] It also coincides with the adoption of Stoicism as a dominant philosophy for some of the educated Roman elite. This would go some way to account for Seneca's focus on the humanity of slaves. The impact of Stoicism on changing Roman thought is discussed in more detail in chapter 6.1. See also Veyne (2003) 7-8 for discussion on the similarities between the emperor's absolute power over the elite and that of a master's over a slave.
[244] Cato *Agr.* 5
[245] Whilst a *vilicus* was not by definition a slave, the role was typically carried out by slaves: Hunt (2010).
[246] Cato *Agr.* 5.2; 5.5
[247] Cato *Agr.* 5.1
[248] Cato *Agr.* 5.2
[249] Cato *Agr.* 5.2-3
[250] Cato *Agr.* 5.3; 5.4. Presumably this is in relation to prayers and rituals that might distract the *vilicus* from the task at hand, but it remains another example of how slaves were denied any opportunity for self-expression – even if that were only to the gods.

that position, there would have been nobody present to enforce Cato's rules at the point at which they might have been broken by the *vilicus*. As such, this reads as a list of behavioural expectations held by Cato that views even his more capable slaves in a decidedly dim light. Meanwhile, the 'ordinary' slaves who were set to work on the farms are seen as being no better than animals. They require constant oversight and only learn by mimicking the example of good behaviour set by the *vilicus*.[251] In his writing, Cato juxtaposes his slaves with the domesticated animals and livestock.[252] To his mind, slaves perform a similar role and behave in a similar way to that of other animals.

Varro maintains a similar tenet and explicitly refers to slaves as articulate instruments (*instrumenti genus vocale*).[253] The dehumanisation continues in his description of the best way to treat slaves on the farm, notably associating them with herd animals in a similar manner to Cato.[254] In particular, despite initially appearing to espouse moderation in the treatment of slaves – especially with regards to punishment – that is only ever advocated with a view to ensuring increased productivity, or so that they might accept a whipping when it *is* required.[255] Good treatment of slaves is not espoused for altruistic motivations, nor in recognition of their humanity. This is simply about maximising a slave's productivity which, taken alongside the animalistic manner in which reproduction and sexual relationships between slaves are discussed,[256] contributes to the construction of the slave as less-than-human in the mind of Varro's readership.

It is worth noting at this juncture that the later agrarian text written by Columella follows Varro's recommendations for the treatment of slaves closely. In particular, the same idea that benevolence should be co-opted in order to ensure a more productive slave is particularly apparent. Not only did this level of treatment result from the belief that slaves were deficient as human beings, it also represents a high level of coercive control through the implicit threat

[251] Cato *Agr.* 5.2; 5.5
[252] 56-59 lists the optimal food and clothing rations for each slave, placing slaves after cattle but before oxen, which indicates that they all occupied a similar position of importance. See also 5.5-6.
[253] Varro *Rust.* 1.17.1-3. The connotations with Aristotle's category for slaves as 'thinking tools' are clear. Arist. *Pol.* 1253b
[254] Varro *Rust.* 2.1.26
[255] Varro *Rust.* 1.17.7
[256] Varro *Rust.* 2.10.6-10

that such benevolence could be taken away at will by the owner.[257] This kind of controlled, controlling benevolence bears a close similarity with the 'small kindnesses' displayed by hostage takers towards their victims in cases of Stockholm Syndrome and in other modern cases of coercive control such as learned helplessness.[258] However, regardless of the deeper psychological workings, the fact remains that, of the three main agrarian works that are extant, each one takes the explicit viewpoint that slaves are on par with the animals of the farm. This should not imply that slaves lacked capabilities that are unique to human beings (such as the ability to read and count). However, those abilities were the result of a slave being human in its most basic, animal manifestation.

3.2.5 - Urban views

The similarities between those three elite men's views on what equates to slave husbandry are unsurprising – Varro explicitly refers to Cato as a source for his own work[259] and Columella clearly inherits those same attitudes. The similarity between all three writers, spanning from the mid Republic into the Imperial period, indicates that these views were relatively ubiquitous in Roman agrarian thought. Further, slaves continued to be legally defined as items of equipment as late as Ulpian's *Digest.*[260] Later, more philosophical approaches to the idea of slave humanity, suggest a more empathetic standpoint but appear to be exceptional in that regard. As such, Seneca's dualistic belief in a slave's untouchable spirit should not be viewed as the *status quo* in 1st century CE thinking. Two further examples of slave-ownership, from Pliny and Cicero, suggest that the dehumanised view of slaves that has thus far been shown to be prevalent in the sources, was also adopted in the urban environment in both a Republican and Imperial context.

[257] My thanks to Joseph Howley for suggesting this interpretation.
[258] Cantor & Price (2007) 379. Although Stockholm syndrome is less directly applicable to cases of Roman slavery due to the requirement that the hostage has contact with no-one other than their captor, learned helplessness is discussed in more detail in chapter 4.4.
[259] Varro *Rust.* 1.18.1-8. Whilst Cato is often typecast by modern readers as overly strict and curmudgeonly, his influence on Varro perhaps indicates that he was not viewed as critically in antiquity.
[260] Ulp. *Dig.* 33.7.12

Pliny gives an illuminating account of the senator Larcius Macedo, who was murdered by his slaves while he was bathing, in retaliation for his cruel treatment of them.[261] Despite the date for this account coming after Seneca's musings on the human potential of slaves, it still provides evidence for the total objectification of the slave in question. The initial murder and its (presumed) motive supports the notion that slaves of wealthy owners were no more protected from harm than those of the less well-off, nor that the life of an urban slave was notably less miserable than of those in agricultural settings. However, it is Pliny's short afterthought on the murder that is of most interest here. He writes that at an earlier date, Macedo suffered another misfortune whilst bathing. He was visiting the public baths and his slave had lightly touched an equestrian to ask him to make way for Macedo. The equestrian was insulted at being touched by the slave, but in response he turned round and hit Macedo for this insult. Pliny does not go into more detail about the event, but it is unclear whether the equestrian knew that Macedo was the owner of the slave that had touched him.

The incident involves some complicating factors that require further consideration. Firstly, this is an example where a slave was used as an extension of his owner. For those wealthy enough to afford them, it was commonplace to have slaves acting as a physical 'cushion' between free individuals; the slaves would clear a way through the crowded urban environment for their owner, thereby avoiding the insult of having freeborn individuals having to manhandle one another out of the way.[262] For this reason, the equestrian at the baths might ordinarily have been expected to hit the *slave* in retaliation, not Macedo, given that the point in using a slave to clear the way was that he endured the physical jostling on his owner's behalf. The fact that the equestrian did not behave as expected, by hitting Macedo rather than the slave, is put forward by Pliny as being a portent (*ominosa res*) of Macedo's later murder at the hands of his slaves; the baths become the setting of successive assaults upon Macedo – the first time as a seemingly random insult, the second as his intentional murder.

[261] Plin. *Ep.* 3.14. Notably, Pliny uses this as evidence for the inherent brutality of slaves; they are not rational humans in the same way that slaveowners are.
[262] Fitzgerald (2000) 57-58. For similar uses of slaves as prosthetic extensions of their owners' bodies see Draycott (2018) 9; Blake (2012).

However, William Fitzgerald further suggests that the assault by the equestrian foreshadowed Macedo's murder not only by its location, but also by signalling the 'catastrophic collapse of the barrier between master and slave' that could ordinarily be relied upon.[263] This interpretation works on the understanding that Pliny (and his audience) would have expected the *slave* to have been hit under such circumstances and that hitting Macedo was an ill-fated coincidence. Therefore, even if this was an accidental assault upon Macedo, it attests to the violence that could be a feature of everyday life for an urban slave.

Conversely, Kathryn Williams attributes Macedo's servile ancestry as a possible reason for why the equestrian felt able to assault a senator so freely.[264] That position relies on the idea that Macedo would have been personally recognisable to the equestrian, as his state of undress whilst bathing would have removed any outwardly identifying features that might have been displayed through clothing or jewellery; the only way the equestrian could have known that he was hitting Macedo would have been through recognising his face. If we are to accept that interpretation, though, it would mean that the assault on Macedo by the equestrian was targeted, and that it cannot attribute '*ominosa*' to the accidental nature of the assault. However, it could see '*ominosa*' as referring to Macedo's inability to distance himself from his servile ancestry. Pliny stresses at the beginning of his letter that Macedo's cruelty as a slaveowner arose from a desire to distance himself from his father's servile past. Arguably, then, it is indeed ominous that his ancestry was the cause of the first assault by the equestrian, but that his own cruel behaviour in attempting to distance himself from that ancestry ultimately resulted in his death.[265]

Regardless of which interpretation appears more convincing, both offer the same conclusion concerning the experience of urban slaves. Macedo was using his slave as a tool - an extension of his own self - to make way for him in the bathhouse in the same way as was done in the urban environment more generally. Equally, irrespective of why it did not happen in this specific instance, the equestrian who reacted violently would ordinarily have been expected to have hit the slave, not his owner. As such, both versions of the event provide

[263] Fitzgerald (2000) 58
[264] Macedo was the son of a freedman: Williams (2006) 420.
[265] One can only speculate, but given Macedo's reputation for cruelty towards his slaves, it would seem unlikely that the slave responsible for instigating the incident in the bathhouse got off scot-free.

evidence for a slave being dehumanised and abused in the urban environment in much the same way as in the rural context that has been discussed above.

One final point of note in that regard relates to Cicero, who is conspicuous in his lack of discussion about any slave's humanity other than his one specially favoured freedman Tiro.[266] Brent D. Shaw's analysis of the changing nature of slavery over the course of the Republican period highlights that, aside from Cicero's well-documented love for his freedman Tiro, his other slaves and freedmen were kept remote in his consideration and were typically grouped together in his view as 'invisible persons'.[267] Shaw's argument on the matter is largely informed by Alain Daubigney's earlier work on Cicero's slave ownership, which highlights the comparative lack of slaves mentioned in his writings.[268] However, if Shaw's conclusions are to be accepted, then it suggests that although Cicero viewed Tiro with a considerable amount of affection, this was the exception that proved the rule whereby in Cicero's household, slaves were seen as lacking in humanity.

3.2.6 - Alternative views: the *palliata*

Taken together, the range of sources that have been discussed thus far have demonstrated that the views of elite Roman slaveowners in both legal and philosophical discourse suggest the total dehumanisation of the slave in Roman thought. This is supported by more practical sources such as the evidence for managing slaves on the farm and the way in which slaves were treated by slaveowners in the urban environment. In sum: these sources, which cover both Republican and Imperial Rome, clearly depict slaveowners treating their slaves as subhuman. This clearly aligns with the tradition of othering and animalising subjugated people that is observable throughout human history and that was set out earlier.[269] In turn, this supports the hypothetical model of a dehumanised invisible slave that was proposed at beginning of this chapter.[270]

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[266] Demonstrating such an emotional attachment to one (ex)slave, whilst failing to appreciate the humanity of any others perhaps indicates that Tiro was viewed as more of a loving pet than a human partner.
[267] Shaw (2014) 206.
[268] Daubigney (1976) 37-38. That is not to say that Cicero does not discuss slavery, merely that when he does so, he is entirely indifferent about a slave's worth as anything other than property. See for example Cic. *Q.Fr* 1.24
[269] See chapter 3.2.1.
[270] See chapter 3.1.

The only sources that demonstrate a true appreciation of the humanity that slaves possessed - obvious as that may be to a modern audience – are the fictional depictions written by Plautus. Despite being exaggerated for comedic purposes, the characters on stage demonstrate the full range of human emotions. Perhaps unsurprisingly, there is a high incidence of slaves portraying fear, pain, sexual subservience and the desire for freedom, but we also see slaves disagree with one another and demonstrate reasoning, loyalty, a desire for companionship, the ability to make complex plans and a host of other traits that demonstrate the deep humanity of their character. Plautus depicts slaves as human because he knew them to be just that.[271] The stark difference between Plautine depictions of slaves compared with writers from an elite background is testament to a more genuine, empathetic understanding of who slaves were, undoubtedly due to Plautus belonging to the lowest end of the social scale himself.[272]

Amy Richlin's work on the subject is extensive and was highlighted in chapter 1.[273] In particular, her observations regarding the two-tier dialogue between stage performers and the audience of slaves/slaveowners respectively highlights the manner in which Plautine drama can be a useful source of information for real-world attitudes. Equally, Roberta Stewart notes that even during the Republic, some individuals were able to recognise their own reality in the comedies that caricatured them.[274] This idea of a comic mirror is corroborated by Cicero who notes that 'in truth, I think that these things are invented by poets in order that we may see our manners sketched under the character of strangers, and the image of our daily life represented under the guise of fiction'.[275]

That is not to say that Plautine drama offers wholly positive depictions of slave characters. Notably, the prevalence of manumission, as an idea, points to the deeply held desire of slaves to escape their situation, thus indicating the misery of that reality. Such instances range from

[271] Gel. *NA.* 170 suggests that Plautus spent some time as a slave in the mills.
[272] The possibility that the Plautine corpus is not the work of one hand should not alter this view. Whether Plautus was one man or many, the nature of slave theatre and working with comic actors indicates someone operating at the bottom of Republican society.
[273] Richlin (2017)
[274] Stewart (2012) 18
[275] Cic. *S. Rosc*. 47

slaves making clear declarations of hope for freedom, attempting to bargain with their owner, trying to make enough money to buy their freedom and with some of the luckiest achieving that aim.[276] Further, slave characters on-stage often refer to themselves in animalistic terms[277] and the use of dehumanising name-calling is prolific.[278] This may be a result of the playwright or actors internalising the subhuman associations that were so prevalent in elite discourse, or it could have simply been that they were writing intentionally for their elite audience.[279] What is clear, though, is that it is only the voices from the lower end of the social spectrum that affords any sort of humanity to slaves.

This alternative view implies the existence of a division between elite and lower-class attitudes towards slaves as individuals. Indeed, this was alluded to earlier, when discussing the riots outside the courthouse after Pedanius Secundius' entire household of slaves were sentenced to death after his murder.[280] Based on the sources available, whilst lower-class views understood slaves as human beings, the elite viewed them either as objects, or more akin to animals or pets. However, as shall be explained in due course, whilst the view from below might reflect how 'ordinary' Romans considered slaves in their society, it was the opinions of the elite that largely shaped those slaves' lives and determined their realities.

3.3 Challenges to the hypothesis

The foregoing discussion has set out the hypothesis that will be adopted throughout this work and that informs how an invisible slave can be conceptualised, based on the available sources for slavery. That model is one where the slave was dehumanised, animalised and thus marginalised in society. This adheres closely to Patterson's theory of social death, which itself is supported by Kağıtçıbaşı's more recent work on social relatedness and the impact that such marginalisation has on an individual's mental health.

[276] Richlin (2017) 418-434
[277] Richlin (2018) 63 n.26 provides a list of instances where slaves refer to their skin as animal hide.
[278] Starks (2000); Leigh (2004) 47-56
[279] Although, the cognitive dissonance that must have occurred whilst scripting dehumanising attitudes that had not been internalised by the writer remains to be fully considered.
[280] See chapter 3.2.2, p60.

The ancient sources that have been considered thus far support this hypothesis and demonstrate where that is observable in Roman thought. However, some sources provide evidence for specific types of slavery or for experiences that were similar to slavery, which must now be considered in more detail in order to test whether they undermine this model for an invisible slave.

3.3.1 -Material conditions: the freeborn poor *versus* slaves of the wealthy

It will first be helpful to consider the plight of freeborn individuals who experienced similar living conditions to slaves whilst still retaining their citizen status. This will establish whether the trauma that slaves suffered resulted specifically from their enslavement, or from more generally adverse living conditions which they suffered alongside the poorest of freeborn society.

Despite not being enslaved members of society, arguably much of the *proletarii* experienced living conditions that were on a par with some slaves through poverty, overcrowding and the lack of means to improve one's circumstances.[281] Undoubtedly such hardships would have taken their toll and may also have had a similar impact upon an individual's mental health. However, those same *proletarii* still occupied a place within Roman society that elevated their socially recognised worth above that of a slave.

Kağıtçıbaşı's axes for plotting the related autonomy of an individual within a society, and how that influences their self-identity, delineates that difference clearly.[282] Even if all other aspects of a slave's and a *proletarius'* situation were to be the same (or even generally similar), the citizen status of a *proletarius* placed them higher on the 'relatedness' axis than the slave. That axis reflects an individual's sense of belonging to a wider culture and has been directly associated with mental health outcomes and universal human behaviour.[283] As well

[281] Holleran (2011) 169-176 and *passim.* Courrier (2017)'s analysis of the *plebs frumentaria* and water supply leads him to conclude that many *proletarii* were better off than the prevailing scholarly approach suggests (pp110-113). Notably, and in agreement with my own position, the idea of civic identity and its benefits runs strongly throughout Courrier's discussion and he specifically argues against the notion that *plebs* were a deracinated population (p117).
[282] Chapter 2.2.1.1
[283] Kağıtçıbaşı (2011) 289

as the need for relatedness representing a human universal, the correlation between Kağıtçıbaşı's observations and Patterson's theories on social death are plain to see, thus applying her work on psychology to ancient slavery does not require a particularly significant leap of the imagination. Consequently, this suggests that the citizen status of a *proletarius* protected them from experiencing the psychological trauma that a slave in otherwise similar circumstances did.[284]

These differences were not merely defined by abstract processes of identity construction that would not have been understood by the contemporary individual; they were clearly set out within the context of Roman law, as was highlighted earlier. Such a clear awareness of the distinction between freeborn and slave raises some interesting questions regarding 'high-status' slaves. Particularly in relation to the *proletarii*, is it possible that the relative material comfort that slaves such as the *familia Caesaris*[285] and personal attendants to high-ranking equestrians experienced, alleviated the more debilitating aspects of their subjugation?

Taking that view risks conflating the status of the slave with the status of their owner. Although it is possible that an individual slave who was close to a wealthy owner could have been more comfortable than that of an agricultural slave - even more so those in the mills or the mines - there remain fundamental abuses that they all shared. Deracination and a lack of autonomy was an abuse that was common to all slaves, regardless of their role or the status of their owner. Even slaves who were allowed to travel and conduct business on behalf of their owner could only do so within the limits of that permission. Arguably then, despite the potential for material comfort that might have accompanied being close to a wealthy owner, this was simply a more salubrious version of the same dehumanising process experienced by other 'less fortunate' slaves.

[284] That is not to say that the mental health of a *proletarius* was unaffected by their conditions, but that slaves were affected in ways that were specific to their status as slaves – something which *proletarii* did not experience.

[285] Weaver (1964) offers a useful overview of this specific group of privileged slaves, although there is a clear need for modern scholarship to re-visit the subject.

In any case, being the slave of a high-status owner did not provide one with extra protection from abuse by that owner. Galen's account of the emperor Hadrian using a *stylus* to poke out the eye of his slave in a fit of anger shows just how vulnerable high-status slaves continued to be. Although the story is probably apocryphal, [286] surely if Galen chose the emperor as the subject of his cautionary tale, his intention was to say that, if such uncontrolled outbursts of aggression could be displayed by the emperor, then presumably *anybody* of high-status could act in a similar reckless haste. Likewise, Vedius Pollio was perfectly happy to visit the most gruesome form of execution upon his slaves as punishment, even in the presence of an esteemed guest such as Augustus.[287] Pollio – an obscenely wealthy and egregiously temperamental equestrian - became notorious for allegedly feeding slaves who had displeased him to a tank of Moray eels that he kept for that specific purpose.[288] The execution that was to occur in the presence of Augustus is typically recounted in criticism of Pollio's temperament; his excessive cruelty was duly punished by the magnanimous emperor, who freed the slave in question. Again, though, it is probable that Pollio was not as bad as the sources make him out to be. His villainous depiction becomes progressively more theatrical the further away from his own lifetime each account was written and the later emphasis on his freedman ancestry is telling. But regardless of their truthfulness, both of these stories were used as examples of an aggressive lack of self-control on the part of wealthy and high-status slaveowners. Clearly, owners did lash out in anger from time to time, and even if these accounts only represent the shocking behaviour of a 'bad' slaveowner, it is most unlikely that Hadrian and Pollio were the only two to have existed.[289]

The wealth of an individual slaveowner was clearly no guarantee of better conditions for their slaves. In a similar manner, even though the poorest of freeborn citizens - the *proletarii* – endured material poverty and adversity throughout their daily lives that was on a par with the conditions that many slaves experienced, they enjoyed a citizen status that provided them

[286] Mattern (2008) 40

[287] Ovid, the only source who was a contemporary of Pollio's, highlights the excessive luxury of his palace, with no detail on his cruelty or sadistic tendencies: Ov. *Fast.* 6.637-648. Later sources include Plin. *HN.* 9.78; Sen. *Clem.* 1.18, *Ira.* 3.40.2; *Dio.* 54,23

[288] *Murena* is often erroneously translated as 'lamprey' in the accounts that detail Pollio's story, rather than 'Moray eel'. The possibility that Morays could be reliably kept for such a purpose is unlikely, but it is simply not possible in the case of lampreys. My thanks to Colin Adams and John Hume, whose expertise in marine biology was most helpful in this matter.

[289] Hopkins (1993) 8, arrives at a similar conclusion concerning the *Life of Aesop*.

with autonomy and social relatedness. This offered a means of coping with such adversity that was denied to slaves. That is not to say that *proletarii* did not suffer, but it is to say that slaves were abused and dehumanised in a manner that was both unique to slaves and common to all slaves.

3.3.2 Voluntary enslavement

3.3.2.1 -Debt slavery and the abolition of *nexum*

One complication for the straightforward acceptance of the dehumanised model for a hypothetical slave could be the capacity within Roman law for fathers to temporarily sell their children into slavery to pay off a debt. The legal provision for this dates back to the *Twelve Tables,* thus it belongs to the earliest of codified Roman legislation.[290] It remains included in the *Institutiones* of Gaius,[291] which might at first indicate that the practice continued throughout the Republic and early Principate. However, Livy notes that debt bondage (*nexum*) was outlawed in 326 BCE after the brutal treatment of Gaius Publilius – a freeborn citizen boy sold into slavery to pay off his father's debts.[292] Interestingly, the slaveowner/money-lender Lucius Papirius is reported as treating Publilius in a manner that is wholly in keeping with the way other slaves were treated. Papirius attempted to sexually abuse the boy and, when the boy refused to acquiesce, flogged him. The very fact that the boy felt capable of refusing the sexual advances of his owner indicates that he had a different expectation of treatment during his enslavement from that which he might have seen other slaves suffer. Furthermore, when those expectations were not met (and he is abused, flogged and treated like any other slave could be) he made a public protest which was so effective that a crowd lobbied the consuls and the law surrounding *nexum* was changed forthwith.

The implications of this episode point to the conclusion that 'slaves' who were bound by *nexum* were not typically viewed in the same manner as individuals who were enslaved by other means. Naturally, there would be those like L. Papirius who might try to take advantage of the situation to carry out their own abusive desires, but the reactions of Publilius and the

[290] *XII tables* 4.2
[291] Gai. *Inst.* 1.132
[292] *Liv.* 8.28

crowd of protestors (and indeed the consuls who found in favour of the crowd) indicates that Papirius' behaviour towards the boy was not considered socially acceptable.[293] This highlights a fundamental difference between debt-bondage and other slaveries. Individuals bound by *nexum* could expect a level of dignity that was not afforded to other slaves and they could appeal to the authorities and to popular opinion to garner support in upholding that dignity. In short, they maintained a sense of civic rights.

As well as having an expectation surrounding the level of dignity they would be afforded during their bondage, individuals bound by *nexum* also had an expectation of freedom and subsequent return to status that was not available to other slaves. Despite the supposed abolition of the *nexum* in the 4th century BCE, legislation in the *Institutiones* continues to cast the wholescale adoption of that change in the law into some doubt.[294] Quintilian, writing around four centuries later, goes to some lengths to differentiate between a slave and a person who is enslaved for debt bondage.[295] The fact that he writes about this at all indicates that the practice continued to be accepted in wider society, even within the discourse of the elite Imperial class. Nevertheless, one of the pivotal features in Quintilian's reasoning is the nature of the individual after manumission:

> *Quae finitio, etiam si distat aliquo, nisi tamen propriis et differentibus adiuvatur, inanis est. [Dicet enim adversarius servire eum servitutem aut eo iure quo servum.] Videamus ergo propria et differentia, quae libro quinto leviter in transitu attigeram. Servus cum manu mittitur fit libertinus, addictus recepta libertate ingenuus: servus invito domino libertatem non consequetur, <addictus vel invito solvendo consequetur:> ad servum nulla lex pertinet, addictus legem habet: propria liberi, quod nemo habet nisi liber, praenomen nomen cognomen tribus; habet haec addictus.*

[293] Gardner (2011) 436 suggests that the likely reason for why castrating slaves was intermittently banned, was due to the long-term implications for the integrity of the male citizen body should those slaves have been freed at a later stage. This 'longer view' may have implications for why the even-handed treatment of debt-slaves was considered more important.
[294] This would not be the only time that Roman legal reform surrounding slavery turned out to be unsuccessful. The castration of slaves was outlawed at least 3 times and is discussed in more detail in chapter 5.2.6.
[295] Quint. *Inst.* 7.5.27; *Dec. Min.* 311

> For the opponent will say that the person in question is actually serving as a slave or is legally in a state of servitude. We must therefore look for properties and differences, to which in passing I devoted a brief discussion in my fifth book. A slave when manumitted becomes a freedman: a man who is assigned for debt becomes a free man on the restoration of his liberty. A slave cannot acquire his freedom without the consent of his master: a man assigned for debt can acquire it by paying his debt without the consent of his master being necessary. A slave is outside the law; a man assigned for debt is under the law. Turning to properties, we may note the following which are possessed by none save the free, the three names (*praenomen, nomen* and *cognomen*) and membership of a tribe, all of which are possessed by the man assigned for debt.[296]

In this passage, Quintilian is clear that prior to their subjugation, the status of the individual bound by *nexum* created a specific set of circumstances that elevated that individual above the status of a regular slave. Effectively, he is arguing that there is an inherent or natural difference between citizens who are reduced to debt-slavery and non-citizens who are reduced to other forms of slavery. This speaks to the fundamental incompatibility of citizenship and servitude in Roman thought.[297] It is those specific features that render debt slavery unrepresentative of a more typical slave experience, thus it can be disregarded when constructing a hypothetical model for slavery.

3.3.2.2 - Voluntary *versus* enslaved gladiators

There was one other, unique, instance in which an individual could voluntarily become enslaved and which requires further discussion: that of voluntary gladiators. Gladiators present an altogether different situation as they were, on the one hand, condemned and despised members of the lowest social standing; 'a mixture of criminals, prisoners of war and unruly slaves who were essentially ostracised from the Roman order.'[298] Yet on the other hand, they were lauded as a living embodiment of Roman martial valour and enjoyed a celebrity status that came with that reputation.[299] Indeed, it has been argued that gladiatorial combat was symbolic of Roman military success due to the fact that most of the contestants

[296] Quint. *Inst.* 7.5.27
[297] Beard (2018), Coleman (1990)
[298] Flaig (2007) 84
[299] Beard (2018)

were prisoners of war[300] (i.e. slaves) and were often involved in military re-enactments where the 'arms of all people conquered by Rome could be found in the arena aside from the standard gladiatorial set.'[301] However, this position does not adequately take into account the number of freeborn volunteers who signed up for the arena.

Voluntary contestants were problematic; despite cultural contempt for debasing oneself in the arena, the glory of the combat continued to compel upper class Romans to volunteer. Tacitus makes a clear social commentary on the practice during the reign of Vitellius:

> *Cautum severe ne equites Romani ludo et harena polluerentur. Priores id principes pecunia et saepius vi perpulerant, ac pleraque municipia et coloniae aemulabantur corruptissimum quemque adulescentium pretio inlicere.*

> The Roman knights were forbidden, under severe penalties, to degrade themselves by appearing in public entertainments or in the arena. Former emperors had encouraged the practice by bribes, or more frequently enforced it by compulsion, and many of the towns and colonies had vied with each other in enticing the most corrupt young men to compete for money.[302]

Seemingly, by attempting to reconcile the degrading behaviour of supposedly upstanding Roman citizens with wider moral standards, Tacitus blames previous bribery or duress[303] rather than admit to simple free willed desire for such behaviour in Roman citizens. However, Suetonius also notes that some years earlier during the reign of Tiberius a similar sanction existed:

> *ex iuventute utriusque ordinis profligatissimus quisque, quominus in opera scaenae harenaeque edenda senatus consulto teneretur, famosi iudicii notam sponte subibant.*

[300] Flaig (2007) 85
[301] Auguet (1972) 59. See also Coleman (1990).
[302] Tac. *Hist.* 2.62
[303] Tac. *Ann.* 14.14, shows that he considers these two motivations to be essentially the same: 'cash from one who can command has the force of necessity'

> The most dissolute youngsters from both the senatorial and equestrian orders voluntarily submitted to legal infamy in order to appear in the theatre and arena, which was restricted by senatorial decree.[304]

Clearly the draw of the arena was too powerful for legislation to prevent freeborn citizens from competing. Even Augustus, whom Suetonius holds up as the epitome of the Roman virtue, ultimately permitted the practice in 'a concession which may surprise some people'[305] because prohibition was ineffective, with some estimates claiming up to half of all gladiators were in fact freeborn.[306] The fame and celebrity that could accompany success in the arena was not doubt an overarching incentive for many freeborn gladiators.[307] However, it is important to remember that a high price was paid by volunteers for the arena: they lost their civic rights and suffered *infamia*.[308] They lost their legal status in a similar way to Roman soldiers who became enslaved during war. As Romans who were captured in battle ceased to be citizens and were considered legally dead, so too did volunteer gladiators suffer the same fate. Once committed to the arena, they were viewed in the same way as all the other slaves therein.

That view was not entirely divorced from the process of dehumanisation that most slaves did undergo, ultimately being seen as merely animals or tools. Gladiatorial combats were representations of honour and military *virtus*,[309] but they were played out in a fantastical setting that was not seen as being truly 'real'.[310] Various technical mechanisms including *sparsiones* (water sprays scented with saffron), mechanically distributed gifts, music and theatrical scenery created an environment that beguiled the senses with colour, scent and

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[304] Suet. *Tib.* 35
[305] Dio Cass. 56.25; Suet. *Aug* 43, notes that eventually a senatorial decree prevented Augustus from employing knights in his own *munera.* Presumably this was the legislation in force during the reign of Tiberius.
[306] Barton (1993) 14
[307] Space will not allow for a more in-depth analysis of this slavery-adjacent phenomenon. However, future research on the subject might reveal some interesting conclusions regarding self-destructive self-gratification exhibited by elite Roman males who were exhibiting a conscious rejection of (often unattainable) social and professional expectations of success.
[308] Flaig (2007) 84. *Infamia* was a broad term that encompassed a range of social and civic degradations of status – *c.f.* Vermote (2016) 154. Its relevance to the current argument is that these individuals voluntarily reduced their status to being on a par with other gladiators who *were* slaves.
[309] Flaig (2007) 85
[310] Beard (2018), Coleman (1990)

sound.[311] Against this backdrop, the gladiator ceased to be an individual and instead became a more abstract representation of Roman values. Viewing the characters of the arena as divorced from reality aided in the creation of an almost mythological representation of martial skill for the spectators; the contestants were removed from the reality of their condition and transformed into a personification of Roman martial prowess.[312]

It was that personification which enabled some of the more successful gladiators to enjoy an elevated status of relative fame. However, that fame and desirability belonged to the 'gladiator', not to the slave beneath the costume. Whilst the example set by famous gladiators might have contributed to the draw of glory won in the arena, tempting some freeborn citizens to reject their privileged status in pursuit of intoxicating fame, this was not the reality for most. The existence of voluntary gladiators should not detract from the horrific reality of gladiatorial life for the vast majority of slaves who found themselves in those circumstances. Simple logic dictates that every 'star' gladiator must have left a sizeable number of defeated opponents in their wake for them to have attained their elevated status. It is reasonable to assume that such stars were not typical of the gladiatorial demographic, hence their fame. Consequently, such individuals should not be seen as representative of the typical experience of slaves destined for the arena. Those slaves suffered dehumanising and brutal treatment at the hands of their owners in much the same way as did slaves in the fields or the home. Evidence for how those individuals felt about their experience is scant. However, the instigators of the Spartacus rebellion were a band of gladiators, indicating that they, at least, were not content to exchange their liberty for a shot at sporting glory. Likewise, Seneca details three separate instances where a gladiator preferred to take his own life rather than suffer the fate of their enslavement.[313]

[311] Day (2017) 179-180, Coleman (1990) 51-53

[312] Coleman (1990) makes a broad study of this phenomenon but see especially pp54-57 and 67-70. Also Potter (1993) 63-71. Ancient commentators include Tert. *Nat.* 1.10.47; *Apol.* 15.4-5; Suet. *Nero* 12.2; Plut. *Mor.* 554b; Ulp. *Dig.* 48.19.8.11,

[313] Sen. *Ep.* 70.20-26; van Hoof (2017) 2528. Of particular note is the slave/gladiator whose only available means of suicide was to choke himself with a public latrine toilet brush. His desperation through taking his own life in that manner could not be more clear. Suicide as an escape from slavery is discussed in more detail in chapter 6.

Taken together, and with the only evidence to the contrary being the existence of a small number of celebrated 'star' gladiators who left no subjective account of their own, the previous examples indicate that the life of an enslaved gladiator was no better than that of any other slave. The fact that some freeborn citizens voluntarily placed themselves in that position should not alter the view of that specific type of slavery as being anything other than a brutal subjugation and dehumanisation of an individual in much the same way as more commonplace types of slavery. Therefore, the two specific instances where a freeborn citizen could voluntarily reduce themselves to the same position as slaves – *nexum* and the arena – can both be shown to have no significant bearing upon the realities for those who were involuntarily enslaved.

3.3.3 The distribution of slaves amongst the wider population

One final challenge to the initial hypothesis of the dehumanised, invisible slave, is whether the sources that we have for slavery – so often written by wealthy and elite slaveowners – represent experiences that were common to all (or most) slaves, or only those belonging to wealthy and elite owners. Were there slaves in poorer households, whose owners left no record of their treatment but who experienced a different set of conditions? Essentially, *where were* the invisible slaves that are the subject of this thesis? Population analyses of ancient societies are fraught with uncertainty stemming from unreliable data. However, the following discussion will attempt to make some general observations about the demographics of slavery that will prove useful in supporting the initial hypothesis.

The 2BCE *Lex Fufia Caninia* placed limits on the number of manumissions allowed per year by slaveowners and provided a maximum of 100 manumissions per year for owners with more than 500 slaves.[314] Whilst this does not reveal exactly how many slaveowners actually had that many slaves, the fact that it was specified as a qualification within the *lex* indicates that some of the wealthy Roman elite did own slaves in such large quantities. There was a considerable increase in the slave population that took place over the 2nd and 1st centuries BCE, which is discussed in more detail below. However notably, there is not a similar increase in the free population (fig.3.1).[315] This indicates that, despite an increasing number of slaves (thus presumably an increase in the number of high-volume slaveowners targeted by

[314] *Gai.* 1.12-47; *Ulp.* 1.24
[315] de Ligt (2012) 190

the *lex*), there was not a directly proportional increase in the number of manumissions, as that would be observable as an increase in the free population, represented as *liberti*. It is therefore probable that the *lex*, although indicating that some slaveowners did keep such large numbers of slaves, does not actually reveal much about the numbers of slaves being manumitted. It is more likely that the law was enacted against a *perceived* risk of high-volume manumissions that threatened the wider social aims of Augustan reform, rather than being in response to the actual occurrence of those manumissions.

Further, some slaveowners are reported to have owned considerably more than the 500 slaves required to place them in the top bracket of manumissions allowed by the *Fufia Caninia*. Aulus Gellius details the proclivity of some elite men for taking huge retinues of slaves alongside them as they went about their business as a status symbol that emphasised their wealth.[316] His point on Tiberius Gracchus being accompanied by up to 4'000 slaves does seem grossly exaggerated .[317] Perhaps this was a confusion with the total number of Gracchus' slaves, or perhaps it merely indicates the huge number of accompanying slaves without any real attempt at accuracy. Regardless, such a number was not unique; Gaius Caecilius Isodorus reportedly left 4'116 slaves in his will,[318] which supports the notion that elite slaveholdings could reach such eyewatering numbers. If these numbers are even approximately accurate, then it has some important implications for understanding the distribution of slaves throughout the Roman population more broadly.

That final point relates to changes in population demographics that took place throughout the Republic and into the Imperial period. A conservative, or 'low-count' model indicates a significant increase in the number of slaves over the 2nd and 1st centuries BCE, from roughly 7% of the total population in 225 BCE to 26% of the population in 28 BCE (fig.3.1).[319] Walter Scheidel approximates that by 47 CE, the senatorial and equestrian ranks equated to roughly 5% of the total free population.[320] It is worth emphasising that the significant

[316] Gel. *NA.* 2.13.3
[317] To be fair to Gellius, his own writing refers to Sempronius Asellio as the original source for this particular number.
[318] Plin. *HN.* 33.134
[319] De Ligt (2012) 190, with a detailed breakdown of how he arrived at his figures in his appendix IV pp340-344.
[320] Scheidel (2005); *c.f.* Tac. *Ann.* 11.25

population increase during the final two centuries of the Republic was almost entirely caused by the number of slaves, not citizens, thus Scheidel's ratio of 5% can also be applied to the late Republican figures with reasonable certainty.[321] Combining that ratio for the elite (i.e. senatorial or equestrian) population with the figures in De Ligt's low-count model gives a total elite population of roughly 210'000 in 28BCE, alongside a slave population of 1.5million. This equates to roughly 7 slaves per member of the elite class. Even discounting women and children from the elite figure, the remaining male population of approximately 63'500 would each need to own only 24 slaves within their entire household for elite ownership to account for every single slave in Rome.

	A – Population changes, 225 BC–28 BC			
	Men, women and children		Adult males (aged 17+ years)	
	225 BC	28 BC	225 BC	28 BC
Free	3,900,000	4,200,000	1,180,000	1,270,000
Slave	300,000	1,500,000	90,000	455,000
Total	4,200,000	5,700,000	1,270,000	1,725,000
	B – Rural/urban split			
Rural free	3,500,000	3,100,000	1,060,000	940,000
Rural slaves	150,000	800,000	45,000	240,000
Urban slaves	150,000	700,000	45,000	215,000
Italian towns free	250,000	500,000	75,000	150,000
City of Rome free	150,000	600,000	45,000	180,000
Total	4,200,000	5,700,000	1,270,000	1,725,000

C – Migration from Italy overseas Adult males (aged 17+ years)		D – Decline of free rural population Adult males (aged 17+ years)	
Before 69 BC	85,000	Natural growth	160,000
69–49 BC	15,000		
49–28 BC	120,000	Migrants 225–28 BC	
Sub-total:	220,000	to provinces:	180,000
Killed/counted twice over:	40,000 –	to Italian towns:	100,000
Net migration	180,000	Sub-total:	280,000
		Total loss:	120,000

Fig. 3.1: 'Alternative low-count model for the late Republic', De Ligt (2012)

Such numbers are a long way off from reaching the 4'000 attributed to Gracchus and Isodorus, or indeed from the manumission figures stipulated in the *Lex Fufia Caninia*, which reveals two important themes. Firstly, there are undoubtedly huge numbers of slaves that are unaccountable to even the most detailed of population surveys. Demographic studies will always suffer from the need to rely on inaccurate figures and slaves are notoriously difficult

[321] Scheidel's total population figure of 6 million in 47CE is in line with the wider trends seen across the previous 200 years in De Ligt (2012).

to account for accurately. However, that is not to say that they are of no use whatsoever, which leads to the second important observation: the approximate figures for the freeborn population used by De Ligt and Scheidel cannot be wildly inaccurate, thanks to the census and other public records such as the number of *plebs frumentaria* (those in receipt of grain relief). Those freeborn population numbers combined with the number of slaves owned by *some* elite citizens that are attested in the sources, the (very) approximate slave numbers accounted for in demographic studies, and a touch of sensible guesswork regarding the practicalities of controlling a massively disproportionate population ratio between freeborn and enslaved, all indicates that regardless of the relative inaccuracy of the demographic assessment, it is clear that the vast majority of the slave population were owned by the wealthy elite.[322]

3.4 Arriving at a model for slavery

3.4.1 Do elite sources reliably depict the invisible slave?

This brings us back to the question of whether the elite sources offer a useful model upon which to base the initial hypothesis of a dehumanised invisible slave. The idea that a significantly high proportion of the total slave population belonged to elite households should not come as much of a surprise when one considers the high cost of buying and maintaining slaves. It is difficult to make any assured statement concerning the value of slaves in modern terms and the various scholarly attempts that have been made do not always agree.[323] However, even accepting that some slaves were more expensive than others, there is no escaping the fact that slavery was not a business for the freeborn poor.[324]

[322] Harper (2011) 54-56 offers an alternative demographic assessment based upon census data taken from Roman Egypt that suggests an urban figure of approximately 20% of households owning slaves and 13% of the population being slaves, with rural figures being almost half of that number (12% and 9% respectively). This would allow for some lower-class households to also own slaves, if we accept his figure for Imperial society consisting approx. 14% bourgeoise and elite households. Harper admits that his figures are ambiguous (*c.f.* Bagnal, *et al.,* 1997, 98 n.30), but regardless of whose numbers are more accurate the point remains that the majority of slaves were owned by wealthy individuals and the highest concentration of slaves in any one household were located in those of the elite.

[323] Lavan (2021); Bradley (2011); Scheidel (2005)

[324] For a breakdown of agricultural slave prices in 1st c. CE see Columella *Rust.* 3.3.8. For an earlier comparison of free *versus* slave labour see Cat. *Agr.* 1.3.

This has important implications for how we approach the written sources for slavery when attempting to construct a model for an invisible slave. Typically, the extant literary sources were written by elite men for an elite male audience. Naturally there are some exceptions – Plautus being the most notable in this case – but by and large the literature provides an elite perspective on the experiences of slavery. This has been viewed as problematic due to only offering a one-sided account.[325] However, if those sources reflect the conditions and roles that were impressed upon slaves of elite citizens, then they must also reflect those that were impressed upon the majority of the slave population. Likewise, the attitudes and opinions that elite slaveowners showed towards their slaves must reflect the majority of slaveowners, as that majority was elite. Whilst those elite accounts of slavery and slave behaviour are subjective and biased, it would be unwise to dismiss their accuracy out of hand. These sources show slaveowners (who *know* how slaves behaved in real life) describing, even fictionalising, slaves for an audience that equally *knows* whether that depiction is accurate or not. Understanding how a slave felt about their circumstances is the work of this thesis, but those circumstances and what slaves' observable responses to those were can be ascertained by reading the work of the slave-owning writers themselves.[326]

Of the varied literary evidence for slave behaviour, the more 'factual' representations belong to the genres of history, epistles, didactic works and certain biographical accounts that reconstruct the historical events of an individual's life. Taken together, these provide a significant amount of information on slavery as an institution. As far as reconstructing the experience of enslavement is concerned, these are most helpful; there are certain conditions and experiences that affect all human beings in roughly the same way, thus it is a simple enough task to ascertain how the enslaved person might have understood and responded to their treatment; this will be the work of the case studies in part 2 of this thesis.

[325] See chapters 1.2.2 and 1.4 for recent attempts to address this problem.
[326] *n.b.* The motivation behind a slave's behaviour is not the same as observing their behaviour objectively. Consequently, whilst a slaveowner may attribute a specific motivation to a slave's action, the action can be taken at face value whereas the motivation must not. See chapter 6 for a more detailed discussion.

3.4.2 Limitations to the hypothesis

It is important to bear in mind that evidence for a particular slaving practice in one part of the Roman empire does not mean that that practice was universal to Roman slavery. Certainly, a limitation to this sort of subjective analysis is that it will never be possible to cover the entire spectrum of possible experiences of enslavement, thus any findings cannot be extrapolated to *every single* slave in the Roman world. However, when the sources provide evidence for a particular kind of slaving practice, it is reasonable to assume that this would have been common enough to apply to a significant number of slaves. Indeed, the agronomist works and certain didactic philosophical treatises are effectively establishing something of a 'best practice' for slaveowners to follow, based upon general observations on the conditions of slavery and, importantly, the behaviour and temperament of the individual slaves experiencing those. Despite this, there will always be outliers for whom the conditions described by a particular historian or didactic text would not apply. Nevertheless, this does not negate the experience being described as having been a reality for a significant number of individuals. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that the conditions which are described in the non-fiction genres of literary sources would have applied to a significant enough number of slaves, so that any conclusions about the mental health repercussions from such experiences would have been observable in an equally significant manner.

3.4.3 Concluding thoughts

Compared with the huge numbers of people who were enslaved during the Republic and early Imperial periods, the number of individual slaves that are observable in the sources is tiny. This then raises the question: can the experiences seen in those sources be viewed as typical, thereby serving as a model for hypothetical, invisible slaves? If so, what does that model look like?

Three important factors when answering those questions are:

1. The majority of sources for slavery were written by the slave-owning Roman elite.
2. A considerable majority of the enslaved population were enslaved by that same group: a Roman elite that fundamentally did not view slaves as human beings who were worthy of empathy.

3. ‘Othering’ in this context was not simply a delineation of cultural differences. Rather, it was a comprehensive cognitive process that dehumanised the slave to the extent that slaveowners *could not* view them as equally human, instead classifying them amongst domesticated animals, fawning pets, or tools.

It was this process that created the empathy gap which enabled slaveowners to treat their slaves with appalling cruelty if they wished. Such cognitive dehumanisation is attested to throughout the history of human subjugation, which makes the likelihood of its presence in Roman slavery more compelling. There is a considerable amount of evidence for the brutal treatment of slaves in the literary sources and those texts were predominantly written by the very same elite men who owned slaves themselves.

Specific types of slavery that clearly deviate from the more typical servile condition, such as debt bondage and gladiators, each have aspects that render them negligible in their impact on understanding the more typical slave experiences of agricultural and urban slavery. Those typical experiences brought with them unique stressors and traumas that other freeborn individuals did not experience, despite perhaps sharing in similarly difficult socio-economic conditions. Naturally, the variety of slaveowners must have led to a variety of experiences. However, that does not alter the evidence that we do have for the attitudes of, and treatment by, slaveowners. Put simply, evidence for one or two slaves who managed their circumstances in an unusually successful way does not negate the fact that many, many slaves could not. Those are the slaves for whom we have no evidence, yet those are slaves who represent the considerable majority.

Fortunately, the objective nature of that experience *is* described in the literary sources. The authors of those sources had a deep understanding of those conditions and describe in detail how slaves were treated from the point of their enslavement to the point of death or manumission. As such, the evidence for the conditions of Roman slavery can be read as a reliable representation of the conditions experienced by a considerable proportion of the total slave population. Theoretical models, grounded in modern psychological research, create an understanding of the human responses to those conditions and will be discussed in the remainder of this thesis. This will elucidate how those invisible slaves understood and reacted to their treatment, thereby offering an insight into their subjective experience.

PART 2 – APPLYING THE METHODOLOGY TO ANCIENT SOURCES

4 - The enslavement process

Regardless of the various types of slavery or the differing conditions that were considered in the previous chapter, one aspect of the slave experience was universal to all. In one form or another, every slave had to *become* enslaved. That process could occur in a number of ways: capture as a prisoner of war and being born to a slave mother were the most common but there were other, less common methods such as being a foundling or taken hostage by pirates. Common to all is the loss of autonomy and the total legal and physical subjugation that slavery entailed. This had a demonstrable impact upon the mental health of the individual, which this chapter will address in more detail.

4.1 The Roman slave supply

An initial consideration of the ways in which the supply of slaves changed over time and how this would have affected the mental health of the individual slave will provide a methodological foundation from which to analyse specific examples of slave behaviour in the literary sources. In particular, historical accounts of slave behaviour during the proscriptions of Sulla, those of the second triumvirate, and events after Nero's suicide in 68 CE will be contrasted with one another to identify how slave behaviour during periods of civil strife changed as Roman socio-political culture developed from the Republic into the early Principate. These differences will then be cross-referenced with changes in the slave supply that coincided with those events. A gradual shift away from capturing slaves during imperial conquest, towards a greater number of *vernae* as expansion of the empire slowed, resulted in a more docile slave population.[327] By considering the differences that capture and subjugation versus natal indoctrination would have had upon the psychology of the slave, I will conclude that the less violent slave behaviour evidenced in the accounts of the civil strife and power struggles during the year following Nero's death is a direct result of wider changes in slave psychology.

[327] Herrman-Otto (2012) 184 notes the importance of foundlings as a source of *vernae* in the Imperial period.

Understanding the proliferation of the Roman slave trade is complicated by the lack of statistical evidence for capture, or indeed any other useful demographic records.[328] There were certain specific legal instances that could result in someone becoming enslaved, such as an Imperial decree which condemned women who had persistent sexual relations with another man's slave,[329] and (rarely) freedmen could be re-enslaved as *ingratus.*[330] Debt-bondage holds little relevance for the period under discussion, as from the middle Republic it was not permitted to voluntarily enslave oneself or sell one's own children into slavery.[331] As such, these legal means for enslaving a person were comparatively rare; nor are there any detailed individual case studies that can be analysed to reveal whether they represented a unique set of circumstances that might have had an adverse impact on mental health.[332] Notwithstanding these rarer instances, by far the most common means of enslavement was being born into slavery as a *verna*, and being captured during military conquest.

Imperial expansion resulted in a number of instances where large groups of people were reduced to slavery after being conquered. The Punic Wars were a particularly lucrative source for the Roman captors, with the battle of Agrigentum (261 BCE) providing 25'000 slaves[333] and the battles of Carthago Nova and Tarentum (both 209 BCE) providing 10'000[334] and 30'000[335] slaves respectively. The battle of Pydna during the war against Perseus (168 BCE) allegedly resulted in an eye-watering 150'000 slaves in one day,[336] whilst Julius Caesar reportedly enslaved over 1 million Gauls over the course of his campaigns.[337] Equally, despite there being fewer opportunities for mass enslavement during the Imperial period, when those opportunities arose they were taken advantage of whole-heartedly: Trajan's Dacian campaign

[328] Scheidel (2011) 287
[329] Suet. *Ves.* 11
[330] App. *BC.* 4.29; *Dig*. 25.3.6.1 details a later decree that allows this practice. *c.f* also Varro *Rust.* 2.10.4
[331] *Liv.* 8.28 tells us that debt bondage, or *nexum*, was abolished in the late 4th c. BCE (see chapter 3.3.2.1). However, there do remain later examples of the practice continuing in spite of this: Varro *Rust.* 1.17.2; Columella *Rust.* 1.3.12; Quint. *Inst.* 5.10.60, 7.3.26-27. Concerning the sale of one's own children see *Cod. Iust.* 4.43.1
[332] The concept of *ingratus* is an intriguing one; would re-enslavement have been felt more keenly due to having initially escaped slavery and obtained manumission, or would the previous experience of slavery have helped the slave to come to terms with their treatment more easily?
[333] *Diod. Sic.* 23.9
[334] *Liv.* 26.47; *Plb.* 10.17
[335] *Liv.* 27.16
[336] *Liv.* 45.34
[337] Plut. *Caes.* 15.3; *Vell. Pat.* 2.47.1

enslaved 500'000,[338] the Jewish wars provided a further 97'000,[339] and the Romano-Parthian battle of Ctesiphon caused 100'000 human beings to be reduced to slavery and subjugation.[340] Putting some of these more stratospheric singular events of mass enslavement aside, the slave market on Delos reportedly had a turnaround of 10'000 slaves per day.[341] Although Strabo is not specific, the wider context of his discussion indicates that he most likely refers to the period between the Roman sack of Corinth (146 BCE) and Pompey's campaign against the Cilician pirates (67-66 BCE). Undoubtedly this figure is an estimate and must reflect a number of other sources (re-sale, or indeed the very prisoners of war just discussed), but Strabo does specifically refer to piracy as a major means of slave production in this instance.[342] In any case, to gain the reputation for such a high turn-over of slaves, a regular and high-volume source of captives for the Delian markets must have been forthcoming.

The fate of the slaves after they had been captured is similarly difficult to establish in any specific manner. However, various sources do provide a general understanding of the subsequent experience of the individual that can be used to create a broad image of the initial stages of enslavement.[343] Forced migration was commonplace[344] and families were most likely separated.[345] Slaves were commonly kept in chains[346] until sold at market, which was itself a humiliating and dehumanising experience.[347] Individuals were abused and objectified, having their feet painted white with chalk[348] and being paraded with wooden *tituli* around their necks indicating their nationality,[349] personal characteristics[350] and if the slave had a history of attempted suicide or escape. Prior to sale, the likelihood of illness and malnutrition during

[338] Lydus *Mag.* 2.28
[339] Joseph. *BJ.* 6.9.3
[340] *Dio.* 75.9.4; *SHA Sev.* 16 *c.f.* Scheidel (2011) 294-297; Bradley (2011) 246; Bradley (1989) 20-24; and Finley (1980) 83-86 for a more in-depth discussion on enslaved prisoners of war.
[341] *Strab.* 14.5.2
[342] Famously, a young Julius Caesar narrowly avoided such a fate: Suet. *Jul.* 4
[343] Bradley (1989) 22-23 paints a particularly vivid picture for the reader. See also Bradley (2012) 72-76.
[344] Cic. *Att.* 89.7; Varro *Rust.* 2.10.4; Tac. *Ann.* 14.44; Carroll (2020) 181-182; Bradley (2012) 173-180
[345] Varro *Rust.* 1.17.6 notes the value of slave families from Epirus, but the very fact that this is noteworthy indicates that it was not the norm. Weiler (2012) 142 notes the frequency with which mothers were separated from their new-born babies; Laes (2008) 240 highlights that this created threat and instability as an endemic feature of a child slave's experience. Rawson (1966) 78-81 details the evidence for such separations in funerary epitaphs.
[346] Bradley (1989) 22
[347] *Gel.* 6.4.3-5
[348] Scheidel (2011) 302
[349] *Dig.* 21.1.31.21
[350] Gel. *NA.* 4.2.1; Bang (1912) 223 discusses the extant *tituli* in-depth.

transport would have been high[351] and all manner of physical abuses can be assumed to have taken place. Sexual abuse undoubtedly occurred; virginity increased the value of a female slave,[352] thus women and girls likely suffered physical inspection by potential buyers. Boys were also sold for sex[353] and might be castrated; a fate that resulted in subsequent mockery to add to their trauma.[354]

Even as a general image, it is a bleak one. How this would have impacted upon the mental health of the slave is not discussed in the sources. Despite ancient medical texts demonstrating a clear appreciation that mental ill-health was a facet of the human condition, slaves are consistently ignored in this respect. Celsus gives a comprehensive discussion on the various diagnoses of mental illness[355] and does treat slaves for other medical conditions,[356] but in his discussions on their health and medical treatment, slaves' mental health is seemingly unaffected by the trauma of their condition. Likewise, the Galenic corpus notes 20 different instances of the physician treating slaves, but not one concerns mental illness.[357] Even looking to earlier examples from the Hippocratic corpus, which physicians of later periods might have referred to, the evidence for slave mental illness is scant.[358] However, the idea that slaves were able to withstand the psychological traumas of the enslavement process unscathed is implausible.[359] This then raises the familiar problem of how to contextualise that trauma in a way that recognises its psychological impact.

[351] Bradley (1989) 23
[352] *Dig.* 47.10.25
[353] Plin. *HN.* 7.10; Suet. *Vit.* 12
[354] *Juv.* 6.366-78; *Mart.* 6.2; Sen. *Ep.* 47.7. Whilst Domitian banned the practice (Suet. *Dom.* 7), this was late in the day, and seemingly unsuccessful, as Hadrian had to pass a similar edict at a later date: *Dig.* 48.8.4.2
[355] Celsus *Med.* 2.1, 2.7, 2.8, 2.12-13, 3.18, 3.20
[356] Celsus *Med.* 3.21
[357] Mattern (2008) 173-202 gives a comprehensive list of case-studies for medical treatment in Galen's works.
[358] Of the 6 mental illness case studies in *Aphorisms*, there are no slave patients. Hippoc. *Epid.* lists 21 mental illness case studies, of which 4 focus on slaves (*Epid.* 4.2, 4.20, 5.84-87, 7.112). This indicates that the concept of slave mental health could be recognised if the physician was amenable to the concept, likewise with their emotional responses (*Epid.* 6.7). It is notable, however, that in most of these cases, the illness is linked to fever or some other physical ailment and how that affects the mind, rather than a more chronic mental state.
[359] Especially if we consider the universal nature of certain traumas, discussed in chapter 2.4.

4.2 The psychological impact of enslavement

4.2.1 Traumatic responses to capture

As set out above, the process of enslavement through capture meant that the captive was cut off from their family, community and culture. Linguistic isolation was a certainty for many[360] and was intentionally maintained by some Roman slaveowners.[361] This means of cutting off a slave's ability to interact with the alien culture that was thrust upon them would certainly have exacerbated their inability to relate to other individuals and form any sort of social bond.[362] Ultimately, slaves underwent a 'social death' where 'everything that has been known by the prisoner about social rules, order, identity, manners and sexuality is gone'.[363] It is therefore likely that an individual who was captured and enslaved would fall clearly into the 'separation' end of Kağıtçıbaşı's 'interpersonal distance' axis. Furthermore, a high score in heteronomy stands to reason; the removal of autonomous agency is literally what enslavement is. As such, if a Roman slave were to be included in Kağıtçıbaşı's model for cross cultural mental health, they would undoubtedly be typified as a heteronomous-separated self. That is to say, that the conditions of enslavement resulted in an individual identifying in pathological way.

Having established that a captured slave would have contextualised and reacted to their traumatic experiences from this initial position of pathological mental health, the argument for their predisposal towards mental illness becomes much more convincing. Further, Baron's cross-cultural research into how individuals respond to intense cultural indoctrination has found that in all the situations that he analysed,[364] commonly observed procedural features of the process were: social disruption and forced changes of personal image (hairstyle, clothing etc.), alongside physical stressors such as lack of sleep, hunger and forced activity.[365] The similarities between those procedures and the procedures of Roman enslavement discussed above are plain to see. Likewise, Baron links these phenomena with changes in an individual's

[360] Bradley (1989) 23
[361] Cat. *Agr.* 143; Sen. *Ben.* 3.22; Columella *Rust.* 1.8.4
[362] This factor is particularly relevant when making comparative studies with later slave-owning societies. The ability to form a slave subculture was fundamental in creating bonds and social support systems in transatlantic slavery. Shared language, music, religious beliefs and cultural markers such as hairstyles meant that Black slaves did manage to develop a sense of relatedness that appears to have been absent in Roman cases.
[363] Joshel (2010) 89; Bradley (1994) 25-26. It is worth noting that this was how the condition of slavery was contextualised regardless of the slave's identity; see chapter 3.3.2
[364] Baron (2000) considers case studies of intense indoctrination in USSR, China, USA and N. Korea.
[365] *Ibid* 241-242

mental state that include fear, confusion, dependency, low self-esteem and guilt.[366] Crucially, this impacts upon the basic human capacity to formulate reasoned responses to trauma,[367] which in turn makes other pathologies such as PTSD and depression more likely to develop.[368]

Human trauma responses are based on evolutionary processes.[369] As such, evolutionary psychology provides a useful model for analysing those responses in relation to slaves, as the focus is on universal aspects of human behaviour. When faced with an acute traumatic experience,[370] the brain processes information across two neural pathways, which Christopher refers to as the 'low road' and the 'high road'.[371] During stress and fear responses the low road processes information faster (being a 'prerational stress response') but is more basic as a result, whilst the high road takes a longer route through the brain but passes information through the neocortex - the area that governs reason and social interaction.[372] It is this high road that facilitates the influence of socio-cultural behaviour and learned coping mechanisms when responding to trauma, thus its absence results in the individual relying on their instinctive, evolutionary responses. Slaves are more likely to have responded in this evolutionary manner as the higher-functioning, more reasoned response requires good biological health and stable social relationships to function properly.[373] Both of these prerequisites were lacking during the enslavement process, as the individual underwent a traumatic experience akin to Baron's intense indoctrination mentioned above. Consequently, if a slave's behaviour relied on this more basic, evolutionary neural pathway to function (a function that is more likely to result in PTSD and depression)[374] and did so from a basis of pathological identity (the heteronomous-

[366] *Ibid*. The role that guilt, or shame, might have played in exacerbating an ancient slave's mental trauma requires further research. Many societies that Romans enslaved traded in slaves themselves, although not necessarily to the same extent; *c.f.* Briggs (2003) for an initial overview. It therefore follows that an individual who understood how their circumstances had changed and what they had been forced to become might also have been ashamed of their new social status, having previously looked down upon and subjugated slaves themselves.
[367] Baron (2000) 243
[368] Christopher (2004) 85; Castillo (1997)
[369] Stankus (2011) 120-129; Christopher (2004) 83; *c.f.* Shalev *et al.* (1998); Tedeschi *et al.* (1998); Castillo (1997); Resnick *et al.* (1995); Eberly *et al.* (1991)
[370] That is, an individual instance of trauma (such as enslavement); chronic trauma is relevant for considering *vernae*, and shall be discussed momentarily.
[371] Christopher (2004) 80
[372] Christopher (2004) 80; *c.f.* Le Doux *et al.* (1988) for a wider discussion on the neurological anatomy of fear and stress responses.
[373] Christopher (2004) 77
[374] Christopher (2004) 85; Castillo (1997)

separated self), then the likelihood that PTSD or depression would have developed in an individual increases significantly.

To be clear, this is not an attempt to pick a specific individual and identify a mental illness within them. Quite simply, there are no examples of individual slaves that can be analysed to the necessary level of detail to arrive at a diagnosis. However, if wider academic discussions on slavery and the slave experience are to progress, it is important to move away from the basic tenet that slavery was a miserable but ultimately inaccessible experience.[375] Instead, by understanding the applicability of universal trauma responses we can start to appreciate that slavery caused mental illness on a mass scale. The uncontrollable uncertainty which now dominated the slave's existence must have exerted a considerable amount of psychological pressure upon the individual.[376] However, despite their cultural background being rendered inaccessible, the evolutionary stress responses detailed above remain salient for the slave's ability to cope with that trauma. Therefore, identifying common behaviours that indicate mental illness or poor mental health can help to delineate the slave experience within this context. If we accept that the conditions of slavery were likely to cause mental illness in humans generally, and that those humans who suffered under slavery were particularly likely to develop mental illnesses as stress responses, then we can start to approach wider Roman society from the perspective that mental illness was endemic within the slave population.[377]

4.2.2 Psychological indoctrination of *vernae*

The foregoing has considered the way in which being actively enslaved might have impacted upon a slave's mental health. These processes would have been notably different for *vernae.* Individuals who were born into slavery would not have undergone the same level of cognitive dissonance that arose from attempting to recontextualise their identity with their new social position. Nor were they suffering from the initial and acute traumatic episode of enslavement. However, the assumption that *vernae* were somehow more accepting of their position without suffering mental ill health as a result is at odds with the basic human requirement of selfhood

[375] Bradley (2011) 246; Schiavone (2000) 123; Scheidel (1993) 108-109; Finley (1980) 93
[376] Toner (2013) 463-464
[377] This, naturally, has further implications for studying freedmen as well, though limitations of space will not allow for that here.

and relatedness discussed above. Comparative psychological research into victims of childhood abuse and indoctrination rituals may help to illuminate the experiences of those born into slavery.[378] Fundamental to childhood indoctrination is the abuse of parental attachment; children particularly seek increased attachment when faced with danger and it has been observed that they will 'turn towards their tormentor if no other source is forthcoming.'[379] Equally, the developmental stage of children under 4 makes them particularly vulnerable to psychological indoctrination; after that stage, a distinct sense of self begins to develop which requires more intense reconditioning.[380] Of particular relevance from an evolutionary psychology perspective is the manner in which 'evolution-prepared dissociation' leaves an individual particularly receptive to suggestion.[381] This process is the psychophysiological state where the brain remains conscious but dissociates the individual from mental and physical trauma that it cannot otherwise avoid.[382] In the survivor accounts that Badouk-Epstein discusses, this suggestibility led to the child exhibiting an acceptance of, and compliance in, cult ritual behaviours that could manifest themselves as violent or sadistic behaviours, or engagement in child soldiery.[383] Relevant to Roman child slavery is that the child who was conditioned from a young age internalised their role as a result of these evolutionary psychological processes.

This may have enabled the *verna* to accept their slave role more willingly, and indeed some Roman enslavers appreciated their more docile temperament.[384] Tacitus' account of the debate surrounding the punishment of Pedanius Secundus' slaves supports this notion. In that debate, Gaius Cassius argues to the Senate that:

> *suspecta maioribus nostris fuerunt ingenia servorum, etiam cum in agris aut domibus isdem nascerentur caritatemque dominorum statim acciperent*

[378] Graham-Kevan (2020); Badouk-Epstein (2011); Dell (2009); Schwartz (2000); van der Kolk (1989)
[379] van der Kolk (1989) 396. Laes (2010) notes some poetic examples where the child slave (*delicium*) appears to reciprocate the affection of his owner
[380] Badouk-Epstein (2011) 118
[381] *Ibid* 127
[382] Dell (2009) 760
[383] Badouk-Epstein (2011)151-153
[384] Lenski (2023) 89; Sigismund-Nielsen (2013) 294; Rawson (2010) 196-198; Hermann-Otto (1994). Stat. *Silv.* 2.1.69-81. Laes (2010) 255-256 details examples of owners who developed strong emotional attachments to *delicia*, though some attempted to disguise their servile status (notably by refusing to actually call them *vernae*, p249). For a full list of sources for *delicia* see Butrica (2005) 223-225.

> The nature of slaves was mistrusted by our ancestors – even when they were born in the same farms or households and were deemed from the beginning as being most dear to their owners.[385]

Whilst this indicates a clear *mis*trust of *vernae*, it specifically highlights that this mistrust was held by earlier generations of Roman slaveowners and is used by Cassius as an example to be emulated in the Senate's decision.[386] This implies that such suspicion over *vernae*'s character was no longer held to the same extent – otherwise there would be no need for Cassius to remind the Senate of those earlier attitudes. Likewise, his use of '*etiam*' has a comparative force when he points out that *even* homeborn slaves were suspected by the ancestors *as well as* those enslaved by other means. Surely then, this further suggests that, though not immune to suspicion, *vernae* were regarded as being of a higher standing than those initially enslaved by force.[387]

Despite having the potential to be viewed more favourably by their owners, the various traumas that *vernae* experienced would still have left their mark.[388] They were by no means immune to the physical and sexual abuse that are detailed above,[389] and repeated childhood trauma has been shown to have a permanent impact upon the brain's development resulting in a propensity towards psychiatric disorders, impaired cognition and poor physical health.[390] Furthermore, it is actually possible that the *verna*'s response to traumatic stress was impaired by virtue of the fact that they were born to slave mothers. Research into PTSD responses in victims of multiple rape has shown that even when victims do not exhibit PTSD responses, they often register as having lower levels of cortisol than victims of a single rape.[391] This demonstrates that even without a pathological response, 'they are biologically changed by the experience.'[392] Most

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[385] Tac. *Ann.* 14.44

[386] The debate took place in 61CE.

[387] *Etiam* could also be read within the context of the punishment under debate in Cassius' speech; *even* the homeborn slaves should be punished alongside the rest, but that still indicates that the behaviour of *vernae* was expected to be better than other slaves, otherwise there would be no need to make the differentiation.

[388] Laes (2003) 315-316 uses the psycho-sociological theory of compensation to explain how owners were able to show affection for their child slaves (*delicia*) as an outlet for their love of their own children who had died in infancy, though that should not be considered a suitable explanation for how those *delicia* might have reacted to that same affection. More recent research on Pompeian graffiti notes the prevalence of prostitution and sexual abuse in connection with *vernae*: Levin-Richardson (2023).

[389] Bradley (1994) 33-35 highlights sexual abuse as being particularly prevalent with *vernae.* See also Laes (2003) 317-320, which discusses the sexual abuse of slaves, noting that 'sexual behaviour is a culturally defined term' (p320) and that we must be sensitive to such variables when assessing the traumatic impact of slaveowner affection on *delicia* children. The discussion below, in chapter 5.1.2, contradicts that view.

[390] Graham-Kevan (2020). Pollock (1983) 40-41 offers an historical perspective on this phenomenon in her analysis of early modern and 19th-century parenting.

[391] Resnick *et al.* (1995)

[392] Christopher (2004) 90

importantly, these biological changes are subsequently inherited genetically,[393] thus the children of women who suffer repeated rape can inherit their mother's lower cortisol levels. Given that *vernae* were most likely the product of rape and that their mother was most likely raped multiple times,[394] it is probable that they subsequently had lower levels of cortisol, thus impairing their ability to respond to traumatic stress in a way that protected them or limited the harm that they suffered as a result of that stress.

Further, recent studies into the psychological effects of slavery on enslaved African and Jamaican individuals have arrived at similar conclusions to those being presented here.[395] Janice Gump gives an account of how unaddressed developmental trauma (trauma experienced in childhood) can become the source of 'lifelong emotional conflict and vulnerability to traumatic states'.[396] Those traumas result in the failed ability to provide adequate care for others (especially the affected individual's children), thus perpetuating the cycle of traumatic abuse. Ultimately this has resulted in the phenomenon of Posttraumatic Slave Syndrome (PTSS), which has effects that are still felt in cultures that have a history of enslavement today. In a similar vein, Longman-Mills *et al.* discuss the effects of PTSS on Jamaican society, highlighting the biologically transmissible effects of trauma and the impact of shame on the individual's psychology.[397] Most interestingly, their account of the experiences of enslaved groups from the middle passage are almost identical to the evidence for the Roman enslavement process that is detailed above. This then suggests the strong likelihood that PTSS was also a factor in Roman society and thus it had a transgenerational impact that caused *vernae* to continue to suffer in a manner similar to that seen in Jamaican and African American cultures.[398]

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[393] *Ibid.* Christopher refers to research on adult children of Holocaust survivors in this instance, but *c.f.* Sule *et al.* (2017), for research into the effects of post traumatic slave syndrome in the U.S.

[394] Columella *Rust.* 1.8.18-19 notes that female slaves who provided him with 3 *vernae* were excused from farm work, whilst a 4th child would result in her being freed. Rape and sexual abuse are discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

[395] Longman-Mills *et al.* (2019); Gump (2017). Notably, at the outset, both studies highlight the paucity of research that has been carried out on the psychological impact of slavery in their respective cultures; the current challenge is not limited to slavery in ancient Rome, nor even antiquity.

[396] Gump (2017) 163-164

[397] Longman-Mills *et al.* (2019) 91-92

[398] A similar phenomenon might have also affected the offspring of freedmen, thus also impacting upon the citizen body at Rome. That subject is too complex to discuss in sufficient detail at this stage, but it presents a tantalising avenue for future research.

4.3 Learned Helplessness of slaves

Having considered that both capture and childhood indoctrination were harmful to mental health and that this inhibits advanced, rational stress responses, further possibilities for explaining the behaviour of slaves arise. The assessment that a majority of slaves, then, would have struggled to rely on their more rational stress responses bears close relation to 'learned helplessness' (LH); a research-based theory that was developed as a psychological model in 1967 and has since been used to understand a number of behavioural and social problems in humans.[399] It focusses on uncontrollability and how 'when experiencing absence of control, the organism perceives independence between actions and outcomes, becomes helpless, and ceases exploration of the environment.'[400] Examples of human behavioural problems which are related to LH and are relevant to slavery are 'individuals who stay with an abusive spouse' and 'maladaptive behaviour in organisations.'[401] Of particular note is that LH is used by psychologists all over the world as a paradigm to explain animal as well as human behaviour,[402] thus it operates on both an evolutionary and cross-cultural level. As such, it can be applied to ancient source analysis more readily. Likewise, a recent re-assessment by the psychologists who initially developed the theory indicates that the impact of LH on an individual operates at a neurological, rather than psychological, level.[403] This further encourages its usefulness as a tool for assessing the behaviour of ancient individuals, as the neural aspect indicates that it operates universally in humans whilst its cross-cultural applicability ensures that the lack of insight available into the cultural backgrounds of ancient slaves is less problematic.

The behaviour of slaves during certain periods of political upheaval (or rather, the absence of behaviour that might reasonably be expected of them) indicates that learned helplessness was a facet of slaves' psychology at that time. Slave behaviour during the proscriptions is particularly interesting because it reflects a time when slaves were encouraged to betray their owners. Crucially, this uprising against their owners was state-sanctioned (assuming that either side in the civil war represents 'the state'). In a recent discussion on slave revolts as class-struggle, Ricardo Noronha notes that this was not the first time that slave uprisings had arisen

[399] Teodorescu & Erev (2014) 1861
[400] Teodorescu & Erev (2014) 1861; Toner (2013)
[401] Teodorescu & Erev (2014) 1861
[402] Walker (2017) 75
[403] Maier & Seligman (2016) 353, 361

from civil conflict or been manipulated by free citizens to forward their own ends.[404] However, Noronha is referring specifically to the Spartacus rebellion and the earlier Servile Wars of the Republic. Out of the earlier case studies that he offers for this type of behaviour, the only one that occurs within a single slave-owning society is the 5th-century civil war in Corcyra.[405] That example will offer a useful comparative model to demonstrate that learned helplessness exerted an influence on slave behaviour more generally.

4.3.1 A comparison from Corcyra

The behaviour of the Corcyraean slaves sets an interesting precedent for approaching the later Republican proscriptions and is worth considering for a moment. Thucydides notes that both sides at Corcyra, the Athenian-backed democrats and Corinthian-supporting oligarchs, offered to free the slaves in return for their support against the opposing faction:

> τῇ δ᾽ ὑστεραίᾳ ἠκροβολίσαντό τε ὀλίγα καὶ ἐς τοὺς ἀγροὺς περιέπεμπον ἀμφότεροι, τοὺς δούλους παρακαλοῦντές τε καὶ ἐλευθερίαν ὑπισχνούμενοι· καὶ τῷ μὲν δήμῳ τῶν οἰκετῶν τὸ πλῆθος παρεγένετο ξύμμαχον, τοῖς δ᾽ ἑτέροις ἐκ τῆς ἠπείρου ἐπίκουροι ὀκτακόσιοι.
>
> The next day they skirmished a little, then each side sent around the fields, calling out to the slaves and offering them their freedom. The majority of the domestic slaves sided with the townsfolk, whilst eight hundred mercenaries from the mainland fought for the other side.[406]

Interestingly, *most of* the domestic slaves (τῶν οἰκετῶν) sided with the townsfolk, thus presumably the few remaining domestics and the public slaves either avoided the conflict (and so chose to remain enslaved) or sided with the oligarchs who had enlisted mercenary help. This division in the servile allegiance closely resembles the wider civic division, with (most of) the household slaves allying with their (democrat) owners and the remainder belonging to the

[404] Noronha (2019) 1086: 'War could also open fissures along the social fabric, creating favourable conditions for slaves to rise up.'
[405] Other examples given are (e.g) the Athenians encouraging the Messenian helots to aid them against Sparta, or the Carthaginians fighting Libyan mercenaries. In neither case is it the *political body under which the individuals are enslaved* that is encouraging the slaves to revolt against their owners. Rather, external aggressors are encouraging slaves to unite against a common enemy.
[406] *Thuc.* 3.73

fewer oligarchic owners. It is a short passage, and Thucydides does not provide any further insight into the fates of the slaves, but the fact that he specifically switches from using τοὺς δούλους to define 'the slaves' (all of whom were encouraged to pick a side) to τῶν οἰκετῶν to define the ones who sided with the townsfolk, carries a significance that Noronha does not include in his discussion. That is: despite being offered freedom by *both* sides, the slaves seemingly allied themselves with their owners nonetheless.

This raises further questions regarding the ability of the slaves at Corcyra to act or choose a side freely. The expectation seems to have been that slaves would desire both freedom *and* revenge, and so would 'defect' from their owners' side. If that were not the case, then the offer to *all* slaves would seem rather pointless.[407] Indeed, the idea that slaves were untrustworthy, disloyal and desirous of revenge for their ill-treatment is hardly new, and transcended slave-owning societies including Rome.[408] It is here, then, that the Corcyraean example sets an interesting precedent for later instances when slaves were made a similar offer: why did a slave *not* take the opportunity for freedom and revenge when it was so easily made available to them? This question has been answered throughout scholarship as being variously due to a lack of 'class-consciousness',[409] a lack of coherent organisation,[410] and diversity in attitudes towards enslavement.[411] The possibility that slaves were psychologically inhibited from taking these opportunities has yet to be considered and shall be returned to later in this discussion. Before that, however, it is necessary to detail the behaviour of slaves when such opportunities arose during the Republic, starting with the proscriptions of Sulla and the civil war against Marius.

4.3.2 Learned Helplessness during the civil wars

During the proscriptions of the first century BCE, Roman slaves were effectively given license to take revenge upon their enslaver by either killing them, or by handing them over to the executioners. The practice of offering slaves freedom as a reward for informing on their owner is well documented throughout Roman history. Alexander Thein writes an account of these

[407] And yet, why offer an incentive, rather than an order, to your own slave? Presumably, by only offering an incentive to those slaves who were owned by the opposing side, you risk the same thing happening *vice versa*.
[408] App. *BC.* 1.10 describes Roman expectations in that regard. See also Bradley (1989) 2, for comparative details based on Brazilian, Cuban and American attitudes of a similar mindset.
[409] Lenin (1972) 481
[410] Urbainczyk (2008) 78
[411] Bradley (1989) 26

practices from the reign of Tarquin the Proud down to the late Republic.[412] However, what Thein's list does not highlight sufficiently is that his examples, with the exception of those from the second triumvirate (discussed below), constitute slaves being rewarded for information that they provided having already chosen to betray their owner. The Sullan examples differ in that slaves are being *incentivised* to make that betrayal. There is one further example that Thein points to which does represent an incentive rather than a reward and that is during the Catilinarean conspiracy.[413] The fact that there is no evidence of any slaves coming forward in this instance demonstrates the futility of the incentive and bears similarities to the response at Corcyra, where slaves largely remained where they were in spite of the opportunity for change.

There does exist some scholarly uncertainty over whether there are examples of slaves being rewarded for informing during the proscriptions themselves.[414] However, Appian's account of Marcus Antonius, the famed orator, tutor of Cicero and consul of 99 BCE[415] (who is not on Thein's aforementioned list) is one example which suggests that slaves were acting in the hope of reward.[416] According to Appian, Antonius was hiding in a farmer's house, but the farmer's slave purposefully revealed his whereabouts to an innkeeper who asked why he was buying more expensive wine than was usual. The innkeeper immediately ran to Marius and reported the information, ultimately resulting in Antonius' execution.[417] However, it might also simply have been the case that his slave failed to stand up to the innkeeper's interrogation over the purchase of uncharacteristically expensive wine, as suggested by Plutarch.[418] Regardless of the lack of specific examples from the Sullan proscriptions, there do remain clear examples of slaves being encouraged to 'defect' from their owners, as in Corcyra. Furthermore, if they were to have defected in this manner, the slaves would have been effectively joining the opposing side from their owner. As such, not only could they take legitimate revenge upon their captor,

[412] Thein (2013) 165-167 offers a comprehensive list of these examples.
[413] Sall. *Catil.* 30.6
[414] Thein (2013) 164
[415] App. *BC.* 1.32. M. Antonius the orator was the grandfather of M. Antonius the triumvir (commonly known by his anglicised name Marc Antony), who is discussed later in this thesis. I shall adopt the Latin name for the grandfather for ease of differentiation.
[416] App. *BC.* 1.72
[417] Though not before Antonius's skill at oratory had initially charmed his would-be executioners into acquiescence; it required Annius, the tribune, to deal the killing blow in the end: Plut. *Mar.* 44
[418] Plutarch specifically attributes this to the slave's stupidity rather than a desire for reward, which possibly reveals his own bias more than it does an accurate motivation on the part of the slave: *Mar.* 44.

but this revenge was also their ticket to freedom and citizenship – it was a 'win-win' situation for the slaves.

Various offers were made, presumably by public proclamation in a similar manner to that seen after the assassination of A.Sempronius Asellio. Asellio was a noted historian and the urban praetor of 89 BCE who was responsible for resolving a legal dispute between money lenders and debtors regarding the charging of interest on debts.[419] Affronted by his support for the debtors, the money lenders assassinated him in broad daylight in the forum, while he was surrounded by onlookers as he carried out a religious sacrifice to Castor and Pollux.[420] This brazen assassination of a magistrate whilst carrying out his official, religious duties demanded a response. The senate consequently made a proclamation that included offering freedom to any slave who would come forward with information on the identity of his murderers. Not one did, and 'the lenders covered everything up.'[421] Later, as the Marian faction was losing against Sulla's advance on Rome, they 'proclaimed that any slave who joined in the resistance would be given their freedom.'[422] Again, no slaves came to their aid and the Marians were forced to flee the city. Cinna went one step further and proclaimed freedom to any slave who joined him, not only in Rome, but also sending proclamations to the surrounding townships, with no response from the slaves.[423] Interestingly, the actions of Marius provoked the proscription of his followers whilst Cinna lost his position as consul alongside his citizen status (with all the legal protections that entails) for inciting slave rebellion. This may go some way to support the view that Sulla himself did not offer such incentives. Nevertheless, at a later stage in the war, Cinna was advancing once again on Rome and offered freedom to any slave who deserted Sulla to join his side. This time the offer *was* taken up, and the slaves 'immediately began to desert in their droves.'[424] It is particularly noteworthy that these newly freed slaves subsequently 'go rogue' and start killing and plundering throughout the city, with some making a point of killing their previous owners. Cinna (now their military commander) could not control them despite ordering them to stop; they were seemingly uncontrollable in their desire for revenge upon their erstwhile oppressors. Ultimately, they were herded up and killed by Cinna's other forces, but

[419] His historical work is now only fragmentary: Gell. *NA.* 1.13,2.13,4.9,5.18,13.3, 13.22
[420] App. *BC.* 1.54
[421] App. *BC.* 1.54; Liv. *per.* 74; Val. Max. 9.7.4
[422] App. *BC.* 1.58
[423] App. *BC.* 1.65
[424] App. *BC.* 1.69

they remained a salutary reminder of the vengeful aggression that could be unleashed by freeing slaves for military purposes, especially when they had not previously demonstrated the appropriate *obsequium.*[425]

Regardless of its consequences, what made this final incentive for betrayal and freedom by Cinna successful, when previous offers had been refused? Two factors may prove significant in this instance: in all of these large-scale instances the slaves are reported as acting *en masse* and in the final, successful incitement to mass betrayal, Marius had just gained control of the food supplies by river and the grain stores in surrounding towns.[426] The Roman grain supply depended on slaves to do the work of producing and transporting the food. Some slaves would have needed an intimate knowledge of the economic supply chain in those roles. Assuming that the slaves who worked in the supply chain had knowledge of this crucial turn of events, it is quite possible that they relayed this information to slaves in the city before it was available to the citizens who were defending it. Slaves were very much central to the transmission of information, running messages and overhearing discussions. Despite the Roman enslavers' preventative efforts, it would seem likely that a significant enough number of slaves could, and did, communicate with each other in this manner. If nothing else, the Sicilian and Spartacus revolts indicate an ability to band together coherently and in Sicily particularly, the 'communication infrastructure of messenger slaves' enabled the revolt to reach as far as the Attic mines.[427] This would appear to challenge the assertions that slaves lacked the socio-cultural unity to operate as a group.[428] It would therefore seem perfectly feasible for the urban slaves to have heard (or overheard) that the food supply had been cut off by the Marians and that this knowledge was fundamental in encouraging their defection to Cinna. There needed to be some aspect that affected the slaves as a group to make their behaviour as a group differ in this one instance. Clearly, earlier offers of freedom were not a sufficient incentive by themselves. Nor was a basic ability to communicate with each other through 'the communication infrastructure', as otherwise this ought to have encouraged revolt before this

[425] Importantly, there are no further accounts of this sort of large-scale emancipation during the Republic. Once 'peace' had been restored, Sulla did free 10'000 slaves whose owners had been victims of his proscriptions – thus significantly increasing his base of indebted *liberti* – but any later incentives to betray owners were for individual instances rather than for a mass defection by slaves.
[426] App. *BC.* 1.69
[427] Noronha (2019) 5
[428] Bradley (1989) 20; Finley (1980); Lenin (1972). Urbainczyk (2008) 75-78 similarly challenges this view, albeit rather weakly.

point. Therefore, the decision to defect to Cinna in this case is a clear indication of an ability to communicate, operate as a group and to *make the decision to betray their owners.* If slaves were capable of making such rational decisions (i.e. *not* to defect when the situation is less favourable but the opportunity presents itself, but to defect otherwise), then this is *not* an example of slaves suffering from learned helplessness. Therefore, in this first, earliest example of slave behaviour under discussion, the ancient sources still indicate a level of psychological independence. This indicates that the slaves in question had not internalised their new personhood and had maintained a sense of self.

A similar situation occurred during the Second Triumvirate. Appian prefaces his account of the Triumviral proscriptions by recording the deaths of Trebonius and Decimus Brutus , who were killed in retribution for their part in Julius Caesar's assassination.[429] This is a device through which Appian can introduce the idea of revenge, which forms the basis for the proscriptions that he narrates in his fourth book: 'In this way two of Caesar's murderers…met their deserts when they were attacked and defeated in their own provinces.'[430] However there is also a seemingly innocuous comment that deserves more attention. The final sentence of book three records the death of another of Caesar's assassins: Minucius Basilus. Appian details his death at the hands of his slaves, murdered in revenge for castrating some of their number:

> τῷ δ᾽ αὐτῷ χρόνῳ καὶ Μινούκιος Βάσιλος, σφαγεὺς καὶ ὅδε Καίσαρος, ὑπὸ τῶν θεραπόντων ἀνῃρέθη, εὐνουχίζων τινὰς αὐτῶν ἐπὶ τιμωρίᾳ.
>
> At the same time, Minucius Basilus, also one of Caesar's murderers, was killed by his slaves in revenge for castrating some of them.[431]

This murder leaves book three with a note of foreboding. Appian does not mention Minucius again, but he records the murder, by slaves, seemingly as an afterthought; it is certainly not given the level of attention that the other two assassins are. In this way, he plants the sinister

[429] App. *BC.* 3.26 and 3.98 respectively.
[430] App. *BC.* 4.1
[431] App. *BC.* 3.98

threat of slave revenge at the back his readers minds. The threat appears to be insignificant, but it foreshadows the role that slaves will play in the impending proscriptions and the fear that this would have elicited in his Roman readership.

By publishing the names of the proscribed and offering freedom and financial reward to any slave who killed or handed their owners over to the executioners,[432] the triumvirs were effectively embarking upon a program of psychological warfare. Although Appian notes that disgruntled family members and acquaintances also represented a threat to the proscribed citizens' safety, the servile element was particularly effective in eliciting fear because slaves were, quite literally, in your bedroom while you slept.[433] Republicans' fear of their own slaves was commonplace[434] and the incentive for slaves to betray their owners was purposefully offered to take advantage of that fear. Appian describes the general mood of the times in some detail, emphasising the chaos and terror that ensued once the triumvirs had unleashed the latent fury of the oppressed.[435] There were some who made counteroffers in an attempt to stem the tide of domestic revolt; Pompeius, who had escaped to Sicily, offered double the reward to any slave (or indeed free person) who helped a proscribed citizen to safety.[436] Quite how this message was transmitted to potential saviours is unclear; presumably with Rome under the control of the triumvirs, a public proclamation was unlikely to have been possible. Similarly, if Appian's description of the fear and mistrust of the time is accurate, then other more private communication networks would likely have been viewed with suspicion as well. Nevertheless, the counteroffer was made,[437] which put slaves in an even more complex position.

On the one hand, the overriding public message was one of defection. The triumvirs were not only offering freedom and reward to those slaves who aided them, but also punishment for

[432] App. *BC.* 4.7; 4.11 puts the financial reward at 10'000 drachmae and further stipulates that slaves belonging to non-Romans would also attain citizenship for their owner.
[433] Fitzgerald (2000) 4; George (1997); Wallace-Hadrill (1994) 38-44. It is worth noting that despite the rewards being offered to *anyone* who killed a proscribed citizen, by far the majority of the examples that Appian discusses in this regard are slaves.
[434] Cic. *Off.* 2.25; although some time afterwards, Sen. *Ep.* 47.5 memorably observes that '*totidem hostes esse quot servos*' ('there are as many enemies as there are slaves') was a commonly held opinion, implying it had been held for some time. *c.f.* Gamauf (2004) 145-146
[435] App. *BC.* 4.13 *ff.*
[436] App. *BC.* 4.36
[437] Pompeius' counteroffer must have been received by at least some people, otherwise Appian would not have known of its existence in the first place.

those who aided their owner. On the other hand, owners 'threw themselves moaning at the feet of their slaves, and called their domestics lord and saviour',[438] whilst conflicting messages of reward were being delivered by Pompeius. This undoubtedly must have increased the levels of uncertainty in slaves who were unsure which side to take. Fitzgerald gives an interesting discussion surrounding slave autonomy and the contrast between how slaves were expected to do what they were told, but then also behave independently in times of danger or risk for their owners.[439] Tacitus records a debate concerning the punishment of Pedanius Secundus' slaves, who were accused of failing to act according to a senatorial decree stipulating that household slaves were obligated to help their owner if he were under attack.[440] Although Tacitus is writing of events that take place almost a century after the second triumviral period,[441] this decree is referred to as an established custom ('*ex more*') which indicates a likelihood that similar attitudes had existed as far back as the events detailed in Appian. Although Fitzgerald does not refer to this passage in his discussion, it clearly indicates that Roman owners, and indeed Roman law, *expected* slaves to act autonomously in certain situations. The likelihood of this happening would certainly have been impeded by the slave's inhibited and pathological heteronomous-separated self. The particularities of events during the proscriptions would have been unlikely to encourage slaves to demonstrate this level of initiative, due to the opposing messages being received from their owners and the wider public incentives of the triumvirs. This conflict of interest would have created a double-bind on the individual, leaving them unsure how to respond. Double-binds are common inducers of stress in individuals and slaves were less well equipped than most to deal with that. Therefore, expecting a slave to adopt a calculated manner whilst under such duress is perhaps a slightly simplistic assessment of their behaviour during the proscriptions.

Nevertheless, there is a number of examples of slaves doing *both*: helping and harming their owners. It is worth remembering that these examples were specifically chosen for inclusion in Appian's account. Therefore, the relatively even mix of behaviours in the examples given[442] does not imply any clear agenda on the part of the author to depict these slaves in an

[438] App. *BC.* 4.13
[439] Fitzgerald (2000) 7
[440] Tac. *Ann.* 14.42-44
[441] The debate takes place in 61CE.
[442] App. *BC.* 4.22-51 details 9 instances where slaves betray their owner, whereas 4.36-48 reveals 11 acts of loyalty.

exceptionally dangerous or honourable light. Within the specific case studies of betrayal that Appian provides, there is little of note aside from basic details surrounding the names of the slaveowners who were executed. However, there is one example of a freedwoman who hands her patron, Fulvius, over to the executioners that is worthy of further consideration.[443] The freedwoman in question was a former sex slave (παλλακευθείσης) belonging to Fulvius. He later freed her and married her to an unidentified husband, paying the dowry himself. However, it is important to remember that slave women who were freed in order to marry another citizen male were not capable of withholding consent. Therefore, whilst this is clearly depicted by Appian as being an act of benevolence and generosity by Fulvius, the reality is much more traumatic. Whatever else remains unknown about the woman's enslavement and earlier life, as a sex slave it can be safely assumed that she was raped on a regular basis by Fulvius before being forced to marry her new husband, having no choice in the matter. Appian assumes that jealousy of Fulvius' subsequent wife was the freedwoman's motive for taking her revenge by handing him to the executioners. Such a phenomenal lack of awareness concerning the trauma that was visited upon sex slaves and how those individuals felt towards their owners as a result is indicative of the wider lack of recognition that slave mental health was afforded in ancient thought.

Perhaps because it was considered more noteworthy, or at least less expected, there is more detail provided for instances where slaves protected their owners. Of particular note are instances where proscribed citizens flee the city with large numbers of slaves in attendance, none of whom takes advantage of their owner's proscribed status or their clear numerical superiority to gain freedom and revenge. Cicero's private servile army outnumbered the hunting executioners, who only managed to overpower them through deception.[444] Equally, M. Apuleius and L. Arruntius are said to have escaped the city disguised as centurions, their slaves disguised as soldiers, and subsequently journeyed around the countryside freeing chain gangs and 'collecting runaways' (τοὺς ἀποδράντας συνέλεγον) until they each had armies large enough to fool the other into thinking that they were a genuine Roman force sent by the triumvirs to hunt the proscribed down.[445] Finally, Hirtius had a curiously similar experience.

[443] App. *BC.* 4.24
[444] App. *BC.* 4.19; Plut. *Cic.* 47-48 gives a slightly different account, notably omitting the supposed size of Cicero's retinue and adding that both Cicero and his brother Quintus were betrayed by Quintus' freedman and slaves respectively.
[445] App. *BC.* 4.46

He also escaped from Rome with a band of slaves, freed chain gangs and adopted runaways. Further, once his army was large enough, he began to raid successively larger settlements around Campania and eventually controlled the entire region of Bruttium, before sailing to join Pompeius in Sicily.[446]

There is much that is dubious about these accounts and they require further consideration. Aside from the apparent lack of opportunistic slaves in their initial retinues, the suggestion that Apuleius and Arruntius released and retained chain gangs from the surrounding farmlands implies that those slaves were uncharacteristically obedient. Fetters were typically used as a punishment for the most unmanageable slaves on farms, with the more trustworthy ones being able to move about freely.[447] That slaves with a history of disobedience were immediately willing to ally themselves to such a rag-tag 'army' of supposed soldiers seems unlikely. Nor is it believable that runaway slaves who have already successfully escaped their owners would freely re-join them. This is especially unlikely after the group had adopted the imagery of a genuine Roman legion, having managed to acquire military standards and weapons.[448] The allegation that Hirtius went on to lead a number of attacks on presumably innocent Italian settlements is not discussed any further, despite being brutal and rather dishonourable behaviour. Given this dubiety, how might we explain these unusual and unlikely accounts of slave loyalty?

One tantalising possibility, although one that cannot go beyond the hypothetical, is that these examples were in fact genuine slave revolts. The almost identical behaviour of Hirtius, Apuleius and Arruntius alongside the unlikeliness that any one Roman could manage an army of newly acquired slaves who had previous form for unmanageability, makes these accounts questionable in the manner that Appian presents them. However, presumably the loss of so many enchained agricultural slaves from the countryside did not go unnoticed; the owners must have eventually realised that their property was missing. Therefore, it is entirely reasonable to expect that Appian was aware of the slaves' disappearance and was attempting to account for

[446] App. *BC,* 4.43
[447] Columella *Rust.* 1.6.3, 1.8.16-18,1.9.4; Cat. *Agr.* 57
[448] The sources are not forthcoming on how both fugitives managed to acquire such official military insignia for their servile armies. Perhaps both Apuleius and Arruntius were equally fortunate to find them lying around unattended, or perhaps this is just an Appian embellishment.

that in a way that seemed plausible to him. Likewise, an entire region in Calabria being successively raided would surely have come to the attention of the triumvirs and accounts of that violence must have been available from a number of sources. But, given the chaos of the time and the comparative ease with which slaves could have escaped their owners by handing them over to the executioners,[449] the possibility for bands of slaves to roam the countryside in revolt would have been entirely feasible.[450] Therefore, again, the lawless pillaging that Appian attributes to Hirtius could in fact have been the work of slaves enacting revenge upon their abusers.

Urbainczyk argues that such slave revolts were often 'hushed up' in order to prevent copycat rebellions from taking place,[451] which would further explain how these accounts may have reached Appian, but also why the narrative had become altered from sinister slave revolt to plucky Roman heroism. Apuleius and Arruntius both became consuls at a later date, so would have benefitted from such a portrayal, and Hirtius' identity is not universally accepted by historians,[452] adding to the dubiety surrounding those events. However, regardless of the reality, the behaviour of the slaves that Appian describes during these times must, at least, have been considered believable and realistic. Indeed, the boundaries between fictional and historical representations of slave behaviour are often rather blurred. This may well frustrate the historian who seeks truthful representation in the individual sources, but it is also liberating for those who seek to understand broader characteristics that typify group behaviour – an idea that is supported by Keith Hopkins who notes that:

> 'Individual stories do not tell us directly what was normal, but they do indicate which abnormalities met with overt disapproval, and for these purposes, I should stress, *it does not*

[449] This could happen even if the owner was not proscribed - the executioners seemingly had little idea what their quarries looked like and relied on witnesses, often slaves, to identify them. Restio's slave (4.43) allegedly protected him by handing over another innocent man's head and claiming it was his owner's, whilst Ventidius (4.46) actually stayed in the company of his executioners, who knew his name but not his face. There are many accounts of citizens disguising themselves as slaves and *vice versa* during this time, and such disguises worked due to clothing rather than facial recognition. Much later, even the emperor Vitellius was unrecognisable to his would-be assassins: Suet. *Vit.* 17. *c.f.* George (2002).

[450] In fact, there are many similarities between the behaviour of Hirtius in Calabria and that of Spartacus' army: App. *BC*. 1.116-119; Liv. *Per.* 95-97; Plut. *Crass.* 8-11

[451] Urbainczyk (2008)

[452] Carter (1996) 388 *n.*39 & 43

> *matter so much whether these stories were true*. It matters more that they were told and retold.'[453]

4.3.3 Learned Helplessness during the Imperial period

What is clear from the individual stories of the Sullan and Triumviral proscriptions, is that slaves could behave in an unpredictable and relatively self-governed manner. When this behaviour is compared with later Imperial examples, a change in the general way that slaves acted during civil strife is observable. The year of four emperors provided slaves with similar opportunities to defect from their owners in support of the opposing side. Tacitus gives a detailed account of the civil upheaval and notes the involvement of slaves and freedmen in the affairs of Galba, Otho and Vitellius.[454] Importantly, he specifically states from the outset[455] that 'slaves were bribed against their masters and freedmen were bribed against their patrons', so it *should* reasonably be expected that a similar level of violent and murderous behaviour would occur on behalf of the slaves as occurred during the proscriptions. However, this does not transpire; instead, they adopt a more manipulative role. Galba's slaves and freedmen were quick to take advantage of his rise to power and comparisons with Nero's reign imply that this included political influence.[456] Likewise, slaves were 'sprinkled through the crowd' when cries of 'kill Otho' were raised.[457] Their inclusion here is not otherwise explained, so presumably Tacitus thought they were acting as agitators to revolt. Certainly, his depiction of slaves and freedmen is generally as a pernicious influence, but they are not actively harmful in the way that they some were in Appian's account.

Suetonius gives some more information on the events of 69CE. In particular, he places a lot of emphasis on freedmen pulling the strings of the revolts; a freedman is pivotal in the coup against Galba.[458] Suetonius depicts Galba as being something of a victim of slave subterfuge. He notes that some slaves were caught being involved in an attempted assassination on

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[453] Hopkins (1993) 4, emphasis added.
[454] Tac. *Hist.* lists seventeen separate incidences between 1.1-3.58.
[455] Tac. *Hist.* 1.2. There are notable similarities between Tacitus description of the chaotic times and those made by Appian about the proscriptions.
[456] Tac. *Hist.* 1.7
[457] Tac. *Hist.* 1.32
[458] Suet. *Otho.* 5

Galba.[459] Again, freedmen are implicated as the slaves had been sent to assassinate the emperor by a freedman of Nero's. They were found out as they clearly were too afraid to carry out the task, and their hesitation gave them away. Nevertheless, their attempt to assassinate the emperor on the orders of a freedman demonstrates a level of blind obedience that is often lacking in the earlier Republican examples. This willingness to subvert and assassinate is depicted as being pernicious by the Roman writers (understandably perhaps), but there is clear lack of ability from the slaves to demonstrate any independent thought.

It is important to differentiate between behaviour and motive in such instances. When Roman writers assign a particular motivation to a slave's behaviour, this primarily reveals what a slaveowner could have conceived in the mind of a slave. Fulvius' freedwoman is an example that has already been discussed, whilst Valerius Maximus devotes an entire chapter (*de Fide Servorum*) to noble slave motivations that are patently erroneous insofar as understanding what was actually going through the mind of the slave is concerned.[460] One (graphic) example will suffice for the time being: the torture of Marcus Antonius' slave boy.[461]

Antonius had been accused of raping a Vestal Virgin (*incesti*) and had only one slave with him as a torchbearer on the night of his alleged offence, whom the prosecution had insisted that Antonius provide for interrogation.[462] Valerius begins his account of the torture by commending the fortitude of Antonius' slave who, on hearing that he was to be tortured, 'did not run away from it' (*nec tamen eos fugavit*). The slave was evidently still a boy (*imberbis*) and was 'surrounded by men from the prosecution' (*stabat in corona*).[463] A glaring omission by Valerius is that he does not consider how the boy could have escaped otherwise, if bravery alone were indeed his motive. Later, conveniently in the presence of no other witnesses, the boy encouraged Antonius to allow his torture to go ahead, promising not to reveal his owner's

[459] Suet. *Gal.* 10
[460] *Val. Max.* 6.8
[461] The account of Valerius Maximus is not repeated elsewhere, although he does allude to the same trial earlier in his work at 3.7.9, where the *praetor* presiding over the trial is named as L. Cassius. Erich Gruen concludes that this M. Antonius is the same man as the orator and grandfather of Marc Antony, who ultimately died during the proscriptions of Sulla (see p104, above). Gruen (1968)
[462] *Val. Max.* 6.8.1
[463] A similar *corona* of soldiers was sometimes used in the slave markets, to prevent slaves from escaping: *Gel.* 6.4.3-5

guilt. This child was then flogged, lacerating his body, he had his limbs dislocated on the rack and he was burned with hot irons. Despite this, the slave did not incriminate its owner.

It is, of course, entirely possible that Antonius had provided a different slave for interrogation – one that had not accompanied him and so could not have known of his owners' guilt or innocence regardless of his suffering. If that were the case, then the obvious contradiction to Valerius' account is that if the boy did not know of any guilt, then how *could* he have divulged that information to the court, even if he did want to stop the torture? Even more sinister are the motivations of Antonius. His worry and concern were not for the fate of his slave, but over the accusation itself (*Antonium hoc nomine vehementius confusum et sollicitum*). This supports the idea that, as the only person to truly know which slave had accompanied him in his crime (assuming his guilt), Antonius *selected* the child for torture, knowing that the boy could do nothing about it and would be forced to endure the torture simply to keep Antonius' name clear. It needs little further consideration to conclude that the child had no choice in the matter, that he was most likely terrified into silence at the initial meeting with the prosecutors, and that he was incapable of incriminating his owner no matter how much he wanted to end his own suffering; bravery and loyalty did not come into it. This serves as a clear example of how Roman accounts of slave motivations can be untrustworthy.

To conclude, motivation and behaviour are not synonymous. In order to understand the motivations for why slaves behaved the way that they did, it is imperative that we approach their psychology with a full appreciation of the stresses and inhibitions from which they were suffering. These were universally debilitating but varied depending upon the method of enslavement. Research into the slave supply has shown that the numbers of captured slaves and prisoners of war were higher during the Republic and that the numbers of indoctrinated *vernae* increased until they were the predominant slave supply during the 1st century CE. This allows a cross reference between the differing effects of enslavement and the differing behaviours exhibited by slaves when they were most able to act autonomously. When reading the ancient sources for examples of slave behaviour,[464] those accounts can be accepted as a broadly accurate portrayal; Roman writers were composing their histories for a readership of

[464] That is: the actual *actions* of individuals.

slaveowners who were familiar with the true behaviour of slaves, both desirable and undesirable. Therefore, their audience would have recognised if the real-life individuals they were reading about were behaving unrealistically. It is surely in the interests of the Roman author to depict his history in a believably realistic way. As such, we can afford to adopt a lighter touch of scepticism when considering the behaviour of slaves in historical texts than we require when assessing the reasons behind that behaviour.

The actions of slaves depicted during both the Sullan proscriptions and those of the Second Triumvirate show a fairly even mix of slaves acting to either remain with their owner and support them, or to defect from their owner and take revenge. In spite of clearly being subjected to high levels of psychological trauma, they were still exhibiting a certain level of independent behaviour; a level of personal choice. This could well be linked to differences in the enslavement process and the higher incidence of capture during the Republican period. Although enslavement through capture was more identifiably traumatic than being born a *verna*, the higher number of prisoners of war would have resulted in slaves who could retain a stronger sense of their own identity. This resulted in a higher level of individuation in slaves' behavioural responses, and possibly explains why the Republican period was when the majority of recorded slave revolts took place. Contrast this with the higher levels of docility, and the lack of independent thought demonstrated by later Imperial slaves; slaves who were more likely to be *vernae* and indoctrinated from birth. The stark differences in their behaviour illuminates the different psychological pressures being exerted upon them, thus helping us to understand the reasons behind their actions.

5 – The sexual abuse of slaves

Of the various abuses that a slave could experience at the hands of their owners, those of a sexual nature require specific consideration with regards to their nature and impact. Despite an invigorated scholarly focus on the subjective experience of slaves over the past few decades, the sex lives of slaves and their abusive nature remains an under-studied area.[465] This may be in part the result of a lack of explicit evidence. Scholars are hampered once again by the fragmentary nature of the evidence and the fact that there are very few extant sources that testify to a specific, defined example of rape or sexual abuse, or the frequency of such behaviours.[466]

However, a number of literary and epigraphic sources from both the Republican and Imperial periods do attest to the presence of sexual abuse in Roman society. Roman comedy is replete with abusive innuendo and explicit references to sexual violence and prostitution (both on and off-stage) that highlight wider attitudes of ownership over a slave's body for the immediate sexual gratification or financial gain of the slaveowner. Historical writers alongside the biographies of Suetonius and Juvenal's *Satires* offer fleeting refences to slaves that provide a glimpse into the world of constant sexual precarity and predation that they inhabited. In particular, the abuses that were visited upon Roman captives during large-scale slave revolts are revelatory in their nature with regards to the treatment that those same slaves were likely to have endured from their erstwhile captors. Agrarian writers offer a comprehensive insight into the manner that farm owners could use and abuse the sexual integrity of their slaves to promote their own interests, whilst texts intended for use in the legal education of young Roman men offer an insight into the treatment of slaves with their hypothetical, but realistic, case studies.

Those sources will be the focus of this chapter, which applies the methodology set out in part 1 to the evidence for the sexual abuse of slaves in order to understand how such abuses would

[465] Marshall and Kamen (2021) 5-6, though Deacy & Pierce (2002) does offer a useful overview of sexual abuse in antiquity more broadly.
[466] Kamen and Marshall (2021) 6; Cohen (2013) 197.

have impacted upon the individual victims. An initial overview of current research on sexual abuse will demonstrate how consent can be understood to apply in the context of an ancient individual, whilst examples of modern-day variances in how sexual abuse is contextualised cross-culturally will show that such abuses are not socially constructed; they affect humans universally.

Understanding the nature of consent is a crucial factor in this instance. Therefore, whether consent is a social construct or something more innate to the human experience will be considered first. This will establish the usefulness of comparative psychological research on the impact of sexual trauma for illuminating the experiences of slaves from ancient Rome. The discussion will then move on to consider how the experiences of victims of childhood sexual abuse manifest as traumatic for the individual. Child slaves were typically *vernae* or very young at the time of enslavement. As such, whether or not those children internalised their identity as *delicati* and accepted the sexual availability that was forced upon them requires more consideration. If there is a culturally relative aspect to how children contextualise childhood sexual abuse, that will render the comparative research inapplicable to ancient case studies. These ideas will be brought together to give an impression of whether or not the violation of sexual integrity and autonomy is universally traumatic for humans. Evolutionary psychology offers some answers to these challenges and is supported by what developmental psychologists have ascertained about the way in which child victims engage with and carry forward the results of early-stage trauma.

Having developed a solid appreciation of how sexual abuse manifests as a universally traumatic experience, a range of case studies from Roman literary texts will then be considered for analysis. The discussion will cover a range of contexts in which those abuses took place, from the martial rape of war-captives to the abuse of agricultural slaves, urban prostitution, child sexual abuse and castration. The nature of those abuses was only limited by the confines of their owners' imagination. The sexual proclivities detailed in some of the sources required the most degrading treatment of the slave, who became nothing more than an animate sex-toy for their owner. In a physical sense, these violations included rape (vaginal, oral and anal), forced intercourse (i.e. male slaves being forced to penetrate another individual), other physical sexual assaults and forced prostitution. Castration of male slaves

was a regular occurrence and was often the precursor to a life as a dedicated sex-slave. The impact of genital mutilation on eunuchs will be evaluated and the concomitant emasculation will necessarily be discussed, which then leads on naturally to the wider topic of the sexual abuse of male slaves. At this stage, a more in-depth analysis of the example offered by Petronius' Trimalchio will reveal some nuances to his condition. Particular attention will be paid to the impact of adverse childhood experiences and how Trimalchio both suffers from and perpetuates the historical cycle of child sexual abuse.

Concluding the analysis will suggest that, despite a comparative lack of specific examples for the sexual abuse of slaves, the evidence that does remain extant offers much potential for ascertaining the psychological impact of sexual abuse upon Roman slaves. Those experiences will be shown to have been commonplace and sexual abuse will have been shown to be a universally traumatising experience for humans. Consequently, the findings of modern psychological research upon the victims of rape and sexual abuse, alongside the experiences of victims of human trafficking, can shed light upon how those same experiences that Roman slaves suffered would have resulted in significantly poorer mental health for the individual.

5.1 Current research on sexual abuse

5.1.1 Understanding consent and its basis in evolutionary psychology

The previous chapter was concerned with the impact that the various enslavement processes employed by Roman captors had upon the individual. It highlighted the need to establish whether or not a particular form of abuse that can be seen in the sources for slavery was traumatic in a universal context. If something is universally traumatic to humans, then modern research into trauma responses can be usefully applied to ancient subjects. Consequently, this can help to illuminate how those subjects (slaves, in this instance) might have responded to or contextualised their suffering.

The same applies to sexual abuse. If a source describes the abuse of a slave for the sexual gratification of another dominant individual,[467] it is necessary to identify what it is about the

[467] Often, but not always, the slaveowner.

abuse that is traumatic. Discounting particularly violent examples, sexual abuse is predominantly considered to operate within a framework of moral and ethical violation, which raises questions surrounding the cultural relativity of that abuse. To state the matter plainly: if the victim consented to the action, they would not have experienced that action as violence. Therefore, the traumatic nature of sexual abuse is often determined by the victim's subjective views of the action itself. That subjectivity is undoubtedly influenced by wider social attitudes that the victim has internalised. Therefore, if a society does not recognise a sexual act as abusive, would the individual who experienced that act feel violated? Equally, if a society does not recognise an individual's capacity to consent, can those individuals conceive of that consent as having been transgressed? It is important to avoid erroneously attributing anachronistic values regarding the nature and severity of sexual abuse onto ancient subjects who did not contextualise their experiences in the same way as modern-day victims.

Putting these questions within a Roman context requires further analysis of the prevalence and nature of the abuses carried out upon slaves. How commonplace was the sexual abuse of slaves? What types of abuse did slaves suffer? If Roman society did not recognise their treatment as abusive, was that lack of recognition reflected in the way that slaves contextualised it themselves? Equally, how clearly did slaves conceive of their own sexual integrity and consent, within the context of a life devoid of any external recognition of those characteristics? This final question is particularly relevant when considering *vernae,* who never knew a life prior to slavery, thus they would not have felt any sense of loss in their ability to consent to sexual behaviour.

The wider cultural backdrop for rape and sexual abuse is important in that regard. From the very beginnings of the Roman Republic, stories concerning the rape of citizen women such as Lucretia and Verginia served to establish the importance of female chastity and *pudicitia*.[468] The violation of their sexual integrity was shameful and degrading to the extent that death was preferable. Conversely, Rome was the product of rape. The rape of the Sabine women was not only fundamental to the origins of the Roman people, but it also established that from the very beginnings of Roman cultural memory, raping 'other' women was an entirely

[468] Strong (2021) 175-176

acceptable practice for citizen men to engage in. This view of female sexual autonomy and consent continued relatively unchanged right through the Republic and into the Imperial period. Plutarch notes, in *Coniugalia Praecepta*, that it is advisable for husbands to use their slaves for sexual pleasure rather than their wives, whose sexual role was for reproduction rather than gratification.[469] Essentially, non-citizen women could be raped with impunity whilst the high value placed upon citizen women's chastity established that sexual consent mattered a great deal in the correct context. It is unlikely that such a distinction was lost on slave women. The specific cultures those slaves came from are rarely specified in any meaningful way, thus their individual cultural values regarding sex cannot be ascertained. Regardless, the fact that Roman social values incorporated consent *at all,* means that slaves would have been aware that they were not afforded that right.

More important than these cultural considerations is the fact that consenting to sexual behaviour is a matter of fact, rather than one of cultural ethics or value.[470] This is because the value that humans place on sexual consent is grounded in evolutionary processes. Those processes have ensured that certain behavioural and psychological traits related to sexual relations that were evolutionarily advantageous have been carried on through natural selection and manifest themselves as universal predispositions in human behaviour.[471] This is observable in the way that all human societies have, in some way or another, regulated sexual behaviour. There would be no point in controlling and legislating against sexually transgressive behaviour if humans did not typically experience distress in response to the violation of sexual consent.[472]

Although this discussion will go on to consider both female and male slaves who were raped by their owners, there are certain harms arising from rape that specifically affect female victims, from an evolutionary perspective. Arguments that attribute an essential, cultural

[469] Plut. *Con.* 140b. The similarities between Plutarch's advice here and the much earlier statement on the sexual roles of women in Dem. 59.122 is notable.
[470] Beauchamp (2009) 56. For arguments in favour of the culturally relative nature of sex and consent see Murphy (1994) 214 and Bogard (1995) 169. Wertheimer (2010) 109-112 rejects those on both moral and psychological grounds (see discussion below).
[471] Wertheimer (2010) 46-48. See Brown (2004) for a more detailed overview of human universals.
[472] Wertheimer (2010) 100-101. See also Hart (1961) for the discussion on how morality and law is rooted in certain universal facets of the human condition.

value to the importance of sex and thus to the importance of rape,[473] fail to account for the fact that 'we must look high and low for anthropological exceptions to rule [that there are evolutionary and biologically determined aspects of trauma arising from rape], if there are any.'[474] Aside from the basic fact that bodily impositions are objectively harmful, evolutionary psychology maintains that 'human minds evolved to maximise reproductive fitness in the environment of evolutionary adaptation.'[475] That is to say, humans are psychologically predisposed to choose certain types of reproductive behaviour that are most likely to ensure the successful survival of their offspring. Rape overrides a woman's ability to make those choices. From an evolutionary standpoint, rape represents an initial risk of injury to a woman's reproductive capacity; it negates the woman's ability to choose a father that will provide for her offspring; when it leads to pregnancy, it uses up one of her limited reproductive opportunities and; if she is already the mother of other children, she risks receiving less parental care from that father because he is now unsure about the parentage of her offspring.[476] These are not conscious thought processes that are culturally determined,[477] they are instinctive reactions to rape that have their basis in a woman's ability to reproduce. In an evolutionary context, rape is an existential harm to the victim. It is for this reason that theories of cultural essentialism regarding the importance of sex[478] must be rejected, and it is for this reason that victims react against it with such intensity.[479]

Roman law regarding rape did not protect slaves, but the fact that the consent of citizen women was legislated for is evidence that Roman society understood that the violation of consent was harmful. It must be acknowledged that in such cases the focus was predominantly on the male family member's control over female sexuality. However, there was still a recognition of agency in the female victim, thus her ability to consent. As such,

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[473] Bogard (1995) 169; Murphy (1994) 214

[474] Wertheimer (2010) 113; see also Brown (2004)

[475] Wertheimer (2010) 51. Importantly, the environment of evolutionary adaptation (EEA) is the environment in which our brains evolved, not the ones we find ourselves in now.

[476] Wertheimer (2010) 113

[477] There are, of course, culturally-based injuries that also arise from experiencing rape, though it is worth questioning where those cultural attitudes originate from if they do not have their basis in evolutionary behaviour.

[478] Murphy (1994) 214

[479] Wertheimer (2010) 104, notes that the risk of developing PTSD is higher for rape victims than all other traumatic events except being held captive, tortured or kidnapped (which are obviously all factors that Roman slave rape victims would have had to endure as well). Herman (1997) 50, highlights the prevalence of suicidal thoughts in rape victims, in comparison with victims of other crimes.

ancient attitudes towards female consent that viewed rape through a lens of patriarchal dominance should not detract from the fact that female victims were understood to suffer *as well as* their husbands or fathers. Further, rape was used as a weapon by the Roman army during military conquest. Clearly, though they did not value the consent of subjugated women, they knew that those women did; otherwise weaponising rape would have been ineffective. Of course, these abuses were also perpetrated in order to hurt the male family members of the female victims. This was certainly the case with Sicilian tyrants Agathocles (discussed below) and Dionysius, whose wife was specifically targeted for abuse in order to anger him.[480]

All of this points to the fact that, despite the lack of external recognition, slave women maintained an innate sense of their sexual consent. Wider society might not have cared about their consent or the impact that violating that would have had upon them, but it does have important implications for assessing the prevalence of sexual abuse from the slaves' perspective. In most cases, the individual slave would have experienced sex as rape.[481]

5.1.2 Cultural variations in defining abuse

Culturally relative gender norms can, however, influence the way in which victims contextualise their abuse. Recent studies into intimate partner violence and sexual abuse of Latina immigrants in the U.S have identified that the culturally defined role of *marianismo* amongst Latina women can result in those women refusing to identify themselves as victims. *Marianismo,* the feminine counterpart to *machismo*, places women in a role of spiritual purity and moral superiority.[482] This requires women to demonstrate values of modesty, chastity, sexual abstinence before, and faithfulness after marriage.[483] However, failure to live up to those standards in a relationship can result in male aggression that is deemed acceptable to a degree that would not otherwise be the case.[484] This can alter the way that certain individuals contextualise objectively abusive behaviour. Notably, this acceptance stems from beliefs whereby the victim 'deserves' their abuse because of their failure to live up to socially

[480] For Agathocles, see *Diod. Sic.* 19.8.3, for Dionysius, see *Diod. Sic.* 13.112
[481] Evidence for consenting sexual relations between slaves is discussed below.
[482] Stevens (1973) 123
[483] The similarities with the Roman feminine values of *pudicitia* are notable.
[484] Fava *et al.* (2021) 1099; Harris (2005) 479

determined behavioural expectations. Broadly speaking, though, the failure of individuals within one cultural group to view intimate partner violence as abusive does not render the female victims immune to the impact of that abuse, it merely results in them contextualising it in a different way.

Culturally relative attitudes towards abuse have, until very recently, also prevented the development of a comprehensive and state sanctioned child protection system in China.[485] However, it does not follow that a lack of cultural recognition concerning certain types of abuse means that those behaviours do not impact upon the individual who suffers them. The very fact that China has recognised the need for a child protection system implies that the abuses that children suffered caused long-term harm in victims, regardless of wider social values. This process will be discussed in more detail below, concerning the historical development of societal recognition of the impact of child sexual abuse.

Similar processes can be observed in anthropological studies on tribal rituals in Melanesia. The Sambia people[486] of Papua New Guinea were documented during the 1970s by the anthropologist Gilbert Herdt. His observations were particularly notable in relation to a ritualised form of child sexual abuse that constituted a coming-of-age process for Sambian boys.[487] The initiation ritual involved boys of around 10 years old being removed from the main group and confined to an all-male troupe for several years until they were allowed back into society as fully fledged adult men. A significant aspect of this time apart was the ritualised performance of oral sex on older adolescent males by the younger initiates. Herdt emphasised that Sambian beliefs attributed a 'masculinising' value to this ritual and that 'intimate consumption' strengthened the boys and helped them grow into full manhood.[488] This ritual might at first represent a challenge to the notion that childhood sexual abuse carries with it some universally traumatic aspects, by demonstrating a culturally constructed way of viewing a sex act on a child as being beneficial for them (in fact, essential to avoid death).[489] However, Herdt noted himself that the younger initiates often initially resisted their

[485] Katz *et al.* (2021) 402
[486] A name given to the tribe by Herdt.
[487] Herdt (1982)
[488] Herdt (2019) 42-43, (1982) 56-57
[489] Herdt (1982) 56

involvement in the ritual, despite the encouragement from tribal elders and, importantly, the cultural construction of the practice as being beneficial for them. Some initiates later reported feeling revulsion, fear and shame stemming from the various stages of the ritual,[490] which speaks to the innate sense of violation that the boys were experiencing, despite the practice being framed within a context of growth, nourishment and positive masculinity.[491] Perhaps even more telling, is that increased interaction with the outside world since Herdt's initial study has resulted in the practice being swiftly abandoned by younger generations of Sambians.[492] Within the space of only a few decades, ritualised childhood sexual abuse has become a relic of tribal memory, suggesting that no amount of cultural conditioning could override the innate, universal sense of abuse that Sambian boys experienced throughout their adolescence.

This all speaks to wider issues that surround childhood sexual abuse and the way in which it is contextualised throughout global societies. Professionals from a range of disciplines who work with victims of childhood sexual abuse differ with regard to the definition of the terms 'child', 'sexual' and 'abuse'.[493] Defining child abuse is notoriously difficult due to a range of cultural and operational factors, partly because the thresholds of abuse are to some extent culturally determined.[494] This has clear implications for research into the sexual abuse of child slaves in Rome, where a set of criteria for determining abusive behaviour was effectively non-existent. The prevalence of such abuses indicates that cultural values accepted (even encouraged) the abuses that took place, which raises questions regarding how Roman sexual abuse of child slaves was contextualised by the victims. However, the Sambian case study suggests that cultural context has little impact upon how abuses are contextualised by the young victims in extreme cases. Therefore, despite the temporal and cultural distance between Roman slaves and modern research into victims of childhood sexual abuse, the impact upon the individual can still be ascertained with a reasonable degree of accuracy.

[490] All of which are commonly reported as feelings experienced by other victims of sexual abuse: Cantón-Cortés (2012) 666

[491] Elliston (2005) offers an overview of the ritual, noting the negative impact that it had upon initiates, and places it within a wider range of human sexualised ritual.

[492] Herdt (2019)

[493] Haugaard (2000) 1036

[494] Katz *et al.* (2021) 415-416. See also Sawrikar & Katz (2017), Yining & Fung (2003) and Kenny & McEachern (2000) for further discussion on the idea that child abuse is a socially constructed phenomenon.

5.2 The sexual abuse of slaves

Having established the universal nature of sexual abuse, various case studies will now be considered that detail the types of abuses that slaves suffered. The wide range of abuses means that regardless of whether one was female or male, adult or child, all slaves were at risk of sexual violence and exploitation. Despite the lack of specific sources that state the frequency of sexual abuse, the prevalence of it in the source material is indicative of this being a pervasive feature of Roman society.

5.2.1 Martial rape

Although there is little evidence that attests to specific instances of the rape and sexual abuse of slaves,[495] there is much that can be considered from a more general viewpoint. Certainly, as regards the expansion of empire, the martial rape of conquered women and children was simply a common feature of military conquest.[496] Polybius describes the resolve of the Abydenes, when besieged by Philip V of Macedon; they preferred to kill their own wives and children rather than let them fall into the hands of the enemy and suffer the expected fate that would entail. However, he leaves the details of exactly *how* they will suffer up to his reader's imagination, merely explaining their fate as involving 'all the miseries they would expect to suffer.'[497] Diodorus Siculus is slightly more specific when detailing the tyrannical coup by Agathocles at Syracuse. He stresses the shame (αἰσχύνας) and violation (ὕβρεις) that the wives and daughters of the Syracusans would suffer, but still avoids more detail because his readership can well imagine those details for themselves.[498] However, his account of the Carthaginian sack of Selinous is explicit in detailing the trauma that the women endured, notably associating the experience with enslavement and concluding it to be a fate worse than death.[499] Appian's *Civil Wars* offers a rare account of how a victim of martial rape reacted to her abuse and fought back against her attacker.[500] The woman had survived the siege of Lauron and was being raped by a soldier in the aftermath but she fought back, clawing out his

[495] Cohen (2013) 197
[496] Huemoeller (2021) 162; Gaca (2021) gives a broad discussion on martial rape in antiquity. See also *Paus.* 10.22.3-4; *Str*. 4.6.8; *Plb.* 16.32.4
[497] *Plb.* 16.32.4 see also *Liv.* 26.24.
[498] *Diod Sic.* 19.8.3-5
[499] *Diod. Sic.* 13.58
[500] App. *BC.* 1.109

eyes in the process. Appian notes that the soldier's entire cohort was executed afterwards, on account of their brutal treatment of the prisoners.

Such punishment for sexually abusing prisoners might at first indicate that Roman commanders disapproved of martial rape, thus when it occurred it was the result of a lack of military discipline. However, another instance, this time one that took place during the final moments of the Third Punic War and involved Scipio Aemilianus, confirms that Roman soldiers could be actively encouraged to rape their prisoners. Prior to the final assault at the siege of Carthage, Scipio had relieved Mancinus' forces and then taken charge of the Roman army, noting that those who had been under Piso's command had turned to 'idleness, greed and rape.'[501] Although he rebukes the soldiers for that behaviour, he is clear that his displeasure is because they have not yet won the battle and not because the raping was problematic of itself.[502] The fact that he refers to the sexual license that soldiers will have over their captives after the battle indicates that this was a normal feature of Roman military conquest.[503]

A similar set of circumstances had also already played out during the Second Punic War, after the sack of Carthago Nova by Aemilianus' grandfather Scipio Africanus. Africanus was moved by reports of sexual abuse at the hands of the Carthaginians by the wife of Mandonius[504] and assured her that he would appoint 'trustworthy men' to guard them. [505] The concern that Africanus showed towards ensuring the non-abusive treatment of female prisoners is notable because it was unusual. It could be argued that Polybius recorded this particular event in order to contrast the benevolence and magnanimity of Scipio with the erstwhile barbaric and abusive treatment by the Carthaginians. However, Polybius then goes on to state that some soldiers made a gift to Africanus of a particularly beautiful female prisoner. He did refuse that gift but, importantly, he did not refuse her because he believed her rape to be improper, but because he was concerned that it did not befit his position as

[501] App. *Pun.* 115
[502] See Gaca (2021) 52-53 for discussion on the use of τὴν τρυφὴν to include the rape of prisoners in this instance.
[503] App. *Pun.* 116
[504] A chieftain of the Ilergetes who had allied with Carthage against Rome.
[505] *Plb.* 10.18

military general to behave in such a way.[506] In fact, he was clear that he would have raped her under different circumstances by saying that 'were I a private individual, no gift would be more pleasing to me.'[507] Consequently, even when the rape and sexual abuse of prisoners of war was deliberately refrained from, those instances actually serve to confirm that it was a commonplace feature of the newly enslaved experience. Equally, given the attitudes of commanders such as the Scipiones, it is likely that such rapes did not always occur due to a lack of military discipline but were actually condoned. Thus, martial rape constituted a weapon of war that could be unleashed by military commanders when desired.

Katharine Huemoeller offers an alternative view of martial rape, by considering its prevalence in the Republican slave revolts. Taking her evidence from historians of the 1st Sicilian slave war,[508] the Etruscan revolt of the Volsinii[509] and the Spartacus rebellion,[510] Huemmoeller notes the prevalence of rape being committed by the slaves against their erstwhile captors (or captors' female relations). Her main line of argument centres around masculinity, *virtus* and the way in which that was weaponised by the slaves against their enemies.[511] This is not an entirely convincing interpretation, as it hangs on the premise that the slaves – some of whom had only ever been gladiators – had an intricate understanding of how Roman gender roles operated.[512] However, the sources can be read differently. For example, Sallust explicitly depicts the rapes as being contrary to the slaves' commands, thus he emphasises the brutality of the slaves in comparison with his more noble description of their leader Spartacus.[513] If those slaves were not acting on orders, then one must question what motivated them to act like this. Are the slave rebels simply revisiting their own previous experiences of abuse upon their enslavers?

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[506] *Plb.* 10.19
[507] *Ibid*
[508] *Diod. Sic.* 34-35
[509] *V.Max* 9.1
[510] Plut. *Crass.* 8-11; Sall. *Hist.* 4.40M
[511] For masculinity and *virtus* being firmly defined by the role as sexual penetrator see Butrica (2005); Williams (1999) 18.
[512] Huemoeller (2021) 170 does briefly allude to this limitation, though it does not address it specifically, instead highlighting that the gender roles which the slaves would have held themselves remain unknowable.
[513] Sall. *Hist.* 3.44

The specific nature of some of the other punishments carried out by Spartacus upon his Roman captives might suggest that this was indeed the case. For example, the rebels chose a typically servile form of execution for some of their Roman captives.[514] Given that the slaves raped women, girls and 'others' (*et alii*, which could imply 'other men'), then this could also indicate that slave women, children *and* men had also previously been raped by their Roman enslavers. That would certainly echo the talionic style of punishment handed out by the slaves during the Sicilian slave revolts. In that instance, the slaves of Damophilus, who alongside his wife was a particularly brutal slaveowner from Enna, instigated a large-scale rebellion. In return for the brutal treatment that they had suffered, the slaves raped the wives of their owners in front of their husbands:

> εἰς δὲ τὰς γυναῖκας οὐδ᾽ ἔστιν εἰπεῖν, καὶ ταῦτα βλεπόντων τῶν ἀνδρῶν, ὅσα ἐνύβριζόν τε καὶ ἐνησέλγαινον

> As for the women, nothing can describe the extent of the violations and outrages that they endured, which were even inflicted under the gaze of their husbands![515]

However, the rebels spared Damophilus' daughter, specifically because she had been kind to them during their enslavement. Diodorus goes on to describe further examples of the rebels visiting the same sufferings that they had endured upon their erstwhile owners as punishment, but the use of rape as a weapon – and particularly because it had previously been committed against the slaves themselves – is remarkably similar to that which took place during the Spartacus rebellion.

That type of sexually violent behaviour reflects typical practices throughout the history of human warfare,[516] where the rape and sexual abuse of men is also commonplace. It has been deployed as a weapon of war throughout history,[517] with evidence from antiquity, the

[514] App. *BC.* 1.119 describes how Spartacus crucified a Roman prisoner between the two encamped armies.
[515] *Diod. Sic.* 34/35. 10-14. See above, for the discussion on raping women to insult their male relatives.
[516] Féron (2018) 21-25
[517] Although Féron (2018) 20, notes that this hypothesis is reductive due to its occurrence as both a planned strategy (e.g. Bosnian War) but also as a result of the complete breakdown of military discipline (e.g. conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo). Scipio at Carthago Nova and the Spartacus rebels, respectively, reflect the

Crusades, colonial North America, WWII and a number of armed conflicts from the 20th century.[518] Consequently, it is likely that slaves who were captured as Roman prisoners of war, regardless of gender, were either raped themselves or exposed to it as a threat or as a witness. Sallust's depiction of the rebel slaves' sexual violence against Roman captives could therefore offer an insight into the abuses that they themselves had suffered during their own enslavement.[519]

5.2.2 Sexual roles of agricultural slaves

Even if they survived the ordeal of capture and its concomitant sexual abuse, the dangers of rape did not disappear for slave women once they were sold to a new owner. For urban slaves, prostitution was an unwelcome probability, whilst agricultural slave women were not guaranteed any safer an existence.

Chapter 3 established that Roman agronomist writers adhered to the Aristotelian view of slaves as articulate tools.[520] Within that context there was the belief that slaves needed certain incentives in order to maximise their productivity.[521] The discussion concerning such incentives largely, though not entirely, focusses on the more basic sexual needs of their slaves and allowing families to develop. Inevitably, this resulted in the rape and forced 'marriage' of slave women, who were assigned to male slaves as sexual rewards to incentivise good behaviour. Cato specifies that the housekeeper (*vilica*) was likely to have been 'given' to the overseer as a wife (*dederit dominus uxorem*)[522] and Varro echoes this sentiment, noting that the foreman should be made more eager to perform his tasks by having a fellow slave to bear his children.[523] Further, he states that herdsmen should also be accompanied by slave women

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occurrence of both those instances in a Roman context. See also Eriksson *et al.* (2013); Kirby (2012); Buss (2009).

[518] Glowacka (2020) 79-80. Recent allegations coming out of Ukraine suggest that this continues to be the case today: Sauer (Feb. 2023) Former Russian soldier reveals he saw Ukrainian prisoners of war tortured | Ukraine | The Guardian Bracanti (2022) Jackson.yale.edu/iss/iss-reflections/sexual-violence-in-the-russian-invasion-of-the-ukraine/

[519] There does remain the possibility that Sallust was writing this for dramatic effect but, if that were the case, then his main source for the behaviour of a conquering military must have been that of Roman soldiers themselves. Either conclusion suggests the Romans raped enslaved women, children and men.

[520] Chapter 3.3.4

[521] Cat. *Agr.* 5; Varro *Rust.* 1.17.5-7; Columella *Rust*. 1.8.15

[522] Cat. *Agr.* 143

[523] Varro *Rust.* 1.17.5

whose specific role, amongst other duties, was to provide them with sex.[524] His description of those women is entirely dehumanising. He talks about their rape within the context of 'breeding' (*feturam*) and says it is a 'simple matter' (*facile est*) of leaving them to naturally reproduce on the farm, though clearly this requires more direction when out with the herdsmen. We should not, of course, adopt the same simplistic view of slaves that the agronomists did when considering the prevalence or frequency of such rapes. It would be unwise to assume that the entire farm was populated by groups of animalistic brutes who were simply waiting for the opportunity to rape the first woman they could find.[525] Undoubtedly, relationships between slaves were varied. That freedmen and freedwomen, previously enslaved by the same owner could subsequently marry one another is a strong indicator that some relationships between slaves were genuinely loving.[526] However, the idea that the *only* sexual behaviour that took place between slaves was within the context of a loving relationship is perhaps a touch optimistic.

Edward Cohen is emphatic concerning the existence of consensual relations between slaves and gives an overview of the legal sources that specify *contubernalis* as a form of pseudo-marriage that slaves were afforded.[527] The existence of this custom does not, however, guarantee that such unions were always voluntary (which could equally be said of some freeborn citizen marriages), thus they might still have been harmful to the slaves involved. Recent cross-cultural research on the damage that forced marriages can have on the female partner have tended to focus specifically on child brides (<15 years old), as the two factors often go hand in hand. Nevertheless, findings are consistent in showing that, despite such marriages being normative for the cultures within which they take place, 'marrying early is fraught with negative outcomes' due to the physical and psychological developmental stage of the bride.[528] Tara Bhavalkhar offers a first-hand account of dissociation by a poet-saint - and adult woman - in a forced marriage who writes 'The authority you have is over my body,

[524] Varro *Rust.* 2.10.6-8.
[525] Though it would seem that this was the view held by their enslavers.
[526] See for example *CIL* VI: 11284/11285
[527] Cohen (2013) 197; *Dig.* 33.7.12.33, 23.2.14.2; *Theod.* 2.25.1; *Just.* 3.38.11. For epigraphic sources that detail such relationships see Fischer (2017) 2532-2533. For a general discussion on unrecognised slave families see Mouritsen (2011).
[528] John *et al.* (2019) 1029. See also Datta & Tiwari (2022); Taplak & Yilmaz (2022); Anagol (2020); Latifiani (2019). Laes (2022) offers a useful overview of age-differences in marriage from antiquity, though his focus is on freeborn unions, and highlights that the majority of child-marriages globally involve a female child (p323).

over me you have no power at all.'[529] It is notable is that religious custom and sovereign law in India from the 16th to 19th centuries denied a woman's personhood 'by making the institution of child marriage mandatory, wherein all her rights and property were subsumed by her husband's personhood.'[530] Therefore, from the perspective of social status, such brides were conceptually identical to the way in which Roman slaves were viewed in relation to their owner: non-persons who had no recognised identity of their own and were entirely subsumed by the identity of their owner.

This all supports the conclusion that even if a slave woman had pseudo-marital relations with another slave, that should not be seen as a guarantee of positive outcomes for the individual. Further, given the explicit availability of female slaves for sexual abuse by male slaves that is seen in the agronomist texts and the fact that such practices were encouraged by slaveowners, it seems reasonable to conclude that for some slave women, rape by other slaves would have been a significant aspect of their wider suffering.

That slave women were expected to reproduce to increase their owner's stock clearly represents an additional strain upon the individual. Child slaves were put to work on the farms and in the fields from an early age,[531] and mothers were expected to continue working despite having babies to care for as well.[532] Columella's self-professed generosity in that regard is revealing. He grants exemption from work for slaves who raise (*educare*) three children and *sometimes* freedom for those who raise more than that.[533] Clearly, then, women with one or two children would still be required to work in his fields as usual. Though he is less explicit, Varro implies that similar conditions exist on his farms too. He marvels at the ability of slave women to return to work almost immediately after giving birth, although one must question how likely it was that they did so voluntarily.[534]

[529] Bhavalkhar (1996) 242. The similarity between this coping strategy and Seneca's view on the untouchable soul of the slave is intriguing: Sen. *Ben.* 3.
[530] Anagol, 2020, 186
[531] Varro *Rust.* 2.10.1-2. Laes (2008) offers a comprehensive overview of child labour in Roman antiquity.
[532] Columella *Rust.* 1.8.19
[533] Weiler (2012) 147 suggests that this is based on profit: with 3-4 new child slaves it is more cost-effective to remove the financial burden of feeding and clothing the mother.
[534] Varro *Rust.* 2.10.10

Columella notes in that same discussion that such concessions for slave women were rare as they were awarded to women who were 'unusually fertile' (*feminis quoque fecundioribus*).[535] Considering the explicit intention that slave women should be used for reproductive purposes, this seems counter-intuitive and requires more consideration. One possible explanation for this could be that slaves were not having sex at anywhere near the frequency to which the slaveowners attest. The adverse effects on mental health that the conditions of slavery and enslavement could have had were discussed in the previous chapter. Symptoms associated with PTSD and depression were likely to have occurred and those same symptoms have been shown to reduce the libido of sufferers.[536] As such, it is entirely plausible that slaves were not as sexually active as their owners might have expected, due to their adverse conditions. The idea that slaves were constantly ready and willing to have sex is possibly more a reflection of the dehumanised and animalistic way that the agronomists viewed their slaves, rather than any reality of slave behaviour. It is unlikely that writers such as Varro or Columella understood the correlation between clinical depression and reduced libido. Equally, it is worth remembering that the majority of rapes that slaveowners themselves forced upon their slaves required the slave to be entirely passive, thus their willingness was neither necessary nor noticeable. As such, the way in which a slaveowner understood their slaves' attitudes towards sex was erroneously based upon their observations of forced behaviour and their assumptions about libidos that can only have come from their own, freeborn, experience.

The difficulty with this conclusion is that the benefits of encouraging slaves to have sexual relations are clearly set out by the agronomist writers as an example for their readership to follow. If Varro and Columella were not seeing a positive return from encouraging the rape of female slaves, then it is unlikely that they would have continued to advocate this approach. However, in both texts, the emphasis is on the contentment of their male slaves in order to increase in their productivity, rather than explicitly increasing the number of babies born into slavery (*vernae*) as a result. It is possibly for this reason that Columella does not remark further upon the low reproductivity of his female slaves; quite simply it was not a concern of his. An unknowable aspect of this situation is whether the male slaves actually *were* more

[535] Columella *Rust.* 1.8.19
[536] Kennedy & Rizvi (2009)

content and more productive, or whether this was an assumption.[537] Nevertheless, Columella's observations indicate that even if slaves *were* sexually active enough for it to have an observable effect on productivity, the number of *vernae* resulting from that remained relatively low.

Another possible explanation could be that slave women were becoming pregnant after being raped, but that the child was either aborted or died at a young age. When Columella talks about the numbers of children that might elicit freedom, he is specific in his use of the term *educare* ('to raise') rather than *gignere* or some other similar term meaning 'to give birth'. Clearly, he is specifying that the children borne by the slaves on his farm had to survive infancy, so that they might become a productive member of the owner's stock. Even though childhood mortality was high, the significantly more difficult circumstances of being born into slavery must have exacerbated the chances of it occurring. Equally, abandonment must also have been a factor that limited the number of children being born to slave mothers that survived infancy. Infant exposure was a relatively commonplace practice throughout the ancient Mediterranean.[538] In fact, foundlings were themselves a source of slaves, as the babies that were discovered in the wild and taken in by a family could be brought up as *vernae* in the household.[539] However, Judith Evans Grubb also notes the likelihood that slaves who gave birth were faced with the prospect of being unable to provide for their child, whilst also having their own condition worsened as a result of caring for the infant. Consequently, the only option left available to some was to abandon their baby to die of exposure. That explanation would certainly account for the relatively low infant survival-rate that Columella describes, whilst still allowing for the higher rate of rape that he encouraged within his agricultural slave population.

[537] If sex was a reward for high productivity, then at least initially the slaves must have been productive *before* being rewarded. Consequently, how did the agronomists know whether productivity was ensured because of, rather than in spite of, sexual incentives?
[538] Evans Grubb (2013); Weiler (2012) 164; Laes (2008) 267-271
[539] Herrman-Otto (2012) 184

5.2.3 Prostitution: human trafficking in antiquity

Among urban slaves, women did not fare much better. There was a comparatively small number of roles for slave women in the elite urban household,[540] which indicates that there *should* have been an equally small number of slave women working in such environments.[541] Chapter 4 discussed the likelihood that the majority of slaves who were captured during imperial conquest would have been women and children.[542] Equally, common sense dictates that roughly half of the *vernae* who were born into slavery should have been girls.[543] If there were relatively few roles for female slaves in the urban household, then where were all these women?

Prostitution is the most probable answer to that question.[544] The simple existence of brothels in Roman settlements that is observable in either literary sources or the archaeological record is a clear indicator that prostitution was commonplace.[545] Notably, there was a lack of upper-class brothels; the ones found in the sources were more likely to have been frequented by men from lower down the social scale.[546] This suggests that the wealthy and elite slaveowners would simply rape their own slaves rather than pay extra money to rape someone else's.[547] However, that same wealthy elite group was most likely the source from which many of the slave prostitutes were derived. They owned the majority of slaves, hence

[540] McGinn (2004) 63; Treggiari (1980); (1976). Harris (1999) 69 notes that evidence from senatorial tomb inscriptions that include many more male than female slave names should not automatically tell us whom they subjugated, it merely points to whom they commemorated. See also Harper (2011) 70-71 for sex ratios between slaves, though his focus is primarily from 4th century CE onwards.
[541] McGinn (2004) 62; see also Smadja (1999) 360-361; Herrmann-Otto (1994) 346-347; Sigismund-Nielsen (1991) 230-232; Bradley (1994) 73-75; Treggiari (1979) 189-190
[542] See chapter 4.1, which explains that men were typically killed while women and children were enslaved.
[543] For the likelihood of *vernae* being prostituted at Pompeii see Levin-Richardson (2023).
[544] Pomeroy (1995) 191-192 notes that, even if slave women were employed in domestic work such as wool spinning and textile production, this in no way precluded them from being prostituted as well. Laes (2008) 270 notes that even very young children were prostituted.
[545] McGinn (2006) discusses the distribution of brothels throughout Roman settlements at length, noting that the 35 brothels identified thus far at Pompeii were distributed throughout the town, thus there was no 'red light district' and instead the presence of brothels was a common feature of daily life. See also Langlands (2009) 209, 308.
[546] McGinn (2004) 72. Sex could be bought from as little as one *as* (*CIL 5408*) at a time when a male labourer's daily wage was approximately 12 *asses* and a loaf of bread cost 2 (McGinn, 47-54).
[547] Slaveowners also bought slaves for exactly that purpose. The case of Marc Antony buying twin boys for their attractiveness, discussed below, supports this. *C.f.* Williams (1999) 30 'from the earliest of times it seems to have been understood that among the services that Roman men might expect their slaves to perform was the satisfaction of their sexual desires.'pp30-38 offers a useful list of sources for Roman sex slavery that exemplifies how ubiquitous such abuse was.

they owned the majority of female slaves, yet they were also the owners of those same large houses that required relatively few female slaves as staff. On the other hand, less wealthy citizens who only owned a small number of slaves would have been unlikely to have wanted to risk damaging their property by pimping the women out in what was a notoriously dangerous profession.[548]

Equally, a collar found at Bulla Regia in Tunisia clearly indicates that the woman who wore it was a prostitute (*meretrix*).[549] Whilst this specific collar is somewhat later than most of the sources under discussion in this thesis, dating from the 4th century CE, we do know that slave collars were used throughout Roman history.[550] The unusual element of the Bulla Regia collar is not that is a collar, but that it specifies that the wearer was a prostitute. Clearly it was attached to ensure that the slave did not run away whilst out plying her trade, though presumably some women did or there would be no need for such measures. Further, it is notable that a significant majority of slave collars have been found in the Italian peninsula, whilst manacles and shackles are concentrated on the northern and western borders of the empire.[551] Perhaps this concentration of collars, which restricted the slave's ability to escape whilst not limiting the free-movement of their bodies, suggests that the wealthy elite were pimping out their slave women from brothels in the same towns and cities where they owned their large homes. This would have enabled the women to return to their slave quarters at night with the profits whilst avoiding the stigma of pimping and prostitution being associated with their elite owners.[552]

Naturally, there were pimps who operated throughout Roman society as well. The pimp as a stock character in the plays of Plautus could be either male (*leno*) or female (*lena*) and was regularly portrayed as a grubby and unlikeable individual, hungry for money and lacking in

[548] Sen. *Controv.* 1.2.12 describes a patron of a brothel who was more turned on 'by the very fact that you begged for mercy' – the violence of the woman's ordeal is palpable.
[549] *ILS 9455.* For discussion on the Bulla Regia collar see Thurmond (1994) 465-466; McGinn (2004) 37.
[550] Trimble (2016). McGinn (2004) 37 n.159 suggests that branding or tattooing would have played a similar role in earlier periods, rather than collars. Either way, the aim was to prevent the slave from escaping whilst not inhibiting her ability to use her body freely during sex.
[551] Trimble (2016); Thompson (1993)
[552] Sen. *Controv.* 5.6 describes the night-time gang-rape of a man dressed up as a woman. One of the arguments put forth in that scenario is the inevitability of a woman being raped when out at night (*date illi vestem puellarum, date noctem; rapietur*), suggesting a further danger that faced such women.

morality.[553] That typification demonstrates that pimps were sufficiently common in Republican society that the audience would recognise them, but also that they were viewed with suspicion and dislike.[554] Despite that social exclusion, which was typical for slave traders as well as pimps,[555] there was undoubtedly a place for such individuals, given the prevalence of prostitution throughout the urban landscape. Inscriptions from Pompeii show a range of sexual services being advertised and attached to servile names, thus the prostitution of slaves must have continued through the Republic and into the early Imperial period.[556] Later commentators from the Imperial period are clear that the prostitution of women and children who were enslaved as prisoners of war was commonplace.[557] McGinn highlights that the readiness of pimps to acquire children suggests that a high number of those children were likely prostituted as a result.[558] The experiences of women who were raped and sexually abused whilst being enslaved through military conquest have been discussed above, whilst the long-term damage done to children who were victims of sexual abuse remains to be considered. However, in both instances it is clear that the prostituted slave – either woman or child – would already have been suffering from a considerable amount of abuse and trauma before being subsequently forced to engage in the continuation of their own sexual exploitation.

The slave's experience of being forcibly removed from their homeland, enslaved, sexually abused and forced into prostitution, are also common for modern-day female victims of human trafficking.[559] Cross-cultural research into the impact of human trafficking consistently finds that, regardless of cultural background, victims frequently meet the criteria for PTSD diagnosis.[560] Even after women have managed to escape prostitution, the psychological distress caused by their experiences has been found to persist.[561] The similarities between the experiences of trafficked women and Roman slaves are clear and

[553] Plaut. *Asin., Cist., Curc., Persa, Poen., Pseud., Rud., Vidularia.*
[554] For Roman social attitudes towards pimps see McGinn (2004) 74.
[555] Sen *Controv.* 1.2.9 likens pimps and slave traders with pirates in his assessment of their moral worth.
[556] Williams (2014) 508-510 gives an overview of the specific inscriptions. Notably a number of those are attributed to male prostitutes (*CIL 7339, 5408, 1825, 1825a, 3932*).
[557] *Dio Chrys.* 7.133; Sen. *Constant.* 6.5; Sen. *Controv.* 1.2.1, 1.2.11-12; *V.Max* 6.1.6; *Liv.* 39.9.5
[558] McGinn (2004) 57-58
[559] The experiences of male victims are less-well researched, though studies that have focussed on men find that violent beatings, 'scare tactics' with weapons (i.e. holding a gun to the head) and forced physical labour is more common, whereas women tend to be raped and forced into sex work: Iglesias-Rios *et al.* (2018)
[560] Iglesias-Rios *et al.* (2018) 10; Hopper (2017) 21; Pascual-Leone (2017) 53; Farley (2004) 34.
[561] Benoit & Millar (2001) 71

both share close affinity with the common stressors that can lead to complex PTSD (CPTSD).[562] Those symptoms are specifically associated with 'sustained, repeated or multiple forms of traumatic exposure (e.g….childhood sexual abuse…torture or slavery), reflecting loss of emotional, psychological and social resources under conditions of prolonged adversity.'[563] The way in which prolonged trauma reduces an individual's ability to withstand subsequent traumatic events - resulting in psychological fatigue, has already been outlined in chapter 2.[564] Whilst these stressors have consistently been linked to the development of PTSD, depression and anxiety, studies have also observed that an interruption of biorhythms, such as sleep patterns, which can exacerbate the decline in mental health, deplete energy levels and cause the individual to dissociate from their situation.[565] Finally, elevated rates of PTSD, anxiety and depression in such circumstances are commonly linked with suicidal ideation (75% of victims), with 84% of those cases resulting in an actual attempt.[566]

It is important to highlight that forced prostitution is rape, from the perspective the victim. This is not a moral statement, but one that has its basis in evolutionary psychology. Human beings are inherently sexual beings. Sexuality is a central part of each person's identity, regardless of where individual preferences might place that person on a spectrum of sexual expression. Given the centrality of sexuality to our wider identities, it follows that 'humans have a central interest in their sexual identities not being violated.'[567] This obviously applies to cases of rape. Regardless of whether or not it was recognised by their abusers, slaves did have a sense of sexual integrity and thus a sense of consent. Consequently, due to their subjugation, any sex with a 'willing' slave was an oxymoron: it was not possible for a slave to consent to rape.[568] As such, whether by their owner or from being forced into prostitution, those sexual acts were ones that violated the slave's innate sexual integrity.

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[562] Farley (2004) 58. Although CPTSD was only recently recognised by the WHO as separate from PTSD, in its 2019 publication of the ICD-11, the disorder had been theorised for some time beforehand and focusses on the compounded impact of suffering a number of stressors that can cause PTSD individually.
[563] Karatzias & Levendosky (2019) 817
[564] p39 *ff*
[565] Hopper (2017) 21. This dissociation is a protective characteristic, but the apparent disconnect from one's surroundings and extreme lethargy could go some way to explain the trope of the lazy and stupid slave in Roman thought. *c.f.* Columella *Rust.* 1.7.5-6
[566] Hershberger (2021) 459; Frey *et al.* (2019); Lederer & Wetzel (2014)
[567] Archard (2007) 392
[568] Matthews (2019) 64

5.2.4 Childhood sexual abuse

As with the discussion of rape, it will be useful to outline the cultural context of childhood sexual abuse in Rome before considering exactly how much the impact of that abuse might have been mitigated by differing cultural values. In a similar manner to rape, the sexual integrity of citizen boys was regarded on a similar level as that of unmarried citizen women.[569] The attempted rape of Publilius[570] was discussed in an earlier chapter as evidence for the clear distinction between attitudes towards free and enslaved sexual autonomy.[571] The fact that this episode occurred in the early stages of the Republic (326 BCE) does suggest that the sexual abuse of slave boys was an established feature of slavery from at least that time. Further, Roman culture became increasingly Hellenised after the second Punic War, which coincided with an explosion in slave numbers obtained through conquest that enabled more questionable sexual behaviours to be explored without harming citizen integrity.[572] Polybius, writing in the second century BCE, quotes Cato in noting that sex with young male slaves was becoming more prevalent in Roman society.[573] Cato attributed the increase in overt pederastic behaviour to the influence of Greek culture upon soldiers who had been serving during the war against Perseus. The use of slave boys for sexual gratification is attested to in a number of plays by Plautus, which perhaps supports Polybius' reasoning if one accepts that the comedies reflect Greek behaviour for comedic purposes.[574] However, instances such as the prologue to *Casina*, where the slave actor openly advertises his services for post-production prostitution (albeit through his on-stage female persona), would seem to indicate that the practice had become rather more embedded in Roman society by this stage as well.[575]

Even if we accept that pederasty was a Greek cultural import, that does not automatically mean that it was not a harmful one. Although it is often described by the older male *erastes* as a gender-specific type of initiation,[576] pederasty effectively amounted to the institutionalised sexual abuse of a citizen boy (*eromenos*) who did not want to be the object

[569] Skinner (2013) 261
[570] Livy 8.28
[571] See chapter 3.4.2.1; also Strong (2021) 176-179
[572] Verstraete (1980) 229-231
[573] *Plb.* 31.25; see also Skinner (2013) 18. Even if viewed within Cato's often exaggerated context of social and moral decline, the alleged ubiquity of pederasty indicates at least a degree of prevalence.
[574] Though *c.f.* Williams (1999) 37, who holds the view that the sexual behaviour on-stage is very much Roman.
[575] Plaut. *Cas.* 84-86. See Williams (1999) 15-16 for the debate on whether pederasty was indeed a Greek cultural export or something more ubiquitous to the ancient Mediterranean.
[576] Pl. *Symp.* 184d-e; Skinner (2013) 16

of the *erastes*' lust. In Xenophon's *Symposion*, Socrates is clear that 'a youth does not share in the pleasures of sex with a man, as a woman does, but soberly looks upon the other who is drunk with passion.'[577] Similarly, despite lust for boys being the subject of various lyric poets (and it is lust - not love), there is not a single extant example that describes the *eromenos* reciprocating the *erastes'* advances.

If literary sources support the notion that the *eromenos* commonly and explicitly rejected the *erastes*[578] - indeed that they were expected to do so - then it would seem that even though pederasty was an accepted feature of some parts of Greek society, that acceptance paid no regard to the views of the children themselves. Graffiti from Athens[579] and Thasos[580] detailing pederastic relationships are decidedly ambiguous as evidence for the boys' enthusiasm.[581] Likewise, Plato philosophises on the virtues of pederasty but is explicit that the boys either do not understand their situation, or do not feel the same way as the older male does.[582] The only clear evidence in support of the *eromenos* being a willing participant in pederastic relationships are a small selection of images taken from red figure pottery. However even those more explicit artistic sources remain problematic when their sympotic context is taken into account. These are images that were designed to be viewed in a sexually charged, licentious, humorous and potentially drunken atmosphere. Considering the far more prevalent views from the more serious literary sources that suggest the boys did *not* wish to engage in sexual relations with the older man, it is perhaps more reasonable to view the artistic depictions of older men being successful in their advances as a pornographic reflection of desire rather than genuine mutual attraction. Consequently, even this brief review of the evidence for pederasty in Greece indicates that, if Cato was correct in asserting that Roman culture adopted it as a Greek cultural export, it adopted a practice that clearly showed a dominant sexual aggressor forcing a child into sexual relations that they did not wish to be involved in.

[577] Xen. *Symp.* 8.21-22
[578] Hubbard (2003) 11
[579] *IG* 1(2).921-926
[580] *SEG* 32.847
[581] Hubbard (2003) 55-85 gives a full overview of Greek historical and epigraphic sources.
[582] Pl. *Phdr.* 5.9.255

Later sources for Roman pederasty support this. The poet Tibullus describes an attempted seduction of boys who resist at first, but must be broken down by persistence,[583] as does Catullus,[584] whilst Ovid's *Ars Amatoria* and Vergil's *Eclogue* both contain sections that bear a striking similarity to the Greek lyric poets, who bemoan their rejection at the hands of a younger lover.[585] In both Greek and Roman instances, then, it is clear that despite the broader cultural contextualisation of pederasty as being acceptable from the perspective of the *erastes* (or simply: man), the boys who were involved did not experience those advances as harmless sexual fun. This bears close relation to the modern example seen in the ritualised sexual abuse of Sambian boys discussed above. Taken together, this clearly indicates that regardless of cultural context, ancient or modern, children are not able to be conditioned into interpreting sexual relations as non-coercive before they are developmentally ready.[586] This has clear implications for child slaves, about whom there is a range of sources which attests to their sexual abuse in both the Republic and Imperial periods.

Plutarch, writing from well into the Imperial period, suggests that citizen boys wore the *bulla* from the very beginnings of the Republic as a way of signalling to men they encountered whilst naked (presumably at the baths) that they were citizens boys rather than slaves.[587] The clear inference from this is that naked boys who did not wear the *bulla* were likely to be slaves and so would be considered 'fair game' by predatory older men. Perhaps it was to avoid allegations of just such behaviour that Gaius Gracchus reported that he made a point of not surrounding himself with attractive young slave boys while on official business in Sardinia.[588] Whilst ostensibly done in order to signal to his supporters that he was morally upstanding, it also signals to historians that the opposite was a common enough practice that he had to explicitly state his opposition to it. Catullus showed no such qualms when he addressed a poem to Cato wherein he describes raping a slave boy as a joke.[589] Horace writes that servant girls and estate-born boys can be abused whenever the mood takes the

[583] *Tib.* 1.4.15, 54
[584] *Catull.* 99
[585] Ov. *Ars.* 2.683-4; Verg. *Ecl.* 2
[586] A view that is also supported by the research on child-brides, discussed above, which specifies developmental stage as a primary factor in the harm that girls suffer.
[587] Plut. *Quaes. Rom.* 288a
[588] *Gel.* 15.12
[589] *Catull.* 56. Although the Latin reads pupulum ('little boy'), it is a fair assumption that Catullus refers to a slave boy and not a citizen, as the rape of a citizen boy would unlikely be the subject of humorous boasting.

slaveowner.[590] His emphasis on *vernae* is telling in this regard and it is notable that he also refers to slave girls as well, which shows that not all girls were prostituted by their owners; some were kept for their personal use. Equally, Pliny records that Marc Antony bought two (supposedly) identical twin boys *eximios forma* ('of exceptional beauty').[591] That the slaves were not, in the end, identical twins is the main reason that Pliny recounts the episode, but the fact that their exceptional beauty was worthy of note (and presumably what secured Antony's interest) suggests that the intention behind buying the boys was sexual.

The Imperial period represents some more challenging accounts for interpretation, as a number of the sexual abuses that are recorded are attributed to the emperor at the time. Inevitably, this raises questions regarding their accuracy, and certainly regarding how easily those examples can be generalised to the wider population. For example, Tiberius is depicted by Suetonius as being of a particularly sexually deviant character. He reportedly insisted that his dinner host, Sestius Gallus, used naked slave girls to attend during their dinner,[592] kept sex slaves at his villa in Capri,[593] forced child slaves to perform oral sex on him while he swam in his pool, and also raped a pair of slave brothers, subsequently breaking both of their legs when they complained at the humiliation.[594]

It is likely that these examples are exaggerated for effect. Suetonius also describes the sexual abuse of a noble woman, Mallonia, who ultimately kills herself as a result of her abuse at the hands of the emperor.[595] Edward Champlin firmly refutes the veracity of this account, arguing that Mallonia is a complete fabrication that served to illustrate the emperor's depravity and predilection with oral sex (which was seen as an emasculating act).[596] If Suetonius was exaggerating (even fabricating) in such a way, it might go some way to explaining why the pair of slave brothers just discussed are recorded as complaining about their abuse at the hands of the emperor; rather than being accurate it was a literary device that

[590] Hor. *Sat.* 1.2.114-119
[591] Plin. *HN.* 7.56
[592] Suet. *Tib.* 42
[593] Suet. *Tib.* 43
[594] Suet. *Tib.* 44
[595] Suet. *Tib.* 45
[596] Although, Champlin (2015) 224 does stress that this was likely the work of Suetonius' sources, rather than the biographer himself.

enabled Suetonius to add to Tiberius' cruel depiction by adding in the remark about breaking his victims' legs. Regardless of the accuracy of those accounts, in much the same way that Plautine farce can offer compelling evidence for real-life treatment of slaves, so too can the exaggerations of Suetonius. The sexual proclivities of Tiberius may have been recounted with disgust by the biographer, but they were nevertheless conceivable as the actions of a morally ambiguous slaveowner.

Although Tiberius was the target of opprobrium for his sexual behaviour, he was by no means the only emperor to be recorded sexually abusing his slaves. Nero's freedman Sporos was castrated and forced to live as a woman.[597] Vespasian, too, was associated with trading in castrated slaves[598] and reportedly also kept a number of female sex-slaves for his daily use.[599] Vitellius is implicated in one of the more detailed cases of sexual abuse, concerning the abuse of his slave Asiaticus. The events, as told by Suetonius, provide an intriguing insight into how slaves might have attempted to escape their abuse, even when it was at the hands of the emperor himself.[600] Asiaticus was a slave who, from a young age (*aduluscentulum*), was sexually abused by Vitellius. Eventually he managed to escape his owner and ran away, disgusted by what he had suffered (*mox taedio profugum*).[601] He then seems to have tried to make a life for himself by selling *posca* – a type of cheap wine - at the harbour town of Puteoli.[602] Unfortunately for Asiaticus, he was found, recaptured and put in chains. However, Vitellius then released him so that he might carry out further sexual abuses against the young slave. Notably, Asiaticus continued to resist and misbehave despite the risk of punishment, and was ultimately sold to a gladiator trainer as a result of his refusal to acquiesce to Vitellius' advances. Despite all of this, Vitellius eventually freed Asiaticus, in order to save him from death in the arena, and ultimately made him an equestrian.

[597] Suet. *Nero* 28; Dio Chrys. *Discources* 21.6-10
[598] Suet. *Ves.* 4
[599] Suet. *Ves.* 21
[600] Suet. *Vit.* 12
[601] The passage is frequently translated as 'running away after growing weary (of his treatment)', though perhaps reading '*taedium*' as 'loathing' or 'disgust' might be a more realistic appraisal of his true feelings.
[602] This is nothing more than conjecture, but it would be a pleasing part of the tale if Asiaticus had deliberately gone to Puteoli in the hopes of raising enough money through his *posca* trade to pay a ship to take him somewhere where he could start his life anew.

The story is ostensibly about Vitellius' weakness of moral fibre and the pernicious influence that slaves and freedmen could exert upon Imperial power. However, there are some clear findings that can be gleaned from this account. It shows that a slave might have responded with revulsion at the sexual abuses they endured, that some might have continued to resist their abusers despite repeated sexual advances,[603] and that continued rejection of their owner might have ultimately resulted in being sold to the arena.[604] There is always the possibility that Suetonius has embellished the story to make his intended point about Vitellius' character, but as with Tiberius, his depiction of Asiaticus' behaviour had to be inspired by examples that had been seen elsewhere, or that at least could be sensibly imagined by a Roman slaveowner.

If the sources for sexual abuse of slaves were limited to accounts such as Suetonius' biographies, then it would be unwise to extrapolate those experiences to the rest of the slave population. Self-evidently, the emperors were men at the absolute pinnacle of Roman power and authority, alongside the commensurate opportunities to abuse that power. While these sources can provide a detailed snapshot into a few specific instances of sexual abuse in a unique social context, how representative are they for the conditions that slaves from less illustrious owners endured? Fortunately, there do remain a number of other sources which provide solid evidence for the continued sexual abuse of slaves throughout the Imperial period. Although these might not deal in specific case studies, they help to 'fill in the gaps' by describing a more generalised view of slavery in Imperial Rome.

Seneca, in his *Controversiae*, discusses the declamations of Haterius - an orator from Augustan Rome of questionable rhetorical skill. In one example, Haterius was defending a freedman who had been charged with having sex with his patron and remarked that:

> *Inpudicitia in ingenuo crimen est, in servo necessitas, in liberto officium.*

[603] Which possibly lends credence to the idea that Tiberius' two slave brothers felt able to complain about their own abuse.

[604] Without the backing of the emperor, it is unlikely that other slaves would have been as lucky as Asiaticus in obtaining his eleventh-hour reprieve.

> Sexual immodesty in a freeborn man is a crime but in a slave it is a necessity and in a freedman, a duty.[605]

Seneca notes that this specific speech later became the source of jokes regarding the sexual behaviour of freedmen.[606] However, clearly the emphasis for current purposes should be upon the attribution of the terms 'immodesty' and 'necessity' to slave sexuality. Necessity implies inevitability. Even if this was not the case for every slave, the fact that Haterius considered sexual abuse to be a necessity for a slave suggests that it was commonplace. Dio Chrysostom corroborates this when he defines slavery versus freedom by stating 'slavery is ignorance of what is allowed and what is not.'[607] This suggests that a distinct feature of the slave experience was a lack of consent and the sufferance of abuses that would not have been tolerated by freeborn individuals. This relates back to Haterius' speech, as the sex acts he deems necessary for slaves to perform were considered shameful for a freeborn man to endure (*impudicitia*). Such a shameful act implies anal or oral rape. Those same attitudes are confirmed elsewhere in the literature. Martial mocks the freeborn Naevolus for being anally penetrated by his slave[608] and Quintilian believes it to be so shameful that victims should not directly discuss it, even when petitioning the case to a judge.[609] Plutarch's view on the purpose of the *bulla* to protect citizen boys from rape are discussed above, and the Hadrianic poet Strato provides a collection of his own and earlier poet's pederastic epigrams, one of which clearly refers to the rape of slave boys as something that inflicted fear and shame upon the victim.[610]

Further evidence for the pervasiveness of sexually abusing child slaves throughout Roman society can be seen in Tacitus' account of Pedanius Secundus' murder.[611] This well-known

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[605] Sen. *Controv.* 4. pf10
[606] Butrica (2005) 210-221 offers an extensive analysis on the subject and disputes the idea that sex was a 'duty' for a freedman. However, despite a comprehensive treatment of this same source, he says nothing concerning the abuse being a necessity for slaves, and indeed p218 actually supports the notion that the freedman in question had previously been abused whilst enslaved.
[607] *Dio Chrys.* 14.18
[608] *Mart.* 3.71
[609] Quint. *Inst.* 11.5.84
[610] Strato *AP.* 12.211. Hubbard (2003) collects the pederastic epigrams together at *pp*.299-306 with discussion at *pp*.270-271.
[611] Tac. *Ann.* 14.42

passage is often discussed in reference to the law that demanded the execution of the full household of slaves.[612] However, Tacitus also suggests the possible motive for his murder as being jealousy from a love-rival. Specifically, he states that one of the slaves who murdered Secundus might have done so because he (the slave) could not compete against Secundus for the affections of a 'favourite boy' (*exoletus*). Anise Strong considers this episode from the perspective of the *exoletus*, noting that this was a child slave who was liable to be raped by his owner. She suggests an alternative motive: that the slave who murdered Secundus did so in order to protect the boy from the abuse, rather than through any feelings of jealousy.[613] Whether or not this was the true motivation behind the killing, the episode once again depicts the sexual abuse of child slaves as being a matter-of-fact detail in other matters that were of more concern to the slave-owning author. It is notable that Tacitus does not pass judgement on this behaviour, yet he is happy to do so in other instances of morally questionable sexual relations with slaves,[614] which further supports that he considered these specific abuses to be mundane.[615]

Conversely, Cohen has argued that the murder of Secundus sets an example that 'would have impelled masters towards self-control',[616] despite the explicit advice from Plutarch that slaveowners should freely rape their slaves to protect their wives' chastity.[617] However, this would seem an unlikely proposition. Overall, Cohen's assessment of slavery and sexual abuse is rather wary of accepting too high a prevalence, due to the lack of explicit evidence and specific case-studies. Arguably, though, it is exactly that generalised nature of the evidence which suggests that it was commonplace. A compelling number of sources have been set out thus far, that describe the sexual abuse of various slaves in various ways. Those span a range of genres from fiction to law and rarely contain any criticism from the writers themselves.[618] Surely, if this were an unusual or unacceptable type of behaviour, there would be more

[612] The *SC Silanianum*; *Dig.* 29.5.1
[613] Strong (2021) 184
[614] Tac. *Ann.* 4.10 describes Sejanus securing 'by the foulest means' (*stuprum*) the loyalty of the young and beautiful eunuch Lygdus.
[615] See also Juv. *Sat.* 11.149-170 for further nonchalant remarks on sexualised child slaves.
[616] Cohen (2013) 198
[617] Discussed at note 433, above.
[618] Musonius Rufus is perhaps unique in being wholly critical of having sex with one's slaves (*Muson.* 12). However, even in this case, his criticisms concern the lack of self-control exhibited the slaveowner rather than any concern for the welfare of the slaves themselves.

explicit commentary and criticism from the extant sources that do detail that sexual abuse.[619] Further, it is even less methodologically sound to take the example of Pedanius Secundus (an example that is exceptional because it concerns the murder of a senator by his slaves, not because of any sexual abuse that caused that to take place) and suggest that that episode should not only dictate how the majority of slave-owning Roman citizens subsequently thought they ought to behave, but also that it conclusively disproves the more abundant sources that suggest the abuse *was* taking place, and continued to do so after Secundus was killed.

5.2.5 Castration and the abuse of eunuchs

One specific type of abuse that did elicit opprobrium from some Roman writers was castration. Child slaves could be castrated in order to keep them looking young and boyish – thus more sexually attractive to their owners.[620] Juvenal's *Satire* 6 describes how female slaveowners preferred to have (forced) sex with eunuchs, as it meant that there was no need to use abortive drugs.[621] He describes the preference to wait until slave boys had started puberty, and were thus physically capable of having sex, before having them castrated. He also describes how a desirable eunuch could catch the eye of all who saw him.[622] Clearly, this not only indicates that such a painful and traumatising experience was being carried out on young boys, but that this set the victim up for a lifetime of ridicule as well. The abuse was seemingly commonplace; Seneca notes that distinguished men 'owned flocks of castrated slaves' (*castratorum greges habent*),[623] and Minucius Basilus, a senator and one of Julius Caesar's assassins, would castrate his slaves as a form punishment.[624]

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[619] In fact, that is exactly what we do see in the evidence for castration – discussed below. Further, the sources are not averse to condemning excessively harsh treatment of slaves more generally (for example, the descriptions of Vedius Pollio), so it stands to reason that these sexual practices were not viewed in such a manner.

[620] Sen. *Ep.* 47.7; Juv. 6.366-78; Mart. *Ep.* 6.2

[621] '*Et quod abortivo non est opus': Juv.* 6.368

[622] *Juv.* 6.373a-376

[623] Sen. *Controv.* 10.4.17. Butrica (2005) 230-231 notes the connection between eunuchs and *exoleti* (*delicati* who had grown beyond boyhood); see also Pomeroy (1992) 47 n.10. Laes (2010) 259-263 notes the relationship between emperor Domitian and Earinus – his castrated *delicium*.

[624] Until they murdered him in revenge: App. *BC.* 3.98. The episode is the closing remark for his 3rd book. Perhaps Appian includes this account as an attempt at symbolism for Julius Caesar's legacy for the Republic and his subsequent assassination. Regardless of its accuracy, it reflects the fact that senators owned eunuchs, and that castration could be a punishment inflicted upon their slaves.

There were occasional attempts to ban the practice, which further speaks to its relative prevalence. Domitian outlawed castration and limited the sale of eunuchs,[625] but they continued to be a popular commodity in spite of the ban. Hadrian had to re-establish that same legislation some years later, indicating that Domitian's initial attempt was clearly unsuccessful in effecting any real social change.[626] Seneca was disapproving, describing how slaveowners giving in to lust was the cause of many slave boys being castrated.[627] It is always worth considering exactly where Seneca was directing his criticism, though. Perhaps he was more disparaging of elite men submitting to their lust and castration simply offered a useful (and common-knowledge) example for illustrating the dangers of that particular vice. However, Quintilian clearly states that he considers it unnatural[628] and Statius, who briefly refers to castration in his *Silvae,* also emphasises his belief that it goes against nature.[629] It is noteworthy that he also specifies the fear that slave mothers experienced, afraid that their sons would be castrated after birth. This certainly suggests that it was a common-enough practice carried out on new-born slave boys as well as those at later stages in life.

The time at which the castration took place might have been relevant to the long-term harm a slave would have suffered, because sexual identity begins to develop in a child at around 18 months.[630] In a modern context, this has implications for whether sex-reassignment is considered as an option for boys who have suffered severe external genital trauma.[631] For eunuchs in ancient Rome, this perhaps suggests that if they were castrated as new-born babies, they might not have suffered the same level psychological distress as those that were castrated after their sexual identity had begun to develop.[632] Regardless, from the relatively

[625] Suet. *Dom.* 7; Mart. 6.2, 9.5, 9.7; Stat. *Silv.* 3.4.74-77
[626] Ulp. *Dig.* 48.8.4.2. Domitian's own castrated *delicium* had been mutilated prior to this ruling: Laes (2010) 262.
[627] Sen. *Ira* 1.21.3
[628] Quint. *Or.* 5.12
[629] 'and rejoicing, Nature sees only those she created' (*gavisaque, solos quos genuit Natura videt*): Stat. *Silv.* 3.4.75-76. See also Laes (2010) 256-257.
[630] Ochoa (1998) 1118
[631] *Ibid*
[632] However, Ochoa (1998) and Reiner (1997) and (1996) describe a range of cases where sex reassignment was elected by the boys' parents as the course to follow. This ultimately failed, as once the child arrived at puberty, despite having received reassignment surgery and having been raised as a girl, they requested a reversal to their original (male) sex. Comparative case studies to work with are few in this regard, but the indication is that even slaves who were castrated at birth, thus living their entire life as eunuchs, might still have developed symptoms associated with gender dysphoria if they survived to adolescence.

few studies that have been conducted on the subject, the psychological trauma that is observed in victims of male genital mutilation is consistently shown to be considerable.[633] Aside from PTSD that can arise from the violence of the abuse itself, hormonal imbalances due to the absence of testicles can result in cognitive deficits that cause depression, memory loss and confusion unless compensated for through medical intervention.[634] Further, self-revulsion and shame are frequently reported by those who continue to attend follow-up studies.[635] Whilst the trauma stemming from violence and the hormonal impact will obviously have also been a feature of the ancient slave's experience, self-revulsion and shame could arguably represent a culturally constructed trauma. However, even in that case, those same responses are noted by Juvenal, who pities eunuchs who were mutilated at a young age (before puberty) as once they were adult, 'they're embarrassed by the pouch and the chickpea they're left with.'[636]

5.3 The long-term implications of Childhood Sexual Abuse

Castration was obviously a form of childhood sexual abuse that could only be inflicted upon males. Other forms of sexual abuse could be visited upon any slave unfortunate enough to attract the attention of an abuser. Whilst the foregoing examples might not give many specific instances of child slaves being sexually abused, they do suggest a continuous pattern of abusive behaviour throughout the Republican and Imperial periods that must have been the true experience for a number of slaves that we do not have any further evidence for. How, then, might they have responded to such abuses?

Despite the aforementioned challenges in defining childhood sexual abuse from a clinical and cross-cultural perspective, methods for measuring trauma impacts on victims, such as the Child Abuse Trauma Scale (CATS), are widely used in a global context and have been established for some time.[637] Equally, the definitional challenges are less problematic when considering the experience of a child slave from Rome. Present-day debates around what

[633] Tubaro *et al.* (2021); Furr& Culkin (2016); Kaggwa & Galukande (2014); Orakwe & Undie (2012); Wassersug & Johnson (2007)
[634] Wassersug & Johnson (2007)546-547; Beer *et al.* (2006); see also Furr & Culkin (2016)
[635] Wassersug & Johnson (2007)546-547; Beer *et al.* (2006)
[636] Juv. *Sat.* 6.373a-383b
[637] Katz *et al.* (2021) 411-414; Sanders & Becker-Lausen (1995)

constitutes a 'child' hover around making a distinction between children and adults at ages 16-18.[638] Within the Roman context, children are comfortably within the lower limit of that age bracket.[639] Further, the majority of specific examples of childhood sexual abuse from ancient Rome indicate that the child slaves were in early adolescence, yet sexual proceptivity has been observed to develop in children worldwide between the ages of 8 and 10.[640] Consequently, even at the earliest stages of sexual development, children already have begun to develop a psychological understanding of sexual attraction and thus the implications of their physical abuse.[641] Equally, concerns about what is termed 'sexual' and what is termed 'abuse' are merely semantic in relation to this research; the types of abuse being considered are well within the accepted confines for sexual abuse in all cultural contexts.

As with victims of rape and trafficking, PTSD, depression and anxiety are all common in victims of childhood sexual abuse. The distress can be immediate but also have a long-term effect on the victim that can result in self-esteem deficit and self-destructive behaviour such as suicide or prostitution.[642] Notably, the possibility that a child might not be affected by a type of sexual abuse without first having been culturally conditioned to view that *as* abuse,[643] has been roundly rejected by modern research. Childhood sexual abuse is no more a culturally constructed form of violence than rape.[644] Matthews offers an excellent overview of the way in which (mostly Western) societies historically ignored or supressed the few voices that were trying to highlight the victims of childhood sexual abuse.[645] Some child victims were labelled delinquents who had actively sought out the sexual experience.[646] Perhaps most well-known is the 'Freudian Coverup', wherein Sigmund Freud intentionally theorised the Oedipal Complex in order to explain away the 'hysterical' accounts of women who had been victims of sexual abuse at the hands of their fathers during childhood.[647] This

[638] Haugaard (2000) 1036
[639] Although Trimalchio's age is the subject of debate (Roth, 2021b, 215) he was certainly a 'child' in his own eyes, which would place him at <14 years old when abused.
[640] Li (2022) 334
[641] Li (2022); Lamb (2004); McClintock &Herdt (2000), (1996); Leitenberg & Henning (1995)
[642] Kenny & McEachern (2000) 911
[643] Kinsey (1953)
[644] The earlier example of how Sambian boys responded to their initiation supports this conclusion.
[645] Matthews (2019) 43-50
[646] This offers an alternative interpretation for the few ancient examples of pederasty where the *eromenos* was supposedly an enthusiastic participant in the relationship. Perhaps it was easier to pretend they had consented, than to accept that a citizen boy had been violated.
[647] For a full account of Freud's reasoning in perpetrating this scandal see Matthews (2019) 44-45; Herman (1997) 10-20; Rush (1977)

concerted minimisation of victim accounts slowly began to reverse over the course of 20th century, ultimately resulting in the understanding that modern-day health and social-care professionals now have on the subject. Importantly, that reversal in attitudes took place in societies that, as with Rome, did not recognise that child sexual abuse was harming its victims. This means that the psychological harm of sexual abuse had to have been happening to children prior to it being culturally recognised. Thus, childhood sexual abuse clearly impacts victims on a universal level.

Cross-cultural studies have consistently found that childhood sexual abuse is associated with a range of negative psychological symptoms and poor mental health in later life.[648] Victims carry the impact of their abuse into their adult life which continues to have a detrimental effect upon their ability to function and adjust. Powerlessness in the face of the abuse has been linked with later-life anxiety and an extreme need to control, 'potentially triggering compensatory responses such as sexually abusing others.'[649] A meta-analysis that searched global literature on the correlation between child sexual abuse and suicidal behaviour confirms that victims of childhood sexual abuse are more at risk of suicidal behaviour in later life. This correlation is observable cross-culturally, thus it represents universal behavioural trends that can consequently be applied to Roman subjects.

However, the impact is not only psychological. The scars from childhood sexual abuse have been shown to leave an epigenetic mark on victims which can have a developmental impact upon cognition and emotion in the child as they grow into adulthood.[650] This impact can result in further psychopathologies that leave the victim vulnerable to further mental illness in later life.[651] The damage that childhood sexual abuse (and indeed other forms of child abuse) can have on the developing brain is typically referred to in relation to Adverse Childhood Experiences, which were discussed previously.[652] Adverse Childhood Experiences, alongside the epigenetic impact of abuse are consistently linked with poor brain development. The brains of children who experience chronic stress through physical or sexual abuse will focus

[648] Cantón-Cortés *et al.* (2012) 666, 675; Gamble *et al.* (2006); Levitan *et al.* (2003)
[649] Cantón-Cortés *et al.* (2012) 667; Finkelhar & Browne (1985)
[650] Zhang & Meaney (2010) 440-441
[651] Ray (2020) 395 and *passim* for explanations of the evolutionary adaptiveness of such psychopathologies.
[652] See chapter 4.3.2

their resources on survival and responding to threats in the environment. This leads to an overdeveloped fear response at the expense of underdeveloped areas such as those involved in complex thought.[653] Likewise, children who have not had the opportunity to develop a healthy theory of attachment and whose early emotional experiences have been impacted by Adverse Childhood Experiences can develop limited capacity for empathy and can lead to abusive behaviour in adulthood.[654]

As ever, it must be stressed that this is not definitive. Being a victim of abuse is not guarantee that the same individual is predetermined to revisit that upon others. However, such observations have been made within the context of a society that offers care and support for victims of childhood sexual abuse. Ancient Rome had no such provision and abused children were merely slaves who grew into abused adults; there was no guarantee that their conditions would even be alleviated.[655]

Clear evidence for such results in Roman slaves is sparse – not least because the very symptoms of those developmental impacts can manifest as anxiety, panic, fear, anger, lethargy, depression and dissociation, which were simply considered to be proof that slaves were naturally inferior to their owners. However, the fact that slaveowners viewed their slaves in such a way does indicate that this could have been a significant feature of 'typical' slave behaviour, even if the causes remained unknown. A number of examples from Plautus indicate slaves living in a constant state of fear and anxiety, with many characters' thoughts turning quickly to suicide and death when their situation looks precarious.[656] However, the character of Trimalchio in Petronius' *Satyricon* is possibly the most illuminating in this respect.

Ulrike Roth conducts an insightful comparative analysis of the *Cena Trimalchionis* with survivor accounts from victims of childhood sexual abuse.[657] She focusses on two passages

[653] World Health Organisation (2006) 8
[654] World Health Organisation (2006) 8; see also Graham-Kevan (2020)
[655] Pollock (1983) 40-41 discusses the same impact that abuse may have had on children from 1500-1900.
[656] See chapter 6.4. Williams (1999) 34-37 offers a brief overview of sex slavery in Plautus.
[657] Roth (2021b)

which detail Trimalchio's boastful account of his own experiences of childhood sexual abuse at the hands of his owner. Notably, Roth asks her readers to consider Trimalchio's apparent bragging about sex with his owner's wife as being the 'mask of a tough guy' that covers up his much deeper mental anguish:[658]

> sic me salvum habeatis, ut ego sic solebam ipsumam meam debattuere, ut etiam dominus suspicaretur; et ideo me in vilicationem relegavit.
>
> By my hope of salvation, I used to bang my own mistress; until even the master became suspicious; and so he demoted me to a stewardship.
>
> tam magnus ex Asia veni quam hic candelabrus est. ad summam, quotidie me solebam ad illum metiri, et ut celerius rostrum barbatum haberem, labra de lucerna ungebam. tamen ad delicias ipsimi annos quattuordecim fui. nec turpe est quod dominus iubet. ego tamen et ipsimae satis faciebam. scitis quid dicam: taceo, quia non sum de gloriosis.
>
> I came from Asia as big as this candelabrum. To come to the point, I used to measure myself daily against it, and in order that I might have more quickly a bearded beak, I used to grease my lips from the lamp. Nevertheless, I was my master's *deliciae* at fourteen/for fourteen years. Nor is what one's master orders shameful. But I also used to satisfy my mistress. You know what I'm saying: I'll say no more, because I am not one of the boastful ones.[659]

Trimalchio exists in a world that does not recognise his treatment as abusive, so it is reasonable that he would also contextualise that abuse as being deserved.[660] However, closer analysis suggests that this is not, in fact, the case and that his contextualisation reflects a coping strategy that he employs to lessen his sense of trauma. Roth suggests that this masking behaviour bears close similarity to the way that some male survivors of childhood sexual abuse go on to adhere to a hyper-masculine performance of gender in their adult life, in order

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[658] Roth (2021b) 225
[659] Petron. *Sat.* 69.3, 75.10-11 (trans. Roth).
[660] Guilt and shame are common responses to sexual abuse: Roth (2021b) 224; Cantón-Cortés *et al.* (2012) 667; Wertheimer (2010) 114

to compensate for a perceived emasculation that stems from feeling responsible for 'having lost control over their bodies' when they were abused as boys.[661]

Further, there are some notable features of Trimalchio's characterisation that relate to the impact of child sexual abuse and adverse childhood experiences just highlighted. He has his own 'favourite boy' (*delicias*) named Croesus,[662] and has no compunction about behaving in an improperly and sexualised manner with his other slaves.[663] Similarly, notwithstanding Roth's alternative reading, the passages quoted above detail Trimalchio's clear expectation that his own slaves should show the same degree of sexual subservience to him, that he himself had to show when he also was a slave. This might come as little surprise when sexual abuse was such a commonplace occurrence in Roman slavery. However, the fact that he has been so badly affected by his own abuse, as Roth suggests, makes his sexually abusive treatment of his own slaves more questionable. That is, until his sexual abuse is viewed within the context of compensatory responses to abuse that are seen in modern-day victim behaviour.[664] Likewise, his preoccupation with his own death, which has typically been seen as a critique on freedmen's funerary customs, could in fact reflect the type of suicidal ideation that is also a symptom in survivors of childhood sexual abuse, discussed above.

A consistent feature of the trauma responses thus far considered is suicidal behaviour. This is clearly linked with other mental health symptoms common to CPTSD such as depression, anxiety and low self-esteem. The very nature of CPTSD serves to exacerbate those outcomes due to the complex nature of the trauma that sufferers have experienced – all of which are present in the treatment of slaves in both Republican and Imperial Rome. Despite there being few specific cases of such abuses taking place, there is ample evidence that supports their existence across the slave population more generally. The psychological impact of those, once again, operate on a universal scale; cultural variation cannot compensate for the traumas of rape and child sexual abuse in human beings. Consequently, the likelihood that many slaves will have suffered in the ways described above is considerable.

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[661] Roth (2021b) 224
[662] Petron. *Sat.* 64.5
[663] At 74.9 he grabs a slave boy and kisses him for so long that even his guests begin to feel uncomfortable.
[664] Cantón-Cortés *et al.* (2012) 667; Finkelhar & Browne (1985)

Once again, suicide looms large in the fictional representations of slaves and freedmen. Its prevalence amongst the slave population is a compelling reflection of how they were responding to their abuse. This corroborates what is known from modern research into trauma responses. Whether ideation or action, rape victims, victims of human trafficking and victims of child sexual abuse all score highly in their propensity towards suicidal behaviour. It therefore remains for this discussion to address that topic and consider the evidence for suicidal behaviour amongst slaves in more detail.

6 – Suicidal slaves: incidence, motivation, public perception

The previous two chapters have discussed specific traumatic events that were commonplace experiences for Roman slaves. The enslavement process itself was something that all slaves underwent in one form or another, whilst the sexual abuse of slaves was prevalent and affected the lives of many. Research into more recent victims of similar abuses has been used to create a comparative model that illuminates how slaves who suffered those same traumas might have responded. Both case studies highlight the prevalence of suicide in modern day cases, which suggests that suicidal behaviour – either ideation or actual self-killing – ought to have been a common feature of slave behaviour in ancient Rome as well, if the comparisons that have been drawn thus far are accurate. This final case study chapter will assess whether that is, in fact, the case.

As always, the scarcity of evidence for slaves presents a challenge that requires some methodological groundwork to be established before undertaking the analysis proper. Consequently, the initial stages of this discussion will highlight some of the approaches that have been adopted in cross-cultural research on suicidology. This will demonstrate how a modern assessment of the evidence for suicide in antiquity can offer alternative interpretations for the motivations behind instances of suicide that differ from those offered by the ancient writers who recorded them. Highlighting this difference also necessitates a broader analysis of Roman attitudes towards suicide more generally.

That initial discussion of cross-cultural suicidology will demonstrate that the cultural framework within which a suicide is depicted has a direct impact on how those instances are contextualised by the individuals that record them. As such, the focus will then turn to the manner in which ancient writers who recorded instances of suicide presented their subject matter to their readership. Authorial intent has an important impact on our understanding of the motivations and context behind suicide. A brief overview of three case studies - the suicides of Cato, Labeo and Gaius Gracchus - will emphasise the ambiguity of the source material. The choice of elite citizen men as subjects might seem an unlikely one in a study on slaves' experiences, but it is done to emphasise that, even when it concerns individuals who

were considered important by contemporary writers, the details and motivations behind suicidal behaviour are far from definitive.

Finally, having made the case that a reinterpretation of the evidence for suicide is possible, a range of extant examples of slave suicides will be presented to that end. This will enable a more nuanced approach to those examples of slave suicide and reveal a potentially more complex psychological motive to their suicidal behaviour than mere loyalty (which is often the reasoning assigned by ancient writers). The analysis will pay particular attention to the mental health of the slave at the point of suicide. Ultimately, this will review the motivations behind slave suicide in Republican and Imperial Rome. Furthermore, it will discuss the relationship between such an extreme action of self-harm, and an underlying problem of undiagnosed mental illness in the slave, as an alternative reading for these examples.

The previous two chapters indicated that suicidal behaviour *should* occur as part of the slave experience with a degree of regularity. Therefore, the argument set out in this chapter is effective in two ways. Firstly, it will show that slaves were suffering from such a poor state of mental health that they were suicidal. But also, the very prevalence of that suicidal behaviour supports the conclusions the previous two chapters, which argue that the detrimental mental health of slaves was a direct result of their treatment.

6.1 Stoicism and the changing nature of suicide in Roman thought

Attitudes towards suicide developed during the Republican and early Imperial periods from initially viewing it as a dishonourable, servile action, to ultimately having the potential to view the act as a noble sacrifice. This change occurred in response to an increase in the number of suicides being carried out by citizen men, most notably during the dictatorships of Sulla and Julius Caesar.[665] The increase in politically motivated suicides by elite males resulted in the re-contextualisation of how society viewed such an action – ultimately leading

[665] Grisé (1980) 22-24; Rauh (2018)

to the development of *exitus* literature and the depiction of suicide as being a praiseworthy action of noble protest.[666]

This development largely coincided with the growth of Stoicism as an influence on elite Roman thought. After the Mithridatic War of 88-86 BCE, the Greek philosophical schools' libraries were split up and dispersed throughout the Mediterranean as various teachers emigrated or books were taken away by Sulla's forces, with the result that the main centre of philosophical teaching moved away from Athens and was re-established in both Alexandria and in Rome.[667] Detailed scholarly understanding of the decentralisation of Stoicism at this time is insecure,[668] but that decentralisation was an important factor in the transmission of philosophical ideas throughout the Greco-Roman world during this period. The impact of this change was not an immediate one, and it took some time for Stoic doctrines to take hold in the thinking of the Roman elite. As such, we must be careful not to overemphasise the role of Stoicism in Republican thought – its influence is less apparent than that of the Antiocheans, New Academics and even Epicureans.[669] With the obvious exception of Cato, Stoicism was merely an influence on Roman philosophy during the late Republic, rather than a defined philosophical identity.

Different approaches by contemporary writers towards Cato's own death are evidence of the diverse opinions on the subject of suicide. Brutus originally considered it 'impious and unmanly', but later changed his mind when faced with the possibility of his own death.[670] Likewise, Cicero uses Cato's example to emphasise the various different ways in which suicide could be viewed in relation to Stoicism, though he is not overly enthusiastic in his assessment of those.[671] Cicero also wrote a number of philosophical works that considers the value of life and the justifications for ending it.[672] However, his references to suicide are

[666] Rauh (2018) considers *exitus illustrium virorum* with a specific focus on Cato. Cobb (2020) 91-92 is broader and discusses the literary phenomenon from its third century BCE origins in Greek τελευτᾶι writings through to Imperial sources, highlighting its affinity with Stoic philosophy. See also Griffin (1986).
[667] Strabo *Geog.* 13.1.54; Plut. *Sulla* 26. For discussion see Sedley (2003) 26.
[668] Sedley (2003) 26
[669] Sedley (2003) 31
[670] Plut. *Brut.* 40.4; Hill (2004) 31
[671] Cic. *Off.* 1.112
[672] e.g. Cic. *Fin.* 1.49, 3.60-61, 5.29-30; *Off.* 1.112; *Rep.* 6.15; *Tusc.* 1.74-5, 2.67, 5.118.

often rather opaque and he is clearly not effusive in his promotion of the Stoic view.[673] His less-than-positive approach indicates that the changes in attitudes that were highlighted at the start of this chapter do not become an established perspective for the educated Roman elite until the Imperial period had begun in earnest.

It is not until Imperial writers such as Livy, Seneca, Tacitus and Valerius Maximus – all of whom shall be discussed in more detail throughout this chapter – that depictions of citizen men committing suicide become more commonplace. In many cases, those depictions concern themselves with case studies from the Republic and the moral justification for the act of self-killing.[674] This was partly a response to the marked increase in the number of high profile suicides that took place during the Imperial period and a need to account for those within the wider social and cultural context.[675] It must be remembered that this tendency towards focussing on noble suicide was still not a widespread phenomenon throughout Roman literature - its basis in a Stoic philosophy that could only be accessed through studying a canon of earlier Greek literature meant the it largely remained the preserve of an educated male elite.[676] Nevertheless, the change in approach to suicide that became apparent in the writings of those men was one which considered suicide as praiseworthy, noble and even morally required in certain contexts.[677]

However, the preoccupation with political nobility in the ancient sources results in a marked absence in the literature that is twofold. Firstly, suicidal motivations are almost entirely framed within a political context, either resulting from a protest against regime change or a 'jump before being pushed' situation.[678] This leaves no room for the consideration of other individual factors, such as poor mental health, that would seem more apt for explaining suicidal tendencies to a modern understanding. This also highlights the second absence in the

[673] Hill (2004) 37-39
[674] The different treatment of suicide in Plut. *Cat.* and *Ant*. clearly indicates a moral judgement on the author's part. Conversely, App. *BC* notes a number of examples of politically motivated suicide as a result of proscriptions. Similarly, although referring to Imperial suicides, Suet. *Tib.* 61 clearly draws comparisons between Carnulius' (amongst others) protest suicide and the example set by Cato in 46 BCE.
[675] Rauh (2018) 59
[676] Gill (2003) 33; Athenodorus of Tarsus and Arius Didymus made a particularly strong impression on Seneca: Sedley (2003) 31; see also Grisé (1982), Griffin (1986).
[677] Lustila (2020) 351; van Hoof (2017) 2526
[678] In fact, Tedius Afer does exactly that in Suet. *Aug.* 27

ancient sources – that of slave suicide and the motivations behind the examples of such behaviour. As shall be demonstrated, slave suicide was prevalent throughout the Republic and Imperial periods yet is largely disregarded by contemporary literature. Furthermore, when such instances are described in the ancient sources, the manner in which slave attitudes towards their own suicide are depicted demonstrates a total disregard for their mental health or sense of autonomy in carrying out an act that is, by its very nature, an act of autonomous self-harm.[679]

For that reason, despite there being evidence for a significant number of suicides in the ancient literature, it is rarely treated as a specific topic for discussion or analysis in those sources. Instead, examples of noble (or ignoble) suicide are given within the wider framework of history or *moralia.*[680] The preoccupation with the political suicides of a wealthy and philosophical elite resulted in a lack of focus on female and slave suicides.[681] However, legislation that concerned slave suicide can be found in Justinian's *Digest*, which indicates that it occurred frequently enough to attract - and maintain until at least the 6th century CE - the attention of jurists.[682] This marked absence in the evidence has created a gap within the modern literature, which is naturally created by the availability of the source material. Ultimately, scholarly research into suicide in Republican and Imperial Rome has largely concerned itself with the actions of free individuals who are predominantly male and invariably wealthy.[683] In particular, it is notable that Anton van Hooff's seminal study of suicide throughout the ancient Mediterranean,[684] which incorporates both Greek and Roman societies across all the major classical time periods and catalogues all available examples of

[679] *C.f.* van Hoof (2017) 2527: 'lässt ihre Motivation die Elemente der Selbstbestimmung und des Heroismus vermissung, auf die ansonsten die Ausdrücke *mors voluntaria* und *mors Romana* hinweisen' (their motivation lacks the elements of self-determination and heroism that expressions such as *mors voluntaria* and *mors Romana* otherwise indicate).
[680] Val. Max. 6.8 '*de fide servorum'* is possibly the closest that extant works come to an analysis of suicide, by virtue of the fact that remarkable instances of slave loyalty were most often typified by their voluntary deaths in the service of their owner.
[681] This is not to mention suicides by free individuals from lower social classes, about whom it may be even more difficult to ascertain any substantial information.
[682] Just. *Dig*. 21.1.1; van Hoof (1990) 20, (2017) 2526; Wacke (2017) 2529
[683] Dutsch (2012) makes an interesting discussion on gender and suicide threats in the *palliata*. Likewise, van Hooff (1990) does include a separate analysis of female suicidal methods and motivations from throughout antiquity, but the emphasis of the work as a whole remains largely masculine. Whilst this is no doubt a result of the imbalance in the source material, this discussion aims to demonstrate that there are methodological means of overcoming these obstacles.
[684] van Hooff (1990)

ancient suicide and attitudes towards suicide, neglects to treat slaves as a separate social group in their own right. van Hoof's study constitutes a fundamental basis for research into suicide in the ancient world. However, this oversight has led to slaves once again being treated as a footnote in the literature due to a perceived lack of evidence. It is necessary to redress this imbalance by examining a number of examples of slave suicide in more detail.

6.2 Methodology of Cross-Cultural Suicidology

Any discussion of slave suicide necessarily requires a preliminary analysis of its terminology and the methodology that will be used. Attitudes towards suicide vary significantly across different cultures and throughout time, and this has clear implications that are twofold: objectivity and subjectivity both hold the potential to influence our understanding of the ancient subject matter. From an objective point of view, a sensitivity to the differences in the conceptualisation of suicide by the culture under discussion must be maintained. From a subjective point of view, our own attitudes towards suicide and suicidal motivations risks an unrealistic application of modern-day morality to ancient actions.

This is by no means specific for interdisciplinary approaches to the ancient Mediterranean; recent research into the usefulness in various applications of the Suicide Opinion Questionnaire (SOQ) has found that three metrics of validity must be met by any methodology that attempts cross-cultural observations.[685] These all require the ability to identify the following:

1. Significant differences among different cultural groups within a particular country.
2. Attitudes of different cultural groups that share a language.
3. Differences between members of different cultures.[686]

Whilst the study conducted by George Domino looked at 21st century communities in North America, China, Germany and Japan, these prerequisites can easily be applied to studies into

[685] Domino (2005); Lester (2009)
[686] Domino (2005) 110-111

suicide from the Republic and Imperial periods of Rome or even within the variety of slave cultures themselves. However, the important factor from this cross-cultural study was to establish that even within ostensibly similar cultures, there exists a wide variety of attitudes towards suicide that are influenced by subcultures and wider belief systems.

It is therefore essential that an assessment of the slave's sense of self is taken into consideration when analysing their motivations for suicide. This raises further difficulties as psychological research has historically used Western subjects as the basis for theory building,[687] which creates a methodological bias that could impact upon any appreciation of the ancient slave as an individual. However, a closer understanding of the slave's psychology will help to overcome the cross-cultural barriers that are discussed above. Kirmayer *et al.* discuss the role of psychology in constructing a sense of self by noting that individual psychologies are 'stories of the self in time, ways of narrating our experience and behaviour that explain the basis of our actions'.[688] Thus, a slave's 'psychology' is nothing more than a narration of how their experiences and behaviours explain their actions. These actions naturally encompass suicide, so it is crucial to understand what psychological motivations and stressors there are upon each individual slave at the time of their suicide. These motivations could involve behaviours that would now be considered commensurate with mental illness, despite this not being suggested in the original sources as a motivation.

The links between mental illness and suicide are well documented in Western medical literature.[689] However, those same links must be applicable in a cross-cultural context in order for them to remain relevant when considering motivations behind slave suicide from ancient Rome. It would seem rather simplistic to assume that mental illness only affects suicidal tendencies in Western culture purely on the basis that the classification of those illnesses belongs to Western medical thought. There have been recent efforts to bridge this gap,[690] but a primary factor that influences cross cultural studies is the concept and

[687] Kirmayer *et al.* (2018) 21
[688] Kirmayer *et al.* (2018) 23
[689] Kumar (2017) *passim*. See also Gvion & Apter (2011); Bongar & Sullivan (2013); Chesney, Goodwin & Fazel (2014). It is important to note this should not mean that having a mental disorder equates to suicidal behaviour, but that suicidal behaviour is often correlated with mental disorder: Gvion & Apter (2012); Salman *et al.* (2017)
[690] Kumar (2017)

terminology behind suicide itself. There are a number of cultures, both globally and historically, where the actual concept of suicide has not been considered indicative of a mental disturbance. This would initially seem to preclude the possibility that mental illness could be a motivation behind an action that is not seen as being culturally anomalous, but further investigation into those cultures reveals a way of solving this methodological problem.

6.2.1 Positive definitions of suicide

The primary area of concern when contextualising suicide is that of intention. For example, Hindu scripture allows for suicide under certain conditions which has resulted in Indian society historically promoting the values of self-sacrifice if it is in keeping with the collectivist, cultural ethos, whilst simultaneously condemning suicide if it is committed for personal reasons.[691] Therefore, despite having the scope to view suicide as an, if not positive, then at least acceptable act, that acceptability depends upon whether wider society deems the suicide to have been motivated by altruistic reasons. However, this naturally focusses upon the impact of the suicide and highlights the way that the culture within which a suicide is committed often defines the motive irrespective of the individual.

The fluid definition of an individual instance of suicide is particularly notable when considering terrorist suicide bombers. These individuals are denied their intended status as martyrs by societies other than the strict subculture to which they belong, instead being typified as radicalised individuals who have been indoctrinated into a harmful psychology.[692] David Canter considers the psychological motivations behind suicide bombing to be more complex,[693] but regardless of the true motivations, denying their validity demonstrates the way that the same suicide can be conceptualised alternatively by different cultures. Canter considers the stark dichotomy between in-group and out-group identity that drives the psychology of suicide bombers to be fundamental to their cognition,[694] and there are clear comparisons that can be made in this respect regarding slave identity. One further aspect that

[691] Kumar & Mukherjee (2017) 10-11
[692] Petrov (2013) 356
[693] Canter (2006)
[694] *Ibid*

supports this comparison is the psychology of mass suicides. Mancinelli *et al.* note, in their historical study of mass suicides, that a typical aspect of 20th century sects that committed mass suicide was a 'hostile attitude towards the outside world.'[695] This hostility to an outside, dominant culture, one that the members of the sect originated from and continued to have a level of interaction with, is reminiscent of the same circumstances involved in the radicalisation of suicide bombers.

Japanese society is a notable example of how a retrospective context can alter external perceptions of an entire culture's approach to suicide. Japan has suffered somewhat under a misrepresentation by Western accounts of its attitude towards suicide. Misunderstandings of the 'Samurai ethic' has led many Western commentators to associate Japan with a positive view of suicide, when in fact the opposite is more accurate.[696] This is in part due to Emile Durkheim's seminal work on suicidology,[697] which misrepresented the Samurai practice of *seppuku* (ritual disembowelment) as being a standard Japanese cultural practice despite being the preserve of a warrior class that constituted only 6% of the population.[698] Regardless of the mythologizing and actual rarity of this suicidal practice, later explanations for the psychology of kamikaze pilots from World War II have also regularly been associated with *seppuku*.[699] However, this association has been based upon a flawed understanding of the Samurai ethic[700] and misleading accounts of the voluntary nature of kamikaze pilot recruitment.[701] Therefore, due to erroneous representations that began with Durkheim's analysis, such misconceptions have become standardised in Western literature.[702] Thus, there remains a common typecasting of kamikaze pilots as exhibiting a Samurai ethic, and that ethic as being representative of wider Japanese society. Not only is this inaccurate, but it is also damaging to broader research in suicidology. Such misrepresentations have been shown to influence the perspective that Western medicine has taken when considering possible motivations and

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[695] Mancinelli *et al.* (2002) 98
[696] Picone (2012) 391, see also 394-396 for a discussion on the way in which *seppuku* was far less common than is often depicted, even amongst the few Samurai who would have considered it. The similarity between this misrepresentation and Rauh's analysis of *pudor* as an over-represented motive for Republican battlefield suicide (discussed below) is striking.
[697] Durkheim (1897)
[698] Picone (2012) 392
[699] Benedict (1954); Boyd & Richerson (1985); Pinguet (1993); Picone (2012); Allan-Hermanson (2017)
[700] Allan-Hermanson (2017) 14
[701] *Ibid* 15
[702] Picone (2012) 392

attitudes towards suicides in cultures that are not considered to be part of Western medical thought. It is important, therefore, that the Japanese example is not allowed to influence any analysis of Roman cultural concepts of suicide.

Nevertheless, the implications of the foregoing discussion for studying Roman slave suicide are clear. These cross-cultural comparative models from a range of historical periods show that across a spectrum of suicide contexts, retrospective attributions of motivation and meaning behind a particular instance of suicide can greatly alter the way that action is represented and memorialised. Furthermore, such alterations can give a false impression of a culture's approach to suicide more broadly.

Despite the Japanese error just discussed, Durkheim's analysis and terminology became canonical in the discipline of suicidology.[703] In particular, he classified the various motivations behind suicide as being either egoistic, or altruistic.[704] Egoistic applies to individuals with a low level of social integration, thus they have little invested in wider society and so are driven by personal motivations. Altruistic applies to individuals with a high level of social integration, who ultimately value the group over their own self.[705] The correlation between Durkheim's single axis of social integration, presented here in reference to suicidal motivation, and Kağıtçıbaşı's dual axis model for identity construction that was discussed earlier, is plain to see.[706]

Ideally, a balance should exist between the level of social integration that an individual experiences with the level of regulation that society places upon them. However, when there is an imbalance, suicidal tendencies can develop.[707] Slaves inhabited a position of imbalance in Roman society; their lack of individual worth clearly constituted low integration, whilst also experiencing high levels of regulation that society placed upon them. Therefore slaves, who could already be suffering from a self/person dissonance, as detailed above, also existed

[703] Kumar & Mukherjee (2017) 7
[704] Durkheim (1897)
[705] Kumar & Mukherjee (2017) 11-12
[706] See chapter 2.2.1.1
[707] Kumar & Mukherjee (2017) 11-12

in a society that caused them to suffer an integration imbalance. Both of these factors are linked with increased mental illness and increased suicidal behaviour respectively. Furthermore, the link between mental illness and suicidal behaviour is well documented, thus the two stressors combined could easily exacerbate each other. These separate factors have been shown to operate in a cross-cultural context, whilst any cultural concept of suicide that views it in a positive manner has been shown to rely, not on the individual who commits the act, but upon a retrospective cultural context that does not necessarily reflect the original motive. This provides a clear methodological basis from which to consider examples of slave suicide in a mental health context. However, given that the nature of the suicide is determined by the culture that defines it, and as the evidence for those suicides comes from contemporary literary sources, it will first be necessary to consider first how attitudes towards suicide developed during the Republic and Imperial periods.

6.3 Discrepancies in the accounts of Roman altruistic suicides

The following discussion will adopt the terminology that Durkheim established and argue that egoistic motivation – that which results as a response to personal feelings of helplessness or suffering – was the primary motivation behind slave suicide. However, the discourse surrounding suicide that developed during the Republic through to the Imperial period largely focussed on the altruistic. This category of motivation constitutes suicide as a result of moral principle and typically manifests itself in one of two ways:

1. Where an individual uses their own death to signify their adherence to cultural expectations.
2. As a form of protest against a regime change that challenges conventional morality.[708]

Examples of the former principle have been considered in research on suicidal behaviour in a military context, where certain death whilst fighting against Rome's enemies was preferable to the shame of surviving after losing a battle.[709] The concept of 'falling on the sword' persists as a traditional image of Roman military shame, yet the reality was far less

[708] Arguably, the Stoic principle of suicide represents a combination of both criteria. For detailed discussion see Lustila (2020) 351-354.

[709] van Hoof (1990) 236, lists *pudor* and *desperata salus* as being by far the most common motives for suicide in Roman men, with 114 and 81 cases respectively; the next most common motive (*dolor*) has only 19 cases. Likewise, Ward (2016) 310 notes the sometimes alarmingly dangerous lengths a Roman soldier would go to in order to regain a lost *gladius*, which was a very real and physical representation of his *virtus* on the field of battle.

common.[710] Post-battle suicide by generals was 'sometimes chosen to redeem themselves from ignominy',[711] but remained unusual.[712] Likewise, rank and file military suicide only ever arose in situations where death at the enemy's hands was certain anyway, thus 'maintaining a sense of autonomy was important'.[713] When considering the prevalence of battlefield suicide, Rauh notes that previous scholarship on the subject has focussed on a 'perceived tradition of suicide' that represents Roman cultural and social values that were connected with shame through loss of honour.[714] However, ambiguity in the sources that describe certain battlefield suicides raises questions over the true motivations behind those recorded cases .[715] If this ambiguity means that it is necessary to reassess the motivations recorded behind suicides that were carried out by Roman citizens - individuals whose cultural approach to suicide can be reasonably well assessed and taken into consideration - then it follows that a similar ambiguity will be present in the sources that recorded the motivations behind slave suicides.

Suicidal behaviour, or at least a wanton disregard for one's own safety, was often depicted by Roman historians of Republican warfare in an altruistic and noble manner.[716] Notably, the majority of such examples come from Livy's account of the wars of the Republic and the 'suicide' under discussion is really 'suicidal behaviour', or an intentional disregard for one's own safety, rather than actively self-killing. Consequently, it is necessary to delineate the parameters for what constitutes 'suicide' and its various motivations in a Roman context. The essential criteria in Rauh's analysis are personal agency and a resolution upon death. Furthermore, he accepts assisted suicide (e.g. by a slave or freedman) within those parameters because the individual who is assisting the suicide constitutes an extension of personal agency.[717] Importantly, battlefield deaths that result from choosing to face insurmountable

[710] Ward (2016) 310-11
[711] Edwards (2006) 204
[712] Rauh (2018) 61, see also my point on *seppuku*, above.
[713] *Ibid* 60
[714] Rauh (2015) 384-385 discusses van Hoof (2004); Hill (2004); Edwards (2006).
[715] Rauh (2015) gives a comprehensive list of Republican battlefield suicides and their motivations, pointing out that *pudor* is in fact not as prevalent as earlier scholarship suggests. The three examples that he considered most ambiguous are Aemelius Paulus (discussed below), Crassus Mucianus and P. Licinius Crassus.
[716] *Liv*. 22.49.11 details such a desire in the consul L. Aemilius Paulus at the battle of Cannae. Likewise, Flaminius (*Liv.* 22.6.1-3), Cn. and P. Scipio (*Liv*. 26.2.13), M. Centenius Paenula (*Liv.* 25.9.16) and even Catiline (Sal. *Cat.* 61). Ward (2016) 310-13 discusses these examples and the 'tradition' of battlefield suicide in greater depth – noting in particular that there was no formal expectation that commanders should behave in such a manner. *C.f.* also van Hoof (1990) 53, 87; (2017) 2526.
[717] Rauh (2015) 386-387

odds are also included within that definition, despite admittedly being problematic. Rauh considers this problem to be that there is a lack of personal agency in such cases but, arguably, the individual's personal agency is simply being exercised at an earlier point, when they *actively choose* to put themselves in a position that guarantees death.[718]

It is likely that accounts such as Livy's were deliberately designed to emphasise Roman military prowess or courage. Episodes such as the well-known account of Horatius Cocles' heroic stand highlight that emphasis. Livy's account is markedly different and more exaggerated than that of Polybius, who also recounts the event, to the extent that Livy records Cocles surviving the escapade whilst Polybius records his death.[719] Although Ward's discussion of this disparity does not go into any detail as to why there might be such a glaring discrepancy in the source material, the relative political context of each writer would seem to be a probable explanation. Polybius was a Greek living during the early Republic and thus was likely more dispassionate in his approach to Roman historiography; he stood to gain little from misrepresenting the facts as he had them. Conversely, Livy's proximity to Augustus at a time of political turmoil and explicit concern with *mos maiorum* meant that he was amongst a cohort of Roman writers who were re-establishing a Roman cultural superiority through the literary genre. This would have encouraged him to embellish his accounts of historical Roman battle prowess and certainly explains his decidedly more heroic account of Cocles' last stand. If Livy was exaggerating in this way, then his other examples of Roman suicidal charges and selfless courage perhaps ought to be taken by his readers with a pinch of salt.

Two pieces of evidence taken from the Second Punic War highlight this point: the deaths of Lucius Aemilius Paulus and Gaius Flaminius. Livy's account of the battle at Cannae documents Aemilius specifically refusing the offer of a horse upon which to flee the carnage and escape to safety, instead stating his desire to:

[718] Modern suicidology supports this view and specifies 'a conscious, self-directed act with the intent to die' as an acceptable criterion: Kumar & Mukherjee (2017) 7; *c.f* Retterstøll (1993); Marusic (2004)
[719] *Liv*. 2.10; *Plb*. 6.55

> *me in hac strage militum meorum patere exspirare, ne aut reus iterum e consulatu sim aut accusator collegae exsistam ut alieno crimine innocentiam meam protegam.*
>
> *breathe my last in the midst of my slaughtered soldiers, lest either for a second time I be brought to trial after being consul, or else stand forth the accuser of my colleague, blaming another in defence of my own innocence*.[720]

Clearly, Aemilius' sense of shame at his defeat is shown here as an overarching reason behind his preference for death over escape to safety. However, Polybius' account merely states that he fell during the fighting, with no indication of his sense of shame or indeed any intention towards death in battle.[721] In a similar vein, Livy records the death of Gaius Flaminius at the battle of Trasimene with the consul exhibiting 'considerable coolness' despite the desperate situation,[722] whereas Polybius notes that he was 'in a state of the utmost distress and despair.'[723] In both of these cases, as with that of Horatius Cocles, Polybius shows himself to be the more sober recorder of events. Further, the historical accuracy of Polybius is likely to have been more reliable when one considers that these battles which he narrates remained on the fringes of living memory at the time of his writing.[724] Livy on the other hand, writing some 200 years after the fact, is at pains to decorate these Roman military individuals with a facade of bravery that may not have been entirely accurate or deserved. Nevertheless, this probably served his aim of celebrating a glorified Roman ideology at a time of momentous political reform.

The purpose in emphasising the disparity between these two accounts is not to question their validity as historical sources; criticising Livy's authorial intent over Polybius' reveals nothing other than the fact that authorial intent was variable. However, it does highlight the manner in which authorial intent impacts upon the information that the sources can provide. This is

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[720] *Liv*. 22.49.11
[721] *Plb*. 3.116
[722] *Liv*. 22.5.1
[723] *Plb.* 3.84
[724] Considering that Polybius was born around 15 years after these battles, it is quite possible that he had access to first-hand accounts whilst conducting his research, even if these would have been remembered from some time afterwards. He also explicitly states that he referred to two historians when writing about earlier battles (though he accuses both of bias): Philinus of Agrigentum, who fought for the Carthaginians during the First Punic War and Q. Fabius Pictor, who fought on the Roman side during the Second: *Plb.* 1.14.

particularly important when considering historical accounts of slave behaviour, as the propensity for Roman writers to be economical with the truth means that modern scholars must also read these sources with a healthy dose of scepticism. Similarly, this impact is observable in examples of the second motivation for altruistic suicide: that of protest against regime change.

Perhaps the most well documented and frequently discussed example of this is the suicide of Cato the Younger.[725] He is credited with the development of a 'noble' suicide tradition that continued to be emulated into the Imperial period and has been discussed at length as an example of Stoic protest against the dictatorship of Julius Caesar, his role in end of the Republic, and Cato's refusal to legitimise this by accepting Caesar's offer of *clementia*.[726] However, of particular importance in this case is the manner in which it stimulated discussion of how Roman society conceptualised suicidal behaviour in a non-military context. The 40s BCE saw Roman society in the grip of an inordinately high number of suicides resulting from civil strife,[727] which necessitated a cultural renegotiation of how suicides were depicted: 'at stake was the status and reception of suicide at Rome, or the memory of Romans who took their own lives during civil strife rather than endure whatever alternative may have awaited them.'[728] Crucial to this change in attitude was the fact that the suicidal individuals under discussion were respected members of society. Prior to this, suicidal behaviour by free citizens had been seen mostly in its military context, but this new trend of suicidal protest required society to adopt an appreciation of the noble autonomy behind such actions.

Appian gives a further example of an individual adopting Cato's Stoic approach to suicide in his account of the suicide of Pacuvius Labeo during the Civil Wars. Here, Labeo calmly puts his affairs in order, digs his own grave, frees his slaves and then has his newly manumitted freedman help him to kill himself.[729] Likewise, this trend continues through into the Imperial period, where suicide became a more common means of protest or avoidance of a worse fate

[725] Plut. *Cat. Mi.* 70.5-6; Sen. *Ep.* 24.6-8
[726] Griffin (1986); Edwards (2006); Zadorojnyi (2007); Rauh (2018)
[727] Rauh (2018) 59
[728] *Ibid*
[729] App. *BC.* 4.17.135

at the hands of an egotistical emperor.[730] The desirability of an autonomous death can also be seen in the way that suicide was reserved as a form of capital punishment for upper class individuals from the second century BCE onwards.[731] Nevertheless, aside from these very specific sets of motivations, Republican culture was most familiar with suicide, conceptually, from its predominance in slave behaviour.[732] Consequently, 'Republican Rome lacked any distinct suicide tradition'[733] for the elite classes and had to reconcile how individuals who were representative of *virtus* were now continuously, systematically betraying those values by behaving in a manner more typically seen in a slave. This was achieved by ascribing a philosophical motivation to those actions, thus attributing a superior morality to the individual suicide; the Stoic approach of Cato the Younger became a paradigm in that respect.

The moral conviction and psychological fortitude shown by the likes of Cato and Labeo in carrying out their suicides became associated with the honour and courage that was expected from a *vir* in the face of insurmountable adversity. Dorota Dutsch highlights that 'many texts convey profound respect for the courage necessary to carry out such decisions', linking this change in attitudes towards suicidal motivation with the growing influence of Stoicism during the first century BCE.[734] She discusses this in relation to the dramatic suicide threats made by jilted lovers in the *palliata* and how those would have been viewed by a Roman audience. However, considering the preponderance of Stoic philosophy in upper class discourse, assigning that same philosophical interest to the creative influences on the vignettes of slave theatre is perhaps stretching the idea to some extent. Likewise, despite Stoic attitudes facilitating a more 'ennobling and symbolic approach' to suicide during the final years of the Republic,[735] this change in social opinion was taking place around 150 years after the *palliata* were written. Therefore, although Dutsch's approach proves useful as a study of the late Republican reception of female suicide in Plautine drama, it is less accurate at describing the

[730] Suet. *Tib.* 61 describes an unspecified 'many' individuals preferring to stab themselves rather than face Tiberius' judgement. Tac. *Ann.* 2.31 specifically names one of these individuals as Libo.
[731] Griffin (1986) 193; Edwards (2006) 206. Whether an enforced personal execution can truly be classed as suicide is debateable, but it serves to outline one of the few ways in which the upper classes practised self-killing prior to the development of altruistic moral suicide, as typified by Cato.
[732] Legal, historical and dramatic examples indicate that slave suicide was prolific during the Republic and shall be discussed below.
[733] Rauh (2018) 60
[734] Dutsch (2012) 195
[735] Rauh (2018) 60

contemporary attitudes of the middle Republic, nor how suicide on stage reflected the dramatists' own lived experiences.

6.4 Slave suicide in the *palliata*

Important to Dutsch's analysis of female suicide in the *palliata* is the notion that 'suicidal thoughts are a woman's natural response to private distress', when that distress is acted out on-stage.[736] This clearly falls into Durkheim's definition for egoistic suicide: it is an act carried out by individuals with lower levels of social integration (comic female characters rarely have much in the way of social capital) and is consequently driven by their personal motivations. This is also the case for some of the slave characters in Plautine drama. Dutsch does briefly consider the role of slave suicide in relation to the female characters who are her main area of concern, though she avoids an in-depth consideration of the phenomenon.[737] Likewise Amy Richlin refers to suicide briefly, as part of a wider discourse on slaves' desire to escape from their suffering.[738] However, dramatised examples of slave suicide is a surprisingly under-researched subject, despite the wealth of scholarship that exists on the Plautine corpus. This is clearly an area that future research can engage with, but the following overview offers a brief analysis of its prevalence and the implications for understanding the mental health of slaves in Republican Rome.

One example comes in the form of Tyndarus, the *servus callidus* from *Captivi.* The basic premise of the play is that the young, freeborn prisoner of war Philocrates has swapped places with his slave Tyndarus in order to trick their captor Hegio into allowing him to travel home to collect his ransom. Hegio only allows this because he is under the impression that Philocrates is actually his newly captured freeborn prisoner's slave. Meanwhile, Tyndarus (the real slave) assumes the persona of his freeborn owner. Further on in the play, when the switched identity ruse looks set to be uncovered, Tyndarus' thoughts immediately turn to his own death, exclaiming that 'I'm better off dead than alive!' and that there is nothing but 'death, doom and destruction' for him to look forward to.[739] Part of the humour hangs on the

[736] Dutsch (2012) 195
[737] Dutsch (2012) 191-192
[738] Richlin (2017) 333, 424
[739] Plaut. *Capt.* 515-529

fact that the audience knows full well that Tyndarus is not going to die; he is the *servus callidus* and they know that he will find a way to extricate himself from whatever trouble he finds himself in. Nevertheless, it is interesting to see how quickly and drastically the slave's thoughts turn to despair and suicide during moments of self-reflection.[740]

Miles Gloriosus provides further examples: the slave Palaestrio immediately resorts to fatal thoughts when he hears that Philocomasium, the woman he was supposed to have been monitoring, has evaded his watch: 'Oh I suspect that I'm a dead man…pity me – I'll have to die – all for a worthless animal!'[741]!' His fellow slave Sceledrus is similarly keen to consider his own death when he offers himself for crucifixion should his promise to his owner prove false.[742] The opening scenes of *Aulularia* depict the elderly slave woman Staphyla being kicked out of the house with threats of violence. Tellingly, her first few lines include an expressed wish to commit suicide: 'I wish the gods would drive me to hang myself and not make me slave in your house on these terms.'[743]

Hanging is a common method for slave characters to envisage their own suicides. Indeed, van Hoof notes that it was considered a typically unmasculine method for self-killing in Rome that was common amongst women and slaves alike.[744] Exhortations to 'go and hang yourself!' are not unknown,[745] whilst the slave character Gripus in *Rudens* makes repeated references to his suicide by hanging.[746] Likewise Chalinus, a slave in *Casina*, reveals in another soliloquy his own sense of worthlessness through his thoughts on suicide:

> *si nunc me suspendam, meam operam luserim*
>
> *et praeter operam restim sumpti fecerim*

[740] This instance (as is often the case) is delivered as a soliloquy or an aside to the audience, thus there is no other character on-stage who is party to the suicidal ideation. Consequently, there is no ulterior motive behind making such remarks; they reveal the slave character's true, innermost thoughts. See also 635-6: 'That's it for me! Can't you be still, my beating heart – or else just go hang yourself? I'm so afraid I can barely stand.'
[741] Plaut. *Miles* 178-180
[742] Plaut. *Miles* 565-67
[743]Plaut. *Aul.* 50-51. Staphyla's suicidal ideation is reiterated later, in lines 77-78
[744] van Hoof (1990) 65-67, 78 ; (2017) 2527
[745] Plaut. *Cis.* 250; *Cas.* 112.
[746] Plaut. *Rud.* 1189, 1288

et meis inimicis uoluptatem creauerim.

quid opus est, qui sic mortuos equidem tamen?

If I hang myself now, it would be a waste,

of both the effort and the rope I use to do it!

Plus, I'd make my enemies happy,

And what's the point, when you can see I'm already dead anyway? [747]

Some instances of suicidal ideation are perhaps more explicit than others but, when considered as a whole, they point to the pervasive nature of such thoughts in the dramatised depictions of slaves. The language that surrounded those fictional slaves and that constructed their realities – a language that was used in conversation with them as well as being the language that they used to describe their own innermost thoughts – was based on the experiences of the most miserable and abused members of Republican Roman society. That basis explains why the language manifested those experiences as the slaves' desire to kill themselves.

Why was such language used in comical depictions of slaves? The level of verisimilitude in the exaggerated drama was discussed in chapter 1 and is worth bearing in mind for the current argument.[748] However, it should be emphasised at this stage just how unlikely it would have been for so many suicidal depictions of slave characters to have arisen without there also having existed a real-world inspiration for that behaviour. The evidence for that will shortly be considered in more detail, but that real-world basis presents some important implications for the dramatic characterisations currently under discussion.

The regularity with which slave characters turn to suicide as the only option available to them in difficult circumstances demonstrates two things about slave mental health. Firstly: the speed with which any given slave character will resort to suicidal thoughts or tendencies,

[747] Plaut. *Cas.* 424-427

[748] Chapter 1.3.

regardless of the severity of their situation, is a form of catastrophising that points to the poor state of their mental health. Secondly: suicidal ideation is exhibited by a range of slave characters, yet it is considered unremarkable – even desirable – within the dramatic context. This suggests a level of accuracy in such portrayals of slave behaviour, at least within the parameters of the audience's suspended disbelief.

6.5 Slave suicide in historical texts

Plautus wrote suicide as an egoistic and decidedly unmasculine act; something only carried out (or even considered) by slaves and irrational women. His association with the lowest members of Republican society was highlighted in chapter 3,[749] but his more intimate knowledge of the slave experience from a first-hand perspective possibly suggests that his egoistic depictions of slave suicide were accurate portrayals of the true motivations behind that behaviour. Equally, in historical texts, although mass suicide is rarely reported in the sources, there are some exceptions which also suggest an egoistic motivation and that slaves were killing themselves to escape the misery of their situation.[750]

Diodorus Siculus records a case of mass suicide by barbarians in the face of slavery and Plutarch notes that the Cimbri committed mass suicide at the battle of Vercellae, with women killing their own children to boot.[751] It must be acknowledged that this was due to the prospect of impending slavery rather than being because of the actual abuses suffered during slavery. Similarly, Livy also records a case of mass suicide during the Second Punic War, when Vibius Virrius and 29 members of the senate at Capua preferred to drink poison when faced with the prospect of capture by their Roman adversaries. [752] In this case, the suicide was to avoid being displayed as part of a triumph rather than to avoid slavery specifically, although that fate possibly still awaited them after the procession.[753] However, these examples are not wholly insignificant to the current discussion as it is a clear indication of the sort of treatment the Cimbri and Capuans expected to suffer, were they to accept their fates at

[749] Chapter 3.3.6
[750] *C.f.* van Hoof (2017) 2528 for examples of this same behaviour going back to Greek antiquity.
[751] *Diod, Sic.* 34/35.4; Plut. *Mar.* 27.2-3
[752] Livy 26.13.15
[753] See Beard (2007) 114-117 for cases of suicide to escape triumphs and 130-132 for discussion on the uncertainty that execution was the fate of those prisoners.

the hands of Roman captors. More directly relevant, though, are the mass suicides of the Sicilian slaves during the second Servile War.[754] In this case, the reason for the suicides given by the sources was the fear of re-enslavement and associated punishment. This clearly indicates the level of misery and anguish that slaves suffered; the mass suicide of the Cimbri was carried out to avoid the *perceived* abuses that they *expected* to suffer as slaves, whereas the mass suicide of the slave rebels was carried out to avoid re-experiencing *known* abuses that they had *already* suffered in that capacity. Arguably, the Sicilian case serves to validate the expectations that the Cimbri and Capuans had concerning their future abuse.[755]

Likewise, Seneca relates two cases where a gladiator killed himself to avoid his fate.[756] The extreme measures taken by such slaves to bring about their own death speaks to their desperation to escape their circumstances. The gladiator who suffocated himself with a public toilet brush has already been mentioned in this discussion.[757] However, Seneca includes him alongside the tale of another gladiator who managed to place his head between the spokes of the cart that was transporting him to the arena, thus breaking his neck once the wheels turned round. Seneca includes these cases as an example of the Stoic courage he thought that it required to carry out such horrific methods of suicide and correlates them directly with the courage demonstrated by Cato in his own exemplary death. However, the egoistic motivation of those slaves is plain to see.

Seneca's reference to Cato in his admiration of those gladiators highlights the changing social attitudes regarding suicide that took place towards the end of the Republic and into the Imperial period.[758] Ultimately the suicide of free Romans, and sometimes even slaves, came to be seen through a lens of honour. Instead of viewing such a self-destructive act as the result of fear, depression, or the desire to escape unbearable misery, it was recorded by later Republican and Imperial writers in a way that aligns itself more comfortably with Durkheim's altruistic definition. Creating an association between moral philosophy and

[754] *Diod. Sic.* 36.3.6
[755] It is possible that such events might also indicate that the few times slaves *could* gather in such large numbers, mass suicide became more likely.
[756] Sen. *Ep.* 70.20-26
[757] See chapter 3.4.2.
[758] A shared appreciation of Stoic values is also no doubt a factor in making that connection.

courageous suicide meant that the suicides of freeborn men could be recorded in a way that did not besmirch their honour and nobility or associate them with feminine or, worse, servile characteristics.

Even in instances when the suicide was typified in a dishonourable light – for example that of Marc Antony[759] – the criticism of the suicide is not the act itself, rather the *vir*'s inability to carry out the act personally. It is at this point that there appears a cross-over of citizen and slave behavioural expectations. In Plutarch's account, Marc Antony decries himself for having 'less courage than a woman',[760] ultimately relying on his attendant slave Eros to help him commit the deed:

> τοῦτον ἐκ πολλοῦ παρακεκληκώς, εἰ δεήσειεν, ἀνελεῖν αὐτόν, ἀπήτει τὴν ὑπόσχεσιν. ὁ δὲ σπασάμενος τὸ ξίφος ἀνέσχε μὲν ὡς παίσων ἐκεῖνον, ἀποστρέψας δὲ τὸ πρόσωπον ἑαυτὸν ἀπέκτεινε.
>
> He had long ago made this man swear to kill him if it became necessary, and he now called upon that promise. Drawing his sword, Eros held it up as if to strike Antony, but then turned away and killed himself instead.[761]

On a first reading, Eros is clearly used as a means of shaming Antony – and indeed Antony notes this himself. Not only is Eros, a base slave, shown to be unwavering in his own swift suicide, but Plutarch specifically describes him as πιστὸς ('faithful'). This attribution to Eros of faithfulness and indeed the very fact that Antony is alone with him at this stage is important. The slave that he chose 'long ago' specifically to be the slave who would aid in his suicide, implies that Eros was held high in Antony's esteem. It is most intriguing, then, that his final act is one of rebellion. Eros explicitly disobeys his master, knowing full well that Antony will struggle to do the deed himself (he has, after all, already failed to do so). Not

[759] Plut. *Ant.* 76.4 *ff.* initially details Antony's failure to die courageously, sees him upstaged by his slave Eros and then draws out his eventual suicide in an almost comical fashion as he hangs in a most undignified manner, upside down and covered in blood, grasping for Cleopatra at the end.
[760] Plut. *Ant.* 76.3
[761] *Ibid* 76.4

only that, but Eros' own suicide both removes him from any chance of punishment for his defiant subversion whilst also being a final act of autonomy. This sort of description is the closest a slave suicide can get to being described by the Roman sources as equivalent to the courageous and morally just examples set by free men of noble rank. Valerius Maximus devotes an entire chapter of his work *Facta et Dicta Memorabilia* to lauding the sort of behaviour exemplified in this case by Eros, although clearly his slave status precludes him from that sort of recognition here.[762]

However once again, authorial intent presents difficulties in relying on Plutarch as an accurate historical source, which leaves these events open to interpretation. Similarly, his account of Cato's suicide discussed earlier is of questionable reliability due to its intimate connection with *exitus* literature,[763] but he also gives two different versions for the role of the slave Philocrates in Gaius Gracchus' suicide. In one account, he describes Philocrates as helping his owner to commit suicide before nobly killing himself over the body like a loyal pet. In another, both were captured and killed by the enemy, though Gracchus could not be harmed until his slave, loyal to the end, was killed first after selflessly using his own body as a human shield for his owner.[764] Beness and Hillard argue that these two versions are likely the result of dramatic embellishment, where over time the details of the story have been enhanced through its re-telling.[765] Indeed, given that Gracchus is prevented by friends from killing himself earlier on,[766] it seems unusual that he should then require a slave to do the deed in the end.

Perhaps Plutarch chose these two versions of the same story in order to highlight the fidelity of Philocrates towards Gracchus – otherwise why mention him at all? Appian records the same event in a far less dramatic manner, merely stating that Gracchus 'presented his throat to the slave' to avoid arrest.[767] Appian also tells us of a lack of slave support towards

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[762] *Val. Max* 6.8. It is worth noting that Valerius regarded these cases of 'suicide by slave' as a shameful necessity; far better to die by one's own hand. Nevertheless, this manner of suicide 'is a marked feature of many stories' *c.f.* Parker (1998) 158

[763] Rauh (2018) 67

[764] Plut. *CG.* 17.2-3

[765] Beness and Hillard (2001) 135. They support this point with reference to Tac. *Ann.* 4.11, where Tacitus notes that the public are excited by tales of high-profile deaths.

[766] Plut. *CG.* 16.4

[767] App. *BC*. 1.3.26

Gracchus prior to his death. Gracchus offered freedom to any who would follow him, yet none did.[768] Clearly the fidelity that Plutarch shows him inspiring in Philocrates was not considered worthy for inclusion in Appian's account. It is also noteworthy that Appian does not name the slave who aids in his suicide, as Plutarch does. Nor does a much later version of the events by Orosius.[769] This indicates that the slave's identity was not relevant to how Appian chose to depict this historical tale, whereas Plutarch, perhaps more concerned with biographical character details, found the loyalty of Philocrates an exemplary sign of a fair and just *dominus.*

Plutarch's interpretation of the subject matter is further complicated by the understanding that he drew on a number of Roman sources that are no longer extant.[770] This is exacerbated in the case of a suicide that is carried out in private, as the ancient sources themselves must have involved an element of conjecture. Nevertheless, the fact that there were opposing viewpoints on suicide means that we can consider the author's opinion on the moral value of the individual and subject matter based upon how they represent a particular instance (or indeed a number of cases). That is not to suggest that events transpired completely differently from the way in which an author such as Plutarch *does* depict them. But it does mean that their choice of depiction – such as the 'faithful slave' assisting his owner - will likely reflect the author's personal bias, or agenda for writing his work, rather than the factual occurrences of those final moments.

Arguably, then, any analysis of the supposedly 'real' accounts of suicides must remain keenly aware that it is not interpreting a factual record of self-killing, but a highly subjective, authorial *judgement* on the act and its concomitant moral basis.[771] This may go some way to explaining the relative lack of extant examples for slave suicide - slave morality was assumed to be of a base nature anyway.[772] Indeed, it was this very belief that made instances of

[768] *Ibid*
[769] Oros. 5.12.8
[770] Edwards (2006) 203
[771] This point is also relevant in a modern context, where perspective and definition have implications for prevention: Kumar & Mukherjee (2017) 7
[772] Seneca's *De Ben* 3.18.4 may well pontificate whether '*potest servus iustus esse, potest fortis, potest magni animi'*, but the very fact that a high-status Roman thinker such as he felt the need to ponder such matters at all surely proves that this was not the common consensus.

explicit slave loyalty, such as those given by Valerius Maximus or Plutarch, so noteworthy. Therefore, it is equally as important to consider authorial intent when considering examples of slave suicide as it has been with case studies of freeborn citizen men. Without a doubt, far fewer slave suicides were recorded by Roman historians and moralists than actually occurred; the rate of suicide was high enough to warrant legislation in the *Digest*, which encouraged buyers to enquire regularly about the mental condition of slaves before purchasing them as 'no-one wanted to buy a slave who had tried to commit suicide or constantly ran away.'[773] Consequently, it follows that the examples of suicide which *were* selected for the record were chosen specifically because they represented something of relevance to the author or his intended audience.

The alternative representations of slaves such as Philocrates demonstrates the likelihood that such cases of slave suicide were at least partially embellished in order to serve the morally didactic purposes of the author. Cases such as Antony's slave Eros adhere more closely to a mythology of suicidal slaves than any true historical representation.[774] It is possibly for this reason that later writers such as Valerius Maximus and Plutarch, when they do depict slave suicides, tend more towards doing so within Durkheim's altruistic model, rather than the egoistic one that might be more expected and that is certainly more prevalent in the earlier dramatic examples from the *palliata*. Conversely, later cases are often depicted as altruistic, as the suicide is typically one where the slave demonstrates their loyalty by killing themselves either to save their owner, or in grief over their owner's death.[775]

However, laws governing the likelihood of suicide attempts in the *Digest* alongside its presence as a dramatic and literary motif proves that it occurred often enough to have occupied a clear position within a broader Roman mindset on how slaves behaved. Slaveowners wrote the accounts of altruistic slave suicide, thus slaveowners *imagined* slaves as being suicidal with a degree of regularity. The irony here is that, because the dramatic

[773] Just. *Dig*. 21.1.1; Joshel, (2010) 104

[774] Who actually saw Eros' final moments, aside from Antony himself? Equally, the connection between the name *Eros* and the role that Antony's love for Cleopatra played in his subsequent defamation is surely no coincidence. My thanks to Jane Draycott for highlighting this connection.

[775] Sen. *Ep.* 4.4 is one of the few exceptions to that trend. He specifically notes that a slave might 'hurl himself down from a rooftop, unable to obey his vexatious owner any longer.'

examples from the middle Republic were unaffected by the changes in Roman thought concerning the morality of suicide, those explicitly fictional representations are perhaps more accurate in how they describe the slave's motivations than the later altruistic (and supposedly true) versions handed down by late Republic and Imperial writers.

Regardless of the true motivation, suicide was clearly a common-enough feature of slave behaviour. However, if many of the historically based examples of slave suicide were embellished to the extent that they occasionally became apocryphal, then it follows that this apocryphal rendering of the suicidal slave can be re-interpreted to offer an alternative explanation for their actions and motives, which the remainder of this chapter shall address.

6.6 The motivations for slave suicide

The examples discussed above show that slave suicide could be intentionally framed by the author to make a broader moral point, rather than to relate the act and its causes accurately. This bias has some important implications when considering other possible motivations behind a slave's decision to die by suicide. By reviewing some further examples from Valerius Maximus' *De Fide Servorum*, it becomes apparent that slaves who have first helped their owner in committing his own suicide before then killing themselves are depicted as loyal, faithful and 'more praiseworthy, as (such loyal behaviour) is less expected.'[776] Valerius continually typifies the slave as helping their owner - thus qualifying as *fides* - but how did he, writing sometimes over 100 years after the fact, know that such slaves actually assisted their masters (or more specifically, did so willingly)?

The trope of the faithful slave can be seen in Valerius' description of the supposed voluntary death of a slave of Urbinus Panapio. In this example, Valerius praises the slave who willingly traded places with his owner, dressing in his clothes and assuming his identity in order to protect him from proscriptions.[777] The same episode is narrated by Seneca, who marvels at the slave's loyalty and proclaims him a hero for this show of loyalty during such dangerous

[776] Val. Max 6.8.*pr*
[777] Val. Max. 6.8.6

times.[778] In this instance the fate of the unnamed slave is known; he is killed. Therefore, the only person whose word could attest to the slave's motivation for such a suicidal show of bravery and loyalty could only have been that of Panapio himself. Whilst Seneca and Valerius both appear happy to accept faithful loyalty and heroic bravery as the slave's motivation, a more cynical reader might question how much choice the slave ever had in the matter. This would understandably cast a different light over the motives of the slave, and Panapio certainly appears less-than-honourable. Pushing his slave under the proverbial bus to save his own skin does not fit with the explicit intention behind writing a piece of *exemplum* literature for either free citizen or slave. Equally, examples such as those given by Valerius Maximus and Plutarch offered their readers a means of assuaging the conscious and unconscious fears that permeated Roman slaveowners' relationships with their slaves by creating a narrative of loyalty and faithfulness.[779]

The honourable slave sacrificing themself for their owner by assuming their identity is a figure that arises in a number of other historical sources.[780] Tacitus records that Lucius Piso's slave also died willingly in such a fashion.[781] When the cavalrymen despatched to kill Piso came across the slave and asked where his master might be, the slave adopted his master's identity 'with an extraordinary lie' (*egregio mendacio*). Interestingly, Tacitus notes that many of the executioners did not know Piso, nor what he looked like. This meant that when the unnamed slave falsely claimed to be his master, there was no-one present who knew otherwise; the slave was believed and executed.

This version of events is a little unusual. Tacitus states that despite the slave's sacrifice, Piso was killed shortly afterwards anyway because the procurator Baebius Massa was present and *did* recognise him.[782] Equally, the group of cavalrymen who encountered the slave, did so near the proconsul's bedroom in the early morning.[783] As such, it seems likely that Massa's encounter with Piso involved the same group of executioners that also killed Piso's slave, given that it happened as soon after the first instance as it did. Likewise, Piso knew that he

[778] Sen. *Ben.* 3.25
[779] Parker (1998) 153
[780] It is also the basis for the plot of Plaut. *Capt.*, discussed above.
[781] Tac. *Hist.* 4.50
[782] Tac. *Hist.* 4.50
[783] Literally 'first light' (*coeptae lucis*), so Piso would not have been out of the home.

was going to be murdered, yet made no effort to run away or save himself.[784] Considering that Piso was nearby and that there evidently *were* some in the company who knew what he looked like, this then raises the question of why the slave reportedly behaved in such a way.

Despite the importance of clothing as an outward signifier of social identity, the clothing of free born individuals and slaves would not actually have been markedly different on a day to day basis.[785] Therefore, in order for a slave to successfully trade places with their owner, they would have been required to adopt some other outward characteristic such as body language or comportment.[786] The assumption by Piso's assassins that the slave they encountered was *not* Piso is clear, given that they asked the slave where Piso was. Yet they must also have reasonably believed that the slave *could* have been Piso, as they took him at his word when he assumed that identity. It must be remembered that this was a targeted attack; no other member of Piso's household is reported to have been killed. The assassins could easily have killed the slave upon encountering him, knowing that he was part of Piso's household and then carried on searching for Piso .[787] The fact that they did not immediately kill the slave implies that he would have survived, had he not identified himself as his owner.

In instances such as this, the targeted nature of the attacks raises an interesting possibility for the slave: what prevented him from handing his owner over to the assassins and then to use his convincing disguise to make an escape to freedom? There could not have been any visible branding marks on the slave's body, otherwise the disguise would not have fooled the executioners.[788] This same question applies to further cases of slave disguise: Appion and Menenius were also both saved from proscription killing by their supposedly willing slaves taking their place.[789] Furthermore, in the case of Marius, Valerius Maximus specifically notes

[784] Tac. *Hist.* 4.49
[785] George (2002) 43-45
[786] *Ibid* 45-46; Quint. *Inst.* 11.3.83 shows that slaves physically carried themselves in an identifiably servile manner. See also Plaut. *Cap.* 250-275 for an exaggerated example of how a freeborn slaveowner might attempt to impersonate a slave's behaviour.
[787] Their intention to kill Piso implies that there would have been no obvious repercussions from killing his slaves as well.
[788] App. *BC.* 4.6.43; Val. Max. 6.8.7 both give the example of Antius Restio's slave, who *had* been branded in such a visible way. Here the slave protects his master by using a different deception that does not involve assuming his identity.
[789] App. *BC.* 4.6.44; Val. Max. 6.8.6

that the slave could have handed his master over to the enemy but chose loyalty instead.[790] This relates once again to the example of Piso's slave; he, too, could simply have handed his master over, yet his refusal to do so is not specifically highlighted by Tacitus as noteworthy. In a situation such as this, where the alternative for the slave was certain death, why did they not take the opportunity to risk an endeavour that would save themselves? If we are to assume that our sources are correct and the slaves did indeed act autonomously, there are two possible motivations for their suicidal behaviour:[791]

1. The slave genuinely wanted to die for their master.
2. The slave was simply too terrified to resist or think for themselves.

The first motivation would have required the slave to have undergone a level of psychological indoctrination into the behavioural expectations placed upon them by Roman society. This would have resulted in the slave genuinely believing that it was their duty to die in this way. The very fact that examples of such behaviour are promoted by Roman writers as praiseworthy is an indication that this *was* the wider social expectation. The role of indoctrination in the subjugation of slaves was discussed in chapter 3, and it is clear that the results of that process were appreciated by Roman enslavers; despite lacking a deeper understanding of the psychological processes at work, the preference of Roman captors for *vernae* is an indication of such an awareness.[792] Nevertheless, it is highly unlikely that all slaves would have been affected in the same way by this sort of process. Therefore, accounts of slaves who willingly lay down their lives for their oppressor are detailing an individual for whom such an indoctrination has been successful. This means that the laudable faithfulness of the slave loses its impact, as they are not technically acting of their own free will. Accepting that this is the case, we must also then accept that the descriptions given by Roman writers of slave behaviour are seriously flawed at best; intentionally false at worst.

[790] Val. Max. 6.8.2; Livy *Per*. 88 also records this death but specifically omits to mention the possibility for the slave to betray his master. Once again, the poetic license of the two writers has a clear impact on how we are presented with the 'facts'.
[791] The idea that some slaves may have felt true devotion, freely given towards their enslaver (i.e. without any level of psychological indoctrination) is unconvincing.
[792] Bradley (1994) 4, 33-35. Explicit examples of *vernae* are rare, although perhaps Nero's freedman Sporus is the most detailed, considering he had attained manumission by his late teens – implying that he had been a slave since childhood.

Closely linked to this is the second motivation. However, the argument for slaves being too terrified to think for themselves is not borne out by the examples given by Roman writers. Slaves are described as acting independently and are recognised as having an independent nature despite their physical constraints.[793] Specific examples, such as the slave of Piso, clearly do not fit with the idea of a terrified individual, as it was the very ability of the slave to think on his feet and lie to protect his master that made his sacrifice possible. This demonstrates a level of agency and that such slaves did in fact have their wits about them. Therefore, the possibility that slaves who adopted their master's identity to save him, thus effectively committing suicide, did so out of fear, is an insupportable one. Furthermore, even if those instances did indicate that the slave acted out of fear, that sort of behaviour is in line with fear-based appeasement displays rather than loyalty.

Appeasement displays are typical fear responses that have their basis in evolutionary psychology and are indicative of deeper mental trauma. [794] Crucially, due to their instinctive nature, these responses are not learned through cultural upbringing or socialisation but are instead natural reactions to severe trauma that are observable in most humans. Therefore, whether the first motivation (indoctrination) or the second (appeasement displays) was the reason for the slave's suicide, the basis for that behaviour points to a deleterious mental health impact that the slave had suffered. Clearly this was not how Roman writers understood or contextualised this behaviour, preferring instead to identify this with fidelity, but that was because they were writing for a Roman audience that was largely unconcerned with the mental wellbeing of their slaves.

6.7 Concluding thoughts: implications of the prevalence of slave suicide

Up to the present day, attempts at understanding the causes and motivations for recorded cases of suicidal behaviour have been influenced by cultural context. That same phenomenon can be seen in Roman discourse on suicide, where changing social attitudes altered the way that writers contextualised suicidal behaviour throughout the Republic and early Imperial periods. Initially, suicide was considered shameful and unmasculine. This is supported by the majority of extant sources, which consist of fictional slaves or women from the *palliata*.

[793] Otherwise there would be no fear of slave revolts.
[794] Cantor & Price (2007) 378

In such dramatic cases, the explicit motivation expressed by the slave for wanting to kill themself aligns with Emile Durkheim's 19th century model of egoistic suicide; a model that is still adopted in modern suicidology research. That egoistic model typifies individuals with a low level of social integration who have little invested in wider society and so are driven by personal motivations. Plautine drama includes a number of slave characters who express the desire to kill themselves as a means of escaping their misery, thus meriting an egoistic classification for their suicidal ideation.

Although these dramatic examples are fictitious, they do indicate how slaveowners might have expected slaves to act or think in response to the circumstances being played out on-stage. As a playwright and actor, it is likely that Plautus rubbed shoulders with the lowest echelons of Republican society, thus it is probable that he had a more intimate understanding of how slaves genuinely contextualised their suffering.[795] Therefore, even though these examples of suicidal slaves are used to comic effect, they possibly reflect a more accurate assessment of the true motivations behind real-world examples of slave suicide that are known to have occurred regularly enough to warrant legislation in Republican society.

However, during the proscriptions of Sulla and the dictatorship of Julius Caesar, suicide as a form of political protest became more commonplace. This led to a change in the suicide tradition that is observable in the literary sources moving into the Imperial period. The genre of *exitus* literature grew out of this development and focussed on detailing the noble and philosophical suicides of virtuous Roman aristocrats. This aligns itself more readily with Durkheim's altruistic model for suicidal motivation; one that includes political protest, civic duty and Stoic courage in the face of adversity. A similar focus can be seen in accounts from that time by writers such as Plutarch and Valerius Maximus. Both men recorded cases of slave suicide from throughout Roman history and attributed a similarly noble and loyal motivation to those, despite not knowing the slave's true intentions.[796] When the various sources for the noble, freeborn suicides are analysed in detail, they display significant discrepancies that result from the author's bias and intentions behind writing their work. This suggests that in cases such as slave suicide, a similarly sceptical approach can be adopted when considering how those deaths were recorded.

[795] Richlin, (2017) 4-7. For the social status of Republican actors see: Edwards (1997) 67; Brown (2002).
[796] Fischer (2017) 2532-2536 highlights some of the epigraphic and literary sources that detail slave self-expression, though these are all in a non-suicidal context.

This allows for an alternative reading of the cases of suicidal behaviour, where the actions of the slave are considered against the intentions of the Roman author. Applying this methodology to a number of sources that detail altruistic suicidal behaviour in slaves indicates that the slave's behaviour may not have been as noble or as faithful as the Roman writer wanted his audience to believe. Consequently, different motivations can be considered that explain why the slave might have been prepared to lay down their life willingly in order to save their enslaver. Those indicate that the slave had either been indoctrinated into their social role or were simply too terrified to act otherwise. Both of those possibilities indicate a level of mental ill-health in the slave and neither indicate any sense of willingness or *fides*, which is how they are often depicted.

Whilst acknowledging the hypothetical nature of this alternative reading, there is little doubt that the range of examples considered in the foregoing discussion strongly suggests that suicide was a prevalent feature of slave behaviour throughout Roman history. Slaves do not feature heavily in the sources and individual case studies are rare. Therefore, when the few slaves that *do* merit inclusion in the sources exhibit suicidal behaviour with such regularity, that surely points to a degree of endemic suicidality within the slave population. Suicidal slaves in sources from the middle Republic display egoistic motivations, whilst slaves from the late Republic and Imperial periods display altruistic motivations. This demonstrates the changing nature of suicide in its cultural context, but the act itself, or the desire for self-killing, remains a constant feature of Roman slavery regardless of the period under discussion.

That prevalence of slave suicide corelates with the discussions of the previous two chapters. In turn, the reasons for that prevalence become clear. The traumas caused by the enslavement process and the prevalence of sustained sexual abuse have been shown to have a considerable and damaging effect on the mental health of the sufferer. Modern case studies, discussed in earlier chapters, suggest that individuals who suffer such traumas are prone to develop symptoms of mental illness such as depression, anxiety and PTSD. In each case, the likelihood of suicidal behaviour – either ideation or action – increases considerably. Armed with this knowledge, the prevalence of suicide in sources for slave behaviour from throughout Roman society should come as no surprise; it should be expected. The fact that

this is the case merely supports that hypothesis and serves to confirm the accuracy of the previous two chapters' conclusions.

PART 3 – CONCLUSION

7 – Closing thoughts

7.1 Mental health and slave subjectivity

The central aim of this thesis has been to uncover the subjective experience of slaves from the Roman Republic and early Imperial periods. This has raised a number of methodological challenges that has required an innovative approach in order to illuminate those experiences.

First and foremost, the vast majority of slaves are invisible in the sources. The extant evidence points to a considerably large population of slaves who lived, suffered and died during that time, yet we know almost nothing about those individuals. This has meant that, until now, scholarship has treated the subjective experience of slaves as being an essentially unknowable aspect of antiquity. However, despite knowing little about individual slaves, we know a good deal more about the conditions under which they were subjugated. That knowledge offers a way in to understanding the elusive subjectivity of slaves.

But how can we obtain that understanding? The key to that process is identifying universal aspects of human psychology. Certain psychological and behavioural responses are universal to the human condition, regardless of cultural influences. Typically, those manifest as instinctive responses to extreme physical and mental trauma. They are grounded in the evolutionary psychology of human beings and include responses to the type of suffering that is described in the sources for the treatment that Roman slaves suffered from at the hands of their owners.

This means that research on modern-day individuals who have suffered similar traumas to those of Roman slaves and which details how those victims have coped with their suffering can be used as a comparative model to apply to antiquity. This new methodology can help to

uncover more information about the lived experience of slaves, thus revealing a more detailed understanding of ancient slavery more broadly.

With an epistemological basis of materialism, a range of modern psychological approaches which can usefully be applied to the evidence for Roman slavery were set out in chapter 2 in order to assess the mental health impact of slavery upon the individual. In particular, biological and evolutionary psychological approaches were used to inform the assessment of responses to enslavement, indoctrination, rape and sexual abuse. Those approaches are most suited to the analysis of universal human trauma responses due to their materialist nature. This interdisciplinary approach is built upon a foundation of shared humanity. Previous scholarship has been at pains to emphasise the human nature of slaves, in no small part because that humanity was so comprehensively denied to them by their Roman enslavers. It is that shared humanity which enables the psychological approaches set out above to reveal something deeper about slaves' lived experiences.

However, a further challenge is the question of how reliable the sources are for detailing the wider slave experience. In short: do the slaves that we read about in the ancient literature represent something of a common slave experience? Can we even envisage a 'common' slave experience? This is a crucial challenge to overcome as, if anything can be known about the invisible slaves who are not described in the sources, there needs to be some sort of identifiable model for an enslaved individual that serves for hypothetical purposes; that challenge was faced in chapter 3. Fortunately, creating that hypothetical slave is made easier by the extreme othering and dehumanisation that slaveowners subjected their slaves to. Whether the source be legal, philosophical, didactic or historical, time and again the evidence points to a total rejection of the slave's humanity by wider society. This created an intolerable situation for the slave.

Once again, modern psychological research offers a means of assessing that situation. Çiğdem Kağıtçıbaşı's work on identity construction informs that assessment. The intersection between social relatedness and individual autonomy plays a considerable role in helping an individual to develop stable mental health. Her work supports earlier sociological arguments

on social death and deracination that were put forth by Orlando Patterson and which have informed scholarship on ancient slavery for decades. Knowing, as we do, that slaves scored poorly in both relatedness and autonomy, this points to any hypothetical slave scoring similarly poorly, thus we can operate from a basis of understanding that invisible slaves were predisposed to poor mental health outcomes when reacting to traumatic stressors.

Even when we consider certain examples of slavery that might challenge that hypothesis – such as celebrated gladiators or citizens reduced to debt slavery, those have been shown to hold little sway over the larger, general picture. Consequently, we are left with a hypothetical model for a slave who, regardless of time period, regardless of whether they were rural or urban, and regardless of which type of source they appear in, shows a propensity for poor mental health outcomes. The question then is: what sort of stressors did that individual face throughout their enslavement?

Stressors that have been considered here are those which were demonstrably commonplace. Enslavement was a factor that affected every single slave in Rome, irrespective of any variables regarding their subsequent conditions. Either through the trauma of capture and deracination or the trauma of psychological indoctrination, enslavement constituted an assault upon the individual's mental health. This would have likely resulted in symptoms that are associated with depression and anxiety and even posttraumatic stress disorder. Notably, long-term captivity and loss of autonomy have been shown in modern case studies to contribute towards the development of learned helplessness; a phenomenon that possibly attests to the drop in slave revolts that coincides with the rising prevalence of *vernae* as a method of obtaining slaves as Roman imperial expansion slows down towards the end of the Republic and into the Imperial period.

A second case study, in chapter 5, focussed on the sexual abuse of slaves. This was a common feature in the lives of many slaves. Women, particularly, were raped from the point of enslavement and throughout their subsequent experience of slavery. This was not only at the hands of their owners but also by other slaves who were sometimes encouraged to use those women as sexual rewards for hard work. Further, women (and men) could be forced

into prostitution by their owner to make him a profit. Likewise, men and boys were either raped or sexually abused with regularity, and castration was a type of traumatic abuse that was unique to male slaves.

In all cases of rape and sexual abuse, socially constructed attitudes towards consent or the acceptability of the sexual act itself were shown to have little bearing upon the responses of the victims. Comparative cases studies were used to emphasise that, even when society frames sexual abuse as an acceptable practice, it can still have an adverse effect upon the mental health of the victim. Such effects can include, again, depression and posttraumatic stress disorder, thus it is reasonable to assume that similar symptoms would have manifested themselves in the Roman slaves who suffered similar traumas.

Common to both case studies is the increased likelihood of suicidal behaviour in modern day victims of such abuses – either through ideation or the act itself. Therefore, if the hypotheses set out in the two case studies were shown to be accurate, then we might expect to see a high prevalence of suicidal behaviour in the sources for Roman slavery too. An analysis of the sources showed that this is, indeed, the case. Suicidal behaviour was common to Roman slaves, which not only indicates a poor level of mental health on its own, but it also corroborates the findings of the earlier two chapters, thus proving that the methodology is an accurate and useful one to apply to ancient slavery.

7.2 Limitations

As with any piece of research, there are naturally some limitations to this work which must be acknowledged alongside its wider impact.

The hypothetical nature of this study means that these findings can only be applied to Roman slavery in a general context. Based upon my analysis, we can reasonably assume that the general conditions of slavery throughout the Republican and early Imperial periods contributed to a considerable and adverse impact upon the metal health of individual slaves. However, there will always be exceptions to that rule on an individual level. Consequently,

we are left with the impression that slaves *generally* would have suffered from poor mental health and likely experienced symptoms that are nowadays associated with depression, anxiety, posttraumatic stress and learned helplessness, ultimately resulting in an increased risk of suicide.

This is, frankly, as close as we will ever be able to get. The lack of individual slaves who were recorded in the sources precludes an analysis on an individual basis. Equally, the accuracy of any individual slave's behaviour that is recorded is questionable due to authorial bias from Roman slaveowners. I argue that this is less problematic than might at first be expected, due to the consistency of group behaviour by slaves depicted in the sources, but it does represent a limitation to my findings.

Likewise, limitations of space have prevented a more in-depth analysis of the impact that such poor mental health would have had upon the freedman class. There is little doubt that the impact of slavery upon mental health must have continued after manumission for at least some freedmen. However, that would require a considerable breadth of analysis which is unfortunately outside the scope of this current work.

7.3 Opportunities for future research

The limitation pertaining to freedmen does, however, offer a clear direction for future studies to follow, based on the findings presented here.

A useful hypothesis, informed by this thesis, would focus on the likelihood that slaves who demonstrated the 'correct' behaviour in order to ensure manumission, were in effect demonstrating behaviour that corresponds with mental illness. This would, in turn, indicate that the majority of the freedman class was suffering from mental illness at the time of manumission, thus mental illness ought to have been a prominent factor in freedman behaviour more broadly.

Equally, further case studies could be conducted which are based on this model and that look more deeply into areas such as specific enslaved occupations, specific groups of 'privileged slaves' such as the *familia Caesaris*, or how slaves in the provinces might have experienced their conditions differently.

One other area of study that might prove especially illuminating would be to use a mental health lens to make a close and critical analysis of slave behaviour throughout the Plautine corpus. This would be a considerable undertaking but would offer an alternative way of reading those comedies which might explain slave characters' behaviour in each play in a different light.

Undoubtedly though, the clearest strength of the findings presented here is that a mental health lens that is grounded in modern psychological observations and theories can be usefully applied to sources from antiquity. This new methodology can now be turned to other time periods, illuminating the experiences of slaves and helots from the Greek world or indeed throughout later antiquity. Varying sources for different subject groups will naturally present new challenges for this methodology to overcome. However, there is no shortage of invisible people from antiquity. The new methodology adopted here has successfully illuminated the lived experience for Roman slaves who were otherwise lost to history; it remains to be seen who else can be found in this way.

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Dio Cassius

Dio Chrysostom

Diodorus Siculus

Gaius - *Institutiones*

Galen - *De Anima Affecta Dignitas*

[797] All entries follow the conventions of the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* 4th edition.

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Orosius

Ovid

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- *Fastii*

Pausanias

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- *Symposion*

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- *Aulularia*
- *Casina*
- *Captivi*
- *Cistellaria*
- *Curculio*
- *Miles Gloriosus*
- *Persa*
- *Poenulus*
- *Pseudolus*
- *Rudens*
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