



Slave Religiosity in the Roman Middle Republic

This article proposes a new interpretation of slave religious experience in mid-republican Rome. Select passages from Plautine comedy and Cato the Elder's *De agri cultura* are paired with material culture as well as comparative evidence—mostly from studies of Black Atlantic slave religions—to reconstruct select aspects of a specific and distinctive slave “religiosity” in the era of large-scale enslavements. I work towards this reconstruction first by considering the subordination of slaves as religious agents (Part I) before turning to slaves’ practice of certain forms of religious expertise in the teeth of subordination and policing (II and III). After transitioning to an assessment of slave religiosity’s role in the pursuit of freedom (IV), I conclude with a set of methodological justifications for this paper’s line of inquiry (V).

[T]he classes of the greatest economic disability, such as slaves and free day laborers, have hitherto never been the bearers of a distinctive type of religion.

Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*, p. 99

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During the past few decades, research into Black Atlantic and antebellum Southern “slave religions” has tapped archives and oral histories such as the 1930s Virginia Writers Project to recreate the religious worlds of the Middle Passage.¹ The Roman historian does not have access to such documents; on an initial sifting of the ancient source material, there is nothing quite like Mrs. Minnie Fulkes’ 1937 VWP interview, with its vivid recollection of her white masters’ violent crackdowns on slave worship: “Dey would come in and start whippin’ an’ beatin’ the slaves unmerciful. All dis wuz done to keep yo’ from servin’ God an’ do you know what some of dem devils wuz mean an’ sinful ‘nough to say. ‘Ef I ketch you here agin servin’ God I’ll beat you. You haven’t time to serve God. We bought you to serve us.”² While these and other survivor narratives do not record the voices of those destroyed by slavery,³ in general the rich documentation available to the historian of African-American and Black Atlantic slave religions far surpasses the resources available to the student of Roman slave religion. Nonetheless, as historians of other slave regimes have emphasized, it will not do merely to adopt a pose of “righteous indignation” at the distortions and gaps in the archive; there are tools available for the effective recovery of the religious experiences of the enslaved, provided we work with these tools carefully and honestly.⁴

This article will therefore attempt to sketch the experiential and psychological aspects of “slave religion” at a turning point in Rome’s transformation into a slave society: the third and second centuries BCE. Inspired by Roberta Stewart’s call for a “thickly contextualized image of slavery at one particular moment in time,” and departing from a scholarly tradition increasingly skeptical of efforts to recover slave psychology, I will attend to this critical juncture in Roman history by bringing together Plautus’ comedies and Cato the Elder’s *De agri cultura* to recover the religious lives of slaves.⁵ Cato and Plautus have previously been mined for information about Roman religion in the era of the Punic Wars, mostly with a view to elite religious discourse and practice.⁶ This article will seek to reconstruct not only the

1. Pioneering: Harding 1969 and Raboteau 1978/2004 on the antebellum South; Bastide 1978: 78–96 on slavery and religion in Brazil.

2. Interview transcript: http://www.encyclopediavirginia.org/_Interview_of_Mrs_Minnie_Fulkes_1937.

3. Johnson 1999: 10.

4. Thus Troutt Powell 2006, on the study of African slaves in the Middle East.

5. Thick context: Stewart 2012: 14. For Plautus I quote from Lindsay’s OCT, and Mazzarino’s Teubner for Cato; unless stated otherwise all translations are my own. Marxist approaches to the psychology and ideology of the structurally oppressed were generative: see Štaerman 1975 and de Ste. Croix 1981: 441–45. But cautionary notes were sounded in Finley 1980: 117 (“sedulously” avoiding psychological interpretations; on the misrepresentation of this position see Scheidel 1993: 108–10 with reference to Kudlien 1991); Yavetz 1988: 153–54 (pessimistic); Bradley 1994: 181 (optimistic); for the special case of the New Testament Servant Parables see Glancy 2002: 29 (reluctant) and Harrill 2011 (optimistic only about the possibility of identifying the literary tropes through which slave psychology is depicted).

6. For Plautus, see Duckworth 1952: 295–300; Hanson 1959; Jocelyn 2001; Dunsch 2009 and 2014; Lacam 2010: ch. 4; Rey 2015. For Cato on religious ritual see Scheid 2005, esp. 129–60 and 315–18 on sacrifice. Champion 2017 puts the study of elite religious observance on a new footing.

horizon of social expectations within which slave religious practices operated but—where and as possible—slaves’ recourse to and internalization of these practices.

Even though “we can only read what the masters have written,” it is possible to read Cato and Plautus against the grain.⁷ Yet the success of any such reading will hinge in large part on the methods used. With *De agri cultura*, a text written by and for the elite master, there is the always-slippery problem of reading between the lines of the master’s script. The Plautine *palliata* poses challenges of a different sort: even the plays’ exaltation of the *seruus callidus* is deeply implicated in the re-affirmation of a master ideology, as Kathleen McCarthy has argued; and it has to be conceded that ancient texts pretending to voice lower-class/freedman subject positions can turn out upon closer inspection to be designed by and intended for sophisticated elites.⁸ With these caveats in mind, my optimism about recovering the religious world of Rome’s slaves through close reading of Plautus and Cato is prompted by two considerations. The first is that recent work on Plautine comedy has uncovered signs of the degree to which the slave experience conditioned the artifice of the *palliata* itself; the jokes, the actors, and the *ludi* in which they were showcased were all inseparable from the phenomenon of mass enslavement.⁹ If the era of large-scale Roman slaving did in fact feature the precipitous reversals of personal fortune that leave their mark on the sociocultural formation of the plays, it may not make much sense to assume *a priori* that an authentically embodied slave or freedman perspective was incompatible with or was completely displaced by the literary ingenuity and intellectual sophistication of the comedies.¹⁰ Reading against the grain will in the first instance require an alertness to the signs of this perspective—the patterns, gaps, and silences in the literary record that may be explained (in part) by being reframed as suggestive of the existence of slave religiosity. Such a reading can additionally seek to make common cause with other recent attempts to explore how Greek and Roman texts “voice” the slave experience despite these texts’ own incubation of strategies for naturalizing and mystifying slavery.¹¹

The second and arguably weightier consideration concerns the status of mid-republican Rome as a “slave society.” With the term I allude to Moses Finley’s distinction between societies with slaves on the one hand and societies fundamentally

7. The quoted words: Fitzgerald 2011: 176, with initial formulation of this position in Fitzgerald 2000: 2–3.

8. McCarthy 2000; cf. Fitzgerald 2000: 6–7 on slaves as necessary supplements “to the self-image and identity of masters” and Dumont 1987: 309–502 on the slave world in Roman comedy. One text whose lower-class inflection masks elite authorship: Champlin 2005 on Phaedrus’ fables; but cf. Morgan 2015 on their popular “religiosity.”

9. Thus Richlin 2014b, 2016 and forthcoming on Plautine comedy’s “voicing” of the slave experience; for a comparable approach to the *Life of Aesop* see Hopkins 1993/2004.

10. Remarks to this effect in Richlin 2014b: 217n.52.

11. See e.g. Leigh 2016 on Vergil’s *Eclogues*. I have privileged Plautus over Terence partly because the latter’s silences on questions of religious practice present some unusually thorny conceptual challenges; for an indication of what can and remains to be done with Terence see Gellar-Goad 2013.

structured around slave labor on the other, the second category believed to consist of five historical exemplars—ancient Greece, ancient Rome, the early modern Caribbean, eighteenth-nineteenth century Brazil, and the antebellum United States—distinguished by an approximately 1-to-3 ratio of slaves to the general population.¹² In the centuries singled out for scrutiny in this article, the Roman Republic was transitioning from the first to the second category, with at least three quarters of a million souls driven into captivity in the one hundred and thirty years from Sentinum to Pydna; these brought to their enslavement the memories of their past as free individuals. An account of this transformation in all of its economic, geographic, and political intricacy is not the aim of this piece.¹³ I am interested rather in outlining how this transformation came to organize and dictate the religious lives of the enslaved. Early modern historians have adopted a number of strategies, some of which are on display in this article, for creatively piecing together the experiential matrix of enslavement from recalcitrant and/or fragmentary evidence.¹⁴ To imagine vividly something as elusive as religious subjectivity, it is important to be flexible. I selectively engage Roman material from later periods to fill in some evidentiary gaps, mindful as I do so of the risk of anachronism. Following the lead of recent scholarship on ancient slavery,¹⁵ I also make “soft” use of comparative evidence not so much to delineate rigorous comparisons and contrasts but to generate a set of new questions and alternative exegeses—even if the questions cannot be answered definitively, and even if the alternatives prove unsusceptible to final verification or falsification.

One of this article’s methodological aims is to model the practice of a historical hermeneutic not wedded to ironclad positivism. While further consideration of my approach’s limitations has been postponed to the final section of this article, it will be important to clarify at the outset my use of the terms “slave religion” and “religiosity.” Below I will be elucidating how slave religion *qua* religious experience differed in some important respects from the religious experience of the free(d): it is proposed that at the center of this distinction stood a distinctive religious subjectivity—my shorthand for which is “religiosity”—conditioned by and responsive to the constraints and oppressions of enslaved life. With this argument

12. For revision and amplification of this list see now Ismard 2017: 4–7.

13. Hopkins 1978: 99–132 for the main structural features; Volkman 1990: 14–71 for the regional specifics of enslavement in the Hellenistic Mediterranean, and Scheidel 2011: 294–95 for the numbers Rome enslaved; Feig Vishnia 2002 on slave-merchants in the train of the Roman army (*lixae*); and Kay 2014: ch. 8, esp. 178–83, for Roman slavery’s impact on agricultural production. I defer to a future project the religious world of *uerna*, who already comprised a significant percentage of the overall slave population by the late second century (App. *BC* 1.7 with Urbainczyk 2008: 104–5) but would become arguably the key means for the replenishment of the slave pool during the Empire. (For the debate see Scheidel 1997; Harris 1999; McKeown 2007: 124–40; Scheidel 2012: 93); and of those who may have sold themselves into slavery (about whom see Duncan-Jones 2016: 142–53; Silver 2016’s dismissal of the literary evidence for mass enslavement in favor of a large “structured market for self-sellers” is unpersuasive).

14. See e.g. Warren 2007’s reconstruction of the rape of an African slave woman.

15. See Webster 2008 and Joshel and Petersen 2014: 22 for the “soft” use of comparative evidence; cf. Bradley 2011: 370 on the use of comparative material “if only for imaginative purposes.”

I will be moving against Franz Bömer and John North, whose denials of any *sui generis* aspects to slave religion echo the Weber epigraph with which this article opened.¹⁶ If the existence of a slave religiosity distinguishable from the religious life of the free can be proven or at the very least plausibly imagined, the next step—in this article’s afterlife—will be to query why even the most comprehensive collaborative reconstructions of ancient slavery have not devoted more space to this religiosity’s formation and development.¹⁷

It will be objected that this decision on the part of historians of Roman slavery to avoid positing a uniquely slave religiosity has been a prudent one, in view of the numerical scope and geographic range of enslavements during the third and second centuries: how could anyone posit a discrete religious subjectivity for individuals who—hailing from different regions, speaking different languages, and worshipping different gods—did not form a coherent community, except inasmuch as they held the legal-juridical status of slave? However, thanks to the development of a Mediterranean-wide religious *koiné* during the second half of the first millennium BCE through commercial exchange, military encounters, and (yes) enslavement, religious concepts could and did range across vast distances, linking far-flung communities to each other. Focusing more narrowly on the third and second centuries, this essay’s mostly implicit answer to the objection will play out on two fronts. First, I will demonstrate how the restrictions of Roman slavery impinged so fundamentally on slave access to religious practice as to circumscribe the slave’s identity in relation to ritual and to the gods. Second, if historically one characteristic of coping with enslavement has been the need to manage trauma, and if this trauma operated not only on the psychological but on the religious level as well, it should be possible to establish (albeit in rudimentary terms) the parameters for the religious disruption experienced by slaves in the specific context of Roman enslavement.

Some readers may find this essay’s reliance on the term “religion” and its assorted lexical congeners to be over-simplistic or naïve in light of the unresolved debate under way in ancient religious studies as to whether the modern vocabulary of religion can be applied to the study of ancient Mediterranean cultic observance; the absence of any terminological or conceptual rubric in Greek or Latin that fully aligns with modern Euro-American notions of religion is only the tip of the iceberg.¹⁸ Throughout this article the word religion and its kin are employed narrowly to cover a set of ritualized

16. Bömer 1981–1990; North 2012; note McKeown 2012’s refinements to Bömer. Dumont 1987 devotes only passing attention to slave religious practice. Schumacher 2001: 248–65 reviews and summarizes the mostly imperial material evidence—some of which is cited in Part I below—for slaves’ religious activity.

17. I am thinking of *The Cambridge World History of Slavery*, Vol. 1: *The Ancient Mediterranean World*: of its twenty-two contributors, only M. George and J. Edmondson have much to say about slaves and (non-Judaeo-Christian) religion. The only two extensive explorations of the topic known to me are the Besançon school’s 1994 edited volume *Religion et anthropologie de l’esclavage et des formes de dépendance* and the 2016 collection *Religion sous contrôle: Pratiques et expériences religieuses de la marge?*

18. Nongbri 2013 summarizes and distills previous scholarship; Barton and Boyarin 2016 is the freshest provocation.

practices concerned with imagining or affirming a relationship with supernatural agents, and the socially policed attitudes and expectations that clustered around these practices.¹⁹ Although any attempt to establish correspondences between Roman and early modern frameworks of religious experience is bound to be a fraught and imprecise exercise, I hope to show that even this imprecision can be conceptually generative.

My argument below is organized into four sections. I will begin with an examination of the subordination and suppression of slaves as religious agents by their masters (I); from there I will move to slaves' cultivation and wielding of religious practice and expertise in the face of and in counterpoint to this subordination (II and III); and finally I will take up the interplay of religiosity and hopes for freedom (IV). Whereas Part I will concentrate mainly on Roman material, Parts II-IV will leaven Roman evidence with Black Atlantic comparanda. Throughout I take it as axiomatic that Roman enslavement was brutal and degrading; for reasons that fall beyond the scope of this article, this claim still seems to catch some classicists by surprise.²⁰ The ultimate ambition is to assemble a stable edifice from less-than-stable component parts, in the style of the "wigwam-method" embraced in Keith Hopkins' *Conquerors and Slaves* (1978): individual readings of Plautus or Cato will be filtered through some of the insights gleaned from Black Atlantic slave histories to arrive at an internally coherent vision of what slave religiosity in Roman mid-republican settings *may* have looked like.

I. RESTRICTION, CONDITIONING, AND ASPIRATION

While slaves in republican and imperial Rome may have enjoyed greater religious freedom than their counterparts in classical Greece,²¹ the former labored under significant constraints when it came to the exercise of religious agency. The impression one obtains from Cato's instructions in *De agri cultura*—whose prescriptions on slave management, even if they do not directly transcribe reality, nonetheless internalize and project a set of realistic expectations²²—is that Roman slaves were subordinated as religious actors, with the range and nature of their religious practices controlled by the demands and preferences of their masters. Such control took two forms, one of which is immediately apprehensible in Cato's text and the second of which is more clearly showcased in the Plautine *palliata*: explicit imposition and regulation on the one hand; keeping slaves far too busy

19. This definition is formulated with a view to recent cognitivist work on religion, for which see the overview in Kraemer 2010: 22–25.

20. Note Harris 1999: 68 on the "long and tiresome tradition among classicists of softening the realities of the Roman slave system."

21. Thus Patterson 1982: 68–69, following Franz Bömer (but conceding at p. 66 that Bömer's contrast between Greek and Roman slave religious life "may be a little overdrawn").

22. For contrasting perspectives on Cato and versus the *realia* of second-century Roman agriculture see Astin 1978: 240–66; Terrenato 2012; Kay 2014: 131–88.

to do anything except assisting (as ordered) at religious observances on the other. In this section I will sketch the entwinement and interrelation of these two forms before taking up the question of how slaves developed responses to them. That Cato is so preoccupied with stipulations for supervising and restricting slave religious practice is an unmistakable sign that religious experimentation was occurring among slaves; Parts II and III pursue the ramifications of this experimentation at greater length.

A. *REM DIUINAM FACERE*: NOT FOR YOU

Cato orders his *uilicus*, the overseer tasked with managing the estate, not to undertake any religious rituals except those conducted at crossroads shrines or at the household hearth for the winter festival of the Compitalia in honor of the Lares (*rem diuinam nisi Compitalibus in compito aut in foco ne faciat*); moreover he is admonished not to consult any fortune-teller, augur, diviner, or astrologer (*haruspicem, augurem, hariolum, Chaldaeum nequem consuluisse uelit*).²³ Meanwhile, the overseer's female colleague is ordered not to perform any religious rituals on her own or to bid another to do so on her behalf except as commanded by the master or mistress of the household (*rem diuinam ni faciat neue mandet qui pro ea faciat iniussu domini aut dominae*) and to remember that the master was the one who performed religious worship for the entire household (*scito dominum pro tota familia rem diuinam facere*). The *uilica*'s religious responsibilities are limited to placing a garland over the hearth and praying to the *lar familiaris* on the Kalends, Ides, Nones, and any other *dies festus*.²⁴ For the enslaved who were neither *uilici* nor *uilicae*, Cato has very little to say: apart from specifying that either a slave or a free person could make the offering to Mars Silvanus (*eam rem diuinam uel seruus uel liber licebit faciat*), the treatise is mostly silent about the activity of slaves in religious rituals—though it is presumed that slaves will be in attendance whenever the master officiates.²⁵

At a minimum, the formulation of these regulations for the *uilicus* and *uilica* suggests a degree of concern about the prospect of unregulated religious observance. But *De agri cultura*'s silences are equally if not more instructive, for several reasons. Cato's clarification that either a free person or a slave could make the Silvanus offering implies that slaves were usually not allowed or envisioned as competent to preside or officiate at most other rituals. Among the circumstantial evidence for this

23. *De agri cultura* 5.2–3. Even if most overseers were free(d) (Scheidel 1990) my argument below would not be impaired: the privilege of overseeing the care of the *lares* of the *dominus* could then be construed as a religious experience denied to the unfree. On the cultural importance of the Compitalia see Flower 2017.

24. *De agri cultura* 143.1–2.

25. *De agri cultura* 83; further on slave involvement in the cult of Silvanus in Bömer 1981–1990: I.78–87 and n.57 below. For the master's command to a Manius—likely a generic name for the overseer—to undertake the *lustratio* see *De agri cultura* 141 with Kolendo 1994: 271–72. Slaves as the presumed audience of the officiating master: El Bouzidi 2015: 142 with Tab. 16.

exclusion is not only the aforementioned command to the *uilicus* not to perform any *res diuina* except that pertaining to the festival of the Compitalia, but the reminder addressed to the *uilica* that it was the master who performed the *res diuina* for the entire household. Intended as an assertion of the master's control over the religious lives of *uili*ci and *uili*cae, the reminder would have been understood to embrace all other slaves in the household, whose interests and desires were subsumed to those of the sacrificing and praying master.²⁶ It is therefore not quite right to say, with Enrico Dal Lago and Constantina Katsari, that “restrictions and impositions on religious matters . . . affected specifically the managerial figure of the *uilicus*”: nothing needed to be said about regulating the religious agency of the non-overseer slave because his/her exclusion from the exercise of such agency was so obvious as not to require commentary.²⁷ The one stated exception in the form of authorization to make the Mars Silvanus offering confirms the rule. Not only denial but disavowal of religious agency was the signature mechanism through which slaves were consigned, if not to Pattersonian social death, then to a social differentiation that minimized their standing before the gods. And this differentiation received dramatic and striking visual expression precisely at the Compitalia, one of the few festivals that did accord prominence to slaves. At this celebration, depictions of human beings were hung up at crossroads and on altars to propitiate the Lares: free members of the household were represented by human-like effigies, whereas slaves were represented as mere balls.²⁸

Also brought to light through the cult of the Lares was another marker of difference, well attested by the Augustan period but likely originating during the middle Republic: the belief that slaves did not have their own individual *genii* or *iunones*, the guardian spirits reputed to attach only to the free members of the household.²⁹ The worship of the *lar* and the *genius* within the slave-owning home was accordingly structured such that “the slave *familia* carried out a rite which invested its master's *genius* with a form of supernatural power.”³⁰ This stark differentiation between slave and free in both the theology and ontology of household cult is best reflected in the material record of late-republican and imperial Pompeii, and not only in the iconography of sacrifice—notably the depiction of ritual on the kitchen wall

26. See Kolendo 1994: 272; but compare his claim that slaves “étaient sans doute convaincus que ces sacrifices étaient offerts aussi dans leur propre intérêt et en leur nom” to Schultz's remark that “Cato's primary concern [is] to direct the slaves' religious activities toward the benefits of the household as a whole and away from the benefit of the slaves themselves” (2006: 196n.58). Usefully on the “sanctioning authority” of the *pater familias* see Gallini 1970: 78–79.

27. Dal Lago and Katsari 2008: 209.

28. The distinction between denial and disavowal is taken from Roberts 2015, whose investigation of marronage is taken up in Part IV below. *Pilae* and *effigies* at the Compitalia: Festus-Paulus 273.7 L. with North 2012: 70–71; Flower 2017.

29. On the evidence in the *palliat*a for the slave's lack of a *genius* see Dumézil 1979: 327–36; cf. Andreau and Descat 2011: 115. Generally on the *genius* and *iuno*: Otto in *RE* 7.1. s.v. “genius,” cols. 1155–70; Schilling 1979: 415–41; Dumézil 1974: 362–69 and 1983; and most recently Schultz 2006: 124–25, Corbeil 2015: 124–28, and Bettini 2016: 68–74. On the oath *eiuno*—formed on analogy with the *ecastor* and *edepol* attested in comedy—see Adams 1984: 54.

30. George 2011: 391.

of House I.13.2 at Pompeii, where a matron offers sacrifice as the slave members of the household look on—but in the spatial distribution of *lararia* within homes: those in the atrium and peristyle would have catered to one domestic group (the free family) while those in the kitchen and other work-intensive spaces engaged another (the slave family).³¹ A fragmentary scene from the *Tunicularia* of Plautus' older contemporary Cn. Naevius in which the possibly servile character Theodotus paints (or touches up?) the “playful Lares” in a confined space during the Compitalia may already be nodding to and sending up this functional and spatial differentiation; such an interpretation can only be speculative but would mesh well with the later evidence.³²

For our purposes, the crucial point to bear in mind is that the worship of the *lares* functioned to consolidate, script, and perpetuate the strategy of fictive kinship according to which slaves were incorporated into the *familia*.³³ In the presence of the gods, the slave could not occupy the same space and role as the master; and even though the rituals of the *lararia* fostered a sense of religious community, they did so with a view to reinforcing the slave's subordinate status within that community. To a degree, religious modalities that integrated the enslaved into the master's household would have been in some respects “even more pervasively oppressive than natal alienation” *because* they went right to the core of the enslaved's personhood, by forcing the slave to recast the interiorized engagement with cult as directly implicated in his/her ongoing subjugation; moreover, the obliteration of independent religious identity that came with forcible incorporation into the *familia*'s religious structure placed the slave in the position of having to worry that any divine displeasure directed at the master might come his or her way as well.³⁴ It was not an unreasonable concern: a late-republican lead tablet found at Cumae curses a M. Heius Caledus, his wife, two slaves, and two freedmen.³⁵

Extending beyond the cult of the *lares*, the production of a sharp ontological distinction between slave and free in the religious realm was partly an outgrowth of explicit direction to avoid the performance of certain *sacra* and partly the accretive result of orchestrated exclusion. A notable instance of the latter is the annual celebration of the Matralia in the temple of Mater Matuta, barred to all slave

31. Fröhlich 1991 and Foss 1997 on *lararia*; Giacobello 2008: 110–16 on the kitchen ones as “true” *lararia*; fresh discussion in George 2011: 390–91 and Joshel and Peterson 2014: 76–78 and 81–82. Further on slaves and the *lares*, see Bömer 1981–1990: I.32–56; on the (servile?) iconography of the *lares*, Pollini 2008: 394–95; for the *lar familiaris* in Plautus, Flower 2017.

32. Naevius *com. fr.* 99–102 Ribbeck² = 97–100 Warmington: *Theodotum / cum Apella comparas qui Compitalibus / sedens in cella circumtectus tegetibus / Lares ludentes peni pinxit bubulo?* This fragment is taken from a partially corrupt lemma in Festus; for a full discussion see Padilla Peralta in progress.

33. On “fictive kinship” mechanisms in slavery societies see Patterson 1982: 62–65; for their operation in the cult of *genius* and *lar*, Edmondson 2011: 344–45.

34. I quote from the comments of de Wet 2015: 20 on “natal association” in Christian texts. For scripted association as reminder of dissociation cf. Richlin 2015: 41–45 on the psychological perversities of natal alienation in *Persa*.

35. Audollent no. 199 = *CIL* 1².3129.

women with the exception of one who was admitted for a ritual beating at the hands of the free female celebrants before being cast back out—one of several sanctioned instances of free Roman women “us[ing] religious practice to reinforce their identity as superior to that of slave women.”³⁶ Yet the bright line separating slave from free in religious matters was also a direct, structural consequence of a system of control designed to keep slaves busy until they dropped dead, or until they survived to be manumitted: “You haven’t time to serve God. We bought you to serve us.”³⁷ Columella’s refinements on Cato make transparent the expectation that slaves on the farm were to be allowed no opportunity for distraction, least of all those distractions afforded by certain forms of individually initiated religious practice.³⁸ Additionally, slaves were to be kept busy ministering to their masters whenever the latter wanted to perform a religious ritual, as extensions of their master’s bodies.³⁹ That work began in the kitchen—in the sight of the *lares*—with the readying of the cakes that would accompany the sacrifice, the *libum* and *placenta* for which Cato supplies recipes.⁴⁰

Perhaps even more trenchantly than Cato, Plautus’ plays communicate the degree to which slaves came to be imagined as prostheses in the context of cult. Amphitryon telling Bromia to go home and have vases prepared so that he could entreat Jupiter with sacrificial offerings, the hiring of a slave to assist Periphanes *ad rem diuinam* in *Epidicus*, Phronesium’s direction to her maid to ready some myrrh and prepare the altar-fire in *Truculentus*: in these and other cases, slaves are figured as cultic *instrumenta*, running around to get things ready for the execution of their masters’ religious desires.⁴¹ Evocative of this conditioning of the slave as object and accessory of the master’s ritual designs is the slave Epidicus’ fear that *he* will be sacrificed as an expiation.⁴² On the other hand, those who were free performed that freedom in part by bossing slaves around in ritual contexts, as the behavior of *Miles Gloriosus*’ protagonist Philocomasium illustrates. Having first collaborated with the slave Palaestrio to concoct a prophetic dream and deceive another slave who had seen her making out with her lover, Philocomasium next

36. The quotation: Richlin 2014a: 198. Slave-beating at the Matralia: Plut. *QR* 16.

37. See n.2 above. On the frequency of manumission at Rome cf. Wiedemann 1985 and Scheidel 1997: 167–68.

38. *De re rustica* 1.8.5–6 with Joshel and Petersen 2014: 196–97.

39. Generally on the slave as prosthesis in *De agri cultura* see Reay 2005, followed up in Bodel 2012: 51 and Reay 2012: 64. For the pedagogical transmission of prosthetization from slave-owning father to slave-owning son through the praxis of (scripted) prayer see Sciarrino 2011: 156–57.

40. The recipes: *De agri cultura* 75–76. Debate as to whether these belong in an agricultural treatise: Varro *RR* 1.2.28. It was not mere idiosyncrasy for Cato to include instructions for sacrificial food prep: see Part III for *ueneficia* prosecutions in second-century BCE Rome.

41. *Amph.* 1126–27; *Epid.* 417–18; *Truc.* 476. Reay’s notion of “masterly extensibility” receives dramatic expression in *Casina* (see Way 2000 and discussion in Part II below).

42. *Epid.* 139–40: *men piacularem oportet fieri ob stultitiam tuam / ut meum tergum tuae stultitiae subdes succidaneum*, with Duckworth 1940 ad loc. and Jocelyn 2001: 288 on the *hostia succidanea*; further on Epidicus at n.106 below. For a full overview of the preparatory work involved in the staging of Roman sacrifice see Aldrete 2014.

orders Periplectomenus' slaves to place a fire on the altar so that she can offer thanks to Diana.⁴³ Plautine comedy's turn to sacrificial ritual as an opportunity to underline subordination falls in line with the recurring and successful patterning of animal sacrifice throughout the Greco-Roman Mediterranean to represent, model, and communicate elite social control.⁴⁴ Within this configuration, slaves were expected to be quasi-permanent altar-servers, both in the private domain of the house and in public ritual contexts.⁴⁵

To the extent that their movements required them to acknowledge the divinities overseeing domestic and exterior spaces—as *Miles'* Palaestrio does by saying goodbye to the *lar familiaris* before exiting the house—a semi-independent religious subjectivity would have come into being in the act of attending to the master's ritual wishes.⁴⁶ And, not unlike altar-servers in more recent times, Plautus' (and Cato's) slaves were allowed to have some extra wine on the big feast days, the Compitalia and the Saturnalia.⁴⁷ Wine was god, and the celebration of its consumption lay at the heart of another mid-republican religious festival, the Liberalia so memorably upheld as an occasion for frank speech in one of Naevius' comedies.⁴⁸ But the over-generous dispensation of alcohol to Roman slaves also facilitated the holiday stupefaction decried by Frederick Douglass two millennia later: in slave regimes ancient and modern, the temporary amnesia induced by alcohol consumption has been integral to the logic of the holiday as a “scene of subjection.”⁴⁹ Since—on the available comparative evidence—even holiday merriment and intoxication have historically functioned as mechanisms of oppression, we should not be gulled into thinking that the religious dimension of binge-consumption at these two festivals, and the general inversion of social roles lubricated by the gift of the grape, represented purely innocent fun and games for individuals of all social statuses: these festivals and their associated rituals were *imposed*.⁵⁰

43. *Mil.* 411–12: *inde ignem in aram, ut Ephesiae Dianae laeta laudes / gratisque agam eique ut Arabico fumificem odore amoene*. The scene's progressive escalation of bewilderment: Sharrock 2009: 107–108.

44. Animal sacrifice in the Roman Empire as articulation and projection of social hierarchy: Gordon 1990: 224–31; Rives 2012. Contrasting the representation of sacrifice in Plautus and the absence of sacrifice in Terence: Gellar-Goad 2013: 166–72.

45. By “altar-servers,” I mean the class of sacrificial attendants known as *uictimarii*, a new account of which is supplied in Lennon 2015. Slave *ministri* in public settings: Bömer 1981–1990: I.9–31; further on *serui publici* at n.84 below.

46. *Mil.* 1339: *etiam nunc saluto te, <Lar> familiaris, prius quam eo*. Cf. Joshel and Peterson 2014: 97–114 on slave identity as constituted through movement around and within domestic spaces.

47. *De agri cultura* 57: $3\frac{1}{2}$ *congii* per slave = 2.76 US gallons, or about 14 bottles of wine; see analysis of Catonian food and drink rations in Roth 2007: 26–52 for whether this allotment was intended for the slave and his family. As one of the few privileges Cato grants his slaves: Richlin 2014b: 206. Slave roles at the Saturnalia: Bömer 1981–1990: II.173–95. For Saturnalian inversion in Greece see Garland 1988: 199.

48. Naevius *com. fr.* 113 Ribbeck²: *Libera lingua loquimur ludis Liberalibus*.

49. The African-American slave's holiday: Douglass [1855] 2003: 185–87, read by Roberts 2015: 80–81 through Saidiya Hartman's (1997) notion of “scenes of subjection.”

50. *Pace* Kolendo 1994: 273: “Il semble que les esclaves n'avaient pas le sentiment que ces cultes et ces pratiques religieuses leur avaient été dans une certaine mesure imposés.”

That the setup of the Compitalia in particular was geared to the end of sustaining slave subjection while reproducing ontological distinction is conjectured by one of the most sophisticated ancient students of Roman religion. Writing in the early Empire, Dionysius of Halicarnassus claims that by bestowing special prerogatives on slaves at this festival, such as the right to officiate and the removal of visible markers of their slave status, Romans sought to ensure that slaves “were more docile towards their masters and less weighed down by the harshness of their misfortune.”⁵¹ Now, Dionysius’ discernment of intent here would not pass muster with modern anthropologists of ritual, for whom this line of interpretation has all of the trappings of *post hoc* rationalization; but his decision to flag the need to render slaves more pliable and obedient as a justification for the Compitalia’s inversion of roles indicates that at least some Greeks and Romans were giving thought to the relationship between the generally routine marginalization of slaves in ritual contexts and the feelings precipitated by that marginalization. More will be said at the end of this section about theologically premised validation of slavery, and in Part IV about the mobilization of religious practice to resist and defy slavery; the important takeaway for now is that Dionysius’ asseveration of the “logic” of Compitalia recognizes, if only fleetingly, the sentimental and psychological drama playing itself out in slave religious life and experience.

There is, moreover, a deeper resonance to Dionysius’ line of interpretation. Granting slaves the privilege to officiate (at the Compitalia or elsewhere) would have created not only a release valve but a carceral mechanism, in the style of those other markers of “circumscribed humanity” through which slaves were distinguished from the free.⁵² The emotional toll of being in all other sacred contexts reduced to a bit player in the performance of sacrifice has been overlooked even in otherwise astute reflections on the peculiar position of the enslaved in Roman religious settings.⁵³ The slave was forever displaced from the center of the action; and that displacement is likely to have engendered some strong feelings, intensifying over the course of the annual festival calendar. And apart from the few other Roman festivals with a slave focus—the celebration for Aventine Diana on the 13th of August, a *seruorum dies festus* on which all slaves were released from work; the festival for Juno Caprotina on the 7th of July, which commemorated the slave women who had volunteered to pose as freeborn hostages when a Latin army threatened Rome in the years

51. AR 4.14.4: . . . χαριέστεροι γίνονται περι τοὺς δεσπότης καὶ τὰ λυπηρὰ τῆς τύχης ἤττον βαρύνονται. Even if Dionysius’ information about the Compitalia is “second hand” (Flower 2017), what matters is that Dionysius can *imagine* this as an explanation.

52. For the phrase see Hartman 1997: 6; usefully on the carceral mechanisms of “humanizing” gestures towards slaves see de Wet 2015: 18–19, building on Hartman. Cf. D’Arms 1991: 176 on the segregation of slave from free at the Saturnalia.

53. So e.g. Amiri 2016: 68, mapping the paradoxical figuration of the slave *uictimarius* as simultaneously necessary for the physical performance of the sacrifice and marginal to its most central moment: “Il n’est évidemment pas question ici de parler . . . de l’émotion qu’il pourrait être amené à éprouver”—but why not at least speculate about the range of emotions likely to have been in play? Lennon 2015 writes of *uictimarii* who “proudly” (73, 85) state their profession on Imperial inscriptions.

after the Gallic sack—the master’s orders would have taken precedence over a slave’s wish to attend any other festival in the annual rotation.⁵⁴ In any event, how plausible is it that most slaves received regular permission to participate in cultic celebrations, in the city or in the countryside? It is not exactly a surprise, then, that festival-time proved most delectable when the master happened to be away.⁵⁵

B. ACTS OF SELF-ASSERTION?

Not every slave was so overworked as to be permanently hindered from performing private rituals of worship outside of festival contexts. For documentation of these acts and their polyvalent significance we may turn, briefly, to epigraphic testimony from the middle and late Republic.

Masters certainly offered dedications on behalf of the full household, as is apparent from the fragmentary mid-republican inscription recording an offering made by a husband and wife; but a few slaves did have enough freedom and financial wherewithal to put up inscribed dedications of their own, such as the slave Abennaeus at San Pelagio or the trilingual slave Cleon in Sardinia.⁵⁶ While we cannot know the extent to which these offerings reflected purely individual initiative as opposed to direction or steering on the part of masters, it is noteworthy in light of the Catonian dispensation cited earlier that slaves appear to be overrepresented in late republican and imperial offerings to the god Silvanus.⁵⁷ Moreover, as Bömer and others have observed, some slaves were commemorated in late republican and imperial inscriptions for having participated in religious rituals as members of *collegia* (societies), from Delos and Minturnae to the city of Rome itself.⁵⁸ However, even though these *collegia* provided slaves with opportunities for interactions with fellow slaves and freedmen, the demands of enslavement—chief among them

54. The *seruorum dies festus*: Plut. *QR* 100 and Festus 460.32–36 L. The festival of Juno Caprotina: Macr. *Sat.* 1.11.36–40, with other versions of the aetiology in Ov. *Ars am.* 2.257–58 and Plut. *Rom.* 29 and *Cam.* 33; discussion in Perry 2014: 21–22 and Bettini 2016: 77–79. On the Matralia see n.36 above. Broadly on Roman slave holidays and holidays that recognized slaves: Bradley 1994: 18; 1998: 24; but note Scheid 2016: 80–90 on the practice of excluding slaves from celebration of the *ludi*.

55. Toxilus in *Persae* cooks up a good time with the master out of town (*Pers.* 29): *basilice agito eleutheria* (“I’m living up the Liberty-festival like a king”). It is clear from e.g. Cato *De agri cultura* 2.4 that slaves were expected to work even on feast days.

56. *CIL* 1².2839 = *ILLRP* 294: - - - | [fili]eisque[- - - | d]ederon[t pro] | domod fa[miliad] | souad quis[que] | leibereique; *CIL* 5.704 = *ILLRP* 244 (Abennaeus); *CIL* 10.7856 = *ILLRP* 41 (Cleon); for other examples see Schumacher 2001: 258. A systematic study of slaves in the epigraphic record of the middle and late Republic remains a desideratum.

57. See North 2012: 82–83, citing the statistics collected in Dorcey 1992: 13–17. Silvanus among “die arbeitsfreudigen Götter und Heroen” to which Roman slaves gravitated: Štaerman 1975: 10.

58. Slaves in republican *collegia*: the late second/early first-century dedications of the Κομπεταλιασταί resident on the island of Delos (compiled in Bömer 1981–1990: 1.43–45) and the early first-century Capua and Minturnae texts (*ILLRP* 705–23b and 724–76 with Bradley 1998: 44–45); for comprehensive discussion see Flower 2017. Slaves in imperial *collegia*: the *ministri* responsible for compital dedications (catalogue with commentary in Lott 2004: Appendix) and the records of the *collegium* of Diana and Antinous at Lanuvium (*CIL* 14.2112 = *ILS* 7212); on these last see n.170 below.

the prosthetization and instrumentalization discussed earlier—could very well have encroached upon or undermined their experience of community; the lingering habit of classifying and studying these *collegia* as “voluntary associations” obscures the persistence of structures of domination within them.⁵⁹ That these societies engendered a sense of community does not mean that they promoted equal or identical forms of religious experience for all their members: some *collegia* kept slaves busy in much the same way that the instrumentalized prostheses of Plautine comedy were kept busy, and some *collegia* bought slaves for the gods they venerated.⁶⁰

With the epigraphic and literary record of slave initiations into mysteries, we again need to be alert to the friction between the performance of community on the one hand and the inescapability of the master’s control on the other. There is absolutely no reason to assume, for example, that the slaves Philodamus and Antiochus who were initiated at Samothrace with their owners M. and C. Paccius (*CIL* 1².2939) at the end of the second or the early first century had any say in the matter, derived much enjoyment from it, or experienced the initiation in the same way as their masters.⁶¹ If the slave on the Catonian farm practiced the master’s religion “surtout parce qu’il n’as pas le choix,” the exact same compulsion would have obtained in non-agrarian contexts as well.⁶² To be sure, slaves might have processed and reconstituted the experience of initiations for their own religious ends—in much the same way that Black Atlantic slaves appropriated Biblical narratives to devise alternative theologies⁶³—and traces of this work can be detected in the soteriological fantasies discussed in Part IV below; but this possibility only lends further credence to the notion that slaves processed initiations differently from their masters. In any event, the admittedly dramatized and fictionalizing literary account of the freedwoman *Hispala Faecenia*’s entanglement in the Bacchanalian conspiracy contains a revealing nugget: when interrogated, *Hispala* insisted that she had been initiated while still a slave-girl with her mistress but had had nothing to do with the cult in the years since her manumission; one implication is that some slaves distanced themselves from the religious predilections of their masters the first moment they could—after emancipation.⁶⁴

59. Cf. the terse comment of Maillot 2013: 199 on “la possibilité d’un choix libre d’appartenance à un groupe en dehors des déterminismes sociaux.” Note also in this vein the comments of Gallini 1970: 43.

60. One fragmentary republican dedication of columns to *Minerva* recovered near Trieste refers to a slave owned by *socii* (*CIL* 1².2215); at Capua a *collegium* purchases a slave for *Juno Gaura* (*CIL* 1².686 = *ILLRP* 722). See McKeown 2012 for the argument that *collegia* engendered a strong sense of community; Flower 2017 for the socially inclusive nature of *lares* worship at Delos.

61. Cf. Amiri 2016: 70: “. . . proximité ne signifie pas adhésion ni reconnaissance . . .” Epigraphic testimonies for slave initiation are collected and discussed in Bömer 1981–1990: II.145–54. Cf. the initiation of Athenian public slaves into *Demeter*’s mysteries: Ismard 2017: 47 on *IE* 159.24–25 and 177.269–70.

62. El Bouzidi 2015: 143.

63. Wimbush 2012 on “The Life of Olaudah Equiano” is excellent on this topic.

64. Liv. 39.12; more on the Bacchanalian conspiracy in Part II below.

However one chooses to anatomize the motivations and negotiations underlying these inscriptions, one aspect of the Roman epigraphic habit seems to provide more unequivocal support for this section's core claim. The numbers of freedmen dedicators during the Republic and Empire strongly suggest that servitude repressed, whereas freedom facilitated, expression of religious sentiment in epigraphic form. Of course, the epigraphic underrepresentation of slaves is hardly restricted to religious inscriptions: for example, of the over one hundred and eighty inscribed second- and early first-century *ollae* from a lower-class graveyard near the Via Appia, only a few seem to refer to slaves, while the overwhelming majority of texts appear to name *ingenui* or *libertini*; that slaves do not appear more often is partly a function of manumission rates but also a sobering reminder of the anonymizing deaths to which those who died in servitude were subject.⁶⁵ In the case of religious dedications, the underrepresentation of slaves gestures indirectly at the structural restrictions on their ability while enslaved to engage in commemorated communication with the divine. Once emancipated, former slaves made use of their freedom to initiate such communication; while in some cases it was Jupiter—invoked by slaves desirous of freedom—who received thanks in the form of an inscription following manumission, the slave-turned-freedman's effusion of gratitude took as its object other divinities as well. Sometime in the early Empire, a slave named Clesippus who had been included as a bargain in the sale of an extravagant bronze candelabrum notoriously offered cult to the candelabrum upon being emancipated; for less outré examples dating to the Republic we might consider the case of the Sextus Numisius who specifies his status as a freedman in a dedication of statues and an altar to the Lares, or the freedman Quintus Mucius who discharges a vow to Bona Dea.⁶⁶ The *seruus uouit liber soluit* inscriptions surviving from the late Republic and (especially) the Empire register gratitude for freedom,⁶⁷ but the assertion of this freedom was a dynamically polyvalent act; given that slaves had been restricted from the performance of certain *sacra* and—for reasons noted earlier—kept too busy to perform *sacra* even when they were not explicitly obstructed from doing so, acts of thanksgiving following emancipation should be read as an affirmation that the dedicator at long last had the freedom to communicate ritually with the gods, a freedom previously denied or drastically constrained during enslavement.

At the first Compitalia after his or her emancipation, the newly freed person had the opportunity to put up a doll instead of a ball, in what was likely “a moving and celebratory moment of personal transition.”⁶⁸ But the cultic distinction between

65. At the *Vinea S. Caesarei*: *CIL* 1².1015–1201 = 6.8211–394; discussion of this graveyard in Shaw 2006: 93–101. The graveyard's Greek speakers: Adams 2003: 101–104.

66. Jupiter: confused after encountering Mercury, *Amphitryo*'s Sosia hopes *quod ille faxit Iuppiter / ut ego hodie raso capite calvos capiam pilleum* (*Amph.* 461–62); the Servian commentary on the *Aeneid* cites this verse in connection with the worship of Feronia as goddess of liberty (see n.81 below). Clesippus and Gegania: Pliny *NH* 34.6.11–12; this Clesippus went on to hold two priesthoods (*ILS* 1924 = *ILLRP* 696). Sex. Numisius: *CIL* 1².3449 (Cartagena). Q. Mucius Trypho: *ILS* 3491 = *ILLRP* 56 (Rome).

67. For a dossier of these inscriptions see Veyne 1964: 32–35.

68. Flower 2017.

slave and free was not fully lifted by manumission. Despite the obviously fictionalizing features of Seneca the Elder's *controversia* concerning a formerly enslaved prostitute aspiring to a priesthood, it is apparent that slavery's stain (the *macula seruitutis*) continued to limit access to forms of religious agency even after emancipation.⁶⁹ At the highest levels, freedmen and freedwomen were excluded from the ranks of the most elite priesthoods, which were governed by protocols of purity that in their regularization and enforcement communicated a message of ontological difference between slaves/freedpersons on the one hand and the freeborn on the other.⁷⁰ Freedwomen aspiring to non-elite priesthoods found their path to be obstructed: the underrepresentation of freedwomen among early imperial inscriptions set up by priestesses leads one to suspect that a previous history of enslavement proved a very difficult hurdle to clear.⁷¹ Enslavement or a prior history of enslavement were perceived in at least some settings to confer ritual impurity: from the *paelex* barred from touching Juno's altar to the inscription denying slave access to an artifact sacred to Mars, past or current slave status could intervene to set the terms of religious engagement.⁷²

With the adoption of a comparative perspective, it becomes easier to see how such limitations on access, working to inculcate and reinforce the degradation and social death detailed by Orlando Patterson, could and did spark resistance among the subordinated. For the Black Atlantic slaves whose religious practices were curtailed or banned by colonial authorities, independent religious expression meant operating in stealth and risking arrest and prosecution for "magic"; as we will see in Part III, the targeting of slave "magic" did in fact occur in mid-republican Rome.⁷³ But histories of Black Atlantic slave religiosity also invite us to entertain the likelihood that dedications to the gods by ex-slaves marked a form of religious subjectivity that arose in response to the regulation of religious agency among the enslaved. The individual who dedicated to the gods asserted not only a relationship

69. The *sacerdos prostituta*: Sen. *Contr.* 1.2 (textual problems: Winterbottom 1974: 34) with Glancy 2010: 149 on the sexual-religious dynamics of the *controversia*; Lennon 2014: 76–81 on prostitutes and pollution. Detailed exposition of the *macula seruitutis*: Mouritsen 2011: 10–35; generally on "the slavish free woman," Pery 2014: 129–54. For a modern African example of slave ancestry's interaction with religious discrimination see Bellagamba and Klein 2013.

70. The literature on elite priesthoods is vast; see now DiLuzio 2016's new interpretation of female and male agency within these priesthoods.

71. See Richlin 2014a: 208–17 and Hemelrijk 2015: 37–107 for additional coverage of the epigraphic material; generally on the conspicuous underrepresentation of freedmen and freedwomen in Roman civic priesthoods see Van Haepere 2016.

72. The *paelex*: Paulus-Festus 248 L. with Richlin 2014a: 227. *CIL* 14.4178 bars slaves from touching an artifact sacred to Mars (*Mauortio sacr(um) | Hoc signum | a servo tangi | nefas est*); but this inscription, first documented in the Renaissance, is now lost, and questions have been raised as to its authenticity; for restrictions of this kind in the Greek world cf. Athenaeus *Deipn.* 6.262c on the Coan festival for Hera. Also noteworthy is the denial of purificatory materials to slaves at Roman *ludi*: Zosimus *Hist.* 2.5.1 with Scheid 2016: 80–81.

73. For citations of the historical research into *obeah* legislation and prosecutions in the Black Atlantic see n.147 below. The resistance of the subordinated to degradation is the theme of Scott 1990; more on religious forms of resistance in Part IV.

with them but validity to participate in cult—a forceful retort to slavery’s imposition of social death, felt even by slaves who had previously secured permission to participate in *collegium*-centered religious praxis.

C. KNOWLEDGE IS NOT POWER

Well before the dedication that followed manumission, the slave was interpellated as a religious agent by exposure to the religious practices of the master; what was learned from this exposure left its mark on the religious practices of the enslaved even after emancipation. Both in the epigraphic initiation record and in the story of a freedwoman’s disavowal of the cult into which she had been initiated with her mistress, we saw possible versions of this interpellation at work. Potentially reflective of the same process is the decision of a freedman Quintus Caecilius—previously a *seruus communis* of two Caecilii and a Flaminius—to make an offering to Juno Sospita, a goddess strongly affiliated with the *gens Caecilia*.⁷⁴ But a particularly rich perspective on the dynamics of how slaves learned or were coerced into learning about the gods of their masters is supplied by Plautine comedy.

In the course of attending to their masters, slaves received instruction in “Roman” religion—all throughout this period being reconstituted partly through the encounters between the native-born free and the foreign-born slave.⁷⁵ We glimpse an expectation of this learning in Plautus’ *Bacchides*, when Pistoclerus chides his slave tutor Lydus for not knowing that *Suavisaviatio* (“Sweet Smooch”) is a divinity; in *Cistellaria*, the perceived efficacy of this learning receives ironic acknowledgment when the freedwoman prostitute Melaenis corrects Alcesimarchus’ faulty genealogy-*cum*-oath.⁷⁶ As best one can tell, the slave could learn about as many real or not-so-real gods as possible—or be kept in a semi-permanent state of suspense about the proper recipients of cult in the world of the master—yet still not be in a position to implement that knowledge through independent ritual action until emancipation. It was this constant exposure to new religious knowledge in tandem with restrictions on and denials of ritual opportunities that served to mold a slave’s religious subjectivity. From the moment of initial capture and sale, slaves were under pressure to learn, but even successful learning was not necessarily accompanied by sanctioned religious empowerment in the years of one’s enslavement.⁷⁷ In conjunction with the practice of preventing slaves of similar backgrounds from clustering in the same household,

74. *ILLRP* 170 = *CIL* 1².1430 = 14.2090, with Nonnis and Pompilio 2007.

75. Cultic innovation and continuity in Roman religion during this period: (purely e.g.) North 1989; Orlin 2010, especially chapters 1–2; Champion 2017: 142–43 and *passim* on “accumulative civic polytheism.” Theorizing the amplification of religious knowledge in republican Rome: Feeney 1998: 137–43.

76. *Bacch.* 120–24; *Cist.* 512–18. *Suavisaviatio* as the last item in Pistoclerus’ gag list: Traill 2004: 117–18. Lydus the teacher is schooled: see Fontaine 2009: 34 on the pun *Lydus* ~ *lūdus*. Lydus’ question as revealing “the apparent randomness behind the whole operation, since any imposing abstract word can indeed look awfully like a divinity”: Feeney 1998: 88.

77. Glancing light from an Antonine source on the immersion of slaves in Roman culture from the moment of sale: Gellius *NA* 4.1.6 has Favorinus distinguish those who employ proper Latin usage

what this forced learning did facilitate was the “quicker oblivion of native customs, gods and way of life” through which the enslaved were psychologically dominated.⁷⁸

It is relevant here to recall that slave sales took place in the sight of temples, and not infrequently at festivals.⁷⁹ In *Poenulus*, the slave Adelphasium’s eagerness to strut her stuff at a *mercatus meretricius* in front of the temple of Venus simultaneously glorifies and distorts the traumatizing fusion of the sacred and the exploitative as experienced by those who were trafficked. Although coming several decades after our period, Cicero’s merrily callous report to Atticus while on campaign in Cilicia that the inhabitants of Pindenissum had been sold into slavery as he and his troops celebrated the Saturnalia evokes the experiential contrast between the festive free and the miserably subjugated.⁸⁰ After sale and purchase, new masters then perpetuated the dialectic of exposure and denial both by indulging their experience of the sacred and by working their slaves sufficiently hard to deny them any chance of similar cultic engagement. Turning to the Hellenistic world beyond Rome for a moment, we can put our finger on the psychological violence of this power-enacted difference in Herodas’ fourth mime, in which the mistress Kynno toggles between expressing admiration at the statues in an Asklepiian shrine and berating her slave Kydilla for staring.⁸¹

What about slaves who worked on the construction of temples or who lived and worked in their vicinity: did they derive any religious lessons from their constant proximity to the divine?⁸² Or those slaves who were brought by their masters to a sanctuary and left there?⁸³ Tensions in the accumulation of knowledge were likely to have been even more acutely registered by those Roman *serui publici* who were entrusted with delegated and specialized sacred competencies.⁸⁴ Even

from *qui in uenalibus Latine loqui coeptant*; note Adams 2003: 761–62 on the acquisition of Latin via enslavement.

78. See Varro *RR* 1.17.4, with Kuzicin 1994: 233 for the quoted phrase.

79. Slave markets in the vicinity of temples: *Curc.* 481 and Sen. *De const.* 2.13.4 with Silver 2016: 189 on the sale of slaves near the temple of Castor and Pollux (for an alternative interpretation of the Plautine evidence see Moore 1991: 353–54). Further work is needed on the archaeology of Roman slave-markets: see Trumper 2009 for a critique. Ch. 1.2 of Ibn Butlan’s medieval *General Treatise* on slave-purchasing, probably based on first-century CE Rufus of Ephesus’ *On the Purchase of Slaves* (Swain 2013: 270–71) cautions *against* buying slaves at festivals; the implication is that festival purchase was the norm.

80. *Poen.* 339–41. Cicero’s slave-dealing Saturnalia: *Ad Att.* 5.20.5 = 113.5 SB. The *mercatus* of the Saturnalia at Rome: García Morcillo 2013: 241n.22.

81. *Mim.* 4.41–51.

82. Sandal-marks and accompanying bilingual inscription of two slaves on a tile placed on the roof of the Pietrabbondante temple complex: *Rivista di epigrafia italiana* 1976: 284–91 = Poccetti 1979: 21 with Adams 2003: 124–25; Joshel and Hackworth Petersen 2014: 87. A late-antique slave collar directs the apprehender of a *fugitiuus* to return him *ad Floram*, the neighborhood around the temple of Flora in Rome: *CIL* 15.7172 = *ILS* 8727 with Trimble 2016: 459.

83. For slave manumissions at the sanctuary of Feronia in Terracina see Serv. ad *Aen.* 8.564 with García Morcillo 2013: 260–61. In the early Principate, owners who brought and left their slaves at sanctuaries forfeited the right to reclaim them: see n.179 below.

84. Broadly, Bömer 1981–1990: I.17–29. For the *serui publici* at the Ara Maxima, Halkin 1897: 48–53 and Eder 1980: 39–41; on slave *aeditui*, Halkin 1897: 68–70 and 162–66 with Eder 1980: 37–39; on slaves in the service of priests, Halkin 1897: 53–68, Eder 1980: 41–56, and Lennon 2015.

the visibility that came with some of these responsibilities would have functioned to heighten the contrast between slave and free; as noted earlier in connection with the Catonian *uilicus* and with the configuration of the Compitalia, states of exception are fundamental to the logics of enslavement. Moreover, as Paulin Ismard has recently reminded us in a study of Athenian public slaves, expertise lodged in slave minds and bodies could authorize and underwrite civic (and I would add religious) orders oppressing them.⁸⁵

D. CONTROL THE MIND

The limitation and regulation of the slave's capacity to offer cult acted in collaboration with the insidious psychological operations of the master's theology, the core premise of which is expounded by the Lorarius of Plautus' *Captiui* to his two new charges: "if the immortal gods have wished for this, for you to experience this grief, it is fitting to endure it patiently; if you do that, the work will be lighter" (*si di immortales id uoluerunt, uos hanc aerumnam exsequi / decet id pati animo aequo: si id facietis, leuior labos erit*).⁸⁶ Comparison with American slaveowners' deployment of preaching to keep slaves in line not only throws into sharp relief the function of this theology as a tactic of control but gives the lie to the supposition that Romans were not interested in the religious ideas of their slaves: inculcating the idea that the gods were responsible *and* that it was best for the slave to endure the divinely ordained misfortune of enslavement mattered.⁸⁷ In response to this master strategy, slaves might make use of philosophical instruction that focused on cultivating equanimity or (as we will see in Part IV) organize their religious subjectivities around the profession of hope for deliverance and exaltation.⁸⁸ Yet there was still another path slave religiosity could take, as both Cato and Plautus in separate but complementary ways make quite clear. I commented earlier that *De agri cultura's* model of villaculture was premised in part on a system of delegated authority according to which the slave (overseer) operated as a prosthetic extension of the master.⁸⁹ The delegation of specifically religious forms of authority was not solely a by-product of Catonian rationalization. For Cato to couple his delineation of slave (overseer) religious responsibilities with a stern injunction to avoid categories of diviners is, as I will next show, revealing of the extent to which

85. Ismard 2017, esp. pp. 80–102; cf. Part III below on slave religious expertise.

86. *Capt.* 195–96. Cf. *Amph.* 180–81 for Sosia's internalization of religious guilt, approvingly noted by Mercury: *sum uero uerna uerbero: numero mihi in mentem fuit / dis aduenientem gratias pro meritis agere atque alloqui?*

87. The "prominent preaching to the slaves" in antebellum America: Randolph 1893; Raboteau 1978/2004: 294–95 on slave responses to this preaching; cf. Parker 2001 on the work of Johannes Capitein, the former slave turned Christian apologist for slavery. Philosophy and theology as methods for controlling slaves in the Hellenistic/Roman world and in the antebellum South: de Ste. Croix 1981: 418–25, to which add now de Wet 2015 on Christian preaching to slaves in late antiquity.

88. On the former see Cicero's report that the Academic Clitomachus had circulated a book containing one of Carneades' lectures to his fellow captives *consolandi causa* after the destruction of Carthage: *Tusc.* 3.22.54. For philosophical and religious protreptics for and against suicide see n.166 below.

89. See ns.39–40 above.

sites of religious authority threatened to proliferate beyond the master's control. Many slaves had religious skills and competencies, among the most powerful and potentially disruptive of which was divination; and it is for the study of slave divination that the *palliata* can be most effectively mined.

II. FRENZY AND PROPHECY

In *The Souls of Black Folk*, W. E. B. Du Bois famously identified the three salient characteristics of African-American slave religion as “the Preacher, the Music, and the Frenzy.”⁹⁰ Productive as a tool for the sociological analysis of African-American religiosity, this same tripartite scheme would not be out of place in the world of the middle Republic. Although the three elements coalesce in the figure of the *seruus callidus*—the “signifying monkey”⁹¹ constantly on the move, singing and dancing and pivoting between the divine and human realms with tricks galore up his sleeve—this section will concentrate on how the divinatory prowess of these clever slaves slides into the enactment or embodiment of frenzy.

Responding to the same cultural moment that inspired Naevius to pen a play entitled (*H*)*ariolus* while he was incarcerated, Plautine comedies hum with augural chatter.⁹² While Roman theater would retain an interest in divination well after Plautus—as evident in the titles of L. Afranius' *Augur*, L. Pomponius Bononiensis' *Aruspex vel Pexor Rusticus*, and D. Laberius' *Augur*—it is thanks to the surviving Plautine *palliata* that we can most clearly observe the operations of mid-republican Rome's bustling fortune-telling economy.⁹³ In these plays men and women regularly consult or allude to consultations of divinatory experts, differentiated into a host of expertise niches ranging from the *haruspex* whose reading of sacrificial innards is disparaged by the pimp Lycus in *Poenulus* to the eyebrow-reading diviner mentioned in Periplectomenus' derisive catalogue in *Miles Gloriosus*.⁹⁴ Especially since other genres of Roman theater contemporaneous with or following on the heels of the Plautine *palliata* venture criticism of the “divinatory underclass,”⁹⁵ there is much to be gained from determining how members of this underclass were imagined and presumed to

90. Du Bois [1903] 1986: 494.

91. Term and classic exposition: Gates 1988; Connors 2004 relates the concept to forms of “monkey business” in Latin literature.

92. Gell. *NA* 3.3.15: *fabulas eum [sc. Naevium] in carcere duas scripsisse Ariolum et Leontem [. . .]*. For the possible reference to Naevius' incarceration at Plautus *Mil.* 211 see now Monda 2014: 67–68 with bibliography. What survives of the *Ariolus*: *com.* fr. 20, 21–24 Ribbeck² = 21, 22–26 Warmington. Overview of the Plautine “market in sooth”: Slater 2000; cf. Santangelo 2013: chs. 2–3.

93. On these titles see Panayotakis 2010: 135–38. The augural focus of the grammarian Melissus' *fabulae trabatae* (early Principate): Kaster 1995 ad Suet. *Gram.* 21.4.

94. *Poen.* 463–66; *Mil.* 692–94. On the other diviners enumerated in Periplectomenus' screed see Traill 2004; the mention of a *coniectrix* is our only extant Latin reference to a female dream-interpreter (Pomeroy 1991: 53n.7), but see Part III below on the association between slave women and fortune-telling.

95. *Enn. scaen.* fr. 319–23 Vahlen on *superstitiosi uates* and Accius *scaen.* fr. 264–65 Dangel denigrate diviners as money-grubbers; contextualization of these lines within an “incipient

formulate their religious lives. By the High Empire, both slaves and their owners were consulting fortune-tellers: among the questions contained in the handbook for knuckle-bone divination transmitted under the title *The Oracles of Astrampsychus* are such queries as “Will I be freed from servitude?” and “Am I going to be sold?” (concerns of the slave), as well as “Will I find the fugitive?” and “Will the fugitive escape my detection?” (concerns of the master).⁹⁶ But an important distinction between slave and free appears in Plautine comedy: in the world of the *palliata*, it is mostly the free who consult, and mostly the enslaved who prophesy. Instances of slaves practicing types of divination, from sky- and bird-watching to dream interpretation, are everywhere in the plays.

A. IMMORTAL TECHNIQUE

Seemingly innocent or casual hints in the direction of divination, such as the slave Ergasilus’ use of the rare verb *mantiscinor* at an important moment in *Captiui* (896),⁹⁷ become significant when interpreted against the general Plautine backdrop of divining slaves. Deliciously subversive moments include the slave Epidicus’ styling of himself as both the recipient of a favorable augury and as capable of deploying a sacrificial knife—accoutrement of the slave as altar-server—to eviscerate his master’s wallet;⁹⁸ or, in *Mostellaria*, Tranio’s augurally flavored banter with Theopropides, who when asked to contemplate a painting in which “one crow has fun with two vultures” (*ubi ludificat una cornix uolturios duos*) grumbles that he does not see any painted bird at all (*nullam pictam conspicio hic auem*).⁹⁹ Other comedies unambiguously associate slaves with divination. In *Amphitruo*, Mercury’s whisper to the audience that Sosia is watching the sky inscribes the latter’s contemplation into the practice of divination; *Cistellaria*’s Halisca orders

systematization of religion” in Rüpke 2012: 57–58 and within emergent critiques of divination in Santangelo 2013: 151–58.

96. *O of A*: Questions nos. 32 and 74; 36 and 89 (trans. Stewart and Morell in Hansen 1998: 292–93); further on fugitives at n.178 below. Contextualization of these *sortes*: Potter 1994: 24–26; on slave consultations of *sortes* see Kudlien 1991: 110–29. That “slave queries had to conform to a given frame of reference that inevitably limited the range of their expressions” (Scheidel 1993: 111) does not preclude the realization of a slave religiosity through these queries.

97. To punning effect: see Brinkhoff 1935: 83.

98. *Epid.* 184–85: *liquido exeo foras auspicio, aui sinistra; / acutum cultrum habeo, senis qui exenterem marsupium*. On *acutum cultrum* see Jocelyn 2001: 280; Hanson 1959: 98 on the inclusion of the *culter* among the sacrificial items listed in *Rud.* 134; Lennon 2015 for the *culter* as sacrificial implement of the *uictimarius*. Evisceration, marked by the rare verb *exenterem*, customarily preceded extispicy, another form of divination; see Barrios-Lech 2014 for the pun on “old men” (*uetulos*) as “calves [for sacrifice]” (*uitulos*) that clinches the extispicy joke two lines later. On Epidicus’ progression “from slave to victim to sacrificer to sacrifice-organizer” see Gellar-Goad 2011/2012.

99. *Most.* 832–39. Cued by the verb *conspicio*, the line-up of birds is augural: if *pictam* puns on *pica* (Fay 1903: 254–55), the exchange between Tranio and Theopropides tees up three birds—*cornix*, *uolturius*, and *pica*—prominent in the Roman *disciplina auguralis* and included in the list of *oscines* preserved in Festus 308 L. For Plautine familiarity with (Umbrian?) bird-divination see next note; on slaves, crows, and divination in the *Life of Aesop* see Jennings 2017: 200–1, 204–7.

herself to practice augury, but in an inversion of the standard procedure stares at the ground and not at the sky; *Asinaria*'s Libanus performs an augury long held by scholars to be deliberately confused and/or satirizing until its parallels to the Iguvine Tables were recognized; and in *Curculio* Palinurus interprets the pimp Cappadox's dream but first brags that only he has access to the divine and that dream-interpreters go to him for advice.¹⁰⁰

Did the dream-interpreter in Plautus' Rome have to be a slave? No, and on occasion (free) dreamers take up the work of interpretation themselves;¹⁰¹ but the preponderance of the Plautine evidence tilts in the direction of the interpreter or diviner being envisioned as a slave, or at the very least as socially marginal and therefore highly exploitable. *Curculio*'s urban topography places fortune-tellers and a *haruspex* in the vicinity of bakers and butchers, not far from the peddlers of sexual services; this spatial conjunction of fortune-telling and prostitution in regimes of human exploitation will come as no shock to readers familiar with New York City's old Times Square.¹⁰² Illustrative of the embedding of the slave-diviner within economies of exploitation is the apprehension voiced by the fisherman Gripus in *Rudens* that Palaestra—striving mightily to escape the clutches of her abusive pimp—might correctly guess the contents of the chest containing her tokens: perhaps she's a witch (or a fortune-teller)!¹⁰³ Besides indirectly corroborating the association between prostituted slave women and fortune-telling, Gripus' apprehension also trots out into the open the possibility that trafficked slaves brought their divinatory practices with them—or were Othered by having ascribed to them divinatory skills with which it was feared they might cheat and swindle those not so fortunately gifted, a prospect I will revisit below. To read Gripus' fear as merely situational slapstick glosses over the degree to which the humor of the scene derived its edge from Roman society's transformation in the era of mass enslavement. Much as the development of the *seruus callidus* theme in Plautine comedy mirrors and reckons with the social consequences of Roman slaving,¹⁰⁴ so too does the emphasis on the divining slave. If, as Amy Richlin has proposed, with Rome's hundreds of thousands of new slaves came a few carriers of shtick,

100. *Amph.* 270: *caelum aspectat* varies the augural formula *de caelo spectare*. *Cist.* 693–94: *Halisca, hoc age, ad terram aspice et despice / oculis inuestiges, astute augura*. Libanus' confused augury: *Asin.* 259–64; for parallels with the Iguvine Tables and Plautus' Umbrian background as explanation (first proposed by J. Poultney) see Langslow 2013: 184–85 with Tab. 7.3; on the prospect of a common Italic “canonical list of augural birds” see Fisher 2014: 79–81. Palinurus' boast: *Curc.* 248–50. Note also the *parasitus* Gelasimus' resort to weasel divination (*Sti.* 459–63, 500–502); for the parasite's association with the figure of the diviner see n.108 below.

101. In *Mercator*, the lustful *senex* Demipho attempts to interpret his own dream, in which he entrusts a she-goat to a monkey (225–70); Connors 2004: 194–96 stresses the metaliterary aspects of this dream and the monkey dream in *Rudens* (593–612).

102. For the topography see *Curc.* 483–84 with Moore 1991: 354–56. The map's staging of a (metatheatrical) “contact zone”: Sciarrino 2011: 58–60.

103. *Rud.* 1139–40: *quid si ista aut superstitiosa aut hariola est atque omnia / quicquid insit uera dicet? idne habebit hariola?* I return to this passage in Part III.

104. Parker 1989, esp. pp. 236–39.

there were bound to be some who brought to the sites of their enslavement forms of divination that were new or were perceived as new.¹⁰⁵ Although we can only line up circumstantial indicators in support of this claim, in the aggregate these indicators leave the impression of a deepening connection between slavery and specific forms of (non-state-endorsed) divinatory practice.

B. THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS

The Punic Wars saw a surge in prophetic activity at Rome, most prominently in the form of those circulating texts ascribed to a prophet Marcius whose lack of the *tria nomina* may betoken originally slave status; also lacking the *tria nomina* is the similarly shadowy Publicius.¹⁰⁶ The Bacchanalian rites that in 186 propelled the Senate into action were tracked to a *Graecus ignobilis* who had relocated to Etruria; at least some of the Bacchants whose activities were curtailed in the *Senatus consultum de Bacchanalibus* were likely to have been slaves.¹⁰⁷ Did any of these slaves cap their Bacchic performances with acts of prophecy, and (if so) under what circumstances? While definitive answers to these questions are not retrievable from the sources, there are literary references to the intermingling of slavery, prophecy, and frenzy in this period that offer a convenient point of departure.

Cato's injunction that the overseer not consult divinatory experts could be taken to reveal anxiety not only about the circulation of these religious professionals but about their physical presence as slaves in the master's household; parasites were not the only source of concern for the affluent landowner.¹⁰⁸ Moreover, as observed earlier, Plautine comedy toys with the possibility that the enslaved had and could wield divinatory expertise. For every bumbling Libanus, there was an Olympio sophisticated enough in the practice of divination—and regarded highly enough on account of that sophistication for his master to designate him the domestic *hariolus*—to press his fellow slave and rival Chalinus on whether the latter's lot was made out of poplar or fir.¹⁰⁹ Olympio's query takes on another flavor when read against

105. The slaves who brought along shtick and perfected it: Richlin 2017. On the accrual of expertise in dream-divination through foreign contacts see Cic. *De diu.* 1.46–47 with Hall 2011: 219.

106. The late third/early second-century scene, and the Marcian prophecies as reported in Livy: North 2000. Publicius the *vates*: Cic. *De diu.* 1.50; 2.113.

107. The conspiracy's beginnings: Liv. 39.8 with Pailler 1988; further on the Etruscan background see Breyer 2012. Bacchants in Plautus: Flower 2000; Fontaine 2009: 187–90 on the parallels between *Truculentus*' courtesan Phrynesium and Livy's Paculla Annia. For the involvement of slaves in the cult see Gallini 1970: 42–43; North 2012: 69–70 argues (correctly in my view) that the restrictions on the Bacchic cult specified in the *SC de Bacchanalibus* imply the existence of slave practitioners. The gender dynamics of Livy's account: Kraemer 2010: 29–34.

108. Before enjoining his ideal overseer not to consult diviners, Cato stipulates that he not have a parasite (*parasitum nequem habeat*); see Damon 1997: 48–49 and Leigh 2004: 18–19 for discussion.

109. *Cas.* 357 on Lysidamus' praise of Olympio's expertise, *plus artificum est mihi quam rebar: hariolum hunc habeo domi*; 382–86 for the back-and-forth with Chalinus. Inasmuch as master and mistress control Olympio and Chalinus (see Way 2000), their divinatory competencies are being exploited; more on this type of exploitation below. Despite Plautus' adoption of *Casina* from a Greek source, nothing about this scene's development and framing is “out of keeping with the religious sentiments of a

the rising popularity of lot divination in middle and late republican central Italy, as practitioners of the art streamed voluntarily or were dragged involuntarily into Rome.¹¹⁰ The circulation of these divining bodies could not always be regulated or controlled. While we do not know for sure that the *haruspices* or *sagae* whom Columella recommends be barred from the farm were typically slaves, one of the enduring obsessions of master discourse as preserved in the agronomist and legal literature of later centuries was the regimentation of slave movement, an indirect indication that slaves could and did wander; slaves with skills to market would have been particularly incentivized to move around.¹¹¹ One notice in Livy records the suppression of a *coniuratio* of Apulian shepherd-slaves, possibly “associated with the cult of Dionysus and its destabilizing raptures”; the mobility of these shepherd-slaves was a source of particular consternation.¹¹² Livy’s characterization of this mobility as an engine for criminal misdeeds opens a window onto the cultural dynamic under examination here, namely the escalating anxiety over slaves who roamed around as potential or actual peddlers of religious services; but to get a firmer grip on this dynamic we will need to return, once again, to Plautus.

Although the *habitus* of diviners is the butt of jokes in the *palliata*, these jokes limn a more sobering sociocultural reality. Diviners and especially the foreign diviners who came in the enslavement train of Roman conquest were read as capable of a special kind of bodily movement: frenzy. In *Rudens*, the slave Trachalio congratulates himself for having anticipated the pimp’s plan and drolly remarks that he may as well let his hair down and begin prophesying; in *Truculentus*, the slave Cyamus observes of the angry *miles* Stratophanes that “he’s gnashing his teeth and striking his thigh: please, is he a soothsayer beating himself?” Both jokes, and in particular Cyamus’ undercutting of the boastful *miles* Stratophanes, rely for their punch on the existence of a cultural script that articulated a three-way connection between the slave, the diviner, and frenzy.¹¹³ Evidence of the figuration of

contemporary Roman audience”: Rosenstein 1995: 49; 70–71 on the scene as parody of public lot-taking at Rome.

110. Republican lot divination: Klingshirn 2006: 140–47, esp. 143–44 on the *puer* who drew the lots at Praeneste and 145–46 on Livy’s description of the sacrifice-performers and prophets (*sacrificuli ac uates*: 25.1.8) who had seized the imagination of Rome’s growing urban population; cf. Santangelo 2013: 73–80 and 161–63.

111. *De re rustica* 1.8.6, construed in Steuernagel 2005: 387–89 as a reference to *haruspices uicani* traveling from farm to farm in Etruria and Latium; for the nature and work of *sagae* see Ripat 2016: 116–17. On the *erro* see *Dig.* 21.1.17.14 with Joshel and Petersen 2014: 95; full work-out of “geographies of slave containment” in Joshel 2013; cf. Bradley 1998: 4 and 36 on truancy and *petit marronage*.

112. For the *coniuratio* see Liv. 39.29.8–9, with Schiavone 2013: 69 for the quoted speculation; cf. n.45 below on other prosecutions of religiously anomalous slaves during this period. The mobile shepherd-slaves *uias latrociniiis pascuaque publica infesta habuerant*; on the figuration of herdsmen as rebellious bandits see Leigh 2016: 430 and Part IV below.

113. *Rud.* 376 (*capillum promittam optimum est occipiamque hariolari*) and *Truc.* 601–602 (*hoc uide, dentibus frendit, icit femur; / num obsecro nam hariolus, qui ipsus se uerberat?*); for the latter

frenzied divination as inappropriate to and subversive of the domineering swagger of the free and mighty comes from several directions. Elsewhere in Plautus—once in *Pseudolus* and once in *Mostellaria*—a slave takes on the voice of an oracle; while neither instance features (at least to the extent that we can glean from textual clues) an enactment of the bodily contortion associated with vatic frenzy, the episodes not only confirm that slaves could be figured as oracular but open the door to reading slave acts of communicative resistance such as taciturnity or deliberate ambiguity in religious terms.¹¹⁴ The explicit mingling of frenzy and divination is on full display in *Menaechmi*, where the strategic mock-derangement of the free Syracusan twin follows up an invocation of Dionysus and Bacchants—another Plautine wink toward the tensions of the 180s—with a performance of vatic inspiration that almost results in his forced confinement as an *insanus*.¹¹⁵

Outside of the Plautine corpus, the historiographic tradition records some intriguing instances of the positioning of frenzied divination within the paradigms of master and slave. The writings of Antisthenes of Rhodes, a Greek historian probably contemporary with Plautus and Cato, contain a sensationalized report of a consul Publius losing his mind and delivering oracular pronouncements (ἐμμανῆς γενόμενος καὶ παράφρων ἀποφθέγγεται πολλά τινα ἐνθουσιωδῶς) during the war against Antiochus; the notice, which illuminates the existence of a counter-discourse against Roman imperialism originating among its Greek victims,¹¹⁶ plays with the trope of out-of-control vatic frenzy as humiliatingly servile. Another, subtler hint as to the social inflection of divinatory madness comes along several decades later, in Sulla's memoirs. Where we can examine in detail this work's path-breaking characterization of religious interiority, the representation of religious ecstasy is revealingly circumscribed: even when presenting—in remarkably innovative fashion—the contents of his dreams or moments of almost mystical exaltation,¹¹⁷ Sulla steers clear of any figuration of himself as manically prophetic. He might make use of a slave possessed by divinity, as in his encounter with a slave who prophesies his

passage's place in Plautus' gestural economy see Monda 2014: 74. Cf. the depiction of divinatory frenzy in Afranius' *Augur: modo postquam adripuit rabies hunc nostrum augurem / mare caelum terram ruere ac tremere diceret* (fr. 8–9 Ribbeck²); and the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*'s recommendation as an effective form of invective a simile likening the target of attack to a *Gallus* or a *hariolus* who *depressus et oneratus auro clamat et delirat* (4.62). On trembling, diagnostic divination, and homeopathic treatment note Ripat 2016: 120–21.

114. *Ps.* 480–88 and *Most.* 971–80 with Fontaine 2009: 128–32 on *Pseudolus*' translingual punning to achieve oracular ambiguity and Barrios-Lech 2016: 229–31 on interpreting these episodes within the broader context of slave silence in the plays.

115. *Men.* 835–42: note the declaration *Apollo mihi ex oraculo imperat* and the pretend-raving question *Euhoe Bacche, Bromie, quo me in siluam uenatum uocas?* (835). On this play's representation of madness cf. McCarthy 2000: 57–58 and Fontaine 2013.

116. *FGrH* 257 F 35 = *BNJ* 508 F 2; on the passage's subversive anti-Roman flavor see Momigliano 1975: 40–41, Potter 1994: 62–64, and Champion's commentary in the *BNJ* edition. For "religious protest" of imperialism in this period cf. de Ste. Croix 1981: 442 on the Book of Daniel.

117. On the religious content of Sulla's memoirs see Flower 2015a and 2015b.

victory in war;¹¹⁸ but at no point in the surviving fragments of the memoirs does Sulla himself fall into a divinatory state marked by frenzy—this being a boundary line for elite self-representation that not even he would dare breach.

More direct evidence for the conceptualization of divination as the frenzy of the socially marginal and above all of the enslaved comes to the fore in later sources; these, while removed from the cultural and political circumstances of the middle Republic, offer a glimpse into the matrix of social expectations and the patterns of embodiment that took shape in the era of mass enslavement. Earlier Columella's advice to keep *haruspices* and *sagae* off the farm was noted; such advice may reflect anxieties over disruptively prophetic slaves, the presence of which is registered in the legal literature of the Empire. I have in mind the standardized contractual guarantees that slaves for sale not be epileptic as well as the *Digest*'s discussion of demented slaves: while both of these are usually understood to be concerned with *uitium*,¹¹⁹ epilepsy and raving might also function as lenses through which the actions of the prophetic slave were read. Epilepsy's framing as a "sacred" disease in antiquity—one instance of which will be isolated for further discussion in a moment—hinged in part on the perceived affinity of the epileptic for divination.¹²⁰ Strikingly, Ulpian's paraphrase of the second-century CE jurist Vivianus in his commentary on the Aediles' Edict flags prophetic activity as one dimension of the type of raving that might amount to *uitium*: "if the slave from time to time in the company of fanatics were to toss his head around and speak prophetically (*si seruus inter fanaticos non semper caput iactaret et aliqua profatus esset*)," does he have *uitium*? What about the slave "who runs wild like a Bacchant in the vicinity of shrines and makes oracular statements (*quis circa fana bacchatus sit et responsa reddiderit*)"?¹²¹

In the legal literature, the juriconsults are concerned with calibrating *uitium* and *insania* for the immediate purpose of clarifying the obligations of slave-sellers and purchasers. That Vivianus was narrowly preoccupied with clarifying whether certain behaviors meet the standard of *uitium* does not, however, preclude our reading these prophetic predilections within the framework of slave religiosity. As I will underline in Part IV, not much separated prophetic madness from the forms of religious charisma wielded by leaders of slave revolts.¹²² Moreover, simulated madness could and almost certainly did operate as a tactic of resistance to the control or wishes of the master. In Plautus there is Casina's feigned derangement, reported

118. Plut. *Sull.* 27.12–13 = *FRHist* 22 F 24; read with Flower 2015b: 314–15. The slave is described as θεοφόρητος, a term employed for the prophets of Cappadocian Ma: Palmer 1975: 656.

119. Generally on health/defect clauses in slave-purchase contracts see *Dig.* 21.1 with Crook 1967: 182–85. Below I quote from *Dig.* 21.1.1.9–10.

120. Debate as to whether the frenzied and melancholic had the gift of prophecy: Posidonius *apud* Sextus Empiricus *Contra logicos* 1.247 and Cic. *De diu.* 1.81 with Temkin 1971: 155–56. The pseudo-Aristotelian background of the Arabic and medieval Latin treatises that connect the figure of the epileptic with the figure of the prophet: Temkin 1971: 154–71; Lo Presti 2015: 361–63.

121. *Aliqua profatus esset*: the verb regularly means to prophesy or speak vatically (*TLL* s.v. *profor*); *responsa reddere* or *dare*—the latter appearing in the very next sentence's clause *quasi demens responsa daret*—is a technical term for giving oracles (*OLD* s.v. *responsum* 2a).

122. *Pace* North 2012: 84–85.

by Pardalisca just when it seemed to the latter that his erotic fantasy would come true; the closest literary analogue to Casina, Anthia in Xenophon of Ephesus' *Ephesiaca*, feigns epilepsy—"the sacred disease"—when about to be prostituted by her master.¹²³ Also worth bearing in mind is the possibility that, in the move across intercultural gradients, one person's epileptic frenzy became another person's spiritual possession, as a modern intervention in journalistic anthropology has beautifully documented.¹²⁴ Therefore, before falling into the trap sprung on external observers both ancient and modern of construing such behavior as *merely* symptomatic of physical debility or *merely* a tactic of resistance, we might be better off attempting a reading of the "raving" slave that looks to how religious ecstasy came to be encoded at the intersection of cross-cultural encounter and legally sanctioned human exploitation.

C. FRENZY AND DERACINATION

So far we have been canvassing for hints—however deeply buried in the archive—as to the relationship between the representation of slaves as prophetic and/or frenzied on the one hand and my nebulous construction of a peculiarly "slave religiosity" on the other. Is it at all possible to place this association on a firmer foundation? Turning comparative provides, once again, an opportunity for recasting slaves' natal alienation in terms of its religious outcomes. In *Mama Lola*, her acclaimed ethnography of Haitian Vodou, the anthropologist Karen McCarthy Brown asks:

When the elders, the priests, the institutions, the musical instruments, the images, the altars, and the sacred objects are absent, where do you turn for spiritual aid? In an African-based religion, possession seems an obvious answer. In Yorubaland and Dahomey, two of the areas of origin for Haiti's slave population, most possession-performances were formulaic affairs with more or less predictable words and gestures. In the New World, however, in that early time when the body and the voice were the slaves' principal mnemonic devices, possession could well have received much greater emphasis, and possession-performances could have quickly become much more extemporaneous and expressive. In other words, cut loose from their African base and institutional moorings, the spirits may well have burst into flower. Times of crisis are often times of high creativity.¹²⁵

Although Brown's carefully hedged claim cannot be corroborated decisively, this reading at least makes an effort to counter the silencing of the enslaved in colonial and postcolonial archives by focusing attention on the body. Here and elsewhere in

123. Pardalisca's report of Casina's fury: *Cas.* 654–83. After falling to the ground, Anthia ἐμμεῖτο τοὺς νοσοῦντας τὴν ἐκ θεῶν καλουμένην νόσον: *Xen. Eph.* 5.7.4.

124. See Fadiman 1997 on the treatment of a Hmong child's epilepsy by American doctors.

125. Brown 2010: 253.

Mama Lola, the emphasis is on documenting religious observance as bodily and imaginatively experienced by practitioners themselves; it may come as no surprise that dreaming—especially of the directive and prophetic kind—features prominently in the complex of devotional and therapeutic strategies developed by Vodou practitioners.¹²⁶ Deriving inspiration from Brown, Elizabeth Pérez has observed of the possession of humans by orishas (spirits worshipped and propitiated in Lucumí and other Black Atlantic religious traditions) that “possession made use of a sacred object no white person could destroy without destroying the slave: the human body.”¹²⁷ To be sure, neither Brown nor Pérez is studying living, breathing *slave* practitioners of Afro-Caribbean religions; rather their shared objective is to recover, through study of the forms of worship adopted and transmitted across the generations to modern practitioners, some sense of how the constraints of slavery functioned to incentivize and in time even consolidate new—or newly intensified—forms of religious expressivity located in the body, the one thing left to the slave after practically everything else had been stripped away. To be possessed was to put that deracinated slave body to spiritual work.

In Greek and Roman contexts where not only slave bodies but slave affect were scrupulously monitored,¹²⁸ performances of slave frenzy would have come under particular scrutiny. In some cases, slave frenzy provided some masters with a convenient source of profits. An episode in the New Testament *Acts of the Apostles* will serve as the final plank in the reconstruction I am proposing in this section of (slave) divination and (slave) frenzy as (slave) religiosity within the intercultural currents of Mediterranean enslavement. When the apostle Paul and his companion Silas visit Philippi to spread the gospel, they encounter a slave-girl “with a spirit of divination . . . who made much money for her owners by prophesying” (ἔχουσαν πνεῦμα πύθωνα . . . ἥτις ἐργασίαν πολλὴν παρεῖχεν τοῖς κυρίοις αὐτῆς μαντευομένη). They proceed to cure her, to the fury of her owners who upon realizing that their source of revenue had disappeared litigate successfully before the local authorities to have Paul and Silas beaten and imprisoned: “These men,” the owners exclaim, “are making a disturbance in our city, being Jews (Ἰουδαῖοι ὑπάρχοντες); and they are promoting customs that it is not lawful for us as Romans (Ῥωμαῖοις οὐδὲν) to follow or observe.”¹²⁹ At first glance the incident may seem to upend my recreation of divination’s entanglements with slave frenzy: far from being afraid of their slave’s *pneuma*, her owners monetized it; and the ones who put an end to this divination by expelling the *pneuma* from the girl

126. For a series of richly recreated dream narratives see Brown 2010: 204–17; more on slaves and dreams in Part IV below.

127. Pérez 2016: 59. Cf. Jennings 2017: 195 on slave access to “do-it-yourself divination.”

128. Apparent in literary portrayals of slave affect: see e.g. Konstan 2013: 148 on Hellenistic comedy’s denial of anger to the slave. For possession in the context of the Bacchanalian conspiracy see Gallini 1970: 58–59.

129. NT *Acts* 16: 16–21, with Potter 1994: 31 on this incident and the case of the prophetic Phrygian slave whose name is changed to that of a Sibyl.

are the ones hauled before the authorities as non-normative religious actors and as interlopers from the outside. Nonetheless, several points of convergence with the reconstruction proposed earlier in this section stand out: the articulation of slavery to divination, the frenzy of the divining slave, and the exploitation of her embodied divinatory skill by owners who charged others for consulting her.

An awareness of how closely coupled certain kinds of religious communication are with the body underlies Cicero's famous differentiation between "natural" and "artificial" modes of divination.¹³⁰ Without overcommitting to this slippery distinction, we might say that the alienation of slaves from the artificial (expert- and expertise-based) divination systems of their homelands would have left them only with natural techniques rooted in the body (frenzied movement, baffling dreams). This is not to say that *all* slaves lost access to artificial systems, since—as suggested previously—at least some of the slaves who were trafficked were likely to have been religious experts of one kind or another.¹³¹ And the story of the slave-girl of *Acts* introduces another wrinkle: with Brown and Pérez at our back, we should be asking how a person whose embodied vatic frenzy had been monetized by her masters—who had been in a sense *turned into* an expert under conditions of slavery—experienced herself and her religious aptitudes before and after her healing. If only to hazard a guess as to the forms a provisional answer to this question might take, I will now approach the negotiation between socially configured expectation and lived religious experience from a different direction: slave "magic."

III. ENCHANTMENT AND HEALING

Slaves could be spooky, or figured by their masters as spooky. Tranio's "ghosting" of Theopropides' home in *Mostellaria* with the help of a fabricated dream models how the *seruus callidus* could (be perceived as fit to) manipulate the realm of the magical to his advantage.¹³² The boundary between divination and magic was quite porous;¹³³ and inasmuch as slaves could be associated with berserker prophets, they could also be associated with the capacity for magic, slave women most of all. But research into this association soon hits a familiar methodological wall: studies of late republican and early imperial literary representations of witches—and of the relation of these representations to the Sullan law against assassins and poisoners—have underscored time and time again the heuristic difficulties of tracing the operations of "magic" and the "magical" in the world of

130. Cic. *De diu.* 1.11 on the *duo diuinandi genera*, with Pease ad loc. and Schultz ad loc. on ancient genealogies and variations of this typology.

131. Experts in the sense of being able to handle various types of localized knowledge; on ritual expertise as *bricolage* see Frankfurter 2002: 161–67.

132. Useful overview of Hellenistic ghost stories: Gordon 1999: 176–77.

133. As disclosed by a practice already attested in Greco-Roman antiquity but exceptionally well documented in later European and non-European contexts: the use of a diviner to find a witch (Frankfurter 2002: 175–76).

Roman slaves.¹³⁴ Retrofitting the term onto shifting Greek and Roman religious imaginaries and cultural practices runs the risk of anachronism, and any effort to carve out a domain of superstitious and/or magical practices as separate from mainstream cultic observance potentially replicates the attempts of ancient elite writers themselves to conceptualize the socially marginal as non-normative religious subjects.¹³⁵ With these two constraints in mind, I want to take up two Plautine figurations of “magic” to make a more general point about the perceptual gridding of slave religious subjectivity. Proceeding from Pauline Ripat’s recent demonstration that the invective swirling around witches conceals a (recoverable) world of wise women administering homeopathic treatments, my objective in this section will be to show that the ideologically charged imputation of magic to slaves masks the actual existence in mid-republican settings of slave religious practices that were “Othered” through discourse and law. Attending to the presence of slaves, and to the social pressures generated by their performance of religious know-how, may also have the side benefit of clarifying “the peculiar Roman ambivalence towards marginal or exotic religious practices” that has long intrigued students of ancient Mediterranean religions.¹³⁶

A. DO YOU BELIEVE IN MAGIC?

In *Rudens*, the female slave Palaestra is marked by the noun *hariola* as a possible witch/fortune-teller; in *Miles Gloriosus*, a *praecantatrix* or “incantation-singer”—the term seems to designate a type of expert sought by women experiencing medical difficulties—leads off Periplectomenus’ mocking enumeration of religious professionals.¹³⁷ It is tempting to take these labels in the first instance as examples of Plautine invective.¹³⁸ But it may be more productive to approach their deployment from the perspective of Rome’s transformation into a slave society. Even if the previous section did not succeed in persuading the reader of the presence and

134. Summarizing the shift from the Middle to Late Republic: Le Glay 1976. For the text of the *Lex Cornelia de sicariis et ueneficiis* see J.-L. Ferrary in Crawford et al. 1996: 749–53; Rives 2003: 317–22 for the law’s focus on magic.

135. Partly for this latter reason McKeown 2012 is skeptical of attempts to pin magic onto slaves; I address one reading of his at n.149 below. For vigorous defense of magic as an emic category see Rives 2003: 334. Dating the rise of a “strong view of magic”: Gordon 1999: 161–68 and 229–39. For Augustan literary portrayals of witches and magic see now Gordon 2009, advancing an important corrective to the view that these portrayals are “diaphanous screens through which . . . we can view a past reality” (213). Richlin 2014a: 73–75 traces the figuration of women as witches within Roman invective.

136. I quote from Frankfurter’s (2002: 165) assessment of the mark left by this ambivalence on the ancient evidence for magic.

137. The passages from *Miles Gloriosus* and *Rudens* are cited above at ns.94 and 103 respectively. Reconstruction of the professional competence of *praecantatrices*: Dickie 2001: 128–29; on their place within a culture of “perforated specialists” see Ripat 2016: 115–19, who maps the relationship between divinatory diagnosis and embodied homeopathic treatment.

138. For “accusations of *ueneficium*” brought against women in the *palliata* see Dutsch 2005: 211–12 and 2008: 63–65.

circulation in mid-republican Rome of slaves and freedmen wielding non-normatively Roman forms of religious expertise, it is clear that by the early second century at the latest the tentacles of Rome's military-enslavement complex were reaching into areas that had or would soon develop reputations for magical and incantatory prowess. This prowess was premised in some cases on the mastery of regional flora and fauna; the hill country of the Marsi, for example, became famous for the snake-charmers who in the generation after Cato attracted the interest of the historian Cn. Gellius and the satirist Lucilius.¹³⁹ In the late Republic and early Empire, the three-way dialogue between imperial expansion, ethnographic projection, and religious specialization would precipitate the circulation of "ethnically coded experts" in the freelance expert economies of the Roman Mediterranean;¹⁴⁰ but this dialogue was first set in motion during the era of mass enslavement, and its workings are already visible in the lifetimes of Cato and Plautus.

The former's attention to ecological specificity both in *De agri cultura* and in the fragmentary *Origines* stands as the front end of a centuries-long process through which local habitats and their products were appropriated and re-articulated under the Roman imperial gaze. The epistemic revolution apparent in these works, extending down to the very plants re-inscribed by Rome's expansion, rode on the backs of the newly subjugated: who was more readily available and better equipped to explain (or mystify) the flora and fauna of conquered regions than those driven as slaves from them?¹⁴¹ On a different register, Cato's inclusion of a ritual incantation for curing a dislocation in the text of *De agri cultura* is suggestive of the extent to which notionally traditional techniques for healing were evolving in dialogue with the slave economy. In specifying for the master's use a charm whose incomprehensible non-Latinisms are more akin to the contents of Greek curse tablets, Cato not only exhibits familiarity with a Hellenizing religious technology possibly mediated by Greek slaves but also structures this technology's use such that slaves themselves are once again figured as *instrumenta*, tasked with holding a split green reed while the *cantio* is chanted—another denial of agency that might be profitably read against the grain.¹⁴²

139. Cn. Gellius *FRHist* F18 with commentary ad loc.; Lucilius fr. 575–76 Marx. Analysis of these and other testimonies: Dench 1995: 159–66; Dickie 2001: 129–30.

140. See Wendt 2016: 74–113; note 98–99 on Roman knowledge of Judean religion as mediated by Judean slaves and 109 on Philo of Alexandria's concerns (*Leg.* 26–27) about the slave Helicon whose "expertise" in Judean practices came to the attention of Caligula.

141. Roman ecological imperialism receives its fullest expression in Pliny the Elder—Pollard 2009 and Manolaraki 2015 for the details—but the process is well under way in the second century BCE: the plant gentian, employed as a tonic, was named after the Illyrian King Genthius who was defeated in 168 and paraded in Rome (*NH* 25.34); more on the entanglement of human and ecological imperial cargoes in Padilla Peralta 2017.

142. The charm: *De agri cultura* 160. A few chapters before the presentation of the charm, Cato makes use of what appears to be Greek medical lore (Courtney 1999: 68–69); if some of the purveyors of that lore were slaves, their influence might be reflected again here. The incantation, the debate over its language and parsing, and its complicated manuscript transmission: Versnel 2002: 106–109, with accompanying notes; note also Champion 2017: xxii. For examples of charms in easy-to-construe Latin cf. the incantation for a sore throat preserved in Marcellus Empiricus *De medicamentis* 15.11

However, the single most compelling justification for reading Plautine representations of “magical” slaves with an eye to what I have been calling slave religiosity comes to us not from Cato but from one of his successor historians, who preserves the details of a trial that occurred sometime in the first half of the second century. This is the annalist Lucius Calpurnius Piso Frugi, from whose *Annales* Pliny the Elder retrieves the story of the freedman C. Furius Chresimus as an *exemplum* of agricultural industry. After being manumitted, Chresimus had acquired and run his own farm with such success that his neighbors had grown green with envy when he started bringing in harvests that exceeded theirs; so envious, in fact, that they had accused him of using magical charms to entice their crops and had him prosecuted under the relevant clause of the Twelve Tables.¹⁴³ On the appointed day, Chresimus had appeared in the Roman Forum with his well-maintained farm equipment and his entire *familia*, including his own slaves; exclaimed that *those* were his charms (*ueneficia mea*); and expressed his regret at not being able to produce in the presence of the tribes about to vote on the verdict his late nights of hard work and sweat. Case closed: Chresimus was acquitted. What is significant for our purposes is not that Chresimus defended himself successfully, but that his neighbors could not believe him capable of earning his success except through magic. Though Pliny is at pains to frame the story as paradigmatic of the hardworking farmer, we should give further thought to the possibility that his accusers were cognizant of and sought to exploit Chresimus’ slave background—the notice introduces him as *e seruitute liberatus*—not only in generally classist terms but with a specific view to the association between slaves and magic.

To beat the charge, Chresimus will have had to submerge his identity into a civic discourse of merit by renouncing any slave-magician past that could be projected upon him; he may have been indignant at being interpellated as a slave-magician, or he may have previously held and been proud of a magico-religious identity that he was now compelled to disavow for his own (free) well-being; whatever the case, communal suspicion had to be put to rest, since its consequences could be fatal. Now here, of course, I am going out on a limb: there is nothing in the story itself that justifies my speculation about his indignation. Nonetheless, speculation of this kind has the virtue of getting at the psycho-emotional dimension of a former slave’s distancing from an earlier existence as a non-normative religious agent. In any case, behind Pliny’s sourcing of this incident to the annalist Piso Frugi lurks another interpretive possibility. Consul in 133, this

(text and commentary: Courtney 1999: 117–18) and the corrupt jingle for sore feet quoted in Varro *RR* 1.2.27.

143. For the incident see Piso Frugi *FRHist* F35 = Pliny *NH* 18.8.41–43; the prosecution occurred either in the 190s or the 150s. Analysis of the episode: Graf 1997: 62–65; contextualization within the history of *Zaubereiprozesse* in Liebs 1997: 149; attention to the specifics of Pliny’s language in Rives 2002: 275–76. Schultze 2011: 174–75 works from Cicero’s gloss of *chresimos* as *frugi* (*Tusc.* 3.16–17) to speculate that the annalist Piso Frugi, Pliny’s source, “was having a little joke” with this story.

historian commanded Roman soldiers in Sicily during the First Servile War, with a magical-prophetic slave to be discussed in Part IV as his major adversary. Given that Piso's *Annales* were in all likelihood composed after 120,¹⁴⁴ the possibility should not be dismissed out of hand that the religious behaviors of the "bad" slaves whose insurrection Piso helped to suppress colored the presentation even of the good slave turned industrious freedman.

B. MAGICIANS MEET THE PROSECUTION

Even if my interpretation of the Chresimus incident does not align with how his contemporaries perceived him, this trial cannot be dissociated from the targeting of "magical" practices and of those engaging in them under way during Chresimus' lifetime. Prosecutions for *ueneficia* skyrocketed in the first decades of the second century: if Livy's sources are to be believed, some five thousand people were tried and condemned by *quaestiones ueneficii* in 184 and in 180–79.¹⁴⁵ While Livy does not supply information about the identities of those sentenced in these trials, the scale of the prosecution was such that almost certainly some slaves and freedmen were among the condemned; another datum pointing in the same direction is the documented existence of at least one other religiously inflected slave-orchestrated *coniuratio* during these years.¹⁴⁶

With evidence from the Black Atlantic as our guide, we can press the issue more forcefully and clarify why *most* of those condemned were likely to have been slaves or freedmen and why suspicion of slaves and the newly freed might have spurred the prosecutions in the first place. Whichever comparandum from the Black Atlantic one chooses—the punishment of the slave healer Domingos Álvares, the multiple enforcement actions undertaken by English and French authorities against *obeah* and "poisons," the concerns expressed by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Caribbean slaveholders about slaves' "use of esoteric spiritual knowledge"—one does not need to assume perfect correspondence between early second-century BCE Rome and the slave societies of the Black Atlantic to speculate that what came to be flagged and prosecuted as an epidemic of poisoning in the former may have consisted of types of religious knowledge practiced by slaves; or to conjecture that these slaves were condemned to die because Roman slaveowner elites could not control their imaginations when they saw their slaves getting up to forms of ritual that had not been scripted or authorized by the masters themselves.¹⁴⁷ It is no coincidence that the lifetime of Chresimus saw Roman anxieties about ostensibly non-traditional practices culminate

144. Dating of the *Annales*: Forsythe 1994: 32–36.

145. Liv. 39.41.5 and 40.43.2 (the former notice hedged: *si Antiati Valerio credere libet. . .*) with Gordon 1999: 254–55.

146. See n.112 above.

147. Domingos Álvares: Sweet 2011. For the quoted phrase and further discussion of the strategies employed in Jamaica and Saint Domingue "to control and suppress enslaved people's use of spiritual weapons against slavery" see Paton 2012; for *obeah* in British Guiana, De Barros 2004; for *obeah* in Martinique, Savage 2007 and 2012. The interpenetration of witchcraft, culture contact,

in other episodes of scaled-up policing. Following the suppression of the Bacchantes in 186, (Greek) philosophers were expelled from Rome in 161 and 154, while Chaldaeans and/or Jews were expelled in 139. Many of these individuals would have first come to the city as slaves or experienced Roman enslavement in their displacement to Italy from other parts of the Mediterranean.¹⁴⁸ The *quaestiones ueneficium* institutionalized during this period can and should be slotted into a *longue durée* comparative history of juridico-legal efforts obsessed with the religious lives of slaves.

If, as proposed in Part I above, slaves internalized forms of religious knowledge and expression approved by or acceptable to their masters while enslaved, they could as easily learn and practice unsanctioned forms; such a possibility surfaces in the *Digest*'s inclusion of teaching a slave "evil arts" among the legally viable rationales for bringing an action against an individual "for making a slave worse."¹⁴⁹ The discourse of the slave magician-poisoner was not conjured out of thin air or simply contrived *ex nihilo* as a randomly chosen ideological justification for the suppression of suspect groups; rather this discourse would have nourished itself on the religious routines of the enslaved and rendered these intelligible and legally actionable as poison-magic. The historiographic tradition for the republican period is riddled with omissions and gaps, so lacunose as to make the meager testimonies for slaves turning to magic in other periods of Greek and Roman history seem like a bounty by comparison.¹⁵⁰ Nonetheless, the mid-republican material set out in this section takes on a different texture when evaluated in the light of comparative evidence, which can help us overcome the lacunose nature of the material itself and arrive at a clearer understanding of how discourses of Othering and protocols of enforcement stamped the real practice of non-normative religious knowledge by slaves as frightening and prosecutable.

The question we are still far away from answering, however, is how slaves processed the policing of the religious knowledge they brought with them. One means of triangulating an answer is to consider the uses to which slaves were putting this "magic." Perhaps masters' fears of poisoning were not completely unfounded: by the Empire, female slave magic was adopted in some settings as a technology of

commodification, and domestic slavery in nineteenth-century West African slavery is brought to life in Bastian 2002.

148. Citations for and analysis of these incidents in Noy 2000: 37–47. See Gruen 2002: 17 for speculation that at least some of the Jews in second-century Rome had fought in the armies of Antiochus III and had been enslaved after the Seleucid ruler's defeat.

149. *Dig.* 11.3.1.5 (Ulpian). The crucial expression is *malis artibus*. McKeown 2012: 283 observes, "This may be connected with magic" (author's emphasis); but there is no need to be so tentative: late-antique uses of the phrase or its variants clearly have something akin to magic in mind (see e.g. Ambrose *Serm.* 24.6 = *PL* 17.653B).

150. Purely e.g.: for classical Greece, Antiphon's narrative of the slave concubine who administered an unintentionally fatal love potion to her master (1.18–20; for different but complementary readings of the episode see Gordon 1999: 196–97 and duBois 2008: 111–12); for imperial Rome, the public slave who affixed curse tablets with the names of *decuriones* to several monuments (*CIL* 11.2.4639 = Gager 1992 no. 135).

resistance.¹⁵¹ But the steering of non-sanctioned religious observance towards the end of resisting slavery's impositions and degradations seems already to be under way in mid-republican settings. To grasp how this process might have worked and how it is likely to reflect—if only at a distance—the religious subjectivity of the enslaved, we will now need to review how slaves aspired to freedom and how such aspiration came to be communicated in religious terms.

IV. CONCLUSION I: DREAMS OF LIBERATION

Not all slaves had an unqualified desire for freedom: in *Menaechmi*, Messenio not only seems ambivalent about emancipation but implores his master to keep ordering him around, later expressing the hope for better auspices by which he might enjoy freedom in perpetuity; in *Epidicus* the lead slave character asks Periphanes for freedom and then for food.¹⁵² Even if these moments in the *palliata* are mainly projections of a master discourse designed to keep slaves in check by characterizing freedom as a source of psychic and physical distress, there were reasons why some slaves might have balked at being manumitted.¹⁵³ Yet for those slaves who actively yearned to escape the agonies of enslavement, desire and aspiration sometimes received expression through religiously inflected forms of imagined or actual resistance. In this section I will explore how we might begin mapping these forms, with the aid of evidence whose re-description within the paradigm of slave religiosity set out in the previous sections could prove useful even if the specific interpretations I have put forward so far do not persuade.

A. BOUND IN A NUTSHELL, KINGS OF INFINITE SPACE

The first of these religiously encoded forms of resistance was the fantasy of escape into another, utopian world. Caught in eddies of confusion, menace, and overwork, slaves nonetheless managed to create internal spaces for the cultivation of religious subjectivities. While our sources for the most part chart these spaces along axes familiar to Roman masters, who were themselves “in need of fantasies of rebellion,”¹⁵⁴ on closer examination the design and representation of this imaginary unveil some elements of the inner life of the enslaved. The religiously saturated thought-world whose imprint is detectable in the *palliata* is reflective of how one such psychosocial space came to be encoded: as a dream-world of aspirations to kingship. For Plautus' slaves to dream of becoming kings was perfectly in tune with a world in which kings could be swiftly reduced to slavery—even compelled to perform the drama of their own enslavement—and in which slaves could

151. See De Haas 2012: 96–144 for an examination of the available evidence.

152. *Men.* 1032–33 (*sed patrone te obsecro / ne minus imperes mihi quam quom tuos seruos fui*), 1149 (*sed meliore est opus auspicio, ut liber perpetuo siem*); *Epid.* 727–28.

153. See de Wet 2015: 22; for the regularity of manumission, n.37 above.

154. Thus McCarthy 2000: 211.

rise to the throne.¹⁵⁵ As affirmations of dignity in the face of degradation, slave hopes for deliverance from bondage in Roman comedy take on a religious inflection when formulated as aspirations to royal status: after all, Hellenistic kings were worshipped as gods; hope itself was a god.¹⁵⁶ Although “the idea of human identification with deity is met constantly in the plays,” the real provocation occurs when slaves strive for identification with the divine.¹⁵⁷ When *Asinaria*’s Libanus and Leonida cap their mockery of the master Argyrippus by offering to hand over the coveted twenty minas if he worships them as gods (*Asin.* 712–16)—

ARG datisne argentum?
 LIB si quidem mi statuam et aram status
 atque ut deo mi hic immolas bouem: nam ego tibi Salus sum.
 LEO etiam tu, ere, istunc amoues aps te atque me ipse aggredere
 atque illa sibi quae hic iusserat mi status supplicasque?
 ARG quem te autem diuom nominem?
 LEO Fortunam, atque Obsequentem.
 ARG You’ll give me the money?
 LIB Yup, if you set up a statue and an altar to me and sacrifice
 right here
 a cow to me as you would for a god—since I’m Health to you.
 LEO Master, are you going to move that fool away from you and
 approach me
 and set up for me what he ordered for himself—and
 supplicate me?
 ARG What god should I call you?
 LEO Fortune—favorable Fortune.

—the cruel joke, further sharpened by the existence of Roman cults to Salus and to Fortuna Obsequens, is that the transmutation of slaves into recipients of cult was impossible. But already in its very articulation this fantasy throws a wrench into Roman calibrations of the boundary between the human and the divine—a delicate negotiation normally understood to be the prerogative of the free and mighty.¹⁵⁸

155. Prusias II of Bithynia’s decision first to don the outfit of a Roman *libertus* and then to address the Roman Senate as θεοὶ σωτῆρες outrages Polybius (30.18 with Habicht in *RE* 23.1 cols. 1111–13 on the incident). For the rebellious slave as king note e.g. Eunus’ adoption of the royal name Antiochus: Diodorus 34/35.24; Bradley 1998: 116–20 on slave leaders’ kingly posturing as one of the “trappings of [their] authority.”

156. Background to my argument here: Segal 1968: 131–32; Richlin 2016. Greek comic antecedents and the “analogy of slavery” as a device to think through the relationship of men to the gods: duBois 2008: 29. Fulkerson in progress explores hope in Plautine comedy, with particular emphasis on slave hopes in *Rudens*.

157. The quotation: Hanson 1959: 52, with examples listed on p. 69.

158. Overview of this negotiation’s literary instantiation in Feeney 1998: 108–14. Distinguishing this passage from more run-of-the-mill personifications of benefactors as *mea Salus* elsewhere in Plautus: Hanson 1959: 76. For the worship of Salus and Fortuna Obsequens in republican Rome

From the master's perspective, the slave fantasy of deification was insolence incarnate, to the extent that it activated the possibility of the master being subordinated to his slave. Immediately prior to demanding worship as a god, Libanus forces his master to give him a piggyback ride, gleefully exclaiming as Argyrippus lugs him around that *this* is how the high and haughty should be humbled.¹⁵⁹ Without any difficulty, we can take Libanus and Leonida's fun with Argyrippus as an instance of comic inversion run wild, and as one more illustration of the general principle that humor can "act prescriptively to police desire and behavior."¹⁶⁰ But Erich Segal in his study of Plautus was on to something when he read this episode through the filter of the *Magnificat* (NT Luke 1.52).¹⁶¹ for some slaves the fantasy of inversion was steeped in religious sentiment. There were slaves who dreamt the impossible as a way of coping with the trauma of enslavement, if some of the dreams compiled in Artemidorus of Daldis' dream-interpretation manual some three centuries after our period are not made up out of whole cloth. Not surprisingly for a dream-interpreter preoccupied with affirming conventional status hierarchies, Artemidorus does not have uplifting news for the slave who dreamt of wearing a gold garland or of playing ball with Zeus: serious punishment was on the horizon.¹⁶² While Artemidorus' exegesis of these dreams undeniably speaks more to the "attitudes and preoccupations of the *interpreter*" than to "the mentality of the *dreamer*,"¹⁶³ my point is simply that these dreams were being dreamt and that their content had a strongly religious flavor. Much like that dream of playing ball with Jupiter, the Sycophanta's longing in *Trinummus* to undertake a journey "to the source of the river that rises in the heavens at the feet of Jupiter's throne" gives voice to the hope for salvation voiced by slaves in other slave societies.¹⁶⁴ In the face of a master's theology that validated slavery as the will of the gods,¹⁶⁵ aspiring to be on the same level as a god capable of receiving cult doubled as a tactic of silent resistance.

see Clark 2007; a reader has reminded me that *obsequentem* can also mean "servile." Further on slave deification: Segal 1968: 133–35; Gellar-Goad 2013: 164–65.

159. *Asin.* 702: *sic isti solent superbi subdomari*; I have slightly reworked Erich Segal's translation (citation at n.161 below), which nicely captures the alliteration of the original.

160. Richlin 2014a: 69, discussing invective against women in Roman satire.

161. Segal 1968: 116–17.

162. Artemidorus *Oneir.* 1.77 (the garland) and 4.69 (playing ball), with Harris-McCoy ad loc.; but it is good for slaves to dream of flying, especially up to heaven (2.68). Analysis: Pomeroy 1991: 71–72; Kudlien 1991: 68–81 (but see next note); programmatically on the *Oneirocritica*'s contribution to the study of Roman slavery see Bradley 1994: 140–42 and Hall 2011: 212–13; Malosse 2014: 144–45 on the figuration of the slave in Artemidorus' text. Skepticism about Artemidorus' reporting of dreams: Harris 2009: 113–15.

163. Scheidel 1993: 110–11 (author's emphasis), critiquing Kudlien.

164. *Trin.* 940: *ad caput amnis, quod de caelo exoritur sub solio Iovis*; Richlin 2014b: 193–95 and (cited by her) Raboteau 1978/2004: 290–318.

165. See Part I (d) above.

B. THE FREEDOM OF DEATH

How many slaves, despairing of human life but placing their hopes in liberation through death, longed or actively sought to end their lives? That there were suicidal slaves is certain; and for some slaves, the thought of suicide as escape would have been filtered through previously held or newly acquired philosophical or religious convictions on the merits of suicide.¹⁶⁶ Still others may have understood death as a path to a new utopian community unmarked by slavery's degradations, though whether and to what extent those in bondage grasped or internalized that their *di Manes* would be "equal" in status to those of the free is impossible to establish with any confidence.¹⁶⁷

Much like slave life, slave death was governed by protocols of dishonor. It would have been common knowledge that slave bodies did not receive the same treatment as free ones, as the provisions of the late republican *lex libitinaria* from Puteoli confirm: dead slaves had to be taken out of the city within two hours of daylight, "suggesting that the pollution caused by the death of a slave was considered more serious than that of a freeborn"; the only category of deceased subject to speedier removal were suicides, who had to be removed within the hour.¹⁶⁸ Moreover, ritual inequality was reiterated in the grieving of death, with slave women being subordinated to a *praefica* who oversaw their training in and performance of the women's work of grief for deceased masters and mistresses;¹⁶⁹ the slave dead, by contrast, were not the recipients of this structured mourning. However, even though the bodies of dead slaves—and especially dead suicides—were held to be more polluting than the bodies of the dead free and did not directly benefit from quite the same regulated grieving, a slave's grave still held the status of a *locus religiosus* under Roman law.

This designation of a slave's grave may very well have been one of those "token" humanizing gestures through which slavery as system reasserted its carceral logic.¹⁷⁰ All the same, there remained other means for slaves to impose religious expression on their physical release from this world. For one, the slave might choose to stage death as a form of explicit dialogue with the divine. Under the Empire, not

166. Suicidal slaves: *Dig.* 21.1.1.1 (inclination to or previous attempts at suicide had to be declared prior to sale), 21.1.23.2. Philosophical and religious discourses about suicide in antiquity: van Hooff 1990: 188–97, but scant assessment of how these discourses were refracted through slavery (cf. 16–21 on "lower-class" suicides); for an example of a philosophical *consolatio* circulated among the newly enslaved see n.88 above.

167. On whether the *di Manes* accommodated the slave dead and the free dead as equals see Varro *LL* 6.24 with Bodel 2008 (who posits a sub-class of *Di Manes serviles*); North 2012: 74–79 (rebuttal and re-interpretation); and Bodel 2016: 95.

168. *AE* 1971: 88 II.22–23 with Mouritsen 2011: 20 for the quoted explanation.

169. The *praefica* in charge of *ancillae* leading the *naenia*: Ser. Clodius fr. 8 *GRF* Funaioli (*apud* Varro *LL* 7.30) with North 2015; Richlin 2014a: 285 on this as "women's work."

170. *Dig.* 11.7.2.*pr.* with Finley 1980: 96 on this as "tokenism" and n.52 above on the carcerality of enslavement's "humanizing" moments of exception. Masters did not always allow their slaves to receive burial: the mixed-status *collegium* of Diana and Antinous at Lanuvium decreed that a *funus imaginarium* was to be carried out on behalf of any deceased member whose owner had denied the *collegium* access to the body (*CIL* 14.2112 = *ILS* 7212 col. II.4–5 with Bendlin 2011 and Tacoma 2017: 237).

long after Caligula's ascension to the purple, a slave by the name of Machaeon mounted the couch of Capitoline Jupiter—*physically* raising himself on the same level as the supreme god—and after delivering prophecies and sacrificing a dog killed himself.¹⁷¹ Another option was also available, perhaps not to the suicidal slave but certainly to the slave with the resources to commission a monument: representing oneself or one's family members as having undergone deification through death. While this practice is only attested in the funerary epigraphy of the Empire,¹⁷² its adoption might reflect a confluence of some of the religious forces set in motion during the period of mass enslavement; it is with these epitaphs that the fantasies banded about in Plautus are immortalized in stone.

C. FIGHT OR FLIGHT

Machaeon's death brings us to the third form of aspirational freedom routed through slave religious subjectivity: subversion, escalating into outright defiance. We would be remiss not to acknowledge everyday forms of individual resistance that did not rise to the level of organized rebellion, above all else those that undermined the religious practices of the master. Here it is appropriate to wonder whether, for example, Cato's "sleeping" slaves knew enough about the need for silence in auspice-taking to try and disrupt him by farting.¹⁷³ In the case of collectively coordinated slave resistance, however, it is emphatically clear that religiosity was being put to work. Cato's (unvoiced) nightmare of the charismatic prophetic slave came to life with the slave insurrection leaders of the late second and early first centuries whose reputation for and recourse to religious expertise endowed them with Weberian charisma. The Sicilian rebel Eunus was a fire-breathing ἄνθρωπος μάγος gifted with μαντική; Salvius was "believed to be skilled in fortune-telling" (δοκοῦντα τῆς ἱεροσκοπίας ἔμπειρον εἶναι); Athenion was "very knowledgeable about astrology" (τῆς ἀστρομαντικῆς πολλὴν ἔχων ἐμπειρίαν); and Spartacus' wife was a prophetess "inspired by Dionysian frenzies" (μαντικὴ δὲ καὶ κάτοχος τοῖς περὶ τὸν Διόνυσον ὄργασμοις).¹⁷⁴ For all of these figures, one could simply construe the assertion of

171. Cassius Dio 59.9.3: ἐν δ' οὖν τῇ νομηνίᾳ αὐτῇ Μαχάων τις δοῦλος ἐπὶ τε τὴν κλίνην [= *lectum*] τοῦ Διὸς τοῦ Καπιτωλίου ἐπανεβή, κἀντεῦθεν πολλὰ καὶ δεινὰ ἀπομαντευσάμενος κινιδίον τέ τι ὃ ἐσεσηγόχει ἀπέκτεινε καὶ ἑαυτὸν ἐσφαξε. Van Hooff 1990: 97 interprets the incident as an "instance of acute insanity—or pathological religious mania"; but pathologizing the act occludes Machaeon's scripting of his death as resistance, apparent even in the choice of animal for sacrifice: although associated with the *lares* (Ov. *Fast.* 5.137–42; Plut. *QR* 51), dogs were generally not handled by priests on account of their perceived impurity (Plut. *QR* 111).

172. Bodel 2016: 87–89 summarizes and interprets the evidence.

173. Cato *apud* Festus 268 L. (s.v. *prohibere*): *domi cum auspicamus, honorem me dium (deum) immortalium uelim habuisse; serui, ancillae, si quis eorum sub centone crepuit quod ego non sensi, nullum mihi uitium facit* On the verb *crepo* and on farting as a *flagitium* see Adams 1982: 249–50. The ritual's validity would be compromised only if the master heard (see Jocelyn 1966: 101); it does not seem to have crossed Cato's mind that some of his slaves might have been farting deliberately—as a form of everyday resistance, on which generally see Scott 1987 and 1990.

174. Bradley 1998: 46–101 remains indispensable on the history of the Servile Wars; on the geopolitics of these rebellions and their "Syrian" connections note also Beek 2016. For Eunus see

religious skill in primarily instrumentalist terms, crediting their “aura of religiosity” as one of the binding agents for the rebellions they led; parallels in New World slave rebellions are not hard to locate.¹⁷⁵ Especially in light of the tendencies in modern scholarship to re-inscribe slave rebellions and their leaders within master paradigms of exoticism,¹⁷⁶ we should by no means take our source-texts’ ascription of an “aura of religiosity” to ancient slave leaders as innocently factual. These leaders were marked as marginal and deviant in part by being invested with this aura, and their movements were denigrated after their suppression by being historiographically scripted and narrated as religiously aberrant.¹⁷⁷ If, however, I was correct to argue in parts I–III of this article that slavery imposed restraints on the exercise of certain types of religious practice, slave leaders would have had some incentive to take up and prominently showcase—possibly even to the point of exaggeration—those forms of practice that had been curtailed among or systematically denied to them.

Whenever collective physical and religious resistance was not a possibility, individual flight was.¹⁷⁸ For the Roman slaves who traveled from country to city and back again at their masters’ orders, or defied their masters’ orders by fleeing city home or country estate, shrines and temples offered a refuge for the expression of religious sentiment. Some slaves fled to these in search of asylum, as we see not only with the fictional Palaestra and Ampelisca of *Rudens* but with the Sicilian slaves at the end of the second century who congregated at the shrine of the Palici to seek deliverance from their brutal masters; and in time the sacred space of the sanctuary itself came to be recognized by law as a conduit not just to protection but to freedom.¹⁷⁹ All those slaves walking to and from shrines and temples, dreaming of escape or in the midst of attempting it: did any of them grapple with the popular belief that Vestal Virgins had the ability to freeze the runaway in place with a

Diodorus 34/35.2.5 (and cf. Florus 2.7) with Morton 2013; for Salvius, Diodorus 36.4.4; for Athenion, Diodorus 36.5.1; and for Spartacus’ wife, Plut. *Crass.* 8.3 with Schiavone 2013: 27–30.

175. The aura: Bradley 1998: 113–16; note Gallini 1970: 127–31 on religiosity’s efficacy in the absence of a “true” revolutionary agenda. Comparanda: Nat Turner and the religiously inspired leadership of African-American slave rebellions come to mind (Raboteau 1978/2004: 304–306); for other cases of expert spiritual practice in Black Atlantic slave rebellions see e.g. Finch 2015: 199–220 on the Cuban slave insurgencies of 1841–1844.

176. Generally, Sharples 2015 on the habit of reading slave conspiracies within these paradigms—among which figures the religious exoticization of slave leaders.

177. Thus Eunus’ band is reported to have eaten the “sacred fish” (probably from Arethusa’s fountain in Syracuse) and to have been punished by the gods as a result: Diodorus 34/35.3.9 with Yavetz 1988: 26n.25.

178. Summary of the evidence for Roman *fugitivi* in Bradley 1998: 32–36 and 2011: 367–73; for New World comparanda see n.181 below. Odds of success: the replies to the prompt “Will I find the fugitive” in the *Oracles of Astrampsychus* (n.96 above) “suggest that 60 per cent will not be found, 30 per cent will be and 10 per cent only after a time” (Toner 2014: 118).

179. Palaestra and Ampelisca at the altar of Venus: *Rud.* 689–701; cf. Tranio’s occupation of an altar (*Most.* 1094–97 with Fontaine 2009: 174–76); for the contrast with Menander’s exploitation of the theme see Gellar-Goad 2013: 161. The Palici: Diodorus 11.89.6–8 with Bradley 1998: 68. Under the emperor Claudius, owners who dropped off slaves at temples lost their right to recover: Suet. *Claudius* 25.2 and *Digest* 40.8.2 with Hopkins 1978: 118.

spell?¹⁸⁰ Did any of them view individual travel and flight as opening the door to a “freedom as marronage” that re-ordered (if only for brief periods) not only slave-master relationships but human-divine ones as well?¹⁸¹

Whatever the answers to these questions, slaves who ran away from their masters, either in the hope of returning to their place of origin or with a view to joining roving bandit communities, had gods to thank, prayers to offer, and dedications to make. An episode recounted in the fragmentary writings of a Hellenistic Greek historian brings this religiosity out well. According to Nymphodorus of Syracuse, Chian runaways brought first-fruits to a roadside shrine set up to commemorate the slave leader Drimakos. Irrespective of whether the full story of the Chian insurrection as narrated in Nymphodorus can or “cannot be accepted as an accurate account of historical events,” the more important points for my purposes are that runaway slaves were plausibly imagined to have sought out a roadside shrine where they might offer cult—slaves in flight had religious needs, and they sought to satisfy these as soon as they could—and that they chose to deify one of their own.¹⁸²

V. CONCLUSION II: DREAMS OF METHOD

The questions are what matter; posing them even if they do not admit to ready answers is vital to countering the silencing of Roman slaves’ religious lives in our sources. As a projection of raw and violent power, silencing of this type is no historical accident.¹⁸³ We have seen that the master’s dominion over the slave is responsible for creating conditions of effacement by subordinating the slave in ritual (Part I), funneling or compelling the religious slave into the paradigm of the frenzied prophet (Part II), or differentiating the slave’s religious skills as “magical” and thereby in need of legal-judicial discipline (Part III). Nevertheless, in the midst of these silences, the work of slaves to express and work through the religious dimensions of enslavement in both exteriorized and interiorized terms is recoverable (Part IV). Listening to the voice of slave religion through the voice-scrambler of the master’s discourses has been the primary goal of this essay. In this final

180. Pliny *NH* 28.3.13: *Vestales nostras hodie credimus nondum egressa urbe mancipia fugitiua retinere in loco precatone. . .*

181. Slave maroon societies: the essays in Price 1996; Roberts 2015 with new insight into “freedom as marronage” in connection with Black Atlantic slave histories; Bradley 1998: 1–16 and Urbainczyk 2008: 30–36 take contrasting positions on the similarities between ancient slave armies and New World maroons. Runaways turned bandits in the lead-up to the Sicilian slave revolts: Diodorus Siculus 34/35.2.25 with Capozza 1974–1975; cf. Shaw 1984: 47–48 on the late second-century CE Robin Hood figure Bulla Felix’s instructions to a captured centurion that he tell his masters to feed their slaves “lest they turn to brigandage” (Cassius Dio 77.10.5: ἄγγελλε τοῖς δεσπόταις σου ὅτι τοὺς δούλους ὑμῶν τρέφετε, ἵνα μὴ ληστεύωσι).

182. *BNJ* 572 F 4 (*apud* Athenaeus *Deipn.* 6.265c–266e), with Forsdyke 2012: 38 for the quotation (and ch. 2 for a full critique). For a fresh interpretation of the episode see Ismard 2017: 41–42.

183. See Trouillot 1995: 48 on silencing and power in the historical archive, with Joshel and Peterson 2014: 5–6 for application of Trouillot’s argument to the study of Roman slavery.

section, I will address several methodological concerns elided in Parts I-IV and conclude with a general comment on the importance of postulating and recreating slave religiosity as a standalone category.

Some counters to my line of argument might focus on this article's failure to engage systematically with the Plautinity of Plautus or with the Hellenizing elements of *De agri cultura*; the vexed questions of Plautus' intended audience and Cato's intended readership; Italy's religious "Romanization" in the lifetime of Plautus and Cato; or the assimilation of new divinities—some of which were worshipped by the enslaved—into Roman state cult.¹⁸⁴ Further work on all of these subjects will be needed to establish the robustness of the arguments set out in Parts I-III,¹⁸⁵ but I suspect that work along these lines would enhance the vividness of my picture without dramatically distorting it. A potentially much stronger objection to this article might hold that its concentration on a slave mode of religiosity simply amounts to a re-enactment of a tired Western metaphysics of distinction preoccupied with asserting vast gulfs between dichotomized categories (in this case the free and the unfree). In response I can only say that this article arose not out of an uninterrogated desire to re-inscribe Rome's slaves into the paradigm of difference but out of the hope of fracturing ancient religious experience into a tessellation of subjectivities: to take a page from recent work in anthropological theory, "It is not a question of erasing the contours but of folding and thickening them, diffracting and rendering them iridescent."¹⁸⁶

Both those who would call for full immersion in comparativism and those who would want nothing to do with comparative work of any kind will have found contestable material in this article. Heeding Joseph C. Miller's call to study enslavement "in terms of the experiences of the enslaved," this essay's comparative gaze is as much a matter of aspiration as it is of method: the hope is that over time bidirectional and imaginatively versed exchange about slave religious experience between students of Roman slavery and historians of other periods will form the foundation of a more versatile and capacious history of the ritual and psychological dimensions of slaving. With so much work still to be done on the culture-straddling experiences of those enslaved during Rome's takeover of the Hellenistic Mediterranean,¹⁸⁷ this article has sought to re-start the conversation about the religious lives of those who found themselves at that collision's white-hot center, by bringing to the table some fairly well-understood developments in the history of

184. For fresh takes on Plautus see the work of the Tübingen school (e.g. Lefèvre et al. 1991) and Gunderson 2015; on *De agri cultura*'s features and ambitions see n.22 above. Audiences: Gruen 1992: 183–222; Goldberg 1998: 13–15. "Religious Romanization": Terrenato 2013 and now Stek 2015. New gods and state cult: Orlin 2010.

185. Sacrifice in Menander might be an attractive point of entry into early Hellenistic literary configurations of religion and social status; see the sketch in Geller-Goad 2013: 161–63.

186. Viveiros de Castro 2014: 45. A similar aim is discernible in Terrenato's (2013: 49–55) sensitivity to "discrepant experiences."

187. Pleading for greater awareness of the differences and interactions between Roman and Greek systems of enslavement: Meyer 2012–2013: 245.

Black Atlantic slave religions. However, by no means would I wish to close the door on other comparisons; it may well be the case down the road that, as the pace of research into non-Black Atlantic slave regimes quickens, the interpretations advanced in Parts I-IV above will be opened to more rigorous testing and fine-tuning.¹⁸⁸

William Fitzgerald and others have reminded us that all contemporary writing about ancient slavery operates under the sign of modern Abolition;¹⁸⁹ the legacy of Abolition is ultimately responsible for my choice of the rubric “slave religion,” a subject placed on its historiographic footing by Albert Raboteau’s research. In the spirit of Keith Bradley’s insistence on “the best history [being] very much contemporary history,” and in adherence to the conviction that any exploration of subjectivities would be incomplete without a statement of the author’s own, it would be irresponsible of me to end this article without acknowledging that my own identity as a descendant of Caribbean slaves—the memory of whose enslavement, for my family and for so many others, has been mediated partly through religious observance—shadows some of the arguments put forward here.¹⁹⁰

Princeton University
dpadilla@princeton.edu

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188. Cf. Scheidel 2012: 96, capping the argument that slavery in the nineteenth-century west African Sokoto Caliphate “offers the most parallels to the Roman experience” with the suggestion that comparatively minded historians of ancient slavery “adopt a more global perspective”; note now the comparative materials harnessed in Ismard 2017. Religious practices of slaves in the Islamic Mediterranean: Hunwick 2004.

189. On ancient slavery’s place in the history of modern Abolition see the essays in Alston et al. 2011; Malamud 2015; for ancient slavery’s centrality to the field of American classical studies “from its inception” see duBois 2008: 13–21.

190. For the quotation see Bradley 1992: 136. I do not mean to suggest that my subject position in relation to slavery’s modern legacies in itself validates this article’s arguments; for some pointed words on historians’ over-confidence in the epistemological power of their personal positioning see Miller 2012: 39–40. I *do* mean to take a stand against the “traditions of the guild, reinforced by a positivist philosophy of history, [that] forbid academic historians to position themselves regarding the present”: Trouillot 1995: 151. For the implication of the authorial self in self-reflexive histories of slavery see Wimbush 2012: 1–21.

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