“Ronald Charles is an important voice in the study of early Christian slavery. A postcolonial historian of antiquity, he situates his investigation of slave characters in Jewish and Christian writings in the theoretical context of subaltern studies. Instead of perpetuating grand narratives, he deliberately concentrates on small tales. Attentive to the voices of ancient slaves and the silences of modern historians and theologians, Charles joins the chorus of those who insist we finally hear the voices of those who cry for justice on behalf of those they love.”

Jennifer Glancy, Le Moyne College, USA
THE SILENCING OF SLAVES IN EARLY JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN TEXTS

*The Silencing of Slaves in Early Jewish and Christian Texts* analyzes a large corpus of early Christian texts and Pseudepigraphic materials to understand how the authors of these texts used, abused and silenced enslaved characters to articulate their own social, political and theological visions.

The focus is on excavating the texts “from below” or “against the grain” in order to *notice* the slaves, and in so doing, to problematize and (re)imagine the narratives. Noticing the slaves as literary iterations means paying attention to broader theological, ideological and rhetorical aims of the texts within which enslaved bodies are constructed. The analysis demonstrates that by silencing slaves and using a rhetoric of violence, the authors of these texts contributed to the construction of myths in which slaves functioned as a useful trope to support the combined power of religion and empire. Thus was created not only the perfect template for the rise and development of a Christian discourse of slavery, but also a rationale for subsequent violence exercised against slave bodies within the Christian Empire.

The study demonstrates the value of using the tools and applying the insights of subaltern studies to the study of the Pseudepigrapha and in early Christian texts. This volume will be of interest not only to scholars of early Christianity, but also to those working on the history of slavery and subaltern studies in antiquity.

**Ronald Charles** is Assistant Professor in the Religious Studies Department at St. Francis Xavier University, Canada.
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THE SILENCING OF SLAVES IN EARLY JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN TEXTS
Ronald Charles

THE SILENCING OF SLAVES IN EARLY JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN TEXTS

Ronald Charles
FILIIS CARISSIMIS
ROMINE OLIVIER AND RANDY SÉBASTIEN
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I was also able to secure the generosity of Richard Ascough (Queen’s University, Canada), Philip A. Harland (York University, Canada), and Hector Avalos (Iowa State University, U.S.A.) to read my first full draft. I thank these scholars wholeheartedly for their generosity and support. I want to thank Chris De Wet for taking the time to read the whole manuscript and for suggesting to me to send it to Routledge. I am very grateful to the publisher for including this book in the series Routledge Studies in the Early Christian World. I also want to thank the following scholars for their help and support at various writing stages: David Gregory Monaco (chapter on Pseudepigrapha), Anna Rebecca Solevåg (chapter on slaves in the early Christian martyrs), Petr Kitzler (chapter on slaves in the early Christian martyrs), Calvin Roetzel (first rough draft on slaves in Paul), Jean-Jacques Aubert (chapter on slaves in Paul), Sandra R. Joshel (slaves in the gospels), Marianne Bjelland Kartzow (chapter on slaves in the Book of Acts), F. Scott Spencer (chapter on slaves in the Book of Acts), Rubén Dupertuis (chapter on slaves in
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS
ABBREVIATIONS

Primary sources

Aeschylus
Cassius Dio
Clement, Paed.
Clement, Strom.
Dig.
Euripides
Eusebius, HE
Gal.
Irenaeus
Jos. Asen
Josephus
Jub
Juv. Sat.
LCL
Mart. Perpt.
Mat.
M. Polyc.

Eumenides
Hist. Rom. Historia Romana
Clement of Alexandria, Paedagogus
Clement of Alexandria, Stromata
Digest of Justinian
Bacchae
Historia ecclesiastical/Ecclesiastical History
Galatians
Adversus Haereses
Joseph and Aseneth
Jewish Antiquities
Jubilees
Juvenal Satires
Loeb Classical Library
Martyrdom of Perpetua
Matthew
Martyrium Polycarpi
The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha
Life of Cato the Elder:
Life of Lycurgus
Epistulae morales/Epistles
Sibylline Oracles
Testament of Benjamin
Testament of Joseph
Testament of Reuben
Testament of Simeon
Testament of Zebulon
Ann. Annales:
Hist. Historiae
ABBREVIATIONS

Tertullian  
Adv. Marc.  
Adversus Marcionem

Xenophon  
Constitution of the Lacedaemonians

Secondary sources

AJS  Association for Jewish Studies Review  
BBR  Bulletin for Biblical Research  
BibInt  Biblical Interpretation  
CP  Classical Philology  
CSCO  Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium  
ESV  English Standard Version  
ETR  Études théologiques et religieuses  
HTR  Harvard Theological Review  
HTS  Harvard Theological Studies  
JBL  Journal of Biblical Literature  
JJS  Journal of Jewish Studies  
JSJ  Journal for the Study of Judaism  
JSJS  Journal for the Study of Judaism, Supplement  
JSNT  Journal for the Study of the New Testament  
JSNTSup  Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series  
JRS  Journal of Religion and Society  
JSP  Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha  
JSPSup  Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha Supplement Series  
JSS  Journal of Semitic Studies  
JTS  Journal of Theological Studies  
LF  Library of the Fathers  
NRSV  New Revised Standard Version  
NTApoc  New Testament Apocrypha  
NTS  New Testament Studies  
RB  Revue Biblique  
SB  Sources Bibliques  
SBL  Society of Biblical Literature  
SBLDS  Society of Biblical Studies. Dissertation Series  
SC  Sources Chrétiennes  
SCI  Scripta Classica Israelica  
SNTSMS  Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series  
SPCK  Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge  
SR  Studies in Religion/Sciences religieuses  

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<th>ABBREVIATIONS</th>
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<tr>
<td>VTS</td>
<td>Vetus Testamentus, Supplement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wis</td>
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<tr>
<td>WUNT</td>
<td>Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament</td>
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<tr>
<td>ZAW</td>
<td>Zeitschrift für die Altestamentliche Wissenschaft</td>
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<td>ZNW</td>
<td>Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</td>
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Although slaves constituted an important social group in the composition of earliest Christ-groups, their bodies have been taken for granted in the myth-making/social construction process of early Christian discourse. In this book, I analyze a large corpus of early Christian texts, alongside the pseudepigraphic materials, in order to understand how their authors—who had no intrinsic interest in slaves—used, abused, and silenced enslaved characters to articulate their own social, political, and theological visions. My aim is to explore the discursive use of slaves in these texts in order to consider an alternative historiography of earliest Christ-groups. The first task, then, is to examine “how slaves are good to think with.”

Thinking with slaves means probing their silences, their lived conditions as property (or “chattels”), their perspectives, and the precarious circumstances of their lives. This task is obviously extremely difficult and humbling since the ancient slaves left no texts or testimonies from which one could recover their perspectives and experiences. Yet, if one shifts their focus and excavates ancient history carefully and critically, they may be able to discern some aspects of the viewpoints of ancient slaves, understand some of their concerns, and use this knowledge about them to construct the past more accurately. By combing through layers of texts and reading against the grain, one can identify the slaves “beneath the surface” and observe “the underlying dynamics of power at work.” Reading “against the grain” means reading in a way that most modern scholars do not, that is by paying close attention to specific slaves in a narrative. It means not only paying close attention to the presence, absence, voice and voicelessness of individual enslaved bodies through specific texts, but also analyzing how they function to satisfy particular rhetorical discourses. This way of approaching the texts differently or “against the grain” allows us to recalibrate or to reconstruct these narratives. Thus, this book seeks a way to make slaves visible by un-silencing them in some specific texts and in the interpretation of these texts.

The unifying theme of this monograph is the silencing of slave voices. This project explores the silenced voices and experiences of slaves, focusing on specific slaves as textualized characters in the so-called pseudepigraphic
materials and in some early “Christian” writings. The inclusion of the Pseudepigrapha is necessary to avoid imposing a demarcation between “Christian” and “Jewish” texts that is historically untenable. The so-called Pseudepigrapha offer us valuable windows into the zeitgeist of early Judaism(s) in the Second Temple period. They also provide us with particular insights for understanding some of the ways in which the earliest Christ-groups proceeded in defining themselves. It can be extremely difficult—if not altogether impossible at times—to distinguish between compositions based on Jewish traditions and so-called “Christian” texts, which may have been redacted or edited, based on a Jewish text, to suit particular theological viewpoints and arguments. The parameters of early Judaism(s) and “Christian origins” are flexible, complex, and contested.

1.1 Plan of the study

This book has eight chapters. Chapter 1 (this introduction) covers the theoretical ground by highlighting how subaltern studies and, inter alia, postcolonial studies (resistance to the practice of colonialism and to master narratives) can help us uncover buried archives with which one may question the silencing of subaltern voices. The goal of Chapter 2 (Slaves in the Pseudepigrapha) is to highlight the different social, political, and literary dynamics around the slaves as characters in the pseudepigraphic literature. The chapter has a serial narrative orientation. I highlight slaves in the works surveyed, and comment on what each text says about a discourse of slavery, the particular assumptions about slaveholding, and the practices of slave owners. I also suggest a few ways that the representation of enslaved persons in this collection may have shaped the representation of slaves among some of the earliest Christ-groups. In the Pseudepigrapha, slaves, as literary figures or characters, are used to advance different discourses on wisdom, as well as the discussions and understandings of how one should live and interact with others in society. The diverse experiences of enslaved literary figures are not questioned in these texts that purport to share with others the benefit of wisdom. The bodies of the slaves are mostly relegated to their useful functions—their bodies are disposable, constantly threatened, socially constructed and functioning as properties due to the lack of interest in their humanity. One may then problematize the very goal of these texts when considering the figure of the enslaved persons in them. One may also wonder why it is there is virtually no scholarship on the slaves in this particular type of literature.

Chapter 3 examines slaves in the Pauline corpus. This chapter takes up the topic of slavery by focusing on three instances where slaves—or former slaves and characters that could be included in the nomenclature of ancient slaves—are mentioned in the Pauline literature: 1) Chloe’s people (τῶν Χλόης) in 1 Corinthians 1:11; 2) the (freed) slave Epaphroditus in Philippians 2:25–30; and 3) the slave Onesimus in Philemon. The analysis undertaken therein has
three objectives. First, it seeks to uncover the narratives within and behind these Pauline texts from the perspectives of the slaves. Secondly, it highlights the voices, echoes, and silencing of the slaves in these texts. Thirdly, it argues that Paul’s rhetorical language in the passages serves to establish his own esteemed hierarchical position.

Chapter 4 (Slaves in the gospels), focuses on the female slave of the high priest, “a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off” (John 18:26; see also Mark 14:66, Matthew 26:69, and Luke 22:56). It also emphasizes the account regarding Malchus, the slave of the high priest who had been struck by one of Jesus’ disciples (Matthew 26:51; Mark 14:47; Luke 22:50; and John 18:10). The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate how the process of highlighting marginalized and silenced slave characters in the texts may help in reconstructing and destabilizing certain conceptions and theological conclusions that were advanced by some of the earliest thinkers among Jesus’ adherents.

Chapter 5 (Slaves in the book of Acts) considers and contrasts two specific slaves, one named (Rhoda, the maid slave in Acts 12:15), who is associated with a Christ-believing group, and the other nameless (the merchants’ fortune-telling slave woman in Acts 16:16–18), who is not associated with Christ-believers. The purpose of highlighting these slaves is to show a pattern of violence (psychological and economic) exhibited in these texts, which takes the enslaved bodies to be vulnerable to such violence. The chapter explores the two narratives in which slave women speak only to be silenced by putting the narratives in conversation with each other. Considerations about the intersection of gender, hierarchy, social status, and economic functions, and how these various factors reinforce one another in the distribution of power within the depiction and silencing of slaves in the texts, are included in the chapter’s analysis.

The aim of Chapter 6, which focuses our attention on the slaves Felicitas and Blandina, is to argue that the slaves in the early Christian martyr narratives are used to advance particular theological conclusions; there is no interest in enslaved members of Christ-groups as violated bodies. In other words, the slaves serve as ideological and interpretative canvases that allow early Christian thinkers and theologians to paint and articulate their specific socio-rhetoric. The focus is on two particular female slave figures, namely Felicitas and Blandina. The emphasis is on them because the story of Felicitas, within the martyrdom account of Perpetua and Felicitas, and the story of Blandina in the account of the martyrs of Lyons and Vienne, are the only two early Christian narratives that feature female slaves as martyrs. The portrayal of Felicitas in the Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas is analyzed first in order to explore how she has been re-signified, reinterpreted, and reimagined in the Acta. The chapter is concluded with an analysis of how Blandina is used and abused in the myth-making process of early Christian discourse.
Chapter 7 (Slaves in the Acts of Andrew) examines how the act of thinking with slaves may help one understand socio-rhetoric and silencing in that particular early Christian narrative. The focus will be on the female slave Euclia, whose body has been used and abused as a surrogate body by her Christian mistress. I argue that Euclia’s mutilated slave body served as discursive material for the author to employ his various social and theological purposes. I will also explore how some curious narratival elements might help in considering the macro-political dimension of the text.

The last chapter of this study (Chapter 8) concludes with a few remarks about why we need to pay attention to figures of slaves in antiquity, what we may uncover from the study of slaves, and what we can learn in the present when we strive to animate silenced figures of the past.

Although the chapters in this book cover various terrain, my argument is clear and cohesive throughout. The theme of the silencing of slaves and slave voices in the Pseudepigrapha and various early Christian texts connects with the central argument to constitute a coherent research enterprise. Paying attention to silence, presence made absence, bodies taken for granted, bodies in motion, threatened bodies that exist to accomplish the desires of powerful figures, and to wounded and traumatized bodies in the texts, can be revealing to the ancient historian.

People in antiquity were on many occasions made slaves as the result of unfortunate circumstances. Slaves were at the margins of political power in the sense that they could not vote or hold office, their bodies were vulnerable to beatings and abuse, they were dishonoured as persons, and they lived under the absolute authority of their owners. However, one must be careful in castigating them as being simply dead at the margins of the social and political realms in antiquity. The slaves were present in their utility for the social orders to go unabated, but they were rendered absent or invisible in their subjectivity. That absence, nevertheless, “must always have been under threat: the human persona of the slave threatened the ordered and hierarchical universe constructed in the discourses of power.” This book seeks to make enslaved persons visible; it attempts to hear them, realize the brokenness of their bodies, be surprised by them in how they convey—almost in spite of the literary control of the authors and beneath the rhetorical force of their discourses—wisdom, theological insights, varied forms of resistance, profound questions and challenges.

No one doing research in ancient slavery can refuse to acknowledge Keith Bradley and his work has been an inspiration to many. Bradley is a very important contributor in the study of ancient slavery, especially in how he draws readers’ attention to notice references to slaves in texts of various genres. Casual allusions and incidental references to slaves are important markers to pay attention to if one wants to highlight slaves in the ancient texts. Bradley’s strategies for illuminating the lives of slaves serve as my guidelines in the present project. J. Albert Harrill and Jennifer A. Glancy are
particularly formidable New Testament researchers who, in the last two decades, have advanced the topic of ancient slavery in relation to early Christian texts.10 The works of Harrill and Glancy on slavery in early Christian writings push forward the works of other New Testament scholars and add much-needed nuances to these scholars’ interpretations and conclusions.11 I have learned a great deal from reading their works, and from the work of others in this area.12 My work differs from the previously mentioned studies in the following ways. First, it pays attention to slaves in a body of texts that have never been considered in the study of ancient slavery before, namely the pseudepigraphic materials. Second, in a sustained manner, it focuses on specific slaves.13 Paying close attention to slaves in these variegated texts is also a way to question our own reading and interpretative choices vis-à-vis slaves and the rise of earliest Christ-groups. Admittedly, the scope of this research project is vast. It goes beyond anything done previously and it will fill a significant void in the literature. The aim is to place these texts in larger, more critical conversations by looking at history “from below.”14

1.2 Silencing in texts

Michel-Rolph Trouillot’s seminal work, Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History, demonstrates that historical narratives can be used both for silencing the past and for rewriting it.15 He argues convincingly that scholars have participated in creating both presence and silence in the historical texts, figures, and events they choose to uncover, study, and emphasize.16 Trouillot showed how the extraordinary event that was the Haitian Revolution “entered history with the peculiar characteristic of being unthinkable even as it happened.”17 He later elaborates on the question of writing a history of the impossible.18

In terms of research on slaves in antiquity, Trouillot’s query is pertinent: How does one write a history of those who left no writing? What concerns me in this project is the challenge of approaching the earliest history of the Jesus movements from below. In other words, how does one understand some of the texts at the cross section of early Judaism(s) and “Christian origins” from the viewpoint of the slaves? An analysis of slaves in texts of antiquity needs to understand not only the cultural and socio-political milieu of these texts, but also the ideological structures resulting from the contexts and interpretations of these texts. Trouillot shows how the historical records can in fact muzzle the past, and how silence can play an important role in managing the interpretation of the historical methods.

Trouillot uses “four crucial moments” to enter into the process of historical production. These are the moment of fact creation (the making of sources), the moment of fact assembly (the making of archives), the moment of fact retrieval (the making of narratives), and the moment of retrospective significance (the making of history in the final instance).19 He utilizes these
conceptual tools to help the researcher understand the mechanisms behind the production of history, and thus, push for more complexity and nuance in our understanding of history.

Revising history in this manner means continually questioning and reviewing these crucial moments in order to surpass any unsophisticated understanding of the past. The past is not self-evident, it is multifaceted; it is always given through certain lenses that highlight and silence certain perspectives. In other words, the past is perspectival and it is always dynamic in its interpretation. The historian reports some historical facts while also interpreting them.\textsuperscript{20} Acknowledging that all history writing is selective and perspectival, the interests and assumptions of histories must therefore be studied and criticized. The “great men” of history must be de-centered so that one may analyze the multiplicity and various possibilities of history. The researcher is necessarily engaged in a type of reflexive mode by moving between theory and evidence, by reflecting on his or her social positioning(s) in doing certain work, and in exploring critically and reflexively what one’s assumptions are in asking (and not asking) certain scholarly questions.\textsuperscript{21}

Trouillot argues that “any historical narrative is a particular bundle of silences, the result of a unique process, and the operation required to deconstruct these silences will vary accordingly.”\textsuperscript{22} The silences are not a matter of actual non-existence of particular historical figures or phenomena, rather, they are the choice of authors and historians to make certain figures or phenomena invisible; that is, deemed not important to highlight, see, comprehend, and study because they are simply beside the point of historical enquiry. Trouillot states,

> The presences and absences embodied in sources are … neither neutral or natural. They are created. As such, they are not mere presences and absences, but mentions or silences of various kinds and degrees. By silence, I mean an active and transitive process: one “silences” a fact or an individual as a silencer silences a gun. One engages in the practice of silencing. Mentions and silences are thus active, dialectical counterparts of which history is the synthesis.\textsuperscript{23}

Silence in this sense is not made manifest as mere absence of facts, or the absence of specific groups of people’s participation in the mechanism of historical production. Rather, silence is manufactured through the erasure of certain pasts, peoples and knowledge. The politics of historical representation is achieved by means of the source production, archives, and narratives. The past is therefore occluded by and through these silences. Trouillot contends that the general silencing of the Haitian Revolution by Western historiography and by cultural producers of the early nineteenth century is not based on the unimportance of the Revolution. After all, this grand act remains the most successful slave revolution in history, and the first abolition of slavery in
an important slave society. However, this particular enterprise was considered unthinkable in the overarching cultural, racial, and imperial landscape of the early nineteenth century. It did not happen because it was impossible in the framework of Western thought.24

Trouillot goes on to say, “The Haitian Revolution did challenge the ontological and political assumption of the most radical writers of the Enlightenment.”25 The unthinkable actions of the slaves who fought and won against Napoleon’s army were not and could not be acknowledged as historical fact. The fact that some slaves in the eighteenth-century Caribbean would have thought about revolting against dehumanizing injustice, taken seriously the ideals of the Enlightenment and of revolutionary “Jacobinism” (Liberté, Égalité, and Fraternité), and made the most of European classical education and thoughts applicable for liberation was considered impossible. Trouillot criticizes the fact that “many historians are more willing to accept the idea that slaves could have been influenced by whites or mulattoes, with whom we know they had limited contacts, than they are willing to accept the idea that slaves could have convinced other slaves that they had the right to revolt.”26 To emphasize the point further, it is not that particular events, individuals, or social groups in history are unimportant; it is rather that the moment of fact creation (the making of sources) captures what it wants and excludes whatever it deems irrelevant, regardless of the significance of specific historical events or peoples.27

Considering Trouillot’s four crucial moments in the process of historical production may enable us to realize the silences not only in the texts, but also in our own scholarly enterprise. The moment of “fact creation” happens when we decide what counts as worthy historical enquiry and what does not. For example, in the study of slaves in antiquity, or in the precise interest guiding my study, the presence of slaves in the pseudepigraphic materials and in some early Christian writings is everywhere, but it is only in the last few decades that a scholarly interest has endeavoured to highlight and understand slaves in the so-called New Testament and the broader early Christian literature. The slaves, however, are still invisible in the Pseudepigrapha. A strategy of silencing the slaves in these texts, and inter alia, my treatment of them in this study may be to continue to ignore them and to question the significance or validity of studying slaves as characters in the Pseudepigrapha in relationship to the study of early Christ-groups. It may not matter to some readers that the division of Jewish and Christian texts is historically problematic, or that some of these texts may be considered as creating a reflexive and ideological platform for some early Christ-followers for articulating their own discourses on slaves in certain early Christian texts. For example, the discussions around whether Joseph was a slave or not in the Testament of Joseph may well be reflecting discussions among Christ-group members in the early second century C.Ê. who adopted and adapted this text, as they were trying to define themselves socially, politically, and theologically in the larger Greek and

INTRODUCTION

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Roman world. Thus, it remains important to probe some plausible connections between the plight of the enslaved persons in these texts in order to notice certain articulation of self-definition in relation to particular social, political ideologies, and theologies.

It is important to question the silences of history as well as the choices one makes to silence or to ignore silences in texts and scholarly contexts. In this book, I take the risk of attempting to understand the slaves in these bewildering texts because I want to break historical barriers and provoke others to probe the connections between silence and the making of sources. In Trouilfort’s second moment (the making of archives), the concern is about the matters of selection (producers, evidence, themes, procedures) and exclusion (some producers, some evidence, some themes, and some procedures). The making of archives necessarily implies choices. However, the making of archives is also simultaneously participating in the practice of silencing. Some texts are studied and some narratives or figures are given more prominence, while others stay in obscurity.

In the case of early Christian studies, the focus on unifying beliefs, an essentialized and unified entity, and clear demarcations between “orthodoxy” and “heresy,” or between the meta narrative of “canonical” texts versus “non-canonical” texts, has had the pervasive consequences of obscuring extremely complex areas of analysis, and has kept a number of scholars preoccupied for many years in defending particular ideological camps. It is true, more and more scholars studying the social and cultural landscape of the ancient Mediterranean world admit that these labels are not helpful for historical enquiry and that the tradition is much more conflicted, but more work is needed to analyze the ordinariness of social agents and restore texture and tension in the making of historical archives and the historical existence of slaves in antiquity. In other words, it is imperative to study a past that is both multidirectional and mundane. The archives need to be broadened. It is important to open the archives and to consider the ideological power that contributed and continues to naturalize the absence of slaves within them.

There are numerous questions, at a methodological, philosophical and even stemming from an ethical dimension, that are necessarily raised when one is presently engaged in reading these texts. Do we, in essence, adhere to a positivist stance, which states that we simply observe and describe what we see without making moral judgments, or is it at all possible to take sides in our analysis? Do we pretend to simply be dispassionate interpreters of the world of antiquity? In this book, I am not pretending to do my research from a completely neutral perspective. I agree with Richard Alston who insists that in a positivist approach “we run the risk of ignoring the voice that cannot be heard. Our researches become subject to the tyranny of the archive, in which what is recorded is assumed to be all that is there. In the case of slavery, to merely record the absence is to collude in the Classical discourse and the technologies of domination that supported slavery.”
I am interested in slaves, in the messiness of history, and in the intersectionality of gender, class differences, conflicts, concerns, contested socio-political experiences, social divisions, race and ethnicity. Clearly, the enslaved persons are textualized; that is, the entanglements of texts as rhetorically motivated and slaves (real, constructed, and imagined in texts as social objects) are what one has to deal with. Social realities and the social world of the texts are enmeshed with rhetorical purposes and literary constructions. There is a gap between reality and image. Placing slaves and their struggles at the forefront of our analysis means understanding the texts as arguments, whether originally and consciously composed as such: we ask what a particular text means, what its rhetorical intentions are, what rhetorical issues it seeks to address and overcome, whose interests it articulates, which social and political position it re-inscribes, and to what purpose. Methodologically, this is important. It allows one to read the texts much more carefully and critically without merely being apologists of certain theological, philosophical, and ideological positions.

The analysis undertaken in many instances in this monograph cannot determine whether a particular slave existed or not, or whether enslaved persons really were treated exactly as projected or constructed in certain texts. What one can do, however, is to consider critically what certain rhetorical moves aimed to accomplish within a text in regard to its intended audience(s). In other words, one needs to consider the dynamic interchange between the sociocultural contexts, the author, the text in its rhetorical force, the audience to which the text is addressed, and the argumentative aims of the text. In this line of thought, Richard Alston states, “We can be quite sure that what was being depicted did not ‘represent’ slaves. The slaves in reality, the bearers of images, were not within the images themselves, which differed radically from the norms of servile corporeality. In this crisis of representation, there is a ‘representation’ of the slave in a different form, but in that ‘re-presentation’ there is an absence that must have been striking.” The bewildering range of ancient documents associated with the multiplicity of early Christ-groups must be the focus of more research. Therefore, slaves in early Christian contexts need to be part of serious historical enquiry.

Trouillot’s third moment of fact retrieval or the making of narratives is pregnant with significance. Clearly, the narratives do not have any interests in the slaves. That is not an altogether surprising element of historical analysis when one places them in their broader political, social, and cultural contexts. What is mostly important to notice is the omission and silencing of slaves and how their erasure in the narratives points to larger issues worth studying. I illustrate this point in the chapter on slaves in the gospels (Chapter 4). I consider in that chapter how the female slave who questioned Peter at Jesus’ arrest has been treated in the various gospel narratives. I propose to read the various manifestations of the slaves in the high priest’s courtyard who accuse Peter of being with Jesus as the development of one character, the female
slave. As we move from one gospel to the next (starting from Mark to John),
the gospel writers alter the identity of that particular slave in order to protect
Peter’s image and memory. Ultimately, the narratives are created to silence
the voice of one female slave in order to rehabilitate the voice, the memory,
and the legacy of a male disciple.

Trouillot’s last moment of historical production is that of retrospective sig-
nificance (the making of history in the final instance). The myth-making and
meaning-making process that articulates certain originary pasts devoid of
conflicts and messiness is what the early Christian thinkers try to present. The
task of the historian of the ancient world is to expose the rifts, the cracks, and
the disorder. The process of doing so implies that one is engaged in thinking
and reading differently. It means questioning what is considered significant
and why; it means interrogating the power and the production of history. In
the subsequent chapters, I engage with buried and silenced voices. I try to pay
serious attention to slaves as characters, who are usually relegated to the
margins of the historical archives in early Judaism(s) and early Christianities.
Postcolonial and subaltern studies provide a way of exposing the rifts and
cracks in traditional historical narratives, of giving voice to the silenced, and
by doing so, provide a much more nuanced, and complete understanding of
history.

1.3 Subaltern historiography

This book is about slaves in texts and contexts of the earliest Christ-groups.
The methodological underpinning of this project is that of Subaltern studies.
Subaltern studies has a proclivity for difference; it seeks to disrupt and chal-
lenge the binary of margins and center. The periphery is not understood as a
site of absence. Subalternity is linked to the notion of marginality in its plural
and complex forms. The margins can also be a space for critical reflection,
articulation, and clarification. It does not imply a perennial longing to dis-
place those at the center and take their place; that would mean to re-inscribe
a center of power with its corollaries of exploitation, brutality, and destruc-
tion. Rather, the poles of “margin” and “center” are complex, flexible, and
always negotiated in the multiplicity of contexts of analysis.

The “center” has the power to establish what it views as normative, deter-
mining what counts as valuable or worthy of consideration, and what it con-
siders insignificant (certain narratives, discourses, histories, and particular
social and ethnic groups). The subaltern subject is designated “Other” and
placed in a subordinate position in relation to the determining authority of
“the center.” Antonio Gramsci popularized the term “subaltern” in the 1920s
and 1930s in his writings on theories of class struggles. The term has been
adopted and frequently used in India by several Marxist intellectuals who
published a number of critical studies related to class, caste, age, and gender
between 1982 and 1996. Ranajit Guha, the editor of the first volume and the
driving intellectual force behind the *Subaltern Studies* group, presents the term and the spectrum of the project: “The word ‘subaltern’ … stands for the meaning as given in the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, that is, ‘of inferior rank.’ It will be used … as a name for the general attitude of subordination in South Asian society whether this is expressed in terms of class, caste, age, gender and office or in any other way.” Of course, one should not think that the original project of the Subaltern Studies group in India has not been altered, redefined, and reinvented by scholars working from other communities, cultural and intellectual contexts, and by interpreters and interlocutors appending their own critical thoughts around social histories external to the original group. The founders of the *Subaltern Studies* group developed their ideas at a critical time of history, while being influenced by a wealth of knowledge and research on history from below pertaining to peasant insurgency in colonial India. Subaltern studies then became intertwined with efforts to reimagine India’s history in the 1980s and 1990s by rejecting official nationalism because of its alliance with colonial ideologies and practices. This was necessary for critical voices and thinkers to cultivate transnational consciousness, conversations, and alliances. Current critical analyses inspired by Subaltern studies examines the variegated and fragmented experiences of power, domination, oppression, violence, displacement, and marginalization of many in the post-modern and post-colonial world, alongside the vectors of gender, class, race and ethnicity. Subaltern studies scholars engage in close critical readings of colonial texts and master narratives. They probe oral histories and use local ethnographic techniques to de-center grand master narratives and overarching subjects to reveal distinct (local) histories and cultures of subaltern groups. In this sense, Subaltern Studies has become a post-colonial critique of modern, European, and Enlightenment epistemologies. (...) Subaltern Studies’ growing diversity of research now coheres like the new cultural history. Its search for hidden pasts evokes textual criticism, fragmentary testimonies, and lost moments, to restore the integrity of indigenous histories that appear naturally in non-linear, oral, symbolic, vernacular, and dramatic forms.

The practice of subaltern history, as suggested by Dipesh Chakrabarty, “would aim to take history, the code, to its limits in order to make its unworking visible.” Thus, the project I am undertaking is to study some fragmentary testimonies seriously, to note and search for the presence of the slaves, and to probe silences and lost moments in the slaves’ pasts that are encrypted in some specific texts, in order to add nuance to the social histories of earliest Christ-groups.

I am not interested in the grand narratives or the grand players of history. The task for a (postcolonial) historian of antiquity interested in the voice and
thought of the “subaltern” is to search for the buried presences, fears, as well as the historical alternatives, and allow the sighs and sufferings of the non-elite to disturb the presented and sanctioned archives, to create a more nuanced understanding of the past. This is in no way a claim to offer a definitive interpretation of a particular narrative, or to “own” a text. The particular interest in the voice and thought of the “Other” does not mean trying to represent or speak for the subaltern either. No one can speak for the slaves in antiquity. This particular focus means reading differently by looking at the texts “from below” with the aim to uncover other potential significance. This kind of reading is a way to push the reader to question the moment of fact creation, or the making of sources, for particular ideological and theological purposes. In this sense, the practice of subaltern critical historiography, with its potentials to unearth subaltern pasts, allows not only the disciplines of history, but also of Religious Studies, Biblical Studies, or Classics, “to be what it is and yet at the same time help to show what its limits are.”

My task is to uncover small tales constructed around slaves, or better, to consider how particular narratives could be understood differently if the reader pays attention to enslaved persons in their characterizations in the texts.

Slaves are, for the most part, silent or silenced in the narratives. One may wish there were more precise ways to get at their voices, desires, activities, and personal thoughts in the texts we investigate. The alternative reading of probing silence and of trying to understand unspoken utterances is not an easy task. Reading against the grain requires alertness to the gaps in the texts. Making silence speak requires much patience and attentiveness to minute details by proceeding tentatively and noticing passing or dismissive comments. It also requires a commitment on the part of the historian to actually see the presence of marginalized and enslaved peoples that are rendered invisible, and hear their voices that are made mute in the texts, around the texts, and outside of the texts. The task, then, is to consider alternative historical routes, brief paths, obscure terrains, and muddy detours, which can lead to fruitful explanations, fresh and creative possibilities, and a way forward in historical and narratival analysis, leading to new understanding of specific social realities.

Historians must analyze the presence of particular causes, many times indirectly, in order to arrive at a satisfactory or plausible explanation for a particular historical fact. In the case of the present research on slaves in texts and overall contexts of the earliest Christ-groups, the historian needs to review the data carefully. As historian, qua historian, one cannot invoke or ascribe any historical values to God, the gods, or the supernatural in the interpretation, analysis, and description of historical events, issues, phenomena, or social realities and social artifacts. This, however, does not imply that God/the gods/the supernatural do not play a role in the belief system(s) of the historical agents, actors, literary figures and subjects under study. God/the gods/the supernatural realm are thus presented as features resulting from ideological, theological, mythological claims and human imagination engaged
in varied social circumstances, which the historian must attempt to understand, explain and deconstruct. While the ancients may have been talking about otherworldly activities, they impressed their ideas on the social realities of this world. Likewise, while the ancient (male) elites may have been philosophizing about the virtues of wisdom, they did so within particular political, cultural, and social contexts that allowed them to enjoy the leisure of metaphysical discussions and speculations. Slaves existed in a liminal category of human/thing/object that allowed particular free citizens of antiquity to live a life of material and intellectual pleasures. What one can do is to try to maneuver through the discourse, historical evidence, silences, gaps, and belief system(s) of those in the past, in order to probe how they make the articulation of certain historical conclusions and happenings possible. What I mean is this: the earliest Christ-groups would have presented a different historical outlook if slaves were treated not simply as mere bodies to be exploited for theological, political, and social purposes, but were instead acknowledged and treated as full members of the variegated Christ-communities.

The contributions of many academic discourses can be divided into two categories: correctives and concepts. Under the category of correctives are disquisitions that seek to show that something has been ignored in a given field. For example, a feminist corrective would demonstrate that women have been ignored in a given context, and the postcolonialist corrective would argue for placing colonial and neo-colonial projects at the center of a given debate and criticism. In the second category, the conceptual contributions, the true mark of a good conceptual contribution is that it manages to transcend the original context of debate and can be exported elsewhere. Subaltern studies would be an example of a conceptual contribution, which has transcended the original context of postcolonial India. The two—correctives and concepts—are not necessarily mutually exclusive, but overall it is much easier to dismiss correctives than to ignore strong conceptual contributions. What is more important is what the reading of certain texts through particular prisms does to enrich the experience of reading such texts, or their potential for fruitfulness. The conceptual contribution of this book is evident in how it shows the nuance in interpretation a reader gains in (re)reading some texts with a particular concern to notice slaves as characters in them. In other words, what I am arguing for in the present monograph is this: the reading of the pseudepigraphic materials and some early Christian writings is enhanced by paying close attention to slaves as characters in them. The focus is not on discourse about slavery in antiquity, as a general and interesting topic of research—which, recognizably, is an important line of historical enquiry. The emphasis, rather, is on slaves as characters in the texts and how that affects the authors’ creation of meaning. The vexing questions are as follows: How is it possible to write histories about slaves who have not left any sources of their own? What can we know about those lost to history? The task of the historian is much more than that of retrieving data. The historian also is a crafter of
narratives. How, then, can one “devise strategies of multivocal histories in which we hear subaltern voices”? Research strategies and imaginative/creative historical possibilities are ways the historian may navigate and propose different ways of conceptualizing the past. History is as much construction as it is interpretation. The “subaltern past” is possible to imagine and to re-create, in some ways, if the historian is curious enough to pay close attention to the silenced narratives and figures of the past. An explicit aim of subaltern studies is “to make the subaltern the sovereign subject of history, to listen to their voices, to take their experiences and thought (and not just their material circumstances) seriously.” In the case of considering ancient enslaved peoples seriously, it is not about psychologizing them; rather, it is about highlighting their few words, and their imposed silences. It is about considering seriously how they have been ostracized, brutalized, and traumatized. Paying attention to “words and things that construct history” is important if one wants to develop ways of reading and understanding history “from below.” As Page duBois states, “The distorted, beaten, whipped, tortured, tattooed, often comic body of the slave insists on its presence, and disturbs the tranquility of positivist historicism, of a serene and confident scholarly posture toward antiquity. The slave cannot be seen; the slave must be seen.” In this sense, the scholar cannot simply look at the data and dispassionately resign themselves to enjoy the texts without considering the discursive mechanisms by which slaves were made to be invisible in the accounts. The slave must be seen! In insisting that the slave must be seen and heard, the historian reflects on texts and their contexts, while upsetting some interpretations and conclusions of those who specialize in these texts and continue to impose silence as a mechanism of power. The texts do not come to us unmediated. The interpretation of texts is not value-neutral. Page duBois is acerbic in her analysis, and she is worth quoting at length:

Scholarship on slavery, with its own rhetoric, implicated in the politics of its own day, can obscure this never-ending process, inevitable in any society marked by dramatic differences in the status of human beings. Scholarship can ignore slavery entirely. Or it can describe it as a static object in the past, relying on ancient texts, inscriptions, acts, and utterances as evidence of reality without considering the ways in which every utterance or representation is an act, a taking of a position in an ongoing struggle to maintain authority and mastery on the part of ancient slaveholders.

The perspective of the past that is of interest to me in this project is that of a social historian. As a cultural studies critic, the social historian can critically analyze and try to make sense of the “religious/supernatural” data (i.e., the theological language of the texts and artifacts under study) and formulate plausible historical explanations through the mundane, human sides of the
narratives, without resorting to any ahistorical explanatory mechanisms. In this sense, I endeavour to highlight and understand slaves in texts and their contexts (historical, theological, and narratival) for the sake of proposing an alternative form of historical perspective, which is that of a different or alternative historiography. This is in line with the methodological standpoint of subaltern critical engagement: “Subaltern studies can be viewed as a form of postcolonial historiography which interrogates the centre from the margin using deconstructive and poststructuralist practices. It focuses attention on the function of the centre as a site of the operation of power and thus confers insight on the marginalized or subaltern by exposing the oppressive nature of this discourse.”

In other words, subaltern historians are sensitive to the nuance of power. They consequently develop ways to recognize the voice, silences, sighs and insights of the marginalized subjects of history.

What Subaltern studies offer me is a way to place the subaltern subject (the enslaved figure) at the center of my analysis. In other words, the interpretative bias that guides my analysis is that of highlighting the periphery over the center. Thus, the slave is not viewed as or relegated to a muted absence outside the system of normality in relation to an invariable presence constructed as a master narrative. Instead, the slave is highlighted as an important factor in offering new possibilities for reading and (re)interpreting antiquity. My contention is that it matters to pay attention to silence and the processes of silencing of slaves in texts and contexts relative to the rise of the earliest Christ-groups. A critical social history that pursues historical questions differently demands that. In this sense, I follow Keith Bradley in his gesture of solidarity with the silenced slaves of antiquity: “We will never know exactly, to be sure, what they thought, or felt; but to try to find out is, I believe, something that matters.”

My intention in critically examining slaves in these various texts is to re-evaluate, reimagine, and deconstruct certain normative ways of reading and interpreting the past in order to recover multiple meanings, and perceive anew the place, the presence made absence, and the voice—persistent, feeble, and muted—of the slaves. I revisit some familiar terrains, and some less familiar sources. Although I have used a variety of secondary sources to inform my analysis and interpretations, I consider this whole project as an exercise in re-reading and re-engaging the primary texts. I should emphasize that this book is not a thorough treatment of all slaves in the Pseudepigrapha and in the early Christian writings. Although I have discussed a fair number of them in this book, I realize the task of being exhaustive is near impossible. In fact, comprehensiveness is not the goal of this study, as I do not want my project to be lost in some kind of unreadable catalog.

I am not interested in major figures or the “great men,” as discursively constructed in the narratives. This is the great irony of history: that marginal social and religious movement(s) that emerged mostly from those occupying low levels of the economic and social strata of the Mediterranean world in the first century (e.g., peasants, poor urbanites, culturally displaced migrants,
 Freedpersons, slaves, and various subordinated peoples), would gradually become the creative platforms on which some intellectuals and theologians developed their socio-rhetorics and social ideologies. This development happened many times to the detriment of the various groups that were engaged in reflexive social experiments.

My interests are in the slaves, many of them women, most of them nameless. They may provide us with an alternative historiography or a new understanding of some early Jewish and some early Christian texts. Paying serious attention to the slaves in these texts may help us find a way to question, and even destabilize some of the ways major characters in these texts (such as Joseph, Job, Jesus, Paul, or Peter) have been textually negotiated and mediated, rhetorically constructed, theologically interested, elevated, habilitated/rehabilitated, and remembered for particular purposes of social constructions and cultural maintenance. In this project, I am involved not only in counter reading and reading between the lines, but also in counter history. My historical interest is not in essentializing the multiple identities of a group, because the slaves in antiquity were far from uniform, especially considering the fact that this group included both the abject poor and the relatively rich and influential slave manager. Rather, the aim of this research is to focus specifically on a number of enslaved persons in a number of texts in order to actualize them and make them the subject of historical enquiry and analysis.

1.4 Summary and conclusion

1 This book pays close attention to slaves in the so-called Pseudepigrapha and in some early Christian texts.

2 This monograph does not consider any bifurcation between canonical texts and non-canonical texts, or between Jewish and Christian texts. This distinction is historically misplaced. Various texts pertaining to early Judaisms and early Christianities are used and are of interest.

3 The main argument of this book is that the authors of the texts studied use slaves as a way to advance their own socio-rhetoric and establish their own hierarchical positions.

4 This book is about description as well as evaluation. Slaves are described in their slave-like conditions, but the social, ideological, and rhetorical constructions of the slaves in the texts are also evaluated in order to show the arguments of the texts.

5 There is a specific focus on characterization in this book. Slaves are studied as characters (usually minor and not so well-known characters) that help move the narratives forward.

6 A major method that guides this study is that of “thinking with slaves” and of attempting to understand the history of some early Christ-groups differently.
Paying attention to the enslaved persons in antiquity implies probing the ideological contexts that manufacture them as silenced voices and as absence, although they were ubiquitously present.

Paying attention to slaves means highlighting their presence, voices, echoes, and the mechanisms of their silencing in the texts.

Paying attention to slaves as characters in the narratives means reading the texts differently, and against the grain.

Major methodological difficulties make it difficult for the historian of antiquity to really see the slaves in the texts. This is why the use of Subaltern studies is important in order to probe history from below.

Trouillot’s “four crucial moments” to analyze the process of historical production allow us to realize and understand the silences, both in sources/texts and in our own scholarship. Silence is also about making invisible (veiling, hiding). This book may be a way to help, or to challenge us to question how we have not been paying more attention to silences in our own scholarship.

The method of this book is to examine the texts by allowing slaves as textualized characters to help us in our analysis and investigations. This means reading the texts with the clear intention of focusing on enslaved persons, not only as they are depicted within particular ideological discourses, but also on how they may let us reimagine these texts.

The interest is in slaves and not in the usual or common major historical and literary/ideological figures of the past.

This study is about refiguring, redescribing, and reconstructing.

The ideological aim of this book is to destabilize the meta-narrative of early Christian historiography. This study seeks to reimagine early Christian history by taking slaves in this history production seriously.

As I have stated, my research is not without its biases. I am not pretending to be engaging in a scholarship that is dispassionate and indifferent to the subject of slavery, presented in a detached neutral manner. This statement does not imply a lack of intellectual responsibility, integrity, academic rigor, critical distance, and honesty in my scholarship, however. It means that I strive to advance knowledge not as a positivist historian with pretension to impartiality and utmost objectivity, but as one situated in specific social and political positions and sympathizing with particular characters in my historical inquiry. I side with the enslaved peoples of antiquity and of today.

The challenge of this book is to realize how slaves as characters in the pseudepigraphic literature and in some early Christian texts have been used and abused to fit certain ideological and social modes. That is, how they have been silenced and how they have been made invisible through instruments of power that often assumed the naturalness of a representation of humans as chattels. Therefore, the ultimate challenge is to expose the roots of this ideology that permeated the texts under study and to consider alternative ways of understanding history.
Notes

1 See Martin Hall, “Ambiguity and contradiction in the archaeology of slavery,” in Archaeological Dialogues 15.2 (2008): 128–130, here 129. Here is the full quote: “We can use material culture, texts and other kinds of evidence to look for recurrent patterns across contexts that help us see the underlying dynamics of power at work (…) The point of comparison is rather to reach beneath the immediate and specific to look for the interests at play beneath the surface—the dynamics of labour relations, gender, the extraction of surplus benefit, status and claims to benefits.”

2 Peter Hunt showed in his study of Greek slavery that an absence of the slave presence in historical sources can be revealing, and Roberta Stewart has done something similar for Roman slavery with her study of Plautus’ comedies. See P. Hunt, Slaves, Warfare, and Ideology in the Greek Historians (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); R. Stewart, Plautus and Roman Slavery (Malden, MA; Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012). See also Richard Alston, Edith Hall, Laura Profitt, eds., Reading Ancient Slavery (London/New York: Bristol Classical Press, 2011). The essays in this fascinating volume try to uncover slave voices and agency from ancient literature and art. These authors attempt to explore how Greek and Roman texts may in fact help the attentive historian to listen and to probe the “voice” of the slave, in spite of the strategies of the ancient authors to occult the experience of the enslaved persons and to naturalize slavery in the texts. One may also refer to the work of Sandra R. Josher and Lauren Hackworth Petersen, The Material Life of Roman Slaves (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010). These authors seek to make slaves visible by working through the dominant discourse of Roman slave owners. Their strategies for doing this detective endeavour is developed as follows. First, by acknowledging that “although Roman slaveholders often criticized the behavior of their slaves, they still provide testimony to the actions themselves, even where the slave’s cause or end is difficult to see.” Second, by always questioning the master’s rationale of the slave’s behaviour: “Roman slaveholders judged their slaves’ actions in terms of their own interests, and hence the naming of those actions stakes claims about the slave’s motives and character that cannot dispassionately denote the action.” Third, by paying attention to silences: “We must listen for silences and look for what seem to be moments of slave owners’ blindness: not only do they misname or misjudge, they simply cannot see what happens for and to the slave.” Ibid., 7, 8.

3 The proposed research is an important one for scholars working in the cross section of early Judaism(s) and “Christian” origins, since these texts (the pseudepigraphic materials and the early Christian writings) share a common background for different ethical understandings.


5 I put these in scare quotes because I am uncomfortable with both terms, in spite of the fact they are retained in the title of this monograph. The term “Christian”—which I use thereafter without the quotation marks—is, for the earliest moments of the Jesus movement(s), historically problematic. The nomenclature “origins” is linked to the dynamic process of socio-rhetorics and social formation/myth-making of heterogeneous groups, which did not necessarily relate to one another or even to a particular historical figure. See A. J. Droge, “Cynics or Luddites? Excavating Q
In addition, combining these two terms seems to imply that historical development of what became known in a later period as Christianity can unproblematically refer back to a complex gestation period that would have given rise to the birth of that particular religious tradition. I am indebted in my thoughts to William E. Arnal in his insightful remarks worth quoting at length: “While both Mack and I are equally interested in offering a sketch or even explanation for developments in ancient Christian history, in my opinion, the linear and idealist character of the scenarios offered by Mack so far only serve to perpetuate, almost inevitably, the same old Lukan ‘story’ of the ‘rise of Christianity.’ Individual episodes may be reconfigured; characters and events may be evaluated slightly differently. But our ‘redescription,’ if we are not careful, may in the end become just that: a redescription of the essentially straight line of development—from Jesus the teacher (schools) to the Jerusalem apostles (the pillars) to the Hellenist and Gentile-positive Antioch-based mission (pre-Pauline Christ cults) to Paul and thence to the ends of the earth—initially described by Luke and redescribed ever since.” See Arnal, “Why Q Failed: From Ideological Project to Group Formation,” in Redescribing Christian Origins (eds., Ron Cameron and Merrill P. Miller; Atlanta: SBL Press, 2004), 86.

I work from the perspective that “Postcolonialism, with its fundamental sympathies for the subaltern, for the peasantry, for the poor, for outcasts of all kinds, eschews the high culture of the elite and espouses subaltern cultures and knowledge which have historically been considered to be of little value but which it regards as rich repositories of culture and counter-knowledge.” See Robert J. C. Young, Postcolonialism: A Very Short Introduction (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 114. Disability Studies, which is a fast-growing subfield of Biblical Studies, is within the broader umbrella of studying the marginalized and the subaltern. See for example Hector Avalos et al., eds., This Abled Body: Rethinking Disabilities in Biblical Studies (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007). However, I have not made use of Disability Studies in my analysis because of my lack of knowledge in this particular area of analysis.


In his celebrated study, Orlando Patterson states, “Although the slave might be socially dead, he remained nonetheless an element of society. So the problem arose: how was he to be incorporated? Religion explains how it is possible to relate to the dead who still live. It says little about how ordinary people should be related to the living who are dead.” See Patterson, Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study (London/Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), 45. Although I agree with Patterson in part, it is difficult, at least to me, to envisage the slaves as socially dead. In antiquity, many slaves were far from being socially dead, and many non-slaves were so poor and living in abject conditions, with no social connections, that they could be considered as socially dead. Thus, social death is no preserve of the slaves. Sara Forsdyke, for example, argues that although slaves were excluded from the formal political sphere in ancient Greece, they participated in the process through various relations and by their participation in forms of popular culture. See S. Forsdyke, Slaves Tell Tales and other Episodes in the Politics of Popular Culture in Ancient Greece (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2012). A recent book that engages with Patterson’s classic is On Human Bondage: After Slavery and Social Death (eds., Walter Scheidel and J. Bodel; Malden, MA, Oxford and Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2017).


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14 The methodological aspect of exploring history “from below” has been undertaken in Biblical Studies. See Christian Origins. Vol. 1 of A People’s History of Christianity
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15 I will first explore Trouillot’s study about the process of silencing some pasts in historical enquiry, and then I will show how his approach is valuable to my own research endeavour.

16 For Trouillot, “History is the fruit of power, but power itself is never so transparent that its analysis becomes superfluous. The ultimate mark of power may be its invisibility; the ultimate challenge, the exposition of its roots.” Michel-Rolph Trouillot, Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History (Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, 1995), Preface, xxi. Trouillot’s book is an invitation to examine critically the varieties of silences in the historical records with the view to expose and challenge the silences of history. I thank my good friend Claudy Delné for suggesting this book to me. Trouillot’s work follows and expands on the critical work of the Subaltern Studies group (see below for more on the Subaltern Studies research project). His contributions show how he has always been interested to study groups that are usually ignored or at the margins of scholarly enquiry. See for example his Peasants and Capital: Dominica in the World Economy (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), and Global Transformations: Anthropology and the Modern World (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

17 Silencing the Past (Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, 1995), 23.
18 Ibid.
19 Ibid., 26. Emphasis original.
21 See Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc J. D. Wacquant, An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology (Chicago: The University Press, 1992). Bourdieu’s “reflexive” scholarship, or “epistemic reflexivity,” is an attempt to elucidate the “conditions of knowledge” (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 36–46). In this way, the conditions of knowledge are explored by interrogating data shown as evidence of certain theories, and by exploring the categories of thought, methods, and instruments of analysis that enter into practice in the analysis of a given problem. The researcher is necessarily engaged in a type of reflexive mode by moving between theory and evidence, by reflecting on his/her social positioning in doing certain work, and by exploring critically and reflexively what one’s assumptions are in exploring (and in not exploring) certain scholarly issues. For Bourdieu and Wacquant, “The most intimate truth of what we are, the most unthinkable unthoughts (l’impensé le plus impensable), is also inscribed in the objectivity and in the history of the social positions that we have held in the past and that we presently occupy. … The
history of sociology, understood as an exploration of the scientific unconscious of the sociologist through the explication of the genesis of problems, categories of thought, and instruments of analysis, constitutes an absolute prerequisite for scientific practice” (Ibid., 213f; emphasis original).

22 Silencing the Past, 27.
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24 Inspired by Trouillot’s Silencing the Past, Claudy Delné wrote his doctoral dissertation on how the Haitian Revolution has been occulted and trivialized in Western imagination through fictional narratives of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. See Delné, La Révolution haïtienne dans l’imaginaire occidental: Occultation, banalisation, trivialisation (Port-au-Prince: Éditions de l’Université d’État d’Haiti, 2017).
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26 Ibid., 103. Toussaint Louverture, the great military strategist of the Haitian Revolution, read Epictetus, the Stoic philosopher who had himself been a slave in Greece. He also read Abbé Raynal’s Histoire philosophique et politique des établissements et du commerce des Européens dans les deux Indes (Amsterdam, 1770). Abbé Raynal wrote about the practice of slavery in the “New World” and predicted the coming of a savior (a “Black Spartacus”) among the slaves who would be a visionary leader to help the slaves put an end to slavery. Toussaint thought himself to be the savior announced. Toussaint also read Caesar’s Commentaries, Herodotus, Des Claïson’s History of Alexander and Caesar. See Madison Smart Bell, Toussaint Louverture: A Biography (New York: Pantheon Books, 2007), 61. See also the now classic book by C. L. R. James, The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L’Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution, 2nd ed. revised (New York: Vintage Books, 1989).
27 See Susan Buck-Morss, “Hegel and Haiti,” Critical Inquiry 26.4 (2000): 821–865. In this article the author demonstrates clearly and convincingly how some of the leading European thinkers of the late eighteenth to early nineteenth centuries, who advocated for freedom as a fundamental human right, were seemingly incapable of including other non-European Others in their consideration. The African slaves in the French colony of Saint Domingue who fought successfully for their own freedom against the tyranny and the exploitation of the French were ignored in the historiographical analysis of these thinkers.
INTRODUCTION


29 I am inspired in this sentence by Russell T. McCutcheon when he states, “The point I am trying to make throughout these chapters is exceedingly simple—the study of religion can be rethought as the study of an ordinary aspect of social, historical existence.” McCutcheon, Critics, Not Caretakers: Redescribing The Public Study of Religion (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), Preface, xii. McCutcheon develops this thought further: “It is only when we start out with the presumption that religious behaviors are ordinary social behaviors—and not extraordinary private experiences—that we will come to understand them in all their subtle yet impressive complexity.” Ibid., 14–15. It is with this caveat that I engage in my work here.


31 Ibid., 13.


33 For examples of what is possible and what is necessary to do in this way, one may refer to the excellent and tightly argued volume of Chris L. de Wet, Preaching Bondage. See also the section on slaves in Early Christian Families in Context: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue (eds., David L. Balch and Carolyn Osiek; Grand Rapids, Mich./Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), 207–274.


39 Ibid., 20.


41 On the question of whether the subaltern can speak, or transcend speech without ceasing to be subaltern, see Gayatri C. Spivak’s question about whether the

Furthermore, Nial McKeown cautions us that “we must be careful not to ‘rescue’ the voice of the ancient slave by making it a distorted version of our own.” See Nial McKeown, *The Invention of Ancient Slavery?* (London: Duckworth, 2007), 163.

In the context of explaining the concept of micro history, Edward Muir and Guido Ruggiero remind us that “historical knowledge is always to some degree conjectural because historians must work like medical practitioners who cannot actually see most diseases but must diagnose their presence indirectly on the basis of telltale symptoms or signs.” See *Microhistory & the Lost Peoples of Europe* (eds. Edward Muir and Guido Ruggiero; trans. Eren Branch; Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), Introduction, xvii. Notwithstanding the problematical image the presence of a disease in a sick body might invoke, the point is well taken.

I am here paraphrasing what Chakrabarty puts in a more elegant way: “Historians will grant the supernatural a place in somebody’s belief system or ritual practices, but to ascribe it any real agency in historical events will go against the rules of evidence that gives historical discourse procedures for settling disputes about the past.” Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 104. See also Rudolf Bultmann whose statement on the historical method is worth quoting at length: “The historical method includes the presupposition that history is a unity in the sense of a closed continuum of effects in which individual events are connected by the succession of cause and effect. This does not mean that the process of history is determined by the causal law and that there are no free decisions of men whose actions determine the course of historical happenings (…) All decisions and all deeds have their causes and consequences; and the historical method presupposes that it is possible in principle to exhibit these and their connection and thus to understand the whole historical process as a closed unity. This closedness means that the continuum of historical happenings cannot be rent by the interference of supernatural, transcendent powers and that therefore there is no ‘miracle’ in this sense of the word. Such a miracle would be an event whose cause did not lie within history.” See Bultmann, “Hermeneutics and Theology,” in *The Hermeneutics Reader* (ed. Kurt Mueller-Vollmer; Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1986), 244.

In other words, philosophical and religious discourses are expressions of competing voices and various social perspectives. See *Early Christian and Jewish Narrative: The Role of Religion in Shaping Narrative Forms* (eds., Ilaria Ramelli and Judith Perkins; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015; WUNT: Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament I, 348).

In this regard, Page duBois states, “There are in the ancient world some human beings without status, without standing, some bodies that are things, that bend gradually into the landscape of animals and of inanimate objects, that have property values without consciousness, without subjectivity, or whose subjectivity and

48 R. Alston is worth quoting at length: “The slave can be re-presented because the slave is largely absent from our ancient discourses, sublimated to the master. If the slave is not present in the text, then the slave exists, has ontological status, outside the epistemes of conventional discourse. The slave is the unrepresentable, and the very existence of that which is unrepresentable is a threat to the established episteme. But the slave is also a real human, with a physical and emotional existence. The boundaries of the epistemic social human then are so drawn in conventional discourse that the real humans exist in opposition to or outside that framework. These humans may be slaves, but the very fact that slaves are not within the discourse creates a fundamental tension: the slave is always largely and potentially not a slave. Furthermore, the free is always potentially a slave. The result of this is that the structures of domination that establish the social formation of slavery are, then, remarkably fragile. Being a slave is not an ontological state (since that would be a state of not being), but a circumstantial state, and this does not change from Homer through to the second century CE.” Alston, “Introduction: Rereading Ancient Slavery,” in *Reading Ancient Slavery*, 25–26.

49 I take this quote from D. Chakrabarty when he states, “Here is a case of what I have called subaltern pasts, pasts that cannot ever enter academic history as belonging to the historian’s own position. These days one can devise strategies of multivocal histories in which we hear subaltern voices more clearly than we did in the early phase of *Subaltern Studies*. One may even refrain from assimilating these different voices to any one voice and deliberately leave loose ends in one’s narrative…” *Provincializing Europe*, 105.

50 Ibid., 102.


53 Ibid., 30.


55 This joins the following quote: “Postcolonial theorists such as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and the Subaltern Studies group led by Ranajit Guha examine this process of ‘othering’ by examining the way in which the signifying system of the centre, i.e. coloniser discourse, renders the experience of the subaltern, or colonial subject, as irrelevant as it is outside the system of normality and convention. Thus the colonial subject is ‘muted’ owing to its being constructed within a disabling master discourse.” Ibid. See Spivak’s critique of the notion of subaltern, as advanced by Guha, in her article, “Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography,” in *Subaltern Studies IV: Writings on South Asian History and Society* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1985), 330–363.


57 More on this line of reflection later in the Conclusion.
NOTES

Chapter 1

1 See Martin Hall, “Ambiguity and contradiction in the archaeology of slavery,” in *Archaeological Dialogues* 15.2 (2008): 128–130, here 129. Here is the full quote: “We can use material culture, texts and other kinds of evidence to look for recurrent patterns across contexts that help us see the underlying dynamics of power at work (...) The point of comparison is rather to reach beneath the immediate and specific to look for the interests at play beneath the surface—the dynamics of labour relations, gender, the extraction of surplus benefit, status and claims to benefits.”

2 Peter Hunt showed in his study of Greek slavery that an absence of the slave presence in historical sources can be revealing, and Roberta Stewart has done something similar for Roman slavery with her study of Plautus’ comedies. See P. Hunt, *Slaves, Warfare, and Ideology in the Greek Historians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); R. Stewart, *Plautus and Roman Slavery* (Malden, MA; Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012). See also Richard Alston, Edith Hall, Laura Proffitt, eds., *Reading Ancient Slavery* (London/New York: Bristol Classical Press, 2011). The essays in this fascinating volume try to uncover slave voices and agency from ancient literature and art. These authors attempt to explore how Greek and Roman texts may in fact help the attentive historian to listen and to probe the “voice” of the slave, in spite of the strategies of the ancient authors to occult the experience of the enslaved persons and to naturalize slavery in the texts. One may also refer to the work of Sandra R. Joshel and Lauren Hackworth Petersen, *The Material Life of Roman Slaves* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010). These authors seek to make slaves visible by working through the dominant discourse of Roman slave owners. Their strategies for doing this detective endeavour is developed as follows. First, by acknowledging that “although Roman slaveholders often criticized the behavior of their slaves, they still provide testimony to the actions themselves, even where the slave’s cause or end is difficult to see.” Second, by always questioning the master’s rationale of the slave’s behaviour: “Roman slaveholders judged their slaves’ actions in terms of their own interests, and hence the naming of those actions stakes claims about the slave’s motives and character that cannot dispassionately denote the action.” Third, by paying attention to silences: “We must listen for silences and look for what seem to be moments of slave owners’ blindness: not only do they misname or misjudge, they simply cannot see what happens for and to the slave.” Ibid., 7, 8.

3 The proposed research is an important one for scholars working in the cross section of early Judaism(s) and “Christian” origins, since these texts (the
pseudepigraphic materials and the early Christian writings) share a common background for different ethical understandings.


5 I put these in scare quotes because I am uncomfortable with both terms, in spite of the fact they are retained in the title of this monograph. The term “Christian”—which I use thereafter without the quotation marks—is, for the earliest moments of the Jesus movement(s), historically problematic. The nomenclature “origins” is linked to the dynamic process of socio-rhetorics and social formation/myth-making of heterogeneous groups, which did not necessarily relate to one another or even to a particular historical figure. See A. J. Droge, “Cynics or Luddites? Excavating Q Studies,” Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses 37.2 (2008): 249–269. In addition, combining these two terms seems to imply that historical development of what became known in a later period as Christianity can unproblematically refer back to a complex gestation period that would have given rise to the birth of that particular religious tradition. I am indebted in my thoughts to William E. Arnal in his insightful remarks worth quoting at length: “While both Mack and I are equally interested in offering a sketch or even explanation for developments in ancient Christian history, in my opinion, the linear and idealist character of the scenarios offered by Mack so far only serve to perpetuate, almost inevitably, the same old Lukan ‘story’ of the ‘rise of Christianity.’ Individual episodes may be reconfigured; characters and events may be evaluated slightly differently. But our ‘redescription,’ if we are not careful, may in the end become just that: a redescription of the essentially straight line of development—from Jesus the teacher (schools) to the Jerusalem apostles (the pillars) to the Hellenist and Gentile-positive Antioch-based mission (pre-Pauline Christ cults) to Paul and thence to the ends of the earth—initially described by Luke and redescribed ever since.” See Arnal, “Why Q Failed: From Ideological Project to Group Formation,” in Redescribing Christian Origins (eds., Ron Cameron and Merrill P. Miller; Atlanta: SBL Press, 2004), 86.

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19 Ibid., 26. Emphasis original.

20 As Edward Carr states it so clearly, “The facts of history do not come to us ‘pure,’ since they do not and cannot exist in a pure form: they are always refracted

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35 Michel Foucault’s methodology of critiquing some traditional ways of thinking about politics and power, and his proposals for understanding the mechanisms and effects of power and knowledge differently, had also influenced some of the Subaltern Studies contributors (e.g., Partha Chatterjee and David Arnold). See especially Michel Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge & The Discourse on Language*, trans. Alan M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon, 1971); *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977* (ed. Colin Gordon; London:


39 Ibid., 20.


42 Furthermore, Nial McKeown cautions us that “we must be careful not to ‘rescue’ the voice of the ancient slave by making it a distorted version of our own.” See Nial McKeown, The Invention of Ancient Slavery? (London: Duckworth, 2007), 163.

43 Provincializing Europe, 112. In the context of explaining the concept of micro history, Edward Muir and Guido Ruggiero remind us that “historical knowledge is always to some degree conjectural because historians must work like medical practitioners who cannot actually see most diseases but must diagnose their presence indirectly on the basis of telltale symptoms or signs.” See Microhistory & the Lost Peoples of Europe (eds. Edward Muir and Guido Ruggiero; trans. Eren Branch; Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), Introduction, xvii. Notwithstanding the problematical image of the presence of a disease in a sick body might invoke, the point is well taken.


45 I am here paraphrasing what Chakrabarty puts in a more elegant way: “Historians will grant the supernatural a place in somebody’s belief system or ritual practices, but to ascribe it any real agency in historical events will go against the rules of evidence that gives historical discourse procedures for settling disputes about the past.” Chakrabarty, Provincializing Europe, 104. See also Rudolf Bultmann whose statement on the historical method is worth quoting at length: “The historical method includes the presupposition that history is a unity in the sense of a closed continuum of effects in which individual events are connected by the succession of cause and effect. This does not mean that the process of history is determined by the causal law and that there are no free decisions of men whose actions determine the course of historical happenings (...) All decisions and all deeds have their causes and consequences; and the historical method presupposes that it is possible
in principle to exhibit these and their connection and thus to understand the whole historical process as a closed unity. This closedness means that the continuum of historical happenings cannot be rent by the interference of supernatural, transcendent powers and that therefore there is no ‘miracle’ in this sense of the word. Such a miracle would be an event whose cause did not lie within history.” See Bultmann, “Hermeneutics and Theology,” in The Hermeneutics Reader (ed. Kurt Mueller-Vollmer; Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1986), 244.

In other words, philosophical and religious discourses are expressions of competing voices and various social perspectives. See Early Christian and Jewish Narrative: The Role of Religion in Shaping Narrative Forms (eds., Ilaria Ramelli and Judith Perkins; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015; WUNT: Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament I, 348).

In this regard, Page duBois states, “There are in the ancient world some human beings without status, without standing, some bodies that are things, that bend gradually into the landscape of animals and of inanimate objects, that have property values without consciousness, without subjectivity, or whose subjectivity and consciousness represent a threat to mastery.” See Page duBois, Slaves and Other Objects (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), 99.

R. Alston is worth quoting at length: “The slave can be re-presented because the slave is largely absent from our ancient discourses, sublimated to the master. If the slave is not present in the text, then the slave exists, has ontological status, outside the epistemes of conventional discourse. The slave is the unrepresentable, and the very existence of that which is unrepresentable is a threat to the established episteme. But the slave is also a real human, with a physical and emotional existence. The boundaries of the epistemic social human then are so drawn in conventional discourse that the real humans exist in opposition to or outside that framework. These humans may be slaves, but the very fact that slaves are not within the discourse creates a fundamental tension: the slave is always largely and potentially not a slave. Furthermore, the free is always potentially a slave. The result of this is that the structures of domination that establish the social formation of slavery are, then, remarkably fragile. Being a slave is not an ontological state (since that would be a state of not being), but a circumstantial state, and this does not change from Homer through to the second century CE.” Alston, “Introduction: Rereading Ancient Slavery,” in Reading Ancient Slavery, 25–26.

I take this quote from D. Chakrabarty when he states, “Here is a case of what I have called subaltern pasts, pasts that cannot ever enter academic history as belonging to the historian’s own position. These days one can devise strategies of multivocal histories in which we hear subaltern voices more clearly than we did in the early phase of Subaltern Studies. One may even refrain from assimilating these different voices to any one voice and deliberately leave loose ends in one’s narrative …” Provincializing Europe, 105.

Ibid., 102.


Page duBois, Slaves and Other Objects, 31.

Ibid., 30.


This joins the following quote: “Postcolonial theorists such as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and the Subaltern Studies group led by Ranajit Guha examine this process of ‘othering’ by examining the way in which the signifying system of the centre, i.e. colonialist discourse, renders the experience of the subaltern, or colonial
subject, as irrelevant as it is outside the system of normality and convention. Thus the colonial subject is ‘muted’ owing to its being constructed within a disabling master discourse.” Ibid. See Spivak’s critique of the notion of subaltern, as advanced by Guha, in her article, “Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography,” in *Subaltern Studies IV: Writings on South Asian History and Society* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1985), 330–363.


57 More on this line of reflection later in the Conclusion.

Chapter 2


2 In some of the texts, there is very little to be found regarding slaves. I still proceed to pay attention to the incidental mention of slaves as characters in them, although there may not be much to gain with respect to my object of enquiry. In other texts where there is much more material to profit from I present a more coherent narrative analysis regarding the function of slaves in these writings. I offer some common threads and differences in how slaves are presented as characters in these various texts. Regarding method and theory, although I do not engage in showing how subaltern studies can be applied specifically to particular narratives, I am
guided by the tenets of subaltern studies to probe history and narratives differently, alternatively, and “from below.”


7. See Karin B. Neutel, *A Cosmopolitan Ideal: Paul’s Declaration “Neither Jew Nor Greek, Neither Slave Nor Free, Nor Male and Female” in the Context of First Century Thought* (London: T&T Clark, 2015).

8. Book 3 is of Jewish origin. The majority of scholars agree that Jews in Egypt probably composed it. It is one of the earliest sibylline oracles (mid-second century B.C.E. for most of its part), and the longest. See Nickelsburg, 194; Docherty, 82; J. J. Collins, *OTP*, 354–356. For a thorough treatment of Book 3 and its social setting, see Rieuwerd Buitenwerf, *Book III of the Sibylline Oracles and its Social Setting: With an Introduction, Translation, and Commentary* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2003). Buitenwerf is one of the few scholars arguing for an Asia Minor provenance of this collection. I side with the majority opinion for an Egyptian source.


10. Rome’s fall and rise, but also harmony and friendship, are within the purview of the sibyl’s visions (361, 375).

11. In Greek mythology, Cronos (the son of Heaven and Earth—Uranus and Gaea) swallowed his own children as soon as they were born because his parents had warned him that he was destined to be overpowered by a child of his. Cronos, however, was not able to swallow one of his children because his wife (Rhea) hid the baby Zeus and gave the father a stone instead, wrapped in clothes in the shape of a baby. Zeus grew up and was able to overthrow his father, who had to disgorge his children (Hestia, Demeter, Hera and Hades). Cronos was subsequently exiled (according to one version of the myth), or he became a slave (based on another version). Cronos’ children battled continually with one another for supremacy. See Hesiod, *Theogony: Works and Days Testimonia* (ed. and trans. Glenn W. Most; Cambridge, Mass.: LCL, 2009), especially 39–55 (453–638). It is probably based on this myth that the sibyl here characterizes Cronos’ descendants as “bastards” and as “slaves.” Alexander and his descendants may be identified as such. See Sib.
3.390; 11.198, which refers to “a bastard of the son of Cronos,” who “will lay waste the cities of many articulate men”; and Sib. 11.216.

12 I hesitate to articulate a clear answer to the question, although it seems that the sibyl is engaging in a polemical discourse by castigating some tyrannical figures into the categories of savages, equating being a slave to being a savage.

13 The power of the imagination as a form of resistance against empire, as displayed in many early Jewish apocalyptic writings, is well captured by Anatha E. Portier-Young, *Apocalypse Against Empire: Theologies of Resistance in Early Judaism* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2011).

14 Sibyllines 4 and 5 are about the tumultuous political and social upheavals in and around Jerusalem between 70 and 132 C.E. Sib. Or. 4.115 refers to the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple by the Romans in 70 C.E. The theological cause of the destruction, in the sibyl’s view, is the people’s trust in folly and the abandonment of piety, which has as its corollaries all kinds of social unrests and crimes, committed even in front of the Temple. The fleeing king seems to be a reference to Nero. See also a similar reference to an analogous figure in 5.140–44: “He will flee from Babylon, a terrible and shameless prince whom all mortals and noble men despise” (144).


16 I use “habitus” in the sense Pierre Bourdieu uses it, although I am aware the notion is much more complex than I can do justice to here. Bourdieu defines the concept as a “system of structuring dispositions” that allows us to make sense of human bodies as “embodied history, internalized as a second nature and forgotten as history.” For Bourdieu, “The conditionings associated with a particular class of conditions existence produce habitus, systems of durable, transportable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them.” See Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* (trans. Richard Nice; Stanford, Ca.: Stanford University Press, 1990), 52, 86, 53. Throughout the narrative Joseph is presented as one who, *par excellence*, possesses self-control, which was a character trait believed to be possessed only by a free individual. It is possible that the narrative is using this ancient stock psychology to make the point that Joseph’s self-control (*σωφροσύνη*), and his overall attitudes in his dealings and interactions with others, were not slave-like, in the sense of not conforming to stereotypical stock psychology that attributed childlike and simple traits to enslaved persons. J. Albert Harrill is right when he states, “The stock figures are products of the literary artifice that ancient slave holders created by stereotyping their slaves. Ancient slave-holders imagined, or, rather, preferred to imagine in literature that their slaves behaved only within the limits of the bland moralistic polarities of “good” and “bad.” See J. Albert Harrill, “The Psychology of Slaves in the Gospel Parables: A Case Study in Social History,” *Biblische Zeitschrift* 55 (2011): 63–74.

17 The Egyptian woman is very present in the first section of the narrative (3.1–9.5). She torments Joseph continually to have sex with her but Joseph is depicted as the struggling, although altogether virtuous, hero who resists her temptations. The second section of the *Testament of Joseph* is about the issue of slavery related to Joseph (11.2–16.6). The two sections are not well connected or well organized, and one may conjecture with Hollander and De Jonge that “the author of the Testaments has incorporated the information given in this story in T.Jos. from a source which differed in many respects from that used in the first part of T.Jos.” See H. W.
Hollander and M. De Jonge, *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs: A Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 1985), 393; William Loader, *Philo, Josephus, and the Testaments on Sexuality: Attitudes towards Sexuality in the Writings of Philo and Josephus and in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 421–425. In the other testaments, Joseph is presented as the idealized, pious, kind, possessing self-control, and compassionate man the children of the patriarchs need to emulate (e.g., *T. Benj.* 3.1; *T. Sim.* 4.4–6; *T. Reu.* 4.8–10; *T. Zeb.* 8.4; *T. Jos.* 10.2).


A slave responded with his body; physical punishment was taken for granted for a slave. See Jennifer Glancy, *Corporal Knowledge: Early Christian Bodies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), especially chapter 3, “Embodying Slavery from Paul to Augustine.”

20 A freeborn is supposed to be free and attended by slaves, whereas a slave is supposed to be beaten, put in jail, or serve in his/her capacity as a mere body/a piece of property available to please the master.

21 I translate the text thus instead of adopting Kee’s translation “and my Lord caused them to be my servants.”

22 I engage in this brief reflection from the point of view of the moment of retrospective significance, as developed by Trouillot. I do that in order to tease out how the trope of slavery in such a narrative could play certain roles in the discourse production of some early Christ-groups in their processes of defining themselves vis-à-vis other groups.

23 One needs, however, as Rob Kugler has reminded us, to consider the text within its broader theological matrix and read it by being sensitive to the subtle influences and nuances the Hebrew Scriptures might have had on it. See Rob Kugler, “Writing Scripturally in the Testament of Job: Advancing Our Notions of Scripture and Authority in Judean Literature of the Early Roman Era,” in *Scriptural Authority in Early Judaism and Ancient Christianity* (eds., Isaac Kalimi, Tobias Nicklas and Geza G. Xeravits; Göttingen: Gruyter, 2013), 251–259.


26 I translate this by keeping the upper case in the name of God. All the other translations are taken from R. P. Spittler, “Testament of Job,” in *The OTP*, 829–868.

27 George W. E. Nickelsburg is reading too much theology in the text when he states, “The burnt loaf that Job offers Satan is symbolic of Job’s refusal henceforth to participate in the cult, of which the offering of bread seems to have been a part, and it may also imply Job’s burning of the temple.” See Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature between the Bible and the Mishnah*, 317.

28 Slaves in antiquity were judged as lacking the ability to behave of their own will; they were supposed to act according to the directives, or to mirror the desires, of their owners.

29 Stating that I do understand a major theme of the text to be Job’s contest against Satan. It is a theme that has its resolution in Satan declaring defeat in the face of Job’s endurance/perseverance (27.4). Job declares to his children that he has exhibited perseverance in everything (1.5: ἐν πάσῃ ὑπομονῇ γενόμενος). See Cees Haas, “Job’s Perseverance in the Testament of Job,” in *Studies on the Testament of*
Michael C. Legaspi tries to capture the image of Sitis in his “Job’s Wives in the Testament of Job: A note on the synthesis of Two Traditions,” JBL 127.1 (2008): 71–79. However, his presentation of the heroine is too scant; it needed to be developed to capture some of the nuance her character embodies. Legaspi recognizes that Sitis “begged and labored as a slave for many years in order to provide bread for Job and herself” (76), and that “Sitis grew exhausted, sold her hair to Satan in exchange for bread,” but it is too simplistic on Legaspi’s part to assume it is for being “misled by Satan she told Job to give up his struggle” (77). One can observe in the text how she despairs over her husband’s misery and how she loves him dearly by toiling to give him bread to eat daily. It is being lured into Job’s rhetoric in the narrative for a reader to conclude that it is Satan who has delivered the following words to her: “Speak a word against the Lord and die. Then I too shall be freed from weariness that issues from the pain of your body” (25.10). Peter W. van der Horst captures Sitis’ graciousness well in the following excerpt: “With never-failing loyalty and sincere love she exerts herself to the utmost on behalf of her husband. She undergoes the greatest possible humiliation, i.e. having her head shorn, rather than letting him go hungry. Also her great care to have the bones of her children buried is a testimony that she lives up to the standards of Israel’s piety. It is, therefore, not without reason that both men and animals burst into lament when this noble woman is found dead.” See Pieter W. van der Horst, “Images of Women in the Testament of Job,” in Studies on the Testament of Job, 99.

Ibid., 97.

It is not clear whether she committed suicide or not.

See Keith Bradley, “Animalizing the slave: The truth of fiction,” Journal of Roman Studies 90 (2000): 110–125. Aristotle associates slaves with animals in their physical work (Politics, 1254b: “And also the usefulness of slaves diverges little from that of animals; bodily service for the necessities of life is forthcoming from both, from slaves and from domestic animals alike”).

I take the wording “wretched of the earth” from the English translation of Frantz Fanon’s Les Damnés de la terre, The Wretched of the earth (New York: Grove Press, 1961).


On the historical problems related to this narrative, see Moses Hadas, Aristeas to Philocrates (Letter of Aristeas) (New York, for the Dropsie College of Hebrew and Cognate Learning, 1961).


The issue of translation plays a minor role in the narrative; it fades in the background as the narrative expands on how the king was interested in quizzing the translators in a series of symposia (187–300).

University Press, 1914), 531–606. For a discussion on Jewish slavery in antiquity see Catherine Hezser, *Jewish Slavery in Antiquity* (Oxford: OUP, 2005). In this monograph, Hezser analyzes the status of slaves within ancient Jewish society and the position of slaves within Jewish families and households.


44 See Wright, *Praise Israel*, 280.

45 See R. Charles, “Hybridity.”


52 In his 1989 edition/translation, James C. VanderKam rendered the expression “an abject slave” and commented, following R. H. Charles, that the formulation in the Ethiopic text seemed more in line with the reading reflected in LXX Old Latin Eth Genesis and the targums: they may presuppose ‘oved ‘eved (or ‘eved ‘oved). See VanderKam, *The Book of Jubilees: A Critical Text*, 2 vols. CSCO 510–511 (Leuven: Peeters, 1989), vol. 2, note 45. One could also regard the reading as an interpretation of a Hebrew idiom that is meant to emphasize the servile status Canaan would occupy. One may certainly doubt *Jubilees* has made a change to the text and see that what the translators are trying to do is to bring out the meaning of the idiom. Incidentally, on the trope of slavery in *Jubilees*, one may refer to Jub 11:2, where trade in slaves is a characteristic of the devolution in society during the time between the Tower of Babel and the birth of Abram.


57 It is also interesting to notice quickly that there is a woman slave working as the gatekeeper living or lying down close to Aseneth’s room. As the heroine was about to go down from the upper floor to the gateway and gather ashes to mourn in repentance in order for her to become religiously suitable to Joseph, she passes by this slave gatekeeper who was asleep with her children. It is not clear why this particular slave is mentioned. C. Burchard’s explanation of this aside is: “Women as gatekeepers, in the author’s day, were most likely slaves who lived in a room near the gate or door … Why the children should be mentioned is not clear, unless to indicate that the woman had retired for the night (Lk 11:7) and was not likely to notice Aseneth’s doings.” See Burchard, OTP, Vol. II, 215.

58 Conquering this house, the priest and the princess Aseneth, seems to be a miniature representation of the eventual conquest of the house of Pharaoh, his priests and the princes of Egypt.


60 Foucault’s framework of power as relational is very relevant here. Foucault contends, “Power must be analysed as something which circulates, or rather as something which only functions in the form of a chain. It is never localised here or there, never in anybody’s hands, never appropriated as a commodity or piece of wealth. Power is employed and exercised through a net-like organization. And not only do individuals circulate between its threads […] Individuals are the vehicles of power, not its points of application.” See M. Foucault, Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings 1972–1977 (ed. Colin Gordon; London: Harvester Press, 1980), 98.
Certainly, the presentation of Aseneth as a slave needs to be nuanced. In her relationship to Joseph, she states she is his slave and acts as such. However, from the rest of the tale we know she is not a slave, nor does she act as one in her relationship to others. She does not act like the mother of Joseph’s brothers, nor does she act like the slave women in her house. She is employed in a metaphorical way as a slave in the narrative in her relationship to Joseph to accomplish certain authorly ideological goals.


See the discussion on the name in Lindenberger, “Ahiqar,” in The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, 488.


In longer, and later, versions of the text (Syriac, Armenian, Arabic, Slavonic, Turkish), the officer in charge of killing Ahiqar informs the Assyrian king that Ahiqar is, in fact, still alive. The king is delighted to learn this unexpected news, since he needed to have the wisdom of a great and experienced advisor who could resolve some very challenging riddles the king of Egypt sent to him upon hearing about the supposed death of Ahiqar. The failure to solve these riddles would mean that the Assyrian king would have to pay the Egyptian ruler a tax for three years. Ahiqar was then sent to Egypt where he gave solutions to the different challenging riddles proposed to him. When the wise and successful Ahiqar returned to Assyria, he requested that he might be able to discipline his treacherous nephew/adopted son. Ahiqar reproaches and chastises the traitor—Nadin is put in chains and beaten—by reciting to him a long series of fables. This episode ends with the death of Nadin. See F. C. Conybeare, J. R. Harris and A. S. Lewis, The Story of Ahiqar: From the Aramaic, Syriac, Arabic, Armenia, Ethiopic, Old Turkish, Greek and Slavonic Versions (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1913). See also Christopher B. Hays, Hidden Riches: A Sourcebook for the Comparative Study of the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster Jon Knox Press, 2014), 100–104. His translation of the Syriac version of Ahiqar is adapted from F. C. Conybeare et al.

Porten and Yardeni’s translation is: “178. A stroke for a slave-lad, a rebuke for a slave-lass; moreover, for all your slaves discipline. 179. He who acquires a fugitive/licentious slave (or) a thievish/stolen handmaiden … […] makes] 180. the name of his father and his descendants into the name of foulness.”

Lindenberger’s comment on this saying is: “The good name of one’s household is jeopardized by bringing into it slaves of bad character.” See Lindenberger, 1983, 55.
One is reminded of the colorful narratives like the Apocryphal Acts of Andrew and the pagan Leucippe and Clitophon of Achilles Tatius. One may refer to Kyle Harper, From Shame to Sin: The Christian Transformation of Sexual Morality in Late Antiquity (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), especially chapter 4, where there are parallels.


For example, “Slaves and freedmen were to be found at all levels of the developing imperial bureaucracy in Rome and the provinces, from lowly clerical workers to influential administrators. Until the reign of Domitian, freedmen headed all the great Palatine bureau; even after those posts were reserved instead for equestrians, a few imperial freedmen who had been raised to equestrian status reached the top of the administrative ladder.” See Keith Bradley and P. A. Cartledge, The Cambridge History of World Slavery, Volume 1, 282.


Emphasis added.


574–582. To situate these verses in a larger literary context see Walter T. Wilson, The Sentences, 211–213.

What the author says here is contrary to common practice in antiquity, and on that basis, one may be tempted to conclude that he may be more humane than other contemporary thinkers. In Pseudo-Phocylides, the author does indeed seem to have regard for the slave as a person, as someone who should be fed appropriately and even as someone to whom one should listen for advice. However, there are also other, and less favorable, ways to interpret the position of the master(s) towards the slave(s) as evidenced in the analysis undertaken therein.

Slaves were susceptible to be disposed of and moved as their masters wished. They were, in the Greek and Roman world, legally considered the mere property of their masters, who controlled them and could use them as their sexual toys. See, in particular, Page duBois, Slaves and Other Objects; Keith Bradley, Slaves and Masters in the Roman Empire: A Study in Social Control (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 26–45; Henrik Mouritsen, The Freedman in the Roman World (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 13–14; Jane F. Gardner, “Slavery and Roman Law,” in Keith Bradley and P. A. Cartledge, The Cambridge History of World Slavery, Volume 1, 414–437.

My conclusion is in line with W. T. Wilson’s when he states, “The discourse of the Sentences, then, constructs social space in terms of various conventional hierarchies. Moreover, it encourages its readers to align themselves with the vantage point of those who occupy positions of power and authority within (almost all of) these hierarchies and to discern their moral obligations accordingly.” See Wilson, The Sentences, 35.


For the Alexandrian proposition, see Jean Paul Audet, “La Sagesse de Ménandre l’Égyptien,” RB 59 (1952): 55–81. Contrary arguments to such a view can be found in Max Kiichler, Friihjudische Weisheitstraditionen. Zum Fortgang weisheitlichen Denkens im Bereich des frühjüdischen Jahweglaubens (Orbis biblicus et orientalis 26; Freiburg, Schweiz: Universitätsverlag, 1979), 316; and T. Baarda in Charlesworth, vol. II, 585. For discussions about the different propositions, see J. Cornelis de Vos, “The Decalogue in Pseudo-Phocylides and Syriac Menander. ‘Unwritten Laws’ or Decalogue Reception?” in The Decalogue and Its Cultural Influence (ed., Dominik Markl; Hebrew Bible Monographs 58; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2013), 52–54.

See Baarda, 584. For a recent treatment of the Sentences, see David G. Monaco, Sentences of the Syriac Menander: Introduction, Text and Translation, and Commentary (Piscataway, New Jersey: Gorgias Press, 2013). D. G. Monaco argues from a number of perspectives in pages 26–35, particularly transmission history and calligraphy, that the text is originally Syriac and that it originates in the region of Edessa.

The translation provided here is that of T. Baarda in Charlesworth, vol. II, 591–606. Baarda’s translation was taken from the transcription and the work of J. P. Audet (1952) and F. Schulthes, “Die Sprüche des Menanders,” ZAW 32 (1912): 199–224. David G. Monaco’s recent translation, which does make a difference in a variety of places, is the only one done from the manuscript directly since J. P. N. Land’s Anecdota Syriaca I in the nineteenth century (Leiden, 1862). Given that I am using Charlesworth for the other texts, it makes sense to use Baarda’s translation in Charlesworth here as well.
Chris L. De Wet rightly observes, “Love was an important discourse in ancient slaveholding. The best and most obedient slaves were said to love their masters—it is ‘love’ that governs the perfect slaveholding relationship […] One needs to be suspicious of the discourse of love between slaves and slaveholders in antiquity—in most cases love was utilized as a technology to optimize labor and productivity among slaves. It was also used as a strategy to ameliorate the negative perception of punishment—slaves, like children, are punished out of love.” See Chris L. De Wet, *The Unbound God: Slavery and the Formation of Early Christian Thought* (London and New York: Routledge, 2018), 57–58.

David G. Monaco’s very clear translations of these logia are worth reproducing:

“(154–156) Do not eat food with an evil slave, lest his masters lay (a charge) against you that you teach their slave to steal. (157–160) Hate an evil slave and repudiate the freedman who steals, because just as you have no power to kill a slave, so too, (you have no power) to confine a freedman. (161–162) God hates an evil slave who hates and dishonors his masters. (163–165) If you see and evil slave (overcome) in his wretched wickedness, do not feel sorry for him. Rather, ‘Woe to his masters! What did they buy here?!’ (166–168) Love an industrious slave who is active and industrious among his masters. God gives (over) every evil man to slavery, and he esteems every industrious man worthy to arise to honor and greatness. (227–228) Slowly the freedman honors his house, and the one who is a maidservant (honors) the house of her master. (347) Do not leer at your maidservant in your house.” See D. G. Monaco, *Sentences*, 135–175. Monaco covers parallels between the slave material and the Hebrew Bible tradition particularly, but also other materials, such as a citation from the Armenian *Ahiqar* recension B, logion 45 in relation to logion 161. This recension, which was also noted by T. Baarda in relation to this particular verse, reads: “son, a slave who sins against his master, and proceeds into a strange land, let him find no rest nor any mercy from God.” See T. Baarda, 596. Cf. the translation in Conybeare et al., 61, quoted in Monaco, *Sentences*, 137.


God is portrayed as the agent who gives (over) every “evil” person to slavery, making thus the enslaved person responsible for his/her fate due to his or her “evil.”

Monaco remarks: “In this logion, there is not only a total lack of mercy for a slave, but the final phrase of pity on those who own such a slave, obviously views a slave as nothing but another person’s property.” Monaco, *Sentences*, 137.

This particular passage is quite difficult to interpret. Monaco is one of the few commentators—Schulthess (1912) and Audet (1952), being the only commentators before him who had anything to say about this passage—who have endeavored to comment sensitively and expertly on this logion. See here his translation of 227–228 and an excerpt from his commentary: “The first portion of the logion is somewhat enigmatic, while the latter part does makes [sic] some sense when one considers that the home of her master is not her own, and that she is, essentially, considered to be part of her master’s property. On the other hand, why the freedman should not honor his own is not so clear. One can understand why a later scribe would have altered the passage so that it would more logically read, given the fact that the freedman was a former slave, and particularly if he were only
recently given his liberty, ‘slowly the freedman honors his house, and the one who is a maidservant (honors) the house of her master.’”

Ben Sira 9:5 is a text close to this logion: “Do not look too intently at a virgin, or you may find yourself forced to pay a bride price.” However, in Ben Sira the passage does not specify whether the virgin was the (open) body of a (young) female slave or the daughter/sister of a free male member of society. The price of gazing at or of being overly attentive to the female body of a (free) virgin is to be forced to marry her by paying a bride price. Ben Sira 41:19–22 has parallel sayings to the logion in Pseudo-Phocylides that are of interest to us: “19. Before your neighbors, be ashamed of theft. Be ashamed of breaking a promise, of leaning on the dinner table with your elbows, of stinginess when you are asked for something, 20 of not returning a greeting, of staring at a prostitute, 21 of turning down a relative’s request, of depriving someone of what is rightly his, of staring at another man’s wife, 22 of playing around with his slave woman (keep away from her bed!) of insulting your friends, of following up your gifts with criticism.” This passage in Ben Sira is about behaviours a respectable person should not be found displaying. Honour and shame should always be taken in consideration in one’s dealings with others, and whatever conduct deemed to be socially shameful should be avoided, especially before one’s neighbors. Shame, in this sense, is the condition of losing one’s social recognition and self-(re)presentation. Although referring to not glancing at a slave woman or meddling in sexual activities with her, the passage in Ben Sira refers to another person’s slave and thus connected to a man’s property (that is, related to “what is rightly his.” 41.22).

The issue of lack of competence to kill a slave is covered in Monaco from the standpoint of dating the underlying text and how it relates to the Antonine emperors and the change in Roman law that outlawed the arbitrary torture and the summary execution of slaves without due judicial processes. For Monaco, this is evidence that “the original text of The Sentences of the Syriac Menander comes from the time of the Roman Empire, which gives us a terminus post quem (IV.1) ‘because just as you have no power to kill a slave, so too, you have no power) to confine a freedman’. See Monaco, Sentences, 25–26. I thank Professor Monaco for making the needed pages of his work available to me when our library system could not locate his monograph anywhere in Canada, where I am doing my research.

Chapter 3

1 I am not interested in the meta-narrative of canonicity; hence my choice of chapter divisions by explicitly placing my chapter on Paul before the chapter on the gospels, and by exploring a variety of other ancient texts that fall outside the canon. The imperial use of “canon” and “Scripture” constitutes part of the galvanizing of power around imperial agendas. That manifests itself precisely around the insistence on literary and theological supremacy of some texts over others. See Edward W. Said, Culture and Imperialism (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993).


Although a thorough review of the setting of 1 Corinthians would be helpful at this point, I will simply refer to a few studies that have influenced my thoughts on this particular letter. See John K. Chow, *Patronage and Power: A Study of Social Networks in Corinth* (JSNTS 75; Sheffield: JSOT, 1992); Andrew D. Clarke, *Secular and Christian Leadership in Corinth: A Socio-Historical and Exegetical Study of 1 Corinthians 1–6* (Leiden: Brill, 1993); Edward Adams and David G. Horrell, eds., *Christianity at Corinth: The Quest for the Pauline Church* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2004); Ron Cameron and Merrill P. Miller, eds., *Redescribing Paul and the Corinthians* (Atlanta: Society Biblical Literature, 2011).


See Laura S. Nasrallah, “‘You were bought with a price’: Freedpersons and Things in Corinthians,” in *Corinth in Contrast: Studies in Inequality* (eds. Steven J. Friesen, Sarah James and Daniel N. Schowalter; New York: Brill, 2013), 54–73. Dale Martin’s work (*Slavery as Salvation*) belongs to this point as well, as he probes how non-Jews, Greeks and Romans living in cities of the first century may have heard metaphorical language of slavery in Paul.

On Chloe, see Gerd Theissen, *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity*, 92–94 (here 93): “Who were the Chloe’s people? … Within the Pauline letters themselves the closest parallel would be groups of slaves addressed summarily (Rom. 16:10, 11; Phil. 4:22).” For Wayne A. Meeks, “‘Chloe’s people’ (hoi Chloës, 1 Cor. 1:11) are slaves or freedmen or both who have brought news from Corinth to Ephesus.” See Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2nd ed., 2003), 59. For Gordon D. Fee, τῶν Χλόης “could be either family, slaves, or freedmen; there is no way to tell, although slaves or freedmen is more likely.” Fee, however, does not think that “those of Chloe” were members of the Corinthian community. Had they been members at Corinth, he argues, “they would most likely have been among those who ‘followed Paul.’ Yet Paul is not at all pleased by this slogan.” See Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*. Revised Edition. The New

9 As Gerd Theissen rightly understands it, this oral report “sees things from below (1:26ff.; 11:20ff.).” See G. Theissen, The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity: Essays on Corinth (ed. and trans. John Schuetz; Edinburg: T. & T. Clark, 1982), 137. This “seeing things from below,” as articulated in the introduction, is where the interest of this project lies.

10 I am using “social imagination” in the sense developed by Charles Wright Mills in The Social Imagination (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959). The social imagination à la Mills allows a researcher to understand the intersectionality between, on the one hand, history, public records, public issues and/or larger social realities and, on the other hand, biography (social positions, personal values and experiences, cultural milieu affecting one’s understanding and one’s place in the world), with the view to thinking away from the customary and considering fresh, and even unexpected, social and political possibilities.

11 Anna C. Miller has convincingly argued that a focus on ekklēsia as a democratic space in the first century allows one to understand not only Paul’s construction of his unique authority vis-à-vis those Christ-followers in Corinth but also the overall multiplicity of debates and tensions over gender and speech in this particular correspondence. See Anna C. Miller, Corinthian Democracy: Democratic Discourse in 1 Corinthians (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2015).

12 “Master” is the slave owners’ point of view, and it presumes the success of the owners’ attempts at and practices of control. Historians of American slavery tend to use owner or slave owner or slaveholder instead of master, and reserve “master” for where the issue is the owner’s belief, perspective, assertions, etc. Slaves were treated as commodities, it is true, but there are places where it is not their status as commodities that is formative or relevant but their status as property.

13 My translation. One may also consider how the claim of being from a specific group might have been related to social status as well.

14 If one accepts E. Fiorenza’s reading that the expression “those of Chloe” means “the people or followers of Chloe” in Corinth, then one may suggest a “Chloe’s party” as well. See Fiorenza, Rhetoric and Ethic: The Politics of Biblical Studies (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 116.

15 Richard Ascough typifies Paul’s relationship with the Corinthians as one engaged in the founding of “an association around the cult of a hero.” See Ascough, “Paul’s ‘Apocalypticism’ and the Jesus Associations at Thessalonica and Corinth,” in Redescribing Paul and the Corinthians, 181.

16 John K. Chow argues that competition among patrons was at the heart of the division in Corinth. See John K. Chow, Patronage and Power, 1992. In this sense, the factions are about different patrons and clients and “those of Chloe” might be considered the social clients of a patroness named Chloe reporting to a patron or spiritual broker named Paul about what is happening in this assembly. Chow argues that some wealthy patrons have already absorbed Apollos into their client network and some of the social tensions that exist is a result of them opposing Paul or trying to absorb him as well into their network. Ibid., 106. John S. Kloppenborg proposes that “The analogy of other associations suggests, however, that internal conflict did not necessarily come from patrons; it could just as easily arise from the general membership.” See Kloppenborg, “Greco-Roman
Corporal punishment was the primary distinctive feature that distinguished a free person/slaveholder from a slave. Being vulnerable to be beaten was the lot of the enslaved persons, whose bodies were routinely subjected to chastisement. It is fair to state that because the slave by definition lacked physical integrity does not mean that slave x, y or z was beaten—only that that possibility was always present. The masters had, without legal constraints, the rights over the slave’s life and body. The bodies of the masters/free citizens were, however, in principle, inviolable. The whip (flagellum), which symbolized the master’s power, was the most frequently used instrument for punishment, although its usage was considered a harsh form of sentence. In addition to being subject to physical harm (to which Roman citizens were legally immune), slaves could only give legal testimony under torture. This demonstrates that not only were slaves subject to violence, they were also inherently untrustworthy and possessed of suspect motives. See among others Richard P. Saller, “Corporal punishment, authority, and obedience in the Roman household,” in Marriage, Divorce, and Children in Ancient Rome (ed. Beryl Rawson; Oxford: Clarendon Press; Canberra: Humanities Research Centre, 1991), 144–165; eadem, Patriarchy, Property and Death in the Roman Family (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 135; Ben Akrigg and Rob Tordoﬀ, Slaves and Slavery in Ancient Greek Comic Drama (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 164–168.


Keith Bradley estimates that “The ability to be sold was the slave’s most compelling reminder of his status as sheer commodity.” See Keith Bradley, Slaves and Masters in the Roman Empire: A Study in Social Control (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 52. This understanding regarding the fate of ancient slaves to be bought and sold as commodities is correct, but Katherine Shaner is right in reminding us of the complex and ambiguous positionalities of some ancient enslaved persons, who could “also enact transactions as buyers and sellers and engage with larger civic and religious institutions in the city.” See Katherine A. Shaner, Enslaved Leadership in Early Christianity (Atlanta, GA: Oxford University Press USA, 2018), 13.

This is, of course, historical conjecture. I am simply imagining various plausibilities with regard to the positionality of the slaves within their particular social reality.

Benjamin W. Millis reports that “The city’s burgeoning population was composed of a number of disparate groups, and the opportunity available in Corinth would have attracted people from a variety of economic and social backgrounds throughout the wider region, particularly from the Greek East.” See Millis, “The Local Magistrates and Elite of Roman Corinth,” in *Corinth in Contrast*, 38. Laura Nasrallah, in the same volume, mentions, “Some freedmen in Corinth monopolized high civic positions and thus the key city center of the Forum was marked by freedperson benefactions.” See Nasrallah, “You were bought with a price,” 61.

Millis again, “To the vast majority of people, the elite were part of a closed system that offered little to no hope of entrance” (Ibid, 50). Millis further adds, “Like most places in the empire and like Rome itself, Corinth was a city with an entrenched elite, in this case composed of men who happened to be freedmen, that was hostile to newcomers and that did its best to maintain a closed system” (Ibid, 53).


E. S. Fiorenza, *Rhetoric and Ethic*, 131. Fiorenza states that in 1 Corinthians, “Paul’s rhetoric does not aim at fostering independence, freedom, and consensus, but stresses dependence on his model, order, and decency, as well as subordination and silence.” See Fiorenza, Ibid, 121.

See Antoinette C. Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets: A Reconstruction through Paul’s Rhetoric* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990). If Wire’s aim was to pay close attention to the significant role the women prophets play in Paul’s rhetorical situation in 1 Corinthians, my aim is to learn from her methodology by focusing my attention on the particular place of the slaves in this narrative. In this entire project I am striving, as much as possible, to develop a methodology that allows voices traditionally silenced to be heard. I confront the overwhelmingly androcentric (and along with it slaveholders-centric) visions that such politics have produced in our scholarship. Thus, my project benefits from advances made by feminist scholars alongside those of other scholars who are reading texts “Other-wise,” with “suspicion” or “against the grain.”


I concur with Stanley K. Stowers that “the choice of these people for baptism by Paul does not appear to be arbitrary (in spite of 1:17), because these are precisely those who are noted as sharers in Paul’s specialist activities.” See Stowers, “Kinds of Myth, Meals, and Power: Paul and the Corinthians,” in *Redescribing Paul and the Corinthians*, 118.
Paul refers to this behaviour according to human inclinations also in 3:4. Craig S. Keener attempts an explanation: “Paul’s ‘merely human’ (3:4) probably plays on some philosophers’ division of humanity into the mortal masses, on the one hand, and philosophers whose experience with the innate divine spark or with divine knowledge progressively divinizes them, on the other.” See Keener, *1–2 Corinthians*. The New Cambridge Bible Commentary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 40. Then, if one accepts Keener’s interpretation, and moves the interpretation away from the author’s theological concerns, Paul is clearly letting otherworldly, if not philosophical and mystical concerns, cloud his understanding of flesh and blood, nitty-gritty material and social realities.

He does not use his self-designation title of “slave of Christ” (δοῦλος Χριστοῦ) to describe his positionality vis-à-vis the Corinthians, although this is a word he uses frequently to designate himself (e.g., Rom 1:1; Phil 1:1; Gal 1:10). The notion of slavery to God is present in the Pauline corpus, and enslavement to Christ is also an important aspect in Paul’s lexicon (Rom 1:1; 6:22; 12:11; 14:18; 16:18; 1 Cor 4:1; 7:22; Gal 1:10; Phil 1:1; 1 Thess 1:9).

See William M. Cooper, *Flagellation and the Flagellants: A History of the Rod in all Countries from the earliest Period to the present Time* (London: William Reeves, 1870). One may accept the theological understanding that Paul here may be echoing Ps 89:32–33 “I will punish their transgression with the rod and their iniquity with scourges (LXX, Ps. 88:33, ἐπισκέψταίμαι ἐν ῥάβδῳ τὰς ἁμαρτίας αὐτῶν καὶ ἐν μάστιξιν τὰς ἁμαρτίας αὐτῶν); but I will not remove from him my steadfast love, or be false to my faithfulness.” See Robert E. Moses, *Practices of Power: Revisiting the Principalities and Powers in the Pauline Letters* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014), 98.

Musonius Rufus, a well-respected Roman and stoic philosopher of the first century, was probably expressing a common view when he states, “Every master is held to have it in his power to use his slave as he wishes” (*Discourse*, “On Sexual Indulgence,” 12.88). Cora B. Lutz, trans., “Musonius Rufus: The Roman Socrates,” *Yale Classical Studies* 10 (1947): 3–147 (87–89). See also the discussions by Gretchen Reydams-Schils, *The Roman Stoics: Self, Responsibility, and Affection* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); Ilaria Ramelli, “Transformations of the Household and Marriage Theory Between Neo-Stoicism, Middle Platonism, and Early Christianity,” *Rivista di Filosofia Neoscolastica* 100.2–3 (2008): 369–396; and Valéry Laurand, *Stoïcisme et lien social: enquête autour de Musonius Rufus* (Paris: Garnier, 2014). Paul does not address the issue of the sexual availability of slaves to masters, although his ethical injunction regarding the sanctity of marriage may have turned some masters away from seeking sexual pleasures with their slaves (1 Cor 7:3–6).

The concern for the ethical purity of the community is Paul’s primary concern, according to Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: A


41 Ibid.

42 Henrik Mouritsen presents a much-nuanced understanding of manumission. According to him, manumission “was considered neither universal nor automatic”; it was “both very common and selective,” and, in the end, it was “more widespread in Rome than in any other slave society for which we have more detailed information.” See Mouritsen, The Freedman in the Roman World (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 139–141. The prospect of possible freedom through manumission encouraged most slaves to be obedient and to work even harder to please their masters. The institution of Roman manumission relied both on the slaveholder’s judicious judgment and on his paternal authority over the freedman, who was considered morally dependent. Thus the obedience of the slave, his conformity to the master’s will and, if ever manumitted, his relationship and integration to the world of freedom under the supervision of his patron/former master, were what characterized the complex relationships between slaves/freed slaves with masters/patrons.

43 Many slaves had no choice but to be a mere speaking tool at the service of masters because a life outside of slavery would be economically precarious.


46 Paul, of course, speaks metaphorically. There is no such thing as Christ’s slave, like a temple’s slave.

47 Scott S. Bartchey, First-Century Slavery and 1 Corinthians 7: 21, 140 (emphasis original).

48 See L. Nasrallah, “You were bought with a price,” 73.

49 Ilaria L. E. Ramelli discusses the possibility that for Paul slavery might have been an “indifferent thing.” She states, “If Paul embraced the Stoic view regarding slavery, it would follow that to his mind slavery was to be conceived as neither a good to be chosen, nor an evil to be avoided, since good is only virtue and what is related to it, and evil is only vice. It is moral enslavement to passions that is evil; juridical slavery is an adiaphoron. But it is an adiaphoron to be rejected if the opportunity presents itself, at least according to most common interpretation of 1 Corinthians 7:21–22.” See Ramelli, Social Justice and the Legitimacy of Slavery: The Role of Philosophical Asceticism from Ancient Judaism to Late Antiquity (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 114.
See Dale Martin’s presentation of the rhetoric of homonoia in *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), 38–47. He considers 1 Corinthians as a homonoia letter, although Paul’s treatment of this particular rhetoric is, in Martin’s view, at odds with the dominant goal of homonoia speeches that solidifies the social hierarchy. I do not agree with Martin’s conclusion because one can argue that Paul also attempts to establish his own hierarchical position in his relationship with the Corinthians. One point I find interesting and worthy of further exploration is when Martin states: “Homonoia speeches regularly took the polis, which could stand for any social group, to be a body, and rebellion, factionalism, or discord (*stasis*) to be a disease.” Ibid., 39. In this sense, the factions in the *ekklesi* in Corinth would be viruses that Paul’s rhetoric aimed at curing but he is also, or he may have also been perceived by some Corinthians to be, embroiled in the illness ravaging the body.


For example, some Corinthians did not trust him because his financial practices were not without problems (2 Cor 8–9; 11:7–11; 12:16), and some doubted his apostleship because he was operating without proper credentials (2 Cor 3:1–3; 13:3).


Λατεινάστης is the root word. The entry in Liddell and Scott suggests a range of meaning: serve public offices at one’s own cost; perform public duties, serve the state; serve a master; perform religious service, minister; performance of religious ritual; service, ministration and help; public service of the gods. See H. G. Liddell and R. Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon with a Revised Supplement* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 1036.


Peter Oakes estimates that “the economic situation of the Philippian Christians appears to have been particularly difficult, even by first-century standards.” See P. Oakes, “The Economic Situation of the Philippian Christians,” in *People Beside Paul*, 82. The membership in this Christ-adherent assembly was probably small—around 20, with women probably in the majority and some in leadership positions (e.g., Euodia and Syntyche, 4:2–3), alongside Roman craft workers, tenant farmers, former slaves and slaves. The group of Christ-followers at Philippi was similar to other ancient associations, whose membership included slaves, former slaves and the free poor. See Richard Ascough, *Paul’s Macedonian Associations: The Social Context of Philippians and 1 Thessalonians*. WUNT 2/161 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003). Ancient associations were normally local organizations; they were relatively small groups (between 10 and 50 members), and only rarely did an association have more than 100 members. See John S. Kloppenborg and Stephen G. Wilson, eds., *Voluntary Associations in the Graeco-Roman World* (London: Routledge, 1996); and Philip A. Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations: Claiming a Place in Ancient Mediterranean

The financial donation to Paul could not have been substantial considering the economic predicament of the Christ assembly in Philippi. I am convinced by Peter Oakes’ argument that “1 Thess 2:9 and Phil 4:15 provide strong evidence that Paul was both receiving money from the Philippians and still doing craft-work in order to provide basic sustenance. This suggests that the group of people in Philippi are providing less than [sic] the living requirements of one or two craftworkers. This is not an amount of money that gives any indication of substantial economic resources among the Philippian Christians.” See Oakes, “The Economic Situation of the Philippian Christians,” in *The People Beside Paul*, 76.

However, as a counter argument, Paul may speak of Epaphroditus as a body in motion to be exchanged, which allowed the apostle to maintain the contact with the Philippians through space, but that does not mean Epaphroditus was definitely a slave, only that Paul talks about him using terms commonly applied to slaves. For a chapter that focuses on slaves on the move as part of the furnishings of street life in the ancient Roman world see Sandra R. Joshel and Lauren Hackworth Petersen, *The Material Life of Roman Slaves*, chapter 3 (“Slaves in the City Streets”).

The usage of “liminal figure” to refer to Epaphroditus is in order to highlight the social ambiguity of this particular character.

Angela Standhartinger suggests, “It is possible that he was arrested when he delivered the money.” See Standhartinger, “Letters from Prison as Hidden Transcript: What It Tells Us about the People at Philippi,” in *The People Beside Paul*, 123. Her suggestion is a plausible one, although it is a possibility I cannot share totally. Indeed, Epaphroditus may have ended up being detained by the guards, who could have suspected him as a conspirator. However, her effort to link Epaphroditus to Epaphras (Philemon 23), a fellow prisoner to Paul, to justify such a rapprochement does not work, or, better, one does not have to
entertain such hypothesis for the plausible detainment of Epaphroditus to make sense. While it may have been possible for a supporter of prisoners to bribe the generally cruel custodians, it was always risky to visit a prisoner and be there at his service. The risks associated with visiting and serving a prisoner in Roman custody, especially if one was a slave or a former slave who could be tortured for extracting further information on the activities and connections of the prisoner, were real. Also, as Standhartinger indicates, “A letter from a Roman public prison, written by a prisoner who was in the midst of a probably political, but in any case life-threatening legal procedure, was always risky.” Ibid., 128. However, as stated above, I have my doubts Epaphroditus was put in detention. Paul does seem to have certain authority, or leeway, about sending him back to the community at Philippi, and such rhetoric of “sending back” would not be the appropriate language to use for a fellow prisoner under Roman authority. Thus my hesitation to consider Epaphroditus as having been imprisoned alongside Paul on his visit.


66 Paul’s “thankless thanks” is well analyzed in Marvin R. Vincent, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles to the Philippians and to Philemon* (Edinburg: T&T Clark, 1897), 146.

67 Paul dreams of Christ as a heavenly hero who is going to have everything subjected to his heroic power (ὑποτάξαι αὐτοῦ τὰ πάντα), and who will transform the lowly bodies of the Philippians into glorious bodies similar to his (ὢς μετασχηματίσει τὸ σῶμα τῆς ταπεινώσεως ἡμῶν σύμμορφον τῷ σώματι τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ κατὰ τὴν ἐνέργειαν τὸν δόξασθαι αὐτῶν, Phil 3:21). The strong, “masculine” body of the heavenly hero interacts with the humble, “feminine” bodies of the Christ-believers in Philippi with the view to transform their lowly bodies into glorious, military ones to be conformed to the image of Christ as the new emperor. The Christ-believers in Philippi, who are signified as conquered lowly bodies within the Roman categorization, will become the conquerors under a new and heavenly emperor ready to exercise “masculine” power to go and to conquer as he is accompanied with the transformed and glorious bodies of heaven’s diasporic subjects.


69 Ibid., 174.

70 In her response to Marchal’s chapter, Antoinette C. Wire, correctly, points out that “the difficulty of taking it [λειτουργός] as the sexual service of an enslaved or freed person is compounded by Paul’s usage when he says that Epaphroditus ‘came near to death for the work of Christ, risking his life in order to substitute for your inability to carry out the λειτουρία you owe me’” (2:30), in *The People Beside Paul*, 179.


72 Marchal states, rightly, that “Paul’s description of Epaphroditus casts him in the role of the loyal and fearful (freed) slave, reflecting the kinds of natally alienate, semireassimilated, but still subordinate positions that was the slave’s in this context, a ‘member’ of a different kind of family, but still disposable for so

73 The use of fictive kinship language, however, does not mean the (freed) slave’s social status is transformed.


75 Psychological trauma damages a person’s ability to adequately deal with stress, and that can lead to acute stress disorder. A small number of scholars have studied the link between trauma in antiquity and trauma in the modern period. See in particular Menachem Ben-Ezra, “Traumatic Reactions from Antiquity to the 16th Century: was there a Common Denominator,” Stress and Health 27.3 (2011): 223–240. The author shows that several texts in antiquity contain clear depictions of literary characters and historical figures who are depicted as having suffered from psychological trauma as a result of being exposed to traumatic events. These traumatic events have affected these figures who have usually shown signs of somatic symptoms. See also Peter Meineck and David Konstan, eds., Combat Trauma and the Ancient Greeks (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014). In this collection, the authors probe carefully how modern mental health concepts may help a reader understand trauma related to war in the ancient Greek texts.

76 On the conditions in ancient Roman prisons see especially Jens-Uwe Krause, Gefängnisse im Römischen Reich. Heidelberg althistorische Beiträge und epigraphische Studien 23 (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1996). This whole dire situation would have been highly traumatic for Epaphroditus who came to assist Paul.


79 J. H. Fitzmyer, The Letter to Philemon: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 7. Paul might have been in prison in Ephesus. See Fitzmyer, The Letter to Philemon, 9–11. J. Albert Harrill proposes to consider Paul’s letter to Philemon as a letter of recommendation on behalf of Onesimus to be considered as an apprenticed slave. The slave, who is now a different person by virtue of his conversion to Christ, could be trained to move beyond his perceived and ideological status of a “useless” slave to that of a “useful” one in the master’s household: “Paul recommends Onesimus for apprenticeship in the service of the gospel, an explicit ‘appeal.’” See Harrill, Slaves in the New Testament, 15.

80 The proximity of slaves to mistress and the female appropriation of space in the absence of the paterfamilias is well attested in the Roman city of Pompeii, for example. See Ray Laurence, Roman Pompeii: Space and Society. 2nd ed. (London and New York, 2007). Laurence indicates that a well-to-do citizen would be outside the house for most of the day, thus creating “a gender division in space and time … without the adult male presence of the paterfamilias.” See Laurence, Roman Pompeii, 166. Generally, the materfamilias of the household was more able to witness the “daily rhythm of the domestic landscape.” The master slaveholder, at his return home at the end of the day, tended to only see the effects of
the slaves’ daily activities: “swept floors, polished silver, prepared meals, arranged dining rooms, warmed bath, and so on.” So to the slaveholder “as long as the day’s work was carried out as he had ordered” the slaves are “useful” and they are invisible. The above quoted materials are from Sandra R. Joshel and Lauren Hackworth Petersen, *The Material Life of Roman Slaves*, 70. Thus, Aphia then needed to be included as a primary recipient of the letter since “she also had to give her opinions when the question of taking back a runaway slave was raised.”

See Eduard Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon: A commentary on the Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon* (trans. William R. Poehlmann and Robbert J. Karris; ed. Helmut Koester; Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), 190. Hence, “the sister” also needed to be convinced by Paul’s arguments, but it is to Philemon, as the head of the household, that Paul addresses his letter. Philemon along with Aphia, and possibly Archippus (v. 1), are positioned as the leaders of this meeting house that was located possibly in Colossae (12 miles southeast of Laodicea in the south of the province of Asia).

81 Paul refers to the fact that he is an old man and, as such, one may interpret that as meaning that he is no longer ready or physically capable of engaging in heated, passionate and overtly hostile discussions or disputes.


83 Jeremy Punt makes the interesting suggestion that “In addition to the family metaphors that Paul used to establish his authority over Philemon, Paul also employed other devices such as punning on ‘useless/useful’ (Phlm 11) which implies Paul’s claim to have been more successful than Philemon in soliciting productivity from Onesimus.” See Punt, *Postcolonial Biblical Interpretation: Reframing Paul* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 166. Jennifer Glancy argues that the recipients of the letter would have understood ἄχρηστος to mean “disposable,” and “expendable.” Glancy, “The Utility of an Apostle: On Philemon 11,” *Journal of Early Christian History* 5.1 (2015): 72–86. See also Christine Berger, “Onesimus der Nützliche. Sklaverei in der Welt des Paulus,” in *La lettre à Phélimon et l’ecclésiologie Paulinienne/Philemon and Pauline Ecclesiology*. Colloquium Oecumenicum Paulinum; SMBen.BE 17 22 (ed. Daniel Marguerat; Leuven: Peeters, 2016), 75–106. I thank Professor Berger for sharing her article and for pointing out this collection to me. Unfortunately, I could not engage with the book because of becoming aware of it in the later stage of my research.

84 Norman R. Petersen estimates that “Onesimus’s action ... poses a threat both to the institutionalized social system and to the social structures it serves.” See Petersen, *Rediscovering Paul: Philemon and the Sociology of Paul’s Narrative World* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 94.


86 The Corinthians, for example, were “clearly unable to break the social conventions in this context and that the best solution Paul can imagine is that all should eat their own meals at home before they gathered (1 Cor 11. 17–34).” See J. M. G. Barclay, “Paul, Philemon and the Dilemma of Christian Slave-Ownership,” *NTS* 37 (1991): 179. On the possibility for slaves to practice, within some limits, other

One may recall The Sentences of the Syriac Menander, especially sentence 161: “God hates a bad slave.” Running away was also considered by slaveholders to be the mark of the bad slave. The stereotypical bad slaves (lazy, idle, stupid and running away) are mentioned in Xenophon’s Memorabilia (2.5.5; 2.10.1–2; 3.13.4).

The portrayal of a good, obedient and faithful slave is often, if not always, a coping mechanism on the part of the slave because of fear of punishment from the masters. See Bradley, Slaves and Masters in the Roman Empire, 1987, 39; Sandra R. Joshel, “Slavery and Roman Literature,” in The Cambridge World History of Slavery: Volume 1, 216–223.

Also, probably, Paul does not want to be accused of theft of the property of another person because anyone who received a runaway slave (fugitivus) could stand accused of such unlawful act (Digest 47.2.1).

Although one may not want to follow Joseph A. Marchal’s argument all the way, one may observe that the language in Philemon indeed contains few homoerotic nuances in the way Paul talks about Onesimus and as he describes passing him off to Philemon. See Joseph A. Marchal, “The Usefulness of an Onesimus: The Sexual Use of Slaves and Paul’s Letter to Philemon,” JBL 130 (2011): 373–395. The slave’s legal personality merged with that of the master. This has, however, implications in contract law but not in criminal law. Although the slave could carry out legally binding transactions, the slave could not be substituted for the master in case of criminal convictions. If the master wanted to put his slave available to a third party, he needed to do so in forms (sale, lease, loan, etc.). See Jean-Jacques Aubert, Business Managers in Ancient Rome: A Social and Economic Study of Institores, 200 BC–AD 250 (Brill: Leiden, 1994), 40–116. Referring to Pliny’s construction of slave agency, Sandra R. Joshel indicates that, “In paternalistic discourse, slaves must have agency, yet their personhood must also be so transparent that they serve as blank screens onto which the master projects himself: their hair is his hair; their interests, his interests; their feelings, his feelings; their dreams, his dreams. There is no opposition, then, between slave as object and slave as human: rather, at the moment that the slave becomes visible as person, it is because he/she is most useful to the writer’s discourse.” See Joshel, “Slavery and Roman Literary Culture,” in The Cambridge World History of Slavery, Vol. 1, 237. Extrapolating from that thought one may indicate that Paul’s paternalistic discourse vis-à-vis Onesimus is constructed in a way to highlight the slave’s usefulness to him and to Philemon. Onesimus’ very personhood functions through his usefulness as a diligent brotherslave/thing that can be owned and transferred. Therefore, I cannot agree with Peter T. O’Brien’s sociologically un-nuanced appraisal of the situation where theology seems to trump social realities when he states, “The relationship between the two men [Philemon
and Onesimus] is deepened, so that the terms ‘slave’ and ‘master’ are transcended. And although Onesimus’ earthly freedom may be of positive value, finally it is of no ultimate significance to him as a Christian as to whether he is slave or free. In the end what matters is to have accepted God’s call and to follow him.” See Peter T. O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*. World Biblical Commentary 44 (Waco, Texas: Thomas Nelson, 1982), 270. A similar theological conclusion, although slightly more nuanced, is expressed in Richard Lehmann, *Épitre à Phîlémon. Le Christianisme primitive et l’esclavage* (Genève: Labor et Fides, 1978). For Lehmann, Paul is not immediately preoccupied to either create a new social order or to be in conformity with the world as it is. Through his conversion, Onesimus’ relationship to his master and to his own self are situated beyond the juridical system and economic structures of the present social order and are expressed “in Christ.” Through his conversion, Onesimus becomes part of an eschatological community where love and true freedom are constituted/renewed by means of brotherly rapport with one and another.


94 Certainly one may interpret this theologically, that is, in the sense that Philemon owes his spiritual life to Paul who preached to him and he converted to the gospel of Christ. However, one may also develop a historical and social imagination that allows considering Paul’s statement differently. Maybe Paul is alluding to an event the whole assembly knows about, or to an episode they may have heard about, and he reminds Philemon of that particular circumstance. I advance this possibility in order to move away from the too theological treatment of this statement, and consider the flesh-and-blood social actors involved in the honour and shame process that is being deployed through Paul’s rhetoric.


96 See Chris Frilingos, “‘For My Child, Onesimus’: Paul and Domestic Power in Philemon,” *JBL* 119.1 (2000): 91–104. Frilingos notes that Paul positions himself as the affectionate and commanding father and thus fulfills and assumes the *paterfamilias* role with authority over both the slave holder—who no longer has the legal right to decide the fate of his property—and the slave. In this sense, Paul assures his patronage over both.

97 I do not see any evidence in the letter that Onesimus was to carry the letter prior to Paul’s eventual release from prison and visit to Philemon.

98 Sandra R. Joshel states, “The runaway dramatically demonstrates an independence of will, disloyalty, lack of devotion, and bad service. Importantly, too, he is guilty of stealing the slave owner’s property—himself!” See Joshel, *Slavery in the Roman World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 118.

99 Running away was, according to Keith Bradley, “one of the most prevalent but hazardous forms of slave resistance in the Roman world” and “the actions of those who undertook it stand as an eloquent statement on the harshness of the institution they wished to flee, and on the motivating force of the will to reject slavery.” See Bradley, “Resisting Slavery at Rome,” in *The Cambridge World History of Slavery*: Volume 1, 373.

100 A slave who fled from the domain of his master in antiquity was constantly threatened and could be captured and returned to his master at any point. The authorities were at the service of the master in capturing any runaway slave. In fact, a specific group of Romans called Fugitivarii made it their profession to
identify and catch runaway slaves in order to return them to their masters—often for the runaway slave(s) to face the death penalty after having been branded on the face or the forehead with the letter “F” (Fur-thief, Fug-fugitive, runaway). Petronius, for example, has a character in his Satyricon (103) say this: “Eumolpus covered both our foreheads with huge letters and wrote with a rough hand the stigmatic mark of runaway slaves all over our faces.” See among others Christopher P. Jones, “Stigma: Tattooing and branding in Graeco-Roman Antiquity,” JRS 77 (1987): 139–155.

Maybe that might have implied for Onesimus not to face the death penalty upon his return or branded on the face as a fugitive.

There are interpretations of Onesimus’ new status both “in the flesh” and “in the Lord” that point to an emancipation of Onesimus. See, in particular, Allen D. Callahan, “Paul’s Epistle to Philemon: Toward an Alternative Argumentum,” HTR 86 (1993): 357–376, and Callahan, Embassy of Onesimus: The Letter of Paul to Philemon (Valley Forge, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1997). Callahan goes so far as to argue, in what remains unconvincing to most scholars, that Onesimus was not a slave, but Philemon’s estranged actual brother. See also Demetrius K. Williams, “‘No Longer as a Slave’: Reading the Interpretation History of Paul’s Epistle to Philemon,” in Onesimus Our Brother: Reading Religion, Race, and Culture in Philemon (eds. Matthew V. Johnson, James A. Noel and Demetrius K. Williams; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012). Demetrius places Onesimus at the center of his discussions, and he finds in the slave a beloved Christian brother who is situated at the margins of the biblical interpretive traditions with whom he can sympathize by means of a liberating reading of the text.

Elisabeth S. Fiorenza notes, “The kyriarchal household pattern conceives not only of family, but also of church and state in terms of the patriarchal household. The Christian community soon comes to be called ‘the household of God’, and G*d is understood as Herr (kyrios = slavemaster) and father in analogy to the great kings of the ancient Near-East and the Roman emperors who, from the time of Augustus, were understood as the pater patriae.” See Fiorenza, “Slave Wo/Men and Freedom: Some Methodological Reflections,” in Postcolonial Interventions: Essays in Honor of R. S. Sugirtharajah (ed. Tat-siong Benny Liew; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2009), 127.

In their introduction to the volume of Onesimus Our Brother, Matthew Johnson, James Noel and Demetrius Williams argue, rightly, that in the long history of interpretation of Paul’s letter to Philemon the center of attention has usually been either Paul (in most cases) or Philemon: “Rarely, if at all, has the other central figure, regarding whom and about whom the letter was written—Onesimus—stepped out of the background. He has been mentioned, discussed, referenced; subtly present, but voiceless, powerless, hidden in the shadows and without agency.” See Onesimus Our Brother, 1.


Ibid., 94.

This is the premise that informed most of the theologians working/ministering within the Liberation Theology movement. One of the earliest and most influential books on liberation theology is by Gustavo Gutiérrez, Teología de la liberación: perspectivas (1971) (trans. Sister Caridad Inda and John Eaglson, rev. ed.; Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988). See also, In the Company of the Poor: Conversations with Dr. Paul Farmer and Fr. Gustavo Gutiérrez (ed. Michael Griffin and Jennie Weiss Block; Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2013). This type
of emphasis on oppression and on God’s positioning with the marginalized is also highlighted in the works of many theologians who have articulated the concerns and the sufferings of blacks in the United States. See the works of James H. Cone, and in particular, *A Black Theology of Liberation* (Philadelphia: J. P. Lippencott, 1970), and *God of the Oppressed* (New York: Seabury Press, 1975).


109 As I reflect on this sentence, I understand the malaise a social historian, who is simply interested in human social activities, might have. I raise this theological interpretation simply to offer a contrastive reading to a social historical approach, but my overall approach remains that of a social historian.

110 Some may argue that Paul’s words should be an incentive in showing leniency towards runaway slaves, but that particular interpretation is only one way this text has been interpreted. See J. Albert Harrill, *Slaves in the New Testament*, especially chapter 7, “The use of the New Testament in the American Slave Controversy,” 165–192; Demetrius K. Williams, “‘No Longer as a Slave’: Reading the Interpretation History of Paul’s Epistle to Philemon,” in *Onesimus Our Brother*, 11–45.


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**Chapter 4**


2 John 15:15; my translation.

3 There are some discrepancies in the various descriptions of this particular slave. I will pay attention to these issues later on in the chapter.

4 See Jennifer Glancy, *Slaves in the New Testament*, chapter 4, “Parabolic Bodies: The figure of the Slave in the Sayings of Jesus.” She considers Jesus’ reliance on slavery as metaphors for his parables in Matthew and in Luke in order for her to question the ideology that is behind the use of slavery in these parables. On Jesus’ parables that feature slaves, see also Ernest van Eck, *The Parables of Jesus the Galilean: Stories of a Social Prophet* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2016).

5 Jeremy Punt, *Postcolonial Biblical Interpretation: Reframing Paul* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 48. The full quote reads: “Broadly speaking then, postcolonial biblical criticism is less about propounding the virtues of a new methodology and much more about a shift in focus. It employs a reading strategy of training the eye on that which was missing in previous analyses, while pursuing a rewriting and correction of past texts—it involves exposure, restoration, and transformation.”


7 What Christopher Rowland states about the role of the interpreter to notice tensions in and around texts is true in this regard: “A text will not usually produce a particular ideology in a ‘pure’ form, whether it be supportive of the *status quo* or
not. Accordingly, however loud the note of protest in a text, it is going to be shot through the ambiguities of being part and parcel of a world that is itself full of contradiction and pain. Any text’s relation to that struggle will not necessarily stand firm on one side or another. Sometimes it will manifest the voice of the oppressor and his ideology in the process of seeking to articulate that subversive memory. It is part of the task of interpretation to lay bare the ambiguities and contradictions that are inherent in all texts.” See Rowland, “Social, Political, and Ideological Criticism,” in The Oxford Handbook of Biblical Studies (eds., J. W. Rogerson and Judith M. Lieu; Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 659.

The most compelling and thorough treatment of this parable is by John S. Kloppenborg, The Tenants in the Vineyard: Ideology, Economics, and Agrarian Conflict in Jewish Palestine (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006).

8 The actions of God are placed in parallel to the actions of the slave owners in the parables, as they are introduced with the formula, “the Empire of God is like ...” Hector Avalos, in his very provocative style states: “If the parables are analogous to God’s kingdom, then God’s kingdom can be a place of horrific torture.” See Hector Avalos, Slavery, Abolitionism, and the Ethics of Biblical Scholarship (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2013), 154.

9 παῖς refers to a child, to a young man, to a slave of any age, or to a boy (boy-slave) who is at the service of a master. See BDAG, s.v. παῖς. Translating παῖς as “boy,” or “pet slave” in this case, or even “boy-toy/sex object,” allows one to highlight the ambiguity of the language used by the centurion. In Martian, for example, boys are referenced as sex objects (3.65, 4.42, 11.22, 12.96.7.12). For more on exploring this usage of the word παῖς see Thomas K. Hubbard, ed., Homosexuality in Greece and Rome. A Sourcebook of Basic Documents (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003). See also Mark Golden, “Paîs, ‘Child’ and ‘Slave,’” L’Antiquité Classique 54 (1985): 91–104.

10 On the Roman masters employing professional torturers to punish slaves deemed useless and recalcitrant see Albert Harrill, Slaves in the New Testament, 109, note 32, especially for the bibliographical sources provided. The practice of a slave master handing his slaves over to professional torturers to punish them in sometimes brutal manners, such as cutting them in pieces (Matthew 24:51), is accepted without any qualm or moral objection by Jesus, as portrayed in the gospels. Albert Harrill summarizes this well when he states: “The author of Matthew makes explicit his contrast of the ‘good slave’ (who shows loyalty to an absent master) and the ‘bad slave’ (who does not), two stock types in tales of absentee ero (when the master’s away) familiar from ancient comedy.” See Harrill, Slaves in the New Testament, 25. Scholars interested in both ancient slavery and ancient Greek comedy may also want to refer to the excellent edited volume by Ben Akkigg and Rob Tordoff, Slaves and Slavery in Ancient Greek Comic Drama (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013). On the trope of “good” vs “bad” slaves in Roman comedy, see W. G. Thalmann “Versions of slavery in the Captivi of Plautus,” Ramus 25 (1996): 112–145.

The lot of the “bad slave,” as stated by Richard P. Saller, “was to be beaten,” while the “good slave” was “to internalize the constant threat of a beating.” See Saller, Corporal Punishment, Authority, and Obedience in the Roman Household,” in Marriage, Divorce, and Children in Ancient Rome (ed. Beryl Rawson; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 144–165. William G. Thalmann suggests that the depiction of the “bad” slave in literature (who “possesses no independent capacity for
moral choice, and is therefore easily corruptible by any who want to use him or her for their own ends"


One may also notice that due to the close proximity between owner and slave inside the households many slaves in antiquity knew the deep internal, private matters of the house and used that knowledge for the good of the family (implying that a slave with that kind of strategic knowledge could also act otherwise, and was feared by the masters to be about to act otherwise). See Richard P. Saller, "The Hierarchical Household in Roman Society: A Study of Domestic Slavery," in Serfdom and Slavery: Studies in Legal Bondage (ed. Michael L. Bush; London: Routledge, 1996), 112–129.


Glancy is perceptive when she states: “While Luke leaves no doubt that slaveholders would not customarily act as waiters for weary slaves, the structure of these parables rests on the recognition that the welfare of chattel slaves depends on the caprice of the slaveholder and not on the intrinsic merits of the slave.” Slavery, 110. See also Marianne B. Kartzow, “Gendered Slave Bodies and ‘Metaphorical Violence’: Thinking with Luke 12:45–46,” in Destabilizing the Margins: An Intersecional Approach to Early Christian Memory (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2012), 31–45.


Luke modifies the Markan formulation because, as suggested by Glancy, it is “potentially offensive to hearers.” Glancy, Slavery, 106.

See Glancy, Slavery, 106–107 to question that declaration. She states, “After telling his followers that he will no longer call them slaves but friends, Jesus employs the slave-master rubric to describe their relationship. Here as elsewhere in the farewell discourse, John’s logic falters. Nonetheless, these sayings reconfirm in a distinctive context the impression that Jesus routinely drew on the imagery of slaves and slaveholders to describe the relationship between his followers and himself or perhaps between the followers and a divine master.” Jesus, in stating that he will no longer call his disciples slaves but friends is, according to Hector Avalos, “exercising a very well-known option of masters to adopt slaves or treat them as members of the household. These slaves can be like family to one another, but that does not mean slavery has ceased to exist. This privilege is extended only to those the master has ‘chosen’ ([Jon 15] (v. 19).” Hector Avalos, Slavery, 156. Avalos helpfully provides an example of such friendship in Seneca: “Associate with your slave on kindly, even on affable terms; let him talk with you; plan with you; live with you … Do
you not see even this—how our ancestors removed from masters everything invi-
dious and from slaves everything insulting? They called the master the ‘father of
the household’, and slaves ‘members of the household’, a custom which still holds
in the mime … Yes, you are mistaken if you think I would bar from my table cer-
tain slaves whose duties are more humble.” Seneca, *Epistles*, 47.13–15 (Gummere,
LCL): “Vive cum servo clementer, comiter quoque, et in sermonem illum admittet
et in consilium e in convictum … Ne illud quidem videtis, quam omnem invidiam
maiores nostri dominis, omnem contumeliam servis detraxerint? Dominum patrem
familiae appellaverunt, servos, quod etiam in mimis adhuc durat, familiares …
Erras si existimas me quosdam quasi sordioris operae reiecturum.” Seneca does
indeed advocate treating slaves well, but it is partly to encourage better work and
loyalty from them—that is, it is not a true friendship. Indeed, those in the *familia
Caesaris* (officials, freedman, as well as slaves) were also called “friends of Caesar,”
on the basis of their loyalty to him, of playing the role of devoted clients at his
service while expecting favors in turn from him, and certainly not on being at the
same social and political level as him. See P. R. C. Weaver, *Familia Caesaris: A
Social Study of the Emperor’s Freedmen and Slaves* (Cambridge: Cambridge Uni-
versity Press, 1972). See also Gérard Boulvert, *Domestique et fonctionnaire sous le
Haut-Empire romain. La Condition de l’affranchi et de l’esclave du Prince*, Annales
littéraires de l’Université de Besançon 151 (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1974). Thus, those
close and loyal to Jesus, and those following him in his various journeys and
observing his teachings, are deemed to be his friends, his brothers and sisters
(Mark 3:35; Matthew 10:37; Luke 14:26). However, his friends are called to serve
one another as he serves them and not lord over them, in a similar manner as “the
rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over
them” (Matthew 20:25). The disciples needed to learn the lesson that the one
needing to be first among them shall be the slave of all (Matthew 24:27). In a
prominent Johannine scene, Jesus performs a servile office (foot washing) and
exhorts his disciples to imitate him (John 13:1–17).

21 Richard Saller depicts the general relationship between slaveholders and enslaved
persons in the context of ancient Roman Household very well in this statement
worth quoting at length: “The relationship between master and slave was inher-
ently one of exploitation. The loyalty of a slave was welcome and restraint on the
part of the master recommended, but the ultimate requirement of a slave was
obedience, and it was widely believed that a slave’s obedience rested finally on fear
of punishment. Because the relationship was basically exploitative, the slave was
believed to be naturally recalcitrant—hence the need to be goaded by the whip,
which was a (and perhaps the) principal feature of the slave’s condition.” See


23 However, the example of Jesus in a servile position and washing the feet of his
disciples in John is necessary to be mentioned in order to add some nuance to our
evaluation.

also William Fitzgerald, *Slavery and the Roman Literary Imagination*. Roman
Literature and Its Contexts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). Ato
Quayson is pertinent in his analysis of the relationship between literature and the
social. He is worth quoting at length: “Any concrete social situation described in
the literary text is to be grasped primarily as a problem or an enigma whose pur-
pose is not (solely) the disclosure of an authentic cultural life but rather the
embedded thematic of change, process, and contradiction. The form in which these
are to be discerned is through a focus on the variety of relations established between the various elements in the text and between these and the several discursive contexts that might be dialogically adduced for the text, irrespective of where the text originally came from. Literature and the social are related to each other because they mutually mirror systemic heterogeneities that manifest themselves as constellated and reconstellating thresholds.” See Quayson, *Calibrations: Reading for the Social* (Minneapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), Introduction, xxxi (emphasis original).

25 Although παιδίσκη can be translated as “young female slave” or as “slave girl,” as most Bible translations render it, I prefer to translate the term as “female slave,” “maid” or “maidservant.” This way, I detach myself from the social elite and slave-owning judgment and social privilege (in antiquity and in more recent times) of considering even adult slaves as lacking the honour and dignity of fully developed adults by addressing a slave man as “boy,” and a slave woman as “girl.” In Classical literature, παιδίσκη could simply refer to a young woman/girl, and not necessarily to a slave.

26 Cf. John 1:46.


30 Carolyn Osiek does underline the fact that Peter is addressing the female slave as γύναι, but she does not investigate what the implication of this address could be in the narrative. This is what she states: “In Luke, Peter addresses her as γύναι, an unusual form of address for a slave, but probably her slave status is not at issue here.” My question to her is: Why would her slave status not be at issue here? See Osiek, “Female Slaves, Porneia, and the Limits of Obedience,” in *Early Christian Families in Context: an interdisciplinary dialogue* (eds., David L. Balch and Carolyn Osiek; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2003), 267, note 26.

31 Luke also mentions a different character (similarly to Matthew) declaring to Peter he was one of those with Jesus. However, the identity of this other figure is clearly not a woman since Peter replied: “Man, I am not” (Ἄνθρωπε οὐ μένι Luke 22:58), although this particular character could be that of another slave as well.


35 Luke’s other mention of a παιδίσκη (Rhoda) is in Acts 12:15. I will consider that specific slave in the next chapter. Suffice it to say at this point that the other slave’s encounter is with Peter as well. The παιδίσκη in the gospel identifies who Peter is, just as the παιδίσκη in Acts recognizes Peter’s voice, as he is standing knocking outside of the household where she works. The nameless female slave doorkeeper in the gospels belongs to the high priest, whereas Rhoda belongs to someone within the Christ-group. Both, however, are deemed to be speaking nonsense, just as the women’s announcement of Jesus’ resurrection is considered nonsense by the male disciples.

36 J. Ramsey Michaels states something interesting and worth noticing: “If this disciple, who was known to the high priest, is the source for the narrative of both the arrest and the interrogation, it is understandable that Malchus, the high priest’s slave, would be named (v. 10) and also that Peter’s third questioner (v. 26) would be identified as Malchus’ relative. The latter identification serves as an ironic link between Peter’s misguided zeal in the garden in verse 10 and his abject cowardice in the high priest’s courtyard.” See Michaels, John. New International Biblical Commentary (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1989), 309.

37 Incidentally, there is no word on the other (unnamed) disciple who was known by the high priest, in the sense of his association or involvement with Jesus.


39 An analysis informed by subaltern studies shows that the process of Peter’s rehabilitation is for the sake of assuring and assuming power in the historical development of the Jesus movement. Peter’s rehabilitation means that, in time, he gained power and authority and played the role of an “empowered representative” (the term is from Bockmuehl, 2012, 76) of the movement, which in turn translated into power and authority for the early Christian thinkers, intellectuals, theologians, bishops, presbyters, elders and deacons, who insisted they have received their mandate through Jesus and through apostolic succession, especially through Peter the first bishop of Rome, admired for his great faith and deemed by some to be the “rock” on which Jesus built his church. Bockmuehl contends that “The memory of Peter as the ‘rock’ appears less as personal memory or polemical tradition than as a consensual principle held in common among many different communities.” Ibid., 179. It might well be so, but the question worth pondering is what is there to gain for these communities, or better, what is beneficial to some influential members and leaders of these ecclesial communities in terms of power by associating with one apostolic figure remembered as “caretaker of the kingdom’s keys, as binder and looser” (Ibid., 183)? Bockmuehl does not consider this line of enquiry in his
otherwise excellent study. The enduring memory of Peter as the “rock” contains in itself seed that will germinate, in time, to allow those who deem it their Christian duty to lock dissidents who do not align themselves to particular views or “right” understandings of God’s kingdom here on earth.


41 There are few parallel elements between Jesus’ arrest and that of Vitellius, the Roman emperor as reported by Tacitus in his Histories. Both are abandoned by their closest allies; both are insulted; both showed self-mastery and did not resist during what was to them a lonely and frightful moment. Just as one of Jesus’ supporters cut off an ear of one of those who came to arrest him, one of Vitellius’ supporters came up and cut off an ear of the tribune guarding him. This is how Tacitus reports the incident: “One of the soldiers from Germany met him and struck at him in rage, or else his purpose was to remove him the quicker from insult, or he may have been aiming at the tribune—no one could tell. He cut off the tribune’s ear and was at once run through” (Obvius e Germanicis militiae Vitellium infest ictu per iram, vel quo mutarius ludibrio eximerit, an tribunum adpetierit, in incerto fuit: aurem tribune amputavit ac statim confossus est). Tacitus, The Histories, 3.84 (trans. Clifford H. Moore; London: Harvard University Press, 1956), 476–477. Brian J. Incigneri proposes to understand this incident in Mark and the phrase “servant of the high priest” as a direct allusion to the Vitellius incident. This incident, according to Incigneri, may serve not only as a reminder of the fate of the previous emperor that brought chaos when Vespasian gained power through armed forces, but also as a way to discourage the use of force from Jesus’ followers (14:48–49). See Incigneri, The Gospel to the Romans: The Setting and Rhetoric of Mark’s Gospel (Biblical Interpretation Series, 65; Leiden: Brill, 2003), 176. Hector Avalos also mentions this incident and suggests that, based upon the parallels between the two stories, “we could read into the arrest of Jesus a stereotypical account of the arrest of a leader regarded in favor by the author.” See Avalos, The Bad Jesus: The Ethics of New Testament Ethics (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2015), 90. The first act of violence in the hours leading up to Jesus’ arrest is perpetrated not by those who came to arrest Jesus but by one of Jesus’ disciples against a slave. Jennifer Glancy suggests that “we focus not on corporal knowledge but on […] corporal ignorance—a culpable ignorance, at best oblivious to the cost of violence inflicted in the name of Jesus.” “The empathy created among members of the baptized community by visceral sharing in the passion of Jesus does not extend to damage inflicted—incidentally or not—on those outside that collectivized trauma.” Her conclusion is that, “Matthew, Luke, and John attempt to domesticate the first act of physical violence said to be committed the night of Jesus’ arrest, an act of violence committed not against his body but perpetrated by his followers against a slave. From allegorical readings of late antiquity to contemporary historical criticism, interpretative tradition deflects attention away from the damaged body of the slave and thus away from the collective memory of a household of enslaved persons wounded by assault.” See Glancy, “Corporal Ignorance: The Refusal of Embodied Memory,” in The Bible and Feminism: Remapping the Field (ed. Yvonne Sherwood; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 390–401 (here 391, 395, 401). I thank Jennifer for sharing her work with me.

42 I translate τὴν μάχαιραν as knife, but when I quote the NRSV I keep the translation they provide. See Paula Fredriksen, “Arms and The Man: A Response to Dale Martin’s ‘Jesus in Jerusalem: Armed and Not Dangerous,’” JSNT 37.3 (2015): 312–325.

43 This seems to suggest that more than one had a knife (cf. Luke 22:36–38).
Dale Martin, in a provocative article, states this in relation to how the incident is narrated in Luke: “The author of Luke–Acts, as we might expect from his depiction of the non-violent, innocent early church and the basically benevolent Romans, goes the furthest in attempting to play down the incident and protect Jesus from any suspicion of rebellion. This author first has Jesus tell his disciples to arm themselves, but only in order to fulfill a prophecy—a prophecy, incidentally, that says nothing about swords or arms of any kind. When the disciples rather ridiculously produce only two swords and ask, ‘Will just two be enough?’, Jesus says yes, two will be plenty. According to Luke’s account, the disciple who strikes the slave even first asks, ‘Lord, should we strike with the sword?’ He strikes, though, without waiting for explicit permission. Just to make sure we know Jesus himself meant no harm, the author informs us that Jesus immediately and miraculously healed the man’s ear. I am sure we are to suppose that the slave enjoyed even better hearing afterwards.” See D. Martin, “Jesus in Jerusalem: Armed and Not Dangerous,” Journal for the Study of the New Testament 37 (2014): 3–24 (here 6).

D. Martin suggests, “Luke’s account of Jesus instructing the disciples to get swords merely in order to fulfill prophecy, his insistence that there were only two swords involved, the disciple asking permission, and Jesus’ response are in all likelihood inventions of the author.” Indeed, the prophecy that is presupposed to be fulfilled in this incident is Isa. 53.12: “He was counted among the lawless.” However, as Martin notices, there is nothing in the Isaiah text that presupposes any sort of violence. Martin then advances, which I concur with, although with some reserve, that “Luke invents the account of the fulfillment of prophecy precisely because he knows that if Jesus’ disciples were armed in Jerusalem, and especially during the celebrations of the Passover festival, Jesus and his disciples would in fact be a band of λησταί—brigands, bandits, or social rebels. So Luke, more than any of the others, goes to lengths to explain away any rebellious or political significance of the idea that Jesus’ disciples may indeed have been armed at his arrest.” Ibid., 6. I doubt that all of Jesus’ disciples might have been armed, although at least some of Jesus’ disciples on the night of his arrest probably carried μάχαιραι (that is, that they might have been in possession of a knife, a dagger or some sort of “short sword”) with the clear view to instigate a kind of apocalyptic violent process during the turbulent festival of Passover with the hope that angels would come and help them usher in the new age of the Empire of God in the land of his people, as proposed by Martin. I do not concur fully with such an intriguing scenario, not because I believe Jesus and his bands were non-militant Jews who were not hoping, and praying, and expecting religious/political/economic changes that would put an end to the oppression of the poor, alleviate famines, eliminate heavy tax burdens, and all kinds of exploitation in the land, but because that is not what the evidence from the texts points to.

For Glancy, “In Luke, the slave’s body tells a story, but the story is not about a slave’s violation at the hands of Jesus’ followers. Rather, the slave’s body serves as a chapter in a larger narrative about Jesus’ compassion, solicitude exhibited even in a moment when Jesus is subjected to what Luke terms ‘the power of darkness’ (25:53).” See Glancy, “Corporal Ignorance,” 8.

For Arthur J. Droge, “Malchus remains a mystery. While the name is not unattested, it would be unusual, to say the least, for a slave to be named ‘King’! By having Peter strike at this (human) ‘king’ in a vain attempt to save Jesus, the author implies perhaps that Peter regarded Jesus as an earthly king.” See Droge, “The Status of Peter in the Fourth Gospel: A Note on John 18:10–11,” JBL 109.2 (1990): 307–311 (here 309). Indeed, the name “Malchus” is not an uncommon name for this period. Raymond E. Brown has noted that, “‘Malchus’ is found five
times in Josephus and is known from Palmyrene and Nabatean inscriptions (whence the suggestion that Malchus was an Arab).” See Brown, *The Gospel according to John* (xiii–xxi) (AB 29A: New York: Doubleday, 1970), 812.

The incident of the severed ear probably happened, based on the criteria of embarrassment and multiple attestations; otherwise, it would have been strange for the gospel writers to invent such an odd story and to associate it to a group and a leader whose memory earlier Christ-groups wanted to present to Roman readers as non-threatening and nonviolent.

Christopher W. Skinner has suggested that Malchus’ presence as a minor character in John 18 serves to enhance the action of the narrative and develop Peter’s characterization in the story. He states, “Peter’s actions with the sword contribute more to his own character than that of Malchus. This is probably the most important reason for Malchus’ inclusion in the story. He further highlights Peter’s reckless and impulsive behavior […] Even as a minor player, Malchus adds theological depth to the narrator’s presentation of Peter’s contradictory character as well as the picture of Jesus’ commitment to his mission.” See Skinner, “Malchus: Cutting Up in the Garden (John 18:1–11),” in *Character Studies in the Fourth Gospel: Literary Approaches to Seventy Figures in John* (eds., Steven Hunt, D. François Tolmie and Ruben Zimmerman; WUNT; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 568–72, here 571, 72.

I identify this slave as the woman who works as a doorkeeper at the high priest’s courtyard.

J. Glancy reminds us that “an abuse of a slave was an attack on the slaveholder’s personal dignity.” Glancy, *Slavery*, 12. This rejoins Dale Martin’s comments, although with some caution, “[T]he well-placed slave of an important woman or man was an important person. It mattered less that one was a slave than whose slave one was.” See Martin, *Slavery as Salvation: The Metaphor of Slavery in Pauline Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 35. It mattered a great deal that one was a slave, but Martin’s point is important as he raises the issue of to whom a slave belonged. In all the gospels, Malchus (a male figure) is the only slave who is named. He may have been a known figure, or an important/managerial slave at the service of the high priest. It is plausible Peter may have targeted him directly if Malchus was amongst the crowd to observe Jesus’ arrest and to report to his owner. I am not saying, as Benedict T. Viviano proposed, that Malchus was the deputy of the high priest and that Peter’s action of cutting the slave’s ear was meant to shame the high priest and, *inter alia*, disqualify his deputy for office. See Viviano, “The High Priest’s Ear: Mark 14:47,” *RB* 96 (1989): 71–80.

Notice that she, like a master, views injury to a family member as injury to herself. Roman law worked thus for slave and free but slave families did not count at law.

Some slaves may have been bred within the same household, while others were purchased on the slave market; they could have been from diverse ethnic origins or not. See Keith Bradley, *Slavery and Society at Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). Malchus and the female slave doorkeeper could have been from the same ethnic background and they could have developed special bonds.

This is not an altogether impossible scenario. Close relatives could be married, and slaves living in the same household could set up quasi-marital unions, although the slave-owners had legal prerogatives over their union and could break the family and sell them, or their children, to others for profit. It goes without saying that the domestic slave households were extremely complicated, unstable, vulnerable, based on the intersectionality of their multiple identities. Jonathan Edmondson states that “the larger the slave household, the greater the number of such unions there might have been at any one time, and the greater the possibility for each slave


56 The Passion narratives indicate that Jesus was perceived or suspected by those in authority as being a social bandit (Mark 15:1ff; Mark 15:16ff); the sign on the cross clearly pointed to Jesus as a royal pretender to the Jewish throne (Mark 15:26; Matthew 27:37; Luke 23:38; John 19:19).

57 One may recall Joel 2:28–29 (LXX 3:1–2) who speaks about how even slaves will prophesy in the last days: καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν δούλων καὶ ἐπὶ τὰς δούλας ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις ἑκείναις ἐκχεῖ ἀπὸ τοῦ πνεύματός μου.

Chapter 5

1 For Penner and Stichele, “Violence in the Lukan narrative is not just something that ‘frames’ or ‘happens’ in the narrative, and the gender relations reflected in the violence are not accidental or circumstantial. Rather, they are fundamental features of the story itself.” “Gendering Violence,” 202.


3 The whip was always ready to accomplish its purpose on the back of a nearby slave. Juvenal also mentions the case of a slaveholder supervising preparations for a dinner party with his whip in hand to motivate his slaves (Juv.6.219–24). The whip was always ready to accomplish its purpose on the back of a nearby slave. Juvenal also mentions the case of a slaveholder supervising preparations for a dinner party with his whip in hand to motivate his slaves (Juv.6.219–24).

3 By “mirror story” I mean reading one story as a reflection of another (previous) narrative, although the (re)created/(re)imagined story articulates its own particularities. I develop this concept later on in the chapter.

4 The name “Luke” is used only as a convenient authorial reference, without assuming anything about the identity of an actual author in antiquity named Luke, who was known as “the beloved physician” (Colossians 4:14) and accompanied a first-century “Christian” apostle named Paul (Acts 28:30–31; 28:10–16; Philo

5 Todd Penner and Caroline V. Stichele are right when they state, “Although some scholars have challenged the dominant paradigm provided by Acts, the stories of the subaltern other on the whole tend to remain submerged behind the dominant textual voice.” See Todd Penner and Caroline V. Stichele, “Gendering Violence: Patterns of Power and Constructs of Masculinity in the Acts of the Apostles,” in *A

6 See Kartzow, Gossip and Gender: Othering of Speech in the Pastoral Epistles (Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2009), 76.


9 That is, the story focusses on Peter as the central character; the authorial voice is that of a third-person narrator.

10 I want to specify I am not saying she was simply the doorkeeper. Opening the door seems to have been one of her functions.

11 What is stated here is at a narrative level.

12 In relation to how Rhoda is treated as hysterical by the others in the house of Mary, F. Scott Spencer states, “The poor girl is either too hysterical or too naïve to trust her judgment; being ‘out of mind’ renders her ‘out of voice.’” F. Scott Spencer, “Out of mind, out of voice: Slave-girls and Prophetic daughters in Luke-Acts,” BibInt. vii.2 (1999): 133–155 (here 144). Spencer’s article greatly influenced my way of thinking about Rhoda’s voice and presence in this narrative. Spencer adds elsewhere: “Apparently, the Jerusalem disciples are not yet ready to adopt the Pentecost agenda fully, particularly when it comes to heeding the voice of women and lower-class servants.” See F. S. Spencer, Journeying Through Acts: A Literary-Cultural Reading (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004), 139.


Margaret Aymer refers to the gathering of this group as a “traumatic gathering.” For her, “In the face of political oppression, they cannot see the oppression they perpetuate. In the face of their own darkness, for one enslaved girl they perpetuate intersectional darkness.” See M. Aymer, “Outrageous, Audacious, Courageous, Willfull: Reading the Enslaved Girl of Acts 12,” in Womanist Interpretations of the Bible: Expanding the Discourse (eds., Gay L. Byron and Vanessa Lovelace; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature Press, 2016), 266.


Ivoni Richter Reimer’s liberation reading of Rhoda is altogether un-nuanced, in spite of containing few interesting and suggestive elements. She concludes, for example, that the fact that a slave woman talks back is an indication “that in this community in Mary’s house the barriers between masters and slaves were broken down; here there are neither slaves nor masters/mistresses, but all are one in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:28).” See I. R. Reimer, Women in the Acts of the Apostles: A Feminist Liberation Perspective (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 242. One need remember that insouciance or impudence were some of the stereotypical views held by slave owners regarding the ancient slaves. In this view, slaves were typically seen as rude; they would not accept the slaveholder’s criticisms of their supposedly erratic behaviours without talking back as an attempt to explain their perceived silliness. Howard C. Kee follows the same direction of seeing inclusivity and harmony in this community based on the character Rhoda. He states, “The servant girl Rhoda, whose joyous recognition of Peter by his voice failed to convince the others until they finally responded to his persistent knocking, is an example of the inclusiveness of the new community: she is a woman and a servant.” See Howard C. Kee, To Every Nation under Heaven: The Acts of the Apostles (Harrisburg, Penn.: Trinity Press International, 1997), 154. It is interesting to note that those who disbelieved Rhoda are in fact the fools (even if they are portrayed as hyper-rational). However, the fact that Rhoda is called crazy and is to a certain extent portrayed as not having complete control over her emotions, is certainly in line with ancient stereotypes about both women and slaves.

Peter at this point, by being made to continue knocking at the door and being denied entrance back into this social space, at least momentarily, is experiencing a violence that Rhoda, as a slave, experiences every day.

An Exodus symbolism is at play in Acts 12. For bibliography and further reflections see Christian Grappe, “Repas nocturnes, fêtes et identité dans les Actes,” Revue d’histoire et de philosophie religieuse 1 (2013): 121–134. At the Exodus, as reported in Exodus 12, an angel of death exercised violence against the first Egyptian males. The night of the Passover (τὸ πάσχα) is described as both dreadful and hopeful. The people of Israel needed to hurry up (μετὰ σπουδῆς, Ex. 12:11) and be ready to depart from the land of slavery. It is only a miracle that allowed Yahweh to bring his people out (ἐξῆλθον, Ex. 12:42 and Acts 12:17). Peter’s liberation from prison may thus be understood “comme une sortie d’Égypte en raccourci.” See W. Rordorf, “Zum Ursprung des Osterfestes am Sonntag,” Theologische Zeitschrift 18 (1962): 183, n. 65, translated and quoted in Christian Grappe (2013), 127.

On some ancient authors’ stereotypical impressions of women associated with earliest Christ-groups as hysterical, see Margaret Y. MacDonald, Early Christian...
In the case of Peter’s request, the silence serves the greater good of delivering the good news. One may, however, reflect on how the silencing of “the crowd,” which is the actual direct object of the verb in 12:17, is best understood as part of a larger set of related actions that are ultimately good to advance the ideology of the biblical author. A contemporary novel is very evocative of the story of Peter standing in front of the crowd. The elements of silence, of death and life, and of dream present in both texts are gripping: “It was like an ancient Roman forum, as they all sat watching the play and turned in unison to look at me. They clapped and they hooted and they laughed, as the empty faced performers apparently gave their lines, which I couldn’t hear but they heard it, and it caused the assembly to rock in their seats. I stood and watched this spectacle and suddenly all were silent as I walked up the steps. I walked to the center of the stage, looked at the empty faced chorus and then to the silent audience and spoke, ‘You are all wrong. I’m alive, but if I was dead, I wouldn’t be here, I would be with God. For God knows me, not you. You only know a person for a moment, a short time, not that person’s life … not me … not me … not me …’ I raised myself up on my elbows, coming out of my dream. ‘My God, what was that all about?’” See David Borland, *In a Moment’s Time* (Victoria, BC: FriesenPress, 2012), 235.


As Mitzi J. Smith rightly puts it, “Rhoda functions, not as the keen witness she is, but as the internal other who enhances or contributes to the epiphanic nature of Peter’s appearance.” See Smith, *The Literary Construction of the Other in the Acts of the Apostles: Charismatics, the Jews, and Women* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., 2012), 129.


John J. Pilch notes that the response of the people in the community to Rhoda that it must be Peter’s angel indicates they believed that, “If she speaks truthfully, then she is likely perceiving a being from alternate reality, the realm of God: ‘his angel.’” See J. J. Pilch, *Visions and Healing in the Acts of the Apostles. How the Early Believers Experienced God* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2004), 101.


Yves Saoût has done a number of illuminating literary analyses on the parallel between Jesus’ story and that of Peter. He puts the aim of the unity of the two narratives elegantly: “L’intention de Luc est évidente: montrer que Pierre, comme son Seigneur, est passé par les sombres régions de la mort et en a été délivré par Dieu.” See Yves Saoût, *Cette activité libératrice: Étude des Actes des apôtres: Les disciples de Jésus devant le pouvoir, l’avoir, le savoir* (Paris: Nouvelles Éditions Mame, 1984), 75.

Keith Hopkins draws attention to the fact that strict expectations regarding comportment were important in antiquity for assuring the maintenance and the clear divisions of social positioning: “The controlling elite was expected to be self-controlled.” See Hopkins, “Novel Evidence for Roman Slavery,” *Past and Present* 138.
10. On the virtue of restraining one’s emotions as an act valued by the Roman upper classes see also Robert Kaster, *Emotion, Restraint, and Community in Ancient Rome*, 84–103. Luke portrays the people gathered for prayer in the house as being able to control themselves, assuming thus the position of a respectable group, while having the crowd characterize the slave as crazy/unable to control herself. Jennifer A. Glancy also observes how important the demarcation between free bodies and enslaved bodies were in many early Christian texts: “In a wide variety of ways, early Christian writings participated in the broader cultural anxiety about the maintenance of decent boundaries between the statuses of slave and free.” Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 72.


31 This is the argument J. Albert Harrill advances in “The Dramatic Function of the Running Slave Rhoda (Acts 12.13–16): A Piece of Greco-Roman Comedy,” *NTS* 46 (2000): 150–157. For Harrill, Rhoda plays the role of a *servus currens* (the character of a running slave in Roman comedy). He states: “Far from being a realistic representation that indicates Luke’s use of some historical source, Rhoda is a running cliche of Greco-Roman situation comedy. Her function is to intensify the anticipation of the reader, to develop irony (inasmuch as the reader has more knowledge of the situation than do the characters), and to provide comic relief at a critical juncture in the narrative when all seems lost.” Harrill, “The Dramatic Function,” 151. My analysis of the character Rhoda does not hang so much on whether she was a historical person or not. In fact, the construction of many women characters may tell us more about male and/or master fantasies of women, both enslaved and free, than about historical women. I consider the narrative as a textual unit and, although I lean towards the plausibility of the historical existence of Rhoda, I cannot deny that Luke might have well embellished the story to serve his own theological and political rhetoric. In other words, what I am suggesting is that behind the redaction of these enslaved women’s stories lies a historical incident that may be reconstructed. However, I accept partly Harrill’s conclusion that “Rather than advancing a theme of liberation that subverts slavery, Luke reinforces its institution and ideology [by making Rhoda a running cliché which encourages laughter at her as a moral inferior even when her news is true].” Ibid., Harrill, 157. The bracketed part of the sentence is what I am not ready to accept. There is a lot more that could be taken from comedy, both the Attic comedy of Aristophanes, and the Roman comedy of Plautus and Menander, in terms of slaves being mouthy, emotionally unstable and generally silly. The Roman comedies have almost too many slaves of every conceivable type to mention. I think, however, that the richest source of commentary on slaves, in the Greek world at least, can be found in the context of the helots of Sparta. The helots were subject to ritual violence and degradation, in ways that probably influenced the milieu of Luke. See, for example, S. E. Alcock and N. Luraghi, eds., *Helots and their Masters in Laconia and Messenia: Histories, Ideologies, Structures* (Washington: Center for Hellenic Studies, 2003); V. I. Anastasiadis and P. N. Doukellis, eds., *Esclavage Antique et Discriminations Socio-Culturelles* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2005); A. Paradiso, “The Logic of Terror: Thucydides, Spartan Duplicity and an Improbable Massacre,” in *Spartan Society* (ed. T. J. Figueira; Swansea: The Classical Press of Wales, 2004), 179–198. For primary sources, Plutarch’s *Life of Lycurgus* and Xenophon’s *Constitution of the Lacedaemonians* offer plenty of material on the helots, the ideology
behind them, and the treatment they received at the hand of the Spartans. One of the most powerful statements on the treatment of slaves in general, in this case in a Roman Republican context, is found in Plutarch’s *Life of Cato*, 21.1–4.


34 There is a significant difference between Cassandra and Rhoda, however. One is free, the other a slave. However, although she is not enslaved in the *Iliad*, she is moving toward violent enslavement.


36 I will come back to this question later on.


38 That Homer and famed scenes from the *Iliad* were part of Luke's mental apparatus is not surprising in light of his culture and education, but one need be cautious about pushing the material to claim that this is what he is doing self-consciously. I engage in doing this kind of comparison for analytical purposes without being convinced that Luke was doing so clearly and intentionally as an ancient author.

39 Ibid., 145.


41 Carolyn Osiek notes Mary’s allusion to herself as the δουλη of God in Luke 1:38, 48, after mentioning Rhoda as a slave among believers in Mary’s house in Jerusalem. The only link Osiek seems to suggest between Mary's allusion and Rhoda’s social condition as a slave is that the usage of δουλη in Mary’s case is “of course metaphorical, but some of the connotations of female slavery are necessarily attached, especially her lack of honor, which only God can bestow on the honorless.” Osiek, “Female Slaves, Porneia, and the Limits of Obedience,” in *Early Christian Families in Context: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue* (eds., David L. Balch and Carolyn Osiek; Grand Rapids, Mich./Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), 267. Although I notice the comparison between Mary’s reference to herself as a δουλη of God and I propose a reimagining of Rhoda’s narrative based on Mary’s Magnificat, I do not want to lose sight of the slave status of Rhoda versus the social status of Mary.

42 In this imaginative theological reading, Luke’s Peter is the one who assumes comedic qualities. After his rather humorous escape from prison, he enters into the house, seemingly oblivious of the presence of the slave, and without presenting any hint of understanding any larger theological significance she may have. On exploring this comedic side of the story, although without the nuance and the scholarly distance needed, see Kathy Chambers, “‘Knock, Knock—Who’s There?’ Acts 12.6–17 as a Comedy of Errors,” in *A Feminist Companion to the Acts of the Apostles*, 89–97. One criticism I expect is that my reliance on the work of D. R. MacDonald is skeptical. One may argue that the association between Cassandra and Rhoda is far too tenuous to be of any value, and that Aphrodite is not immediately conceived of as connected to the rose. Indeed, MacDonald's work
may give the general impression that he reads far more into the Classical texts than is really there, and certainly more than the New Testament writers seemed to notice in any meaningful way. Notwithstanding these cautions, I think the value of MacDonald’s work, at least from the materials I have used here, is in its capacity to help a reader tease out fresh possibilities and to situate the Lukan narratives in a broader cultural and literary milieu.

44 Mitzi J. Smith notices that “Peter’s encounter with Rhoda in some respects parallels Paul’s encounter with Lydia and the Pythian slave girl.” Smith, *The Literary Construction*, 128.
45 There are three prison-escape stories in Acts (5:18–19; 12:5–10; 16:23–34), but my interest is only in the last two—although the one in chapter 16 can hardly qualify as an escape narrative—because of the link each of these stories has with a slave woman. See John B. Weaver, *Plots of Epiphany: Prison Escape in Acts of the Apostles*. Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche 131 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2004).
47 The “groups” function differently in the two stories.
48 One may argue Paul and his companions had no way of knowing her name since she was a stranger to them, unlike Rhoda who was with the crowd at Mary’s place. A counter argument to this logic would be that the narrator displays important knowledge about this nameless slave, namely, she had a spirit of divination and that she earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune telling. That particular slave woman remains nameless because the author considers her as an annoying background noise that needed to be stopped, whose name was totally irrelevant.
49 I will qualify that statement later on in the chapter.
50 Literally, a spirit of Python. Πύθων, the serpent/dragon at Delphi, had possession of the oracle of Apollo at Delphi before being slain by Apollo in a contest.
51 The geographical space for the development of this narrative is Philippi (Acts 16:12). Philippi was founded by Philip II of Macedonia in around 358 B.C.E. It became a Roman city in around 168 B.C.E., and it was conceived as a Roman colony for retired army veterans in 31 B.C.E. when Augustus renamed Philippi as *Colonia Augustas Julia Philippensis* (Dio Cassius, *Hist. Rom.* 51.4.6). It was a hub of Roman culture; the colony was the beneficiary of a number of Roman rights and privileges (autonomous government, fiscal exemptions, and the Roman rule of law). See Charalambos Bakirtzis and Helmut Koester, eds., *Philippi at the Time of Paul and after his Death* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1988). By the time Paul and the missionaries with him would have entered the city in the early 50s, there were no Christ-groups in Philippi. The voice of the nameless slave echoes that of John the Baptist. The connections to the story between the nameless slave in Acts and John the Baptist are by ways of prophetic vocation and message. First, the prophetic oracle made by the priest Zachariah in the temple concerning his son to be born to his once barren and old wife Elizabeth: “And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High (προφήτης υψίστου); for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him, to give his people the knowledge of salvation (τοῖς διόνυσις γνῶσιν σωτηρίας)” (Luke 1:76–77). Second, the echoes between Acts 16:17 and Luke 3:4. For John, it is the prophetic voice crying out in the desert (φωνὴ βοῶντος ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ, Luke 3:4). The connection between these two intriguing characters may mean that like John the Baptist she is duly mandated to
announce to people the coming of a messenger (or messengers), who will lead the people to the way, or knowledge, of salvation. Her message is correct from Luke’s theological point of view. I am following F. Scott’s Spencer’s analysis at this point. See Spencer, “Out of mind, out of voice,” 147–148.

52 I use the word “ecstatic” not in the sense of mystical ecstasy, but to refer to sheer joy. It is true the text does not articulate this explicitly, but the verb ἔκραζεν (call out, cry out, shout, exclaim) used to describe her prophetic gifts seems to indicate she was euphoric in following and in announcing to others who these messengers were. One may also observe the similarity between her announcement and that of Matthew 21:9 concerning the coming of Jesus to Jerusalem: “The crowds that went before him and those that followed were shouting (ἔκραζον) ‘Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!’”

53 This possibility is raised because of the timeframe in the narrative.


55 The word ὑψιστος is found eight times elsewhere in the New Testament corpus (Mark 5:7; Luke 1:32, 35, 76; 6:35; 8:28; Acts 7:48; Heb. 7:1), and numerous times in the Septuagint. The term, expectedly in its biblical use, refers to the god of the Jews, which they claimed as the supreme one occupying the place of the Most High God. The oracle of the slave woman identified the Jewish crowd (Paul and the others) as “slaves of the High God” in the biblical sense of ὑψιστος. For more discussions and bibliographical sources on this lexical entry, see Ivoni R. Reimer, Women in the Acts of the Apostles, 161–167. Dennis R. MacDonald also shows another Greek classical text (a tragedy) that plays the role of antetext for Luke as he deployed the narrative of Acts 16:16–40. The text is Aeschylus’ Eumenides. It opens up with the Pythian prophetess praying to the gods for inspiration; the text ends with invocations that comprise a number of linguistics elements similar to what is found in the Lukan text. For example, ὑψιστος is mentioned and, as expected in this context, it is used in relation to Zeus. Polemically, Luke may have effectively used elements of this story in order to make the mantic prophetess confess, not Zeus as the all-powerful Most High God, but the one proclaimed by Paul and those with him. See MacDonald, Luke and Vergil: Imitation of Classical Greek Literature (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2014), 44–47. For the usages of ὑψιστος in Asia Minor and elsewhere, without the Jewish influence and referring to any deity in the Graeco-Roman pantheon, see Paul R. Trebilco, “Paul and Silas—‘Servants of the Most High God’ (Acts 16.16–18),” Journal for the Study of the New Testament 11 (1989): 51–73; and Trebilco, Jewish Communities in Asia Minor (SNTSMS 69; Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 127–144. See also Nicole Belayche, “De la polisémie des épiclèses: Υψίστος dans le monde gréco-romain,” in Nommer les dieux. Théonymes, épithètes, épiclèses dans l’Antiquité (eds., N. Belayche et al.; Paris/Rennes, Brepols: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2005), 427–442.


57 Bruce W. Longenecker states something similar: “The Lukan author frequently tries to establish that the good news of the Jesus-movement is not a threat to those in positions of civic responsibility, while at the same time registering ingredients of that news that run against the grain of Roman society and honor.” See Longenecker, Remember the Poor: Paul, Poverty, and the Greco-Roman World (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 270, note 28.
58 Κράτιστε is used on three occasions as a term of address for a Roman governor in Acts (23:26; 24:3; 26:25).

59 See Olivia F. Robinson, *The Criminal Law of Ancient Rome* (London: Duckworth, 1995), 80; Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 16.162. See also Mary E. Smallwood, *The Jews under Roman Rule from Pompey to Diocletian: A Study of Political Relations*, 2nd ed. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1976), 143. Some potential converts might have asked, justifiably: What is exactly the composition of various Christ-groups? How are Christ-believing groups similar to and different from other associiative communities in the Greek and Roman world? Are there prominent members of society who constitute important parts within the movement and who assume key leadership roles? Luke could not avoid these anxieties, and the Luke-Acts narrative gives clues regarding how he tried to negotiate these concerns and how he attempted to give an orderly sequence (καθεξῆς, Luke 1:3) and reasonable case for joining (or supporting) the movement of the Way.


64 Sarah I. Johnston states, “Diviners are frequently somewhat mobile members of society insofar as they are understood by nature to belong at its margins and yet may be called on to serve those firmly entrenched at its center.” *Mantikê: Studies in Ancient Divination*, 19.


66 One of the ideas of the etic definition is to make explicit that it was not necessarily so, but that the emic actors thought it was.

67 I will consider these verses later on.


69 Sandra R. Joshel states, “As property, the slave, even if his work is considered an art, has no physical integrity and is subject to his owner’s physical violence.” Joshel, *Slavery in the Roman World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 20.

70 Slave ownership was above all, as stated by Keith Bradley, “an expression of power,” because of the quasi-total control and level of domination the owners had over the lives of their human properties. Bradley, *Slavery and Society at Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 24. However, as rightly observed by Sandra R. Joshel, “Slaveholders’ complaints about quick-tempered, silly,
obstinate, sluggish slaves bespeak slaves’ refusal to serve with complete subservience.” Joshel, *Slavery in the Roman World*, 193. Bradley also gives various examples of slaves’ various forms of resistance (for example, running away, committing suicide, committing violent acts on slaveholders, cheating, lying, working at a slow pace, sabotaging property). See *Slavery and Society at Rome*, especially chapter 6, “Resisting Slavery.”


72 It is true the damage has been done to her spirit and not to her body, but these components go hand in hand. Without the ability to read signs and exercise her mantic abilities, she could even be forced to use her body as a prostitute in order to survive. This way, her owners would still receive the fees charged for her sexual labors in lieu of profiting from her previous prophetic works. Marianne B. Kartzow makes a similar point in *Destabilizing the Margins: An Intersectional Approach to Early Christian Memory* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2012), 131. On working as a prostitute for the profit of the slave owners, see S. Joshel, *Slavery in the Roman World*, 150. Kyle Harper has noted that in some cases slavery and prostitution were synonymous. See Harper, *Slavery in the Late Roman World*, 308–309.

73 I consider Lydia’s role in Acts later on in the chapter.

strategies may help us understand why he would place Paul within the category of a Roman citizen. He does not want anyone to consider his hero as a slave (that is, one considered mad, out of control, without honour, and susceptible to be publicly shamed without any qualm or recourse). Luke wants to state that even if Paul may have accepted being beaten and shamed as a slave, he had theological aims for doing so; he did not want his social status to be an impediment to his endeavours in preaching the good news to all. For more on the construction of Paul in Luke see Richard I. Pervo, *The Making of Paul: Constructions of the Apostle in Early Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), 149–156. For considering Luke-Acts as apologetic history see Gregory E. Sterling, *Historiography and Self-Definition: Josephos, Luke-Acts, and Apologetic Historiography*, Supplements to Novum Testamentum 64 (Leiden and New York: Brill, 1992).


I am alluding to the description of ancient slave provided by Norbert Brockmeyer when he states, “Diese Einteilung und Definition Zeigt, daß Sklaven als reine Produktionsinstrumente angesehen wurden, die sich nur durch ihre Stimme vom Vieh unterschieden. Wenn ein Sklave, wie hier gezeigt, als res galter, bedingte das nicht nur Recht-, sondern auch Pflichtenlosigkeit: In personam servilem nulla cadit obligatio (Dig. 50, 17, 22 pr.).” See Brockmeyer, *Antike Sklaverei*. Erträge der Forschung, Bd. 116 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1979), 9.

Self-inflicted death in the Roman world could be interpreted either as an individual’s wish to make his/her end stand as a commentary on the regime, or an act done in order to unveil the violence of the power in place. See Catharine Edwards, *Death in Ancient Rome* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 122–123.

Although there was a plot by some Jews to kill Paul (23:13–22), it could not be finalized. The various troubles that came up for Paul are not so much the result of the machinations of the Roman Empire, which shows benevolence towards him—notwithstanding the overarching framework of the violent imperial system—but of various local groups of people, mostly composed of Jews, who are treated as outsiders and depicted as the usual fomenters of violence (e.g., 13:44–50; 14:1–6, 19; 17:5–13; 18:12–17; 21:17–36; 22:22; 23:10, 20–21). Another example of the cessation of killings in Acts is found in Acts 27:42. The Roman soldiers responsible for guarding the prisoners on the ship sailing for Rome planned to kill the prisoners to prevent any of them from swimming free as a result of a shipwreck. That plan did not materialize either. The death of Paul is not narrated, but Paul’s ambition of extending the mission up to the capital of the empire is realized (19:21). Rome, ultimately, supersedes Jerusalem in Luke’s theological and political vision. Acts ends with Paul as a Roman prisoner under house arrest, proclaiming the message “to all who came to him” (28:30–31).

Robert M. Price suggests that it is not Paul who is annoyed by the slave woman but Luke, “who in his patriarchalist ecclesiastical context feels annoyance at the prospect of a woman preaching or prophesying.” His guess is that “the text before has depicted the Pythoness as a Philippian convert having joined Paul in his evangelistic activity there—and that her name was Lydia.” See Price, *The Widow*
Traditions in Luke-Acts: A Feminist-Critical Scrutiny. SBL Dissertations Series 155 (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1997), 228. Price’s dubious proposal that Luke split one character into two (Lydia=Rhoda) requires too much textual and interpretive gymnastics to be, at least to me, considered as a valid argument. My treatment of Lydia is admittedly underdeveloped simply because she is not the focus of my analysis. I mention her to show how she is placed between the narratives of the slave women to play Luke’s narrative function of what he values as the model of a good woman. In other words, the slave women function in the narrative as the “bad women” in contrast to Lydia’s status as a “good woman.” See Jeffrey L. Staley. “Changing Woman: Postcolonial Reflections on Acts 16.6–40,” Journal for the Study of the New Testament 73 (1999): 113–135, here 126–128. Staley argues that the juxtapositioning of Lydia and the slave woman allows one to understand their function as border-crossing women in the narrative—where the first inhabitants of a defined Roman territory Paul and the other missionaries met—placed at this particular juncture to legitimize the ideological and territorial conquests of the ideological colonizers.

80 Spencer remarks: “In the larger narrative of Acts 12:1–9, the public city-domain where Herod violently asserts his power is bounded by two gates: (1) the ‘iron gate’ (pyle) to the prison through which Herod intended to ‘bring out’ Peter for execution (12:4, 10) and (2) the ‘outer gate’ (pylon) to Mary’s home through which Peter gains ultimate refuge from Herod’s plot.” The references to “gate” continue when in 16:13 we read: “On the Sabbath we went outside the ‘city gate’ (pylēs) to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer.” F. Scott Spencer, “Out of mind, out of voice,” 143. The lexeme “gate” seems to play the role of a special spatial marker that helps in moving the narratives from point A to point B. Also, although the present chapter is about slaves in Acts and not women in Acts, it is important to mention Lydia in the analysis because of where she is situated in the narrative, and because of the role model she plays for Luke in comparison to the slave women.


83 See Michael White, “Visualizing the ‘Real’ World of Acts 16: Toward Construction of a Social Index,” in The Social World of the First Christians (eds., L. Michel White and O. Larry Yarbrough; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1995), 234–261. White also cautions about taking Luke’s narrative of how an important businesswoman in Philippi became part of the movement as accurately reflecting an actual and historical conversion of a woman named Lydia that happened in first-century Philippi. Ibid., here 259. Margaret Y. MacDonald follows this line of argument, which I agree with, and she advises that it “is probably best not to look for direct correlation between the story of Lydia and the real circumstances of Paul’s day. Rather, for the author of Acts Lydia represents the ideal woman convert, a facilitator of Christian growth to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8) whose own house serves as a base for the movement (16:15, 40).” See Margaret Y. MacDonald, “Was Celsus Right? The Role of Women in the Expansion of Early Christianity,” in Early Christian Families in Context, 177.


86 Penner and Stichele place the conquest of the slave woman and the defeat of the opposing group in a clear way: “The slave girl represents the battleground between Paul and her male owners. Her fate is entirely beside the point; there is no real sense of ‘healing’ or liberation in this narrative. At stake rather, is the demonstration of power; and, even more to the point, Paul’s superiority over other males (and his God over theirs). Interpretations that focus on the ‘demonic’ element again miss the point—this is a battle between men for control over her spirit, which is a source of profit for her owners. For Paul, however, she is an annoyance and a nuisance.” Todd Penner and Caroline V. Stichele, “Gendering Violence: Patterns of Power and Constructs of Masculinity in the Acts of the Apostles,” 206.

87 See Marianne B. Kartzow, “The Complexity of Pairing: Reading Acts 16 with Plutarch’s *Parallel Lives*,” in *Engaging Early Christian History*, 131. Kartzow, elsewhere, does excellent work in substituting the name of Luke for Aristotle in a profound statement made by Elizabeth V. Spelman in her book, *Inessential Woman: Problems of Exclusion in Feminist Thought* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1988), 38. The quote reads thus: “An account of Luke’s view about women that doesn’t inquire seriously into what he says about slave women not only announces that the position of slave women is theoretically insignificant, it also gives a radically incomplete picture of what he says about women who are not slaves.” See Kartzow, *Destabilizing The Margins*, 42. What is important to mention here is that we see not only “Luke’s view on women,” but also how he uses intersections of gender and class to construct hierarchy and ideals to satisfy certain Greco-Roman (male) gaze.


Joel’s prophecy (Joel 2:28–32) being rearticulated in Peter’s speech in Acts 2:17–21 that the Spirit will fall upon even male and female slaves (καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν δούλων μου καὶ ἐπὶ τὰς δούλες μου).


See the next chapter on Felicitas and Blandina.

Chapter 6


4 Jan den Boeft suggests that the editor may have been someone who belonged to a circle around Tertullian. See Jan den Boeft, “The Editor’s Prime Objective: Haec in

5 This statement, I recognize, is slightly inaccurate. Better: The narrative contains an account that many scholars hold to have been written by Perpetua herself and redacted by a redactor who had his own literary, theological and social agendas. In this sense, it can be difficult for a reader to differentiate Perpetua’s voice from the editor’s. See among others Heffernan, *The Passion*, 76–77. W. H. Shewring distinguishes three distinct styles of Latin for the editor, Perpetua and Saturus. See Shewring, “Prose Rhythm in the *Passio S. Perpetuae*,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 30 (1928): 56–57.


7 The title by which this text is traditionally referred to was not its original title. According to Jan N. Bremmer and Marco Formisano, “The older manuscripts mostly lack the beginning and/or the title, but the *Codex Einsidlensis* 250 (c. XII) has the title *Passio sanctorum Revocati Saturni Perpetuae et Felicitatis* and a lost *codex Laureshamensis* bore the title *Passio sancti Saturninini et sancti Saturis, Felicitatis et Perpetuae*.” See Perpetua’s Passions: Multidisciplinary Approaches, 2. In these manuscripts, place is given to the male rather than the female martyrs at the forefront. See, however, J. N. Bremmer, “The Motivation of Martyrs. Perpetua and the Palestinians,” in *Religion im kulturellen Diskurs*. Festschrift für Hans Kimpenberg zu seinem 65 (eds. B. Luchesi and K. von Stuckrad; Geburtstag, Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 2004), 535–554, here 542.

8 The only contribution, which I am aware of, that focusses on Felicitas is Jan N. Bremmer’s “Felicitas: The Martyrdom of a Young African Woman,” in *Perpetua’s Passions: Multidisciplinary Approaches*, 35–53.

9 James W. Halporn is doubtful that *conserva* needs to mean slave. For him, *conserva* can also mean in this context fellow servant in Christ (or even his sister, as in the *Acta*). Halporn argues that Felicitas’ single name tells us that she was of low status, but not necessarily a slave. See Halporn, “Literary History and Generic Expectations in the *Passio* and *Acta Perpetuae*,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 45 (1991): 223–241.

10 It is possible, as Thomas J. Heffernan suggests, that Felicitas and Revocatus could have been members of the same *domus*, based on their pairing in the text. See Heffernan, *The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 19. I use the new translation provided by Joseph Farrell and Craig Williams in *Perpetua’s Passions: Multidisciplinary Approaches*, 14–23. *Conserva* and the Greek συνδουλοι could simply mean that they (Felicitas and Revocatus) were both slaves but not married. Although Saturninus and Secundulus could also have been slaves, only Felicitas and Revocatus are clearly identified as such.


18 Solevåg, “Perpetua and Felicitas,” 284.

19 It was common for a slave in antiquity to have been sold and resold and to live in constant trauma of being sold once again as a commodity to a potential buyer. K. Bradley states, “Throughout the Mediterranean … slaves were bought and sold from one owner to another as a matter of course … part of what the Roman jurist Papinian once offhandedly termed ‘the regular, daily traffic in slaves’.” See Bradley, “‘The Regular, Daily Traffic in Slaves’: Roman History and Contemporary History,” Classical Journal 87 (1992): 126.


21 The Greek text does not provide this detail.

22 Keith Bradley asks a pertinent question that is in line with the reflection undertaken here: “As for Christian slave martyrs, who can deny that some may have been motivated to sacrifice their lives by the hope of a reward that eradicated for all eternity the rigors of enslavement and allowed entry into a community of the blessed?” See Bradley, “Engaging with Slavery,” Biblical Interpretation 21–4-5 (2013): 533–546 (here 541).
Thomas J. Heffernan suggests that Felicitas could have been in an intimate relationship with her fellow slave as her conjugal partner. See Heffernan, *The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity*, 19. Since under Roman law a slave could not acknowledge a child as his or her own, it is within the realm of possibility that the father of Felicitas’ baby could be a fellow slave, but I hesitate to conclude that her child is from the bond slave Revocatus. The suggestions I am making regarding how Felicitas became pregnant are also speculations based on possibilities and not clearly based on evidence stemming from the text.

However, the child could also be valuable economically to the owner. This scenario may not be altogether historically accurate, or it may have been created by the editor to give the story a “happy ending” in respect to the child.

Contrary to Heffernan, I do not see the slave’s status of Felicitas as ambiguous. See Heffernan, *The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity*, 310: “Felicity’s status is ambiguous. She is called *conserva* (slave) when we first encounter her (II.1). Yet here her autonomy appears to be underscored, since the child is not given to an owner but presumably to someone of her choosing.”

The narrative presents Perpetua as more torn and worried about her child than Felicitas. One may wonder whether this is a construction relying on societal expectations that slave mothers were not as attached to their children as free mothers. See Anna R. Solevåg, *Birthing Salvation: Gender and Class in Early Christian Childbearing Discourse*. Biblical Interpretation Series (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 6, and especially chapter 5 on Perpetua and Felicitas. One may also imagine that if the baby has been the fruit of violence, perhaps from the owner of Felicitas, she might have been eager to give it away.

“Diary” is placed in scare quotes because it is evident that the (presumably male) editor/redactor has edited the text of Perpetua.


Marshall, “Postcolonial Theory,” 103. The male redactor (and perhaps even Perpetua herself) has less interest in Felicitas because she was a slave, and not as “note-worthy” as the upper-class Perpetua. Another reason why Perpetua is more in the spotlight is that she did leave her memoir, and thus it would make sense for the redactor to expand on it with materials that pertained to her. See also Kate Cooper on the voice of Perpetua in prison, “The Voice of the Victim: Gender, Representation and Early Christian Martyrdom,” *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 80.3 (1998): 147–157, special issue on Representation, Gender and Experience edited by Grace M. Jantzen. However, I want to assert that the voicelessness of Felicitas is also necessary to mention. It is also important to explore the social, theological, rhetorical and literary constructions that allow such silence.

Anne Carson, in the context of the ancient Greek world, has made this observation about the perception of the female body: “[W]oman’s boundaries are pliant, porous, mutable. Her power to control them is inadequate, her concern for them unreliable. Deformation attends her. She swells, she shrinks, she leaks, she is penetrated, she suffers metamorphoses.” See Carson, “Putting Her in Her Place: Women, Dirt, and Desire,” in *Before Sexuality: The Construction of Erotic Experience in the Ancient Greek World* (eds., D. M. Halperin, J. T. Winkler and F. I. Zeitlin; Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), 154. For a larger context see Kathryn Chew, “The Representation of Violence in the Greek Novels and Martyr Accounts,” in *The Ancient Novel and Beyond* (eds., Stelios Panayotakis, Maaike Zimmerman and Wytse Keulen; Leiden: Brill, 2003), 129–141.
32 See Craig Williams, “Perpetua’s Gender,” 68.  
33 Solevåg, “Perpetua and Felicitas,” 276.  
37 In other words, “There is not one but many silences, and they are an integral part of the strategies that underlie and permeate discourses.” See *Foucault: A Critical Reader* (ed. David Couzens Hoy; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 931.  
40 The redactor’s construction of the two women is a factor to consider and one may certainly question whether the text, as we have it, can tell us anything about Perpetua’s self-perception.  
41 I am here inspired by Solevåg: “The Passio partakes in this Christian discourse by reinterpreting the concepts of empire, family and gender. In this Christian narrative, the Roman Empire is superseded in power by God’s kingdom, and the Roman family is replaced by the Christian family, in which God is the father.” See Solevåg, “Perpetua and Felicitas,” 270.  
43 Solevåg, “Perpetua and Felicitas,” 277. I understand how complex it is to distance Perpetua’s voice from that of the redactor. It may be she is presented thus to conform to some male writer’s masculinization of valorous women, including in confronting death and torture. To note but one treatment of this phenomenon see Catharine Edwards, *Death in Ancient Rome* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2007).  
45 Ibid., 322.  
46 Ibid., 305.  
47 Ibid.
Marshall, “Postcolonial Theory,” 103. In fact, the only ones who are given space in her narrative are her father and her late brother. See Kate Cooper, “A Father, a Daughter, and a Procurator: Authority and Resistance in the Prison Memoir of Perpetua of Carthage,” Gender and History 23.3 (2011): 685–702.


I am here paraphrasing Petr Kitzler who thinks that “It appears that the primary objective of Acta Perpetuae A was to normalize the contents of the original Passio Perpetuae, which the author of this version of the Acta was directly working from. Conversely, the author of Acta Perpetuae B likely used the already existing recension A as the pre-text in writing his adaptation, and his motivation may have been to embellish the text rhetorically and make both its language and its style more congruent with the literary conventions of the established hagiography.” See Petr Kitzler, From “Passio Perpetuae” to “Acta Perpetuae,”” 114. Brent D. Shaw’s position on the versions of Felicitas and Perpetua in the Acta is that the later editors were quite troubled by the women’s deviation from their family ties and sought to correct this by inserting husbands. I agree with him. The later Acta versions have been rewritten to try to correct various issues in the original Passio that were perceived as troubling. See Shaw, “The Passion of Perpetua,” in Studies in Ancient Greek and Roman Society (ed. Robin Osborne; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 286–325 (here, 312–314).


Eusebius wrote his Ecclesiastical History in the early decades of the fourth century. The accounts of martyrs were important to him as he found them to be inspiring stories. He was never a martyr, although he experienced imprisonment and ran the risk of death. See Robert M. Grant, *Eusebius as Church Historian* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 121–124.

59 The other mention in the narrative of an imprisoned Christian with a weak body is that of Pothinus. He was over 90 years of age. Although physically weak the author’s theological reflection is that he “was strengthened by spiritual enthusiasm because of his pressing desire for martyrdom” (ὑπὸ δὲ προθυμίας πνεύματος ἀναρ-ρονόμιον ὑπὸ τὴν ἐγκειμένην τῆς μαρτυρίας ἐπιθυμίαν) (5.1.29).

60 Vettius Epagathus is another martyr who confesses clearly he is a Christian when the governor asked him (5.1.4). In his answer, however, there is no declaration concerning the cause of the whole community of Christ-followers. A similar picture is reported in 5.1.51 when the governor summoned a certain Alexander, a Phrygian by birth and a doctor by profession, and asked him who he was. He replied: “A Christian.” In both instances, the answers are direct and are not encompassing more than the identity of the respondent. Only in the mouth of Blandina do we hear an apologetic statement on behalf of the whole group.


62 I agree in part with Candida R. Moss when she states, “Blandina’s conduct is implicitly contrasted with that of the pagan slaves who had betrayed their Christian masters: the pagan slaves were not tortured and provided a false witness; Blandina was tortured and provided an authentic testimony (Lyons 5.1.17)” (Ibid., 113). I prefer not to use the polemical term “pagan” to denote non-Christians, so I will rather use “non-Christian slaves” for those who did not adhere to the religious sentiments of their Christian masters. Also, the language of “false witness” and “authentic testimony” is problematic because it adheres to the rhetorical construction of the text. It is to make a theological value judgment to place Blandina’s path to martyrdom as providing “an authentic testimony.”


66 The author may be talking about otherworldly concerns or the rearrangement of history, but as critical scholars we need not reproduce the given theological rhetoric in our analysis. Russell T. McCutcheon reminds us that “Despite the fact the people we may study profess to be talking about other-worldly concerns, we as scholars have nothing to study but what we can observe in this world and what we can organize theoretically; therefore, what we observe and study are socially and materially entrenched human beings engaging in certain behaviors, maintaining specific social institutions, and deploying artful rhetorics for this or that material or social end.” See Russell T. McCutcheon, *Critics Not Caretakers: Redescribing the Public Study of Religion* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), 88.


69 I am here building upon the reading of Moss, although from a different perspective. See Candida Moss, *Ancient Christian Martyrdom*, 115: “The martyrs are...
described as being scented with ‘the sweet savor of Christ’ as they go out to the arena. The multilayered image evokes a handful of rich interpretations. One reading, delicately described by Susan Ashbrook Harvey, draws upon the invocation of bridal imagery in the passage: ‘For the first went out rejoicing, glory and grace being blended in their faces, so that even their bonds seemed like beautiful ornaments, as those of a bride adorned with variegated golden fringes; and they were perfumed with the sweet savor of Christ, so that some supposed they had been anointed with earthly ointment’ (Lyons 5.1.35).” Moss’ reading is itself inspired by that of Susan Ashbrook Harvey. See Susan Ashbrook Harvey, Scenting Salvation: Ancient Christianity and the Olfactory Imagination. Transformation of the Classical Heritage 42 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 46–48. The bridal imagery is inspired by Psalm 44:14 (according to the Septuagint); the fragrance of the martyrs is a common topos (cf. e.g. M. Polyc. 15, 2; Tertullian, Adv. Marc. 2, 4); cf. also A. Lallemand, “Le parfum des martyrs dans les Actes des martyrs de Lyon et le Martyre de Polycarpe,” Studia Patristica 16 (Berlin 1985): 156–162.

The analysis offered here, especially as it relates to Blandina, may be enhanced by exploring the rationale behind such an intellectual experiment. In other words, what would be the social, political and theological motivations of Eusebius for crafting or editing such narrative?

Chapter 7

1 Foucault states perceptively, “It is always the body that is at issue—the body and its forces, their utility and their docility, their distribution and their submission … The body is also directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs.” Michel Foucault, Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison (translated from the French by Alan Sheridan; New York: Vintage Books, 1997), 25.

2 The section of the narrative about Andrew’s martyrdom circulated separately from other accounts and existed in several adaptations. The oldest testimony we possess concerning the Acts of Andrew is found in Eusebius. In his HE 3.25.6, he mentions the Acts of the Apostles by Andrew and John and others, which he considers heretical based on the criterion that “no one of those writers in the ecclesiastical succession has condescended to make any mention in his works; and indeed, the character of the style itself is very different from that of the apostles, and the sentiments, and the purport of those things that are advanced in them, deviating as far as possible from sound orthodoxy, evidently proves they are the fictions of heretical men.” See The Ecclesiastical History of Eusebius Pamphilus (trans. and introduction by Christian F. Cruse; Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1991), 111. Andrew’s apostolic activities “seem to have been known from at least the fourth century onwards by fathers of the church, and by the time of Gregory of Tours the Byzantine tradition concerning Andrew was well established.” See J. K. Elliott, The Apocryphal New Testament: A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation Based on M.R. James (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 236. The rare allusion to the Acts of Andrew in the patristic corpus is in Evodius of Uzala (d. 424 C.E.) in his work De Fide Contra Manichaeos 38 (ed. J. Zycha, CSEL 25.2; Vienna, Prague, Leipzig, 1892), 968–969. The following statement shows Evodius knew not only of the work, but the excerpt also gives a hint as to why it may have been considered unorthodox in some ecclesiastical circles: “Observe in the Acts of Leucius which he wrote under the name of the apostles, what number of things you accept about Maximilla the wife of Egetes:
who, refusing to pay her due to her husband (though the apostle had said ‘Let the husband pay the due to the wife and likewise the wife to the husband’ 1 Cor.7.3), imposed her maid Euclia upon her husband,decking her out, as it is there written, with wicked enticements and paintings, as substituted her as deputy for herself at night, so that he in ignorance used her as his wife.” See J. K. Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, 232.


4 See D. R. MacDonald, *The Acts of Andrew* (Santa Rosa, California: Polebridge Press, 2005), 9. In passing, one may note the interesting place of Jesus in the *Acts of Thomas*. The narrative portrays Jesus as selling his freeborn twin brother into slavery for furthering his mission. Becoming a slave, in this sense, is in line with the Pauline image of Christ’s emptying himself, taking on a slave-form, for the sake of redeeming humanity. *Acts of Thomas* 1.2: “I, Jesus, the son of Joseph the carpenter, acknowledge that I have sold my slave, Judas by name, unto thee Abbines, a merchant of Gundaphorus, king of the Indians. And when the deed was finished, the Saviour took Judas Thomas and led him away to Abbines the merchant, and when Abbines saw him he said unto him: Is this thy master? And the apostle said: Yea, he is my Lord. And he said: I have bought thee of him. And thy apostle held his peace.”

5 J.-M. Prieur, *Acta Andreae: Praefatio-Commentarius* (Turnhout: Brepolis, 1989), 2:414. The Greek text upon which the *Acts of Andrew* is based was probably written around the end of the second century and the beginning of the third, which places the *Acts of Andrew* between 200–220 C.E.


14 Lautaro R. Lanzillota criticizes the reconstructions upon which most modern study and translations are based. For him, the manuscripts should be studied separately “due to their different provenance, time of composition, intention and character.” See Lautaro R. Lanzillota, *Acta Andrea Apocrypha: A New Perspective on the Nature, Intention and Significance of the Primitive Texts* (Genève: Patrick Cramer Éditeur, 2007), xiv.

15 My translation.

16 Translation, Dennis R. MacDonald, 77.

17 See Christy Cobb, “Madly in love: The Motif of Lovesickness in the Acts of Andrew,” in *Reading and teaching ancient fiction: Jewish, Christian, and Greco-Roman narratives*. Writings from the Greco-Roman world supplement series, 11 (eds., Sara Raup Johnson, Rubén R. Dupertuis and Chris Shea; Atlanta: SBL Press, 2018), 29–41. In this chapter, she argues that there is homoeroticism present in the text, not only in the Alcman/Stratocles relationship, but also in the Andrew/Stratocles relationship. I thank the author for sharing her work with me.
The relationship between Stratocles and Alcman seems to exist no longer after the healing of the slave, as Stratocles turns his love and devotion as a disciple to the apostle/teacher Andrew. On homoerotic relationships in antiquity, see Thomas K. Hubbard, ed., *Homosexuality in Greece and Rome: A Sourcebook of Basic Documents* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003). Maud W. Gleason remarks correctly, “In antiquity … what mattered, what defined one’s place in the sexual scheme of things, was not the sex of one’s partners but their social status. It was generally considered acceptable for a man of high status to have sex with persons of lower status, male or female, as long as he maintained the dominant, insertive role. Sex was about power. To have one’s will with one’s slaves was unremarkable.” See Maud W. Gleason, “Elite Male Identity in the Roman Empire,” in *Life, Death, and Entertainment in the Roman Empire* (eds., D. S. Potter and D. J. Mattingly; Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1999), 76.


The way we may understand the body as a site of power is to pay attention to the web of power relations between individuals, which are determined and affected by particular discourses and performances. Michel Foucault refers to the “technology of power over the body” to articulate this relationship. *Discipline & Punish*, 29.


The exercise of demonizing others in the earliest developments of this religious movement was sometimes expressed as an intramural activity of delimitating similar groups of believers in Christ, whereas other times, the positional strategy is accomplished through rhetoric of vituperation pointed at others (for example, pagans, Jewish nonbelievers, and other groups considered “Other”). See Sean Freyne, “Vilifying the Other & Defining the Self: Matthew’s and John’s Anti-Jewish Polemic in Focus,” in *To See Ourselves as Others See Us: Christians, Jews, “Others” in Late Antiquity* (eds., Jacob Neusner and Ernest S. Frerichs; Chico, Calif: Scholars Press, 1988), 117–143. On the intersectionality of self-definition, religious identity, violence and sexuality with regard to Christianity in the late Greco-Roman world see Susanna Drake, *Slandering the Jew: Sexuality and Difference in Early Christian Texts* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).


The construction of the “Other” is built on the oppositional notions of “in, us, pure, rational” versus “out, them, polluted, irrational.” See Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (New York: Methuen, 1984). Mary Douglas focuses on matter out of place to examine the social binaries of impurity/purity, taboo/socially and ritually permitted. Her analysis offers indications and indices into how a particular society may divide and
structure itself regarding what the expected social boundaries and margins are. The pollutants and/or the contagious elements are carefully discarded so that they may not create imbalance or threaten the proper functioning of the social order. Mary Douglas reminds us that “any structure … is vulnerable at its margins. We should expect the orifices of the body to symbolize its especially vulnerable points.” Ibid., 115, 121. Douglas has argued that a societal identity/integrity is symbolized as a body sensitive to fissures, bleeding, and infection. Douglas, *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology* (New York: Pantheon, 1982), 103–124. Judith Butler offers a post-structuralist critique of Douglas’ cultural coherence established through coherent bodies: “Mary Douglas’s Purity and Danger suggests that the very contours of ‘the body’ are established through markings that seek to establish specific codes of cultural coherence. Any discourse that establishes the boundaries of the body serves the purpose of instating and naturalizing certain taboos regarding the appropriate limits, postures, and modes of exchange that define what it is that constitutes bodies (…) A post-structuralist appropriation of her view might well understand the boundaries of the body as the limits of the socially hegemonic.” Butler, *Gender Trouble* (New York and London: Routledge, 1990), 178–179. In her analysis, Butler wants to exceed the biological. Her purpose is to move beyond some rigid categorizations of bodies in order to embrace bodies in their malleability. For the case I am interested in, both Douglas and Butler are right. Bodies, in general, are not fixed; questioning and problematizing gender’s fixedness is correct. However, some bodies, such as the female slave body of Euclia, are constructed as Other/bound/fixed to establish boundaries of pure and evil.

26 On the role of chastity in the Apocryphal Acts see Virginia Burrus, *Chastity as Autonomy: Women in the Stories of the Apocryphal Acts* (Studies in Women and Religion 23; Lewiston, NY: Mellen, 1987); eadem, “Mimicking Virgins: Colonial Ambivalence and the Ancient Romance,” *Arethusa* 38 (2005): 49–88. Jennifer Glancy rightly notes, “The branch of Christianity that produced the *Acts of Andrew* was unusual in its wholesale condemnation of sexual activity, even within marriage. The story should not be taken as a historically accurate account of a typical Christian woman (or even a historically accurate account of an atypical Christian woman). The author of the account, however, accepted without protest the sexual exploitation of a slave, an exploitation that occurred precisely to preserve the interests of an elite woman.” Glancy, *Corporal Knowledge*, 67. The issue of Maximilla’s chastity is problematic, at least from the angle of considering her close relationship with Andrew. She spends days and nights with Andrew and prays that God would keep her pure and chaste (καθαρὰ καὶ σώφρονα) so she may give service to God only (σοὶ τῷ θεῷ μονος ὑπηρετῆσαι μόνον, 14.7). Saundra Schwartz highlights some of the erotic elements present in the relationship between Maximilla and Andrew, especially in the scene where Maximilla takes Andrew into her bedroom. She writes, “Maximilla’s gesture, with its hand-holding and attendant entry into a bedroom, resonates with the entry of the bride and groom to the nuptial chamber or, given the absence of a man of the house, the entrance of an adulterous couple into the husband’s bedroom, a scenario fraught with resonance in the popular culture of the Mediterranean world.” See Schwartz, “From Bedroom to Courtroom: The Adultery Type-Scene and the Acts of Andrew,” in *Mapping Gender in Ancient Religious Discourses* (eds., Todd C. Penner and Caroline V. Stichelle; Leiden: Brill, 2007), 305.

27 Roberta Stewart, in her analysis of Plautus’ play *Mercator*, presents the merchant’s judgment regarding the slave woman in a similar way to Euclia’s presentation: “Beautiful slave women naturally and necessarily function only for illicit sex, and they naturally and necessarily evoke desire in freeborn men, both young and old.
The slave woman is body and desire (...) Mercator shows the female slave instrumentalized as body in the service of male master.” See Roberta Stewart, *Plautus and Roman Slavery* (Malden, MA; Oxford; Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 36.

Jennifer A. Glancy has shown how the ideology of ancient slavery permeates the narrative of the *Acts of Andrew* and how this particular text supports the hubris exercised against slave bodies. She states, “The *Acts of Andrew* condemns the hubris of a slave who overestimates the significance of a sexual relationship with her owner but does not condemn the sexual use of slaves, especially since that practice permits an elite Christian Woman to remain unsullied by sexual contact. The work exempts Maximilla from a blame in the subterfuge, implying that Euclia’s actions were completely explicable in the context of her nature, which is depicted as both lascivious and greedy.” Glancy, *Corporal Knowledge*, 67.

The timing of eight months is strange and curious. How the mistress would have gone missing from her sexual conjugal duty for all these months without the suspicion of the husband is not entirely clear. However, as several commentators noticed, this timing may suggest that Euclia is by then pregnant and close to giving birth. At that point, it would have been no longer possible for her to hide it, and thus be discovered by the proconsul. Saundra Schwartz suggests that the author probably introduced this detail in the narrative to give more credence to its verisimilitude. It may also be the authorial indication to the reader to come to the conclusion that Euclia was indeed pregnant at this point, as “eight months” was a highly auspicious time in the beginning of a sexual relationship between a man and a woman. (...) The fact that Euclia demands her freedom as well as money, and that Maximilla gives it to her un-begrudgingly after eight months, offers a tantalizing clue to decoding the narrative’s construction of sexuality, as well as to understanding the subsequent chain of events.” See Schwartz, “From Bedroom to Courtroom,” 305. If Euclia were indeed pregnant, Aegeates’ act of mutilating the body of the one carrying his own child would mean that he would be “deprived of both Platonic forms of immortality—immortality through offspring and immortality of soul.” See Anna R. Solevåg, *Birthing Salvation: Gender and Class in Early Christian Childbearing Discourse* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 191. At the end of the narrative, we learn that Aegeates and Maximilla were childless. Having a child through the slave would have given them offspring, but this child, if indeed Euclia was pregnant, would have been regarded as a bastard and the fruit of a lie. This narrative echoes the Sarah/Hagar drama. In Sarah’s case, however, she is the one who pushed Abraham to have sex with the slave Hagar, whereas in the case of Euclia, Aegeates ignores whether he is having sexual encounters with his slave Euclia, thinking all along he was engaging in sexual intercourse with his wife. In the Sarah/Hagar narrative, the slave and her son are eventually chased away from the house. In the case of Maximilla/Euclia, the slave is brutally mutilated with probably a baby (or more than one) in her womb about ready to come into the world. Jennifer Glancy also makes the connection between the two stories, referring to the story in the *Acts of Andrew* as a “disturbing variant.” She states, “The story of Maximilla and Euclia echoes, in a disturbing way, the story of Sarah and Hagar. Sarah arranged for her husband to have sex with her slave in order to reproduce. Maximilla arranged for her husband to have sex with her slave so that she, Maximilla, could avoid having sex. In both instances, the Christians who relayed these stories were more concerned by the slave’s purported misbehavior than the gross sexual exploitation of a female slave by a female slaveholder.” Glancy, *Corporal Knowledge*, 67, 68.
The narrative sets Euclia up as a clever slave/servus callidus character and as the object of a joke that aims to entertain the elite audience, usually prone to enjoy jokes about the torture of slaves. See Holt Parker, “Crucially Funny or Tranio on the Couch: The Servus Callidus and Jokes about Torture,” *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 119 (1989): 233–246.

Even when a reader might expect to hear Euclia’s voice as a character the author silences her. For example, when the other slaves were observing Euclia on bed with the proconsul she “woke him from a deep sleep, she and the fellow slaves looking on heard this: “Maximilla, my lady, why so late?” Euclia said nothing, and the attending slaves left the bedroom without a peep” (18.7).

Saundra Schwartz notes correctly, “Aegeates is a picture of oblivion, as if he were spiritually blind to the brethren’s emergence out of his own house and into the world (…) Aegeates is thus constructed in the narrative as not only the ultimate bamboozled cuckold, but as the absolute moral antithesis to his brother, the newly converted Christian.” Schwartz, “From Bedroom to Courtroom,” 301.

This corresponds to what one reads in the *Digest* of Justinian 48.10.15.41: “By torture we mean the infliction of anguish on the body to elicit the truth.” Torturing the slaves to extract truth from them was a common procedure in Greek and Roman trials in antiquity. See E. Peters, *Torture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985), 11–36.

This act, as Christy Cobb observes, suggests Aegeates’ “desire to silence her and simultaneously humiliate her.” Cobb, “Hidden Truth in the Body of Euclia,” 35. The message seems to be, according to Solevåg, “If she had kept her tongue, she would not have lost it.” *Birthing Salvation*, 167.

Cobb observes rightly that, “Apparently, even after the removal of her tongue and her mutilation she is still alive for several days. This detail serves to punish Euclia further as the reader pictures her dying a slow and degrading death.” See Cobb, “Hidden Truth in the Body of Euclia,” 35. Anna R. Solevåg points to the connection between Jezebel’s violent death, who is depicted as eaten by dogs (2 Kings 9:30–37), and that of Euclia’s death. See Solevåg, *Birthing Salvation*, 194. One may also highlight the commonalities of trick, participating in shameful slut behaviors, and being cursed that both narratives advance in their rhetorical arguments. This serves to justify the violent deaths and the eating by dogs of both characters, who are cast as evil “others,” deserving of their unhappy fate. It is interesting to note in passing how the author of the Book of Revelation warns the community of Christ-followers in Thyatira by making reference to Jezebel: “You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and beguiling my slaves (τούς ἐμοὺς δούλους) to practice fornication and to eat food sacrificed to idols. I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her fornication. Beware, I am throwing her on a bed, and those who commit adultery with her I am throwing into great distress, unless they repent of her doings; and I will strike her children dead (καὶ τὰ τέκνα αὐτῆς ὑποκτενῶ ἐν θανάτῳ)” (Rev. 2:20–23, NRSV, slightly altered).

The lines put in italics echo eerily what happened to Euclia in the *Acts of Andrew*. Maximilla her mistress threw her on the conjugal bed. Aegeates commits adultery with her, albeit unknowingly. He is in distress upon learning what happened; he is losing his wife. However, the violence is exercised upon the abject body of the slave. Euclia is mutilated/cut into pieces and her plausible child/children is/are dead. The female slave is dead so that the work of God can continue to be lived out by and among his people.

I am taking these lines from Page duBois when she states, “The slave body has become, in the democratic city, the site of torture and the production of truth.” Page duBois, *Torture and Truth* (New York/London: Routledge, 1991), 50. DuBois shows that slaves in Athenian democracy were considered mere bodies who

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thought with their bodies. Only through torture could “truth” be extracted from a slave, although the testimony the slave provided under torture was not always believed as valid. Torture was the marker between the violable and vulnerable body of the slave and the inviolable body of the free. Torture normalizes and naturalizes differences that are complex and contested. The author continues, “The free man is compelled by oaths; he might lose his rights as a citizen if he lied under oath. The slave, even though he will certainly be put to death as a consequence of what he reveals under torture, will nonetheless, under torture, reveal the truth.” Ibid., 61.


37 See Kate Cooper, The Virgin and the Bride: Idealized Womanhood in Late Antiquity (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 55 (emphasis original).
38 Here I am thinking of Michel Foucault’s understanding of power as a multidimensional force that creates various discursive projects. For Foucault, power can be productive as it can create discourses, pleasures and knowledge. See Foucault, Discipline and Punish, 29.
39 Hannah Arendt contends that when hegemonic power is in danger violence will occur, but violence cannot take place without a certain basis of power. See H. Arendt, On Violence (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1970).
40 Schwartz, “From Bedroom to Courtroom,” 304.
41 Solevåg captures the image of Maximilla beautifully: “As a perfect female, with some admirable male traits, then, Maximilla is a paragon of chastity, silence and submission.” Solevåg, Birthing Salvation, 187. Maximilla’s silence (or preferably, her few words) is to show self-control and dignity. Andrew addresses her as a wise man (Δέομαί σου οὖν τοῦ φρονίμου ἄνδρος, 41.1), making her, thus, an “honorable” male member.
42 One may also suggest that perhaps she functions as a placeholder for Andrew to assume the mantle of the patriarchal leader.
43 I concur with Solevåg that “The relationship between Maximilla and Iphidama, though cloaked in metaphorical sisterhood, is clearly a slave-mistress relationship where one commands and the other obeys. For example, Maximilla commands Iphidama to fetch Andrew for her: “Sister, go (γενοῦ αὐτή) to the blessed one so that he may come here to pray and lay his hand on me while Aegeates is sleeping” (15). Iphidama rushes off without delay: “Ἡ δὲ μὴ μελήσασα δρομαία.” Later, Maximilla sends her slave to the prison, to find out how Andrew is doing. Her instruction is again given in imperatives: “γο … and find out (ἀπελθε ... μάθε, 27).” Solevåg, Birthing Salvation, 163.
44 This may simply be a narrative device to recapitulate the plot for the reader.
45 This brief mention of that slave resembles Plautus’ staging of the female slave of the Virgo in which he invites his elite (male) audience members and prospective buyers to admire a beautiful but sexually vulnerable female slave they could fantasize possessing as a satisfying commodity. The play Mercator does the same as well in inviting the male viewers to gaze at/desire, imagine, and bidding for the beautiful female slave they would like to possess. See Roberta Stewart, Plautus and Roman Slavery, 36–47.
46 Solevåg, in relation to this incident, asks some pointed questions: “Is Stratocles here portrayed as a not yet fully developed Christian, or an upper-class male who is entitled to beat up any slave he pleases? Is the reference to training and learning
ironic, i.e. is he disproving by his actions what he claims to have learnt? Or is it thanks to his Christian training that he does not kill the slaves but 'only' beats them up, as an appropriate punishment for their actions?”


49 The text presents Andrew as a very important character, as one who is feared and loved by many as a righteous man (ἄνδρα δίικαιον, 59.15). The narrative indicates how the proconsul, after having had Andrew arrested, faced a grieving and angry crowd for how he treated the apostle and hanged him for four days. In 60.1–2 one reads, “At first Aegeates disregarded the crowd, and gestured for them to leave the tribunal; but they were enraged, and were gaining courage to oppose him in some way. (They numbered about two thousand.) When the proconsul saw them he became crazed, or so it seemed—terrified he might suffer a revolution.” Andrew is announcing Christ’s message, but he is also presented as a new Jesus. He is, like Jesus, a just and pious man, a miracle-worker, and one who announces God’s kingdom. However, unlike the Jesus of the gospels who was thought to be mad, demon possessed, and an enemy of the state, Andrew is viewed by the crowd, who opposed fiercely his arrest, as a rational philosopher and one whose freedom would mean that all in the city of the emperor would be behaving as law-abiding citizens. The *Acts of Andrew* presents a mirror-reading of Pilate and the crowd in the gospels by having the roles reversed. Consider the following table to notice the similarities and contrasts:

| Pilate had the authority to conduct assize like a proconsul. He is constructed in the gospels as one who wants to know the truth and release Jesus, whom he finds to be a righteous man. The crowd in the gospels, after Jesus’ arrest, was persuaded by the Jewish leaders to demand that Jesus be executed. In the *Acts of Andrew*, the proconsul takes the place assigned to the crowd in the gospels, while the crowd in the *Acts of Andrew* assumes the role of the Roman governor in the gospels. | As the |
above table indicates, the wordings are similar in both columns. In the first cell on the left, Pilate presents Jesus as the king of the Jews. The crowd corrects him by crying out they have no king but Caesar. The corresponding cell on the right shows that the crowd also cried out and corrected Aegeates, the political authority in place. There is no mention of sole allegiance to Caesar. That particular political loyalty can be inferred in the last cell on the right: “Don’t betray the city of the emperor.” There is no specific correspondence to the statement that “your courts are a sacrilege” in the gospels. However, the reader is invited to conclude that the fate of the innocent Jesus and the liberation of the violent and dangerous political prisoner Barabbas is a travesty of justice. The question in the second cell is identical in both columns. The expected answer to the question is: none. The crowd and the Jewish authority stand morally condemned in the gospels at the crucifixion of Jesus, while the proconsul is judged as a brute tyrant for arresting and hanging Andrew in the Acts. In both stories, there are looming riots at the scene of the impending death of main characters. An uprising was breaking out in the event Pilate would not cede to the crowd’s pressure in the gospels, whereas a revolt was about to happen in the Acts of Andrew because of the alleged unfair treatment of the god-fearing Andrew. The betrayal of the emperor is invoked in both narratives to deter the wrong-headed party from entering into a politically dangerous terrain. In the gospels, Pilate granted the crowd what they wanted, but in the Acts of Andrew the crowd was left without satisfaction. The political power in the gospels is respected, both by presenting the Romans as not being primarily responsible for the death of a righteous preacher and by Pilate conceding to the demands of the crowd, lest they riot and thus bring chaos under the governance of a Roman official. In the Acts of Andrew, the political landscape is respected by having an unjust Roman proconsul dead and leaving a political vacuum the emperor would have to fill. That, in itself, is politically problematic, but it is not the same as a revolution based on the martyrdom of a man of God.

50 Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 25.
51 A slave describes the demeanor of Stratocles the Christian believer to Aegeates his brother in these terms: “Even though he owns many slaves, he appears in public doing his own chores—buying his own vegetables, bread, and other supplies, and carrying them on foot through the center of the city—making himself look a simple object of shame to everyone” (25.9). In other words, his everyday practices become that of an honourless and shameless commoner. Stratocles’ *habitus* (a practice that highlights certain behavioral dispositions based on social class in the details of one’s food preferences, clothing, and cultural tastes) is shown to have been altered because of his new religious convictions. On “*habitus*” see Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (translated by Richard Nice; Cambridge University Press, 1977), 72–95. For Jean-Marc Prieur, “Ceux qui ont reçu les paroles d’André ne tiennent plus compte des différences sociales ... L’acceptation des paroles salutaires a aboli les distinctions sociales.” J.-M. Prieur, *Acta Andreae*, 1:328. One may argue against Prieur that it is too simplistic to assume that social differences no longer count for those who receive Andrew’s discourses. It is true the Christian believers meet in the privacy of Maximilla’s house, and that Stratocles prefers a simple life in contradistinction to that of a noble Roman citizen. However, Stratocles still felt he could, as an upper-class male, just grab slaves and beat them as he pleases to fix a situation, albeit recognizing he acted in a violent manner in doing so (52.1–2). Contrary to Prieur’s mention of Maximilla sharing her clothes and her jewelry with Euclia as a sign of renunciation of fine clothes and beautiful adornments (*Acta Andreae*, 1:328), it is clear what the motive was. She was using the slave body of Euclia.
She was not embracing a life of simplicity by the giving of her fine possessions. Moreover, one needs to be careful not to equate certain projected social behaviors from the elite's perspectives to social realities of equality between different social classes. Bourdieu argues, “Even those forms of interaction seemingly most amenable to description in terms of ‘intentional transfer in the Other,’ such as sympathy, friendship, or love, are dominated (as class homogamy attests), through the harmony of habitus, that is to say, more precisely, the harmony of ethos and tastes—doubtless sensed in the imperceptible cues of body *hexis*—by the objective structure of the relations between social conditions.” Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, 82.

Edward W. Said mentions how the “Orient” is viewed by the European Orientalists as both barbaric and seductive. See Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon, 1978). It is interesting to note that the romance *Joseph and Aseneth*, roughly written around the same period (no later than 200 C.E.), also presents Aseneth as a beautiful woman. She is also constructed as being sexually available to Joseph. Aseneth is also viewed as Other. If there is anything worthy of admiration in Aseneth the Egyptian girl, it must be because she is like us, “as tall as Sarah, as handsome as Rebecca and as beautiful as Rachel” (1:7).

Andrew’s last communication with Maximilla asserts as much: “I rightly see in you Eve repenting and in me Adam converting. For what she suffered through ignorance, you—whose soul I seek—must now redress through conversion. The very thing suffered by the mind which was brought down with her and slipped away from itself, I make right with you, through your recognition that you are being raised up. You healed her deficiency by not experiencing the same passions, and I have perfected Adam’s imperfection by fleeing to God for refuge. Where Eve disobeyed, you obeyed; what Adam agreed to, I flee from; the things that tripped them up, we have recognized. For it is ordained that each person should correct his or her own fall” (37.9–12). For more on the association between Maximilla and Eve see Solevåg, *Birthing Salvation*, 180–185.

This particular reflection I am making is inspired by my reading of Gregory J. Riley, *One Jesus, Many Christs: How Jesus Inspired Not One True Christianity, but Many* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1997). Riley argues that the story of the classical Hero, alongside the ideals and the values of classical antiquity, allowed the Christ story to be accepted by various people, who understood the Christ figure as fulfilling every aspect of the classical Hero. Many of those who followed the Christian message did so with the hope they would themselves become Heroes as well.

Elizabeth A. Castelli’s interesting analysis on the soteriological significance of the soul in tension with, and sometimes over and against, the body in early Christianity is worth quoting at length: “The paradox of early Christianity, of course, is that its apparent rejection of the body as a shadowy and passible shell of the immortal soul is located within an ideological and practical matrix thoroughly focused on the body. Every important dimension of early Christian thought and practice is mediated through language and ideas about and the material realities of the (human or mystical) body.” See Castelli, “Mortifying the Body, Curing the Soul: Beyond Ascetic Dualism in the Life of Saint Synclêta,” *Differences* 4 (1992): 137. This theological/ideological framework of conceiving salvation for the soul and enslavement for the body is what has guided many slave owners and white missionaries eager to spread the Christian message to the nations during the period of European colonization and American imperialist expansion in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. See *Teaching All Nations: Interrogating the Matthean Great Commission* (eds., Mitzi J.

56 These chapters are filled with drama and violence exercised against the slave bodies. These episodes allow the author to show the reading/hearing audience the trouble slaves can be, at times acting as the enemies within the household. See Albert Harrill, “The Domestic Enemy: A Moral Polarity of Household Slaves in Early Christian Apologies and Martyrdoms,” in *Early Christian Families in Context. An Interdisciplinary Dialogue* (eds., David L. Balch and Carolyn Osiek; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2003), 232.


58 See Umberto Eco, *The role of the reader: Explorations in the semiotics of texts* (Bloomington, IN: University of Indiana Press, 1979). In this watershed exposition, Eco approaches his subject from the angle of the reader and tries to articulate the transaction between reader and text.

59 Laura S. Nasrallah, ‘‘She Became What the Words Signified,’” 254.

60 Ibid., 255.

61 Ibid., 255–256.

62 Ibid., 256.

63 Ibid., 257.

64 Ibid., 257.

65 She uses the term “aberrant” in Eco’s sense. Eco, *Role of the Reader*, 8: “In the process of communication, a text is frequently interpreted against the background of codes different from those intended by the author. Some authors do not take into account such a possibility … Those texts that obsessively aim at arousing a precise response on the part of more or less empirical readers … are in fact open to any possible ‘aberrant’ decoding.”

66 Laura S. Nasrallah, ‘‘She Became What the Words Signified,’” 257.

67 Ibid., 257. Emphasis added.

68 Ibid., 258. Here Nasrallah seems to embrace Andrew’s theological project.

**8 Conclusion**

1 Said, for example, articulates my overall theoretical framework very well when he states, “I’m interested in the tension between what is represented and what isn’t represented, between the articulate and the silent. For me, it has a very particular background in the questioning of the document. What does the document include? What doesn’t it include? That’s why I have been very interested in attempts of the Subaltern Studies Collective, and others, to talk about excluded voices.” See *The Edward Said Reader* (eds., Moustafa Bayoumi and Andrew Rubin; New York: Vintage Books, 2000), 424.

2 Admittedly, the desire to deconstruct boundaries between various genres, groups and texts may have pushed me to try to cover too much in this book. The problem with such a broad scope is that it is simply impossible to extrapolate everything a text has to offer because of space limitations. The result is that one tends to focus more on some texts and less on others. Also, the nature of the project renders it difficult to have the chapters explicitly interact with each other. Some chapters lead beautifully to others in terms of how one builds into another; others do not. When one has a broad literary scope and an equally broad and complex theoretical spread as I have in this study, it becomes a real challenge to keep all the strands together.
Jubilees, 3 Maccabees and the Letter of Aristeas are placed within the second century before the Common Era, while the Sibyline Oracles, the Testament of Joseph and Joseph and Aseneth are situated in the early to late second century C.E. Pseudo-Phocylides could be from the end of the first century C.E., and the Sentences of the Syriac Menander are accepted by various scholars as third-century compositions. None of these dates precludes one from considering the importance of these texts not only for their own historical and literary values, but also from understanding how and why some early Christ-groups would adopt and adapt these texts for their own theological views and understandings. Only the Wisdom Literature texts are outside this historical framework (fifth century B.C.E.). In addition, it is worth noting that most of these texts are from North Africa (Alexandria in Egypt, in particular), a region that played a considerable role in the spread of various Christ-groups and the development of divergent Christian theologies and philosophies (e.g. Perpetua and Felicitas and the Acts of Andrew are from the region). See among others François Decret, Early Christianity in North Africa (trans. Edward L. Smither; Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2009).

There are, sadly, more than 20 million people in forced labor today according to the International Labour Organization. The annual profits for such sordid activities (forced labor, human trafficking and slavery) are about US$150 billion a year. See International Labour Organization (ILO), Profits and Poverty: The Economics of Forced Labour (Geneva: International Labour Organization, 2014), 1, 45.


Page duBois, Slaves and Other Objects, 221. Page duBois states elsewhere, “Our readings of history, especially of the Greek and Roman past, can never exhaust the richness of its legacies, for good and ill. Antiquity changes as the present changes, can never be caught in its entirety, made to surrender up its truths; it is not a dead past, but an ever-changing past that teaches us about the present and the future as much as about the remote past.” See Page duBois, Slavery: Antiquity and Its Legacy (Ancients and Moderns; London: I.B. Tauris, 2010), 143. See also Bernadette J. Brooten, ed., Beyond Slavery: Overcoming Its Religious and Sexual Legacies (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).


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