Review article: Recent works on ancient slavery

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THE STUDY of slavery is one of the most popular subjects in the field of ancient history. Each year sees the publication of a couple of books and articles explicitly devoted to ancient slavery, as well as innumerable works that touch on slavery from a variety of perspectives.[1] But volume of production is not the only significant aspect of the study of ancient slavery; there are hardly any aspects of the history of antiquity that are not affected by slavery and its consequences. Given the enormity of the subject matter and the significance of its impact on all aspects of history, it is hardly accidental that the study of ancient slavery has long been the scene of vigorous debates about theories, methods, approaches and foci.[2]

Reviews of publications on ancient slavery appear across a number of journals: some are journals with a general Classics readership, others are more specifically focused on ancient history, while books on ancient slavery are occasionally reviewed in the few specialist journals on world slavery, or the many non-specialist history journals. The dispersion of reviews across so many and so different journals, and the usually limited space allowed for reviews in most journals, makes it often difficult, if not impossible, to follow the development of the field as a whole. This review article aims to offer to the academic community a service that could prove of significant value and attract widespread interest. By bringing together reviews of multiple works on ancient slavery on a regular basis, it aims to set these works in a wider framework of the historiography of the study of ancient slavery, explore their interconnections, highlight the emergence of new areas of research and new approaches, and provide an overview of the development of the field.

This review commences with two recent works with significant implications about how we should approach the status of slavery in the an-

[1] A comprehensive bibliographical search engine for ancient slavery is available online at <http://www.sklaven.adwmainz.de/index.php?id=1584>.

[2] See the excellent overview of McKeown 2007.

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cient Greek world. Back in the 1960s Moses Finley suggested a novel approach to the study of ancient slavery, by arguing in favour of situating slaves within a wider spectrum of statuses; he explored a variety of groups of ancient slaves in order to show that the traditional Marxist approach that conceived all of them as a single class was misguided. There were very significant differences between Athenian chattel slaves, Spartan helots, Cretan slaves, slaves in *paramone* and debt-bondsmen. Furthermore, even among chattel slaves there were very significant differences: the slave miners in Laureion and the slave banker Pasion, or the imperial slaves in the Roman Empire, exhibited very significant differences among themselves. Finley's proposal was to abandon the Marxist concept of class as well as the rigid classification between freemen, slaves and serfs. Instead, he proposed that the various groups of free and dependent people should be located within a spectrum of statuses that ranged from absolute freedom to absolute slavery. Locating slaves and other dependent groups within the spectrum of statuses was the desideratum of a new research agenda: Finley proposed a range of privileges and powers that could be explored in order to locate different groups within the spectrum of statuses and explain their difference position and history.

It is quite remarkable that this research agenda has till recently never been put into practice. Part of the explanation is Finley's own contradictory position, which cannot be explored in this context.[3] Finley had presented the spectrum of statuses as an approach of universal applicability, given the range of rights and privileges and the diverse ways in which they were distributed among various groups; but he went on to argue that the spectrum of statuses only applies to the Near East and to the societies with slaves which appeared in archaic Greece and Rome and again from late antiquity onwards; for classical Greece and Rome the simple distinction between slave and free was instead a convenient rule of thumb.

In a slim, but highly stimulating book, Deborah Kamen (2013) attempts for the first time to apply Finley's original spectrum of statuses approach to the case of classical Athens. Kamen distinguishes ten groups that range from the absolute bottom of the chattel slave to the pinnacle of the full male citizen; in between them, she explores eight other status groups: privileged chattel slaves, freedmen with conditional freedom,

[3] For Finley's approach to slavery, see also Vlassopoulos 2016a.

metics, privileged metics, bastards, disfranchised citizens (*atimoi*), naturalised citizens, and full female citizens. What is truly remarkable is that hardly anything in her account of the different groups is novel or unknown; and yet, by simply placing all these groups next to each other, Kamen makes a very significant contribution by alerting us to the immense complexity of statuses that coexisted in classical Athens. While Athenian ideology focused on a simple distinction between free and slave, her analysis shows that Athenian reality created situations that cannot be accounted without recourse to a spectrum: a slave banker like Pasion, a public slave like Pittalakos, a manumitted slave in *paramone*, or the son of a freedman that serves as a debt-bondsman in Menander defy the simple line drawn by ideology.

Kamen is surely right to insist that in order to delineate distinct status groups we need to take into account both rights and obligations enshrined into law as well as conditions, disabilities and privileges that existed as de facto opportunities. In this respect, it is quite significant that although Athenian ideology focused on a trifold distinction between citizen, metic and slave, Kamen correctly points out that many of the status groups she identifies (bastards, disfranchised citizens, privileged metics) possessed rights and disabilities that were clearly enshrined in law; that they were nevertheless largely absent from the Athenian imaginary points to the significant disjuncture between the peculiar focuses of Athenian ideology (and any ideological or legal tradition) and the complex diversity of reality. From the point of view of slavery, it is quite true that the significant differences between chattel slaves, privileged slaves and freedmen with conditional freedom were overwhelmingly de facto distinctions, and not codified by legal tradition. Comparing the Athenian situation with that of e.g. the Lombard laws, which define a variety of groups of slaves with distinctive *wergilds*, rights and disabilities, raises the important question of the processes through which de facto differences come to be enshrined in law and the significance of legal distinctions for real life (Drew 1973, §§ 76-137).

Finley was correct that it is quite remarkable that in contrast to many other societies, which explicitly accepted the spectrum of statuses in their legal and ideological systems, in Greece and Rome law and ideology opted to focus on a single distinction between slave and free. Finley's mistake was to take this as a direct reflection of reality, and to argue therefore that the spectrum of statuses was inapplicable to Greece and Rome in their classical periods, because as slave societies the slave/free

division had obliterated any other distinction (Vlassopoulos 2016b). Kyle Harper's recent exploration of late Roman law on slavery has serious implications for the existence of a spectrum of statuses in the early empire that classical Roman law chose to leave outside purview, while late Roman law decided to deal with (Harper 2011, 351-493); Kamen's analysis makes the same point for classical Athens. In the light of all this, we need to simultaneously account for two things: both the existence of a spectrum of statuses in the complex social reality, as well as the reasons for the obfuscation of this complexity in Greek and Roman law and ideology in favour of a single distinction between slave and free.

Equally important for historians of Athenian slavery are the implications of Kamen's book in terms of reorienting our traditional fixation of studying slavery solely on the basis of the master-slave relationship. If we try to visualise mentally the ten status groups identified by Kamen, we will realise that an Athenian street teemed with people whose diverse statuses would be impossible to identify without an insider's knowledge. How could one tell who was a privileged slave living and working on his own, a freedman with *paramone* obligations, a freeborn metic, a bastard, or a poor citizen? The scale of the Athenian polis and its diverse milieus (from small hamlets, villages and towns to a large urban centre, an international port and a major mining district), the economic complexity and the lack of working and living segregation on the basis of status, and the effects of a political system which gave significant power to lower-class citizens combined to create a situation in which the clarity of the legal trifold division was accompanied by a continuous blurring of status and constant challenges of the status of individuals from high to low (Gottesman 2014, 44-76). If we want to understand slavery in classical Athens, we need to explore the communities and networks based on work, exchange, cult and residence, which crossed the multiple status lines that Kamen has identified. We need to study both the processes that created the spectrum of statuses, as well as the communities and networks that crossed the status lines. Kamen's spectrum of statuses will be of most use when put into motion to study the complex entanglements and conflicts that are so stimulatingly revealed in sources as different as curse tablets, building accounts, dedications, philosophical dialogues and courtroom dramas.

While Kamen examines the full range of statuses in classical Athens and explores their implications, a recent book by Paulin Ismard focus-

es on the status group of Greek public slaves, while reaching equally important conclusions (Ismard 2015). Arnaldo Momigliano long ago emphasised the difference between history and antiquarianism, a scholarly approach that Finley caricatured as 'tell all you know about x'. The last study of Greek public slaves by Oscar Jacob in 1928 was very much a comprehensive collection of all the then existing evidence about the various tasks and groups of public slaves in Athens, but largely without reaching any wider conclusions. With the exception of the Scythian archers, there has been hardly any interest in public slaves ever since Jacob. This remarkable study by Ismard is proof that any subject might suddenly become highly interesting if perceived from a novel angle.

Ancient historians are fond of Orlando Patterson's definition of slavery as the violent domination of dishonoured persons. The link between slave and dishonour is beyond doubt, but public slaves raise some very difficult problems for this ahistorical generalisation. Ismard discusses how slaves of the Athenian Boule were honoured with first seats (*prohedria*) in the theatre of Dionysus, how assembly decrees honoured long-serving public slaves, or how public slaves served as priests. While public slaves were unthinkable in many New World slave societies, Ismard uses Greek public slaves as a means for rethinking slavery, the repertoire of social and legal statuses of ancient Greece, and the nature of Greek politics and the state. Ismard's is the first study of ancient slavery to take account of comparative evidence beyond the Americas, and the result is highly profitable; and the book is written in a vivid manner that joins together highly disparate pieces of evidence, from the exceptional use of a single public slave in Athens, Georgia, through the bogeyman expression 'man of Tenedos' for a public slave bearing an axe, to the Ethiopian royal slave who was the first pagan to become baptised as a Christian.

Ismard uses the multiplicity of tasks entrusted to Greek public slaves as a means of re-examining how ancient Greeks conceived politics. His approach is inspired by the anthropologist Pierre Clastres (1987), who explored how non-state societies develop a range of practices in order to avoid the development of the state as an independent power apparatus. While the function of every complex community requires certain kinds of knowledge, democracies like Athens conceived of politics as the exchange of information among equal citizens and refused to accord to experts a separate prominent position in their political institutions. The decision to turn over the administration of public affairs to public slaves had a double effect: on the one hand it made administration invisible in

Greek conceptions of politics, and on the other, by entrusting administration to slaves, it foreclosed the emergence of a state apparatus with its own interests and agendas. If judges, policemen and top-class civil servants are entrenched interest groups in modern societies, the fact that their ancient equivalents were public slaves placed serious limits to their ability to act in their own interests.

Nevertheless, this was a distinct possibility, as Ismard shows through an excellent use of comparative evidence. In many African, Middle-Eastern and Southeast-Asian states royal slaves were accorded distinctive statuses and formed communities that protected effectively their own interests; in certain cases, like the Mamelukes in Egypt, they even became rulers themselves. In exploring how Greek public slaves fit this pattern, Ismard raises some extremely important points concerning Greek social history. To what extent can we see public slaves occupying a distinct status within Greek communities? Ismard discusses three main issues that show major differences between public and private slaves. The first is the recognition of the right to property: we see public slaves using their money to participate in public contributions or even manumitting their own private slaves; the second concerns the 'privilege of kinship' evident in the inclusion of the patronymic in some official references to public slaves; the third concerns their participation in judicial processes as if they were free.

These are interesting arguments, but they can be interpreted otherwise. Ismard bases his last inference on Aeschines' description of how Pittalacus, referred to as a public slave, prosecuted Hegesander. In light of how often Athenian sources refer to free or manumitted people as if they were (still) slaves, it seems to me more likely that Pittalacus is no longer a public slave when he prosecutes Hegesander (Kamen 2009). Equally, the mention of a patronymic for private slaves is quite common in the funerary epigraphy of Roman Asia Minor: but this would not constitute a 'privilege of kinship' per se. That official inscriptions record the patronymics of public slaves sounds more like recognition of an existing fact, rather than a bestowal of a privilege. There is some evidence that Greek public slaves formed communities of their own, but far too little in comparison with other cases of royal slaves. On the other hand, it is quite remarkable that punishments for public slaves are effectively identical to those for private slaves and do not seem to accord them any special privileges or status, in contrast to the conditions for many kinds of royal slaves discussed by Ismard.

How should we interpret this contradictory picture? The answer will require further discussion, but Ismard makes two important points. The first concerns the peculiar position of public slaves as public property: the lack of a concrete human master, as in the case of private slaves, had major implications on their ability to pursue agendas of their own. Studies of slavery need to pay far more attention to the variability of masters and the effects of that variability on slaves. The second relates to the general absence in Greek legal and social repertoires of a hierarchical spectrum of statuses, so evident in *ancien régime* Europe, or even to a certain extent in Rome. As Kamen's book explored above, Greek communities chose to employ a single distinction between free and slave and behaved as if everybody could neatly fit into such a scheme. Each of the two statuses (free-slave) was in practice a portmanteau of honours, privileges and obligations, as illustrated by the concept of *atimia* (the partial or complete abrogation of citizen privileges). Depending on the context and circumstances, an individual might fall on either position, and the peculiarity of public slaves meant that in a number of occasions they tended to be treated as if they were free; but Greek communities behaved as if free and slave were absolute statuses, and this explains to a significant extent why public slaves were never accorded a clear and distinctive status. We come again to the need to explain the same paradox that emerged from Kamen's book as well: the Greek categorical distinction between slave and free as the only imaginable statuses was not a direct reflection of reality, but a historical choice that needs further work to be explained.

Ismard's book evinces a conflation evident in the very title, which includes both democracy and ancient Greece. While discussing public slaves over hundreds of Greek communities from the Archaic to the Hellenistic period, Ismard often focuses on Athenian democracy as if it was a representative stand-in for all ancient Greek poleis. Ismard's argument about the implications of the divergence between the continuity provided by public slaves and the discontinuity of the annual iteration of amateur magistrates in democracies is undoubtedly correct. But public slaves were not only employed by democracies like Athens, but also by oligarchies in which the same people could be continually elected into office. We need to think further about the link between political regime and the employment of public slaves. Even more, a generalising approach to public slaves is unwarranted, and we need to ask more specific questions. Why did Greek poleis employ free public doctors but slave

street-cleaners? Why did Greek poleis avoid the employment of slaves in their armies, but show fit to employ them as policemen? How did Greek poleis choose between employing free hired labourers and buying slaves for different public services and what factors (e.g. funding) figured in their calculations? For all the above reasons, this is simply a brilliant book that raises so many questions that should be at the forefront of future research; it deserves to be read widely and with attention.

Manumission and freedmen loom largely in two other books that focus on the problems of using the epigraphic and material evidence as a main source for studying ancient slavery. The methodological issues raised by these two volumes are particularly significant once we move beyond a static account of ancient slavery based on literary sources and try to construct a narrative that is attentive to changes in place and time. The first book is a volume edited by Michelle George (2013) that focuses on the link between Roman slavery and material culture, but actually ranges more widely. Two chapters in this volume are largely concerned with the problems of employing the epigraphic evidence. Christopher Bruun re-examines the old question of the extent to which we can identify slaves, freedmen and their descendants in Latin inscriptions on the basis of their cognomina (19-42). The traditional view has been that 2/3 of Roman slaves bore Greek names, which became their cognomina once manumitted; the dwindling number of Greek names among the descendants of freedmen is then interpreted as evidence of the effort to obliterate the servile taint of Greek names. Bruun attempts to challenge this assumption by focusing on the names of *vernae*, slaves born into a Roman household. As he shows, while in the overall slave population 2/3 of slaves bear Greek names, in the case of house-born slaves the majority bear Roman names. How to interpret this phenomenon is an interesting question: if this is evidence not merely for a small section of favourite house-born slaves, but of how Roman masters named their slaves, can we then argue that the overwhelming proportion of Roman slaves, who bore Greek names, were imported, since otherwise they would have born Roman names? This is not impossible, and is an important argument, but it will require more attention to the differential pattern of slave naming based on conditions and chances that analyses of Athenian slave names have recently explored (Vlassopoulos 2010; 2015).

Henrik Mouritsen employs the epigraphic evidence from the two first-century AD *columbaria* of the Statilii and the Volusii, in order to

study the function of slavery and manumission in the households of the Roman elite (43-68). Mouritsen persuasively emphasises diversity, both among these elite households, as well as between them and the rest of Roman households. There is clear evidence for widespread manumission in both households, but not a single pattern: while the overall trend is for manumission of older slaves in positions of trust, slaves can be manumitted at a very young age, and trusted slaves can remain slaves while other slaves in less glamorous posts can gain their freedom. Most interesting is the clear evidence for how complex the *familia* in an elite household was, including mixed families of slaves and freedmen, as well as a very significant number of slaves belonging to other slaves and freedmen of the elite household; this raises very interesting questions about the allocation of slaves within elite households. On the other hand, it is evident that a wider section of lower slaves finds commemoration among the Statilii than among the Volusii; but as Mouritsen correctly notes the patterns of slave employment and manumission in these elite households cannot be generalised for the rest of Roman society.

The papers by Peter Keegan and Natalie Kampen move from the strictly epigraphic to a stronger emphasis on the archaeological context of the inscriptions and the interlinking between inscription and archaeological object. The focus of Keegan's paper concerns the graffiti found in a building on the Palatine Hill, which has been identified by some scholars as the Paedagogium, the school of imperial pages (69-98). The graffiti, some accompanied by images, are truly fascinating in their diversity, in particular those referring to the games and to Christianity, with the famous Alexamenos graffito accompanied by a donkey-headed figure on the cross. But the interpretation of these graffiti as relating to the subculture of imperial slaves rests on the prior acceptance of the identification of the building as a paedagogium—an acceptance that is not accompanied by any discussion of the alternative interpretations that have been offered.

Natalie Kampen focuses primarily on the visual evidence of tombstones as regards the presence of slaves and freedmen in the Roman army (180-97). As she shows, after an early period of exploration, most tombstones for military men become aniconic, while depictions of slaves tend to show them in the generic form of servants, either as dining or horse attendants. Nevertheless, a number of tombstones from the first century AD present interesting problems of interpretation. Some of them mention freedmen, but they are either not depicted, or it is diffi-

cult to identify them with some of the figures depicted on the stelae; in a few exceptional and fascinating cases, slaves and freedmen are explicitly identified among the depicted figures, but it remains impossible to understand the precise reasons for their presence.

The final three papers focus primarily on the visual and material evidence. Sandra Joshel attempts to trace the place of slaves in the spatial geography of the Roman villa and house (99-128). She explores two different aspects of the issues: on the one hand, she looks at the geography of slave containment, by examining how spatial analysis of Roman villas and houses enabled masters to control the movements of their slaves, by limiting movement and access and enabling surveillance. On the other hand, she explores the alternative geography that slaves tried to construct within the limits created by their masters, by trying to imaginatively reconstruct the movement of slaves across the space of the Roman villa and house, with particular emphasis on those sections of villa and house that were largely restricted to slave use. This is a highly stimulating paper that raises a number of difficult methodological questions. Joshel's interpretation of the villa at Settefinestre is a case in point. In the first phase of Settefinestre, the courtyard interpreted as servile quarters included double rooms, and the second room would have been invisible to an overseer standing in the courtyard; in the additional courtyard of the second phase, there are only single rooms opening to the courtyard; it might sound plausible to interpret this as evidence of an interest in greater slave surveillance, as Joshel does, but had the constructors of the original villa never thought of slave surveillance? We are still a long way from a detailed methodology of the archaeology of slavery, if such a thing is feasible, but papers like this are particularly helpful in raising difficult questions.

Noel Lenski's paper argues that conceptions of slavery can be meaningfully employed in order to interpret Roman functional art (129-57). The existence of human servants and the view of slavery as vocal instruments of their masters' various needs provided a layer through which ancient users would interpret the variety of objects in which human forms are depicted as tools, as props and as waiters; 'just as slaves were tools, tools could be made to look like slaves'. The human figures examined by Lenski come in a variety of forms: if the portrayal of human tools focuses on visual alterity by depicting barbarian captives or Africans, the depiction of human props focuses on ideal depictions of the young human body, which Lenski interprets as references to the good-looking

young slaves that catered to their masters in elite households; finally, the depiction of waiters can employ both idealised as well as exotic or grotesque forms of the human body.

Michelle George's chapter explores the connection between Roman slavery and the image of the captive Cupid in various genres of Roman art (158-79). George focuses on images of Cupid in chains and establishes three contexts in which Roman slavery has shaped the representation and its visual experience; the chaining of real slaves as a form of discipline and punishment; that of *deliciae*, young slaves who entertained their masters and guests with their free speech and sexual appeal; and the context of slave sale, as regards the depictions of Cupid sellers. Like Lenski, George finds that a long-established theme of Greek art is inflected in Roman art to bring to the foreground aspects that make slavery a pertinent way of thinking about the visual depiction; there were human bodies in Greek functional art and depictions of Cupids were commonplace, but Roman art stresses the slavish body and prefers to depict captive Cupids in a way that stresses the similarity of their condition to that of slavery. The difficult question raised by both chapters is how to account for this inflection: given that both Greece and Rome were 'slave societies', the experience of slavery per se is not a sufficient explanation. But it will repay further study to isolate which wider processes, economic, social and artistic, and which peculiar aspects of Roman slavery are able to account for this interesting phenomenon.

Manumission inscriptions constitute a fascinating peculiarity of Greek epigraphy; Rachel Zelnick-Abramovitz (2013) has written a useful book that is based on the significant corpus of Thessalian manumission inscriptions. Notwithstanding their large numbers, Thessalian manumissions have not attracted the attention they deserve, for various reasons. But a major cause of this relative neglect is undoubtedly their form: while manumission inscriptions from other parts of the Greek world record in often great detail the circumstances and conditions of the manumission, thus offering very important evidence for many aspects of slavery, most Thessalian inscriptions consists of a bare list of names, accompanied by the dating formula and usually the added detail that the manumitted slaves have paid to the polis (or the relevant magistrate) a specified sum of money. Zelnick-Abramovitz re-examines these records in the light of comparative evidence from other areas, in order to establish the nature of this sum paid by Thessalian freedmen: did it

constitute a manumission tax, or was it a fee for registering the manumissions? In the process, she examines various aspects of Thessalian slavery and its political, economic and social history.

The introduction (1-13) presents an overview of the history of the Thessalian League and briefly discusses the evidence for the dependent population of the *penestai* and for chattel slavery in Thessaly. Chapter 1 (15-27) reviews the evidence for indirect taxes in Greek polities, with particular attention to the evidence for taxation regarding slavery. This involved primarily the taxation of slave sales, but also included various other fiscal practices, such as the imposition of poll taxes involving slaves, or the obligatory sale of slaves by private citizens with the profits accruing to the city, as a form of a private loan to the city. Chapter 2 (29-53) moves to examine in detail the Thessalian manumission inscriptions and their references to various payments. Most of these inscriptions take the form of summary lists, which record the magistrates and the dating formulae, the names of manumittors and manumitted slaves and the fact that they have paid the relevant fee to the city, which is always in the amount of 15 staters/22.5 denarii; but some of them note additional details, like the existence of *paramone* service, or the acquiescence of family members to the manumission. The manumission price is rarely mentioned, but irrespective of the price, or whether a slave was manumitted for free, the payment to the city remains unaffected.

Chapter 3 (55-69) tries to assess whether these payments constituted a manumission tax, similar to the Roman *vicesima libertatis*, or a fee for the registration and inscribing of the manumissions. While in many cases the evidence is ambiguous, and it is conceivable to infer Roman influence through Roman interventions in Thessalian affairs, there is unambiguous evidence for registration fees from cities like Hypata and Lamia. The related question whether the payment of the registration fee was obligatory on all manumissions, or an optional charge on those freedmen who wanted their manumission act registered and publicised, is impossible to answer conclusively on current evidence.

Chapter 4 (71-107) attempts to answer the same question by examining the evidence for payments from manumitted slaves on the occasion of their manumission in the rest of the wider Greek world. Many Greek communities imposed on their manumitted slaves some kind of payment, but in most cases the evidence is ambiguous on whether the payment constituted a registration fee or a manumission tax. In the few cases where the evidence makes inferences possible, registration fees appear in communities like Orchomenos in Arcadia; on the

other hand, Ptolemaic Egypt appears to have charged a manumission tax. Particularly interesting in this chapter is the range of ways in which communities exacted payments from manumitted slaves, in addition to the common money exactions: the author discusses the evidence for the conduct of obligatory sacrifices by manumitted slaves in Cos, or the dedication of cups and bowls to deities on the occasion of manumission in various Macedonian communities.

Chapter 5 (109-32) explores the wider historical and economic background in which Thessalian communities decided to exact the manumission fees. After examining the chronological range of the appearance of manumission fees in individual Thessalian communities, Zelnick-Abramovitz concludes that the federal fee was probably instituted in the early second century BCE and seems to have been first applied in Pelasgiotis; but generalisations are difficult, as there are some inscriptions recording manumission fees which appear to date from the third century, and the date at which individual communities chose to apply the fee seems to have diverged. The author goes on to link the institution of this federal fee to two wider motives. The first one is the financial problems created by the political and economic turmoil that affected Thessaly along with other regions of Greece in the first half of the second century BCE: the fee would have been a useful contribution to the empty coffers of most Thessalian cities. The second motive, for which though there is rather limited evidence, concerns the presumed interest of Thessalian poleis in monitoring the non-citizen population and preventing them from encroaching on citizen rights.

While this book is a very useful survey of the evidence, it also raises a wider question. Deciding whether the recorded payments are registration fees or manumission taxes begs the question of precisely what function the inscribed documents served. It is normally assumed that the purpose of manumission inscriptions was to achieve the widest possible publication for the act of manumission and thus to safeguard the freedman from seizure and re-enslavement. Manumissions were always witnessed so that in the future there would be persons capable of verifying the status of the liberated slave; by inscribing the manumission record in publicly accessible places, like temples and agoras, knowledge of the manumission would be continuously publicised to a much greater audience than the few witnesses of the act.

The theory sounds plausible, until we examine which Greek communities developed the habit of inscribing manumission acts. One

could argue that manumission inscriptions are a characteristic feature of Greek culture in general; but a more careful look reveals that the vast majority of manumission inscriptions occur in central Greece (Boeotia, Phocis, Locris, Aetolia, Thessaly) and northern Greece (Epirus, Macedonia). There are very few manumission inscriptions from the Peloponnese, the Aegean islands and Asia Minor. According to my calculations, around 90% of manumitted slaves recorded in Greek manumission inscriptions come from central and northern Greece.

One would have expected that most manumission inscriptions would be erected in large urban communities, where people would not know each other, and the need to publicise manumissions to a wider audience would be stronger. Surprisingly, the evidence points the other way round. We have no manumission inscriptions from large urban centres like Ephesus and Miletus; thousands of inscriptions from these communities have been preserved, making it improbable that manumission inscriptions once existed but have since vanished. We do not have any manumission inscriptions from large Aegean islands like Rhodes and Chios, where we know thousands of slaves were employed; instead, manumission inscriptions crop up in small island communities like Thera and Calymnos. But the most telling example is that of Athens. There are no manumission inscriptions from any period of Athenian history, with the partial exception of the so-called *phialai* inscriptions, which are concentrated in the short period between 330-320 BCE, and do not record manumissions as such. Publicising manumissions would have been essential in a large urban community like Athens; and yet, the Athenians do not seem to have ever felt such a need. Ironically, it was only the small community of Athenian citizens in the island of Lemnos that felt the need to inscribe manumission acts!

Most manumission inscriptions come from relatively small communities in central and northern Greece, like Chyretiai, Hypata and Leukopetra. The need to publicise manumission acts cannot therefore sufficiently account for manumission inscriptions. Any account of manumission inscriptions must explain why they are overwhelmingly absent from large urban communities with strong and diversified epigraphic habits, where the problems of publication would be particularly acute, and why they are present where they are. In other words, we need to understand the epigraphic habit, as well as the social dynamics of those communities that set up manumission inscriptions. Answering the question that Zelnick-Abramovitz raises, would involve a number of

case-studies of local communities and their epigraphic habits; this important desideratum is perhaps the greatest gap in our knowledge and understanding of post-classical Greek history. This slim but informative volume is a welcome addition towards that end.

The reception of Classical culture and ancient history in the modern world has been a burgeoning field of research over the past decade. Much of this work has been produced by modern literary scholars focusing on the reception of ancient literature, while social historians have been more reluctant to engage with reception studies. It is therefore particularly welcome that the bicentenary of the abolition of the British slave trade in 1807 provided the occasion for a conference that brought together literary scholars with ancient and modern historians, in order to explore the reception of ancient slavery in modern slavery and its abolition; the volume under review, edited by E. Hall, R. Alston and J. McConnell (2011), originated from the proceedings of this important conference.

The subjects covered by the contributors, as well as their foci and approaches, range widely, but largely overlap nicely, and are eloquently presented in the introduction by Edith Hall (1-40). The volume is bookended by two chapters that offer a comparative framework of antiquity and modernity, within which slavery and abolition can be situated. Richard Alston compares and contrasts Pliny the Younger and Hobbes as a means of articulating the major differences between ancient and modern conceptions of freedom, and consequently their radically different approaches to slavery and abolition (41-64). Alston explores the paradox of Pliny's sympathetic attitude towards his slaves and his callous reaction to the mass execution of slaves for the mere fact that they belonged to a master who had been murdered by some of his slaves. Pliny's acceptance of the humanity of his slaves seems to co-exist happily with his acceptance of horrific punishment for slaves. On the other hand, modern discussions of freedom and slavery from Hobbes onwards tend to take freedom as a constitutive element of individuality and end up debating the precise balance between individual freedom and the welfare of society as a whole. This conception of freedom is completely absent from the ancient world and its understanding of freedom as a claim that can be exercised only through membership to a particular political community; the paradox that moderns see in Pliny might not exist at all from Pliny's point of view. As Alston persuasively argues, ancient and modern conceptions of freedom and slavery are

dependent on wider ontological theories; if ancient and modern ontologies are widely dissimilar, then the study of slavery as a transhistorical subject might be a fool's errand. Ahuvia Kahane's short chapter provides another look at the same ancient/modern distinction (409-23). If at one extreme this distinction, and its relationship to slavery and abolition, can be described as a rupture, the other extreme can be described as development and genealogy.

A second axis is constituted by chapters that explore the impact of ancient slavery on modern debates about slavery and abolition in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Stephen Hodkinson and Edith Hall examine the image of helotage in the British debates of the 1790s (65-102). Helotage could be employed both by abolitionists and by pro-slavery thinkers; it could be used as an example of the inhumanity of ancient slavery, and thus contrasted with the more lenient forms of modern slavery tempered by Christianity and law, or be presented as a form of limited slavery based on rights to land and sharecropping, and thus seen as a model for the direction that modern colonial slavery could take. But particularly interesting is the authors' finding that helotage could be used as a metaphor for all sorts of other relationships of domination and exploitation: the use of helotage in the discourses of Irish opponents of British rule is particularly interesting.

Sara Monoson contributes a stimulating chapter on the employment of Aristotle by pro-slavery thinkers in the antebellum South (247-77). Aristotle's theory of natural slavery offered a valuable weapon and a much sought-after genealogy for pro-slavery that Southern intellectuals seized upon. As Monoson shows, Aristotle was employed for three main purposes. The first was as a means of challenging the natural rights theory employed by abolitionists: the fact that an esteemed ancient thinker could write in favour of natural slavery showed that modern pro-slavery thinkers were not motivated by racism, but were part of a long tradition that went back to classical antiquity. Aristotle's view of manual labour and wage labour could also be used in order to present the capitalist system of the North as a form of wage slavery that was actually worse than the paternalist slavery of the South. Finally, Aristotle's criteria for identifying natural slaves could be shaped into fitting with the racial view of slavery adopted by anti-abolitionists, even if race theory was absent from Aristotle's work. John Hilton explores the influence of classical ideas and themes in the debates on slavery and abolition in the Cape colony, between the British conquest in 1795 and the British abolition of slavery in

1834 (103-24). The chapter ranges widely and attempts to discuss more generally the role of slavery in the Cape colony under British rule; particularly interesting are the differences that emerged between the British approaches to slavery based on common law, and the Dutch approach of the colonists that traced its origins to the Roman law of slavery.

Edith Hall explores the classical imagery employed by abolitionists (181-207). As she shows, it was not easy for abolitionists to find an appropriate image from the classical past as a symbol for their cause, a problem also explored in Carey's chapter. The image of the chained Prometheus liberated by Hercules ended up being the most popular classical symbol, but it was by no means without problems. Abolitionists needed to present slaves as victims of injustice and cruelty and the abolition of slavery as ending a horror, without at the same time confronting the apocalyptic image of post-abolition chaos and slave assertion that anti-abolitionists and many abolitionists feared. The myth of Prometheus in both the classical tradition and its neoclassical rendering had associations that did not fit easily with the abolitionists' agenda; on the other hand, the myth of Prometheus could easily be used in order to put the stress on the heroic feats of Hercules and the white abolitionists, rather than the agency of chained Prometheus and the slaves.

Closely related to Hall's chapter, is Brycchan Carey exploration of classical influences on eighteenth-century abolitionist poetry (125-52). As he shows, classical influences were rather limited in abolitionist poetry, which found relatively little in classical literature that could be used for abolitionist purposes, in particular in comparison to the Bible. Nevertheless, as Carey shows, a range of abolitionist works could employ themes from ancient history in order to challenge modern prejudices about Africans and slavery, while abolitionist poetry could employ classical and neo-classical genres, like epic and pastoral poetry. Finally, Leanne Hunnings discusses the depiction of the slave Nydia in Bulwer-Lytton's 1834 novel *The Last Days of Pompeii* (181-207). Like Hall, Hunnings finds that the image of the blind slave Nydia can be used in order to construct slaves as passive victims and turn away attention to the features and acts of their protectors. But while this tendency is certainly present in the novel, Hunnings also shows that Bulwer-Lytton is willing to depict Nydia as an active agent, with her own feelings and aims, whose passionate love for the hero Glaucus provides an illuminating window to the condition of slavery and how nineteenth-century writers conceived it.

A third axis concerns the role of Classics in the culture of masters, slaves and emancipated black communities in the eighteenth and nineteenth century in the USA. Margaret Malamud offers a general exploration of this topic in the antebellum South (279-317). Among the wide-ranging phenomena she discusses, particularly interesting is the significance of classical culture for the communities of free African Americans, for whom classical education was a means of social advancement and a proof that African Americans were equally adept at mastering the higher attainments of the classical heritage. David Lupher and Elizabeth Vandiver explore the career of Basil Lanneau Gildersleeve, the founding father of Classical studies in the American university system (319-51). As the authors show, Gildersleeve fought in the Confederate army, wrote numerous racist and pro-slavery editorials for an influential Southern journal during the war, and remained a committed supporter of the Southern cause for the rest of his life, even though in his later years he attempted to minimise the significance of slavery as a motive for Southern secession. Emily Greenwood explores the influence of Classical literature in the poetry of Phillis Wheatley, a female slave who published a poetic collection in 1773, a little before she was manumitted (153-79). Greenwood shows how Wheatley has been belittled from various sides: racists considered the poetry of a female Black slave as merely imitation of the Classical masters, or doubted that her classical allusions resulted from direct access to Classical literature; but she has also been rejected by a significant part of African American scholarship, which considers her work too little affected by African American identities and too close to the culture and viewpoint of her masters. Greenwood offers an alternative approach that explores the depth of classical reception in Wheatley's work and examines the complex images and ideas of her poetry.

A final axis concerns the role of ancient slavery in twentieth-century depictions of modern forms of slavery. Lydia Langerwerf examines C. L. R. James' *Black Jacobins*, his 1938 magisterial account of the Haitian revolution of 1791, which led to the abolition of slavery and the creation of an independent African American state (353-84). Langerwerf explores James' focus on Toussaint L'Ouverture as a model of revolutionary leadership with both heroic and problematic features, and argues that the classical descriptions of the ancient slave leaders Aristomenes and Drimakos might throw light on James' depiction of Toussaint. Finally, Justine McConnell examines the relationship between the 1993 movie *Sommersby*, depicting a returning impersonator in the post-emancipation South, with the sixteenth-century French story of *The Return of*

Martin Guerre and the most famous story of a hero's return in classical literature, the *Odyssey* (385-407). While much in the chapter has little to do with slavery, McConnell's argument that the depiction of the two slave characters in the movie has been influenced by the depiction of the slaves Eumaeus and Eurycleia in the *Odyssey* sounds plausible.

The present review article has explored a range of issues and approaches. In summary, I would like to emphasise some important aspects. The works by Kamen and Ismard have raised important new questions about the Greek systems of status classifications and their peculiarities, which future research on Greek slavery will need to grapple with in earnest. Ancient historians will need to think anew the relationship between the blueprints employed by law and ideology, the complex historical reality they tried to shape, and the reasons that led ancient societies to adopt these particular blueprints. Once these blueprints for conceiving slavery are no longer seen as direct reflections of reality, the need to historicise them as historical choices is particularly urgent. The volume edited by George underlines the significant differences between Greek and Roman slaveries that are often elided under the concept of ancient slavery. Alongside the book of Ismard, they also point out the need to take seriously into account the variety of masters and the differential effect this had on slaves and slavery: elite masters, the state, or ordinary householders created very different slave portfolios, managed their slaves in different ways, employed slaves for different purposes, created diverse relationships between slaves and masters, and gave slaves widely divergent opportunities for pursuing their own agendas. Zelnick-Abramovitz's book stresses the need to think seriously about the nature of our sources and the complex reasons that lie behind their creation and preservation, raising the same methodological questions we encountered above with blueprints of slavery. Finally, the volume edited by Hall, Alston and McConnelly underlines the significance of expanding the study of ancient slavery to account for its modern reception. Not only because this modern reception is interesting per se, but also because if all of history is contemporary history, as Benedetto Croce famously put it, the modern reception of ancient slavery has had a very serious reciprocal impact on how modern scholars study ancient slavery.

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