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INTRODUCTION

Intellectual Pursuits and the (Formerly) Enslaved

"The question is one almost of intellectual property."
BRADLEY 1994, 181.

THIS SHORT study has as its specific focus some of the most highly educated and intellectually prominent among those enslaved in Rome. These individuals formed a recognizable and characteristic group within the ancient metropolis. They typically went on to be manumitted, although not always at a particularly young age or even soon after their talents were acknowledged by an audience of the affluent. The time period treated here falls within the second and first centuries BC, during the later phases of republicanism and the transition to the early principate under Augustus. These two centuries saw a vast increase in the number of slaves, through captives, especially in war but also through piracy, and subsequently in children born to enslaved mothers. As a result, this research topic, although in itself quite precisely defined, is inevitably closely connected to the much broader issues of expansion of Roman imperialism, especially in the Hellenistic East, and also to the emergence of an increasingly ambitious Roman literary culture in the Latin language. Each of these factors played out against the backdrop of a complex intellectual landscape created by multilingualism and ongoing cultural appropriation, especially but not exclusively of Hellenistic culture(s).

My interest in those educated to an advanced level despite enslavement grew out of an initial research project on a single such individual, Quintus Lutatius Daphnis, who was reputed to have been the man who was bought and sold (twice) for the highest price recorded for a person born into slavery in a Roman household (*verna*), at least when Pliny the Elder and Suetonius were writing. It is a revealing aspect of the culture produced by enslavement in Rome that such

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a high value, perhaps indeed the highest monetary price, would be ascribed to literary knowledge and aptitude rather than to any other skill, talent, or craft among the multitude practiced by the enslaved in Italy during this time period. Daphnis' story will be revisited in chapter 3. The individual chapters of this book examine a series of case studies inspired by the figure of Daphnis, some like him and others with rather different life stories.³

At the outset of this investigation, it is important to be explicit about what is and what is not being discussed here. No attempt is being made to write a general history of literate slaves in Rome or of their more typical careers, or of the kinds of training they expected to receive at an elementary level. Rather the focus is deliberately rarefied since the case studies are (inevitably) taken from the most successful and prominent. In other words, the men in these case studies were by definition exceptional, which is also why they were admired in life and were consequently recalled by later generations. Many others will have died young before finishing a course of study that they had begun; yet others, after completing their education, will indeed have been kept in relatively menial tasks or simply been forgotten by posterity despite intellectual achievements and influence during their lifetimes. Behind the individuals examined in the following chapters, we can posit schoolrooms and writing studios filled with other literate individuals who were enslaved, most of whose trajectories and achievements are not recorded in our extant sources.

Similarly, this study is not focused primarily on teachers, in the way that Suetonius' *De Grammaticis et Rhetoribus* took the teachers at various levels as its subject. 4 Nevertheless, to be sure, several of the men under discussion did have distinguished teaching careers, both in private houses and in schools they themselves established and led. Nor is this study concerned in any detail with the complex and time-consuming procedure of book production on papyrus rolls.⁵ Yet, each of the case studies deals with authors, several of them highly prolific, whose works must have circulated at least in their own generation, and in some instances for much longer. The everyday use of the written word included the taking of dictation, reading aloud, copying and recopying of letters and of other texts from the mundane to the rarefied. The writing that was integral to running a large household constituted an ecosystem that by its very nature both produced and consumed the labor of many who were literate. All these literate people, as well as the material objects and techniques they used, were and are fascinating in their own right and deserving of attention. 6 Here they provide the background to the lives of the most highly educated slaves and freedmen, who formed an elite within the household, and arguably within the broader cultural networks of the city.

The intellectual formation, aspirations, experiences, and endeavors of prominent enslaved and formerly enslaved intellectuals will guide the

discussion that follows. Their interests were often broad, as they collected, sifted, produced, and reproduced information in texts written in a wide variety of genres. Their lives can be measured in basic ways through career trajectory, intellectual networks, students, published works, and sometimes through other more fleeting anecdotes. They worked on command, on commission, but also on their own initiative, often all at the same time. Alongside the outline of their lived experiences, one can see that the recognition (sometimes even explicitly expressed in terms of prestige) that they enjoyed was itself a cultural aspect of Roman intellectual life and self-representation. These men were well known, and they mattered, at least among the intelligentsia in the city. Their patrons and associates included the most prominent Romans of the day. Yet the celebration of their exceptional knowledge and talents took place within the explicit framework initially of enslavement and then subsequently of manumission, itself a Roman citizen status exclusively created by a formal transition from previous enslavement.

Within the increasingly systematic exploitation of a larger and more diverse population of enslaved persons, the intellectual labor of some of the most highly educated became a regular part of larger Roman households. At its most advanced levels, this labor consisted both in the production of new works (presented in spoken and written formats) and in the accessing of an increasingly extensive archive of existing knowledge from the Mediterranean world. Through long years of memorization, educated individuals gained their own command of vast databases of knowledge that their patrons could consult through them. The spectacular virtuosity involved is highlighted by the fact that the Roman patrons had themselves mostly undergone an education that stressed memorization reinforced by rote learning and standardized writing exercises. Yet, the most prominent among their household could be prized for being more learned than they were or even claimed to be. It was for this reason that these enslaved individuals were so valued and admired as repositories of special learning and skill, whether local or acquired elsewhere.

These same intellectuals will also have mastered the other skills associated with literacy, including reading aloud, editing, writing, collating, critiquing, and doing original research. Inevitably, their presence in the households and networks of Romans whom we associate with written texts, such as Cicero and Caesar, Asinius Pollio and Cornelius Gallus, raises complex questions about the very nature of authorship, questions that are also implicit in the life stories of these freedmen. As has already been investigated in some detail, Roman writers tended to go through a complex process of writing and rewriting their texts, sometimes over many years. They drew on networks of friends and peers to advise, react to, critique, and even redraft sections or whole works. Many of these conversations about a literary project took place orally and in

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person, as an integral part of the social life of the leisured classes. Ideas were exchanged and editing took place in real time and out loud. The process was itself prized, even more than the completion of a draft or a polished version produced by an individual author. In this sense, our whole approach to an ancient text is often and inevitably anachronistic, since we seek and often claim to find one "author," a distinctive voice and point of view in a work that we can now usually only approach in a single written version.¹¹

Even as scholars have tried to reinsert at least some understanding of the role of these conversations among friends and peers, who were social equals or distinguished visitors to the city, these same (types of) dialogues and editing sessions will have included educated enslaved persons and freedmen. An incomplete picture results from relegating these individuals to the most basic roles of scribes or readers, as if they were themselves merely tools despite their elaborate educations. 12 It is clear that intellectuals who were or had been enslaved played roles that were essential to these conversations, both within the household and across wider networks of households. The fact that our evidence only allows us to catch glimpses of individual interactions or ongoing relationships between interlocutors should make us all the more eager to try to recover at least some of the flavor of these complex practices that produced ancient texts. Closely related to these basic questions about voice and influence is the larger picture of the role of literary and cultural capital within Roman society, especially but not exclusively in the city itself. Leading Romans were not only refined consumers of literature; many of them also aimed themselves to be writers and even innovators across literary genres. 13 Their intellectual pursuits were a vital part of their self-presentation. In this context, the help of gifted intellectuals, especially ones who could not easily refuse a wide range of requests, became especially and increasingly useful.

Such relationships, and the fruit that they bore, grew and flourished in the very particular context of enslavement, of its various conditions and consequences. A central premise of this study, therefore, is that slavery mattered in Roman society in characteristic and specific ways, including at the most advanced level of knowledge acquisition and literary production. It was not simply that the labor of the enslaved freed wealthy Romans from menial household tasks so that they could pursue their intellectual interests at much greater leisure. Nor was the ability of elites to write merely made much easier and faster by scribes who copied and recopied letters, documents, speeches, and literary texts. Rather the system of household enslavement was based on the labor of these workers, and not least of all on the exploitation of intellectuals who were among the most advanced in their various fields at the time, whether polymaths, comic poets, antiquarians, rhetoricians, creative writers, or literary experts.

Beyond and between the many daily routines of premodern life, whether running a household or writing a book, freeborn Roman writers often relied on the learning of others both to collect relevant material and to produce a new text that they could call their own. Meanwhile, the most successful of these manumitted intellectuals were themselves surely also supported by a literate staff whom they might supervise on behalf of a patron or employ for themselves in their own projects. Even if they had performed many of these same menial tasks themselves at an earlier stage, they moved on to a life of the mind that could eventually yield manumission and a more independent position in Rome, if only through the increasing opportunities to cultivate a wider circle of patrons and students in return for payment.

The wealth of evidence for Roman slaves in business and commerce has perhaps inevitably overshadowed pursuits that were more prestigious in intellectual and literary terms. ¹⁴ Petronius' very wealthy freedman Trimalchio, the fictional host of an imaginary vulgar dinner party described in a satirical text, is notable for his ignorance of Greek literature and myth, as well as of good taste and culture more generally. His dinner guests also see literacy as something to be used primarily in commerce or for legal transactions. But Trimalchio represents a particular caricature, who has sometimes loomed too large in readings of freedmen in Roman society more generally.

Similarly, modern prejudices about "secretaries" and about the kinds of work they do, especially as related to the role of women employed in offices during the twentieth century, can also create unconscious, anachronistic biases that distort our picture of what the most literate slaves could and did do in Rome. The almost total absence of highly educated enslaved people doing intellectual work in other historical periods and places means that scholars who study comparative slavery tend to find these particular Roman slaves less relevant to their own research, if they have even noticed them at all. All these tendencies and blind spots are made worse by the scarce evidence, which comes in small fragments from a wide variety of ancient sources.

Nevertheless, recovering at least some of the story of men like Daphnis or Opillus or Epicadus or Melissus is both possible and eminently worthwhile. If the individual ancient life has value, then it does so across the social spectrum. Their trajectories may have been unusually successful, but they reflect the practices and aspirations of many others in a highly competitive market, whether in the case of enslaved boys selected for training or enslavers looking to benefit from their talents. Enslavement will consistently have been exploitative but that does not mean it consistently involved only menial labor. Meanwhile, the independent lives of freedmen as authors were a significant feature of city life but remain largely lost to us.

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Stark reversals of fortune in the experiences of a highly educated slave are illustrated by the well-known life story of the renowned and remarkably influential Stoic philosopher Epictetus, who had been born in Phrygian Hierapolis and became the slave of a slave, in the household of Epaphroditus, a freedman of the emperor Nero. ¹⁵ Keith Bradley used the story of Epictetus' life as a prime illustration for the paradoxes inherent in enslavement in imperial Rome. ¹⁶ Epictetus was enslaved as a child and had been so physically abused at a young age that he walked with a limp for the rest of his life. However, it was also in enslavement that he received his advanced education, including the study of philosophy under the tutelage of the foremost teacher in Rome at the time, the Stoic philosopher Gaius Musonius Rufus. ¹⁷ Similar dissonances will surely have marked the lives of many if not most of the individuals in this study of earlier times.

This investigation will offer a series of interlinked case studies of enslaved and manumitted intellectuals, in an attempt to explore at least some of their lived experiences within each social and political setting. Their origins, education, careers, and interests will be examined, as far as the surviving evidence allows. These men came from different backgrounds. 18 Some were vernae (home-born), the children of mothers who were enslaved in the households of Roman citizens. Others had been exposed as infants, illegally enslaved, and traded away from their place of birth. Yet others were war captives from all around the Mediterranean, some of whom were enslaved as mature adults who already enjoyed an international reputation for learning, teaching, and scholarship. Yet others were taken in unrecorded circumstances, notably by pirates or traders who preyed on the young and on the vulnerable in society. Their stories touch on habits of breeding enslaved children, trading in educated boys, and lending or sometimes even giving the educated as special gifts or favors. In addition, dowry was a factor in habitual transfers from one household to another at the time of a marriage. 19 Intellectual freedmen were integral to wide-reaching networks of friendship and forced labor. Nevertheless, they are sometimes documented as making at least some choices that were clearly very much their own.

Fragments of works by these men are meager to nonexistent, even in cases where they are said to have been prolific authors of books that seem to have been influential for contemporary and later writers. Consequently, tracing their impact, either on the publications of their patrons or on their own writings, is virtually impossible. Unsurprisingly, the sources that mention them are few; they offer only glimpses of certain conditions of or moments in each individual's life. As a result, this study builds out from such rarely attested moments to create a possible model(s) of their careers, expertise, and personal situations. The interactions of these slaves and freedmen with well-documented Roman

patrons, both senators and businessmen, does allow the mapping of at least partial timeframes, networks, and settings, whether geographical or political or cultural. Yet it is obvious that vital information has often been lost or suppressed.

It is also important to note that, in nearly every instance, their own personal opinions, emotions, and relationships remain beyond our reach. This study will, therefore, not try to reconstruct how each individual felt about a devastating change of fortune, a given patron, a particular assigned project, or even about Roman intellectual culture more generally. Some men discussed in this book had been brought up since infancy in Roman households, so that they were truly integrated into Roman society from birth. Others consistently identified themselves as foreigners, even after acquiring citizenship through manumission; they presented themselves not so differently from intellectuals who had come to Rome of their own accord in search of patrons and of ways to support a literary life. One such example of the intellectual immigrant is included in chapter 3 by way of comparison, the poet Archias of Antioch, whose long career is described in some detail but with considerable and cunning distortion by Cicero in a lawcourt speech delivered in 62 that was circulated soon after.

This book is articulated thematically in order to try to give shape to the case studies of individual intellectuals, rather than presenting them in the form of a catalog. The first chapter focuses on a single freedman, Licinius the flute player who worked with and for Gaius Gracchus. This man's contribution to Gracchus' (in)famous rhetorical style raises central questions about the dependence of even the wealthiest and best-educated Roman politicians on the skill and judgment of members of their household. Chapter 2 contrasts two households that were heavily engaged in educating young, enslaved boys at different time periods, those of Cato the Elder and of Atticus, men who lived several generations apart. Atticus' decision to educate every member of his household in Rome can be interpreted as the logical result of earlier experiments with schools at home, such as Cato's. The much-admired Daphnis is the focus of chapter 3, where his trajectory and skills are compared and contrasted with the experiences of Archias of Antioch, a Greek-speaking poet who came to Rome as a young Syrian immigrant in 102. Chapter 4 is devoted to Opillus and Epicadus, two freedmen who were prominent in the 8os and 7os. Their careers demonstrate the fact that the most highly educated were often the closest collaborators of a patron, even when that involved the freedmen taking on more than one job and despite ready access to other skilled helpers. These examples reveal that personal trust could be as important as expertise and might sometimes outweigh it, especially in times of great political unrest and civil war. Roman children who were illegally enslaved after being exposed at birth are the subject of chapter 5. And finally, chapter 6 looks at highly educated war captives, with a principal focus on Tyrannio of Amisus and

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Timagenes of Alexandria. The Romans made a habit of enslaving even mature men with high profiles as scholars, writers, and teachers after they had been captured in war.

The most well-known republican writer who was enslaved and whose work still survives will not be examined in detail in this study. He is the comic poet known in English as Terence, said to have been a native of North Africa who had a memorable but short career in Rome in the 160s.²⁰ His six surviving plays, written in simple, conversational Latin and based on Greek originals, were very popular in the Middle Ages and served as an inspiration for Shakespeare. Publius Terentius Afer is described as having died young while on a journey to Greece, perhaps being only in his mid-20s. He had allegedly been born to an enslaved mother in Carthage. According to this version of his biography, it seems that his mother was a local African woman who had been enslaved in a Punic household while Carthage was still a flourishing city but not at a time of armed conflict with Rome.²¹ According to Suetonius, Terence was acquired under unknown circumstances as a child by the Roman senator Publius Terentius Lucanus, who educated and manumitted him. 22 His early success as a writer was said to have gained him many connections with prominent Romans, including Scipio Aemilianus and the latter's close friend Gaius Laelius. Some of these acquaintances were even said to have helped in the writing of his plays, in a pattern suggestive of the kinds of collaborative relationships that produced and were fostered by literary activities.

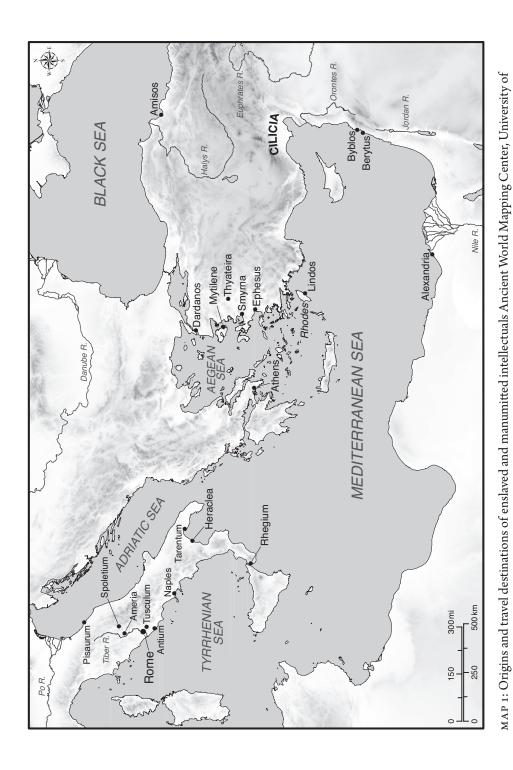
Terence left behind some property along the via Appia and a freeborn daughter, who later married a Roman citizen of equestrian status.²³ Consequently, Terence seems to have made a profit from his writings and social connections, at least enough to assure his daughter a dowry even years after his death. But much of this traditional narrative might be based on later inferences. It has been interpreted as speculation based on his cognomen Afer (the African), Terence's brief period of producing plays, and various other snippets of information. As will be discussed, ethnic names like Afer did not always indicate a place of birth or ethnic origin.²⁴ Could this man really have risen so far so fast up from slavery in just a few years and have made enough money to guarantee the future of his family in the next generation? If indeed Terence was a freedman who had a meteoric career but died young, then his story serves as a clear illustration of the way in which education and literary talent could lead to fame and fortune. Terence's contested life story illustrates difficulties already experienced by our ancient sources, who were writing later and in very different historical circumstances from his time.

A number of recent publications have served to inspire the methodology of this investigation. These works have faced and come to terms with the central issue of how to reconstruct the lives of persons who stood at the margins

of history as formally conceived and about whom the surviving evidence is incomplete. How can we recover at least some of the perspectives and experiences of such individuals, who seem to have been influential in the lives of the prominent men who are the main characters on the stage of history as traditionally constructed? Two recent studies of women at different historical periods illustrate some promising strategies, as well as identifying unique challenges. In 2013 Jill Lepore published her study of Jane Franklin, the sister of Benjamin Franklin. She explains in her appendix on methods and sources how for a long time she had thought that her project was not doable, that she could only write a novel about Jane Franklin Mecom. "But I decided, in the end, to write a biography, a book meant not only as a life of Jane Franklin Mecom but, more, as a meditation on silence in the archives." Lepore uses a wide variety of sources that shed light on the lives of those who came into contact with her main subject. At the same time, in dwelling on the lives of the betterdocumented family members, she is careful not to lose sight of Jane. Her study brings Jane and the age she lived in vividly to life.

Similarly, in 2019 Susan Treggiari went beyond what had ever been attempted before in recovering the biography of a Roman woman of the republican period, including in her own earlier work on the relatively better-documented women in Cicero's family. ²⁶ Treggiari's study of Servilia, mother of Marcus Brutus the tyrannicide, is a sweeping treatment of several Roman political families and of the ways in which women shaped and supported these kinship groups, especially in times of civil war. ²⁷ Examining the lives and contributions of these women involves both a re-focalizing from their particular perspectives as well as a broadening of one's research horizon beyond the principal actors and events in the senate or on a battlefield. Meanwhile, such a project does not require or even invite us to discount or pass over political or economic history; rather it enriches that central narrative of what was happening in the community as a whole. These and other studies of individual women have influenced this examination of educated enslaved men in republican Rome.

The title *Intellectual Property* is meant to be deliberately ambiguous. It can refer to the enslaved themselves when treated as property within a Roman household. At the same time, it can also indicate their knowledge and ideas, which contributed to shaping both the content and the form of texts that circulated under the names of their various patrons. Intellectual property is a broad concept that goes beyond the simple attribution of authorship to a single individual to the complex question of how ideas and concepts are shared within a literary culture. No literary or rhetorical work is produced in a vacuum; rather it inevitably reflects styles, content, and fashions shared within its cultural and historical setting. This ambiguity inevitably stands at the heart of the present (and perhaps of any) study of learned men who had been subject to enslavement.



For general queries, contact info@press.princeton.edu

North Carolina, Chapel Hill

An example of what can be at stake in a discussion of authorship is raised by John Scheid's 2007 Budé edition of Augustus' Res Gestae, the first-person account of his achievements that was published after his death and circulated throughout the empire. In his introduction, Scheid argues that this inscription was produced by Augustus' staff and should not be interpreted as a work written by the princeps, although the content and first-person style is in line with the autobiographical writings of earlier politicians. ²⁸ This interpretation, therefore, stresses the contributions of Augustus' literate slaves and freedmen, even as it assigns to them the role of ghostwriters, who are tasked with impersonating someone who is presented in public as the author of a text that he has not himself produced. The research and methodology of the present study eschews the image of the ghostwriter for that of the research assistant who is also an editor, a person (or in this case surely a team of people) who coproduce a final text through an intensely collaborative process.²⁹ Given the importance of the Res Gestae, Augustus would surely have wanted an active hand in shaping and polishing both its design and its final form.

There is plenty of evidence to suggest that these intellectuals, whether still enslaved or already manumitted, were very influential in the lives of prominent Romans such as Cicero and his best friend Atticus. Every aspect of their literary interests and projects was shaped by interactions with these men. Their libraries were arranged and curated by such individuals, who offered invaluable advice about a world of texts, including those beyond what was available in the city of Rome. Their letters, speeches, poetry, prose, and collections of material for all of the above were edited by such helpers. Ultimately, we will never know the extent to which even the most gifted Roman writers relied on the enslaved or manumitted to produce and edit their works and to create an image of themselves as learned and cultivated men. But that does not mean that such an inquiry is fruitless in that it seeks to gain insight into a rarefied world that put so high a value on the acquisition of cultural capital that it created a characteristically Roman system to exploit the persons of intellectuals as repositories of knowledge and skill, whether educated at home or acquired from abroad.

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