THE "SINFUL" WOMAN OF LUKE 7:36-50: AN EXPLORATION OF HER ACTIONS IN LIGHT OF ANCIENT BATHING AND ANOINTING PRACTICES

By

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Abstract

In this thesis, I suggest that scholarship has not exhausted the ways in which we can understand the woman's actions in Luke 7:36-50. Whilst traditional readings have long understood her actions to signify either gratitude or repentance, less attention has been paid to what her self-abasing actions tell us about her lived reality. I contend that the woman's actions are reminiscent, if not representative, of the work carried out by enslaved bathhouse workers. Her actions of bathing and anointing towards Jesus, therefore, can be understood more fully in the context of ancient bathing and anointing practices. Commentaries since the Early Church Fathers have identified the woman as a sex worker, yet, even today, these discussions are still widely concerned with the immorality of such work. Whilst I concede that Luke's description of the woman indicates her identity as that of an enslaved sex worker, my primary interest lies with the impact such a position would have had on her life experiences. I dedicate substantial discussion to the experiences of sex workers within the ancient bathhouse setting, and subsequently, how we can understand the woman's actions against this context.

Through a focus on the woman's use of her body as an object, I will suggest that we can understand her actions more fully as an indication of her internalised servility, or conversely a rebellion against her enslaved status. I will also propose that her actions reflect the humanising practice of washing amongst sex workers which constituted an act of self-care. Fundamental, however, is the absolute care and love her actions display towards Jesus, and crucially his receptiveness to them. Moreover, I suggest that Luke's presentation of Jesus and the woman stands in contrast to, and even actively opposes, the prevailing understanding of the immorality of sex work, specifically that of Paul's 1 Corinthians 6:12-20. This thesis aims to offer a more empathetic and intersectional approach to the woman, her actions, and her lived reality through the application of a feminist, social history methodology.

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I am deeply grateful to my supervisor Professor Candida Moss for her guidance and encouragement not only in this project, but also in my other academic pursuits. I am thankful to my friends and family for attentively listening to my ideas despite being wholly unfamiliar with the subject matter. I would also like to thank the participants of the Birmingham Biblical Studies Seminar, whose wonderful ideas have motivated me in my own research.

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Abbreviations

Abbreviations for series and journals follow *The SBL Handbook of Style*, 2nd ed. Below are abbreviations used in this work, following SBL, LSJ, and including additional entries.

AE	*L'Année épigraphique* (Paris 1888-)
AUC.	Livy, *Ab urbe condita*
AJPS	*American Journal of Political Science*
Ann.	Tacitus, *Annales*
Apoph.	Martial, *Apophoreta*
Ars.	Ovid, *Ars Amatoria*
Caes.	Plutarch, *Caesar*
Carm.	Horace, *Carmina*
Cas.	Plautus, *Casina*
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
CIJ	J. B. Frey, ed. *Corpus inscriptionum Iudaicarum*. 2 vols. Rome: Pontifico istituto di archaeologia cristiana, 1936-1952; *CIJ* i2 is a reprint of Frey, with additions by B. Lifshitz.
CIL	*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* (Berlin 1963-)
Dial.	Seneca, *Dialogi*

Dig.	*Digest*
Eleg.	Tibullus, *Elegies*
Ep.	Pliny the Younger, *Epistulae*
Ep.	Martial, *Epigrams*
Fam.	Cicero, *Epistulae ad familiares*
Haut.	Terence, *Hauton Timorumenos*
Hist.	Herodotus, *Historiae*
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
ILS	Hermann Dessau, ed., *Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae*, (Berolini: apud Weidmannos, 1892)
Inst.	Gaius, *Institutiones*
JAAR	*Journal of the American Academy of Religion*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JLA	*Journal of Late Antiquity*
JRS	*Journal of Roman Studies*
JSJ	*Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Periods*
JSHJ	*Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus*
JSNT	*Journal for the Study of the New Testament*

JSNTSup	*Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series*
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
Metam.	Apuleius, *Metamorphoses*
Mil. Glor.	Plautus, *Miles Gloriosus*
Muren.	Cicero, *Pro Murena*
Nat.	Pliny the Elder, *Naturalis Historia*
Neot	*Neotestamentica*
NIV	New International Version
NovT	*Novum Testamentum*
NRSVUE	New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition
NTS	*New Testament Studies*
PEQ	*Palestine Exploration Quarterly*
Pol.	Aristotle, *Politica*
Pomp.	Plutarch, *Pompeius*
RIDROM	*The International Review of Roman Law*
Rust.	Columella*, De re rustica*
Sat.	Petronius, *Satyricon*

Sat. Juvenal, *Satirae*

Xe. Martial, *Xenia*

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Chapter 1 Introduction

After a period of travel and preaching, Jesus is invited to dine in the house of Simon the Pharisee (Luke 7:36-50). Jesus accepted the invitation and as he reclined to eat, a woman, who Luke describes as "a woman in the city who was a sinner," unexpectedly enters the house. The brave woman, who had sought out Jesus after breaking away from her long day of gruelling work, is met with hostility by the men around the room. Her presence is not only unforeseen but bold as she, an uninvited woman, wilfully enters the house at night. As she catches sight of Jesus, she approaches him directly. Whilst "stood behind him at his feet," she begins to cry copiously. She kneels at Jesus' feet, and gently bathes them with her bounteous tears. As she regains her composure and her tears dry, she gathers her long, unbound hair into her hands. She carefully and lovingly wipes her hair over Jesus' feet, as she dries away her tears. The woman kisses Jesus' feet in a heartfelt gesture of genuine devotion, and then opens her "alabaster jar" of perfume. The aromatic smell floods the house, and she pours it generously onto Jesus' feet. Such a luxurious and deeply personal act of anointing grabs the attention of the diners, who look on in silence, and watch her unusual actions in bewilderment and confusion.

Simon, arguably a central figure in the pericope, is particularly puzzled by this interaction. He ponders to himself whether Jesus can truly be a prophet, as surely a prophet would not allow an infamous "sinner" to touch him! As Simon thinks privately to himself, Jesus replies to his thoughts aloud, which astounds those onlooking. Jesus offers a parable about two debtors, one who owes "five hundred denarii, and the other fifty." Neither debtor can afford to pay the lender, so both debts are struck off. Jesus pointedly asks Simon "now which one of them will love him more?" Simon hesitantly offers the correct answer: "I suppose the one for whom he cancelled the greater debt." The diners murmur in

excitement and surprise at Jesus' clear prophetic nature. Jesus now faces the woman and Simon, whilst he addresses Simon alone. He emphatically highlights the woman's hospitality to him, and Simon's lack thereof:

> "I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has bathed my feet with her tears and dried them with her hair. You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment."

Jesus proclaims the woman's forgiveness "hence she has shown great love,"[1] but warningly states that "the one to whom little is forgiven loves little." Despite having already announced the woman's forgiven status, Jesus turns to her, and tells her benevolently "Your sins are forgiven." The woman, overwhelmed, stands silently in awe. As occurs elsewhere in the Gospels, the onlookers buzz with discussion about Jesus' ability to forgive sins, but he simply tells the woman "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

Previous discussions of the pericope have long been concerned with the woman's actions towards Jesus and the nature of her sins. For centuries, commentators have labelled the woman a "prostitute" and negative readings of her are aplenty.[2] This focus on the sexuality of the woman and her actions towards Jesus has led to more fruitful feminist discussion in the past few decades. The ambiguous nature of the text has resulted in countless readings of the pericope, and I will contribute one further here.

This thesis is also concerned with the woman, specifically how auditors and readers understood the woman's actions in connection to bathing and anointing culture. Traditional

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[1] Unless otherwise noted all translations are from the NRSVUE translation and all translations of classical texts are from Loeb Classical Library. For Rabbinic texts I have used Sefaria.org. The translation of the Greek text here is difficult. The introductory phrase "οὗ χάριν," which states the reason for Jesus's declaration, is difficult to render into English. It is a summation of what preceded it and, as Fitzmyer notes, means something like "for this reason." See Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke I-IX: Introduction, Translation and Notes* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 687.

[2] See G. B. Caird, *The Gospel of St. Luke* (London: Penguin, 1963), 114, who describes the woman as "a woman of evil ways and evil reputation." Robert C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: Volume 1 A Literary Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 117 calls her a "despised sinner."

readings of the woman's actions have largely categorised them in one of two ways, as a sign of her repentance or her gratitude. I contend that these discussions have not exhausted all possible readings of the nature of the woman's actions. Through my exploration, informed by bathing and anointing culture, I will offer several possible readings of the woman's actions, all stemming from the legitimate assumption that she is an enslaved woman experienced with body work in the baths. The woman's actions of bathing and anointing are reminiscent, if not representative, of the body work carried out within the baths. I suggest that we view the woman as an enslaved bathhouse worker, possibly an *unctrix* (masseuse). Central to my exploration of the woman is the way in which she uses her own body as an object to wash and anoint Jesus. This understudied element of the pericope gives rise to a variety of different possible readings, and concretely connects her to enslavement. I will explore whether the way in which the woman uses her body as an object suggests that she has accepted her enslaved status, perhaps because, in her position at the baths, she would experience bodily objectification daily. Conversely, I will consider whether her actions are indicative of a rebellion against her enslaved status and desperate lived reality. Potentially her actions symbolise a recovery of control over her body, and the use of her body how she chooses, not how she is expected to. Furthermore, I will explore the significance of washing and anointing amongst enslaved sex workers as a means to regain autonomy and humanity, a further possible reading of the woman's actions.

This thesis aims to add depth to the discussion of the woman's supposed engagement in sex work. Whilst several scholars validly point out the sexism in labelling the woman a sex worker without sufficient reasoning, they occasionally succumb to the trap of stigmatising sex work as a source of shame.[3] Here, I aim to explore the woman's

[3] See Bart D. Ehrman, *Peter, Paul and Mary Magdalene: The Followers of Jesus in History and Legend* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 189; Barbara E. Reid, "'Do You See This Woman?' Luke 7:36-50 as a Paradigm for Feminist Hermeneutics," *Biblical Research* 40 (1995): 42-46.

connection to sex work alongside the significant question of what this would mean for her lived reality. Through a deeper contextual exploration of what sex work entailed for the women engaged in such work, I hope to avoid a reductive reading of the woman.

Such a discussion of sex work has implications for our reading of Jesus in the pericope also. I will argue that in the pericope Jesus interacts with and accepts an enslaved woman engaged in sex work into the Christian body. The integration and unquestioning acceptance of such a woman is significant due to the longstanding debate over the place of sex workers within Jesus' ministry and the early Christian movement. Jesus' holistic acceptance of the woman brings into question Scripture which excludes sex workers, specifically Paul's 1 Corinthians 6:12-20. I will argue that Luke, in his portrayal of Jesus and the woman in this pericope, pushes back against Paul's conception of the morality of sex work, and the place for such people in the Christian community.

1.1 Outline of Chapters

To establish the context for discussions about the pericope, and the woman more specifically, I will first present a review of literature, in which I will offer the main discussions which have impacted my reading of the pericope. My review will begin with the broad debate about the relationship between the Lukan account and the "Bethany anointings." In my brief assessment of the most common positions within this debate, I will also explore the place of the form-critical approach and the significance of oral tradition. I will then turn to the motif of forgiveness wherein lies a central question: at which point in the pericope was the woman forgiven? This discussion, whilst not directly relevant to my reading, has led to fruitful debates concerning the interpretation of the Greek text. I will review the central points of this discussion, with a specific focus on those who view the woman as being forgiven before the pericope, and those who view her

forgiveness as occurring within the pericope. Briefly, I will also assess the view that such a binary distinction is not productive. I will then lightly discuss literature concerned with the literary contrast between the woman and Simon, and crucially, those debates which highlight the dangerous and frequent sliding into anti-Jewish interpretation.

Moving to scholarly conversations more relevant to this dissertation, I will focus on literature concerned with the woman's identity. I shall survey ancient positions which have established the mainstream perception of the woman as a sex worker before moving on to more recent scholarly discussions. I will then turn to the vast debates about the identity of the woman, whether she can be identified as Mary Magdalene, Mary of Bethany, or an unnamed and unknown woman. To conclude my literature review, I will address scholarship on the anointing and Messianic aspects of the pericope. Much of these considerations regard whether Luke is concerned with Jesus' identity as the Messiah in this pericope. The broad scope of the literature review will provide the context in which my reading is situated, as it serves to highlight the gap which I aim to fill.

My third chapter will outline my methodology for approaching the "sinful" woman. My methodology draws upon both feminist criticism and social history. Firstly, I will explore the nature and history of feminist criticism before I offer a consideration of select feminist texts which have impacted my reading. Such texts include the work of Schottroff and Ipsen.[4] After a brief discussion of the long running feminist debate about Luke's presentation of women within his Gospel, I will turn then to the social history approach. I will bring attention to the applications of the social history method which have been most pertinent to my own research, including Hartman's "Critical Fabulation," Chin's "Historical Radiance," and Kitzberger's focus on female characters written by men in a

[4] Luise Schottroff, "Through German and Feminist Eyes: A Liberationist Reading of Luke 7:36-50," in *Feminist Companion to the Hebrew Bible in the New Testament*, ed. Athalya Brenner (Sheffield: Sheffield University Press, 1996), 332-341; Avaren Ipsen, *Sex Working and the Bible* (BibleWorld, Acumen Publishing, 2009), see pages 120-165.

patriarchal context.[5] Throughout my methodology, I aim to highlight the importance of intersectionality and imagination which allows for creative, new readings to give voice to the voiceless. This section concludes with my aims of empathy and generosity in my application of such a methodology.

I shall then turn, in Chapter Four, to the social world and status of women, particularly enslaved and prostituted women, who lived in the Roman Empire and under Roman rule. After a discussion of gendered virtues, I will explore the multiplicity of lives lived by women under Roman rule. I shall discuss the wealthiest of women, freedwomen and, importantly, enslaved women. I will explore the dire treatment of enslaved women and their common occupations. A particular focus of this chapter is the frequent objectification of enslaved women, including sexual objectification. I will then turn to the lives of sex workers, who, whether enslaved or free, experienced constant objectification, abuse, and violence. Whilst the lives of ancient women, and most significantly impoverished or enslaved ancient women, have been erased from our archive and are difficult to speak about with absolute certainty, I hope to offer a fuller exploration of their experiences here.[6]

The pericope of the "sinful" woman invokes the broader world of ancient bathing and anointing practices. Thus, in Chapter Five, I will narrow my attention onto this aspect of ancient life to focus on the wider social practices invoked by the woman's actions. In this chapter, I will begin with a brief exploration of the much-debated connections between

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[5] Saidiya V. Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," *Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism* 12 (2008): 1-14, Saidiya V. Hartman, *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2008), 16; Saidiya V. Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror*, *Slavery*, *and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); C. M. Chin, "Marvelous Things Heard: On Finding Historical Radiance," *Massachusetts Review* 58.3 (2017): 478-91; Ingrid Rosa Kitzberger, "Mary of Bethany and Mary of Magdala – Two Female Characters in the Johannine Passion Narrative: A Feminist, Narrative-Critical Reader Response," *NTS* 41 (1995): 564-586.

[6] On the difficulties accessing women's lived experiences in history see Elizabeth A Clark, "The Lady Vanishes: Dilemmas of a Feminist Historian after the "Linguistic Turn"," *Church History* 67.1 (1998): 1-31.

Greek and Roman bathing, followed by an outline of how the Roman public baths functioned. Crucially, here I will discuss how those visiting the baths bathed, and the place of anointing in the bathing routine. I will then provide a thorough assessment of who could be found at the baths, with most discussion dedicated to the women, including sex workers, who frequented the baths. Subsequently, I will turn to the complex consideration of why people attended the baths, with a focus on arguably the central motivations: to socialise, for pleasure, and for health. Noteworthy here is the socially acceptable nature of sex in the baths, as bathers used enslaved bathhouse and sex workers sexually in this environment with few communal qualms. The context provided in this chapter is crucial for my discussion of the "sinful" woman and her connection to bathing and anointing culture.

My sixth chapter returns to the story of the "sinful" woman and re-interprets the pericope. I aim to explore the deeper meanings of the woman's actions, including the possibility of an acceptance of her enslavement, or conversely an act of rebellion. I will also consider whether the way in which she shows love and devotion to Jesus is derived from her experiences as an enslaved bathhouse worker who shows love to herself and her companions in the same way. Furthermore, in this chapter, I will explore whether, through this pericope, the author of Luke makes a larger statement about the morality of sex work in his reworking of the pericope. As I will argue, Jesus is depicted as accepting the woman's role as a sex worker; he does not question her, nor does he tell her to abandon such work. I will pose this reading against Paul's view of the morality of sex work in 1 Corinthians 6:12-20, with the suggestion that the author of Luke actively rejects such a view in his formation of the pericope.

I hope that my rereading of the "sinful" woman contributes a new and meaningful angle from which to view her. Through an exploration of her actions in connection to

bathing and anointing culture, I aim to offer a reading in which the woman's life and history are central. My eagerness to give deeper meaning to the woman's lived experiences will also, I hope, provide a new perspective on Jesus' relationship with sex workers. I will maintain throughout my thesis that the woman is not sinful due to her potential engagement in sex work, and that this view is only furthered by Jesus' interaction with her in the pericope.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Scholarship concerned with the "sinful" woman in Luke 7:36-50 is diverse and extensive. In this section of my thesis, I will survey the broad ongoing discussions about Luke 7:36-50 which have informed my study of the pericope. I will discuss the central debate which concerns the relationship between the Lukan account and the other Gospel accounts. Then, I will review discussions on the significance of forgiveness within the story, exploring the question of when the woman was forgiven. I will briefly survey studies of the use of contrast between the woman and Simon, before I move on to discuss perhaps the most significant element of scholarship for my research: how the woman is understood, markedly and frequently, as a sex worker.

As I continue with this focus on the woman, I will turn to how scholarship has identified her as: Mary Magdalene, Mary of Bethany, an unnamed woman, or an amalgamation of the three. Finally, I will review the literature that debates whether the Lukan account points to the Messianic nature of Jesus. A noteworthy thread which runs through much of these scholarly debates is the attempt to uncover the original version or meaning of the pericope. I will conclude that whilst a great deal of scholarship has focused on the woman in the pericope, this work has not exhausted the range of possibilities for the woman's identity or lived reality. Historically, we have been quick to label the woman as a sex worker, at times without adequate inquiry as to why this is or how this would have affected her daily life. Through my exploration of the woman in the context of bathing and anointing culture, I aim to fill this lacuna, and bring the woman's circumstances and lived experiences to the forefront of the conversation.

2.2 The Relationship between the Galilee and Bethany Anointing Stories

A central question which concerns the Lukan story is its relationship to the other Gospel accounts, sometimes referred to as the "Bethany anointings" (Mt. 26:6-13; Jn 12:1-8; Mk 14:3-9). The field is largely divided on this issue, as some suggest that Luke's story is one with the "Bethany anointings" and others that it is completely separate. Whilst the act of anointing Jesus in some form is present in all four accounts, there are also clear dissimilarities between them. Notably, the location sets Luke apart from Mark, Matthew, and John, as he places the event in Galilee and not Bethany. Luke's focus also appears to be on "sin-and-forgiveness,"[7] whereas this is "nowhere mentioned in the Bethany account."[8] Moreover, the dating of the stories is different, with Mark and John's accounts set in relation to Passover. Most significant, perhaps, is the dissimilarity of the Lukan woman's actions compared to that of the other Gospels. Many agree, however, that there are similarities between Luke and John.[9] Such similarities include the anointing of the feet of Jesus, and subsequent wiping with hair. Whilst the Lukan dependence on Mark is largely agreed upon as a scholarly consensus, some make objections to the case in the instance of Luke 7:36-50.[10] A small minority argue for the reliance of Luke on John and

[7] The seeming difference in narrative theme of the pericope has also led to fruitful scholarly discussion, including Kent A. Van Til, "Three Anointings and One Offering: The Sinful Woman in Luke 7.36-50," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 15 (2006): 73-82. Van Til has proposed a way in which thematic differences can be reconciled. Through a focus on "Luke's distinct narrative purposes," Van Til suggests the Lukan account should not be read as detailing an anointing, but rather an "offering" ("Three Anointings and One Offering", 74). Amongst his defences of his view, he argues that Luke's Gospel as a whole focuses on forgiveness. Moreover, he suggests that the differences in the stories are not "central" but rather "center on the words of the dialogue and details within the narrative" ("Three Anointings and One Offering", 75). The motif of forgiveness has also given rise to further debate which will be detailed below.

[8] Thomas L. Brodie, "Luke 7,36-50 as an Internalization of 2 Kings 4,1-37: A Study in Luke's Use of Rhetorical Imitation," *Biblica* 64 (1983): 457-485.

[9] For example, C. H. Dodd, *Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1963), 172; André Legault, "An Application of the Form-Critique Method to the Anointings in Galilee (Lk 7, 36-50) and Bethany (Mt 26, 6-13; Mk 14, 3-9; Jn 12, 1-8)," *CBQ* 16 (1954): 131-145.

[10] See B. H. Streeter, *The Four Gospels: A Study of Origins: Treating of the Manuscript Tradition, Sources, Authorship and Dates* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1925), 210; Joachim Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), 99; Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke*, 684.

vice-versa, whilst others prioritise a form-critical approach, thus viewing the differing anointings as a result of oral transmission.[11] The scope of debate is vast, and so I will examine a small but significant portion of this ongoing discussion.

The form-critical approach, and its emphasis on oral transmission, has long been used to explore the differences in the Gospel accounts. [12] The view that one anointing story is expressed in all four Gospels was strongly supported by this method up until the mid-20th century, but such a view has experienced a recent reintroduction through the work of Corley, among others.[13] Legault's seminal text on the pericopae*,* in which he puts forward the views of Benoit, has received attention for his use of the form-critical method.[14] He surveys scholarship concerning the relationship between the anointings in somewhat large and disparaging strokes, and suggests that there are largely three positions.[15] These positions are (1) those who think that there are two distinct scenes, (2) those who view the anointings as being "only one scene" (their differences arise through Luke's personal addition of "all the color and human interest which enhances the incident of the anonymous sinner"), and finally (3) those who argue that "two different scenes were combined into one by Lk" to preserve the "anonymity" of Mary of Bethany, the sinful woman.[16] Legault finds flaws in each of these conclusions, as he labels their proprietors "easy-going", "extremist", and inconsistent respectively.[17]

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[11] J. F. Coakley, "The Anointing at Bethany and the Priority of John," *JBL* 107 (1988): 241-256.
[12] The New Testament form-critical approach was first developed in Rudolf Bultmann, *Form Criticism: A New Method of New Testament Research*, trans. Frederick Clifton Grant (Chicago: Willet, Clarke and Company, 1934). The approach seeks to identify the age of scriptural passages, through observance of the "laws of style" of "literary expression" (Bultmann, *Form Criticism,* 28-30). Through determination of the text type, an attempt is made to trace the original form back to its historical context.
[13] Kathleen E. Corley, "The Anointing of Jesus in the Synoptic Tradition: An Argument for Authenticity," *JSHJ* 1 (2003): 61-72; Robert Holst, "The One Anointing of Jesus: Another Application of the Form-Critical Method," *JBL* 95 (1976): 435-446.
[14] Legault, "An Application," 131-145.
[15] Legault, "An Application," 141-142.
[16] Legault, "An Application," 142.
[17] Legault, "An Application," 141-142.

His form-critical approach maintains that the stories of the Bethany anointings (Mt. 26:6-13, Mk 19:3-9, Jn 12:1-8) and the Galilee anointing (Lk. 7:36-50) are "radically distinct" from one another, visible through the disparate time and place of the narratives.[18] The narrative foci of the Galilee and Bethany anointings are "completely different," as the Lukan account focuses on the "pardon of the anonymous sinner" and the Bethany anointings are concerned with "Mary's generous action" which anticipates Jesus' "impending burial."[19] There is, however, significant cross over between the two scenes in his scheme, which he attributes to oral transmission.[20] This resulted in the "confusion of incidents in the two scenes" and the juggling "back and forth" of details "from one scene to another."[21] Legault details the frequently referred to commonalities between the anointings. For example, Luke's influence on John is seen through the anointing of the feet and wiping of the hair.[22] In his view, the Bethany anointings have also influenced the Galilee anointing of Luke, which included "the name *Simon*, *perfume* in an alabaster box, and an *anointing*."[23] Legault concludes that Luke made use of "a confused oral tradition" whilst making his own changes, notably his omission of the temporal setting in the Passion narrative.[24]

Others have pointed to the narrative influence of the Gospel accounts, suggesting that they were transmitted orally, and that each of the three versions should be understood

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[18] P. Benoit, *Évangile selon saint Matthieu* (Bible de Jérusalem; Par Éditions du Cerf, 1950), 148 cited in Legault, "An Application," 143.
[19] Legault, "An Application," 143-145.
[20] Legault, "An Application," 144.
[21] Legault, "An Application," 144. The theory of two sources influencing one another through oral transmission is also supported by Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John (i-xii)* (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1966), 451-452.
[22] Legault, "An Application," 138 calls the anointing of feet an act which was "absolutely unknown in the Orient and is never mentioned in the Bible" apart from these examples. This view is repeated in Brown, *The Gospel According to John (i-xii)*, 451 who calls the anointing of the feet "anomalous." Coakley, "The Anointing at Bethany," 247-248, strongly disagrees and offers a formidable list of foot washing examples from ancient sources. For further discussion of foot washing, see Walter L. Fleming, "The Religious and Hospitable Rite of Feet Washing," *The Sewanee Review* 16 (1908): 1-13.
[23] Legault, "An Application," 144 - original italics.
[24] Legault, "An Application," 144.

as traditional. Whilst conceding that each author "contributed something of his own," Dodd views the divergence of accounts as being traceable to "cross-contamination" through the oral tradition.[25] Like Legault, Dodd sees the crossing of narratives between Luke and John in their shared anointing of the feet.[26] Dodd explains the further differences between Luke and John as personal contribution, as the act in John is "described essentially as in Luke, but simply and without the pointed elaboration."[27] Holst, whilst in agreement about the impact of the oral tradition, views the Lukan and Johannine accounts as "more primitive" than Mark's.[28] Holst appeals to the theory of "multiple attestation," and argues that Luke "preserves a pre-Lucan tradition."[29] He supports this view through his suggestion that the elements lacking in Luke were more likely added to the other Gospel accounts at a later date, rather than having been left out by Luke himself, for example the absence of the temporal setting in the Passion narrative.[30] In a more recent contribution to the field, Witherington argues that two alternative versions of Jesus' anointing have interacted with one another.[31] Specifically, he suggests that Luke's pericope was likely derived from his "special source," which he altered slightly.[32] Undeniably, the range of viewpoints is comprehensive.

As I have shown, much scholarly debate justifiably considers the literary relationship between the Gospel accounts and the contribution of an oral tradition to the

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[25] Dodd, *Historical Tradition*, 172.
[26] Dodd, *Historical Tradition*, 172.
[27] Dodd, *Historical Tradition*, 173.
[28] Holst, "The One," 437. Although Coakley, "The Anointing at Bethany," 241-256 has supported Johannine priority, the primacy of the Lukan account is also attested for elsewhere in scholarship, see Erwin. R. Goodenough, "John a Primitive Gospel," *JBL* 64 (1945): 145-182. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke,* 686 also uses the existence of an oral tradition to argue that Luke is not a reworking of Mark, as the anointing of the feet is likely an earlier version than the anointing of the head.

It should be noted that scholarship generally rejects such views, including the primacy of the Johannine or Lukan accounts. There is a wide consensus that views Mark as the earliest Gospel, and John, or John and Luke, as the latest Gospel.
[29] Holst, "The One," 440-441.
[30] Holst, "The One," 444.
[31] Ben Witherington III, *Women and the Genesis of Christianity* (Cambridge University Press, 2011), 66.
[32] Witherington, *Women,* 66.

story in Luke 7. In my reading of the pericope, I will focus rather on how Luke personally shaped the story and how the auditors and later readers received it. Whilst the debate concerning the origins of Luke's account is extensive, Luke's knowledge of at least the Markan narrative is widely accepted, and so I will work from this position in my reading.

2.3 The Motif of Forgiveness

Forgiveness is a key element in this story, as in so many Synoptic narratives. A central contention surrounding the forgiveness aspect of the pericope is at what point in the narrative did Jesus forgive the woman. In the pericope, Jesus tells Simon a parable seemingly to explain Jesus' interaction with the woman. The parable describes two people who owe debts to a moneylender, one owes "five hundred denarii, and the other fifty" (Lk. 7:41). Neither debtor could afford to pay back the lender, so the lender struck both debts off. Jesus asks Simon "now which of them will love him more?" (Lk. 7:42). Some take the parable to suggest that love follows forgiveness, yet others view this reading as being at odds with verses 48-50. In these verses, Jesus forgives the woman, and tells her "your faith has saved you," which suggests that Jesus forgave her because of her love (Lk. 7:50). This contradictory message comprises the central issue of the Lukan text.

Literature concerning the woman's forgiveness largely falls into these two positions, with some viewing her tears as a sign of her repentance, and others viewing them as tears of gratitude. This discussion also ties into a debate about the parable and how it fits within the wider pericope: significantly, whether the parable's figures are reflective of the woman, Simon, or Jesus.

2.3.1 **Tears of Gratitude – Forgiveness before the pericope**

2.3.1.1 The ὅτι *clause*

A popular argument to support the reading of the woman's actions as showing gratitude, not repentance, lies with the ὅτι clause of v.47 ("Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven; hence she has shown great love"). Nolland calls upon this clause to justify his perspective that the woman's display is of gratitude for her forgiveness, as he argues that it should be read "in the logical sense"; it is "establishing a basis for the ideas expressed in the previous statement."[33] Therefore, "the woman's profound display of grateful affection is a clear indication that she has been freed from the great burden of her moral debt."[34] Fitzmyer agrees with Nolland's interpretation of the Greek, as he argues that "the conj. *hoti* could be understood not as the reason 'why the fact *is* so, but whereby it is known to be so'."[35] The woman, therefore, arrives "as one already forgiven … seeking to pour out signs of love and gratitude."[36] Proponents also suggest that this reading resolves the conflict between the parable and the interaction between the woman, Jesus, and Simon, as the absence of Simon in the parable ceases to be a problem for interpreters.[37] This reading allows for the woman to be the centre of the parable, "the woman must have been forgiven much, because she does not fit the pattern: little forgiveness, little love."[38]

2.3.1.2 Forgiveness in the past

The perception of the woman as being forgiven in the past has garnered much attention among scholars. Kilgallen in particular has dedicated significant focus to this

[33] John Nolland, *Luke 1:1-9:20* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018), 358.
[34] Nolland, *Luke*, 358.
[35] Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke*, 687 - original italics.
[36] Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke*, 687.
[37] Nolland, *Luke*, 9.
[38] Nolland, *Luke*, 359

point, as the major throughline of his work is the maintenance that the woman was forgiven before she entered the Pharisee's house. He supports this thesis through reference to the parable.[39] Kilgallen suggests that the debtor, "obviously the woman," is forgiven, and Jesus concludes that "this debtor will show great love or gratitude in some notable way."[40] This reading gives the framework from which to read the forgiveness of the woman: the reader should see the acts of the woman as "a sign of gratitude for debt remitted."[41] Furthermore, the tense used in v.48 indicates the forgiveness as having begun "in the past."[42] In Kilgallen's most interesting assessment, he suggests that we observe the pericope in connection to the previous pericope of Jesus and John the Baptist (Lk. 7:18-35) to eliminate the question of "how can the reader be expected to know … that one is to read the story with the knowledge that the woman has already been forgiven?"[43] In Luke 7:18-35, the narrative focus centres on the work of John the Baptist and his role in preparing for Jesus' coming, as well as the importance of baptism as showing belief in Jesus. For Kilgallen, the "sinful" woman is amongst those baptised by John, thus placing her forgiveness in the past, and Simon is amongst the Pharisees who rejected baptism.[44] Moreover, this reading shows the pericope of the "sinful" woman as being less concerned about proving Jesus' "power to forgive," and more about "the tragic irony that those who are sinners are accepting of the plan of God, whereas the religious leaders, the 'men of this generation' are not."[45]

Whilst affirming that the woman's tears indicate her gratitude, Myllykoski takes a different approach to reading the story. He explores the pericope in conjunction with the

[39] J. J. Kilgallen, "Faith and Forgiveness: Luke 7,36-50," *Revue Biblique* 108 (2001): 214-227.
[40] Kilgallen, "Faith and Forgiveness," 216.
[41] Kilgallen, "Faith and Forgiveness," 216.
[42] Kilgallen, "Faith and Forgiveness," 216.
[43] J. J. Kilgallen, "John the Baptist, the Sinful Woman, and the Pharisee," *JBL* 104 (1985): 675-679.
[44] Kilgallen, "John the Baptist," 677-678.
[45] Kilgallen, "John the Baptist," 679.

Gospel of Peter and P.Oxy. 4009.[46] He argues that Pseudo-Peter's version of the pericope does not contain vv.47-48, not because he purposely omitted them, but likely because he was not aware of them.[47] The omission of these verses brings Luke's narrative into focus, as it makes clear that "the actions of the woman must be seen as a sign of love and gratitude, not repentance."[48] Despite dating later than Luke, Myllykoski suggests that Pseudo-Peter's version of the story has "preserved the original reading," that the woman arrived already forgiven.[49] Black also sought the original reading through his review of the Greek text alongside the Aramaic.[50] He concludes that the "undoubtedly original" understanding of the forgiveness of the woman is "in the past" with her "demonstration of affection … a consequence of her being forgiven."[51] Black's views are strongly expressed: he writes, "there is no doubt how the original Aramaic was construed."[52]

The status of v.48, in which Jesus tells the woman "Your sins are forgiven", is connected to this argument. Green, who understands the woman to have been forgiven before she entered the house, sees the statement of forgiveness as not for the woman, but rather for the benefit of Simon and those onlooking.[53] Kilgallen interprets the verse as Jesus giving the woman "direct assurance that her sins have been forgiven," which is far superior to the simple "knowledge" of her forgiveness.[54] Marshall agrees, as he claims that the "statement is a confirmation of what has already taken place" which serves to bring her "personal assurance."[55]

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[46] Matti Myllykoski, "Tears of Repentance or Tears of Gratitude? P.Oxy. 4009, the Gospel of Peter and the Western Text of Luke 7.45-49," *NTS* 55 (2009): 380-389.
[47] Myllykoski, "Tears of Repentance," 384-385.
[48] Myllykoski, "Tears of Repentance," 386.
[49] Myllykoski, "Tears of Repentance," 388.
[50] Matthew Black, *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts*, 3rd ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1967).
[51] Black, *An Aramaic Approach*, 183.
[52] Black, *An Aramaic Approach*, 183.
[53] Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 314.
[54] J. J. Kilgallen, "Forgiveness of Sins (Luke 7:36-50)," *NovT* 40 (1998): 105-116.
[55] I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 314.

2.3.2 **Tears of Repentance – Forgiveness during the pericope**

The understanding of the woman's tears as repentant has a long history that began with Clement of Alexandria's third century C.E. proclamation that she "expended on the Lord tears of repentance."[56] Other early Church writers have viewed her tears as repentant, including Clement's colleague Origen and the seventh century English monk Bede of Jarrow.[57] Bede introduced his commentary on the pericope with "*sanctissima Maria Poenitentis historic*," "the most blessed Mary, the story of her repentance."[58] So too Legault declared that her "tears, not anointing with perfume, signify penitence."[59]

Contemporary explorations of the forgiveness in the pericope have moved away from this binary distinction, as they question whether Luke offers such a rigid understanding of forgiveness and love. Pesonen, for example, is sceptical of the popular reading of the ὅτι clause as affirming the woman's previous forgiveness.[60] The suggestion that the ὅτι clause should not be taken to introduce "the reason why the fact *is* so, but whereby it is known to be so" would be an exception to all other uses of the term.[61] This reading of the clause is "difficult to defend" since out of the "175 cases of the ὅτι clause in the Gospel of Luke, not one can be interpreted in this way; by far the most natural interpretation is the simple 'for' or 'because'."[62] To take the "natural" interpretation would also allow for the acceptance of an internal contradiction regarding the parable and wider

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[56] Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus*, 2.8.61. Translation by William Wilson, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 2. Edited by Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885), 253.
[57] Origen, *Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, 12.4. Translation by John Patrick, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 9. Edited by Allan Menzies (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1896), 452.
[58] Bede of Jarrow, XI.53. Translation by Teresa J. Hornsby, "The Gendered Sinner: The Appropriation of a Woman's Body in the Interpretations of Luke 7:36-50" (PhD. Diss., Vanderbilt University, 2000), 54.
[59] Legault, "An Application," 141.
[60] Anni Pesonen, "The Weeping Sinner: A Short Story by Luke?," *Neot.* 34 (2000): 87-102.
[61] Pesonen, "The Weeping Sinner," 98.
[62] Pesonen, "The Weeping Sinner," 98.

story, without indicating multiple authorship.[63] Crucially, Pesonen argues that the contradiction need not be viewed as a significant aspect of the story, instead it shows that "for Luke, the more there is forgiveness, the more there is love and joy on both sides."[64] She is not alone in this view, as Schottroff agrees that "in our context it can suffice to state that the text is contradictory in this respect because it is not interested in the problem."[65] This retreat from binary readings is significant in my wider approach to the pericope, despite my focus not lying with the theme of forgiveness.

2.4 The Woman and Simon

Exegetical study of the pericope has drawn attention to the contrast between the woman and Simon. Simon, otherwise referred to as "the Pharisee" and the owner of the house, is an important character within the story. As Green has noted, Simon is known "first and foremost as a Pharisee," but within the pericope the reader develops a deeper understanding of him, becoming privy even to his thoughts.[66] In the story, Jesus personally addressed Simon after he questions Jesus' allowance of the woman's touch, and thus his prophetic nature. Significantly, Simon did not speak his reservations aloud, but rather thought them to himself. Jesus addressed the parable story directly to Simon, and subsequently questioned his understanding. Jesus rebuked Simon for his seeming lack of hospitality, which the woman's actions more than compensate for. The difference in

[63] Pesonen, "The Weeping Sinner," 99.
[64] Pesonen, "The Weeping Sinner," 99.
[65] Luise Schottroff, *Befreiungserfahrungen: Studien zur Sozialgeschichte des Neuen Testaments* (München: Kaiser, 1990), 321. Original text: "In unserem Zusammenhang kann die Feststellung genügen, *daß* der Text in dieser Frage widersprüchlich ist, weil er an dem Problem nicht interessiert ist."
[66] Green, *The Gospel of Luke,* 306. In the Markan account (Mk 14:3-9), the interaction similarly takes place within the home of Simon, yet Mark identifies him as a "leper," not a Pharisee. Despite being named by Mark, Simon is not a central figure in the pericope. Rather it is an anonymous group of people who question the woman and Jesus. Those who question and scold the woman are simply referred to as "they."

presentation of Simon and the woman has led to much scholarly debate over the literary relationship between the figures.

As already noted, some interpreters view Luke as purposely contrasting the woman's actions to Simon's, specifically her abundance of care for Jesus is contrasted to Simon's lack thereof (Lk. 7:44-46). Whilst Simon is civil to Jesus, he does not appear to fulfil his role as host, rather "the woman fulfils the role expected of Simon, and thus shames Simon as a host who did not honor his guest."[67] The actions carried out by the woman are memorable for their personal and "extravagant" character, they far surpass what Jesus expected of Simon, "water for my feet … a kiss … oil on my head" (Lk. 7:44-46). [68] The woman does not use water, but her own tears, she does not use a cloth, but her own hair, and she does not use simple olive oil, but perfumed ointment from an "alabaster jar" (Lk. 7:37). Green brings attention to her concentration on Jesus' feet, an "unseemly, unclean part of the body," which shows the "extraordinary and humble nature of her attendance to his needs."[69] Fitzmyer argues that the parable "allegorizes the narrative," while also containing its own Lukan message: that "the sinner turns out to be the one who manifests to God greater gratitude than the upright, critical Pharisee."[70] Reid views the pericope similarly, with the role reversal of the woman and Simon playing a key part in the narrative: those "least expected to be upright: tax collectors and prostitutes" see and accept Jesus, whereas Simon, a religious leader, does not.[71]

[67] Green, *The Gospel of Luke,* 313.
[68] D. H. Bertschmann, "Hosting Jesus: Revisiting Luke's 'Sinful Woman' (Luke 7.36-50) as a Tale of Two Hosts," *JSNT* 40 (2017): 30-50.
[69] Green, *The Gospel of Luke,* 313.
[70] Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke*, 687.
[71] Barbara Reid, "'Do You See This Woman?'," 44.

Others refer to the supposed contrast between Simon and the woman in the parable; however, such a view has faced pushback in recent scholarship.[72] The contrast between the loving and faithful woman and the obtuse Pharisee is mentioned aplenty, however some find fault in the attempt to position the woman and Simon at odds with one another. Bashaw suggests that the parables in the Gospel of Luke "serve as confrontational teaching tools" which often "contain contrasting characters."[73] Yet, the parable of the debtors works in a dissimilar way. It "draws its previously polarized characters with similar strokes," therefore the parable is used to "unite rather than divide."[74] Despite the characters "wildly varying debts," they are "both on equal ground" at the parable's end, which in turn releases the "tension" in the wider story.[75] Kilgallen has also problematised the contrast to be found within the parable, and the wider pericope.[76] He argues that the pericope does not speak directly to the three figures in the pericope, but rather just to Jesus and the woman.[77] The parable does not relate to Simon, as he "does not qualify as the debtor who owed less and was forgiven less and thus will love less."[78] He puts this down to Luke's treatment of Simon, who receives a "constant pounding" from Jesus, and is reminded that "he did nothing for Jesus, in contrast to the woman."[79] For Kilgallen, there is nothing to suggest that Simon will be forgiven anything, and so he is not representative of the lesser debtor in the parable.[80]

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[72] Yuri Phanon, "Is She a Sinful Woman or a Forgiven Woman? An Exegesis of Luke 7:36-50 Part 2," *AJPS* 19 (2016): 73-84; Darrell L. Bock, *Luke*, (Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 142-143. On the contrast between the figures in the context of hosting see Jennifer A. English, "Which Woman? Reimagining the Woman who Anoints Jesus in Luke 7:36-50," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 39 (2012): 435-442; Bertschmann, "Hosting Jesus", 47; Mary H. Brondyke, "The Sinful Woman as Surrogate Host: Hospitality and Forgiveness in Luke 7:44–48," *Pricilla Papers* 18 (2004): 11.
[73] Jennifer G. Bashaw, "Finding Common Ground in God's Story: Experiencing Luke 7:36-50 with the First-Century Hearers," *Review and Expositor* 116 (2019): 233-239.
[74] Bashaw, "Finding Common Ground," 238.
[75] Bashaw, "Finding Common Ground," 238.
[76] J. J. Kilgallen, "A Proposal for Interpreting Luke 7,36-50," *Biblica* 72 (1991): 305-330.
[77] Kilgallen, "A Proposal," 309.
[78] Kilgallen, "A Proposal," 310.
[79] Kilgallen, "A Proposal," 311.
[80] Kilgallen, "A Proposal," 311.

Whilst the element of contrast between the woman and Simon in the pericope is well discussed, recent attempts have emerged to challenge the repeated juxtaposition of the woman and Simon. Schottroff highlights the antisemitic or anti-Jewish thought latent in this approach to Luke 7:36-50.[81] She rejects the interpretation that sees Simon as a "representative of Judaism or Pharisaism," preferring to view him as representing "a false attitude toward whores and 'the least' among people generally."[82] She uses Bovon's commentary to demonstrate the common "anti-Jewish interpretation" in which Simon is contrasted to the woman: he is "blind" and does not accept the forgiveness of the woman's sins as it did not sufficiently apply "scriptural rules."[83]. Schottroff argues that the issue is one that "feminist theology" must continue to understand and problematise.[84] Parks, in her discussion of women in Q, also highlights the damaging presentation of women who are contrasted to Jesus' Jewish contemporaries and, in this case, Jewish religious leaders, which in turn commonly begets anti-Jewish interpretations.[85] An awareness of this tendency to slide into anti-Jewish interpretation, and more widely into harmful Biblical interpretations of any kind, is critical.

2.5 Who was the Woman?

In this section, I will survey how readers and commentators understood the woman's identity, discussing both her pervasive identification as a sex worker as well as the named

[81] Schottroff, "Through German," 335-339.
[82] Schottroff, "Through German," 334.
[83] François Bovon, *Luke 1: A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 1:1-9:50*, trans. Christine M. Thomas (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002); Schottroff, "Through German," 336.
[84] For further discussions of anti-Judaism and feminism see Amy-Jill Levine, "The Word Becomes Flesh: Jesus, Gender, and Sexuality," in *The Historical Jesus in Recent Research,* eds. James D.G. Dunn and Scot McKnight (Winona Lake, Ind: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 509-523; Judith Plaskow, "Feminist Anti-Judaism and the Christian God," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 7 (1991): 99-108; Judith Plaskow, *The Coming of Lilith: Essays on Feminism, Judaism, and Sexual Ethics*, *1972-2003* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2005); Sarah J. Melcher, "The Problem of Anti-Judaism in Christian Feminist Biblical Interpretation: Some Pragmatic Suggestions," *CrossCurrents* 53 (2003): 22-31.
[85] Sara Parks, *Gender in the Rhetoric of Jesus: Women in Q* (Maryland: Lexington Books, 2019), 4.

women she is so commonly connected to. The nature of the woman's sins has remained a talking point since the early Church Fathers, with the most frequent conclusion being that her sins are sexual in nature. This view was expressed as early as the 3rd century C.E. in the writings of Origen, who labelled the woman a "harlot."[86] I will survey the views of Origen and his contemporaries, before I turn to recent scholarly discussions about this conception of the woman. Some scholars agree with their predecessors in viewing the woman as a sex worker, as they point to her unbound hair, her presence at the dinner party, and her actions involving perfume. Conversely, some ardently hold that this conclusion is simply sexist.[87] Others embrace the label placed on the woman (and subsequently Mary Magdalene), as they argue for its empowerment of sex workers.[88] Here, I will survey these broad views before delving more deeply into feminist discourse on this question in my next chapter.

Moreover, the specific identity of the unnamed "sinful" woman of Luke 7:36-50 has been of great interest to ancient and contemporary readers alike. She is most commonly identified with Mary Magdalene, but some have tied her to Mary of Bethany, and others still have noted the significant history of conflation of these two women. Whilst scholarship now largely advocates for the understanding of the woman as an unnamed woman who appears just once, her identification with other Biblical female figures has exerted a pervasive influence over mainstream thought. Arguably this trend began with Gregory the Great in 591 C.E., who conflated Mary of Bethany, Mary Magdalene, and the unnamed sinner, thus naming her Mary Magdalene.[89]

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[86] Origen, *Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, 12.4.
[87] E.g., Ehrman, *Peter, Paul and Mary Magdalene*, 189.
[88] E.g., Schottroff, "Through German," 334 - an exploration of the empowerment of sex workers from Lk. 7:36-50 is explored more thoroughly in my methodology chapter.
[89] Mary Ann Beavis, "Reconsidering Mary of Bethany," *CBQ* 74 (2012): 281-297.

2.6 Ancient Traditions Viewing the Woman as a Sex Worker

The understanding of the "sinful" woman as a sex worker has a long history, with discussions dating back hundreds of years.[90] Origen likens her to Rahab from Joshua and declares her a "harlot."[91] In his commentary, Origen depicts her as "surreptitious," despite being a woman who goes through a transformation at the feet of Jesus into a "penitent harlot" through her "tears of repentance."[92] Clement of Alexandria connects the pericope, and the woman's actions of anointing, to the sin of excess. In his discussion, he warns women against using too much perfume to avoid "nauseat[ing] their husbands" and cautions against the use of oil as a "bait which draws us into sensual lust."[93] For Clement of Alexandria, the actions of the woman are risky; he cautions that excessive use of oil in anointings "savour of a funeral and not of connubial life."[94] In his reading, the stakes are high and thus the woman's actions are used to advise his readers against the dangers of excess.[95] Early writers, including Saint Ambrose and Hippolytus of Rome, also connected the Song of Songs to Luke 7, as they conflated the woman and Jesus with the bride and bridegroom.[96] By the early 5th century, Saint Cyril's writings spoke to the mainstream view of the woman, she who is "lewd, and guilty of sensuality," a particularly difficult sin to atone for.[97] The 6th century writings of Gregory the Great were similarly pervasive, in which he identified the "sinful" woman of Luke 7 as a conflated Mary Magdalene, a

[90] Hornsby, "The Gendered Sinner," 33 thoroughly surveys discussions of the woman as a sex worker in discussions from the third to seventh century.
[91] Origen, *Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, 12.4.
[92] Hornsby, "The Gendered Sinner," 49.
[93] Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 2.8.
[94] Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 2.8.
[95] This focus on excess arises again in the identification of Mary Magdalene as the "sinful" woman.
[96] Hornsby, "The Gendered Sinner," 43-47; Ambrose, *Concerning Repentance*, 2.8.68-69.
[97] Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on Luke: Sermons* 40.157. Translation by R. Payne Smith, *A Commentary Upon The Gospel According to Saint Luke by S. Cyril Patriarch of Alexandria* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1859), 157.

prostitute.[98] Chiefly, ancient traditional readings of the woman have viewed her in widely negative terms, her perceived engagement in sex work was universally seen as the source of her sins and therefore was made morally objectionable. Whilst discussions of the woman have progressed into a more empathetic sphere, as I will show, some still perceive of the woman as a sex worker who is repentant of this occupation.

2.6.1 **Scholarly Discussions**

Some contemporary scholars also find the connection between the woman's sinful nature and her engagement in sex work logical, despite the sins never being named.[99] Many scholars point to the woman's loosened hair as an indication of her sinful nature.[100] Green strongly discusses the ancient reception of her loose hair, as he suggests that it is akin to today's understanding of being "topless in public", and that her actions are clearly erotic.[101] He also suggests that her presence and attentiveness to Jesus at the dinner party setting would have suggested "a prostitute or a slave girl accustomed to providing sexual favors."[102] Bovon too views her gesture as one of "erotic love," coupled with the "particularly erotic action" of loosening her hair.[103] Schweizer, whilst reaching the same conclusion that the woman is a sex worker, does not view her unbound hair as indecent,

[98] Gregory the Great, *Homily* 33. Translation by Dom David Hurst, *Forty Gospel Homilies by Gregory the Great* (Michigan: Cistercian Publications, 1990), 268-279.
[99] Green, *The Gospel of Luke,* 310.
[100] See Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel of Luke* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920), 211; Witherington, *Women,* 67; Joachim Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1963), 126; E. J. Tinsley, *The Gospel According to Luke: Commentary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 82; D. W. Cleverley Ford, *A Reading of Saint Luke's Gospel* (Hodder and Stoughton, 1967), 110; Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to St Luke: An Introduction and Commentary* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1974), 147.
[101] Green, *The Gospel of Luke,* 310.
[102] Green, *The Gospel of Luke,* 310.
[103] Bovon, *Luke 1*, 295.

but rather as commonplace.[104] Yet, he too views her actions as "erotic," even "hysterical," and therefore indicative of her occupation as a sex worker.[105]

The anointing of Jesus' feet as a sexual act has also been discussed extensively. The context of the dinner party setting helps us comprehend this view, as it would have impacted ancient audiences' perceptions of her. Whilst Green, Bovon, and Schweizer among others, have already highlighted the sexual nature of her actions, Corley thoroughly draws upon ancient understandings of women at dinners to argue for the comprehension of the woman as a sex worker.[106] She argues that women present at a dinner setting "would have signalled sexual innuendo to ancient readers," specifically during Hellenistic times.[107] Women present at dinners alongside men were "stereotypically considered to be prostitutes, or at least promiscuous" regardless of their social strata.[108] Corley connects this understanding to the "impropriety of the woman's action," as she suggests that not only her presence indicates the sexual nature of her sins, but her actions also further this conclusion.[109]

The woman's use of oil on Jesus' feet, in a dinner party setting, has also resulted in her connection to sex work, particularly when coupled with the cost of an "alabaster jar of ointment" (Lk. 7:37). Whilst it is known that sex workers, often enslaved women, performed sexual favours at dinners, Corley also notes the ancient Greek custom in which wives anointed their husbands "before sexual intercourse," thus she highlights the variety of sexual acts which can be linked with the woman's actions.[110] Derrett also suggests that the ointment indicates her occupation, or past occupation.[111] He views "ointment to a

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[104] Eduard Schweizer, *The Good News According to Luke* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1984), 139.
[105] Schweizer, *The Good News,* 139.
[106] Green, *The Gospel of Luke,* 310; Bovon, *Luke 1*, 295; Schweizer, *The Good News,* 139; Corley, "The Anointing of Jesus," 61.
[107] Corley, "The Anointing of Jesus," 64.
[108] Corley, "The Anointing of Jesus," 64.
[109] Corley, "The Anointing of Jesus," 64.
[110] Corley, "The Anointing of Jesus," 65.
[111] J. Duncan M. Derrett, *Law in the New Testament* (Dartan: Longman and Todd, 1970), 267.

prostitute" as one of the "most useful 'tools' of her 'trade'", but one which could not be accepted as a gift if she had not renounced her sex work, hence his labelling of her as an "ex-prostitute."[112] To support his reading, Derrett calls upon the Jewish "self-taxing system" which excluded sex workers to demonstrate the tainted nature of the money they made.[113] Such money was viewed as "so dirty that no respectable person would accept them as gifts," therefore a "renunciation is quite understandable."[114]

Despite the pervasive identification of the woman's unbound hair as an expression of her sexual sins, this view has been subject to criticism. Reid calls upon the Song of Song's as a Biblical example of loosened hair to contradict the idea that the woman's hair indicates her occupation as a sex worker.[115] In the Song of Songs, the loose hair of the bride-to-be is viewed as "beautiful" and evokes feelings of "awe and love; there is nothing of shame or uncleanness."[116] In relation to the "sinful" woman of Luke, Reid also suggests that simple unbound hair does not fit with the hair typical of ancient sex workers.[117] Her hair is not noted as being "beautifully groomed" as expected from sex workers, nor "dishevelled" as associated with "adultery, shame, or uncleanness."[118] She concludes that

[112] Derrett, *Law*, 267-268.
[113] Derrett, *Law*, 268.
[114] Derrett, *Law*, 268.
[115] Reid, "Do You See This Woman?," 45.
[116] Reid, "Do You See This Woman?," 46.
[117] Reid, "Do You See This Woman?," 45.
[118] Reid, "Do You See This Woman?," 45. Ishay Rosen-Zvi, *The Mishnaic Sotah Ritual: Temple, Gender and Midrash* (Leiden: Brill, 2012). The *Sotah* ritual is important context in which to understand the focus on the state of the woman's hair. The ritual, designed to humiliate a woman accused of adultery, involved the "forced drinking… of the water of bitterness" as described in the Mishnah, alongside "a sequence of gestures of humiliation performed on the woman's body in public" (Rosen-Zvi, *The Mishnaic Sotah Ritual,* 67-70). The drinking of the bitter water was believed to produce specific effects on the woman depending on her innocence or guilt, with a guilty woman experiencing the swelling of her stomach and "her womb shall discharge, her uterus drop, and the woman shall become an execration among her people" (Num. 5:27). However, if the woman is innocent, she shall have no adverse effects, rather she will "be able to conceive children" (Num. 5:28). The treatment of a woman's hair is central to the humiliation aspect of the ritual. "The priest is ordered to ruffle and unbind the woman's hair," which some interpret as the significant dishevelling of the hair, hence scholarship's attention paid to the *state* of the woman's unbound hair (Rosen-Zvi, *The Mishnaic Sotah Ritual,* 77).

the woman is not a sex worker but is simply "maligned for overstepping ideal societal roles."[119]

Cosgrove too successfully problematises this common assumption, as he follows on from the earlier work of Reid.[120] Cosgrove thoroughly unpacks contextual perceptions of the woman's unbound hair without concluding that she is necessarily a sex worker. He asserts that the "woman's gesture with her hair is not sexually provocative, indecent or even a breach of etiquette," instead her unbound hair could hold several other meanings.[121] His conclusion considers the social history of and the similarity between Jewish and "Mediterranean social codes" regarding hair.[122] Despite the fact that women's loose hair "often had sexual connotations" in antiquity, we must be aware of the ever-present male gaze and male projection of "their own sexually aggressive urges onto women."[123] The wearing of hair loose was common, but also can be connected to displays of religious devotion, mourning, and "proleptic grief in the face of impending danger."[124] Most significant in the context of the pericope is the ancient tradition of loosening one's hair for religious worship or devotion.[125] Braided hair or hair worn up was viewed as unacceptable in the context of acts of religious devotion concerning the Andanian mysteries, as well as the Temple of Despoina at Lycosura, which perhaps suggests that loosened hair was the most appropriate style for her interaction with Jesus.[126]

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[119] Reid, "Do You See This Woman?," 45.
[120] Charles H. Cosgrove, "A Woman's Unbound Hair in the Greco-Roman World, with Special Reference to the Story of the 'Sinful Woman' in Luke 7:36-50," *JBL* 124 (2005): 675-692.
[121] Cosgrove, "A Woman's Unbound Hair," 691.
[122] Cosgrove, "A Woman's Unbound Hair," 678.
[123] Cosgrove, "A Woman's Unbound Hair," 679; see also Molly Myerowitz Levine, "The Gendered Grammar of Ancient Mediterranean Hair," in *Off with Her Head!: The Denial of Women's Identity in Myth, Religion, and Culture,* eds. Howard Eilberg-Schwartz and Wendy Doniger (Berkeley: California University Press, 1995), 76-130.
[124] Cosgrove, "A Woman's Unbound Hair," 691.
[125] Cosgrove, "A Woman's Unbound Hair," 680.
[126] Cosgrove, "A Woman's Unbound Hair," 680. See also Petronius, *Sat*. 44.18, "In the good old days the women in long robes used to walk barefoot up the hill with loose hair, pure in spirit, and pray to Jupiter to send rain." Translated by Gareth Schmeling, Loeb Classical Library 15 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2020), 149.

Feminist scholar Teresa Hornsby also problematises the labelling of the woman as a prostitute.[127] Like Reid, Hornsby argues that "the label 'prostitute' functions to categorise all women whose physicality does not conform to what is 'normal' or socially acceptable," yet she questions how the sinful woman had "overstepped" in Reid's view.[128] Hornsby argues that "sexual readings of this pericope are not based entirely on historical/social evidences" but rather the readers assumption "that a woman who is a sinner is a sexual sinner."[129] Although she questions, and so diverges from Reid, their work is similar in its observations. Hornsby suggests that the woman's actions simply show her autonomy in a patriarchal society: "she has her own economic resources; she is unconcerned with social perception; she is unashamed of her physicality; and her actions prompt Jesus' positive recognition."[130] Whilst feminist discussions of the woman's positionality are diverse, what is noteworthy is the way in which some objections to the identification of the woman as engaging in sex work inadvertently buy into the damaging idea that sex work is morally wrong or shameful. The debate concerning whether the woman can be, or should be, viewed as a sex worker is significant, yet what is arguably more meaningful is what such an engagement in sex work would mean for the woman's lived reality. In my reading of the pericope, I hope to bring dimension to the woman through an exploration of her actions in relation to bathing and anointing culture. Through such a discussion I aim to explore the impacts of an engagement in sex work, rather than simply whether the woman can rightfully be labelled as such.

2.6.2 **Mary Magdalene**

[127] Hornsby, "The Gendered Sinner," 1-2.
[128] Reid, "Do You See This Woman?," 45; Hornsby, "The Gendered Sinner," 20.
[129] Hornsby, "The Gendered Sinner," 34.
[130] Hornsby, "The Gendered Sinner," 132.

The deeply pervasive identification of Mary Magdalene as the unnamed sinner of Luke 7:36-50 was perpetrated by the Church Fathers throughout large periods of history, most prolifically in the Middle Ages. Jansen surveys the history of Mary Magdalene's reputation as a sex worker, as she explores the charges of *luxuria* and vanity levied against her in the absence of any "scriptural evidence about the nature of her transgression."[131] The sin of *luxuria,* or lust, was almost always connected to sex work, as sex workers were understood as women who "made any sort of public display of herself, exhibited lust in anyway, or if she stimulated love."[132] Preachers made reaching statements to identify the "sinful" woman of Luke as Mary Magdalene, with some suggesting that "the adverb *ecce* attested her promiscuity," as it demonstrated the Evangelist's "astonishment at her excess."[133] Moreover, "preachers argued that the Magdalen's endless repetition of vices accounted for the loss of her name."[134] Despite the absence of her name, her identity as the sinner was very much common knowledge: "everyone knew her as *peccatrix*."[135] The public nature of the "sinful" woman's actions, and the interpretation that she had a reputation that preceded her, was also used in the Middle Ages to associate her with Mary Magdalene.[136] The public nature of her sins allowed Church Fathers to make statements pertaining to public penance, as Iohannes de Castello (John of the Castle) shows: "she came into the banquet so that she who had sinned publicly might do penance publicly."[137] The public defamation of Mary Magdalene, with very little reasoning, causes Jansen to

[131] Katherine L. Jansen, *The Making of the Magdalen: Preaching and Popular Devotion in the Later Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 169.
[132] Jansen, *The Making of the Magdalen*, 168. The sin of *luxuria* also underpins Clement of Alexandria's animosity to the Lukan woman. He claims, "luxury all but compels vessels for the meanest uses to smell of perfume" (Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 2.8).
[133] Ubertino de Casale cited in Jansen, *The Making of the Magdalen*, 170.
[134] Jansen, *The Making of the Magdalen*, 170-171.
[135] Jansen, *The Making of the Magdalen*, 171.
[136] Jansen, *The Making of the Magdalen*, 171.
[137] Jansen, *The Making of the Magdalen*, 172.

conclude that "preachers and moralists invented a woman called Mary Magdalen in order to preach on the evils of vanity, *luxuria*, prostitution, and the frailties of women."[138]

The notion that the Church Fathers fabricated this Mary Magdalene, a prostitute of public discourse, is pointed to elsewhere in scholarship. King argues that early Church Fathers intentionally conflated Mary Magdalene with the unnamed "sinner" of Luke 7:36-50 to discredit her.[139] After Gregory the Great's statement which identified the sinful woman as Mary Magdalene, she could then on "be associated with every unnamed sinful woman in the Gospels."[140] Mary's reputation as an "apostle and teacher" had changed to "Mary the repentant whore."[141] King argues we should view this as a deliberate besmirching due to the problems Mary Magdalene caused the early Church: Mary showed "women's capacity to take on leadership roles", an ideal which the early Church strongly opposed.[142] To taint her reputation in such a long-lasting way Church Fathers had solved the issue of women's authority, argues King, as they could highlight her sinful nature as an antithesis to her leadership.[143]

Recent scholarship has staunchly resisted the identification of Mary Magdalene as the "sinful" woman in Luke,[144] as she and the woman "have as little to do with each other

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[138] Jansen, *The Making of the Magdalen*, 194.
[139] Karen Leigh King, *The Gospel of Mary of Magdala: Jesus and the First Woman Apostle* (California: Polebridge Press, 2003), 151.
[140] King, *The Gospel of Mary*, 152.
[141] King, *The Gospel of Mary*, 152.
[142] King, *The Gospel of Mary*, 152.
[143] King, *The Gospel of Mary*, 152-153.
[144] All discussions of Mary Magdalene I have surveyed have opposed her association with the "sinful" woman of Luke 7:36-50. See Edward Grubb, "The Anointing of Jesus," *The Expository Times* 26 (1915): 461-463; Susan Haskins, *Mary Magdalen: Myth and Metaphor* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1995), 14; Marjorie M. Malvern, *Venus in Sackcloth: The Magdalen's Origins and Metamorphoses* (Southern Illinois University Press, 1975), 26; Jane Schaberg, *The Resurrection of Mary Magdalene: Legends, Apocrypha and the Christian Testament* (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2004), 76; Benedicta Ward, *Harlots of the Desert: A Study of Repentance in Early Monastic Sources* (Michigan: Cistercian Publications, 1987), 12; Ehrman, *Peter, Paul and Mary Magdalene*, 189; Beavis, "Reconsidering Mary of Bethany," 282; Mary Ann Beavis, "Mary of Bethany and the Hermeneutics of Remembrance," *CBQ* 75 (2013): 739-755; Elizabeth Schrader and Joan E. Taylor, "The Meaning of "Magdalene": A Review of Literary Evidence," *JBL* 4 (2021): 751-773; English, "Which Woman?," 436.

as Peter and Judas."[145] A common argument against the identification of the "sinful" woman as Mary Magdalene is that she is "introduced by Luke in his very next story (Luke 8:1-3), where he gives her name (Mary), her identification (of the town Magdala), and describes something about her ('from whom seven demons had gone out')."[146] Whilst it is "now common scholarly knowledge that Mary the repentant whore is a distortion, that image is still alive and powerful in contemporary novels, plays, films, and TV presentations."[147] Ehrman has brought attention to the several pop culture hit films that portray Mary Magdalene as a sex worker, such as *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *The Last Temptation of Christ*, and *The Da Vinci Code*.[148] Schaberg also references the presentation of Mary Magdalene as a sex worker in pop culture, an indication of just how pervasive the notion has been.[149]

Historically, commentators have conflated the "sinful" woman of Luke with Mary Magdalene, as well as further unrelated women found in the Bible. Ward argues that whilst Mary Magdalene's reputation as a sex worker has surely come from her identification as the "sinful" woman of Luke, Mary Magdalene has also been associated with Mary of Egypt.[150] Mary of Egypt, of the 4th century C.E., lived a life of "passion and lechery" before she became a hermit.[151] Saint Sophronius' record of her life from the 7th century C.E. depicts her sins as clearly sexual in nature: she was "always ready for the next sexual

[145] Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel, *The Women Around Jesus,* trans. John Bowden. (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1990), 64.
[146] Ehrman, *Peter, Paul and Mary Magdalene*, 189.
[147] Schaberg, *The Resurrection of Mary Magdalene*, 70.
[148] Ehrman, *Peter, Paul and Mary Magdalene*, 182. Even the most recent depictions of Mary Magdalene are questionable, including the 2018 eponymously titled film. Meredith Warren, "Mary Magdalene and the Dangers of White Feminism," *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* 20 (2022): 179-191 has brought attention to several concerning aspects of the film, including its "subtly negative depiction of Jewishness" and Mary's weaponization against Jewish and Black people. The issue of anti-Jewishness in recent feminist theological discourse is discussed further in my methodology to follow.
[149] Schaberg, *The Resurrection of Mary Magdalene*, 70-73.
[150] Ward, *Harlots of the Desert*, 15.
[151] Sophronius, *The Life of Our Venerable Mother Mary of Egypt*. Translation from Holy Trinity Monastery, *The Great Canon: The Work of St. Andrew of Crete* (Holy Trinity Publications, 2021), 129.

adventure."[152] Sophronius also described her as a "sinful woman", the same phrase Luke used.[153] The story of Mary of Egypt and that of the "sinful" woman of Luke are alike.[154] Both women wept during their interactions with the divine, as Mary of Egypt cried at the door of the Holy Sepulchre.[155] The pair of women too were known for their repentance, a potential explanation of how the three women became conflated.

2.6.3 **Mary of Bethany**

In the Johannine account, the woman who anoints Jesus is clearly identified as Mary of Bethany (Jn 12:1-8). In the Matthean, Markan, and Johannine accounts, the anointings are unmistakably set in Bethany (Mt. 26:6-13, Jn 12:1-8, Mk 14:3-9). This has caused a small discourse in scholarship which suggests that the woman of Luke should be identified as Mary of Bethany. O'Rahilly strongly supports this thesis: he views the sinful woman and Mary of Bethany as "identical."[156] Kitzberger suggests that there are indications within John's account to connect the "sinful" woman of Luke to Mary of Bethany.[157] In John 11:1-16, the anointing actions of Mary of Bethany are mentioned, before they have occurred in John's Gospel: "Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair; her brother Lazarus was ill" (Jn 11:2). Kitzberger suggests that this shows an awareness of an "extratextual source" from ancient readers.[158] For Kitzberger, the reader is invited by John to "remember knowledge gained somewhere else and integrate it into the reading of a new story."[159] The commonalities

[152] Ward, *Harlots of the Desert*, 32.
[153] Sophronius, *The Life of Our Venerable Mother Mary of Egypt.*
[154] Sophronius, *The Life of Our Venerable Mother Mary of Egypt.*
[155] Ward, *Harlots of the Desert*, 27.
[156] Alfred O'Rahilly, *The Family at Bethany* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1949), 91.
[157] Kitzberger, "Mary of Bethany," 571.
[158] Kitzberger, "Mary of Bethany," 571-572.
[159] Kitzberger, "Mary of Bethany," 571-572. Kitzberger employs an "interfigural view" positing that both "the author of John" and "his audience, readers or listeners, were familiar with the Synoptic traditions." Mary's anointing and wiping of "the Lord's feet" in John 11 "is a clear signal for our reader to open up this

between the Johannine and Lukan accounts, namely the wiping of the feet with hair, thus invites the reader to identify the anonymous Lukan woman "with Mary of Bethany, or at least she is invited to assign some of their character traits to Mary."[160] Platt also connects Mary of Bethany to the unnamed woman in Luke.[161] In Luke 10:38-42, Mary of Bethany is said to have sat "at the Lord's *feet*" during a dinner setting, thus, the anonymous woman's name is potentially revealed in this later chapter.[162] Whilst these proposals have gained little traction, scholarship attests to the relationship between the Johannine and Lukan accounts, thus supporting the basis of interaction between them.[163]

Beavis has written frequently on the "overlooked" status of Mary of Bethany in New Testament studies.[164] The absorption of Mary of Bethany into the conflated Mary Magdalene has resulted in her "relative neglect", despite the significant "consensus that Mary Magdalene and Mary of Bethany are clearly delineated and separate Gospel figures."[165] This conflation and absorption of Mary of Bethany has taken place most notably in Luke 7:36-50. Ehrman too supports the delineation of Mary Magdalene and Mary of Bethany, as he argues that their names show where they are from, Mary Magdalene is from Magdala "the Galilean town" whereas Mary of Bethany is from Bethany, "a town near Jerusalem in Judea."[166] He states that "they can't be the same person" because their names which denote their locale serve to "differentiate them."[167]

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text" to the Synoptic anointing stories. The reader is therefore encouraged to integrate knowledge from other sources into this reading. (Kitzberger, "Mary of Bethany," 566-572).

[160] Kitzberger, "Mary of Bethany," 572.

[161] Elizabeth E. Platt, "The Ministry of Mary of Bethany," *Theology Today* 34 (1977): 29-39.

[162] Platt, "The Ministry of Mary," 34 - original italics.

[163] Whilst I concur that the Gospel of John is the latest, some scholars argue for the understanding of an interaction between Luke and John. See Frederick C. Grant, "Was the Author of John Dependent upon the Gospel of Luke?" *Journal of Biblical Literature* 56.4 (1937): 285-307; Mark A. Matson, *In Dialogue with Another Gospel?: The Influence of the Fourth Gospel on the Passion Narrative of the Gospel of Luke* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001); Barbara Shellard, "The relationship of Luke and John: a fresh look at an old problem." *The Journal of Theological Studies* 46.1 (1995): 71-98.

[164] Beavis, "Mary of Bethany," 741.

[165] Beavis, "Reconsidering Mary of Bethany," 281.

[166] Ehrman, *Peter, Paul and Mary Magdalene*, 189.

[167] Ehrman, *Peter, Paul and Mary Magdalene*, 189.

2.6.4 **An Unknown and Unnamed Woman**

Despite the continued effort to identify the "sinful" woman, recent scholarship has argued for the acceptance of her anonymity.[168] Simply, to identify the woman as any named woman from the Gospels, including Mary Magdalene, is to insert "meanings into the Lukan narrative that are not there."[169] Schrader and Taylor have also argued against the geographical understanding of Magdalene. In the Gospel of Luke, the formulation used to name Mary Magdalene differs from the other Gospel accounts.[170] Luke's naming of Mary is "Maria called the Magdalene" and "the Magdalene Maria", not "Μαρία ἡ Μαγδαληνή" which the other Evangelists use.[171] The differentiation between when Luke refers to someone's "nickname" and someone's place of origin is clear to see in Acts 13:1 "Συμεὼν ὁ καλούμενος Νίγερ, καὶ Λούκιος ὁ Κυρηναῖος, 'Simeon called the black, and Lucius the Cyrenian'."[172] Luke's naming of Mary Magdalene is clearly her "nickname" and, for Luke at least, "the name Magdalene was not understood in a locational sense."[173]

For these reasons, it is difficult to make a specific identification of the Lukan woman that ties her to other named Gospel women. This does not mean, however, that we have exhausted the range of possibilities for thinking about the woman's identity. As I shall discuss in Chapter Five, ancient bathing and anointing culture may give meaningful context to her actions. I will explore the potential that her actions of self-objectification reveal her identity as an enslaved woman familiar with the bathhouse.

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[168] Schrader and Taylor, "The Meaning of 'Magdalene,'" 763.
[169] Schrader and Taylor, "The Meaning of 'Magdalene,'" 763. Schrader and Taylor argue against geographical understandings of Mary Magdalene's name, which is argued for by Ehrman, *Peter, Paul and Mary Magdalene*, 189.
[170] Schrader and Taylor, "The Meaning of 'Magdalene,'" 754.
[171] Schrader and Taylor, "The Meaning of 'Magdalene,'" 754.
[172] Schrader and Taylor, "The Meaning of 'Magdalene,'" 754.
[173] Schrader and Taylor, "The Meaning of 'Magdalene,'" 754.

2.7 Anointing and Messiahship

The orientation of the Johannine, Markan, and Matthean anointing accounts are explicit: they point to Jesus' messiahship and impending death, which Jesus himself referenced (Mk 14:8, Jn 12:7). Traditionally, the woman's actions in the Bethany anointings are understood "as a prophetic sign, because she is foreseeing Jesus' death, and it is a confession of the suffering Messiah."[174] The "burial motif" is also viewed as "part of the original story" and further explains why "Mark and John bring the story into close connection with the Passion narrative."[175] Additionally, Platt views Mark as being "very concerned to stress the Davidic messianic elements in his portrait of Jesus", thus the anointing of Jesus' head portrays him as an archetypal "Anointed One."[176]

Luke's account, however, does not contain any direct reference to the impending death of Jesus, and the central theme is arguably forgiveness, not the anticipation of Jesus' death.[177] For Dodd this dissimilarity in motif shows the presence of two "strands" extant within the anointing accounts.[178] "In one strand of tradition" Jesus accepts the acts of the woman as "an anticipatory or symbolic preparation of his body for burial," in another strand the woman's actions are simply interpreted as "an expression of a love kindled by gratitude for many sins forgiven."[179]

Earlier examinations tend to view Luke's account of the anointing as being unrelated to burial rites or indicating Jesus' nature as a messiah. Ravens explores the meaning behind Luke's account, as he differentiates between the "two principle verbs"

[174] Kitzberger, "Mary of Bethany," 572.
[175] Holst, "The One," 444.
[176] Platt, "The Ministry of Mary," 30.
[177] Van Til, "Three Anointings and One Offering," 78.
[178] Dodd, *Historical Tradition*, 172-173.
[179] Dodd, *Historical Tradition*, 172-173.

used by Luke for anointing.[180] The terms used are χρίω, (*mšh*) and ἀλείφω (*swk*), and the general use of them indicate different meanings: the latter is more "secular" than the former, and is often used to "describe the preparation or beautifying of the body."[181] Apart from 3 exceptions, ἀλείφω (*swk*) does not seem to be used in a "religious or sacred context in the LXX," whereas the "overwhelming number of instances where χρίω (*mšh*) is used is sacred in character."[182] Ravens argues that when "Luke wants to speak of the status or the role of Jesus, he uses χρίω (*mšh*)."[183] In the case of Luke 7:36-50, Luke uses ἀλείφω (*swk*), suggesting therefore that we can "rule out the possibility that Luke understood the event as having messianic significance."[184]

Despite this, some recognise the messianic significance in Luke's account. English, whilst accepting that in Luke "all vestiges of a Messianic anointing seem to be lost," still argues that "throughout chapter seven, Luke seeks to identify Jesus clearly as prophet and Messiah," and his encounter with the "sinful" woman is no exception to this.[185] English sees Luke 7:36-50 as serving "to reveal Jesus' identity and purpose as the prophetic Messiah," through "Jesus' ministry of forgiveness and release."[186] The climax of the scene is at the "narrative of the anointing," in which Jesus "knows exactly what Simon is thinking, showing that Jesus is, indeed, a prophet."[187] Whilst Matthew, Mark, and John seem to direct the reader to Jesus' messianic nature as expressed "through the cross," in Luke the anointing indicates Jesus' "prophetic" messianic nature through his "ministry of release."[188] Kim concurs, and suggests that Jesus' messiahship is shown in the pericope

[180] D. A. S. Ravens, "The Setting of Luke's Account of the Anointing: Luke 7.2-8.3," *NTS* 34 (1988): 282-292.
[181] Ravens, "The Setting of Luke's Account," 283.
[182] Ravens, "The Setting of Luke's Account," 283.
[183] Ravens, "The Setting of Luke's Account," 283.
[184] Ravens, "The Setting of Luke's Account," 283.
[185] English, "Which Woman?," 437-438.
[186] English, "Which Woman?," 437-438.
[187] English, "Which Woman?," 438.
[188] English, "Which Woman?," 438-439.

through his ability to forgive sins.[189] Whilst the connection between anointing and messiahship is indisputable, this does not preclude the presence of other narrative themes and elements. Through the employment of a social history approach to the act of anointing, and a focus on how the actions of the woman speak to her identity (as well as that of Jesus), we will develop a richer understanding of her position in the story.

2.8 Conclusion

English suggests that "ultimately this text, like most passages in the Gospels, is not about the woman but about Jesus."[190] This statement exemplifies the largely unsatisfying treatment of women in the New Testament.[191] While many have paid attention to her specific identity as a follower of Jesus, the nature of her sinfulness, and what her actions say about the identity of Jesus, scholarly analysis of this passage has been less concerned with the real-life experiences of the woman. This means that the lived experiences that shaped her actions have gone unexplored. Moreover, aside from the, at times undefended, labelling of the woman as a sex worker, very little time has been spent exploring the woman's social context. Was she enslaved? Can we rightfully identify her as a sex worker, and if so, what would this have meant for her experience of the world? It is this consideration of her *experiences* as a sex worker that prevents our identification of her as such from being reductionist.

Moreover, do her actions indicate that she has a familiarity with ancient bathing practices, potentially suggesting an occupation in a local bathhouse? If so, can we understand her passionate and personal actions towards Jesus as pointing to her experience

[189] Sun Wook Kim, "A Discussion of Luke's Portrayal of Women and the Eschatological Equality between Men and Women in Luke 7: 36-501," 신약연구 12 (2013): 706-733.
[190] English, "Which Woman?," 438.
[191] There are, of course, exceptions, which I will discuss in the next chapter.

of sex work in the baths? And, critically, if we understand her as an enslaved woman, familiar with the bathhouse, can we understand her use of her body as an object either as an internalisation of her mistreatment, or perhaps a significant act of rebellion?

The rest of this dissertation will delve into these questions, with specific focus on the woman and her actions in relation to the bathing culture of the Roman Empire, and the treatment of enslaved women in this context. I will explore the text with a keen focus on the lived reality of the woman, which it is undeniably about. In my following chapter, I will provide my methodology, in which I will survey literature which has impacted and influenced my approach to the pericope as well as internal feminist dialogue concerning the pericope.

Chapter 3 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

My approach to the "sinful" woman of Luke 7:36-50 involves the application of a feminist, socio-historical lens, as well as the prioritisation of an intersectional approach to the woman's identity and actions. In this section, I will first discuss feminist criticism, in which I will offer a concise definition of the method and a brief history of its emergence and growth. I will then survey feminist approaches to the "sinful" woman of Luke 7:36-50 that have influenced my approach, before briefly discussing the debate concerning Luke the Evangelist's intentions in his depiction of women. From there I will introduce the socio-historical method that underpins my work. I will highlight the major contributors to the field in relation to slavery, notably that of historian of Atlantic slavery Saidiya Hartman. Through my discussion, the significance of imaginative licence present in both feminist and social history approaches becomes clear. This freedom to reasonably envisage beyond the strict confines of what is historically knowable is critical to my reading of the pericope in which I explore the woman's lived reality.

3.2 What is "Feminist Biblical Criticism"?

Whilst there is no one definition of feminist criticism, Levine's succinct description is helpful.[192] It is a "reading strategy" of "critical analysis that interrogates both Biblical and extra-canonical texts as well as those who comment upon them, not only for their depictions of women and constructions of gender, but also for their ideological views of

[192] Amy-Jill Levine, "Feminist Criticism," in *The Blackwell Companion to the New Testament*, ed. David E. Aune (John Wiley & Sons, 2008), 156-165.

sexuality, race, class, ethnicity, practice, belief, and other categories of social oppression."[193] This definition, which considers several socio-political and cultural factors, thus highlights the intersectionality of the feminist approach.[194]

Feminist Biblical criticism often requires creative thought to fill the many gaps in patriarchal texts in the attempt to recover female voices. This approach is most prevalent in the reconstructive thread of feminist scholarship. In her ground-breaking work Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza draws attention to these "silences" which we must read "as evidence and indication of that reality about which they do not speak."[195] Critically, a feminist approach cannot "rely solely on historical 'facts'" but at times must "invent its evidence" to create "an imaginative reconstruction of historical reality."[196] The academy commonly views this "hermeneutics of imagination" as a "more generous approach," which focuses on the "possible and plausible, especially when it serves to enhance women's liberation."[197] Additionally, the hermeneutic of suspicion is a significant method for my own research. In an application of this approach, one should avoid reading the Bible as revealing historical truths, but instead, more plausibly, as how an event's "religious significance was understood."[198] Crucially, Biblical texts should not be accepted at face value. This hermeneutic, whilst stressing the plurality of ways to gestate "early Christian origins," recognises that prevalent and "esoteric" scholarship still perpetuates a limited and homogenous understanding of women.[199] The recovery of women's voices is central to

[193] Levine, "Feminist Criticism," 156.
[194] The language of intersectionality is borrowed from Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," *The University of Chicago Legal Forum* (1989): 139-169, whose work has been of great use to me.
[195] Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1994), 41.
[196] Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory*, 41.
[197] Levine, "Feminist Criticism," 156.
[198] Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory*, 68.
[199] Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory*, 69.

others in their application of feminist criticism also.[200] Radford Ruether speaks of the importance of the constructive element of her feminist approach, alongside criticism.[201] Whilst feminist criticism clearly critiques and deconstructs, it also works to rebuild dominant theology in a "gender-inclusive and egalitarian way."[202] This creative thought is also present in a socio-historical approach, which I will discuss below.

A significant area of discussion in feminist Biblical criticism is the pervasiveness of androcentric interpretations. Androcentrism, the "primary or exclusive focus on men as opposed to women," has been the unquestioned approach to Biblical exegesis for millennia.[203] Whilst many concede that the Biblical texts themselves are patriarchal and employ androcentric language, this language is also prevalent in translations of the Bible, a reality which, in recent years, feminist scholarship has pushed strongly against. Brooten clearly laid out this androcentric tendency in her seminal text "Women Leaders in the Ancient Synagogue."[204] Through her extensive examination of ancient inscriptions, Brooten convincingly argues for the existence of women religious leaders, significantly she claims that their titles were "functional" as is assumed for men, and not simply "honorific".[205] The pervasive androcentric reading of these inscriptions has contributed to the mainstream view that female members and leaders of the ancient synagogue did not exist, a perspective that is facing growing critique.

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[200] For recovery of women's voices and, more broadly, feminist theology with a focus on Judaism, see Judith Plaskow, *Standing Again at Sinai: Judaism from a Feminist Perspective* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991).
[201] Rosemary Radford Ruether, "The Emergence of Christian Feminist Theology," in *The Cambridge Companion to Feminist Theology*, ed. Susan Frank Parsons (Cambridge University Press, 2006), 3-22.
[202] Radford Ruether, "The Emergence," 4.
[203] *Oxford English Dictionary*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022): s.v. "androcentrism".
[204] Bernadette Brooten, *Women Leaders in the Ancient Synagogue: Inscriptional Evidence and Background Issues* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1982). More recently, Sara Parks has cited Brooten's work in "'The Brooten Phenomenon': Moving Women from the Margins in Second-Temple and New Testament Scholarship," *The Bible & Critical Theory* 14 (2018): 1-20. Parks uses the term "The Brooten Phenomenon" to highlight "the way in which women's scholarship, and scholarship on women" is not considered "real" or worthy scholarship (Parks, "The Brooten Phenomenon," 2). Her focus on Brooten arose because her work "has yet to pass through the barrier to change the classroom or the field outside of what is incorrectly perceived as the realm of 'women's' scholarship'" (Parks, "The Brooten Phenomenon," 2).
[205] Brooten, *Women Leaders*, 149.

Phoebe, who is described as "*diakonos* and *prostatis* of the Church at Cenchreae" in Romans 16:1-3, is a pertinent example of pervasive androcentric interpretation.[206] Bibles have long translated these titles as "servant" or "helper," rather than "deacon," the translation of the term opted for when the person is male.[207] This new attention on the androcentricity of the text *and* the interpretation of the text proved a central contribution to the field. Schüssler Fiorenza also made early strides to widen the parameters of who was affected by this androcentrism in her coining of the term "kyriarchy," which recognises that power structures operate "not only along the axis of gender but also along those of race, class, culture, and religion."[208] Such a conception again highlights how intersectionality is at the centre of the feminist critical approach.

3.2.1 **The History of Feminist Criticism**

The historical relationship between feminist scholarship and the academy is complex and challenging. During the so-called "first wave" of the late 19th and early 20th century, feminist approaches to Scripture were seen as "having little value in the academy."[209] Early feminist discourse was largely amongst women who "had formal training in Biblical studies" but were practicing Christians.[210] Elizabeth Cady Stanton's "The Woman's Bible," first published in 1895, was arguably the first of its kind, and thus it exemplifies the conversations of these early contributors to the field.[211] Stanton approached the Bible holistically to survey the presentation and treatment of women, and

[206] Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory*, 47.
[207] Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory*, 47. The King James Version simply translates *diakonos* as "servant," whereas the same term in 1 Tim. 3:8-13 is translated to "deacons" (1 Tim. 3:8-13 speaks of the deacon's wives, thus confirming they are highly likely male).
[208] Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *But She Said: Feminist Practices of Biblical Interpretation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), 123.
[209] Levine, "Feminist Criticism," 157-158.
[210] Levine, "Feminist Criticism," 158.
[211] Levine, "Feminist Criticism," 158.

she suggested that whilst women are portrayed negatively: "the Bible teaches that women brought sin and death into the world …," women are also portrayed positively: "whose lustre cannot be dimmed by the false sentiments and vicious characters bound up in the same volume."[212]

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, as feminist Biblical criticism developed alongside and out of the women's liberation movement, it "began to impact divinity schools and seminary education."[213] Eminent feminist scholars, like Schüssler Fiorenza and Schottroff, began to contribute to the field in this era.[214] The far-reaching discussion of Luke as "celebrating women's discipleship, self-determination, and leadership" began during this period.[215] This reading of Luke has faced contention in recent years, and it is this debate which I will discuss below.

It was also at this time that the white, middle-classness of feminist Biblical discourse became clear, as second wave feminist scholars tended to "universalize their own experiences and concerns."[216] Baker-Fletcher's discussion of her involvement in feminist movements succinctly demonstrates the issue: "I called myself a black feminist but was frustrated with the agendas of white feminists at the time."[217] The inclusion of race within these discussions was left by the wayside, with white feminists urging that "it was *more important to talk about women, because we are all women, than about race.*"[218] The exclusion of discussions of race in feminist discourse contributed to the formation of the Womanist movement. Womanism is defined by Floyd-Thomas as a "paradigm shift wherein Black women no longer look to others for their liberation, but instead look to

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[212] Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *The Woman's Bible* (Pacific Publishing Studio, 2010), ix-x.
[213] Levine, "Feminist Criticism," 158.
[214] Levine, "Feminist Criticism," 158.
[215] Levine, "Feminist Criticism," 158.
[216] Levine, "Feminist Criticism," 159.
[217] Karen Baker-Fletcher, "A Womanist Journey," in *Deeper Shades of Purple: Womanism in Religion and Society*, ed. Stacey M. Floyd-Thomas (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 158-175.
[218] Baker-Fletcher, "A Womanist Journey," 158 - original italics.

themselves."[219] For Womanists[220] "black religion," meaning "the music, the drama, the communion, and the interpretation of text within the walls of the physical Church" as well as "the orientation of black people to so-called secular culture," is central.[221]

During this period, a rift amongst feminist scholars emerged. This disagreement concerned one's capability to carry out feminist theology within the Church, as Christian feminists prioritised the reinterpretation of sexist materials, whilst others argued for the wholehearted rejection of the patriarchal Church. The discussions between Mary Daly and Phyllis Trible offer noteworthy examples of this tension. Daly's 1971 pivotal sermon at the Harvard Memorial Church prompted many feminist scholars' departure from the Church. Scriptural readings preceded the sermon, including 1 Samuel 15:23 and 1 Timothy 2:11, which sought to highlight the lesser place of women within the Church. After her sermon in which she discussed "the problem," Daly stood and called for an "exodus" from the Church.[222] She physically left the Church followed by other women and men.[223] The leaving was both symbolic and literal: Daly stressed that to gain equality those in the women's movement must leave the Church, as such work cannot be done within a patriarchal establishment.

Phyllis Trible is one of several examples of feminist scholars who rejected Daly's approach, and instead advocated for women and men to remain. Whilst acknowledging the

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[219] Stacey M. Floyd-Thomas, "Introduction: Writing for Our Lives: Womanism as an Epistemological Revolution," in *Deeper Shades of Purple: Womanism in Religion and Society*, ed. Stacey M. Floyd-Thomas (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 1-14.
[220] Womanist scholar Angela N. Parker seamlessly ties in the experiences of black people in secular and religious culture into her theological discussions. See Angela N. Parker "'And the word became . . . gossip?' Unhinging the Samaritan woman in the age of #MeToo," *Review and Expositor* 117 (2020): 259-271 and "Sandra Bland at the cross: A womanist reading of Mark 15:40-47," *Review and Expositor* 118 (2021): 89-101.
[221] Rosemarie Freeney Harding, "Hospitality, Haints, and Healing: A Southern African American Meaning of Religion," in *Deeper Shades of Purple: Womanism in Religion and Society*, ed. Stacey M. Floyd-Thomas (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 98-114.
[222] Mary Daly, "The Time of the Tigers," in *The Mary Daly Reader,* ed. Jennifer Rycenga, and Linda Barufaldi (New York: New York University Press, 2017), 319-323.
[223] Daly, "The Time," 321.

"superfluous … patriarchy in Scripture," Trible, worked to depatriarchalize the Bible.[224] She pointed to the nuanced descriptions of Yahweh, who is portrayed as both feminine, masculine, and genderless, as well as the equal presentation of women and men in the Song of Songs.[225] Crucially, Trible bought attention to the exegete's role in revealing meaning, as she argued that "we expose" rather than "impose" the "depatriarchalizing principle at work in the Hebrew Bible" and that the "fluid" nature of Scripture is significant.[226] The strong divergence of views in this period paved the way for further nuanced discussion and inclusivity in feminist criticism.

Feminist Biblical discourse of the 1980s and 90s was marked by an increased awareness of diversity and self-criticism. The earlier understanding of women's lived experiences as uniform gradually transformed to recognise the sheer scale of diverse perspectives, including the factors of race, sexuality, and geography.[227] It was also during this time that feminist scholarship became cemented into the academy.[228] Discussions about Luke's Gospel became more critical also, crucially including the idea that Luke intended to restrict, not liberate, women.[229] As this discussion grew, feminist New Testament discourse also expanded "into conversation with gay studies and queer theory."[230] Althaus-Reid, a significant feminist scholar who coined the term "indecent theology," spoke of the sheer scale of changes within feminist scholarship during this period: "I am not even sure if the term Feminist Theology is still relevant. If it can still be retained it is only if we are aware of the extent to which its context (and content) have changed."[231] A conversation between feminist theology and queer theology was also

[224] Phyllis Trible, "Depatriarchalizing in Biblical Interpretation," *JAAR* 41 (1973): 30-48.
[225] Trible, "Depatriarchalizing," 32-42.
[226] Trible, "Depatriarchalizing," 48.
[227] Levine, "Feminist Criticism," 159-160.
[228] Levine, "Feminist Criticism," 161.
[229] Mary Rose D'Angelo, "Women in Luke-Acts: A Redactional View," *JBL* 109 (1990): 441-461.
[230] Levine, "Feminist Criticism," 162.
[231] Marcella Althaus-Reid, "From the Goddess to Queer Theology: The State we are in now," *Feminist Theology* 13 (2005): 265-272.

particularly necessary at this juncture, to embrace the "resistance to normativity and a subversion of the politics of representation which are essentialist and reductionist."[232] The inclusion of queer theology in feminist discourse is also meaningful because of the significance of sex: "all theology is sexual theology."[233] The sexual nature of the woman in Luke 7:36-50 is often central to explorations of the pericope. Yet, this discussion is overwhelmingly heteronormative. As feminist Biblical studies expand, it defies definition, as each contributor generates their own "new understandings of texts."[234]

3.3 Feminist Discourse Concerning the "Sinful" Woman

The "sinful" woman of Luke 7:36-50 has proved ripe for feminist discourse, and many of these readings have inspired me in my own approach to the pericope. Through an exploration of the works of Schottroff and Ipsen, I will bring attention to the distinctiveness and strength of their individual methodological approaches. Schottroff, in her liberationist reading, views the woman holistically and empathetically whilst also bringing due attention to her social context.[235] Ipsen's qualitative approach also centres empathy, and emphasises the affect one's interpretation has on modern day readers.[236] While I will not employ a qualitative approach, nor a liberationist one *per se*, these undeniably feminist readings have influenced my approach regardless.

3.3.1 **A Liberationist Reading of the Woman**

[232] Althaus-Reid, "From the Goddess," 270.
[233] Marcella Althaus-Reid, *Indecent Theology: Theological Perversions in Sex, Gender, and Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2000), i.
[234] Levine, "Feminist Criticism," 162.
[235] Schottroff, "Through German."
[236] Ipsen, *Sex Working,* 120-165.

Schottroff's reading of the pericope is noteworthy due to the centrality of empathy in her liberationist approach. Liberation theology, which arose out of the Caribbean and Latin America during the 1960s, attempts to address the issues of poverty and oppression through a Christian theological lens.[237] Whilst liberation theology focused primarily on poverty in its early stages, several other theological movements concerned with social injustice have since co-opted it, including feminist theology. Schottroff's focus on the woman's capacity to love, and Jesus' acknowledgement of her amplitude of love for him, works to liberate the unnamed woman from the moral judgement often heaped onto her. Whilst she agrees that the woman is a sex worker, she refutes the idea that the woman is a "repentant whore," a commonly expressed view in scholarship.[238] Schottroff successfully highlights the moral implications of viewing her sex work as sinful: "when the idea of a whore's repentance is introduced, prostitution is made into a moral problem."[239] She views the woman's actions as a "cry for liberation," and successfully brings attention to the economic status of such women, women who "had to sell their bodies in order to live."[240] The liberationist drive behind Schottroff's reading enables her to view the Lukan woman holistically and compassionately, thus she is a "greatly loving human being, who, in her life as a whore, has given love in full measure" despite her desperate circumstances.[241] In her interaction with Jesus, we see that he recognises her as "a woman who is able to give love," thus he liberates her from her mired reputation and accepts her into the Christian community.[242] Crucially, Schottroff's interpretation highlights "women's capacity for love

[237] See Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation*, trans. Sister Caridad Inda and John Eagleson (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1973); Christopher Rowland ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Liberation Theology*, 2nd ed, Cambridge Companions to Religion (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).
[238] Schottroff, "Through German," 332-334.
[239] Schottroff, "Through German," 334. See also Schaberg, *The Resurrection of Mary Magdalene.*
[240] Schottroff, "Through German," 334-341.
[241] Schottroff, "Through German," 334.
[242] Schottroff, "Through German," 334.

that patriarchy cannot always succeed in destroying": Jesus and the woman demonstrate a "resistant and liberating way to love in justice."[243]

Through the employment of a feminist liberationist approach, Schottroff offers a reading which inspires in its empathy. She brings the woman's humanity and capacity to love to the fore, aspects of sex workers which are often overlooked. She does not assign a negative moral weight to the woman, but instead brings attention to her social context as oppressed. Schottroff's recognition of the impact mainstream views of the woman's sins have on modern day sex workers is significant. Whilst I will not be employing a liberationist method *per se*, Schottroff's work has been a source of great inspiration to me due to her contentious application of a feminist critique, in addition to her focus on social history.[244]

3.3.2 **A Consideration of Sex Worker's Views on The Anointing Woman**

Schottroff's unapologetic approach is succeeded by Ipsen.[245] Ipsen engages in qualitative research in the form of discussions, whilst she also employs a feminist critical approach. She focuses particularly on the association between the "sinful" woman and Mary Magdalene, and Mary Magdalene's subsequent and pervasive identification as a sex worker. Due to the ubiquitous identification of Mary Magdalene as a sex worker, the disentangling of her identity from that of the "sinful" woman of Luke 7:36-50 is complex and potentially disadvantageous. The "sinful" woman's anointing of Jesus has led to the view that Jesus has "solidarity with sex workers."[246] Through discussions with

[243] Schottroff, "Through German," 341.
[244] For further examples of her combined feminist and social history approach, see Luise Schottroff, *Lydia's Impatient Sisters: A Feminist Social History of Early Christianity* (Kentucky: John Knox Press, 1995), and Luise Schottroff, *Let the Oppressed Go Free: Feminist Perspectives on the New Testament* (Kentucky: John Knox Press, 1992).
[245] Schottroff, "Through German," 332-341; Ipsen, *Sex Working*, 120-165.
[246] Ipsen, *Sex Working*, 123.

contemporary sex workers, Ipsen recognises that the disassociation of the woman with sex work, and the subsequent removal of the label of "prostitute" from Mary Magdalene, can negatively impact current day sex workers.[247] This disassociation has resulted in the "sinful" woman being labelled as "respectable," contrasted to her supposedly unrespectable and immoral engagement in sex work.[248] This understanding, which has spread in feminist discourse, has caused some women to feel side-lined and judged:[249] "Sex workers feel that feminist Biblical scholarship might be pulling the rug out from under their political strategy of claiming the endorsement of Jesus in their struggles for justice and liberation."[250]

Ipsen's qualitative feminist approach prioritises accountability in one's reading, as discussions of the morality of sex work in the past impacts those engaged in such work in the present.[251] Whilst I will not be engaging with a qualitative research method, the compassion and weight of responsibility shown within Ipsen's work is something I will carry into my own work. Ipsen also takes into account the importance of social history as she successfully illustrates the connection between sex work and enslavement and details the routes by which a woman may have found herself in such a position.[252] Ipsen's emotionally sensitive and multi-faceted approach places the woman at the centre of her work.

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[247] Ipsen, *Sex Working*, 123.
[248] For example, see Kathleen E. Corley, "Were the Women around Jesus Really Prostitutes? Women in the Context of Greco-Roman Meals," in, *Society of Biblical Literature 1989 Seminar Papers*, ed. Davis J. Lull (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1989), 487-521.
[249] This "sexual purification at the expense of sex workers" has spurred queer readings (Ipsen, *Sex Working*, 124). M. Hugo Cordova Quero, "The Prostitutes Also Go into The Kingdom of God. A Queer Reading of Mary of Magdala," in *Liberation Theology and Sexuality: The New Radicalism from Latin America*, ed. Marcella Althaus-Reid (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2006), 81-110 has noted this absence of sexuality. Quero invites readers to consider how our understanding of Mary Magdalene would change if she was not heterosexual. Though some feminist scholars "rightly critique the repentant, weeping sinner-whore image of androcentric scholarly tradition," some fall into the trap of confining Mary Magdalene under the "heterosexist patriarchal understanding of power by not addressing" her sexuality, whether this is queer or not (Ipsen, *Sex Working*, 130).
[250] Ipsen, *Sex Working*, 123.
[251] Ipsen, *Sex Working*, 124.
[252] Ipsen, *Sex Working*, 126-129.

3.3.3 **The Gospel of Luke: A Gospel for or Against Women?**

As the Gospel that speaks the most about women, the Gospel of Luke has been at the centre of feminist discourse for many years. This work is largely divided as to whether the presentation of women is positive or negative, with most early discussions favouring the former, and recent analysis the latter. Some feminist scholars view the Lukan Gospel as being focused on "inclusiveness and equality and … perhaps the most favorable image of women in the New Testament."[253] Others strongly disagree, as they argue that Luke "deliberately and systematically portrays women in subordinate roles, reinforcing the silence of women."[254] Whilst there is of course a middle ground to this debate, I will briefly survey these positions alone to conserve space.

The Gospel of Luke not only mentions women more than the other Gospels, but it also employs a narrative device of parallelism in which the Evangelist repeats stories, once aimed at women and once aimed at men.[255] For some, including Kim, these elements are evidences of its positive portrayal of women.[256] Kim also points to the female characters in Luke, some of which are exclusive to the Gospel.[257] Kim contends that Luke portrays "their status and role in a positive light," such as Jesus' mother Mary in Lk. 1.[258] The discussion of female and male pairs in the Gospel of Luke is extensive,[259] and the central narrative suggests that the choice was taken "to make a point about their equality."[260]

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[253] Elizabeth V. Dowling, *Taking Away the Pound: Women, Theology, and the Parable of the Pounds in the Gospel of Luke* (New York: T & T Clark, 2007), 60.
[254] Dowling, *Taking Away the Pound*, 60.
[255] Jane D. Schaberg and Sharon H. Ringe, "Gospel of Luke," in *The Women's Bible Commentary: Revised and Expanded Edition,* eds. Carol A. Newsom, Sharon H. Ringe, and Jacqueline E. Lapsley (Westminster: John Knox Press, 2014), 718-745.
[256] Kim, "A Discussion," 711.
[257] Kim, "A Discussion," 711.
[258] Kim, "A Discussion," 711.
[259] A significant contribution to this discussion is Turid Karlsen Seim, *The Double Message: Patterns of Gender in Luke/Acts* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994). For an analysis of gendered pairings and Q see Parks, *Gender in the Rhetoric of Jesus*.
[260] Kim, "A Discussion," 711.

Others propose that the "complementary parallelism" is Luke showing how "man and woman stand together and side by side before God. They are equal in honour and grace, they are endowed with the same gifts and have the same responsibilities."[261] Parvey sees this pairing as a deliberate device used to make "the message clearly understandable to different groups – the female and male listeners," with the differing renderings of the stories "designed to appeal to different audiences of learners – one to men, the other to women."[262]

Others vehemently disagree. Such commentators suggest that Luke "deftly portrays them [women] as models of subordinate service, excluded from the power center of the movement and from significant responsibilities."[263] The silence of the women in the Gospel of Luke is also a central talking point, as some view this as representative of Luke's intentions: his "rhetorical interests … are to silence women leaders of house-Churches who, like Martha, might have protested, and to simultaneously extol Mary's 'silent' and subordinate behavior."[264] The silence of women becomes clear when their appearances and voices are compared to that of the men in Luke. Whilst there are ten named women, this is paltry in comparison to the "one hundred and thirty-three" named men.[265] Moreover, "women speak fifteen times in Luke," whilst the number of male voices is in the "hundreds", a comparative "din."[266]

The limitations placed on women's prophetic speech in the Gospel of Luke has led further commentators to view the Evangelist as restricting women. D'Angelo asserts that those women who speak as "prophets" are corrected, whilst Jesus approves of those who

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[261] Helmut Flender, *St Luke: Theologian of Redemptive History* (London: SPCK, 1967), 10.
[262] Constance F. Parvey, "The Theology and Leadership of Women in the New Testament," in *Religion and Sexism: Images of Woman in the Jewish and Christian Traditions,* ed. Rosemary Radford Ruether (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974), 117-149.
[263] Schaberg and Ringe, "Gospel of Luke," 718.
[264] Schüssler Fiorenza, *But She Said*, 68.
[265] Schaberg and Ringe, "Gospel of Luke," 726-727.
[266] Schaberg and Ringe, "Gospel of Luke," 727.

are silent.[267] Contra to the anointing woman of Luke 7, interpreters highlight the prophetic aspect of the actions of the female anointers in the Markan and Johannine accounts. Mark is particularly clear in his acceptance of the woman's prophecy, as Jesus proclaims "she has anointed my body beforehand for its burial. Truly I tell you, wherever the good news is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her" (Mk 14:8-9). The woman's actions prophesy Jesus' forthcoming suffering and death yet she, to some extent, remains the central character within the narrative.[268] If we accept that Luke is acutely aware of the Markan account, then his version of the story undoubtedly limits the role of the anointing woman, in Luke's case the "sinful" woman.[269] By separating the story from the Passion narrative and instead centring the pericope on love and forgiveness, "Jesus, not the woman, is shown to be the prophet" as he knows that she has been forgiven, as well as what Simon was thinking.[270] In Luke's erasure of the woman's prophetic ability, he "refused to honor her memory," instead he acts in support of the contextual androcentric structures.[271]

3.4 A Social History Approach

The social history approach, sometimes called "new social history," has its roots in the historical method.[272] This interdisciplinary approach considers "political history and … social and cultural factors."[273] Through the employment of this approach, proponents argue that the "human experience as a whole" can be studied, an essential element of the

[267] D'Angelo, "Women in Luke-Acts," 452.
[268] Schaberg and Ringe, "Gospel of Luke," 736.
[269] Schaberg and Ringe, "Gospel of Luke," 736.
[270] Schaberg and Ringe, "Gospel of Luke," 736.
[271] Schaberg and Ringe, "Gospel of Luke," 727.
[272] Laura Kathryn Jurgens, "Understanding Research Methodology: Social History and the Reformation Period in Europe," *Religions* 12 (2021): 370-379.
[273] Jurgens, "Understanding Research," 371.

methodology for my research.[274] The consideration of political, social, and cultural factors is tantamount in the study of ancient slavery, and marginalised people more broadly. The study of slavery is challenging: "evidence … is often sparse and difficult to interpret."[275] Moreover, surviving evidence is "biased since it is slaveholders rather than slaves who wrote almost every text that has survived from antiquity."[276] For these reasons, the social history approach must allow for a certain amount of imaginative licence to recentre such sources, and permit an interpretation of the enslaved persons circumstance and potential point of view.

3.4.1 **Critical Fabulation**

When employing a socio-historical approach to ancient history, particularly with a focus on marginalised people, the lack of own-voice sources proves to be a serious stumbling block. Saidiya Hartman, an eminent social historian and scholar of African American and slavery studies, coined the term "critical fabulation" to describe an appropriate approach when in such a situation. Critical fabulation involves imagination, but also "narrative restraint": "the refusal to fill in the gaps and provide closure."[277] While she admits that we cannot "*give voice* to the slave," we can "imagine what cannot be verified," thus creating "a narrative of what might have been or could have been" by "writing at the limit of the unspeakable and the unknown."[278] To understand the voiceless of history, we must use the sources written by the elite about those of extreme oppression and/or subjugation, as they, in most cases, are the only sources which discuss the experiences of the marginalised. However, to access these lost voices, we must read the

[274] Peter Burke, *History and Social Theory* (Cambridge: Polity, 2005), 17.
[275] Peter Hunt, *Ancient Greek and Roman Slavery* (Newark: John Wiley and Sons, 2017), 1.
[276] Hunt, *Ancient Greek*, 1.
[277] Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," 12.
[278] Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," 1-12 - original italics.

sources "against the grain in order to write a different account of the past," thus, we reject face value readings and instead dive into a deeper interpretation.[279] It is significant to consider the "purposes" of the elite authors in contrast to our purposes as social historians, as the sources remain "entangled with the politics of domination."[280] To focus on the subaltern of such sources, we should view them "not as the archive's object, but rather as its historical subject."[281] This approach requires a "struggle within and against the constraints and silences imposed by the nature of the archive," which in turn creates "social meaning."[282] The act of recovering, or arguably responsibly recreating, erased voices is also a central practice of feminist Biblical criticism, as aforementioned, thus these two methodological approaches are strikingly compatible.

In ancient studies, Kamen and Levin-Richardson employed "critical fabulation" to survey ancient inscriptions on "Greco-Roman sexual slavery."[283] For Kamen and Levin-Richardson, the approach allowed them "to envision the emotions and embodied experiences latent in our epigraphic corpora," whilst it also raised "new questions."[284] They also point to the "*ethical obligation*" of using imagination and telling the stories of "those who are marginalized and oppressed, even if those stories are inevitably some combination of fiction and history."[285]

This ethical sensitivity and responsibility to the experiences of marginalised people is central to my research of the "sinful" woman. I will bring due attention to a marred, one-

[279] Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 10.
[280] Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 10.
[281] Stephanie E. Smallwood, "The Politics of the Archive and History's Accountability to the Enslaved," *History of the Present* 6 (2016): 117-132.
[282] Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 10.
[283] Deborah Kamen and Sarah Levin-Richardson, "Epigraphy and Critical Fabulation: Imagining Narratives of Greco-Roman Sexual Slavery," in *Dynamic Epigraphy: New Approaches to Inscription*, ed. Eleri H. Cousins (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2022), 201-222.
[284] Kamen and Levin-Richardson, "Epigraphy and Critical Fabulation," 203.
[285] Kamen and Levin-Richardson, "Epigraphy and Critical Fabulation," 217 - original italics. Compare here also Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 14: "I also recognize the political utility and ethical necessity of historical fiction."

dimensional female character, and view her holistically as an embodied person who has experienced much. By theorising her experiences, she, and not her sins, becomes the focal point, she who is deserving of such.

3.4.2 **Weirding History**

It is tempting for modern readers to impose their own sentiments and experiences on ancient literature. While there are advantages, particularly humanising advantages, to doing this, there are aspects of the past that are obscured by this tendency. In "Marvelous Things Heard," Chin speaks against the normalising of history, and instead favours the recognition of its weirdness: its "historical radiance."[286] He brings attention to the commonality in which "strange things" are treated as "isolated 'beliefs,'" and the way in which historians attempt to make the weird "less strange," and thus fit them into our comfortable understanding of history.[287] Chin's approach speaks to the empathy of historians, and how the mainstream approach of making history intelligible is "fundamentally a warm-hearted one: it is to see the people that we study, and about whom on some level we care deeply, as somehow 'like us.'"[288] Yet the more empathetic approach is to apply a "kind of imaginative stubbornness, a determination to remember that people living in past worlds were not always very much like us, but that we should pay attention to them anyway."[289] This venture applies directly to my thesis. The bathing culture of my study is unlike anything that remains today in Western Europe.[290] Moreover, whilst

[286] Chin, "Marvelous Things," 478.
[287] Chin, "Marvelous Things," 479-480.
[288] Chin, "Marvelous Things," 480.
[289] Chin, "Marvelous Things," 480.
[290] Public bathing culture remains across much of the Islamic world in the form of Hammams. The baths resemble the earlier thermae in the succession of heated rooms, yet they maintain a practice of bathing alongside one's own gender. Whilst many Hammams remain open, they are steadily in decline. See J. Sarmento and Z. Kazemi, "Hammams and the contemporary city: the case of Isfahan, Iran," *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 20 (2014): 138-156 for an exploration of contemporary Hammams in Isfahan, Iran.

patriarchal structures remain, the ancient treatment of women and other marginalised groups borders on the incomprehensible. The prevalence of slavery and the exploitation of sex workers were accepted aspects of society. Moreover, the distinctiveness of the woman's actions of foot washing and anointing are highlighted time and time again, but are commonly explained away by the confusion of the oral history.[291] By employing Chin's approach, I will not seek to normalise this potentially unparalleled, if not unusual, pericope, but rather I will appreciate the "otherness in its full disturbing weight."[292] In my acceptance of Chin's approach, I will bring the woman's life to centre stage, and study her deeply, despite the differences between us.

3.4.3 **A Focus on Female Characters**

In her work on Mary of Bethany and Mary of Magdala in the Johannine Gospel, Kitzberger offers a thorough methodological approach to female characters.[293] She describes her approach as "*feminist hermeneutics* which focuses on the reconstruction of women's history and on the critical analysis of women's stories as rendered by a male author in a patriarchal society."[294] She adopts the "open view of characters" advocated for by film and literary critic Seymour Chatman.[295] This requires that "characters are not only evaluated by the functions of their actions in relation to the plot, but are treated as autonomous beings and are assessed in the way we evaluate real people."[296] This method, which analyses what characters do as well as "who they 'are'", is central in my

[291] See Legault, "An Application," 144; Dodd, *Historical Tradition*, 172; Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 451-452.
[292] Chin, "Marvelous Things," 489-490.
[293] Kitzberger, "Mary of Bethany," 564-586.
[294] Kitzberger, "Mary of Bethany," 570 - original italics.
[295] Seymour B. Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (London: Cornell University Press, 1978).
[296] Kitzberger, "Mary of Bethany," 565.

interpretation of the Lukan woman.[297] I will explore the real-life ancient experiences that may lie behind the woman's actions. In particular, and in distinction to earlier treatments of this question, I will explore who she was with a focus on her possible connection to ancient bathing culture and her potential employment as an *unctrix* or a sex worker. The treatment of New Testament characters as real and embodied people allows for a meaningful and relatable interpretation of the Scripture. This potentially allows the pericope to speak directly to more people in the present as well as the past.

Kitzberger also advocates for "special attention" to be paid to "the position of the *narrator*, *his point of view* and the consequences this has for the *presentation of female characters.*"[298] The question of how a male point of view (the male gaze) shapes the presentation of women "as well as the readers perception of and attitude towards these female characters" is crucial.[299] When studying any female characters in the New Testament, an awareness of the oppressive patriarchal culture must always be kept in mind. The reader focused aspect of Kitzberger's approach also has consequences for my reading of the text. She emphasises the creativity of reading: it is a "temporal response, as well as a creative and dynamic process by which meanings of the text are established."[300] Upon encountering the text, "the reader is forced to fill in the gaps and make decisions, and by doing so he/she creates the meaning of the text accordingly and uniquely."[301] Moreover, the context of the reader, and their "*social location*" have a significant impact on the "concrete actualization of a text."[302]

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[297] David Rhoads, "Narrative Criticism and the Gospel of Mark," *JAAR* 50 (1982): 411-34.
[298] Kitzberger, "Mary of Bethany," 567 - original italics.
[299] Kitzberger, "Mary of Bethany," 567.
[300] Kitzberger, "Mary of Bethany," 568.
[301] Kitzberger, "Mary of Bethany," 569.
[302] Kitzberger, "Mary of Bethany," 569 - original italics. See also Matthew V. Novenson, *Paul: Then and Now* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2022), 7 who argues that we must take "moral responsibility for our interpretations," as we read, then "generate our interpretations, for which we then stand responsible."

3.5 Conclusion

Drawing upon these methodologies and approaches to the Gospel of Luke, and through the application of both a hermeneutic of suspicion and a hermeneutic of imagination, I will construct a reading of the pericope in which the woman's lived-reality and experiences are central. As I have shown, androcentric readings of the Bible are aplenty, and through the application of a feminist, socio-historical approach I hope to offer a counter reading in which the woman, the focus of my study, is viewed holistically and empathetically. The use of disciplined imagination alongside traditional historical critical methods is fundamental to the study of women and enslaved people.[303] Hartman's generous approach to interpretation serves as significant inspiration for my own work. Her call for creativity alongside caution is compelling, an approach which I will heed throughout this work.[304] Empathy is also significant in my application of a feminist, socio-history approach, as I am acutely aware of the impact that studies like this have on female readers today.

[303] See also Katherine A. Shaner, *Enslaved Leadership in Early Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), xi-xiii: "How…do we incorporate the pervasive presence of enslaved persons in ancient life when our ancient materials often render them invisible apart from their masters' perspective?" and notes analogous work by feminist authors.
[304] Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," 1-12.

Chapter 4 The Status and Social World of Women

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will provide an overview of women's lives in the wider Roman context. I will touch on gendered virtues, women's education, the expectations of marriage and the difficulties of distinctions like citizen and non-citizen. Before I focus on freed and enslaved women, I will briefly explore the lived experiences of the most privileged and wealthy women under Roman rule, including those who gained higher levels of education and reached positions of authority in the public sphere. I will then begin my exploration of enslaved women, their occupations, and the ways in which enslavers repeatedly objectified them, in particular sexually. I will also consider the lives of female sex workers, who, regardless of their civic status, suffered significant degradation and abuse. The exploration of women's lives in the Roman Empire is difficult, due to the diversity of life experiences and the multiplicity of factors affecting women's lived reality. However, women of all statuses experienced inferior treatment to their male counterparts. It is the women of the lowest stature who lived arguably the most difficult lives.

4.2 Women in Context

Ancient women—whether residents of Judea, Athens, Rome, or the small villages of the Galilee—were marginalised across the Roman Empire. They were viewed as lesser than men, in their intellect, physical capacity, and they suffered a near complete lack of agency. Valerius Maximus epitomises the perceptions of women's intellect as he deems women mentally infirm and guilty of putting all of their energy into "the refining of their

personal adornment."[305] Greco-Roman understandings of gender also held that women were weak, helpless and requiring protection.[306] Women were expected to uphold the gender norms of "modesty, chastity and domesticity" in their daily lives.[307] Undoubtedly, marriage and the production of children were tantamount in a woman's life, and in other's perception of her worth. Funerary inscriptions illustrate the importance placed on a woman's role as wife and mother, as well as her continued obedience to gender norms. In the Ostian funerary inscription of A.E. 179, the husband praises his wife for being "most loyal, chaste and faithful."[308] She is also noted as having "never wanted to go out in public without me, either to the baths or anywhere else."[309] Such a description starkly highlights the wife's domesticity and her dependence on her husband. A further funerary inscription which praises a woman for her domesticity is that of Amymone. "Here lies Amymone, wife of Marcus, best and most beautiful, worker in wool, pious, chaste, thrifty, faithful, a stayer-at-home."[310] The inclusion of her wool working is significant, as, for Hylen, wool working "encapsulates the ideal female virtues."[311] Livy's *History of Rome* 1 demonstrates the emphasis placed on wool working as being reflective of female merits. Lucretia, who works on her wool through the night, is praised for her display of "womanly virtues."[312]

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[305] Valerius Maximus, *Memorable Doings and Sayings*, 9.1.3. Translation by D. R. Shackleton Bailey, LCL 492 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 297.
[306] Marcianus, *Dig.* 49.14.18. Translation by S. P. Scott, *The Civil Law XI* (Cincinnati: The Central Trust Company, 1932), 164. I am aware of the complications present in dating such compiled texts including the *Digest*, however, I have endeavoured to use only the texts which fall closest to my period of study.
[307] Emily Hemelrijk, "Women's Daily Life in the Roman West," in *Women in Antiquity: Real Women Across the Ancient World,* eds. Stephanie Lynn Budin, Jean Macintosh Turfa (London: Taylor and Francis Group, 2016), 895-904.
[308] L'Année épigraphique, *Italie* (1987), s.v. 179 - translated by Hemelrijk, "Women's Daily Life," 896.
[309] L'Année épigraphique, *Italie* (1987), s.v. 179 - translated by Hemelrijk, "Women's Daily Life," 896.
[310] Hermann Dessau, ed., *Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae* (Berolini: apud Weidmannos, 1892), s.v. 8402. Translation in Susan E. Hylen, *Women in the New Testament World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 19.
[311] Susan E. Hylen, "Modest, Industrious, and Loyal: Reinterpreting Conflicting Evidence for Women's Roles," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 44 (2014): 3-12.
[312] Livy, *AUC*. 1.57.9. Translated by B. O. Foster, LCL 114 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1919), 199.

Significantly, the woman was required to be at home to carry out this modest work for the benefit of her family.[313]

Modesty, sexual virtue, and marriage were viewed as being closely related in Greco-Roman culture. The specific virtue of *pudicitia*[314] was expected of married women, and they were encouraged to display their *pudicitia* as openly as possible.[315] The woman who "regulate[s] her sexual behaviour in the accepted ways" was not generally viewed as modest enough, rather her *pudicitia*, should be "plain for all to see."[316] Despite this focus on the publicity of *pudicitia,* the way in which women should display it remains inexplicit.[317] Roman sources also closely connected *pudicitia* to fecundity (*fecunditas*).[318] This celebration of married women for their childbearing abilities is common throughout Greco-Roman literature. In almost caricature fashion, Pliny details the extreme fertility of Cornelia, the mother of the famous Gracchi brothers. Whilst disputed, Pliny claims that Cornelia had six sons and six daughters.[319] Cornelia, in her apical fulfilment of the expectations of women, "has come to personify the ideal of a Roman mother."[320]

The perception of women as belonging to the domestic sphere was held so strongly that most women's education did not reach beyond this domain. Literacy aided men in their daily lives, and families were motivated to educate their sons to "reinforce the

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[313] Suzanne Dixon, *Reading Roman Women: Sources, Genres and Real Life* (London: Duckworth, 2001), 117.
[314] *Pudicitia* has been translated in a number of ways including modesty, chastity, and sexual virtue.
[315] Seneca The Younger, *Dialogues*, 12.16.4, translation by Rebecca Langlands, *Sexual Morality in Ancient Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 37; Valerius Maximus, *Memorable Doings and Sayings,* 7.1.1
[316] Langlands, *Sexual Morality,* 38.
[317] Langlands, *Sexual Morality,* 38.
[318] Livy, *AUC*. 42.34.3; Seneca, *Dialogues*, 12.16.3, translated by Aubrey Stewart, *Minor Dialogues: Together with the Dialogue on Clemency* (United Kingdom: G. Bell, 1889), 108; Tacitus, *Ann.* 1.41.2, translated by Clifford H. Moore, John Jackson, Loeb Classical Library 249 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931), 133.
[319] Pliny, *Nat.* 7.57. Translated by H. Rackham, Loeb Classical Library 330 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1938), 545.
[320] Lena Larsson Lovén, "Roman Motherhood," in *Women in Antiquity: Real Women Across the Ancient World,* eds. Stephanie Lynn Budin, Jean Macintosh Turfa (London: Taylor and Francis Group, 2016), 885-894.

position of privilege for those men who could afford it, readying them for the responsibilities of power."[321] For women whose lives centred on the domestic sphere, the motivation to obtain an education was dissimilar. For urban girls of the "low-middle class" an "elementary education was probably offered."[322] Cribiore suggests, that the education such girls were lucky enough to receive did not reach "beyond the primary level," however.[323] Whilst there are examples of literate, and highly literate, women which I will discuss later on in this chapter, "illiterate women were the norm."[324] A noteworthy exception here are women who were educated as a means to work, including enslaved and freedwomen. Inscriptions detail literate enslaved and freedwomen working as "scribes, secretaries, and copyists" as well as "*lectores*" (readers).[325]

Roman laws upheld the maintenance and protection of a woman's modesty, as they sought to limit women's social mobility and their right to public action.[326] Crucially, behind these laws was the desire to limit a woman's risk of incurring dishonour.[327] These laws affected several areas of a woman's life, but here I will focus on guardianship (*tutela*) and the restrictions placed on women's legal endeavours. Under the most stringent of Roman legislation, women remained under the guardianship of a male for the entirety of their lives, due to their *infirmitas* and "ignorance of business matters."[328] Cicero makes

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[321] Raffaella Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind: Greek Education in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 75.
[322] Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind,* 75. For an exploration of elementary and secondary educations, see Alan D. Booth, "Elementary and Secondary Education in the Roman Empire," *Florilegium* 1 (1979): 1-14.
[323] Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind,* 75.
[324] Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind,* 76.
[325] Hella Eckardt*, Writing and Power in the Roman World: Literacies and Material Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 156. For inscriptions of female readers see *CIL* 6, 8786; *CIL* 6, 33830 (a freedwoman reader), and for a secretary see *CIL* 6, 9541. Translation by Emily Hemelrijk, *Women and Society in the Roman World: A Sourcebook of Inscriptions from the Roman West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 139 and 327.
[326] Judith Evans Grubbs, *Women and the Law in the Roman Empire: A Sourcebook on Marriage, Divorce and Widowhood* (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2002), 48.
[327] Ulpian, *Dig.* 3.1.1.5. Translation by S. P. Scott, *The Civil Law III* (Cincinnati: The Central Trust Company, 1932), 4; Paulus, *Dig.* 5.1.12.2. Translation by Scott, *The Civil Law III,* 144.
[328] *Rules of Ulpian*, 11.1. Translation by S. P. Scott, *The Civil Law I* (Cincinnati: The Central Trust Company, 1932), 232.

clear the long history of this practice: "Our ancestors required all women owing to the instability of their judgement to be under the control of guardians."[329] Such legislation developed and changed over time, and, understandably, affected women differently depending on their age, marital status, and location.[330] Plainly put, minor daughters fell under their father's *potestas,*[331] which was also the case for women married *sine manu*. Such women remained under their father's household instead of being enveloped into their husband's *potestas*, as was the case for marriages with *manus.*[332] As I will briefly discuss later on in this chapter, the *sine manu* marriage was beneficial for wealthy women who were set to inherit assets after their father's death. Enslaved and, in some cases, freedwomen, were encompassed under the *potestas* of their enslaver. *Manus* marriage and the guardianship of minors (*tutela impuberum*), generally children under the age of 12, had disappeared and decreased respectively by the time of Augustus.[333] The decline of *tutela impuberum* arose due to Augustus' introduction of *Lex Julia* and *Lex Papia Poppaea:* laws which granted freedom to freeborn women (with no living husband or father) who had three children, and to freedwomen who had four children.[334] Prior to this legislation, these women remained under the guardianship of a *tutor*, most commonly the woman's closest male relative. In the case of freedwomen, their tutor was often their ex-enslaver.[335]

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[329] Cicero, *Muren.* 27. Translated by C. Macdonald, Loeb Classical Library 324 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), 219. Such a practice did not remain unquestioned, however, as Gaius, *Inst.* 1.190 asserts "There does not seem to be any good reason, …, why women of full age should be under guardianship." This is not to say however, that Gaius was against the woman remaining under the potestas of her husband. Translation by S. P. Scott, *The Civil Law I* (Cincinnati: The Central Trust Company, 1932), 109.
[330] See Susan Treggiari, *Roman Marriage: lusti Coniuges from the Time of Cicero to the Time of Ulpian* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991); Beryl Rawson, *Marriage, Divorce, and Children in Ancient Rome* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996). Gaius, *Inst.* 1.193. Here Gaius recognises that "women are not held in guardianship among foreigners as they are with us," but "they are generally, as it were, in a state of tutelage".
[331] Ulpian, *Dig.* 1.6.4. Translation by S. P. Scott, *The Civil Law II* (Cincinnati: The Central Trust Company, 1932), 232.
[332] Gaius, *Inst.* 1.109; Tacitus, *Ann.* 4.16.
[333] Grubbs, *Women and the Law*, 20.
[334] Jane F. Gardner, *Women in Roman Law and Society* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1986), 20. See also Kit Morrell, "Tutela Mulierum and the Augustan Marriage Laws," *EuGeStA* 10 (2019): 89-116.
[335] Gardner, *Women in Roman Law,* 14.

Conversely, *patria potestas* remained largely unchanged, although weakened, up to the end of the ancient era.[336]

Roman law also significantly restricted women's legal actions. Such jurisprudence placed limitations on the types of criminal charges women could bring, which included murder and adultery.[337] Legislation also restricted women from acting on another's behalf, even their own husband and children.[338] Whilst women could act legally in regard to their own property or person,[339] ancient sources are scathing towards women who do so. Valerius Maximus views Carfania, the wife of Senator Lucius Buccio who was "quick to engage in lawsuits" and "always made speeches on her own behalf," as impudent and shameless.[340] Carfania also appears in Ulpian's writings, whom he views similarly to Valerius Maximus. Ulpian calls her a "wicked woman" who acts "without shame."[341] Whilst Carfania was able to use her elevated position and thus adjacent authority to act in court, most women would have been unable, or unwilling, to do so.[342] The legal limitations placed on women, whilst not absolute, were extensive. Ulpian neatly summarises the woman's position in civic life: "the wife is the beginning and the end of her family."[343]

Amongst the many factors that affected a woman's lived experience, the civic status of a woman also had a palpable effect on her life. In the Roman Empire, alongside the distinction of freeborn, enslaved, and freed women, peoples were also categorised as

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[336] Grubbs, *Women and the Law*, 20.
[337] Grubbs, *Women and the Law*, 63. It is interesting to note that no equivalent limitations were placed on men in regards to adultery, thus, women's position within a marriage was legally inferior to her husband's.
[338] Ulpian, *Dig.* 16.1.2.5. Translation by S. P. Scott, *The Civil Law IV* (Cincinnati: The Central Trust Company, 1932), 273; Ulpian, *Dig.* 47.23.6. Translation by S. P. Scott, *The Civil Law X-XI* (Cincinnati: The Central Trust Company, 1932), 12; Paulus, *Dig.* 16.1.3.
[339] Women were also able to make accusations of serious crimes, "provided that she was a close relative of the victim" (Grubbs, *Women and the Law*, 66). The tombstone Laudatio Turiae describes how the woman avenged her parents' deaths.
[340] Valerius Maximus, *Memorable Doings and Sayings,* 8.3.2.
[341] Ulpian, *Dig.* 3.1.1.5.
[342] Ulpian, *Dig.* 47.23.6; 47.10.2.
[343] Ulpian, *Dig.* 50.16.195.5. Translation by S. P. Scott, *The Civil Law XI* (Cincinnati: The Central Trust Company, 1932), 287.

citizen or non-citizen. Simply speaking, citizens experienced significant perks that were not afforded to non-citizens. In civil law, non-citizens lacked the rights to "seek the help of a tribune, or exercise their right of appeal, against the arbitrary actions of magistrates."[344] Generally, non-citizens were vulnerable to poll taxes, and could not serve in the military.[345] A person's citizen status may have even affected the way in which they socialised. Kehoe suggests that, for those in the provinces, it "affected their social networks in fundamental ways, from who they married, to who they named as guardians of their children."[346] Significantly, citizens faced more severe punishments than non-citizens. This was the case even if a citizen and non-citizen faced the same charge, which is seen clearly through the Senate's attempts to eradicate astrology in 17 C.E.[347]

A further complication in our comprehension of one's social standing in the Roman Empire is the distinction of *honestiores* and *humiliores*. The category of *honestiores* was comprised of "senators, equestrians, members of town councils, and some military officers", whilst all other, crucially lower rank, citizens were *humiliores.*[348] Whilst, in theory, citizens were protected from the worst punishments afforded to non-citizens, the poor *humiliores* often suffered this fate regardless of their citizen status.[349] Callistratus, remarking on judicial inquiries, states "It is not customary for all persons to be whipped, but only men who are free and of inferior station; those of higher rank are not subjected to the penalty of castigation."[350] Despite the protections supposedly afforded to all citizens, Callistratus' remarks suggest that, perhaps above all, station was the most important factor in guiding one's treatment.

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[344] Peter Garnsey, "Legal Privilege in the Roman Empire," *Past & Present* 41 (1968): 3-24.
[345] Dennis P. Kehoe, "Law and Social Formation in the Roman Empire," in *The Oxford Handbook of Social Relations in the Roman World,* ed. Michael Peachin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 144-163.
[346] Kehoe, "Law and Social Formation," 152.
[347] Garnsey, "Legal Privilege," 20.
[348] Kehoe, "Law and Social Formation," 153.
[349] Garnsey, "Legal Privilege," 20.
[350] Callistratus, *Dig.* 48.19.28.2. Translation by S. P. Scott, *The Civil Law XI* (Cincinnati: The Central Trust Company, 1932), 120.

Whilst these distinctions of citizenship and rank are blurry in the case of men, they are even more complex for women. The fact that women were not afforded citizenship in their own right complicates this picture significantly. Moreover, the legal restrictions placed upon women's lives prevented them from experiencing the full benefits of citizenship, regardless of whether they possessed it.[351] The benefits and restrictions of citizenship were also inconstant, as they underwent several changes over the course of a lifetime.[352] Thus, whilst a consideration of citizenship is significant in an exploration of women's lived experiences, there is not a clearcut distinction to make.

4.3 Wealthy and Privileged Women

Despite the extensive restrictions placed on the lives of women, a minority of women went on to gain authority, wealth, or esteem. Whilst the vast majority of these women were members of elite, wealthy families, there are a very few examples of lower born women working their way up.[353] Wealthy women experienced higher levels of education than poorer women, and there is evidence of a range of literacy levels amongst them.[354] Cribiore, in her expansive exploration of women's education and literacy in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt, brings attention to the varying levels of women's literacy found in papyri.[355] Isidora, writing in 28 B.C.E, obtained an education that "was not faultless, but it allowed her to manipulate the written word efficiently."[356] She is direct and

[351] Jane F. Gardner, *Being a Roman Citizen* (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 1993), 85.
[352] Gardner, *Being a Roman Citizen,* 2.
[353] For example, Francesca Cenerini, "The Role of Women as Municipal Matres," in *Women and the Roman City in the Latin West,* eds. Emily Hemelrijk and Greg Woolf, Mnemosyne Supplements Series 360 (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 9-22. Cenerini discusses the title of *mater*, a female figure who likely ascended the ranks of the *collegium*.
[354] Eckardt*, Writing and Power,* 155-156.
[355] Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind,* 86-101.
[356] Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind,* 92. For further exploration of women's epistolary writings see Rodger S. Bagnall and Raffaella Cribiore. *Women's Letters from Ancient Egypt: 300 BC – AD 800.* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008).

commanding in her correspondence, perhaps for her, "education was far from being an ornament."[357] Herennia, whose correspondence dates between 57 and 64 C.E, obtained a lower level of literacy than Isidora, however "she is able to string together simple sentences in a paratactic style."[358] Unlike Isidora, Herennia's speech is less commanding, her concerns are "mostly domestic."[359] Whilst wealthy women could generally handle "written modes of expression," a "relatively small pool of women who enjoyed a literacy that went beyond the technicalities of writing" did exist.[360] Namely, a variety of literacy levels existed amongst wealthy women, and these women put their literacy to use in differing ways.

The writings of Plutarch reveal the perhaps common male hesitation surrounding wealthy women's levels of education. Plutarch's description of Pompey's fifth wife, Cornelia, who is regarded in high esteem, shows the ancient hesitancy towards women being educated to *too high* a level. Plutarch claims that "the young woman had many charms apart from her youthful beauty. She was well versed in literature, in playing the lyre, and in geometry, and had been accustomed to listen to philosophical discourses with profit."[361] Crucially, Plutarch points out that "she had a nature which was free from that unpleasant officiousness which such accomplishments are apt to impart to young women."[362] Plutarch's statement suggests that Cornelia's nature was unusual. Whilst she, an educated woman, had retained her gendered virtues, Plutarch insinuates that not all educated women did.

[357] Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind,* 92.
[358] Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind,* 93; Bagnall and Cribiore, *Women's Letters,* 165.
[359] Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind,* 93.
[360] Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind,* 101; Eckardt*, Writing and Power,* 155.
[361] Plutarch, *Pomp.* 55.
[362] Plutarch, *Pomp.* 55.

Sources also reveal wealthy women's public positions of authority. One of the most impressive of heights reached by women are perhaps those of the benefactress.[363] Inscriptions of women's civic contributions are found across the Greco-Roman world, which reveal select women's immense wealth. Eumachia of Pompeii's contribution to the city is clear as two inscriptions which detail her donation of a large building in the forum still remain.[364] Moreover, Ummidia Quadratilla's contribution to Casinum of an amphitheatre and a temple is noted to be from her own money (*sua pecunia*).[365] Such women's social statuses are also made clear from the example of Quadratilla, as she was from a "prominent senatorial family," and was commented upon in Pliny the Younger's *Epistles*.[366] Tacitus also illustrates how the wives of wealthy magistrates achieved inadvertent positions of power.[367] Despite giving a disclaimer that "weakness and a lack of endurance" were the accepted characteristics of women, he goes on to describe wives who, whilst stationed in the provinces, "had the centurions at beck and call" and "took in hand and transacted business."[368] What is noteworthy about the vast majority of wealthy, influential women, however, is their reliance on their male relatives, whether their husbands or fathers, for their status.[369]

Wealthy women also exercised their authority on a regular basis within the household. The Greek term "*oikonomia*" refers to household management, of which was

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[363] Wealthy women also were required to pay *munera* by law. See Ulpian, *Dig.* 50.12.6.2.
[364] *CIL* 10, 810; *ILS* 3785. Translation by Hemelrijk, *Women and Society,* 267.
[365] *CIL* 10, 5183; *ILS* 5628. *AE* (1946) 174; *AE* (1992) 244. Translation by Hemelrijk, *Women and Society,* 269.
[366] Emily Hemelrijk, *Women and Society,* 269; Pliny, *Epistles*, 7.24, translated by Betty Radice. Loeb Classical Library 55 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969), 535.
Hemelrijk notes that we can assume that such women as Eumachia and Quadratilla "had married without *manus*, which gave women control over their property when their fathers died" (Hemelrijk, *Women and Society,* 266). These women, who also benefitted from the *Lex Julia* and *Lex Papia Poppaea*, would likely have experienced "legal independence" from their husbands and thus their finances remained strictly separate (Hemelrijk, *Women and Society,* 266). Such a reality was, however, most likely limited to the women of elite families with belongings and property to inherit.
[367] Tacitus, *Ann.* 3.33-34.
[368] Tacitus, *Ann.* 3.33-34.
[369] Grubbs, *Women and the Law*, 71.

commonly the responsibility of women. Despite women lacking the same legal rights as men, they "exercised daily influence over their husband's affairs through their oversight of household production."[370] Women, too, had both "formal and informal control over property," and we know from ancient sources that women managed entire households in their husband's absence.[371] Most likely, this was common among a range of elite and non-elite households. Cicero, when away in Athens, asked his wife Terentia to act on his behalf to arrange his affairs.[372] Materfamilias' control of the household also extended to direct authority over her slaves. Such a reality highlights the multiplicity of women's lives and how much of their experiences depended on their status and wealth.[373]

Women too held positions of religious authority. Inscriptions show a range of leadership and management roles held by women in both the Roman and Jewish religion. The cult of Ceres in particular provides ample evidence for female priests, in both public and more private settings.[374] The aforementioned benefactress Eumachia of Pompeii is revealed as a public priestess (*sacerdos publica*) in a dedicatory inscription.[375] Eumachia undoubtedly used her immense wealth and prestige to her advantage, likely a significant factor in her election. Such positions as the *sacerdos publica* were limited to women of the local elite due to the expenses involved, and thus, it is clear once again that status and wealth are significant factors in a woman's likelihood to attain such positions.[376] Whilst

[370] Hylen, "Modest, Industrious," 7.
[371] Hylen, "Modest, Industrious," 7.
[372] Cicero, *Letters to Friends*, 119. Translated by D. R. Shackleton Bailey, Loeb Classical Library 205 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 19-21.
[373] Again, the woman's wealth and influence was often derived from her husband or father. Whilst she may wield power in the domestic and civic sphere, her authority ultimately depended on her male kin's wealth and social connections.
[374] Hemelrijk, *Women and Society*, 221. See *CIL* 10, 5073; *CIL* 9, 3089; and for a public priestess see *CIL* 10, 4794. Translation by Hemelrijk, *Women and Society,* 222-224.
[375] *CIL* 10, 813. Translation by Hemelrijk, *Women and Society,* 222.
[376] Hemelrijk, *Women and Society*, 221. A woman's marital status also impeded on her capacity to achieve positions of religious authority. Whilst some positions required celibacy (e.g., Vestal Virgins), the positions of *flaminica* and *regina sacrorcum* were defined by their marital status and divorce was not permitted. See Celia E. Schultz, *Women's Religious Activity in the Roman Republic* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 80 for further discussion of these roles.

social status dramatically affected one's capacity to reach positions of authority, inscriptions also reveal impoverished and freed women as priestesses, alongside the plentiful wealthy priestesses.[377] Women also held lower ranking positions, like those who oversaw the maintenance and organisation of cults (*magistrae* and *ministrae*).[378]

Inscriptions highlight the reality of women leaders in Synagogues also. The marble sarcophagus of Veturia Paulla commemorates her as the "mother of the Synagogues of Campus and Volumnius."[379] Whilst this title, and many others including "elder" and "priest," have long been interpreted as "honorary," Brooten has argued that they were "functional."[380] These numerous inscriptions of Jewish women who held positions of authority should also be understood as being subject to regional variety, as well as the likely elevated status of the women which enabled them to achieve such roles. Despite this, it is clear that women did attain positions of religious leadership and were in turn granted respect.

4.4 Freedwomen

The status of freedwomen is indistinct, and subject to many factors. Freedwomen were not afforded the same rights as freeborn women, despite no longer being enslaved.[381] They also suffered an inferior position to freedmen. A freedwoman's legal and social status often hinged on whether she was formally or informally manumitted. Several methods of

[377] A freedwoman: *CIL* 6, 2240. An impoverished woman: *CIL* 9, 3358. Translation by Hemelrijk, *Women and Society,* 224 and 233.
[378] Schultz, *Women's Religious Activity,* 70. See *CIL* 5.762a/b for evidence of freedwomen holding such positions. Translation by Hemelrijk, *Women and Society,* 244.
[379] *CIL* 6, 29756 (whilst there is debate over the exact date of this inscription, it is largely dated to the 3rd century C.E.) Translation by Hemelrijk, *Women and Society,* 245. See also *CIJ* 606, *CIJ* 639, (translation by Hemelrijk, *Women and Society,* 246), *CII* 496 (translation by Brooten, *Women Leaders,* 68).
[380] Brooten, *Women Leaders*, 1.
[381] Matthew J. Perry, *Gender, Manumission, and the Roman Freedwoman* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 60.

manumission existed, and naturally some were utilised more by enslavers than others.[382] Formal manumission, in the forms of *vindicta*[383] and *testamento*[384], gave freedwomen "full Roman citizenship, with rights nearly equal to those of freeborn women."[385] Informal manumission, including *per epistulam* and *inter amicos*, left the freed person without Roman citizenship and still regarded as property of their enslaver; legally they remained enslaved.[386] Importantly, Roman law considered any children born to a woman after informal manumission to be enslaved, and thus, the property of their (ex)enslaver.[387]

A common route to "freedom" for enslaved women was through marriage to their enslaver.[388] Cases in which enslavers freed their enslaved women specifically in order to marry them required the marriage to take place within 6 months, otherwise the

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[382] For examples of the agreements of manumission between enslaver and enslaved see Egbert Koops, "The Practice of Manumission through Negotiated Conditions in Imperial Rome," in *Roman Law and Economics: Volume II: Exchange, Ownership, and Disputes*, eds. Giuseppe Dari-Mattiacci, and Dennis P. Kehoe (Oxford: Oxford Academic, 2022), 35-78.

[383] *Vindicta* required the enslaver to manumit the enslaved in the presence of a magistrate, "who then certified the slave's freedom by touching her with his official rod" (Perry, *Gender, Manumission*, 60). See Plautus, *The Braggart Solider*, 962, translated by Wolfgang de Melo, Loeb Classical Library 163 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 243; Ovid, *Ars.* 3.615. Translated by J. H. Mozley, Revised by G. P. Goold, Loeb Classical Library 232 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1929), 161.

[384] *Testmento* allowed slaves to be freed in the will of their enslaver. See *Dig.* 40.4. Translation by S. P. Scott, *The Civil Law IX* (Cincinnati: The Central Trust Company, 1932), 45-46.

[385] Perry, *Gender, Manumission*, 60.

[386] Grubbs, *Women and the Law*, 223; Gaius, *Inst.* 1.44. In the early Principate, people freed informally were categorised as *Junian Latins*. This gave them recognition, not as Roman citizens, but as Latins (Gardner, *Women in Roman Law,* 223). As with all other aspects of Roman legislation, women did not experience the same benefits as men. Men were able to gain their freedom through marriage to a Latin or Roman woman if he was a *Junian Latin*, whereas *Junian Latin* women were only able to gain their freedom through marriage to a Latin man (Gaius, *Inst.* 1.67-71;79-80). See also Gaius, *Inst.* 1.23 which concerns a Latin woman cohabiting with a Roman man.

[387] Gaius, *Inst*, 3.56; Perry, *Gender, Manumission*, 60. For the lives of the children of freedmen and women, see P. R. C. Weaver, "Children of Freedmen (and Freedwomen)," in *Marriage, Divorce, and Children in Ancient Rome,* ed. Beryl Rawson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 166-190. Like the lives of freedwomen, the lives of children of freedwomen and men are difficult to categorise in broad statements. Their status, like their parents', depended significantly on the method of manumission. See *Dig.* 40 for further discussions of manumission and J. Albert Harrill, *The Manumission of Slaves in Early Christianity* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995).

[388] See Katherine P. D. Huemoeller, "Freedom in Marriage? Manumission for Marriage in the Roman World," *JRS* 110 (2020): 123-139. Whilst marriage or sexual relationships between enslaved women and their male enslavers were not viewed with disdain, the idea of relationships between female enslavers and male slaves was stigmatized. See Judith Evans Grubbs, "'Marriage More Shameful Than Adultery': Slave-Mistress Relationships, 'Mixed Marriages,' and Late Roman Law," *Phoenix* 47 (1993): 125-154; Marican, *Dig.* 40.2.14.1; Papinian, *Dig.* 23.2.62.1. Translation by S. P. Scott, *The Civil Law V* (Cincinnati: The Central Trust Company, 1932), 241; Ulpian, *Dig.* 23.2.13; *Sententiae Paulii* II.xix.9. Translation by Grubbs, *Women and the Law,* 147.

manumission was deemed "invalid."[389] Enslaved women could not refuse marriage to their enslaver, nor their ex-enslaver; a reality which demonstrates the limitations faced by women who were supposedly "free."[390] Kleijwegt, in his exploration of the positionality of freedwomen across the Roman Empire, focuses on Acilia Plecusa, a freedwoman who married her former enslaver, a Roman Knight.[391] Whilst some freedwomen may have lived very similar lives to those when they were enslaved,[392] others statuses, like Acilia Plecusa's, were "raised considerably."[393]

4.5 Enslaved Women

Enslaved women's lives, as I will suggest, were deeply challenging. Due to their general lack of education, female slaves often struggled to ascend the ranks and so relied on others for their freedom. Gendered virtues and the oppressive patriarchy allowed enslavers and fellow male slaves to take advantage of women, which is demonstrated repeatedly in literature. My discussion will primarily focus on the treatment of enslaved women as equivalent to inanimate objects, particularly in the case of enslaved women forced into sex work, or self-enslaved sex workers. Whilst this brief assessment of the difficulty of enslaved women's lives is factual, we should not ignore the reality of hierarchies amongst enslaved women also. Enslavement was not a uniform experience, and

[389] Gardner, *Women in Roman Law,* 227.
[390] Ulpian, *Dig.* 23.2.45; 24.2.11. See also Henrik Mouritsen, *The Freedman in the Roman World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 36-65.
[391] Marc Kleijwegt, "Deciphering Freedwomen in the Roman Empire," in *Free at Last! The Impact of Freed Slaves on the Roman Empire,* eds. Sinclair Bell and Teresa Ramsby (Bloomsbury Press, 2012), 110-129.
[392] Inscriptions detailing the occupations of freedwomen often name jobs carried out by enslaved women. E.g., wetnurses (*CIL* 6, 25808 / *AE* 1980, 326), *ornatrices* (*CIL* 6, 9736), and clothes menders (*CIL* 6, 9884), translation by Hemelrijk, *Women and Society,* 131-150. Whilst some freedwomen did retain work as educators and readers, their numbers are small in comparison to male pedagogues (Hemelrijk, *Women and Society,* 133). See *CIL* 6, 33830 for an example of a freedwoman reader, translation by Hemelrijk, *Women and Society,* 139.
[393] Kleijwegt, "Deciphering Freedwomen," 111.

some women suffered more than others. As I hope to show, enslaved women forced into sex work were viewed as some of the most abject in society.

Slavery was accepted across the Roman Empire and remained an unquestioned aspect of life for centuries.[394] Unlike New World slavery, slavery in the Roman Empire was not motivated by race, rather people of all races were vulnerable to enslavement.[395] There were ordinarily two routes into enslavement, people were either born into slavery, or they were forcibly enslaved.[396] Roman slavery was an institution which was, in its earlier years, steadily sustained by Rome's expansionist warfare.[397] The numbers of people enslaved during Rome's frequent wars of expansion recorded in sources, whilst unverifiable, are staggering. Plutarch claims that Caesar enslaved "one million" people on his campaign in Gaul between 58 and 50 B.C.E.[398] Lenski suggests that such large numbers would have "temporarily crashed prices on the slave market."[399] Women could be enslaved through war if "they were camp followers or ordinary citizens where the Romans made a conquest."[400] Women also suffered the risk of enslavement in adulthood from "kidnappers or pirates," as well as crucially self-enslavement through extreme poverty.[401] Exposed babies and children sold into sex work by procurers also fed the enslaved population, and these people lived some of the most difficult lives. Exposure was common across the Roman world; Emperor Claudius was even noted to have ordered the exposure

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[394] Aristotle's conception of "natural slavery" emphasises the lack of humanity afforded to enslaved people in both the Greek and Roman view (*Pol*. 1252a). Translated by H. Rackham, Loeb Classical Library 264 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1932).
[395] Hunt, *Ancient Greek and Roman Slavery*, 31.
[396] Noel Lenski, "Slavery in the Roman Empire," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Global Slavery throughout History*, eds. D.A. Pargas and J. Schiel (Palgrave Macmillan, 2023), 87-107. Justinian, *Institutes*, I.3, translation by J. B. Moyle, *The Institutes of Justinian*, 5th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1913), 13.
[397] Keith Bradley, *Slavery and Society at Rome* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge, 1994), 32; see also Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1982), 106-115; Hunt, *Ancient Greek and Roman Slavery*, 40.
[398] Plutarch, *Caes.* 15. Translated by Bernadotte Perrin, Loeb Classical Library 99 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1919).
[399] Lenski, "Slavery," 88.
[400] Sarah B. Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves: Women in Classical Antiquity* (New York: Schocken Books, 1995), 191.
[401] Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves,* 190-191.

of his child, as he doubted their paternity.[402] Enslaved women's children were born into slavery, and immediately became the property of the enslaver to use as he pleased. Such "homebred" slaves were common, even preferable to the enslaver, due to their lack of knowledge of life outside enslavement.[403] Enslavers could restrict the mother's access to her children if she was to be utilised as a wet-nurse, or simply remove the child from the enslaved mother's care entirely. Simply, it was the enslaver's choice.[404] Alongside wars, it is suggested that the biggest contribution to the enslaved population came from these children who were born into slavery.[405]

4.5.1 **Occupation of Enslaved Women**

Most enslaved women worked in the domestic sphere, commonly in supportive roles, either for their enslaver or to the enslaver's children.[406] As expected, enslaved women's roles were deeply rooted in the Roman gender norms. Female slaves tended to work indoors, while male slaves worked outdoors.[407] Women's "weakness" largely discouraged enslavers from employing their female slaves in physical work, yet there is some evidence to suggest that, particularly in rural settings, female slaves carried out

[402] Suetonius, *Lives of the Caesars 5. Claudius*, 27.1. Translated by J. C. Rolfe, Loeb Classical Library 38 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1914).
[403] Lenski, "Slavery," 89. The Latin term *verna* denotes a "homebred slave."
[404] Sandra R. Joshel, *Slavery in the Roman World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 40-41.
[405] Walter Scheidel, "Quantifying the Sources of Slaves in the Early Roman Empire," *JRS* 87 (1997): 156-169.
[406] These roles also commonly included the wetnurse. See Sandra R. Joshel, "Nurturing the Master's Child: Slavery and the Roman Child-Nurse," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 12 (1986): 3-22. See also Susan Treggiari, "Jobs in the Household of Livia," *Papers of the British School at Rome* 43 (1975): 48-77. Treggiari explores in detail the occupations of Livia's enslaved help, including the roles specifically carried out by women. Some women's roles, whilst domestic, required skill, like the *ornatrix*, or dresser, who was also assisted by other slaves (Treggiari, "Jobs," 52). Pertinent to my thesis is the *unctrix*, or massuse (Treggiari, "Jobs," 53). This role, specifically carried out by women, was a less skilled and respected (Treggiari, "Jobs," 53). Children of enslaved women often fulfilled the role of *delicia*, entertaining their masters whilst their relationship with their master or mistress was like that of "parents and children" (Treggiari, "Jobs," 53-54).
[407] Perry, *Gender, Manumission,* 44.

physical labour.[408] Generally, a minority of slave women were employed in the agricultural sphere in comparison to domestic work within the house. The roles of enslaved women are widely described as "service" roles, which encompassed cooking, clothes making, childcare (in many forms), and sex work.[409] Particularly for female slaves, employment in their mistress's entourage was not uncommon, especially if they were owned by a wealthy family.[410] Female enslavers used their enslaved women's services most frequently whilst in public, as they would clear the way for their mistress, carry her parasol, and adjust her clothing.[411] Oftentimes, enslavers, and the wider free population, did not sufficiently recognise such work, as female slaves were typically viewed as "both unskilled and unproductive."[412]

Conversely, enslavers recognised and lauded the reproductive potential of enslaved women. As I have previously noted, enslaved women's children were automatically enslaved at birth, undoubtedly benefitting the enslaver. Perry suggests that "It was the reproductive potential of female slaves, possibly even more than their capacity for productive labor, that was an essential component of their worth."[413] Whether the enslaver or a fellow slave fathered the child, the perceived value of the woman and child was not

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[408] Perry, *Gender, Manumission,* 44-46. Columella, whilst suggesting that poor weather would prevent a woman from working outside, does not suggest that female slaves did not work outside at all (*On Agriculture,* 12.3.6. Translated by Harrison Boyd Ash, Loeb Classical Library 361 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1941), 191). For an in-depth exploration of agricultural slave labour, see the work of Ulrike Roth, "Inscribed Meaning: the Vilica and the Villa Economy" *Papers of the British School at Rome* 72 (2004): 101-24; Ulrike Roth, "Food, Status, and the Peculium of Agricultural Slaves." *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 18 (2005): 278-292.
[409] Perry, *Gender, Manumission,* 46; Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves,* 191. More generally see, Treggiari, "Jobs in the Household of Livia," 48-77; Bradley, *Slavery and Society*, 57-80.
[410] See P. R. C. Weaver, *Familia Caesaris: A Social Study of the Emperor's Freedmen and Slaves* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972) for the role of imperial slaves.
[411] Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves,* 192.
[412] Perry, *Gender, Manumission,* 48. Stereotypes of specific enslaved women were pervasive, which subsequently resulted in a poor reputation for such women. In particular, the *ancilla* was viewed as lazy. Perhaps due to her general role and lack of specific skills, the presentation of unskilled slaves like the *ancilla* in literature is harsh (Marcian, *Dig.* 32.65.1. Translation by S. P. Scott, *The Civil Law VII* (Cincinnati: The Central Trust Company, 1932), 141). See also Richard P. Saller, "Women, Slaves, and the Economy of the Roman Household," in *Early Christian Families in Context: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue*, eds. David L. Balch and Carolyn Osiek (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), 185-204.
[413] Perry, *Gender, Manumission,* 49.

affected. Ulpian states that the sale of healthy pregnant enslaved women is permissible.[414] Martial's discussion of Quirinalis, (a master who sleeps with his slave girls) is illustrative: he suggests that Quirinalis "fills town house and country estate with home-born knights" making him a "true *paterfamilias*."[415] The permissibility of an enslaver's use of their slave's reproductive capacity shows the complete control enslavers exerted over the enslaved. As I will discuss later in this chapter, the sexual use of enslaved women was widely accepted, not only to increase slave population, but for the enslaver's pleasure also.

4.5.2 **Objectification**

The Greco-Roman enslavement ideology viewed enslaved persons as objects and additional prosthetic body parts for their enslaver's use. Whilst the "slave is a part of the master—he is, as it were, a part of the body, alive," he is simultaneously "separated from it."[416] This use of enslaved persons is seen in a number of ways, including the use of slaves in the literate sphere.[417] Funerary inscriptions reveal the commonality of enslaved persons being used as readers and scribes. A funerary epitaph from Cologne describes the late slave Xanthias as "second to none at reading"[418] and "his master's closest ear."[419] The ambiguousness of whether Xanthias *was* his master's ear, or whether he was "*to have* his

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[414] Ulpian, *Dig.* 21.1.14. Translation by S. P. Scott, *The Civil Law V* (Cincinnati: The Central Trust Company, 1932), 154.
[415] Martial, *Ep.* 1.84. Translated by D. R. Shackleton Bailey, Loeb Classical Library 94 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 101.
[416] Aristotle, *Pol.* 1255b.
[417] Sarah Blake has contributed much to this field through her articles "'In Manus': Pliny's Letters and the Arts of Mastery," in *Roman Literary Cultures: Domestic Politics, Revolutionary Poetics, Civic Spectacle,* eds. Alison Keith and Jonathan Edmondson (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2016), 89-107 and "Now You See Them: Slaves and Other Objects as Elements of the Roman Master," *Helios* 39 (2012), 193-211. Blake explores the way in enslaved workers, in the letters of Pliny, become writing apparatuses integral to the production of "Pliny's" letters. These enslaved workers are absorbed into the master, and thus, whatever they produce is produced by and accredited to the master. For additional exploration of enslaved work in the literate sphere, see Candida R. Moss, "The Secretary: Enslaved Workers, Stenography, and the Production of Early Christian Literature," *JTS* 74 (2023): 20-56.
[418] The commonality of enslaved persons aiding their masters in reading and writing further works to problematise the understanding of enslaved people as uniformly illiterate or uneducated.
[419] *CIL* 13, 8355 (trans. William Fitzgerald, *Slavery and the Roman Literary Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 14).

master's ear" demonstrates the way in which enslaved persons drifted in and out of their master's "body" as was expected of them.[420] Pliny's letters also reveal a master's complete dependence on their enslaved help, as when his *lector* was unwell Pliny was left desolate: "Who then will read and savour my books as he does? To whom will my ears be pinned as they are to him?"[421] Pliny's concerns for his unwell *lector* are essentially self-centred: "The slave exists in his services to Pliny, his feelings of loss that mirror Pliny's, and his interests that are identified with – and as – his master's."[422] Here, Pliny's *lector* is not only acting on behalf of Pliny to read and "savour" the books, but his presence is as necessary as the book itself. Despite Pliny's capacity to read, without his *lector* he becomes illiterate.

Martial's descriptions of enslaved persons in the texts *Xenia* and *Apophoreta* also reveal the ancient understanding of slaves as extensions of their master, or specific faculties of their master. For example, in the discussion of a cook, it said not to be enough for him to be able to cook, rather he is required to have the master's "appetite" or "taste."[423] Thus, the enslaved cook acts as the tastebuds of the enslaver—a capacity only possible if the enslaved is one with his master. Moreover, the "stenographer," like the cook, must know his master thoroughly. He writes faster than the master speaks: "the right hand is finished, though the tongue is not yet done."[424] Here, the stenographer and his master "form one organism," as they work in perfect harmony.[425]

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[420] Fitzgerald, *Slavery and the Roman Literary Imagination,* 15. My italicisation.
[421] Pliny, *Letters*, 8.1. Translation by Blake, "'In Manus'," 95.
[422] Sandra R. Joshel, "Slavery and Roman Literary Culture," in *The Cambridge World History of Slavery: Volume 1, The Ancient Mediterranean World*, eds. Keith Bradley, and Paul Cartledge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 214-240.
[423] Martial, *Apoph.* 14.220. Translation by Blake, "Now You See Them," 204.
[424] Martial, *Apoph.* 14.208. Translation by Blake, "Now You See Them," 203.
[425] Blake, "Now You See Them," 203. This "symbiotic" relationship between enslaved and enslaver is not represented in sources as faultless, however (Fitzgerald, *Slavery and the Roman Literary Imagination*, 24). The task of the enslaved is great and perhaps unachievable; "on the one hand the master wants the slave to be an automaton who is nothing more than an extension of his will, but on the other hand he needs the slave to take some initiative if he is to be properly served" (Fitzgerald, *Slavery and the Roman Literary Imagination*, 24).

Aside from the assimilation of the slave into the master, these examples clearly highlight the common view of slaves as equivalent to objects, as Martial includes these enslaved people as gifts to exchange on the Saturnalia. Enslavers also used enslaved people as inanimate objects in more explicit ways. Ancient sources reveal the practice of tattooing slaves, in much the same way that a person might write on a sheet of paper.[426] In Herodotus' *Histories,* Histiaeus shaved and tattooed the head of his "most trustworthy slave" with a secret message.[427] Once the man's hair had regrown, he was sent to Miletus "with no other message except that … he must bid Aristagoras shave his hair and examine his head," thus, revealing the message.[428] Further examples are found in Jewish sources, including the permissibility of "a divorce document" being written "on the hand of a slave who would then be given to the wife to effect a valid divorce."[429] Again, the enslaved person is tattooed as if they are no more than a piece of paper. A further aspect of the use of enslaved persons as inanimate objects is that they, whilst treated as inanimate, are clearly not inert. The man with his head tattooed simultaneously acts as a messenger, as he must travel to Miletus and instruct for his head to be shaved for the plan to work. Similarly, the slave tattooed with the divorce document, whilst literally validating the divorce, also witnessed that the divorce was enacted as claimed.[430]

Whilst these examples are male centric, it is my conviction that this treatment of enslaved people as inanimate objects, and physical extensions of their master, is equally

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[426] We can see the treatment of slaves as objects through penal tattooing and branding also. See C. P. Jones, "Stigma: Tattooing and Branding in Graeco-Roman Antiquity," *JRS* 77 (1987): 139-155; W. Mark Gustafson, "Inscripta in Fronte: Penal Tattooing in Late Antiquity," *Classical Antiquity* 16 (1997): 79-105.
[427] Herodotus, *Hist.* 5.35. Translated by A. D. Godley, Loeb Classical Library 119 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1922), 39. See also Page Dubois, *Slaves and Other Objects* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), 3-4; Keith Bradley, "Animalizing the Slave: The Truth of Fiction," *JRS* 90 (2000): 110-125.
[428] Herodotus, *Hist.* 5.35.
[429] Catherine Hezser, *Jewish Slavery in Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 65.
[430] Enslaved persons were not seen as reliable witnesses, however. See Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 4.219. See also William Warwick Buckland, *The Roman Law of Slavery: The Condition of the Slave in Private Law from Augustus to Justinian* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), specifically pages 73-97.

relevant to women.[431] The objectification and prosthetic use of enslaved women's bodies is also clear to see in sources which discuss ancient sex work, an exploration of which follows. Perhaps most significant to my exploration of the "sinful" woman in Luke 7 are the examples found in Petronius' *Satyricon*, which describe the enslaver's use of both male and female slaves in much the same way. During Trimalchio's visit to the baths, he emptied his bladder, washed his hands in water and "then wiped them on the boy's head."[432] The enslaver's use of the enslaved boy as an object is striking in its complete degradation of the boy's autonomy and humanity. Trimalchio used him without a second thought. Subsequently, at the *Cena Trimalchio*, the use of an enslaved persons hair is mentioned again. A freedman guest at the dinner "flared up in anger" at a rude freeborn guest, and subsequently spoke openly about his experience of enslavement.[433] Strikingly, he claims "I bought the freedom of my common-law wife, so that no one could wipe his hands in her hair."[434] The husband's lack of further explanation perhaps suggests that the act of wiping one's hands in an enslaved persons hair is representative more widely of the physical nature of the dehumanisation and abuse faced by enslaved women in particular. The freedman's emotive speech suggests that whether emblematic or literal, this treatment of his now freed wife was invasive and exploitative. Conversely, the mentioning of this act twice in close succession also gives weight to the theory that the literal use of enslaved persons' hair was common. In my reinterpretation of the "sinful" woman's actions towards Jesus, and crucially her use of her own hair, I will draw upon this evidence.

4.5.2.1 Sexual Objectification

[431] Fundamentally, all work which enslaved people were forced to carry out is exploitative, regardless of one's gender.
[432] Petronius, *Sat.* 27.6.
[433] Petronius, *Sat.* 57.6.
[434] Petronius, *Sat.* 57.6.

Arguably, the way in which the majority of enslaved women were objectified was sexually. Among scholars, the prevailing view is that female slaves were "always subject to sexual use" by their enslavers.[435] Fundamentally, enslaved women lived with sexual abuse as an integral part of their daily lives. Enslavers, and in some cases their fellow enslaved men, viewed them as always available for sexual use. Enslaved women were vulnerable to sexual assault when out in public, as seen in Terence's *The Eunuch*. Chaerea, an *ephebe,* raped a woman who he assumed to be a slave girl, yet at the end of the play it is revealed that she was a "long-lost citizen."[436] Chaerea assumes the woman to be enslaved simply from the way she looks, and he is convinced enough to treat the woman in the way that enslaved women were typically treated.[437] This assumption of enslavement, or sex work, as reason enough to rape a woman is seen in Ulpian's *Digest*, which states that if a freeborn woman is approached whilst dressed as a slave (or a sex worker), then the perpetrators crime is venial.[438]

Sexual relationships between male masters and female slaves are rife in Roman and Greek literature. We can assume that these relationships were, more often than not, entirely one sided with the male master exerting their power over an enslaved woman. An example from Ovid's *Ars Amatoria* shows the violent extents to which masters went to have sex with their female slaves. The language used here is that of violent force, a fishing metaphor is used: "Let the fish be held that is wounded from seizing the hook; once you

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[435] Page DuBois, "Slavery," in *The Oxford Handbook of Hellenic Studies,* eds. Barbara Graziosi, Phiroze Vasunia, George Boys-Stones (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 316-327. See Jennifer A. Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 9-12; Hunt, *Ancient Greek and Roman Slavery,* 106; Noel Lenski, "Violence and the Roman Slave," in *The Topography of Violence in the Greco-Roman World,* eds. Werner Riess and Garrett G. Fagan (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2016), 275-298; Niall McKeown, "Greek and Roman Slavery," in *The Routledge History of Slavery,* eds. Gad Heuman and Trevor Burnard (Taylor & Francis Group, 2010), 19-34; Serena S. Witzke, "Violence against Women in Ancient Rome: Ideology versus Reality," in *The Topography of Violence in the Greco-Roman World*, eds. Werner Riess and Garrett G. Fagan (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2016), 248-274.
[436] Witzke, "Violence against Women," 264.
[437] Witzke, "Violence against Women," 264.
[438] Ulpian, *Dig.* 47.10.15.15.

assail her, press the attack, nor depart unless victorious. Then, sharing a common guilt, she will not betray you."[439] The power imbalance between the free man and enslaved woman is clear here: although she has been raped, her "guilt" will prevent her from raising the issue. The fact that enslavers used their slaves sexually, with no regard for the enslaved person's wants, is very clear. Despite this, such women, whilst also facing the trauma that accompanies such abuse, would be viewed as tainted with *infamia*. There is debate as to whether a freedwoman could ever regain her modesty after such treatment whilst enslaved.[440]

A common element of the desirable slave girl trope in Roman literature is "love" on the free man's side, whether he is the enslaver or not. This language of love is visible in Horace's *Odes*. When discussing Xanthias' love for a slave girl, Horace recollects perhaps the most famous relationship between a captive woman and a free man, Briseis and Achilles.[441] Love on the part of the man is no indication of the feelings of the woman, and it does not suggest that the man holds any respect of the woman's feelings or autonomy. In the case of Briseis, Achilles forcefully takes her from her father as a spoil of war, his "prize," and uses her as he wishes, most certainly in a sexual way.[442] As suggested in Ovid,

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[439] Ovid, *Ars.* 1.393-398.

[440] See Catherine Hezser, "Slavery and the Jews," in *The Cambridge World History of Slavery: Volume 1, The Ancient Mediterranean World*, eds. Keith Bradley and Paul Cartledge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 438-455. Catherine Hezser's work on Judaism and enslavement shows the long term effects enslavement and sex work have on a woman's reputation and prospects even after manumission. While both male and female slaves were required to immerse themselves into the Jewish culture, which included forced circumcision for the men, unlike the men, these women, when freed, were excluded from the Jewish community (Hezser, "Slavery and the Jews," 441). These freed women were viewed as permanently "stigmatised as sexually promiscuous" which led Rabbis to advise against entering into marriage with them (Hezser, "Slavery and the Jews," 441).

[441] Horace, *Odes*, 2.4. Translated by Niall Rudd, Loeb Classical Library 33 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 103.

[442] As aforementioned, women became enslaved in adolescence and adulthood through war. This treatment of Briseis as a spoil of war is not unusual. Homer, *Iliad*, 1.322-325, translated by A. T. Murray, revised by William F. Wyatt, Loeb Classical Library 170 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1924), 37. Briseis later becomes a bargaining chip as Agamemnon demands to have her as compensation for his loss of Chryseis.

whether this "love" is reciprocated or not, it would likely not affect the actions of the man in either way.

Enslaved women faced vulnerability to the sexual desires of their fellow male slaves, as well as their masters (and men generally). Plautus' play *Casina* is driven by this fact, with the plot centring on "the male desire of sexual possession of the slave maid Casina": it is both her master, her master's son and her fellow male slaves who are lusting over her.[443] The fact that Casina was raised by her mistress "as if she were her own daughter" did not prevent the master from falling "madly in love with her," nor his son.[444] The opening of the play sees the enslaved men, Olympio and Chalinus, fighting over Casina, as they call her "booty."[445] The lovesick master plots to take Casina to an empty house to rape her, as he wants to "embrace her" without his wife knowing.[446] As the male characters individually, and communally, plot how to possess Casina, she remains mute throughout the entire play. Her voice is not heard by the reader and her desires are not deemed important enough to be mentioned even once. In the end, Casina is married to Euthynicus, her master's son. Marriage between an unmarried master and his slave girl, which thus manumitted the slave girl, was fairly common.[447] The manumission of enslaved women through marriage has resulted in much debate as to whether such women used their master's sexual interest to their advantage. Such sexual relationships, despite their abusive potential, may have been "the principal means for a female slave to gain favor with her male owner."[448] Martial comedically refers to such an occurrence between Telethusa and her master, who sold her before buying "her back as mistress of his house."[449] Plainly,

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[443] Witzke, "Violence against Women," 263.
[444] Plautus, *Cas.* 45-50. Translated by Wolfgang de Melo, Loeb Classical Library 61 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 17.
[445] Plautus, *Cas.* 113.
[446] Plautus, *Cas.* 465-471.
[447] For an in-depth discussion of manumission through marriage, see Huemoeller, "Freedom in Marriage?," 123-139; Perry, *Gender, Manumission*, 43-68.
[448] Perry, *Gender, Manumission,* 51.
[449] Martial, *Ep.* 6.71.

enslaved women suffered serious and constant objectification, frequently sexual in nature. Whilst the lives of enslaved women in the domestic sphere were alarming, the lives of sex workers, as I will show, were arguably even more so.

4.6 Sex Workers

There is substantial overlap between sex work and enslavement. Whilst enslavers exploited female slaves within the house, some enslavers formally employed their slaves in the sex trade "either in addition to their other domestic responsibilities, or as a primary occupation."[450] Ancient understandings of sex work differed from our own; Ulpian's definition provides key insight. Perry, working from Ulpian's definition, suggests that a woman was deemed a sex worker if she carried out her sex work "openly" and "indiscriminately."[451] Payment was not a vital constituent of being considered a sex worker, rather it was the openness in which such work was carried out.[452] Location, too, did not affect whether a woman was viewed as a sex worker.[453] Sex workers were found in several urbanised areas, including baths, taverns as well as brothels. Both free and freedwoman carried out sex work alongside enslaved women, largely due to extreme poverty.[454] Sympathy was not afforded to those who fell into sex work, or even self-enslavement, due to poverty, like enslaved women sex workers.[455] Whilst some high-class sex workers arguably experienced a higher quality of life, for those typically enslaved women who worked in brothels life was physically arduous.[456]

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[450] Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves,* 192.
[451] Perry, *Gender, Manumission,* 30; Ulpian, *Dig.* 23.2.43.
[452] Ulpian, *Dig.* 23.2.43.3
[453] Ulpian, *Dig.* 23.2.43.
[454] Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves,* 202.
[455] Ulpian, *Dig*. 23.2.43.5.
[456] Perry, *Gender, Manumission*, 34; Ulpian, *Dig.* 3.2.4.2.

Enslavers benefitted from situating their enslaved women in brothels, as they could make substantial profits.[457] Apuleius's eminent novel *Metamorphoses*, or "The Golden Ass," shows the views of ancient enslavers. When discussing what to do with a slave girl, it is suggested that "she should be taken off to some city and sold" into a brothel for "no small price."[458] With the woman situated in a "whorehouse," the enslaver would receive a steady income of money.[459] The woman, however, would likely earn a paltry amount, if any at all. Procurers, both female and male (*lena* and *leno* respectively), took a cut of sex workers earnings, as did landlords.[460] The earnings kept by enslaved sex workers in particular varied, as the amount they could keep depended on the discretion of their enslaver.

The working conditions in brothels were extremely difficult, and the women were often expected to work tirelessly to make any money for themselves. McGinn estimates that, depending on one's charge, a woman could see ten to twenty clients a day.[461] Gallus explicitly describes the services offered by Lyde "who services three men at once, one over her belly, the other below, another from above."[462] Gallus' description of Lyde suggests that this arrangement was not unusual and men took advantage of the sex worker's tolerance: "If you're in a hurry, get in alongside two others, and don't hold back!"[463] Lyde's "crass pragmatism" highlights the harsh working conditions of sex work and a female sex worker's desperation to earn a meagre wage.[464] Alongside the insignificant compensation,

[457] Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves,* 192.
[458] Apuleius, *Metam.* 7.9. Translated by J. Arthur Hanson, Loeb Classical Library 44 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 17.
[459] Apuleius, *Metam.* 7.9.
[460] Linnea Åshede, "A Demanding Supply: Prostitutes in the Roman World," in *Women in Antiquity: Real Women Across the Ancient World,* eds. Stephanie Lynn Budin, Jean Macintosh Turfa (London: Taylor and Francis Group, 2016), 932-941.
[461] Thomas A. J. McGinn, *The Economy of Prostitution in the Roman World: A Study of Social History and the Brothel* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004), 176-177.
[462] Gallus, *Anth. Pal.* 5.49. Translation by Åshede, "A Demanding Supply," 934.
[463] Gallus, *Anth. Pal.* 5.49. Translation by Åshede, "A Demanding Supply," 934.
[464] Åshede, "A Demanding Supply," 934.

sex workers faced "violence and rape as workplace hazards."[465] Like enslaved women in the domestic setting, sexual violence against sex workers was much expected in ancient sources. Some ancient writers "condemn violence" against sex workers, or courtesans, "and frequently promise not to do things other men have done."[466] Tibullus, for example, acknowledges his predilection for violence ("I did not wrong thee of purpose—forgive me, now I own it—'twas at Love's bidding"), yet later in the same elegy claims that he would rather give up his hands than strike her ("I would not wish to strike thee, Delia, but if such madness come to me, I would pray to have no hands").[467] The continual acknowledgement of violence faced by sex workers shows its commonality, which was exacerbated by the sex worker's full reliance on her customer to behave, as there were few regulations to protect her.[468]

Fundamentally, sex workers, whether enslaved or impoverished free(d) women, were objectified in much the same way that enslaved women in domestic settings were. Even the language used to describe sex workers is pervaded by the understanding of their existence as service and use by others. This is seen in the translation of *prositiuere*: "to set out (of wares)."[469] My decision to describe such women as sex workers does not accurately reflect the ancient understanding of their roles, as these women were "considered (and, through slavery, concretely constituted) more as products than producers, more as wares than workers; they were approved only as sexual objects for men, not as themselves, as women, and certainly not as sexual subject."[470] This construction of sex workers highlights the lack of autonomy they experienced, as they are set out by their procurer, and then used

[465] Witzke, "Violence against Women," 265.
[466] Witzke, "Violence against Women," 267. For a fuller discussion of such sources, see Witzke, "Violence against Women," 267-268.
[467] Tibullus, *Eleg.* 1.6. Translated by F. W. Cornish, J. P. Postgate, J. W. Mackail. Revised by G. P. Goold, Loeb Classical Library 6 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1913), 227.
[468] Witzke, "Violence against Women," 265.
[469] Rebecca Flemming, "Quae Corpore Quaestum Facit: The Sexual Economy of Female Prostitution in the Roman Empire," *JRS* 89 (1999): 38-61
[470] Flemming, "Quae Corpore," 56.

by their customers; there is no consideration of the sex worker within their work. Flemming goes as far to suggest that "the absence of autonomy was an integral part of being a *meretrix*."[471] Ancient society viewed enslaved sex workers as occupying the "lowest station among unfree women."[472] Alongside their lack of autonomy, all sex workers lacked sexual honour and status. Sex workers were tainted by *infamia*, and "suffered from a very low position viewed from the perspective of both legal disability and social prejudice."[473] Legally, sex workers experienced few rights and little protections, even going as far as to limit who they could marry.[474] Due to their lack of sexual honour, sex workers, and enslaved women more generally, lived in "a state of perpetual shame."[475]

4.7 Conclusion

Women who lived under the shadow of Roman rule, led heterogenous lives, and multiple factors affected their experiences. For the wealthiest women, land owning and management were not unheard-of; they could exert their influence and authority over others (albeit, likely enslaved people and little others), and they could become highly educated. Such women often conformed to gender norms that emphasised marriage, childbearing, and modesty. Yet, whilst some women certainly did lead such lives, they were undoubtedly the minority. Many less affluent freeborn women had to work to support their families, temporarily setting aside their domesticity. The lives of enslaved women

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[471] Flemming, "Quae Corpore," 47.
[472] Perry, *Gender, Manumission,* 29.
[473] Thomas A. J. McGinn, "Roman Prostitutes and Marginalization," in *The Oxford Handbook of Social Relations in the Roman World,* ed. Michael Peachin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 643-659.
[474] McGinn, "Roman Prostitutes," 646. See, for example, Paulus, *Dig.* 23.47. A daughter of a Senator who has carried out sex work or worked as an actress can marry a "freedman with impunity" because she "is no longer worthy of honour." Translation by S. P. Scott, *The Civil Law V* (Cincinnati: The Central Trust Company, 1932), 254.
For further discussion see "Civic Disabilities: The Status of Prostitutes and Pimps as Roman Citizens" in Thomas A. J. McGinn *Prostitution, Sexuality, and the Law in Ancient Rome* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 21-69.
[475] Glancy, *Slavery*, 27.

were often desperate, with sexual exploitation forming a part of their daily lives. Ancient sources reveal much about the views of enslaved women, including the common view that enslavers, enslaved, and freeborn men could sexually use enslaved women at any time. The objectification of enslaved people exacerbated their mistreatment, as their work was left unacknowledged, or rather accredited to their master. For *ancillae* in particular, the perception of them as lazy left much of their work overlooked.[476]

Alongside being forced into sexual relationships inside the house, enslaved women were also highly likely to be formally put to work in brothels. Female sex workers were often enslaved, if not self-enslaved or simply impoverished. Here too, conditions were dire, such women were not paid fairly for their work, and they experienced frequent objectification like enslaved women in the domestic setting. As I will come to show, enslaved women who worked in brothels or, more pertinently, in baths coped with the desperate living and working conditions through shared experiences of body work, which constituted a type of self-care. In my next chapter, I will explore bathing and anointing culture, as I assess who bathed, why people attended the baths, and some ancient concerns surrounding the baths.

[476] Terence, *The Self-Tormentor*, 142-143, translated by John Barsby, Loeb Classical Library 22 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 191-193. Also see Saller, "Women, Slaves, and the Economy," 185-204.

Chapter 5 Ancient Bathing Practice

5.1 Introduction

Roman bathing culture was an integral feature of wider Roman society. By the second century C.E. it had spread across the Mediterranean and beyond with many thousands of bathhouses across the Empire, in cities, towns, and villages.[477] Throughout this time, masses of literature, both fictional and non-fictional, discussed the baths—a significant assertion of their cultural relevance. Much of the texts discussed here are considered satiric or humorous works, yet this should not be taken to suggest that these satirised events were of an entirely fictional basis.[478] Whilst much of the source material used here refers directly to Roman public baths in the Mediterranean, there is a general view that urban architecture was relatively consistent across the Empire.[479]

It is also critical to consider the context in which Luke wrote, or recorded, the pericope of 7:36-50. It is widely agreed that the Gospel of Luke was written after 70 C.E., although there is ongoing discussion regarding the exact decade.[480] The scholarly consensus also asserts that Luke's Greek is of a higher calibre than the other Gospels, that its format closely resembles a Greco-Roman historiography, and that the Gospel is rooted

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[477] Yaron Z. Eliav, "Bathhouses as Places of Social and Cultural Interaction," in *The Oxford Handbook of Jewish Daily Life in Roman Palestine*, ed. Catherine Hezser (2012), 604-622. See also Garrett G. Fagan, *Three Studies in Roman Public Bathing: Origins, Growth, and Social Aspects* (PhD Diss, McMaster University, 1993), 142.

[478] This approach is applied by J. P. Sullivan, *Martial: The Unexpected Classic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 292 to Martial and reiterated by R. B. Ward, "Women in Roman Baths," *HTR* 85 (1992): 125-147 in his treatment of Juvenal. Sullivan suggests "if many of the epigrams refer to specific social or sexual behaviour on the part of Martial himself, of his subjects or of his audience, it is fair to assume that such behaviour was common, or at least not rare, even though the particular events and personages were invented for the sake of the poem" (Sullivan, *Martial*, xxiv).

[479] William L. MacDonald, *The Architecture of the Roman Empire: II An Urban Appraisal* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 263.

[480] Bock, *Luke*, 18-19.

strongly in his cultural setting.[481] Moreover, there are suggestions that Luke was from Antioch and not Jewish, but perhaps most crucially, that his Gospel was written in Rome.[482] It is for these reasons that my discussion will focus on the Roman public baths, as they were in the central Mediterranean, rather than the specific bathing culture of Galilee, for example. What we know of Luke's context suggests he would have been familiar with these baths predominantly, and thus his knowledge would have informed his writing. This is not to suggest, however, that public bathing culture was not found across the Roman world, as Roman public baths have been found in Hamat Gader, Tiberias, Magdala, and Galilee.

In this chapter, I will begin with a brief exploration of the much-debated connections between Greek and Roman bathing culture before I move on to outline the way in which the Roman public baths functioned and how their visitors bathed. The discussion of who could be found at the baths is critical, and due to the focus of my thesis, I will dedicate most analysis to the women, including sex workers, who frequented the baths. I shall then address the vast discussion of why people bathed, with a focus on arguably the most common motivations: to socialise, for pleasure, and for health. Subsequently, I will consider the unique bathhouse atmosphere, including an examination of whether the baths were rare social levellers in the Roman world. I will conclude with a discussion of some issues associated with the baths, including physical dangers. I will also discuss Jewish attendance at the baths, which has long been debated. An examination of the Roman public bathhouse is vital to my exploration of the "sinful" woman, and her treatment of Jesus. Arguably, the bathhouse is an important, and perhaps inimitable,

[481] Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 3-6. See also Henry Joel Cadbury, *The Style and Literary Method of Luke: I The Diction of Luke and Acts*, Harvard Theological Studies VI (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1919).
[482] Bock, *Luke*, 17-18; Barbara Shellard, *New Light on Luke: Its Purpose, Sources and Literary Context*. (London: Bloomsbury, 2004), 36.

location in which to view all women, as whilst many women were exploited and subjugated in the baths, some wealthy women used their status to exploit and subjugate their own slaves.

5.2 Situating the Roman Baths – Successor of the Greek Baths?

The extent to which Roman bathing culture developed from the earlier, divergent, Greek bathing culture is a point of continual discussion. Whilst this debate is not directly relevant to my thesis, I will briefly discuss Greek baths in order to situate the Roman baths in their wider historical context. Greek public baths appeared around the late 5th, early 4th century B.C.E, but the majority of these earliest baths were "mainly, if not exclusively, privately owned and managed as profitable business investments."[483] Despite the similarities between the two bathing cultures, the characteristic feature of the Greek public bath was arguably the hip bath. The hip bath was individualistic, assembled of a small basin situated next to a seat, commonly made of stone.[484] Those who could afford to do so sat whilst an enslaved person attended to them, who most likely poured water from the basin over the bather.[485] Greek public baths also housed larger baths, individual immersion tubs, which closely resemble modern day bathtubs.[486] Such tubs are also found in private residences and are frequently mentioned in Greek literature. Perhaps the most memorable example is from Aeschylus' *Agamemnon,* in which Clytemnestra killed Agamemnon whilst he vulnerably bathed at home.[487] Whilst it is commonly assumed that Greek public baths were predominantly, if not exclusively, cold-water facilities, archaeological concessions in

[483] Monika Trümper, "Urban Context of Greek Public Baths," in *Greek Baths and Bathing Culture: New Discoveries and Approaches,* eds. S. K. Lucore and Monika Trümper (Leuven: Peeters, 2013), 33-72.
[484] Fagan, *Three Studies*, 45.
[485] Fagan, *Three Studies*, 45.
[486] Fagan, *Three Studies*, 45.
[487] Aeschylus, *Agamemnon,* 1342-1371. Translated by Alan H. Sommerstein, Loeb Classical Library 146 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 165-167.

recent years contradict such a view. Some archaeological remains of Greek public baths point to the existence of "sweat baths and hypocaust systems," facilities that scholarship commonly understands to be of Roman origin.[488]

A central element of Greek bathing culture was exercise before bathing, and thus, the presence of exercise facilities attached to public bathing institutions was typical. The Greek *gymnasium* was an outdoor courtyard space in which naked, oiled, young men exercised before bathing.[489] The exercises were often strenuous and varied, as they lifted weights, wrestled, or boxed.[490] The presence of a *gymnasium* is at times viewed as synonymous with the Greek baths themselves.

Roman public bathing culture sustained aspects of, yet diverged from, its Greek counterpart. A popular, yet overly simplistic, sentiment used to distinguish Greek and Roman bather's intentions suggests that the Greeks bathed for hygiene, whilst Romans bathed for pleasure.[491] The solitary nature of Greek bathing is certainly absent in its Roman equivalent, as to bathe in the Roman public baths was also to socialise. Roman baths tended to operate on a much larger scale than Greek baths also.[492] A significant point of discussion, however, is the central characteristic of Roman baths, the hypocaust system. Fagan argues that "without the hypocaust system, Roman-style baths … could not have existed."[493] The hypocaust system was located in hollow spaces under the floors of the bath's hottest rooms, the *suspensura.*[494] Pillars of stacked tiles were widely used to support

[488] Fagan, *Three Studies*, 45.
[489] Ray Laurence, *Roman Passions: A History of Pleasure in Imperial Rome* (London: Continuum, 2010), 64.
[490] Lucian's *Anacharsis* 1-5 describes the ongoings of the *gymnasium* through a comedic lens. He describes many exercises, including wrestling, boxing, and the throwing of the discus all whilst the men are naked and covered in oil. Translated by A. M. Harmon, Loeb Classical Library 162 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1925), 3-5.
[491] René Ginouvès, *L'établissement thermal de Gortys d'Arcadie* (Paris: École française d'Athènes; Études Péloponnésiennes, 1959) cited in Fagan, *Three Studies*, 47.
[492] Eliav, "Bathhouses as Places," 605.
[493] Fagan, *Three Studies*, 22.
[494] Abraham Ofir Shemesh, "'He Who Enters the Bathhouse Utters Two Blessings': On the Evolvement and Decline of an Ancient Jewish Prayer," *Religions* 8 (2017): 225-240.

the floors of the bathing rooms, as they allowed the hot air to circulate and rise easily. The heat was produced by furnaces situated directly below, or nearby, the suspended floor, most commonly in a "side chamber."[495] Hot air created by the fierce furnaces heated the floor above, but also crucially the bath water.



Figure 1: The Hypocaust of the Great Baths Complex, Ancient Dion, Greece (2012). (Image Credits: Carole Raddato, Flickr, https://www.flickr.com/photos/carolemage/7094483903/in/photolist-bNV5TZ-aCivML-dumSoE-dug52v-dugib8-dumPzN-dMAyDb-dumSZJ-dugg6i-dumK1u-bNVpui-bNV3xK-bA1hAb-oz6PGt-aCfTZa-fafBu5-oz7cFh-dMAyhu-9YNZan-aCfTag-bA1h1L-pJZDwk-dumP7d-bA1E5m-aCfZPg-bNVgXg-aCiKz5-dumFhd-Cj8mVk-dug8Nr-aCfVHa-pK2zPu-dumCNb-bA1pX1-bA1KqJ-bA1JDu-aCfSBk-dugjDT-p5zehm-aCfZcp-aCiFhU-J7KXJT-9YNLdc-2igDLf1-q2c77F-J7L38c-acEgwf-nFHnx8-nFHkHM-d8bpH7).

As discussed, the hypocaust system is commonly understood as a Roman invention, one widely attributed to Sergius Orata in the early first century B.C.E.[496] Ancient sources, including Pliny the Elder, speak of Orata as the inventor of the *pensiles*

[495] Shemesh, "He Who Enters the Bathhouse," 330.
[496] Garrett G. Fagan, "The Genesis of the Roman Public Bath: Recent Approaches and Future Directions," *American Journal of Archaeology* 105 (2001): 403-426.

balineae (hanging baths) in conclusive fashion, yet archaeological evidence suggests otherwise.[497] Fagan, among others, points to the hypocaust's presence in the Stabian Baths, which predate Orata and his invention of the *pensiles balineae* by around a century.[498] Others have pointed to the presence of an early hypocaust system in Greek bath remains, like the 2nd century B.C.E baths at Olympia, to suggest that the Romans simply developed the hypocaust system from an earlier Greek model.[499]

The Roman *palaestra* is arguably the modified continuum of the Greek *gymnasium*. This view has largely remained unquestioned, due to ancient sources which suggest such a development. Most significantly, Vitruvius's *On Architecture* states that the Greeks "handed down" their *gymnasium* "method of construction" which the Romans used for the *palaestra*.[500] Whilst the spaces were both regarded as exercise areas, the exhaustive nature of the exercises practiced by the Greeks differed significantly from those popular in the Roman *palaestra*. Greek bathers engaged in intense exercise before bathing, whereas Roman bathers preferred light exercise, like gender inclusive ball games.[501] Conversely, women were not welcome in the Greek *gymnasium*, alongside slaves and freedmen.[502]

5.3 The Rituals of the Roman Bath

[497] Pliny, *Nat.* 9.168.
[498] Fagan, "The Genesis of the Roman Public Bath," 404. Janet DeLaine, "Some Observations on the Transition from Greek to Roman Baths in Hellenistic Italy," *Mediterranean Archaeology* 2 (1989): 111-125 thoroughly surveys the transition from Greek to Roman baths in Hellenistic Italy, surveying the emergence and development of the hypocaust system. See p.112 onwards for her discussion of Orata and the Greek origins of the hypocaust system.
[499] DeLaine, "Some Observations," 112.
[500] Vitruvius, *On Architecture,* 5.11.1. Translated by Frank Granger, Loeb Classical Library 251 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931), 307.
[501] Fikret K. Yegül, "Development of Baths and Public Bathing during the Roman Republic," in *A Companion to the Archaeology of the Roman Republic,* ed. Jane DeRose Evans (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 15-32.
[502] Monika Trümper, "Gender-differentiation in Greek Public Baths," *Proceedings of the International Frontinus-Symposium of the Technical and Cultural History of Ancient Baths* (2009): 37-45. Further discussion of the Roman *palaestra*, and its contribution to the health of bathers, is to follow.

Bathing in a public bathhouse was a lengthy process in which the bather would undergo a protracted routine. That is to say that one did not visit the baths to have a quick wash, rather they attended the baths to undergo a "complex" bathing process, whilst they socialised at the same time.[503] Across the Empire, most Roman public baths contained the same standard set of rooms, with some variation conditional to the "size and luxury of the establishment."[504] The rooms found in nearly all Roman public baths are the *frigidarium* (cold room, which often contained a plunge pool), *tepidarium* (warm room) and the *caldarium* (hot room). Most baths also provided an *apodyterium*, a changing room, of which the furnishing likely differed from bathhouse to bathhouse. Whilst most changing rooms provided niches and shelves to store clothing, modest baths simply provided hooks, and the most well-endowed, provided lockers.[505] The *palaestra* and the hypocaust system are synonymous for the Roman public bathhouse and thus are found in Roman public baths across the Mediterranean. Archaeological excavations at Baiae and Pompeii also highlight the commonality of empty adjoining rooms, of which their use at first appears ambiguous.[506] When viewed in the wider bathhouse context, it becomes clear, and is now commonly accepted, that such rooms were used for anointing, massage, and perhaps also sex work.[507] In the more luxurious establishments, large "open-air swimming pools," "very hot sweat chambers" (*sudatorium*), and dry heat chambers (*laconicum*) have also been found.[508]

The layout of public baths also varied, with some built on a circular plan, which appear to direct the bather from room to room, whilst others maintained a more linear

[503] Garrett G. Fagan, *Bathing in Public in the Roman World* (Ann Arbour: The University of Michigan Press, 2002), 10.
[504] Fagan, *Bathing in Public*, 10.
[505] Eliav, "Bathhouses as Places," 607.
[506] See Anise K. Strong, "Well-washed Whores: Prostitutes, Brothels and Water Usage in the Roman Empire," *Classical Studies*, https://classicalstudies.org/well-washed-whores-prostitutes-brothels-and-water-usage-roman-empire; Fagan, *Bathing in Public*, 36; McGinn, *The Economy of Prostitution*, 211-212.
[507] Strong, "Well-Washed Whores."
[508] Fagan, *Bathing in Public*, 10.

layout.[509] Baths across the Empire ranged in size too. The largest imperial baths at Rome, known as *thermae*, housed "thousands of attendants at once," and the smallest baths found in villages housed only tens at a time.[510] Most public baths across the Empire are known as *balaneia*: smaller, urban baths.[511] The decorative style of the baths also varied significantly, and through the years significant changes in style occurred. Seneca famously denounced richly decorated baths, which he viewed as excessively luxurious.[512] Rather, Seneca favoured the plain bathhouses of the past, like Scipio's which he describes as "small" and "buried in darkness."[513] In bathhouses contemporary to the life of Seneca, the

[509] Eliav, "Bathhouses as Places," 607.
[510] Eliav, "Bathhouses as Places," 607.
[511] Eliav, "Bathhouses as Places," 607.
[512] Seneca the Younger, *Epistles*, 86, translated by Richard M. Gummere, Loeb Classical Library 75 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1917), 311-323. Seneca's objection to luxury, or *luxuria*, was a popular moralising theme in his lifetime. *Luxuria* is difficult to define, but is often taken to suggest excessive indulgence, concretely attached to morality (see Francesca Romana Berno, *Roman Luxuria: A Literary and Cultural History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023), 1.) Stoic Romans, including Seneca, viewed *luxuria* as an Eastern import, a form of effeminacy common amongst Greeks. Seneca's negative view of bathing is likely connected to the use of oil in the bathhouse also. Bathing for long periods of time and the continual use of oil were viewed as effeminate and idle. See Plutarch, *Moralia: The Roman Questions*, 274d. Translated by Frank Cole Babbitt, Loeb Classical Library 305 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1936), 69-71.
[513] Seneca, *Epistles*, 86.4-5.

luxurious atmosphere, and ornate decorations which he decries were very much the style of well-funded public bathhouses across the Empire.[514]

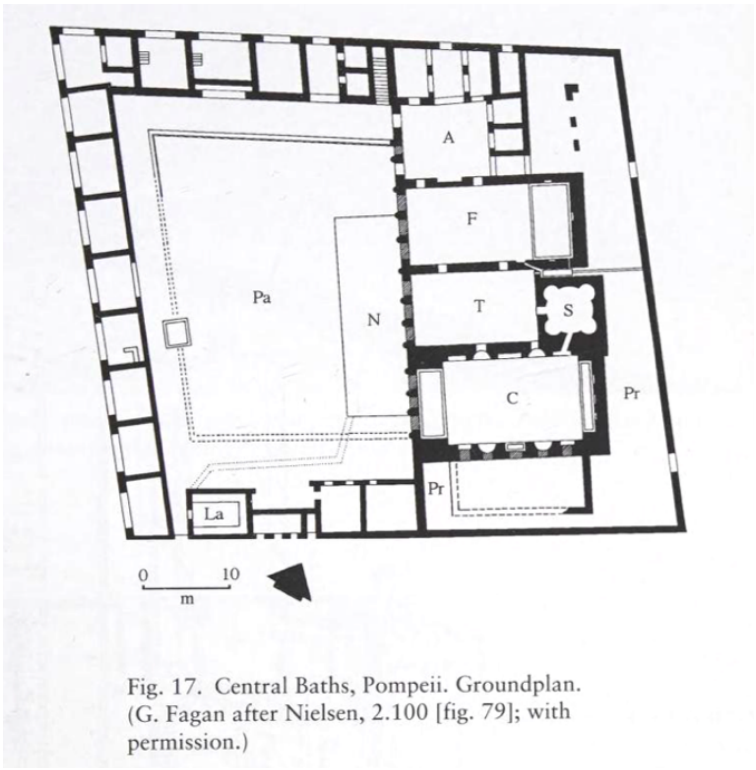


Fig. 17. Central Baths, Pompeii. Groundplan. (G. Fagan after Nielsen, 2.100 [fig. 79]; with permission.)

Figure 2: Central Baths, Pompeii. Ground Plan. (Image Credits: Fagan, Bathing in Public*, 210).*

Key to Plans of Baths

A = Apodyterium
C = Caldarium
Ca = Calida Piscina
E = Exedra
F = Frigidarium
N = Natatio
La = Latrine
Lc = Laconicum
Pa = Palaestra
Pr = Praefurnium
T = Tepidarium
V = Vestibule

Figure 3: Key to Plan of Baths shown in Figure 2. (Image Credits: Fagan, Bathing in Public*, 210).*

The order in which bathers moved through the rooms is debated. Some scholars favour a prescribed route, whilst others argue that personal preference led the bather. Although Fagan suggests that it was "largely a matter of choice," he contends that a typical route existed, which consisted of the *tepidarium* to the *caldarium*, back to the *tepidarium*,

[514] Jérôme Carcopino, *Daily Life in Ancient Rome* (London: George Routledge & Sons, 1941), 254. See Lucian, *Hippias*, 5-7 for a description of a Roman bath from the second century C.E.

and finally to the *frigidarium.*[515] Similarly, Eliav argues that bathers would alternate between hot and cold baths, before finishing their ritual with an application of oil, massage, and the oil's removal with a *strigil.*[516] There is general scholarly agreement that bathers began their visit to the baths in the *palaestra*, to work up a light sweat whilst covered in oil.[517] After the bather had exercised, their oil, and sweat, would be *strigiled* off, either by enslaved help or themselves, before they entered the water. The *palaestra* was largely attended by men, as despite women being allowed in the *palaestra*, most began their routine in the *tepidarium* or *caldarium*.

Wealthy bathers chose from a range of physical treatments, which their personal slaves, or hired bath attendants provided. Whilst massage with oil was common, anointment with perfumed oil as the last step of the bathing routine was the most luxurious and expensive treatment.[518] The perfumed oils used to anoint bathers were indulgent.[519] Costly oils and unguents were "rubbed over the entire body, even to the soles of the feet."[520] Different infused unguents were applied for different purposes, and on different parts of the body.[521] Apuleius highlights the sexual use of some oils, as he describes how

[515] Fagan, *Bathing in Public*, 10.
[516] Eliav, "Bathhouses as Places," 607. A *strigil* was an instrument with a curved blade that was used to scrape sweat and dirt from the skin.
[517] E.g., Eliav, "Bathhouses as Places," 607; Fagan, *Bathing in Public*, 10; Lin Foxhall, *Studying Gender in Classical Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 133.
[518] Fagan, *Bathing in Public*, 10; Yaron Z. Eliav, *A Jew in the Roman Bathhouse: Cultural Interaction in the Ancient Mediterranean* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2023), 95.
[519] Perfumed oil's uses outside the bathhouse further denotes their costly nature. We know from Biblical sources that oils were used to preserve the dead (Luke 23:56) and to anoint the "tent of the meeting and the ark of the covenant" (Exodus 30:25-30). Josephus, *Antiquities*, also reveals the use of oil in anointing of priests and the tabernacle (8.3; 8.6). Bock, *Luke*, 141 estimates that the oil used by the Lukan woman, if nard, was worth three hundred denarii, or "about a year's salary, per pound". Moreover, bath benefactors were known to donate large amounts of oil, presumably of the quality used by the masses, in order to gain favour with the populace. See Fagan, *Bathing in Public*, 162-163 for further discussion.
[520] E. C. Angell, "Inunction and Manipulation," *The Sanitarian* 6 (1878), 481-498. See also Angus Bowie, "Oil in Ancient Greece and Rome," in *The Oil of Gladness: Anointing in the Christian Tradition*, eds. Martin Dudley and Geoffrey Rowell (London: SPCK, 1993), 26-34.
[521] Angell, "Inunction and Manipulation," 28. Marjoram, for example, was used widely "for warming and softening the sinews," more specifically for "the uterus" (Pliny, *Nat.* 21.163). Shane Butler, "Making Scents of Poetry", in *Smell and the Ancient Senses*, ed. Mark Bradley (New York: Routledge, 2015), 74-89 explores the relationship between the uses of marjoram the perfume and marjoram the medicine.

Lucius is wooed by a woman who "anointed herself all over with oil of balsam."[522]Ancient sources indicate that scented oils used in bathing also served other purposes, as Aphrodite anointed Hector's corpse with rose oil, which is also recommended by Celsus for headaches.[523] Whilst anointing was utilised by physicians for health purposes, this should not distract from the extravagant and costly nature of the treatment which took place within the baths. The routine of each individual bather varied significantly, and largely depended on the bather's wealth, location, and social status.

5.4 Who attended the Baths?

Men and women of all social stations visited the baths. It is this openness, in such a structured society, that makes the Roman baths unparalleled. Whilst there is an ongoing debate as to whether the baths were rare spaces in which the confines of social hierarchy were set aside, it is undeniable that the baths were perhaps the most widely used features of Roman society.

5.4.1 **Women**

The presence of women, both enslaved and free, at the Roman baths is indisputable, and their nudity in a mixed sex setting is also well attested to. There is debate, however, over the commonality of and attitude towards mixed bathing. The argument for the presence and preference of segregated baths relies heavily on the archaeological remains of the Forum baths of both Pompeii and Herculaneum.[524] Such baths consisted of two mirrored, sealed off bathhouses, with "separate but not equal

[522] Apuleius, *Metam.* 10.21.
[523] Homer, *Iliad,* 23.186. Celsus, *On Medicine,* 3.10, translated by W. G. Spencer, Loeb Classical Library 292 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1935), 271-273. See also Hannah Platts, *Multisensory Living in Ancient Rome*: *Power and Space in Roman Houses* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019).
[524] Ward, "Women in Roman Baths," 128.

facilities."[525] Academics have understood this to indicate that one—the lesser—side was reserved for women only, whilst men bathed separately in the larger side.[526] Though this perspective may seem intuitive, Pickett offers an alternative point of view.[527] Such "symmetrical doubling" present in *thermae* bath houses, viewed through a social history lens, may speak to more practical motivations, for example for "the needs for redundancy, crowd capacity or partial shutdown during cold weather."[528] Moreover, double the facilities would also allow for easy maintenance and cleaning.[529] Pickett's employment of a social history lens brings forth new and meaningful understandings of the *thermae* bathhouses, aside from gendered segregation.

Bathhouses designed in a symmetrical fashion appear to regress from the early imperial period onwards, in favour of the more recognisable "single set of bath rooms."[530] Despite this, some continue to argue for the precedent of segregated bathing, through tenuous references to gendered bathing hours, most notably argued for by Carcopino.[531] Ward finds fault with Carcopino's evidence to support his assertion, as, by his own claim, women would end up bathing "together with the invalid men."[532] Whilst Carcopino's view is shakily upheld, his "influence has been widespread" as contemporary scholars such as Yegül cite his theory in their support of segregated bathing practices.[533]

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[525] Ward, "Women in Roman Baths," 131. See also Foxhall, *Studying Gender,* 135.
[526] Some primary sources appear to support this assumption: Marcus Terentius Varro, *On the Latin Language*, 9.68, translated by Roland G. Kent, Loeb Classical Library 333 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1938), 491; Vitruvius, *On Architecture*, 5.10.1.
[527] Jordan Pickett, "A Social Explanation for the Disappearance of Roman Thermae," *JLA* 14 (2021): 375-414.
[528] Pickett, "A Social Explanation," 386.
[529] Pickett, "A Social Explanation," 386.
[530] Ward, "Women in Roman Baths," 131.
[531] Carcopino, *Daily Life*, 258.
[532] Ward, "Women in Roman Baths," 140-141.
[533] Fikret K. Yegül, Mehmet C. Bolgil, and Clive Foss, *The bath-gymnasium complex at Sardis* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1986), 8; Ward, "Women in Roman Baths," 141.

Mixed bathing was common and remained largely unquestioned up until the beginning of the second century.[534] Literary sources indicate that mixed bathing was a regular occurrence, as many authors discuss the practice with no implication that it was anything other than ordinary. Martial, in particular, frequently discusses naked women at the baths in the presence of men, with no indication that it was unusual.[535] Balsdon suggests that the women mentioned in Martial are "women of the lowest character," sex workers, and so the text does not suggest mixed bathing among free persons.[536] Balson's statement is problematic, as in Martial's *Epigrams* 11:19 there is no indication that Galla is enslaved or a sex worker. Rather, Ward suggests that Galla intends to marry Martial, therefore her *connubium* denotes that she is not a sex worker.[537] Furthermore, Balsdon argues that if mixed bathing was commonplace Juvenal would have discussed it, yet Juvenal does discuss a married woman in the context of a mixed bath.[538] Clement of Alexandria, despite his later date than Martial, also mentions "mistresses."[539] Enslaved helpers attended these women, which suggests that high status women bathed nude alongside men.[540] There are further examples of wealthy women in mixed bathing settings flanked by their male slaves, most notably in Martial. Martial explicitly questions why Laecania comes to the baths accompanied by her male slave, who wears a strap "round his

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[534] Ward, "Women in Roman Baths," 139. See also Eliav, *A Jew in the Roman Bathhouse,* 69-77 who asserts that, whilst some facilities offered gendered baths, "as far as we know" gendered segregation was "never enforced." Eliav, *A Jew in the Roman Bathhouse*, 70 strongly contends "For all we know, most, if not all, of the public bathhouses in the days of the Rabbis—the second to fourth centuries CE—operated as mixed-gender facilities." Most scholars display a level of restraint in this view, however, as they concede that geography would have resulted in some regional differences in practice (Fagan, *Bathing in Public*, 27).
[535] Martial, *Ep.* 3:52; 3:72; 11:75.
[536] John Percy Vyvian Dacre Balsdon, *Roman Women: Their History and Habits* (Barnes and Noble Books, 1983), 269.
[537] Ward, "Women in Roman Baths," 136. *Connubium* (legal capacity) was a requirement for a legal marriage to take place. Enslaved people, sex workers, and non-citizens did not possess *connubium*. See also Gardner, *Women in Roman Law*, 24-50.
[538] Balsdon, *Roman Women*, 269. Juvenal, *Sat.* 6.419-425, translated by Susanna Morton Braund, Loeb Classical Library 91 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 275.
[539] Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 5.1628-1632.
[540] Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 5.1628-1632. Eliav, *A Jew in the Roman Bathhouse,* 75 suggests that "the only ones who cover themselves are those with something to hide, whether because of social status such as slaves or cultural conventions."

loins," whilst she openly bathes naked in the company of men.[541] While Martial mentions "women's rooms," he does not suggest that Laecania's presence amongst the naked male bathers is unusual, rather it is her sexual unavailability that causes frustration.

Although mixed bathing was arguably the cultural norm for a period of many years, at least in some areas of the Roman Empire, in the early second century tensions around the practice grew.[542] Most notably, Emperor Hadrian is understood to have spoken out against the practice and ordered the separation of the sexes in the bathhouse.[543] Whilst the commandment appears in two sources, Cassius Dio's *Roman History* and *The Historia Augusta*, there is evidence that the sources are troublesome due to "serious questions" about their "authorship, date and reliability."[544] Contrary to these sources, archaeological remains across the Mediterranean clearly show "that segregated baths were not being built in or after the time of Hadrian," perhaps an affirmation of the unquestioned status quo of mixed bathing.[545] Despite the lack of a uniform scholarly consensus, I will work from the view that mixed bathing was the largely unquestioned reality of public bathing in the wider Mediterranean, as primary sources attest to.

5.4.2 **Enslaved Persons**

Ancient literature clearly affirms the presence of enslaved persons at the baths. Those who were wealthy enough to afford several enslaved people often had them attend

[541] Martial, *Ep.* 7:35.
[542] Ward, "Women in Roman Baths," 139.
[543] Ward, "Women in Roman Baths," 139.
[544] Ward, "Women in Roman Baths," 139.
[545] Ward, "Women in Roman Baths," 140. Commonly cited examples of double, or mirrored, baths, including Ferentum in Etruria, Gisacum in Gaul, Thamusida in Mauretania, and the Forum baths at Herculaneum, are all dated earlier than Hadrian, argues Ward, "Women in Roman Baths," 140. Eliav, *A Jew in the Roman Bathhouse*, 70: "Only a few of the thousands of structures that have been excavated throughout the Mediterranean basin give any indication of a double bathing arrangement that could accommodate the simultaneous but segregated use by men and women." Despite the existence of contradictory evidence, this thesis maintains that mixed bathing was the norm across the Mediterranean until the second century, and that mirrored baths were not widely used to segregate the genders at this time.

the baths, not only to assist them, but also as objects which clearly displayed their wealth and high status. Whilst the fifty slaves who attend the baths alongside their master in Marcellinus's *Histories* is clear satire, one or two enslaved workers may well have accompanied each bather.[546] When at the baths, enslavers employed their slaves in a number of roles. For example, some enslaved attendants watched over their master's belongings in the *apodyterium*, whilst others entered the baths with their enslaver to bathe, anoint, and massage them.[547] Enslavers also sexually used their slaves in the bathhouse setting, as they existed to fulfil their master's needs, whatever their nature. Both Martial and Juvenal note the sexual nature of relationships between mistresses and their male slaves at the baths, thus, both female and male slaves likely suffered similar exploitation.[548]

Enslaved bath attendants, those who were permanently stationed in the bathhouse, were used and abused in much the same way that household slaves were. Bath attendants were employed by the bathhouse to provide a wide range of services which bathers could buy. This provided access to bathers who sought services but could not afford to bring slaves to the baths. The roles of bath attendants varied significantly, with some skilled and others menial. Wissemann thoroughly surveys the range of roles of enslaved bath attendants, which he categorises into six different areas.[549] The largest of these categories, and the most relevant to my thesis, is that of "körperpfege" (body care).[550] The roles within this category include those who removed hair (*alipilus*), those who applied ointments (*unctores*) and massage therapists (*iatraliptae*).[551] Other menial tasks included the person

[546] Ammianus Marcellinus, *History* 28.4.8-9, translated by J. C. Rolfe, Loeb Classical Library 300 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1950), 141; Fagan, *Bathing in Public*, 200.
[547] Fagan, *Bathing in Public*, 201.
[548] Marital, *Ep.* 7:35; Juvenal, *Sat.* 6.419-425.
[549] Michael Wissemann, "Das Personal des antiken römischen Bades," *Glotta* 62 (1984): 80-89. Also see Eliav, *A Jew in the Roman Bathhouse*, 43-45 on bathhouse staff.
[550] Wissemann, "Das Personal," 81.
[551] Wissemann, "Das Personal," 86-88.

who collected the entrance fee (*capturarius*), and the slave tasked to guard the clothing (*capsarii*).[552] Enslaved bath attendants were also responsible for the maintenance and proper function of the hypocaust system, with the *fornacat* (furnace worker) held responsible for the proper heating of the water and air.[553] This role is not dissimilar to the lesser known *faber balneator* (bathhouse keeper) whose role covered the general maintenance of the baths.[554] While such roles seem to be clear-cut, there appears to be an element of crossover, especially in smaller bath establishments, where bath attendants were referred to by generic titles such as *baliscus* (towel bearer), *balneator* (bathhouse manager), and *lotor* (bathhouse attendant).[555]

The parameters of some bathhouse attendant's roles were arguably broader. Some relationships between bath attendants and bathers transgressed "sexual boundaries," as some enslaved women provided "sexual favors to guests."[556] Whilst Bond focuses on the sexual favours provided by female bath attendants, McGinn suggests that both male and female bath attendants were "used" by the opposite sex.[557] Due to the specification of my thesis, I will focus primarily on female bath attendants. Whilst these interactions are referred to as "favors," there is little to suggest any respect for, or consideration of, the bath workers autonomy and boundaries.[558] Enslavers viewed such women as objects to be used, "like luxury items" and "human accessories."[559] This lack of respect for enslaved

[552] Wissemann, "Das Personal," 84-85. See also Eliav, *A Jew in the Roman Bathhouse,* 99-100.
[553] Wissemann, "Das Personal," 84.
[554] Wissemann, "Das Personal," 84.
[555] Wissemann, "Das Personal," 83. See also Christer Bruun, "Lotores: Roman Bath-Attendants," *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 98, (1993): 222-228 for further discussion of the *lotores*.
[556] Sarah E. Bond, "'As Trainers for the Healthy': Massage Therapists, Anointers, and Healing in the Late Latin West," *JLA* 8 (2015): 386-404.
[557] Bond, "As Trainers for the Healthy," 393; Thomas McGinn, *The Economy of Prostitution,* 24. Whilst evidence suggests that attendants were "used" most frequently by the opposite sex, the aforementioned interaction between Trimalchio and the boy provides evidence that same sex "use" also occurred. Moreover, Martial's *Epigrams* further support the understanding that same-sex relations occurred within the baths - see 1.96 and 12.75.
[558] Bond, "As Trainers for the Healthy," 393.
[559] Bond, "As Trainers for the Healthy," 391.

bath workers, male and female alike, is seen in Petronius' *Satyricon* in which Trimalchio wipes his wet hands on a "boy's head," openly using him as an object.[560]

Despite the lack of autonomy enslaved female bath attendants had, they were ruinously viewed as tainted due to their association with "sexual deviance."[561] Bath work was viewed as taboo due to this transgression of sexual boundaries and more generally the bathhouse's association with sexuality and nudity.[562] Female bath attendants, even if they were not directly involved in sex work, were often smeared with the same stigma as sex workers, "*infamia*," associated with "consistent transgressions of sexual boundaries."[563] The overtly sexual atmosphere of the baths, and the sexualisation of bath attendants, is seen in art from public bath remains. In his exploration of Roman figural mosaics, Clarke highlights the overtly sexual portrayal of bath attendants in the Ostian baths.[564] Here, an attendant is depicted as having "stopped for a moment to greet the incoming spectator. It is clear from his stance and his directional erection that we are meant to follow him."[565] There are further examples of phalli serving as directional aides in the bathhouse, which suggests that "ithyphallic" figures of bath attendants are not uncommon. [566] From this we can deduce that real life sexualisation of bathhouse workers was prevalent. Fundamentally, enslaved bath workers suffered pressurised and exploitative working conditions, as well as inappropriate sexual encounters with bathers.

5.4.3 **Sex Workers**

[560] Petronius, *Sat.* 27.
[561] Bond, "As Trainers for the Healthy," 390.
[562] Bond, "As Trainers for the Healthy," 393.
[563] Bond, "As Trainers for the Healthy," 393.
[564] John R. Clarke, *Roman Black-and-White Figural Mosaics* (College Art Association, 1979), 25-26.
[565] Clarke, *Roman Black-and-White Figural Mosaics,* 26.
[566] See Clarke, *Roman Black-and-White Figural Mosaics,* 13.

Whilst most scholars regard the presence of sex workers at the baths as indisputable,[567] there is an ongoing debate as to whether sex took place in the bathhouse. Yet, from both archaeological and textual sources, it appears likely that sex did occur on the premises. Graffiti in Pompeii records the available sex workers at the establishment, and their price.[568] Further inscriptions record sex worker's services, most commonly fellatio.[569] Some scholars, including McGinn, argue that the presence of sex workers in the baths is unambiguous because of the commonality of brothels based in, or connected to, bathhouses.[570] The presence of some unidentified, empty, or near empty, rooms at bathhouses has also led scholars to argue for the presence of sex workers within the properties. McGinn draws upon literary evidence to argue for the permanent station of sex workers in the baths at Baiae, a popular and controversial seaside resort town in the Bay of Naples.[571] Ancient writings on Baiae speak of the overtly sexual atmosphere of the town, like Seneca who refers to Baiae as a "deversorium vitiorium" (place of vices).[572] McGinn views this term as synonymous with "brothel."[573]

Alongside being highly likely that sexual interactions between bath attendants and bathers took place within the building, archaeology further suggests that sex workers may have carried out their roles in the bath premises.[574] In the Aphrodite Sosandra baths in Baiae, "several small rooms" contain "permanent masonry beds that closely resemble those from the well-known Pompeii lupanar."[575] These rooms, as discussed, were likely

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[567] Bond, "As Trainers for the Healthy," 393; Fagan, *Bathing in Public*, 35; Claudine Dauphin, "Brothels, Baths and Babes Prostitution in the Byzantine Holy Land," *Classics Ireland* 3 (1996): 47-72; Eliav, "Bathhouses as Places," 606; Flemming, "Quae Corpore," 43; Yegül, "Development of Baths," 21.
[568] McGinn, *The Economy of Prostitution,* 295-302.
[569] McGinn, *The Economy of Prostitution,* 295-302.
[570] McGinn, *The Economy of Prostitution,* 26.
[571] McGinn, *The Economy of Prostitution,* 18.
[572] Seneca, *Epistles*, 51.3. See also Cicero, *Phil.* 2.104-105 for the use of the term "*libidinum deversorium*" (place of pleasures). Translated by D. R. Shackleton Bailey, revised by John T. Ramsey, Gesine Manuwald, Loeb Classical Library 18 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 157.
[573] McGinn, *The Economy of Prostitution,* 18.
[574] McGinn, *The Economy of Prostitution,* 24.
[575] Strong, "Well-washed Whores."

used for "sex work or massage or both," a further indication of the substantial crossover between work as a bath attendant and sex work.[576] Fagan goes as far to suggest that the upper level of the Suburban Baths at Pompeii served as a brothel.[577] His view is furthered by McGinn, who suggests the "quasi-independent residential quarters" which were accessible from both the baths and the street indicate that it was "'more likely' than not a brothel."[578] Moreover, archaeological remains reveal that brothels were situated near baths which lacked dedicated rooms for sex work.[579] Whilst the experience of sex work in baths across the Roman Empire is not uniform, it is clear that sex work occurred at some, if not most, public baths, and the heightened sexual atmosphere of the baths was simply accepted.[580] A further discussion of sexual activity between bathers, including free-born citizens, is to follow.

5.4.4 **The Most Elite – including Emperors**

People of all socioeconomic statuses, including the very poorest, attended the public baths. Perhaps surprisingly, there is evidence to suggest that the very highest in society also attended the public baths and mingled with the populace. The presence of elite men at the baths is well attested to in both fictional and non-fictional writings. Notably, Pliny, a significant public figure and senator, mentioned nonchalantly in his letters that if his own private baths are unusable the nearby village had "no less than three *balnea meritoria*" of which he would utilise.[581] Pliny's comfort at visiting a public bath, which

[576] Strong, "Well-washed Whores." The categorising of these rooms in such a way is not unique. See McGinn, *The Economy of Prostitution,* 212.
[577] Fagan, *Bathing in Public*, 36.
[578] McGinn, *The Economy of Prostitution,* 211.
[579] Fagan, *Bathing in Public*, 36.
[580] Eliav, *A Jew in the Bathhouse*, 70.
[581] Garrett G. Fagan, "Socializing at the Baths," in *The Oxford Handbook of Social Relations in the Roman World,* ed. Michael Peachin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 358-373.

was likely attended by the local community, indicates that for the elite this was not abnormal.

There is reason to speculate that the highest echelon of society, including the Emperor, bathed in public baths alongside the people. In the *Historia Augusta* 1, Hadrian is said to have "often bathed in the public baths, even with the common crowd."[582] An interaction between Hadrian and an elderly man, in which he gifted the man with the services of slaves to "get a rubdown" because he could not afford them himself, became "famous."[583] This text presents Hadrian as being in and amongst the masses, very much voluntarily as he "loudly expressed his love for the common people."[584] Whilst the authenticity of the text is impossible to classify, and a degree of imaginative freedom was almost certainly used by the author, the text is illuminating. This holds particularly true when viewed in the context of other Emperors' potential visits to the public baths. Emperors Titus, Caracalla, and Severus Alexander are also said to have visited public baths, however, the context of these visits is significant.[585] Whilst Hadrian is presented as visiting the baths on multiple occasions, driven by his love of the people, this honest motivation is not necessarily shared by the aforementioned Emperors. Suetonius notes that Titus "sometimes bathed in the baths which he had built, in company with the common people," as to "not to omit any act of condescension."[586] Fagan, who translates his motivation as "so as not to pass up any opportunity of courting popular favor," stresses Titus' self-motivated reason for visiting the baths.[587] Whilst there is doubt concerning the legitimacy of the *Historia Augusta* as a source, "there is no reason to believe that all

[582] Historia Augusta, *1. Hadrian*, 1.17. Translated by David Magie, revised by David Rohrbacher, Loeb Classical Library 139 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2022), 49-51.
[583] Historia Augusta, *1. Hadrian*, 1.17.
[584] Historia Augusta, *1. Hadrian*, 1.17.
[585] Fagan, *Bathing in Public*, 190.
[586] Suetonius, *Titus,* 8.2. Translated by J. C. Rolfe, Loeb Classical Library 38 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1914), 317.
[587] Fagan, *Bathing in Public*, 190.

vignettes of Emperors at public baths are complete fiction."[588] Certainly, Emperors used private baths for the vast majority of their time, yet they may have utilised the public baths, and the people within, "to foster public goodwill."[589]

5.5 Why Bathe?

Roman public baths were prominent and beloved aspects of Roman culture, the popularity of which rose to new heights during the latter half of the first century C.E.[590] Individual's motivations to bathe may have varied significantly, however we can deduce some central and shared motivations from existing literature and archaeology. The primary reasons that people attended the baths were to socialise, experience pleasure, and for health.

5.5.1 **Social Engagement**

Perhaps the most well attested appeal of the Roman baths was to socialise. As aforementioned, the baths were visited by all people across the social strata, thus, they provided a rare chance for people to mix with those outside of their own social position. Yet, most social interaction took place amongst peers. For the wealthy males who regularly attended the baths, social engagement was arguably their central motivation for attendance. It is frequently affirmed that such men attended the baths at the same time each day, at mid-afternoon after the workday and before dinner.[591] Attendance of the baths by such elite men was partly connected to dining, a further social affair. Bathing provided an

[588] Fagan, *Bathing in Public*, 191.
[589] Fagan, *Bathing in Public*, 192.
[590] Fagan, *Three Studies*, 142.
[591] Fagan, *Bathing in Public*, 366; Inge Nielsen, *Thermae et Balnea: The Architecture and Cultural History of Roman Public Baths 1* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1993), 135-138; Eliav, "Bathhouses as Places," 606.

opportunity to mix with like-minded men, make connections and establish a relationship, before extending invitations to dine that evening. This well attested custom was so well-known, and perhaps cumbersome, that it gave rise to large amounts of satiric writings.[592] Perhaps the most famous bathhouse satire is Petronius' *Satyricon*, which lampoons Trimalchio, a freedman who awkwardly navigates social interactions at the baths, and then at a similarly satirised dinner party. Further satires bring attention to elite men's performative social engagement at the baths to emphasise their status and wealth. Marcellinus mocks the elite who bought countless attendants to the baths, who served to "shield them from the less elevated" and highlight their wealth.[593] Ultimately, whilst the male elite attended the baths to socialise, these social interactions served an ulterior motive of performance and display.

The *Satyricon*, alongside many other works, brings to the fore the social performance male elites underwent at the baths, and the cognizant nature of their actions. Moreover, Martial's *Epigrams* provides valuable insight into many aspects of the Roman baths, including the prevalence of observation. Throughout his work, Martial observes, and scrutinises, a range of female and male bathers.[594] His scrutiny often concerns one's physicality, an observation that also was directed inwards at times. In social interactions at the baths, particularly among men, one's physical appearance was intentional, and even verged on being contrived. The pervasiveness of physiognomy dictated male behaviour, and at the baths men faced a "minefield of behavioural norms."[595] Aspects of physical character which were deemed feminine, and so avoided by men, were easily visible in the nude setting of the baths, thus making it a tense and pressurised environment. Moreover,

[592] Fagan, "Socializing at the Baths," 366.
[593] Foxhall, *Studying Gender,* 134.
[594] Martial discussing the male form: *Ep.* 7.82, 9.33, 11.63, 12.83. Martial discussing the female form: *Ep.* 2:52, 3.51, 6:93.
[595] Laurence, *Roman Passions,* 70.

bather's actions were easily viewed and analysed by others, due to the exposed nature of bathing. Ones engagement in hair plucking and massage, for example, was closely monitored by others and hence the observed were left in a "no win situation."[596] Whilst the baths were arguably the hub for social interaction between elite men, this social interaction was fraught with complex social codes, and intense scrutiny of one another whilst at their most exposed.

5.5.2 **For Pleasure**

The baths were luxurious places to attend, particularly for the poorest, as clean, hot water was accessible like nowhere else.[597] Other aspects of the baths were also considered pleasurable, such as the company of nude men and women in a semi-private setting, sex workers situated within or nearby the baths, and the abundance of food and drinks stalls. The atmosphere of the baths is widely regarded as "highly sexualized," a place in which pleasure was prioritised.[598] These pleasures have been long linked: a famous Roman epitaph celebrates "baths, sex and wine" as essential factors to "make life worth living."[599] The presence of sex at the baths was well-known, thus some particularly hedonistic baths gained a poor reputation.[600] It is generally agreed that both paid for, and free sex took place

[596] Laurence, *Roman Passions,* 70. See also Ovid, *Ars.* 1.500-524 which discusses the fashionable male look.
[597] Some scholars suggest that the baths were not clean places, but rather smelly, disease infested ones. Ann Olga Koloski-Ostrow, "Roman Urban Smells: The Archaeological Evidence" in *Smell and the Ancient Senses*, ed. Mark Bradley (New York: Routledge, 2015), 90-109 suggests that bathers would likely be sat next to someone with "open wounds, lesions, lice, gangrene, worms, diarrhea, gonorrhea, tuberculosis or worse" whilst bathing in public baths.
[598] McGinn, *The Economy of Prostitution,* 210. See also Eliav, "Bathhouses as Places," 606. Eliav, *A Jew in the Roman Bathhouse,* 70 calls the baths "an erotically charged environment."
[599] *CIL* 6, 15258. Translation by Yaron Z. Eliav, "The Roman Bath as a Jewish Institution: Another Look at the Cultural Interaction Between Judaism and the Greco-Roman Culture," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 31 (2000): 416-454.
[600] The most obvious example of such is the resort town of Baiae. The hot springs attracted wealthy visitors from across Italy, with some visiting to improve their health for example (Laurence, *Roman Passions,* 73). However, the town's reputation became dominated by the party atmosphere, leading Cicero to denounce it, among others (see Cicero, *Pro Caelio*, 35, translated by R. Gardner, Loeb Classical Library 447 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958), 451). Seneca also described Baiae as a place of "vice" (*Epistles* 51.4.3).

at some, if not most, public bathhouses. Graffiti clearly attests to the engagement of sex at the baths in Herculaneum but does not state that it was paid for: "Apelles, the bedroom attendant, with Dexter, (slave) of Caesar, ate lunch here most agreeably and also had sex."[601] Sex appears to be at the forefront of Martial's mind in the baths also, as he commonly raises the topic in his discussions of women at the baths. He speaks of sex between female master and male slave, sexual tension between a free woman and himself, and the unusualness of a free male bather who avoids female bathers because he *doesn't* want to "fornicate."[602]

The near privacy of the baths was utilised by many to engage in sexual liaisons, including young lovers. Ovid discusses the use of the baths as a meeting place for lovers, but not necessarily a place to engage in sex.[603] Graffiti found in the Herculaneum baths also attests to the meeting of lovers, as Hermeros directs his lover Primigenia to Puteoli to meet, after he missed her at the baths.[604] Ulpian suggests that adultery took place in the baths, as he notes their immoral and depraved licentious atmosphere.[605] As aforementioned, sexual interactions between master and the enslaved also took place at the baths, as well as between enslaved bath attendant and bather.

Literature clearly ratifies the presence of sex workers at the baths, which archaeological evidence also supports. Marcellinus satirises the reactions of male bathers to an "unknown courtesan" at the baths.[606] He pointedly portrays them as striving to "be the first to reach" the "common prostitute," as they flatter her with exaggeration.[607] The lustful reactions of the men in this satire show the common desire for sex in the bathhouse

[601] Erotic Graffito, "The Ancient Graffiti Project," http://ancientgraffiti.org/Graffiti/graffito/AGP-EDR154185.
[602] Martial, *Ep.* 7:35, 7:32, 11:47.
[603] Ovid, *Ars.* 3.638-40.
[604] Graffito Giving Directions, "The Ancient Graffiti Project," http://ancientgraffiti.org/Graffiti/graffito/AGP-EDR102191.
[605] Ulpian, *Dig.* 48.5.10.1.
[606] Marcellinus, *History*, 28.4.9.
[607] Marcellinus, *History*, 28.4.9.

setting; it is not veiled or shameful but rather a common and accepted reality. The source also attests to the presence of sex workers at the baths, and perhaps insinuates that each bathhouse had its regular sex workers, as the woman is noted as being "unknown" and therefore intriguing.[608] Graffiti from Herculaneum also details the cost of sex at the baths, which points to the presence of sex, and sex work, in the bathhouse. The graffito, found on the walls of a small room at the Herculaneum baths and represented in figure 2, says "Two friends were here, and they had a servant named Epaphroditus who was terrible at everything for the whole time, so they finally kicked him out. (Then?) they spent 105 1/2 sestertii most delightfully when they had sex."[609] Fagan suggests that the money was "not by any means an inconsiderable sum."[610] This graffito is invaluable evidence which points to not only the presence of sex workers at the baths, but also the rates charged of customers. Both examples of graffiti at Herculaneum discussed here were found in a small adjoining room at the baths, likely a room used for sex, a "bath-based brothel."[611] The recurrence of such rooms further affirms the accepted and widespread presence of sex workers, their facilities, and most importantly, the execution of their services at the baths.

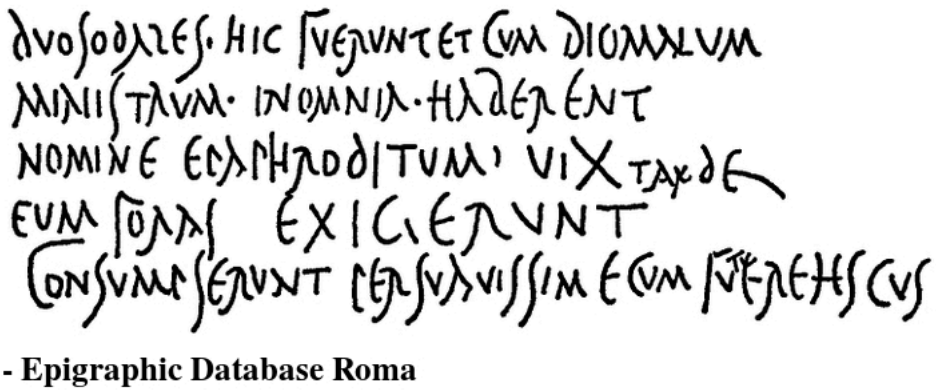


Figure 2: Graffito about Leisure, "The Ancient Graffiti Project," http://ancientgraffiti.org/Graffiti/graffito/AGP-EDR154179.

[608] Marcellinus, *History*, 28.4.9.
[609] Graffito about Leisure, "The Ancient Graffiti Project," http://ancientgraffiti.org/Graffiti/graffito/AGP-EDR154179.
[610] Fagan, *Bathing in Public*, 35.
[611] Fagan, "Socializing at the Baths," 366.

Abundant examples of bathhouse commensality are found in both literary and archaeological evidence. Seneca's soundscape, which details his experience of living above a Roman bath, is invaluable evidence for our comprehension of the baths.[612] In his description, Seneca frequently refers to the consumption of food and drink by bathers.[613] He describes the calls of the "cake-seller," "the sausageman, the confectioner" as well as "all the vendors of food."[614] The variety of foods for sale in Seneca's description suggests that eating at the baths was much enjoyed, and part and parcel of the bathing experience. The graffito of Dexter and Apelles mentions that they "ate lunch here," again showing the commonality of commensality at the baths.[615] Archaeological remains have also pointed to the presence of eating at, and in, the baths. Henderson has advocated for a new approach to explore the functionality of rooms within Roman baths: a close exploration of "artefact assemblage."[616] In Hammat Gader, the "presence of cooking pots, bowls and a spoon" in a room previously believed to be a *frigidarium* suggests that the room had "more than one function."[617] Further cooking and eating utensils, as well as coins, were found in other rooms at the Hammat Gader baths, which indicates that cooking and eating may have taken place in multiple rooms within the bathhouse.[618] Commensality at the baths brings to the fore the distinctive nature of ancient bathing culture, as eating and bathing, unlike in modern thought, were viewed as complementary.

The consumption of alcohol may have also been part of the bathing experience, at least for those who could afford it. As the famous epitaph suggests, bathing and sex are

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[612] Seneca, *Epistles,* 56.
[613] Seneca, *Epistles,* 56.
[614] Seneca, *Epistles,* 56.2.
[615] Erotic Graffito, "The Ancient Graffiti Project," http://ancientgraffiti.org/Graffiti/graffito/AGP-EDR154185.
[616] Tanya Henderson, "Roman Baths: An Alternate Mode of Viewing the Evidence," *Past Imperfect* 13 (2007): 3-23.
[617] Henderson, "Roman Baths," 17.
[618] Henderson, "Roman Baths," 23.

connected to the consumption of wine.[619] Drinking at the baths is discussed by writers significantly less than both eating and sexual encounters, perhaps suggesting that it was not looked upon kindly by fellow bathers.[620] Both Seneca and Pliny criticise those who drank at the baths, respectively noting their ignorant consumption of alcohol without food and their need to be carried out the baths unconscious.[621] Whilst these sources speak of those who have consumed too much alcohol, it is unlikely that many bathers would have found themselves in this situation.[622] Bathers may well have consumed moderate amounts of alcohol, if they were able to afford to do so.

5.5.3 **For Health**

Whilst the aforementioned epitaph views the baths alongside wine and sex as having an aging effect over the years, several prominent physicians viewed the baths in terms of both preventative and curative medicine.[623] Bathing was viewed by Celsus primarily as a preventative medicine, which he commonly prescribed alongside dietary restrictions.[624] Contrastingly, Pliny the Elder viewed bathing as more a remedial medicine, which he often prescribed alongside other drugs, yet both recommended bathing for a wide variety of ills.[625] Bathing was a popular medicine because of its accessibility. Such health recommendations are easily fulfilled not just by the elite and wealthy, but also the impoverished, the "real people" who also needed medical attention.[626]

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[619] *CIL* 6, 15258. Translation by Eliav, "The Roman Bath," 421.
[620] Fagan, *Bathing in Public*, 32.
[621] Seneca, *Epistles,* 122.6; Pliny, *Nat.* 14.139-140.
[622] Fagan, *Bathing in Public*, 32.
[623] *CIL* 6, 15258. Translation by Eliav, "The Roman Bath," 421.
[624] Garrett G. Fagan, "Bathing for Health with Celsus and Pliny the Elder," *The Classical Quarterly* 56 (2006): 190-207.
[625] Fagan, "Bathing for Health," 195. See also Pliny, *Nat.* 31.32 for the medicinal benefits of bathing in hot springs.
[626] Fagan, "Bathing for Health," 204.

The attentiveness to health in bathing culture was not limited to one's submersion in water, physicians also viewed the *palaestra* in terms of health. The focus on exercise as a healthy introduction to bathing appears to "have its roots in the recommendations of Greek medicine."[627] Exercise in the *palaestra* was part of the bathing routine for many, as they would engage in physical activity before they entered the bathrooms. The undertaken exercise was much more accessible than that practiced in the Greek *gymnasium*. Whilst we can assume that the *palaestra* was mostly dominated by men, Juvenal references women who exercised alongside men.[628] Seneca's soundscape also refers to exercise, in which he mentions the lifting of weights, the huffing of breath: the sounds of "working hard," or potentially pretending "to be working hard" in the *palaestra.*[629] Here, Seneca indicates that one's self-awareness was present in the baths and *palaestra* alike.

5.6 Were the Baths Egalitarian?

Scholarship has long proclaimed the egalitarian atmosphere of the bathhouse, yet there has been a recent shift in dialogue. Whilst Dyson suggested that due to the "bathing process, social distinctions and hierarchies were bound to break down" and Stambaugh simply called them "social levellers," ancient sources perhaps suggest a more complex picture.[630] There was "no shortage of ways to declare rank" at the baths, despite the bather's arguable lack of clothing and accessories.[631] As aforementioned, the wealthy displayed their status openly through their retinue of slaves. Enslaved persons who entered

[627] Yegül, "Development of Baths," 17.
[628] Juvenal, *Sat.* 6.419-425.
[629] Seneca, *Epistles,* 56.
[630] Stephen L. Dyson, *Community and Society in Roman Italy* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkin's University Press, 1992), 174; John E. Stambaugh, *The Ancient Roman City* (Baltimore: The John Hopkin's University Press, 1988), 205. Fikret K. Yegül, *Bathing in the Roman World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 37 calls this idea of "classlessness" an "illusion."
[631] Fagan, "Socializing at the Baths," 368.

the baths alongside their master, instead of waiting in the vestibule, were potentially the strongest symbol of wealth and status, due to the enslavers potential need to pay their entrance fees. Such slaves, simply there to represent their master's wealth, were viewed as akin to objects as they "served as human accessories" in an atmosphere where actual accessories were perhaps unsuitable.[632] Whilst this use of enslaved persons is well documented, its use in satire potentially suggests a lack of respect from fellow bathers.

Alongside their slave attendants, the wealthy could assert their status through their "bath attire."[633] The use of "multiple changes of clothing and jewellery" visibly differentiated the wealthy from the impoverished.[634] In Petronius' *Satyricon*, Trimalchio is separated from his peers through his costly oil and towels: "Trimalchio, already doused with perfumed oil, was now being rubbed down, not with linen but with the softest woollen towels."[635] Trimalchio's wealth allows him access to perfumed oil and "the softest" towels, unlike the less fortunate bathers who simply used what was provided for them.[636] Moreover, women may have shown their moral and capital superiority over the less wealthy women through the maintenance of their "modesty," despite being nude, through their "behaviour, gestures and body movements."[637]

A further indication of a bather's status was the time of day they were able to bathe. The eighth hour, believed to fall around midday, was considered the optimal time for bathing.[638] At this time elite men frequented the baths, to socialise and relax before their evening meal. Martial mentions the eighth hour several times, as he considered the baths to be at their ideal temperature at this time.[639] Whilst the elite's workdays were largely

[632] Bond, "As Trainers for the Healthy," 391.
[633] Foxhall, *Studying Gender,* 134.
[634] Fagan, *Bathing in Public*, 369.
[635] Petronius, *Sat.* 28.
[636] Petronius, *Sat.* 28.
[637] Foxhall, *Studying Gender,* 134.
[638] Fagan, *Bathing in Public*, 185. The exact time of the "eighth hour" depended on the season.
[639] Martial, *Ep.* 10.48, 4.8, 11.52.

planned around their social escapades of bathing and dining, the poor, enslaved, and working populace were not so fortunate. For rural people, a visit to the baths was even more difficult, potentially only accessible on "special occasions."[640] An enslaved person's role hugely impacted their opportunity to bathe in public baths, but the venture proved difficult for all due to their restricted mobility. Whilst slaves who attended the baths with their enslavers may have had an opportunity to bathe at the same time, this was less likely for those who were not employed in the baths.[641] Although slaves may have visited the baths as customers, the probability of this would have depended on their role and subsequent freedom, with "the *paedegogus*" and the "personal valet" more likely to than "menial laborers."[642] Whilst the baths were theoretically open to all, the entrance fee would have further limited some clientele. Those who did enter the baths did not leave their status at the door and enter an atmosphere of equality and goodwill, rather existing roles were retained in the bathhouse, whether intentionally or not.

5.7 Concerns Surrounding the Baths

5.7.1 **Jewish Concerns**

Despite the bath's centrality in Roman culture, their presence did not come without criticism. Particularly for the Jewish community as there were concerns over their acceptability in relation to Jewish law. Some Rabbinical literature denounced Jewish

[640] Fagan, *Bathing in Public*, 198; Yegül, *Bathing in the Roman World,* 36.
[641] Yegül, *Bathing in the Roman World,* 35-36.
[642] Fagan, *Bathing in Public*, 200.

attendance of the baths, whilst others appear to view it as acceptable.[643] The richly decorated nature of the baths proved controversial for Jewish bathers, as the abundance of statues of both gods and Emperors provoked questions of idolatry.[644] Despite the statues primarily serving a decorative role, some sources still considered these depictions to be "religious" in nature, and the bath's inherent atmosphere as one of "abundant spirituality."[645] The religious figures at the baths, whilst not being worshipped as such, were still "ceremonially" observed.[646] Curative figures such as Asclepius patronised the baths, which further established the religious nature of the bathing experience.[647] However, the Mishnaic dialogue concerning idolatry in the baths is more complex than a complete rejection. Despite what we would now call the "religious" overtones that pervaded the entire Roman culture, "numerous literary and epigraphic references" deem the bathhouse a "totally secular, a non-consecrated establishment."[648] Whilst the debate is extensive, it appears as though the bathhouse's possible links to idolatry did not prevent Jewish people's attendance.[649]

Sabbath *halahkah* was also viewed as being at odds with the bathhouse. Two areas were of particular concern: "washing the body with water and heating the water (and the entire establishment) with burning fire."[650] Such issues resulted in extensive dialogue.[651] Rabbinic law was clear in relation to the maintenance of fire, as Eliav claims "the Hebrew

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[643] Sources are contradictory and complex. Those which raise concerns about the bathhouse include Mishnah Makhshirin 2:5 (heating water on Shabbat), Mishnah Avodah Zara 1:7 (idolatry), Mishnah Megillah 3:2 (meeting whilst naked), and Mishnah Niddah 9:3 (impurity likely in a space shared by nude women and men). On the other hand, some Rabbinical sources seem to either excuse these concerns, or raise no issues concerning the use of bathhouses. For example, Mishnah Avodah Zara 3:4 appears to claim that the statues of gods in the bathhouses lack ritualistic context and so do not count as idolatry.
[644] Eliav, "The Roman Bath," 431.
[645] Eliav, "The Roman Bath," 431.
[646] Eliav, "The Roman Bath," 432.
[647] Eliav, "The Roman Bath," 432.
[648] Eliav, "Bathhouses as Places," 612. See also Nielsen, *Thermae et Balnea,* 146 "the bathhouses were always secular."
[649] Eliav, *A Jew in the Roman Bathhouse,* 66.
[650] Eliav, *A Jew in the Roman Bathhouse,* 60.
[651] Eliav, "Bathhouses as Places," 610.

Bible is very clear on certain prohibitions. You cannot make a fire on the Sabbath."[652] Less clear, however, is whether washing one's body on the Sabbath was permissible, as all discussions of this nature are absent from the Bible and Rabbinical writings.[653] Despite the apparent clear-cut nature of rulings on the use of fire, later texts, including Yerushalmi Shabbat 3, offer a more "lenient position, allowing bathing on the Sabbath under certain circumstances."[654] Whether Jews adhered to the more stringent, or more lenient, restrictions is impossible to know, however it is clear that Rabbi's held a variety of viewpoints.

The occurrence of Jewish ritual bathing in Roman public baths is a further area of discussion.[655] Miqva'ot, (singular mikveh),[656] Jewish ritual immersion baths, were deep, stepped immersion baths used for purification.[657] Whilst Miqva'ot have been long used as a sign of the "ethnic/religious identity of the settlement," remains from public bathhouses have been excavated across the Mediterranean.[658] A crucial question about the relationship between Miqva'ot and Roman public baths is whether cold water immersion pools, often found in the *frigidarium*, were considered valid under Jewish *halahkah.*[659] Eliav argues that ritual purification was valid in cold water pools found in public bathhouses, provided

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[652] Eliav, *A Jew in the Roman Bathhouse,* 60-61. For discourse on the use of the baths on the Sabbath, see Mishnah Makhshirin 2:5; Tosefta Shabbat 17:18.
[653] Eliav, *A Jew in the Roman Bathhouse,* 60-61: only one "post-Biblical source refers to washing," and it appears to suggest that "washing the body was actually permitted on the holy day."
[654] Eliav, *A Jew in the Roman Bathhouse,* 60-61.
[655] For in-depth exploration of Jewish Ritual Immersion Pools in the Galilean Late Second Temple Period, see Joseph Scales, "Religious Identity and Spatiality in Hasmonean and Herodian Galilee" (PhD diss., The University of Birmingham, 2020), 73-146.
[656] There is contention over the use of the term Miqva'ot here, with some opting to call ritual baths "stepped immersion pools."
[657] Ronny Reich, "The Hot Bath-House (balneum), the Miqweh and the Jewish Community in the Second Temple Period," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 39 (1988): 102-107. The mikveh had to meet a number of specific requirements to be considered valid. The water must be "undrawn," therefore it would be "cold, standing and even stale," a stark contrast to the hot water of the Roman public baths (Reich, "The Hot Bath-House," 104).
[658] Joseph Scales, "Bathing Jewish, Bathing Greek: Developing an Approach to De-Categorising Hellenism and Judaism," *PEQ* 154 (2022): 1-14. See also Asher Grossberg, "A Mikveh in the Bathhouse," *Cathedra: For the History of Eretz Israel and Its Yishuv* 99 (2001): 171-184.
[659] Shemesh, "He Who Enters the Bathhouse," 226.

that certain requirements were met.[660] Conversely, Reich, who derives his view from the Babylonian Talmud *Shabbat* 13b-14a, suggests that those who bathed in the public baths were only considered pure if they immersed themselves into a valid Mikveh after.[661] This suggests a lasting hierarchy in which valid Miqva'ot were prioritised over public bathhouses.

The evolution of the common public bathhouse suggests that they were regularly attended by Jews, however. The *frigidarium* typical of Roman *balnea* critically differs from those found across the Near East. The classic *frigidarium,* which consisted of a "rather shallow cold water basin," evolved into the archetypal "comparatively deep stepped water installation."[662] These likely served as Miqva'ot, as their "layout, arrangement of stairs, type of plaster, etc.," were identical to the known Miqva'ot in the area.[663] Reich points to the "stepped water installations" in bathhouses of the Second Temple Hasmonean and Herodian palaces as classic Miqva'ot.[664] Therefore, whilst the cold-water pools found in Roman *frigidaria* may have been used as Miqva'ot, over time these pools were adapted into stepped pools to be used unquestionably for ritual purification.

5.7.2 **Dangers at the Baths**

The baths, despite their attractions, also posed many dangers. These risks presented themselves in several forms, including interpersonal dangers. A frequently mentioned hazard for bathers was that of theft, particularly of their clothes from the *apodyterium*. The

[660] Eliav, "Bathhouses as Places," 611. See also Tosefta Miqvaot 6.4.
[661] Reich, "The Hot Bath-House," 105.
[662] Reich, "The Hot Bath-House," 106; Hayah Katz, "'He Shall Bathe in Water; then He Shall Be Pure': Ancient Immersion Practice in the Light of Archaeological Evidence," *Vetus Testamentum* 62 (2012), 369-380.
[663] Reich, "The Hot Bath-House," 106.
[664] Reich, "The Hot Bath-House," 106.

problem was widespread, and it affected those who left their clothes unattended most pointedly.[665] Whilst Martial inadvertently referenced the phenomenon in his epigram about a "one-eyed old woman" who sat watching Aper's clothes, the most convincing evidence of the occurrence comes from "curse tablets."[666] These tablets, written by the victims of theft, often called for divine retribution.[667] One example asks for the gods to prevent the offender from sleeping or eating unless he "reveals himself and brings those goods to your temple."[668] Other writers refer to this common practice, like Seneca who mentions the "arresting" of a "pickpocket" in his soundscape.[669] Ulpian dedicates a small section of *Digest* to "thieves in the bathroom" in which he calls attention to the common phenomena.[670]

Arguably, the rise of this ever-present crime resulted in the popularity of the *capsarii*, the enslaved bath worker tasked to guard clothing.[671] Individuals enslaved within a household carried out this role, alongside enslaved bathhouse workers whose services bathers were able to purchase. Bathers also stored their belongings in a "lockable box until one returned from the baths."[672] These lockers, as found in Pompeii and Herculaneum, were typically used in conjunction with an enslaved person's service.[673] Du Plessis argues that, whilst the use of a slave standing guard provided obvious protection of one's belongings, it also provided legal protection of the bather should their items go missing.[674] As suggested, those who could not afford to own, or hire, slaves had to leave their clothing

[665] "An endemic problem" - Fagan, *Bathing in Public*, 37; "An ever-present concern" - Paul Du Plessis, "Trouble at the Baths," *RIDROM* (2021): 308-333.
[666] Martial, *Ep.* 12.70.2; Fagan, *Bathing in Public*, 37.
[667] Fagan, *Bathing in Public*, 37.
[668] Fagan, *Bathing in Public*, 37.
[669] Seneca, *Epistles*, 56.2.
[670] Ulpian, *Dig.* 47.17.
[671] Wissemann, "Das Personal," 85.
[672] Du Plessis, "Trouble," 330.
[673] Du Plessis, "Trouble," 320.
[674] Du Plessis, "Trouble," 330-331.

unprotected, likely on pegs rather than in lockers.[675] It is reasonable to suggest, therefore, that it was the most impoverished bathers who were most likely to be victims of theft at the baths. Whether they had anything valuable to steal is another question.

Interpersonal violence was also a perpetual threat at the baths, particularly at those most crowded. Seneca reveals the commonality of violence in the baths through the experience of Cato, a man who is punched unprovoked.[676] The assailant apologised to Cato to which Cato replied, "I do not remember being struck," as to "ignore the insult than avenge it."[677] This bizarre interaction between a well-known Senator and an unknown aggressor shows the normalcy of violence at the baths, which both the highest and lowest in society were subjected to. Pliny further highlights the volatility of the bathhouse atmosphere. He recalled an event in the baths when "one of Macedo's slaves lightly touched a Roman knight to ask him to let them pass," which led the knight to turn and land a "violent slap" on Macedo, so violent that it "nearly knocked him down."[678] The speed at which an interaction became violent is shocking, an indication of the extreme tension in a place of relaxation. Fagan suggests that congestion and overcrowding spurred these violent encounters and general heightened tensions.[679]

Whilst the bathhouse is understood in the mainstream consciousness as a place of relaxation, pleasure, and luxury, the bathhouse buildings were notoriously replete with dangers. An invaluable source which demonstrates the nature and extent of these dangers is the "He Who Enters the Bathhouse Utters Two Blessings" prayer. The ancient Jewish prayer first appears in the Mishna era and is reformulated into several versions which are found in the Tosefta, Tractate Kala Rabati, Tracate Derech Eretz, Jerusalem Talmud, and

[675] Du Plessis, "Trouble," 320.
[676] Seneca, *Dial.* 2.32.
[677] Seneca, *Dial.* 2.32.
[678] Pliny, *Epistles*, 3.14.6-8.
[679] Fagan, *Bathing in Public*, 31.

the Babylonian Talmud.[680] Most versions contain, as the title would suggest, two prayers: one to be said prior to entrance and one to be said as one leaves the bathhouse.[681] The first prayer consists of a plea for "mercy, asking that the bather not be harmed while at the bathhouse."[682] This prayer also contains a confessionary element, which allowed the bather to atone in case of a sudden death whilst bathing.[683] The latter prayer is a prayer of thanksgiving for the bather's safety, which also asks for "future deliverance from other grave harms" in daily life.[684] The Jerusalem Talmud prayer briefly describes some dangers which the bather requires protection from: "being burned in fire, damaged by hot water or from collapse."[685] The endurance of this prayer highlights the continual presence of dangers the bathers faced in the bathhouse.

As mentioned in the Jerusalem Talmud prayer, bathers faced the threat of burning.[686] Shemesh suggests that because "burning" is mentioned first among the dangers, it likely occurred most often.[687] The obvious interpretation of this danger is one's exposure to fire or extreme heat, fuelled by the fierce fires of the hypocaust system. The most probable cause of a bather being burnt was the uncontrolled spreading of the furnace fire.[688] The "large amounts of flammable materials" kept in the bathhouse, such as wood, easily fuelled fires.[689] Moreover, the life-threatening danger of floor collapse also exposed bathers to fire. Eliav deems the collapsing of the floor as common, and suggests that a person who came to the baths to relax may find themselves "falling into the searing

[680] Shemesh, "He Who Enters the Bathhouse," 226-228.
[681] Shemesh, "He Who Enters the Bathhouse," 226. See also Sarit Kattan Gribetz, "'Lead Me Forth in Peace': The Origins of the Wayfarer's Prayer and Rabbinic Rituals of Travel in the Roman World," in *Journeys in the Roman East: Imagined and Real,* ed. Maren Niehoff (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 297-328.
[682] Shemesh, "He Who Enters the Bathhouse," 226.
[683] Shemesh, "He Who Enters the Bathhouse," 226.
[684] Shemesh, "He Who Enters the Bathhouse," 227.
[685] Jerusalem Talmud Berakhot 9:4.
[686] Jerusalem Talmud Berakhot 9:4.
[687] Shemesh, "He Who Enters the Bathhouse," 236.
[688] Shemesh, "He Who Enters the Bathhouse," 236.
[689] Shemesh, "He Who Enters the Bathhouse," 236.

vacuums underneath the floors."[690] The breakdown of the pillars which supported the bathhouse floor was caused by several factors, including overcrowding, humidity, and extreme temperatures.[691] Eliav suggests that these factors, combined with "inefficient building practices," caused "frequent" floor collapse.[692] As aforementioned, congestion at the baths also led to increased tensions, causing outbreaks of violence from lack of personal space. The accessibility of the baths may have further led to their busyness.

Bathers were also susceptible to slipping on slick floors. Understandably, the bathhouse floors were wet, but they were also oily from the unguents used in massage. Such oil was likely scraped, using the *strigil*, "onto the floor and the walls."[693] The baths also posed further health hazards, most notably from intense heat of the bathhouse. Bathers were susceptible to bouts of fainting and dehydration, as the baths sometimes reached dangerously high temperatures.[694] The heat achieved in the *caldarium* and the *sudatorium* was viewed as hazardous if one did not bathe in the proper way.[695] There are recommendations as to how to bathe correctly in many writings, with some clearly contradicting one another. Jewish sources suggest attending the baths in the morning, sitting on the floor instead of standing, hydrating after bathing, and to avoid physically demanding activities after bathing.[696] Whilst other sources suggest that to sit in the baths was inappropriate, it appears as though, if motivated by health reasons, it was acceptable.[697] The avoidance of fainting was also tantamount due to the presence of deeper pools in the baths, which posed the risk of drowning.[698] Overall, the baths posed several

[690] Eliav, "Bathhouses as Places," 618.
[691] Eliav, *A Jew in the Roman Bathhouse,* 109.
[692] Eliav, "Bathhouses as Places," 618.
[693] Fagan, *Bathing in Public*, 187.
[694] Shemesh, "He Who Enters the Bathhouse," 235.
[695] Shemesh, "He Who Enters the Bathhouse," 230.
[696] Shemesh, "He Who Enters the Bathhouse," 230. See Tractate Kala Rabati 9:11; Bava Batra 67b; Talmud Shabbat 9b.
[697] Shemesh, "He Who Enters the Bathhouse," 235.
[698] Shemesh, "He Who Enters the Bathhouse," 232.

dangers of varying degrees, and death at the baths was not unheard of. Bathers had to put their lives in the hands of the gods to avoid a sudden and potentially violent end.

5.8 Conclusion

The baths were an eminent and distinctive feature of the Roman Empire, with their popularity attested to in abundant ancient writings. Bathers appear to have luxuriated in the, at times extensive, bathing routine, with the most thorough of treatments reserved for the wealthy. Oil played a large role in all bathers routines. The most costly perfumed oil, however, was a speciality reserved for the rich. Enslaved bath attendants and sex workers contributed to the routine of many bathers, as they provided massages and anointings as well as more intimate treatments. These slaves, most significantly women, likely suffered under the overtly sexual atmosphere of the baths, often being tainted with *infamia* due to their work. Such women, whether sex workers or bath attendants, also suffered significant objectification and potentially abuse at the baths, due to the admissibility of sex in the bathhouse. Whilst the baths are at times viewed as a strange microcosm, separate from the restrictions of wider life in the Roman Empire, the treatment of women in this location differs little from their treatment elsewhere. Like life outside the bathhouse, the most wealthy women were the most comfortable bathers. However, even they could not escape the critical male gaze which Martial's writing effectively conveyed. Despite the ongoing debate over the prevalence of mixed bathing, it appears convincing that women and men, both free and enslaved, bathed together in an atmosphere of mutual assurance.

The baths were significant places of social interaction, especially between wealthy male bathers. Such social interaction took on the guise of performance, which, as I have shown, was satirised significantly. Another, and possibly more pertinent, reason to attend the baths was for sex, which is known to have taken place in many forms at the bathhouses

across the Roman world. Whether acting as a precursor to sexual encounters, or as a meeting place for such encounters to occur, the baths were overtly sexual spaces, which understandably led to their condemnation by some religious and secular figures alike. Moreover, I have shown that the baths were not egalitarian places, as bathers could show their wealth and status in a number of nuanced ways. Some chose to display their superior status overtly, through a large retinue of slaves for example, whereas others showed their supposed superior morality through their actions. I have also shown that, in spite of the many attractions of the baths, the dangers present there were significant. Bathers faced risks from fellow bathers, as well as, perhaps most morbidly, from the building itself.

An exploration of the Roman bathing culture gives us significant context from which to explore the "sinful" woman's actions of washing and anointing towards Jesus. From this background, I will explore the woman's actions and investigate the possibility that she was connected to the bathhouse, either through her status as a household slave, a bath attendant, or possibly a sex worker stationed at the baths.

Chapter 6 A Rereading of the "Sinful" Woman

6.1 Introduction

In order to view the "sinful woman" of Luke 7:36-50 in a new light, we must first turn back to the pericope. The woman, "who was a sinner," entered the Pharisee's house because she heard Jesus was there. We are told little about her circumstances, and she remains silent throughout the interaction. She does, however, bring with her an "alabaster jar of ointment" (Lk. 7:37). After she lovingly wets Jesus' feet with her tears, wipes them with her hair and kisses them, she pours perfume on them. The pericope closes with Jesus sending the woman away: "your sins are forgiven … your faith has saved you; go in peace" (Lk. 7:48-50). Read in light of ancient bathing culture and our exploration of the positionality of enslaved women, the interaction between the woman and Jesus takes on new meaning.

In this chapter, I will suggest that ancient auditors may have understood the actions of the woman in Luke as those typically carried out in a bathhouse setting, thus recognising her as an enslaved bathhouse worker. From this starting point, we can further explore the meaning of the woman's actions, as she, an enslaved and objectified woman, uses her own body as an object to serve Jesus. Has she internalised the treatment she is so used to receiving? Or is she, perhaps, rebelling such that her interaction with Jesus can be read as an act of defiance against her social position? Are her actions indicative of those carried out by enslaved and prostituted women to regain their autonomy?

To conclude, I will discuss the relationship between my reading of the pericope and Paul's view of sex work in 1 Corinthians 6:12-20. Whilst I cannot offer a definitive answer to such questions, an intersectional and empathetic discussion about her conduct proves fruitful in uncovering a new angle from which to view the woman. I believe that it is this

discussion of the motivations and lived experiences of the woman which prevents our identification of her as a sex worker or enslaved woman from being reductionist.

6.2 The "Sinful" Woman as Enslaved?

As so often is the case, an absence of detail in the Lukan account allows for debate about the woman's positionality. Whilst swathes of scholarship have labelled the woman a "prostitute," there has been little conversation about her legal status. It is reasonable to suggest that at least some ancient auditors would have viewed the woman as an enslaved person. Luke's narrative does not mention the presence of a companion, whether a husband or another male protector. Her solitary appearance at the house during the evening furthers my reading of the woman as enslaved, as women of "respectable" status would not risk being unaccompanied in public at any hour, but particularly during the evening.

Moreover, the woman's enslaved status may also explain why her reputation preceded her, as Luke suggests that she was "a woman in the city who was a sinner" (Lk. 7:37).[699] Enslaved women, particularly those engaged in sex work, were considered "infamous:" they were tainted with stigma and suffered from a sorely degraded status.[700] As previously discussed, an enslaved woman's engagement in sex work was not their decision, rather that of their enslavers. Additionally, whilst out in public, enslaved women could not protect themselves from "insult or violation," which resulted in women not directly engaged in sex work being viewed in much the same way.[701] Enslaved bathhouse workers, whether actively involved in sex work or not, were also subjected to prejudice

[699] NIV translates the verse as "a woman in that town who had lived a sinful life."
[700] Glancy, *Slavery*, 27.
[701] Glancy, *Slavery*, 28-29.

and viewed as tainted in a comparable manner to sex workers situated in brothels.[702] Although it is possible that the "sinful" woman was simply an impoverished and self-enslaved woman, or someone who turned to sex work through desperation, in this reading I will work with the legitimate assumption that she was enslaved and as a result suffered the degradation that enslaved persons who carried out body work faced.

6.3 The "Sinful" Woman in the Bathhouse

The Lukan woman's actions towards Jesus evoke the rituals of washing and anointing practiced in the bathhouse. More specifically, they suggest a client being washed and anointed by an enslaved worker. Her actions bring to mind the role of the *unctrix* in particular: an enslaved bathhouse employee who anoints and, presumably, massages bathers who paid for her services.[703] The services of bathhouse employees were not strictly delineated, as we know many experienced a descent into sex work.[704] Massage with oil was a common step in the bathing routine, whereas anointing with perfumed oil was accessible only to those who could afford it, and those who had their own enslaved attendees service them.[705] Whilst the work of enslaved bathhouse attendants responsible for massage and anointing is only known in its most basic sense, the scholarly consensus agrees that they would apply oils to the bather who had washed, and massage in the oils before removing them with a *strigil*. Anointing with costly, scented oils likely did not involve the use of a *strigil*. The work was repetitive and relentless, with at least some male bathers subjecting the *unctrix* to sexual harassment, if not rape.

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[702] Bond, "As Trainers for the Healthy," 393. We might compare here the assumptions that surrounded flutists in antiquity, see, for example, Live Hov, "The First Female Performers: Tumblers, Flute-girls, and Mime Actresses." *New Theatre Quarterly* 31.2 (2015): 129-143.
[703] Fagan, *Bathing in Public,* 10.
[704] Bond, "As Trainers for the Healthy," 393.
[705] Fagan, *Bathing in Public,* 10.

Due to the centrality of bathing culture during the period, and arguably Roman setting, in which the author of Luke wrote, it is likely that auditors made a connection between the woman and bathing culture. The actions of the "sinful" woman suggest a familiarity with oils, perfumed unguents, and anointing. She follows the same steps of a bathing routine, as she washes Jesus' feet with her tears, before she dries them and pours perfume onto them. The "sinful" woman may have reasonably carried out this treatment of Jesus as a way to show her subservience and humility. The woman, whose depth of care for Jesus is clearly profound, attends to him in the way she knows best, through the utmost attentiveness and humility to his body. The deeply personal nature in which she bathes and anoints his feet shows that she has elevated the washing and anointing of the body she is familiar with at the baths. She is not only subordinate to him, as she is to those at the baths, rather her actions are self-abasing, she uses her body first and foremost to honour him, before she anoints his feet with (presumably) costly perfume.[706] Her use of perfume instead of simple oil also highlights her high regard for Jesus, the use of perfume in the baths was limited to those elite who could afford such luxury. The experience of anointing or massage with perfumed oil, carried out by the *unctrix*, was certainly luxurious, and the woman's use of this oil is noteworthy. Luke's account suggests that the woman arrived with her perfume, perhaps intent on anointing Jesus' feet, or possibly on her way from the bathhouse, as she still carried her perfume and wore her bathhouse garb.[707]

[706] Moreover, when we view the Lukan account adjacent to John 12:1-11, the significance of the woman's use of perfumed oil becomes explicit (that is, if one accepts the related nature of these accounts). John's pericope places significant emphasis on the perfume: the scent is made note of, and Judas brings attention to the waste of such costly oil.

[707] The understanding of the woman as an enslaved bathhouse worker may also explain the social mobility she enacted in her arrival at the house alone during the evening. We can assume that the dinner occurred at the usual time of sunset, notably after the busiest period at the baths. During the afternoon, when elite men would leisurely bathe, the woman's services would most certainly be called upon. She may have snuck away from the baths at a time when she would not be missed, or perhaps when she finished her work for the day. She, instead of going to her lodgings, went to find Jesus.

6.3.1 **The Woman as An Objectified Sex Worker from the Baths**

It is the woman's use of her own body as an object of service which furthers the understanding of her as, yes, enslaved, but likely a bathhouse worker and thus, sexually exploited. Her actions towards Jesus are corporeal, as she uses her own body to bathe and anoint him. Her tears serve as the water to wash him, and her hair as the towel to dry his feet. As I have noted, sex workers could be found in bathhouses across the Empire. Fagan brings to the fore the common view of enslaved persons as objects in his discussion of whether enslaved attendants had to pay to enter the baths.[708] He proposes that enslaved attendants may well have been "counted among the *intrumenta balnei* (like towels and *strigils*)."[709] If slaves who attended the baths with their masters were viewed as objects, the enslaved sex workers stationed at the baths were certainly viewed in the same light, if not worse, as professional sex workers were seen to occupy "the lowest station" among enslaved persons.[710]

The connection between sex work and washing enhances our understanding of this context.[711] Such a relationship is present throughout several eras, including in Ancient Rome where small wash basins were adjacent to masonry beds at bathhouses in, for example, Baiae.[712] Some view the presence of basins and hip baths as indicative of postcoital washing among sex workers.[713] Drawing upon literary evidence, Strong highlights the distinction made between women who had access to water and those who

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[708] Fagan, *Bathing in Public,* 202.
[709] Fagan, *Bathing in Public,* 202.
[710] Perry, *Gender, Manumission*, 29-30.
[711] Strong, "Well-washed Whores."
[712] Strong, "Well-washed Whores." mentions the connection between washing and sex work in Medieval England, where the link was so strong that the words "'brothel' and 'bathhouse' are virtually synonymous".
[713] James L. Butrica, "Using Water "Unchastely": Cicero "Pro Caelio" 34 Again," *Phoenix* 53 (1999), 136-139.
Butrica brings attention to Martial's allusions to post-coital washing, see Martial, *Ep.* 2.50. He makes the argument that there was a strong "connection between washing and love-making" which resulted in references of "taking" water as suggesting intercourse, and post-coital washing (Butrica, "Using Water "Unchastely"," 136).

didn't.[714] The distinction noted in Plautus' *Miles Gloriosus* is perhaps common: "a gentleman seeking to hire a prostitute must choose between a 'washed' woman (*lauta*) or one 'not yet washed' (*nondum lauta*)."[715] For these women, washing may have symbolised something greater than simply hygiene.[716] Perhaps, rather, washing allowed them to remove "the evidence of sexual activity, and broader notions of impurity."[717]

The view that "washing was one act in which women took control over their own bodies" is particularly pertinent to my discussion.[718] When we consider that the absence of autonomy was a characteristic feature of sex workers, the view that washing was the only act in which a sex worker could enact their autonomy is momentous.[719] Her actions are certainly self-determined; likely no-one expected her to behave in such a profound way, if anything her reputation suggests that she will act with abandon and gaucherie. Perhaps as a woman who cannot express her own will in her daily life except through washing, she chooses to treat Jesus in the only way she can lovingly treat herself. If we accept that she experienced the labour of washing and anointing in the bathhouse, her sincerely personal

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[714] Strong, "Well-washed Whores."
[715] Strong, "Well-washed Whores." Plautus, *Mil. Glor.* 1.787. Translated by Wolfgang de Melo, Loeb Classical Library 163 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 223.
[716] We can assume that in the absence of sexually transmitted disease and pregnancy prevention barriers, including condoms and the diaphragm, sex workers used post-coital washing to prevent the spread of disease. Butrica, "Using Water "Unchastely"," 137 infers the act of douching, in his reading of to "take" water in Ovid's *Ars Amatoria.* The practice of douching to prevent disease and pregnancy lasted into the early modern period in Europe, see Sarah Toulalan, "Bodies, Sex and Sexuality," in *The Routledge History of Women in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Amanda L. Capern (United Kingdom: Taylor & Francis, 2019), 1-36. Arguably, post-coital washing remains an important step in the routines of sex workers today. See Anjali Sharma et al. "Sex preparation and diaphragm acceptability in sex work in Nairobi, Kenya." *Sexual Health* 3 (2006): 261-268.
[717] Strong, "Well-washed Whores."
[718] Strong, "Well-washed Whores." Sarah Levin-Richardson, *The Brothel of Pompeii: Sex, Class, and Gender at the Margins of Roman Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 113-115 also connects water and autonomy, if not rebellion. She suggests that sex workers stationed in brothels without water supplies, such as the famous Pompeii brothel, would have had to collect and haul water back to the building. Levin-Richardson, building upon the work of Sandra. R. Joshel, and Lauren Hackworth Petersen, *The Material Life of Roman Slaves* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014) suggests that sex workers could pause, socialise, and perhaps enter nearby a shop. Whilst the actions of the Lukan woman do not directly relate here, this argument furthers our understanding of the connection between water and self-determination. Sex workers used water to exert control over their physical bodies, as Strong ("Well-washed Whores") suggested, as well as over the social restrictions placed upon them.
[719] Flemming, "Quae Corpore," 47.

and physical approach to bathing Jesus simply shows her meaningful concern to honour Jesus sufficiently, in the way she knows best.

The connection between sex work, washing, and the baths is strengthened when we consider the multiplicity of uses of the so-called anointing rooms in bathhouses. Whilst these rooms did not always include wash basins, their locality within bathhouses is noteworthy. The central feature of such rooms is often a masonry bed. As I have previously discussed, scholarship tends to identify them as anointing rooms, but their use for sex work is also recognised.[720] Role boundaries were blurry for those working within the baths, and for the "sinful" woman, an assumption of experiences of sex work whilst situated within the bathhouse, perhaps as an *unctrix*, is not unreasonable. Moreover, in her exploration of the brothel of Pompeii, Levin-Richardson brings attention to the sex workers' actions of body care in brothels separate from the bathhouse, and significantly, the use of water in these practices.[721] Sex workers likely carried out "physical and emotional labor" alongside their sexual services.[722] They may have shaved their client's facial hair or hauled water from local fountains.[723] Women in the brothels who carried out body care needed a supply of water. The presence of such practices, and the importance of water, reinforces the connection between sex work and bathing. Whilst it is most likely that the "sinful" woman acted from her experience in the baths, she may have also been a sex worker who was familiar with the practices of body care carried out inside and beyond the baths. Again, here we can view her actions as her attempt to treat Jesus in the way she assumes he would want to be treated, the way in which she deferentially treats her clients. Crucial here, however, is the autonomy she uses to approach Jesus and touch his feet without saying a

[720] Strong, "Well-washed Whores."
[721] Levin-Richardson, *The Brothel of Pompeii,* 113.
[722] Levin-Richardson, *The Brothel of Pompeii,* 113.
[723] Levin-Richardson, *The Brothel of Pompeii,* 113.

word. Her actions can be seen in two ways, therefore, as bold and authoritative, or as servile.

6.3.2 **Perfume as Body Work**

The connection between sex or body work and perfume is strong in both literature and archaeology.[724] As I have discussed, perfumed oil played an important role in the baths. Bathhouse workers who carried out massaging and anointing roles used such oil regularly. Whilst the vast majority of bathers, despite their wealth, utilised olive oil in their bathing routine, perfumed oils were costly and thus reserved for the wealthiest clients only. Perfumed oil served other uses outside of the baths also, as sex workers used it in body care within brothels. Archaeological remains further indicate the association between perfume and sex work, as a perfume vial was recovered in the brothel of Pompeii.[725] Whilst sex workers may have used such perfume, and other cosmetics vials, on themselves to increase their desirability to customers, they likely used them on their clients also.[726] Interestingly, Levin-Richardson highlights the possibility that clients gifted these perfume vials to sex workers, perhaps as an attempt to initiate a longer-term arrangement.[727] Perhaps the Lukan woman's costly "alabaster jar of ointment" was a gift from a client, from the baths or elsewhere (Lk. 7:37).

Of the greatest interest here are the acts of body care carried out between sex workers and towards themselves.[728] In the absence of clients, sex workers may have taken advantage of the abundance of perfume, and this assumption is reasonably applied to the bathhouse also. The inference that sex workers or bathhouse workers cared for themselves,

[724] Anointing and massage using perfume likely took place alongside shaving and depilation, thus sex workers carried out expansive body care.
[725] Levin-Richardson, *The Brothel of Pompeii,* 117. See also pages 31-39.
[726] Levin-Richardson, *The Brothel of Pompeii,* 109.
[727] Levin-Richardson, *The Brothel of Pompeii,* 113.
[728] Levin-Richardson, *The Brothel of Pompeii,* 128.

when they were able to, in the same way that they serviced their clients furthers our reading of the woman's actions as grounded in her lived reality. If, as a sex worker or *unctrix*, she cared for herself and significantly, her fellow women, with perfume and anointing, then our reading of her actions towards Jesus as being generous and personally informed is strengthened still. Moreover, perhaps these women regained their agency through the treatment of oneself and each other like clients. Instead of carrying out these acts simply because they must, as they do for bathers, possibly they subverted the status quo, as they acted to show love and attention to one another and themselves. The "sinful" woman's washing and anointing of Jesus may suggest that she is treating him, not as a client, but rather as she treats a loved one, or herself, once the workday is over. Again, here, her actions suggest "great love" and devotion towards Jesus, which he accepts wholeheartedly (Lk. 7:47).

6.4 The Woman's Actions as Rebellion or Internalisation?

As I have discussed, enslaved people, especially women, faced violence and abuse on a daily basis. Their subordinate status and, for those exploited sexually, their stigma, severely impacted their treatment socially. Fundamentally, enslaved women and sex workers of all statuses could be treated however their enslaver or client saw fit, which was commonly inhumane and cruel. Such casual acts of violence against slaves, which has also been noted in the bathhouse, continued into the early Christian period.[729] The description of a slave in Julius Obsequens *Prodigies* shows how an enslaved person's debase treatment of themselves can suggest both rebellion and internalised servility.[730] A male slave of Caepio "emasculated himself in devotion to the Great Mother, and was shipped across the

[729] See Pliny, *Ep*. 3.14.6-8.
[730] Glancy, *Slavery*, 29.

sea, that he might never return to Rome."[731] Butler argues that male slaves did not have a "phallus" because their penis "did not signify the sexual and political domination exercised by adult male Roman citizens."[732] The subordination of enslaved persons extended to the value of their sex organs, and in Butler's reading, the slave might have even been thanked for "neatly trimming one away."[733] Viewed against this backdrop, the slave's act is in line with the wishes of the master, he treated himself as his master would treat him. We can understand the enslaved man's act, therefore, as the result of his acceptance of his lack of bodily autonomy: his "corporeal subordination."[734] Conversely, the man's actions may suggest a profound attempt to regain his bodily autonomy, as he carries out a wilful act that physically affects his body without the permission of his enslaver.[735] Now turning to the "sinful" woman, this framework suggests that the way she uses her body, and hair, as an object to bathe and anoint Jesus reflects her internalised servile status. It may also be reflective of the degradation she likely faced as an enslaved woman forced into sex work. Conversely, her acts can be interpreted as rebellious: she acts autonomously, and thus regains control of her own body.

6.4.1 **Internalisation**

The treatment of enslaved persons in the *Satyricon*, and specifically the use of their hair, adds to our understanding of the woman's actions as being governed by her internalised servility. As I have discussed, the *Satyricon* details an enslaver's use of both an enslaved man and woman's hair, with one example set within the bathhouse.[736] For the

[731] Julius Obsequens, *Prodigies*, 653. Translated by Alfred C. Schlesinger, Loeb Classical Library 404 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959), 279.
[732] Shane Butler, "Notes on a *Membrum Disiectum*," in *Women and Slaves in Greco-Roman Culture*, eds. Sandra R. Joshel and Sheila Murnaghan (London: Routledge, 1998), 242-261.
[733] Butler, "Notes on a *Membrum Disiectum,"* 248-249.
[734] Glancy, *Slavery*, 29.
[735] Butler, "Notes on a *Membrum Disiectum,*" 255.
[736] Petronius, *Sat*. 27.6.

enslaved woman (Pet. *Sat.* 57.6), the description perhaps suggests that the enslaver's use of her hair was repeated, and potentially a symbolic example of the treatment of enslaved women more widely.[737] The "sinful" woman uses her own hair to dry Jesus' feet, an act which strongly resembles Trimalchio's use of an enslaved boy's hair to dry his wet hands.[738] The "sinful" woman, if enslaved and familiar with close encounters with male bathers at the bathhouse, would likely have been used in such a way. Perhaps her hair is the closest thing on hand to wipe away her tears, and maybe she has used her hair in this way previously in the bathhouse setting.

The view that she used her body, including her hair and tears, as a means to serve Jesus because of her repeated experiences of objectification is more compelling, however. If we see the woman's actions as that of self-objectification and an internalisation of the treatment she faced as an enslaved woman, her actions show her acknowledgement of her humble position in contrast to Jesus' status as a miracle worker, and perhaps simply a free man. Her actions, therefore, may demonstrate her acute awareness of her liminal position. Enslaved women would remain vulnerable to sexual violence throughout their lives, and an escape from their lack of status and sexual honour would be near impossible. For the Lukan woman to enter the dinner party alone, after likely travelling unaccompanied in the evening, she would have placed herself at significant risk of exploitation. The fact that she does so should be taken as a sign of devotion to or trust in Jesus, which her hyperbolic tears exemplify. It also shows how she willingly took on and embodied her status of servitude with respect to Jesus.

Molly Myerowitz Levine's discussion of the gendered grammar of hair complexifies our reading of this passage further still.[739] Levine advocates for the reading

[737] Levine's discussion of Greco-Roman understandings of hair as metonymic follows.
[738] Petronius, *Sat.* 27.6.
[739] Levine, "The Gendered Grammar," 76.

of Greco-Roman and Jewish understandings of hair as metonymic and metaphorical.[740] Simply, hair was viewed as symbolic of the whole person, thus it was used in rituals to signify "movement and exchange, passage and negotiation, changes in status."[741] Strikingly, this metonymic reading of hair is found in the *Satyricon*. Eumolpus suggests that once your hair has fallen out, you have lost part of your "individuality" ("*capitus perisse partem*").[742] Here, one's hair is magnified to the scale of the whole person, in which a loss of the hair signifies a loss of something greater.[743] As I have suggested in my reading of *Satyricon* 27.6 and 57.6, the wiping of one's hands in an enslaved person's hair may have suggested more broadly the bodily objectification and use of an enslaved person. Particularly in 57.6, in which a freedman speaks of his desire to free his enslaved wife "so that no one could wipe his hands in her hair," the implication is that the use of an enslaved woman's hair is metonymic for the use of her body in any manner.[744] This synecdochical perception of hair impacts our reading of the "sinful" woman's actions. We can understand her hair as gesturing to the comprehensive objectification she faced as an enslaved woman situated in the bathhouse. Her actions towards Jesus symbolise an internalisation of this treatment. If enslavers used her hair, and thus, her body, through her use of her own hair and body to serve Jesus, she openly indicates an acceptance of her servile status.

6.4.2 **Rebellion**

Alternatively, the woman's actions can be viewed as rebellious, a breaking away from her social status, lack of sexual honour, and perhaps her status as a polluted woman. Returning to the auto-castration of a slave in Julius Obsequens' *Prodigies*, this moment too

[740] Levine, "The Gendered Grammar," 85.
[741] Levine, "The Gendered Grammar," 85.
[742] Petronius, *Sat.* 109.5.
[743] Levine, "The Gendered Grammar," 85.
[744] Petronius, *Sat.* 57.6.

has been read as an act of rebellion. Ancient conceptions of the enslaved male's penis might have motivated the slave to act in such a way to make him the "master of his own body."[745] His act is therefore a profound rejection of his enslaver's view and a means to regain autonomy. Can we view the Lukan woman's actions in much the same way?

Read in this way, the "sinful" woman's actions may suggest her attempt to take back her autonomy from her enslavers and bathhouse clients. Her actions towards Jesus resemble the actions an *unctrix* would perform in the baths, yet, as I have noted, the woman elevates these acts to a more personal level. The personal and corporeal way in which she washes and anoints Jesus perhaps points to the way in which bathers physically used her in the bathhouse setting. Bathers exploited her body for their own purposes, and her lack of autonomy gave her little to no means of resistance. Yet, in her decision to use her own body as an object to honour Jesus, she takes back control of her body, and crucially chooses the way in which her body is used.

Coupled with Strong's reading of sex workers use of washing as the "one act in which women took control over their own bodies," the "sinful" woman's actions become an attempt to take control of her body and regain her autonomy.[746] The use of perfumed oil might be understood as a form of self-care, as a "humanizing interaction(s)" that allowed her to regain her self-determination and humanity after experiences of exploitative and dangerous sex work.[747] Jesus' unquestioning acceptance of her actions, which diners interpreted as highly inappropriate (as Simon suggested in Lk. 7:39), enriches this reading. Jesus, whilst not having exchanged a word with the woman, may too have known the deeper meaning of her actions, and in his indiscriminate empathy, fulfilled her desires for forgiveness and humanity. Perhaps Jesus' sensitive actions also suggest a tacit endorsement

[745] Butler, "Notes on a *Membrum Disiectum,*" 255.
[746] Strong, "Well-washed Whores."
[747] Levin-Richardson, *The Brothel of Pompeii,* 127.

of her efforts to resist and rebel against her servile status. His actions towards the woman are not only a display of his Messianic character, but also his acceptance of those viewed, in antiquity, as tainted and unworthy.

The context in which the woman approaches Jesus may also suggest that her actions are rebellious in nature. Luke tells us that she enters a Pharisee's house whilst a meal is ongoing, approaches Jesus without a word, and begins to cry at his feet. Perhaps understandably, Simon is confused by the ongoing interaction, and he subsequently labels the woman a sinner (Lk. 7:39). Her actions towards Jesus display a significant level of courage and self-determination, conceivably suggesting a rebellion against her overwhelming lack of autonomy as an enslaved bathhouse worker. Or, potentially her rebellion encompassed the stigmatisation she would have faced as a sex worker from religious authorities, whose disdain for sex work is clear. Noteworthy too is her preceding reputation, which if those at the dinner were aware of, would have called her bold actions into question more so. Luke notes that as she enters, she carries an "alabaster jar of ointment," an implication that her actions towards Jesus are premeditated (Lk. 7:37). If so, auditors and readers alike would have noted that her actions here, especially when coupled with her likely enslaved status, are bold and rebellious. Even without a consideration of her use of her body as an object, the reader is already aware of her determination to reach Jesus and the courage associated with her behaviour.[748]

[748] Scholarship has long been concerned with the woman's unbound hair. Perhaps we can view the woman's actions towards Jesus, not as indicative of her potential occupation, but rather as her ultimate diffidence to Jesus and a further act of rebellion. If the woman's hair was elaborately adorned, or simply worn in an updo, then her action of taking down her hair served not herself, but Jesus. The assumption that she entered the house with hair worn up is not unreasonable, due to ancient sources which speak of sex workers wearing their hair in the same fashion as matrons (e.g., Plautus, *Mil. Glor.* 791-793). Luke states that her reputation preceded her, she is a woman "in the city who was a sinner" (Lk. 7:37). Her choice to loosen her hair in the setting of a dinner party may well have suggested to those nearby that she was a woman of improper action and likely sinful in nature. Yet, whilst her loosening of her hair would have further tarnished her reputation as she does away with cultural norms, she does so only to honour Jesus and rebel against her context. Her abeyance of cultural norms shows her complete devotion to Jesus, she not only uses her body to serve him, but she also risks her reputation further to honour him.

6.5 Luke 7:36-50 and 1 Corinthians 6:12-20

In this reading, I have suggested that the woman's actions towards Jesus, when considered in light of bathing and anointing culture, suggest that she was an enslaved worker, possibly from a bathhouse, who engaged in sex work. This reading has consequences for our perception of Jesus, and in particular, his views towards sex workers. Here Jesus engages with and crucially accepts a woman who has engaged in sex work. He does not question her or draw attention to her reputation, rather he extols her steadfast treatment of him and highlights her "great love" (Lk. 7:47). Perhaps most significantly, as she was widely understood to be a sex worker, Jesus does not denounce her profession or instruct her to abandon it.

When read in conjunction with 1 Corinthians 6:12-20, Jesus' position in Luke seems to directly challenge Paul's view of sex workers. The meaning of this passage, as well as Paul's statements about marriage and chastity in 1 Corinthians 7, has been the subject of considerable scholarly debate. Pertinent to my discussion of the passage is Paul's definition of the term *pornē* and its cognates. Many translate the term used in 1

The woman's inclusion of her hair in this reverence to Jesus may also speak to the wider contextual understanding of women's hair. The patriarchal culture significantly influenced the acute gendering of ancient understandings of women's hair (Levine, "The Gendered Grammar," 76-130). In Greco-Roman and Jewish conceptions of hair, women's loose, flowing hair was long read to signify their threatening sexuality and fertility (Levine, "The Gendered Grammar," 91). Whereas, for men, loose hair has been viewed as an abundance of nature and manhood (Levine, "The Gendered Grammar," 81-89). Ancient literature has played out the synecdochical nature of hair repeatedly, with women threatening men's flowing hair and therefore their very nature and strength. See the stories of Samson and Delilah, Enkidu and Shamhat, and Scylla and Nisus as examples (Levine, "The Gendered Grammar," 90). The patriarchal reading of women's hair has led to women to be "veiled, wigged, blinded, beheaded, and fettered," and if they stepped outside the cultural boundary, their unbound hair is oftentimes viewed as a statement of shame (Levine, "The Gendered Grammar," 109). Yet, Jesus, in his reaction to the "sinful" woman's actions, recognises her use of her hair as empowering and honourable, not shameful and subversive. He does not suggest that her hair symbolises anything other than devotion and care (Lk. 7:44).

Corinthians 6:13 and 6:18 as "sexual immortality."[749] I take this term to refer directly to sex workers in the context of 1 Cor. 6:12-20.[750] Therefore, like many others, I read 1 Cor. 6:12-20 as a denouncement of sex work, a "sin against God," and therefore, incompatible with a Christian lifestyle and participation in the Corinthian Church.[751] Paul argues that those who engage the services of sex workers contaminate the body of Christ (1 Cor. 6:15). Fundamentally, Paul's focus on the discordance between sex work and Jesus "seems to leave even those prostitutes who were enslaved beyond the boundaries of Christian community."[752] Crucially, it is likely that Paul would have had knowledge of the way in which many urban slaves, particularly women, had "sexual obligations" to their enslavers.[753] Those women who were prostituted by their enslavers, or sexually exploited within the house, could not heed Paul's call to "shun" or "flee from sexual immorality" (1 Cor. 6:18), argues Glancy.[754] Even further than this, we know that male civilians frequently accosted and assaulted enslaved women on the street simply because of their status and appearance.[755] For such women, it seems impossible for them to join the Corinthian community and access eternal life. More generally, Paul's seeming lack of interest in the women in 1 Corinthians 5-7 perhaps highlights his disinterest in such women's participation in the Corinthian Church, potentially an indication that the sex worker who is not a "member of Christ … is not destined for resurrection."[756]

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[749] "The business of a prostitute (Greek, *pornē*) was *porneia*" says Glancy, *Slavery*, 59. See also Hans Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians: A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians,* trans. James W. Leitch (Philedelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 108; Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1987), 250; Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians* (United Kingdom: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 245-251. Paul uses the term "*pornē*" and its cognates elsewhere in his letters also. See 1 Corinthians 7:2.
[750] There is further discussion as to whether Paul is referring to secular or sacred prostitution. Due to the focus of my argument, we can set aside this question.
[751] Brian S. Rosner, "Temple Prostitution in 1 Corinthians 6:12-20," *NovT* 40 (1998): 336-351.
[752] Jennifer A. Glancy, "Obstacles to Slaves' Participation in The Corinthian Church," *JBL* 117 (1998): 481-501.
[753] Glancy, *Slavery*, 40.
[754] Glancy, "Obstacles to Slaves' Participation," 494.
[755] Ulpian, *Dig.* 47.10.15.15.
[756] Fee, *First Epistle to the Corinthians,* 260.

Whilst Paul's discussion of sexual morality in 1 Corinthians has been particularly pervasive, I suggest that in Luke 7:36-50, Luke shows Jesus as rejecting this particular Pauline argument. As I have already noted, Luke's Jesus shows no indication that the woman cannot participate in the Christian community, nor that she be excluded from the eternal life to be found through Christ. Rather he clearly indicates the woman's active and accepted participation in Christ; Jesus says to her "your sins are forgiven … your faith has saved you; go in peace" (Lk. 7:48-50). Not only does Jesus accept the woman into the community, but, arguably, he also makes her actions emblematic of what "great love" and devotion to Jesus looks like. Furthermore, Jesus' integration of women potentially engaged in sex work is so resolute that he even rejects the pointed questions of his companions, as despite Simon's concerns Jesus does not hesitate to welcome the woman into the community. While Luke is clearly borrowing the general sentiment found in his source, Mark 14, he amplifies the idea of sex work. Although the woman in Mark 14 was almost certainly a sex worker, Luke has taken it further, labelling her a "sinner." His depiction also draws further attention to her body and its objectification through references to her tears and hair.

This reading is plausible due to the scholarly consensus that "Luke and Paul knew each other", and thus, Luke had access to Paul's writings.[757] It is widely accepted that Luke wrote his Gospel with the knowledge of Paul.[758] What is unclear, however, is the "extent of this relationship."[759] Paul's writings mention "Luke" several times, yet whether this Luke, a physician and friend, is the author of the Gospel of Luke is debated.[760] Such

[757] Sean A. Adams, "The Relationship of Luke and Paul: Luke, Paul's Letters, and the "We" Passages of Acts," in *Paul and His Social Relations*, eds. Stanley E. Porter and Christopher D. Land (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 125-142.
[758] Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke,* ed. Daniel J. Harrington (Sacra Pagina Series 3; Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 3.
[759] Adams, "The Relationship of Luke and Paul," 125.
[760] For mentions of "Luke" in Paul's writings, see Colossians 4:14; Philemon 24; 2 Timothy 4:11.

mentions of a "Luke" have resulted in the tradition which views Luke as Paul's *amanuensis*, however the academic consensus views such a tradition as unreliable and distrusted.[761] Due to the consensus that a relationship between Luke and Paul did exist, we can set the debate concerning the nature of the relationship aside.

If we accept that the author of the Gospel of Luke is at least familiar with Paul's teachings, this reading of his opposition in this pericope is comprehensible. As has been discussed decidedly, Luke's personal contribution to the existing anointing account can be reasonably assumed. Through his distinctive portrayal of Jesus as interacting with and accepting a female sex worker, Luke offers a new, more inclusive perspective of Jesus' ministry. Arguably, the author of Luke is falling into line with the Gospel of Mark over the teachings of Paul here, as readings of Mark 14:1-11 may also suggest Jesus' positive interaction with a woman engaged in sex work.[762] Luke's portrayal of Jesus here, and his rejection of Paul's view, has lasting effects for readers of the pericope today. Whilst those engaged in modern day sex work will recognise an acceptance and care for the woman in Jesus' actions, others who also suffer objectification and subjugation can take away a sense of validation here too.

6.6 Conclusion

Read against the backdrop of contextual bathing culture, the woman's actions take on new significance. I have suggested that her actions can be understood in a multiplicity of ways, but, centrally, they indicate her familiarity with body work in the bathhouse. The

[761] Adams, "The Relationship of Luke and Paul," 128-129.
[762] The Gospel of Mark is also replete with depictions of lone, likely vulnerable women (Mk 5:25-34; 7:24-30; 12:41-44 etc.). Arguably the post war context in which the Gospel of Mark was written would have contributed to the depiction of lone women, as many women were left widowed, poverty-stricken, and helpless. This likely caused many women to turn to sex work as a means to survive. Furthermore, the Gospel of Mark never names Joseph as the father of Jesus, rather calling Jesus "the son of Mary" (Mk 6:3).

woman's actions strongly suggest that she is familiar with the work of anointers and masseuses, yet we know that these roles were not clear cut. This reading also provides significant context within which we can read the woman as a sex worker, not because she is labelled a "sinner" nor because of her unbound hair, but rather because of the way in which she approaches and treats Jesus. Her actions show a level of self-abasement common among enslaved women who were forced into and subsequently tainted by sex work. Moreover, her behaviour towards Jesus inherently includes self-objectification, which gives rise to further questions surrounding the personal meaning behind her behaviour. Most significantly, we may read the woman's actions as an attempt to reclaim autonomy and regain her humanity, a reading that, thus far, has been overlooked.

Her treatment of Jesus as a loved one is a means both of honouring him and also humanising herself. Her actions, thus, might be seen as a gesture of rebellion against her lived reality. Conversely, the woman may simply be acting in accordance with her role in the bathhouse, as an enslaved woman would doubtlessly be treated like an object in everyday life.

Whilst it is impossible to confidently adjudicate between these interpretations, what is clear is that the woman's actions speak to the lived realities of enslaved workers, bathhouse attendants, and sex workers. Through an exploration of the woman's actions in light of bathing and anointing culture, I have brought her back to the centre of the pericope and given her a fruitful backstory from which we can understand her actions more fully. This reading also impacts our perception of Jesus in the pericope, as he is portrayed as accepting and empathising with sex workers, instead of viewing them with disdain. When read alongside 1 Corinthians 6:12-20, Luke's rendition of the pericope suggests a resistance against Paul's harsh treatment of enslaved people and sex workers.

Chapter 7 Conclusion

In my examination of the story of the "sinful" woman, along insights into the bathing and anointing culture of that time, I have presented a new interpretation of the woman as a complex individual. Her actions, thus, imply something deeper and more profound than simply gratitude or repentance. Whilst there are endless possible interpretations of her actions, I have proposed a small handful which explore the woman and her possible participation in sex work more fully. Her actions, I contend, suggest a woman likely caught in enslavement, and so she experienced exploitation and objectification. Importantly, her actions indicate a woman who is familiar with the baths, likely through her occupation. The way she interacts with Jesus suggests a familiarity and competency of body work akin to that of bathhouse attendants. I have suggested that she washes and anoints Jesus in a manner similar to how bathhouse workers attended to bathers, including the utilisation of expensive perfumed oil as the final step in their bathing routine. These suggestions not only shed light on the woman's identity, but they are most significant in what they reveal about her motives.

An acceptance of the woman's familiarity with body work in the baths uncovers various interpretations of her underlying intentions. Rather than simply suggesting her gratitude or repentance for Jesus, a consideration of her lived reality brings forth more nuanced and comprehensive readings. For example, drawing upon Glancy and Butler's discussions of an enslaved man who cut off his penis as described in Julius Obsequens *Prodigies,* I argue that the woman's actions may indicate her internalisation of her treatment as an enslaved woman, or conversely, her bold rejection of her circumstance.[763]

[763] Glancy, *Slavery*, 29; Butler, "Notes on a *Membrum Disiectum,"* 248-249; Julius Obsequens, *Prodigies*, 653.

In the former reading, the woman can be seen to simply treat Jesus as she treats her bathhouse clients—by using her body as an object of servitude. At the core of her actions lies her internalised subservience and self-objectification, as she wholeheartedly employs her own body to wash and anoint Jesus. As a woman so deeply weakened by her continual subordination, she might assume that even Jesus must be treated in this manner.

Conversely, the woman's actions with Jesus can be seen as representative of the oppressive work she is subjected to. It is possible to interpret her actions as a bold rejection of her position and life circumstances. By using her own body as an object to honour Jesus, she may actively reject the way others exploit her body for their own purposes. Central to this reading is her choice to use her body to show reverence to Jesus, in stark contrast to the ever-present obligation to use her body as an enslaved woman. As I have discussed, enslaved women in the bathhouse, brothels, and in their enslaver's homes were treated as objects to satisfy their enslaver's sexual urges. Through the woman's use of her body in a way unrelated to sexual purposes, but rather to symbolise love and honour, she regains her autonomy and personhood.

The woman's actions of bathing and anointing as a reclamation of the self is also consequential in my reading of the woman. Through an exploration of contextual bathing culture and the positionality of enslaved women within the baths, the significance of this act becomes apparent. Whilst Strong places weight on the practice of self-washing as a means to regain one's autonomy, Levin-Richardson reflects upon body care amongst sex workers as a means to regain their self-determination and humanity after enduring exploitative and dangerous sex work.[764] Consequently, it is reasonable to suggest that the woman, by washing and anointing Jesus, may be showing reverence to the man who forgave her while simultaneously reclaiming authority over her own body. Her act of love

[764] Strong, "Well-washed Whores."; Levin-Richardson, *The Brothel of Pompeii,* 128.

and kindness to Jesus is, in essence, an act of love and kindness to herself. Alternatively, and perhaps simultaneously, she might be expressing her love and care for Jesus in the most fitting way she knows how. As previously suggested, women sex workers performed body work on themselves and each other to (re)humanise and cherish one another.[765] Particularly if the woman was familiar with, or situated within, a bathhouse her actions of bathing and anointing would be reminiscent of her daily work. However, in her utmost piety to Jesus, she elevates and personalises these actions, willingly using her body as her vehicle of devotion.

My central contribution to scholarship concerning the "sinful" woman revolves around my empathetic and multidimensional exploration of her potential involvement in sex work. For too long, the woman's status as a "prostitute" has remained an unquestioned aspect of the pericope, and too many loaded assumptions about the nature of her "sinfulness" have been sustained. Through the application of a feminist social-history lens and an examination of ancient bathing culture, I have delved deeper into her potential, or likely, involvement in sex work. An understanding of the circumstances that forced enslaved women into sex work, or led impoverished women into it, is crucial in our understanding of who auditors and readers presumed the woman to be. Furthermore, knowledge of how such women were objectified and subjected to inhumane treatment further sheds light on our understanding of the woman's actions towards Jesus. Throughout my discussion of the woman and sex work, I have maintained that sex work is not immoral or shameful. The focus of my discussion lies in what this reality would have meant for the woman, and it is this that I have attempted to explore.

This reading has implications for how we view Jesus and his attitudes towards sex workers. I have suggested that in this pericope Jesus engages with and supports a woman

[765] Levin-Richardson, *The Brothel of Pompeii,* 127.

who likely had a history of sex work. Rather than berating her, or questioning her morals, he praises her and welcomes her into the Christian community. As I have suggested, when we read this in conjunction with 1 Corinthians 6:12-20, it appears as though Luke positions Jesus in direct contrast to the views expressed by Paul. Fundamentally, 1 Cor. 6:12-20 denounces the morality of sex work and so expels sex workers from the Christian community, regardless of their context. Significantly, enslaved women are banished from Paul's Corinthian Church as they have no means of heeding his call to "shun sexual immorality" (1 Cor. 6:18). In my reading of Luke 7:36-50, Luke's depictions of Jesus' actions suggest otherwise. Jesus in no way retreats from her touch nor prevents her actions. Rather Luke shows Jesus to celebrate her, indicating her active and endorsed participation in the Christian community. Jesus' knowledge of the enslaved population and the reality of sex work can be easily assumed, and through this reading, his stance against such a reality is realised. Luke presents Jesus' position as one of empathy and inclusivity.

These interpretations of the woman's actions may have significant impacts on contemporary Christian readings of the pericope and more broadly, on the perception of sex workers in the New Testament. Jesus demonstrates empathy towards a woman with a tarnished reputation, a woman whom others do not expect Jesus to accept, and a woman who is certainly judged and condemned by many in the Early Christian movement. This reading also challenges Paul's pervasive understanding of the immorality of sex work in 1 Corinthians 6:12-20. By humanising the woman, and bringing her experiences, feelings, and potential motivations to the fore through an application of a feminist social history lens, I hope to have challenged not only how scholars approach the woman and her probable involvement in sex work, but also how contextual readers of the New Testament, including those engaged in sex work or tainted by cultural taboos, view themselves and Jesus' acceptance of them.

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