

BASIC ECONOMICS

THE ENTERPRISE OF VENAL SEX

This chapter is intended to provide an overview of the economic reality of prostitution at Rome to the extent that the sources permit. The challenges presented by the ancient evidence are especially formidable here. Collecting data, evaluating their reliability, and formulating adequate conclusions about the practice of Roman prostitution are not simple or straightforward tasks. It is small comfort that modern researchers studying contemporary prostitution are faced with similar difficulties, encouraging them to abandon an econometric approach in favor of traditional social science methodology.¹ Our own difficulties with evidence prompt an assiduous cultivation of the methods of economic anthropology.²

To take one example, I know of no study, whether economic or sociological in focus, that attempts to determine a price structure for modern prostitution by establishing a system of prices in relation to services offered and the age, appearance, sexual and nonsexual talents, and so forth of prostitutes and then comparing this data with the cost-of-living standards of prostitutes and rates of pay from other available forms of employment. The absence of such studies has forced students of prostitution to rely on highly circumstantial and incomplete data for comparative purposes. Given the limits of this study, such

1. See Reynolds, *Economics of Prostitution* (1986) 8.

2. See Greene, *Archaeology* (1986), 9; Horden and Purcell, *Corrupting Sea* (2000) 365.

data must suffice, but there is no question about the benefit that a detailed analysis of the price structure of modern venal sex would bring.³ Despite these limitations, no real choice exists. We must rely on comparative data in this field, which can, at minimum, provide a sense of the plausible.

This chapter begins by examining in detail the phenomena of the broad diffusion of brothels, of the close connection between prostitution and other forms of popular entertainment, and of prostitution's association with lower-class lodging. Next, the evidence for upper-class investment in prostitution is introduced.

The question of ownership leads in turn to a discussion of brothel management, the prices charged for sexual services and the economic implications of these prices, and the acquisition of slave prostitutes. Finally, this chapter reviews the possible motivations free women had for entering the profession. The economic motivations and expectations of masters prostituting their slaves are also taken into account. This survey does not pretend to being complete, but aims to describe those features that allow an understanding of the economic importance of the institution, as a foundation for the understanding of the place of prostitution and especially brothels both in the context of the Roman city and in Roman society as a whole.

THE MILIEU OF PROSTITUTION

Inns and Such

The broad definition of brothel adopted in chapter 1 allows us to grasp the significance of the practice of prostitution in a variety of settings. Several of the Pompeian brothels, for example, were connected with the operation of *cauponae*, that is, inns and taverns.⁴ More important perhaps is the reverse relationship: generally speaking, inns, lodging houses, taverns, and restaurants of all kinds were associated with the practice of prostitution, often, though not exclusively,⁵

3. For some details of this problem in an historical context, see Goldman, *Gold Diggers* (1981) 91–92, and Rosen, *Sisterhood* (1982) 86–111.

4. See, for example, the tavern-brothels listed in the catalog in app. 1 and, for one example, figs. 1 and 2.

5. Pimps traveling with prostitutes stayed in public lodgings: Strabo 12.8.17. It is obvious that streetwalkers and other freelancers did in some cases take customers to lodging houses when they had no venue of their own available. See chap. 7 for additional information.

by the staff.⁶ The legal sources in particular seem to reflect an implicit distinction between establishments where prostitution was practiced more or less as a sideline, and brothels, which in turn may have offered guests more than just sexual services (e.g., liquor, food, and lodging).⁷ The distinction is a useful one, though obviously in many cases the line is difficult to draw with certainty, and routinely impossible, I argue, when dealing with archaeological evidence for brothels.⁸ It is not clear, for example, that, insofar as they served food, brothels fell under the repressive legislation that governed the sale of food in inns and taverns.⁹

The range of establishments offering sexual services embraced *tabernae*, *meritoria*, *caupona*, *stabula*, *deversoria*, *synoecia* (all terms for lodging houses that typically served food and drink),¹⁰ as well as *popinae* and “*thermopolia*” (terms strictly for eating and drinking places).¹¹ It is also necessary to include such slang terms as *ganeum*, *ganea*, and *gurgustium*, which all mean “low dive,” and are often associated with the practice of prostitution.¹² It is difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish such places from “brothels” on the basis either of archaeological or literary evidence.¹³

Familiar examples of the establishments mentioned above include Catullus’s *salax taberna* (“sexually provocative tavern”) and Horace’s *fornix et uncta popina*, (“brothel and greasy cookhouse”), a phrase that might almost be read

6. See Hor. *Serm.* 1.5.82–85; Tac. *Hist.* 3.83.2; Apul. *Met.* 1.7–19 (though the client presents the sex as uncompensated); Ulp. D. 3.2.4.2; Ulp. D. 23.2.43 pr., 9; Alex. Sev. C. 4.56.3 (a. 225); Dio (in Xiph.) 62.15.3. Cf. the Mosaic regulation on marriage for priests recorded at *Ios. Ant.* 3.276 that prohibited unions with female vendors, innkeepers, and prostitutes. See also McGinn, “Definition” (1997[1998]).

7. See chap. 1.

8. See chap. 7.

9. On this issue, see Hermansen, *Ostia*, 196–203.

10. These words were often used interchangeably: see Frier, “Rental Market” (1977) 32–33, and below. On *synoecia*, see Rowell, “Satyricon” (1957) 222. For this reason, the argument of Kleberg, *Hôtels* (1957) 30–31 that *taberna* was strictly a wine shop appears unsustainable. The evidence he cites (5–6) for a change in meaning of *caupo* and *caupona* in the early Empire is not convincing. Furthermore, the terms used to designate operators of such establishments, such as *caupo* and *stabularius*, might overlap in meaning: see Földi, “*Caupones*” (1999). The fact that *stabulum/stabularius* might at times have a more specialized reference to facilities for travelers’ animals as well as for travelers themselves (see *OLD* s.h.v.) is irrelevant to our purpose.

11. *Thermopolium* is discredited as a modernizing usage by Kleberg, *Hôtels* (1957) 24–25; Wallace-Hadrill, “Public Honour and Private Shame” (1995) 45–46.

12. Kleberg, *Hôtels* (1957) 8–11.

13. The same point appears to hold for classical Athens: Lind, “*Hetärenhaus*” (1988) 162–63, 166–69.

as a hendiadys.¹⁴ Cicero describes an opponent exiting a *popina* with his head covered, a gesture associated with visiting a brothel.¹⁵ Columella puts *popinae* and brothels on a list of urban pleasures and notes that a slave who indulges in such pleasures is unreliable.¹⁶ In the *Copa* attributed to Vergil,¹⁷ sex is mentioned as one of the tavern's attractions, and the pattern suggested by these sources is supported by epigraphic evidence, such as the boasts *futui coponam* and *futui hospitam*.¹⁸ For Seneca, *formices* and *popinae* are equally the haunts and homes of pleasure.¹⁹ The juncture of *formix* and *stabulum* in an invective hurled by the elder Curio at Julius Caesar, is just as telling.²⁰

A caveat is in order here. Roman poets and graffiti writers were not always careful to specify whether the sex available in such places was commercial in nature, and we should not always simply assume this. Even when a price is given, we should be alert to the possible status of these claims as boasts, wishes, or insults. As with the identification of brothels, however, the precise (and admittedly difficult) evaluation of individual pieces of evidence can and should take second place to the confirmation of the overall trend. The practice of prostitution in inns and taverns was so common as to be taken for granted, as a famous graffiti burlesquing the settlement of a hotel bill suggests. Among the charges, the writer lists one for (the services of) a "girl" (*puella*), which, since no separate charge is given, evidently embraces the cost of a room.²¹

The sale of liquor, in particular, helped to create a sexually charged atmosphere in inns and taverns regardless of whether sex was for sale or not.²² It is difficult, even in light of ample comparative literature on this subject, to deter-

14. Catull. 37.1; Hor. *Ep.* 1.14.21.

15. Cic. *Pisonem* 13.

16. Colum. 1.8.2.

17. [Verg.] *Copa* 1–4, 33, with Rosivach, "Sociology" (1996). Cf. Iuv. 8.162: ". . . et cum venali Cyane succincta lagona" (" . . . and Cyane [runs up to the client] her tunic hitched up, with a wine-jug—for sale").

18. *CIL* 4.8442, 13.10018.95 (both mean "I fucked the mistress of the tavern"); cf. 4.4884, 8258–59.

19. Sen. *Vita Beata* 7.3.

20. Suet. *Iul.* 49.1.

21. *CIL* 9.2689 (= *ILS* 7478: Aesernia). Kleberg, *Hôtels* (1957) 82–84 points out that the operators of these establishments, variously described as *caupones*, *tabernarii*, *popinari*, and so forth are often assimilated to pimps. See also Apul. *Met.* 1.7.

22. See, for example, [Verg.] *Copa*; Apul. *Met.* 1.10 (cf. 2.17), with Moine, "Augustin" (1975) 358–59; Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 33.6, which associates pimps and wine sellers. See also Kleberg, *Hôtels* (1957) 109.

mine whether alcohol was more important for selling sex or sex for selling alcohol.²³ Certainly each tends to raise the cost of the other for the consumer, so that they both perhaps contributed much to the success of the brothel as a business. At the same time, the presence of one tends to raise the expectation of the other, making it very difficult to distinguish, say, a bar from a brothel.²⁴

The fluidity of terminology and the flexibility of arrangements illustrate an important truth about the extreme variety of Roman prostitution. Of interest for this discussion is the relationship between the practice of prostitution and Roman lower-class housing.²⁵ There is no small significance in the fact that one of the words commonly used for lodgings, *stabulum*, could also be used specifically for a brothel²⁶ and, when employed in this way, might even serve as a term of abuse.²⁷ The double meaning of *stabulum* was so firmly established that it could be relied on for humorous effect and is found in a joke in the *Satyricon*. Encolpius cannot find his lodgings (*stabulum*) and approaches an old woman selling vegetables for information.²⁸ She leads him to a brothel, tacitly casting an aspersion on his moral and social status, not to speak of his intelligence. Here the words *stabulum* and *habitare* simultaneously refer to both lodgings and brothel. Less subtle is the incident where Ascylytos asks directions to the *stabulum* (lodgings/brothel) and is led to the same location as Encolpius. A prostitute demands one *as* (= one-quarter of a sesterce) as a temporary room rental, heightening the irony implicit in the *contretemps*.²⁹

Other terms for lower-class lodgings, such as *deversorium*³⁰ and *meritorium*,³¹ were sometimes explicitly associated with the practice of prostitution, that is, as words for brothels. Such terms were used fairly indifferently by the

23. See, for example, Prus and Irini, *Hookers* (1980) 6; Rosen, *Sisterhood* (1982) 83–84; Reynolds, *Economics of Prostitution* (1986) 114; Schuster, *Frauenhaus* (1992) 66, 171; Hill, *Their Sisters' Keepers* (1993) 94, 197, 244; Bernstein, *Sonia's Daughters* (1995) 151; Seigle, *Yoshiwara* (1993) 24.

24. The point is made by Trillmich, "Charitengruppe" (1983) 347–48.

25. See also the discussion of the Pompeian Purpose-Built Brothel in chap. 8.

26. Cic. *Phil.* 2.69; Val. Max. 7.7.7; Suet. *Iul.* 49.1.

27. OLD, s.v. "*stabulum* 2c."

28. Petron. 7. See chap. 9.

29. Petron. 8. On renting out rooms in a brothel for sex, see chap. 7.

30. See Cic. *Phil.* 2.104–5, where the former villa of Varro becomes a *libidinum deversorium*, and thus the haunt of both male and female prostitutes, as well as more respectable debauchees; Sen. *Ep.* 51.3, whose reference to Baiae as a *deversorium vitiorum* is clear enough; Apul. *Pl.* 1.13, where the physical location of the appetitive portion of the Platonic soul is associated with some unsavory places, including the "haunts of worthlessness and extravagance" ("*deversoria nequitiae atque luxuriae*").

31. At Schol. *ad Iuv.* 6.125, 127, *meritorium* is used for a prostitute's *cella*, if it does not refer to the brothel itself. See also Firm. Mat. *Math.* 3.6.22; *Iuv.* 3.234 (perhaps); *HA Tac.* 10.2.

Romans, as noted above, so that the association with prostitution might have been in a sense cumulative. Moreover, *stabulum*, in its neutral sense, was often equated with these other terms.³² *Stabulum*, *hospitium*, *taberna*, *deversorium*, and so forth were used to denote places that catered to a chiefly lower-class clientele composed both of travelers and more or less permanent residents in the city and predominately the former group in the countryside.³³

The practice of prostitution was common in all such places. Of great interest are passages that seem to equate, in moral terms, a visit to a *popina*, *taberna*, or even a *balneum* [bath] with a visit to a brothel in that for persons of rank such a visit incurred disgrace.³⁴ While, as we shall see, the Romans had differing opinions about the propriety of visiting the baths, especially when both genders were present, they consistently viewed a visit to a *popina* or *taberna* in the same light as a visit to a brothel. They felt this way, it appears, not simply because venal sex was readily available in these venues (which would make them brothels using our definition), but above all because they fostered social mixing, as a famous passage of Juvenal describing the clientele of a *popina* makes clear.³⁵

Other factors helped secure the connection between brothel and tavern, and disgrace in the mind of the male elite. Apuleius makes a casual link between prostitutes and daytime drinking as constituent pleasures of the tav-

32. *Stabulum* is associated with *meritoria*: Ulp. D. 17.2.52.15; CIL 6.15640. It also is associated with *cauponae*, *deversoria*, and *meritoria*: PS 2.31.16. Note also the linkage of *caupones* with *stabularii* in clauses of the Praetor's Edict: Lenel, *Edictum*³ (1927) 131, 333–34, with Földi, “*Caupones*” (1999).

33. This is the conclusion of Frier, “Rental Market” (1977) 34. See also Rosenfeld, “Innkeeping” (1998) 145, 147.

34. See Plaut. *Curc.* 292–94 (covering heads); Cic. *Pisonem* 13 (covering the head, see also *Phil.* 2.77), *Phil.* 2.69 (Antony turns bedrooms into *stabula* and dining rooms into *popinae*); Colum. 1.8.2; Sen. *Vita Beata* 7.3; Suet. *Nero* 26–27 (cf. *Cal.* 11, *Vit.* 7.3, 13.3, *Gramm.* 15); Tac. *Ann.* 13.25.1; *Viv.-Cels.-Ulp.* D. 4.8.21.11 (cf. Paul. D. 47.10.26); Dio (in Xiph.) 62.15.3; Aur. *Vict. Caes.* 33.6; *HA Verus* 4.5–6 (this emperor's alleged establishment of a *popina* in his house parallels the usage, real or imagined, of in-house brothels: see chap. 5) *Comm.* 3.7, *Trig. Tyr.* 3.4, 8.9, 9.1, 29.1. Cf. Petron. 8; Lucian. *Dial. Mort.* 10.11; *Hist. Ap. Tyr.* 34. For evidence from Josephus, see Rosenfeld, “Innkeeping” (1998) 141–43. Of course some of these authors invent or exaggerate behaviors associated with a visit to such places; it is the association itself with brothels that is important. See also chap. 3.

35. Iuv. 8.158–62, 171–82. See also Plaut. *Curc.* 288–95, *Poen.* 829–35, *Pseud.* 178, *Trin.* 1018–23; Hor. *Serm.* 1.5.4; Sen. *Prov.* 5.4; Athen. 13.566F–567A; Amm. Marc. 14.1.9, 14.6.25, 28.4.21; *HA Verus* 4.5–6. See [Quint.] *Decl. Mai.* 14.7, which makes the body of the prostitute the locus of social mixing. Social mixing in the sense of contact between Jews and non-Jews might occasion disquiet about inns in late Hellenistic Palestine: see Rosenfeld, “Innkeeping” (1998) 140.

ern (*luxuria popinalis*).³⁶ Drink, often available in or near brothels, spelled excess and potential disorder to members of the upper classes.³⁷ Like brothels, taverns could be violent³⁸ and physically unpleasant or, to be exact, greasy, dirty, damp, noisy, roach-infested, and smoky.³⁹ Other elite biases more specific to eating places fostered objections to consuming food while seated instead of reclining or simply to eating in public at all.⁴⁰ The association between these places of public resort and prostitution remained so strong that the Christian church repeatedly forbade clerics from visiting inns on journeys except in cases of dire necessity.⁴¹

The association of prostitution with lower-class lodging is unsurprising, and modern parallels are not lacking.⁴² Nonetheless this association has important implications. Certain districts such as the Subura in Rome may have had a higher concentration of such activity, not because they functioned in any true sense as “red-light districts,” but simply because these areas had a greater concentration of lower-class housing or residential buildings *tout court*.

The evidence suggests that Roman cities did not have clearly demarcated neighborhoods for the rich and poor. A pattern of limited clustering, rather than strict segregation, is what emerges from recent studies of places such as Roman Britain,⁴³ Egypt,⁴⁴ Pompeii,⁴⁵ Volubilis,⁴⁶ and Rome itself.⁴⁷ Here the

36. Apul. *Met.* 8.1.

37. Plaut. *Poen.* 661, 699–700, 834–35. See the remarks of Toner, *Leisure* (1995) esp. 77.

38. Prop. 4.8.19. On violence in brothels, see chap. 3.

39. Plaut. *Poen.* 835; Lucil. 11W; Cic. *Pisonem* 13; Hor. *Serm.* 2.4.62, *Ep.* 1.14.21, 1.17.6–8, *Ar.* 229; [Verg.] *Copa* 3; Iuv. 11.78–81; Gell. 9.2.6; Sid. Apoll. *Ep.* 8.11.3.42–44; Aus. *Mos.* 124; *HA Hadr.* 16.4. See Kleberg, *Hôtels* (1957) 96–97.

40. Mart. 5.70.3; Amm. Marc. 28.4.4; cf. the animus against eating in a brothel registered at Sen. *Contr.* 1.2.11, 16.

41. See, for example, *Brev. Hipp.* 26 CCSL 149.40 (Carthage, A.D. 393) with Herter, s.v. “Dirne,” 1205; Dauphin, “Bordels” (1998) 182–83.

42. Especially noteworthy is the case of Victorian England, where a large proportion of prostitutes lived in lower-class lodgings, apparently beyond the control of pimps: Walkowitz, *Prostitution* (1980) 24. For American evidence, see Goldman, *Gold Diggers* (1981) 59–63; Rosen, *Sisterhood* (1982) 78–80.

43. Clarke, “Pre-Industrial City” (1993) 56, who finds some quite disparate patterns, to be sure. See also 63 and 65.

44. Alston and Alston, “Urbanism” (1997) 211–16; Alston, *City* (2002) esp. 172, 183–84.

45. The dominant thesis of recent studies (apart evidently from the question of brothel location) is Pompeii had no social zoning: see Packer, “Middle and Lower Class Housing” (1975) 134; Raper, “Analysis of the Urban Structure” (1977) 191, 204, 207, 216, 218; Raper, “Pompeii” (1979) 137–48; Jongman, *Economy* (1988) 270–71; Perring, “Spatial Organisation” (1991) 284; Wallace-Hadrill, “Elites and Trade” (1991) 250; Dyson, *Community and Society* (1992) 176–77; Laurence, *Roman Pompeii* (1994) 121; Wallace-Hadrill, *Houses and Society* (1994) 65–90; Lau-

highest concentration of senatorial houses was in a part of the city (*Regiones* 3 and 4) where the Subura, commonly regarded by modern scholars as a brothel-district, was located.⁴⁸ I do not deny that the Subura had its brothels and its prostitutes.⁴⁹ But the brothels were just one element in the urban mix of residential (both upper- and lower-class) and commercial buildings. If any one factor made for a somewhat higher concentration of brothels in the Subura it was the relative absence of public construction, which would have meant more emphasis on residential and commercial establishments overall. Nevertheless, the presence of prostitution in the Subura was likely to have been more a matter of perception than reality. Its proximity to the Forum heightened its profile in the eyes of the male members of the elite who wrote the texts that define for us the nature of life in the capital.⁵⁰ A recent survey of the Roman urban matrix in various cities shows a broad integration of residential and commercial, public and private, rich and poor.⁵¹

rence, "Organization of Space" (1995) 65; Parkins, "Consumer City" (1997) 87; Robinson, "Social Texture" (1997) 142; Pirson, *Mietwohnungen* (1999) 140–41, 161–64. (Pirson argues that rental housing fostered social integration, which has obvious implications for the location of brothels); Schoonhoven, "Residences" (1999). It is not clear to me how Robinson's reliance on Fiorelli's *Regiones* vitiates his analysis, as has been argued. Any modern topographical scheme is bound to be somewhat arbitrary, and for Robinson to invent his own would have raised suspicions of a *petitio principii*. For an attempt to discern elements of the ancient organization of the city, see Van Andringa, "Autels" (2000). Zanker, *Pompeii* (1998) 41–42, lends support to Robinson's conclusions about the distribution of elite houses (though cf. Zanker, 8). *Regio* 7 did have a relatively high concentration of tradesmen and artisans: Zanker 33.

46. See Wallace-Hadrill, "Elites and Trade" (1991) 261.

47. See Ramage, "Urban Problems" (1983) 86–88; Purcell "Plebs Urbana" (1994) 675; Wallace-Hadrill, "Case" (2000) 204–12 (who emphasizes the numerous instances of social mixing within individual *insulae*); Kardos, "Vrbs" (2001) 397 (for the Esquiline; for the Subura, see note 48); Lo Cascio, "Population" (2001) 193.

48. Eck, "Cum Dignitate Otium" (1997) 177, 181, 183; cf. Guilhembet, "Densité" (1996) (esp. 15: though aristocratic houses were in all parts of the city, they clustered in certain areas). Eck, to be sure, locates these dwellings on the hills. For a clearer, and utterly convincing, presentation of the Subura as a locus of elite as well as lower-class housing, see Welch, *LTUR* (1999) s.v. "Subura" 382. (I thank Andrew Wallace-Hadrill for this reference.) For literary representations of the Subura, see also Gold, "Urban Life" (1998) 57–61. In Juvenal's work, notes Gold, the Subura is a kind of "Rome-plus," in which the most dystopian elements of life in the capital are concentrated, that is, exaggerated. According to Kardos, "Vrbs" (2001) 393, Martial and Juvenal suggest a decidedly mixed commercial and residential use in this area.

49. See, for example, Prop. 4.7.15; Persius 5.32–33; Mart. 2.17.1, 6.66.1–2, 9.37.1, 11.61.3–4, 11.78.11, *Priap.* 40; and the discussion in note 48.

50. "The district gained notoriety because it happened to be close to the *Forum Romanum*, the center of elite activity. It was for this reason that the S. became the proverbial demimonde of the Latin poets": Welch, *LTUR* (1999) 4:383.

51. Owens, "Residential Districts" (1996).

Because of this integration, we can expect to find brothels in many different areas. Beginning in the second century at the latest, they will have followed the *insulae*, which were scattered throughout the city.⁵² Finally, this connection suggests an answer to the mystery of the apparent lack of brothels in Ostia; that is, we might conclude that they simply cannot be distinguished from the abundant lower-class housing excavated in that city.⁵³

Sex and Circuses

In addition to lower-class residences and restaurants, all places of public entertainment were commonly associated with the practice of prostitution, including circuses, theaters, and amphitheaters.⁵⁴ The arcades of these buildings contained a variety of shops and strolling vendors in a venue somewhat akin to that of a modern shopping mall.⁵⁵ The setting was a convenient one for prostitutes to solicit clients, a practice that attracted the attention of Christian critics. A text attributed to Cyprian, the bishop of Carthage in the mid-third century, states that the entrance to the circus leads through the brothel.⁵⁶ Years later, Isidore of Seville notes that young men exiting the theater would cover their heads as though stepping into a brothel.⁵⁷ It is possible that space in the arcades of the amphitheater in Pompeii was leased to prostitutes or their exploiters by local officials.⁵⁸ Taken together, this evidence suggests that prostitutes were a more or less permanent feature of these public

52. See chaps. 7 and 8.

53. See chap. 7.

54. According to *HA Elag.* 26.3 (see also 32.9), Elagabalus knew to find prostitutes for his purposes at the circus, theater, stadium, and baths. On prostitutes at the amphitheater, see Statius *Silvae* 1.6.67; at the circus, see Lucil. 1071W; Hor. *Serm.* 1.6.113; *Priap.* 27; Iuv. 3.65–66 (this source suggests that prostitutes soliciting outside of brothels were not necessarily free of pimps: “ad circum iussas prostare puellas” (cf. *Anth. Lat.* 190.7R); Suet. *Nero* 27.2. The portico at the Theater of Pompey was such a familiar venue for the solicitation of clients that the association was elevated to a literary topos: Catull. 55.6–10; Prop. 4.8.75; Ov. *Ars* 1.67, 3.387; Mart. 11.47.3. For other porticoes cited by Propertius and Ovid as haunts of prostitutes, see Kardos, “*Vrbs*” (2001) 402 n. 72.

55. Astrologers, street performers, musicians, and others were found in the arcades of circuses, theaters, and amphitheaters: Hor. *Serm.* 1.6.113–14; Iuv. 6.588–91; Tac. *Ann.* 15.38.2; Suet. *Aug.* 74; *CIL* 6.9822 (= *ILS* 7496).

56. [Cypr.] *Spect.* 5 CSEL 3.3.8.

57. Isid. *Orig.* 19.26.2. Adams, “Words” (1983) 357, explains the etymology of a term for prostitute, *lodix* (which literally means “covering,” “blanket”), on the basis of this passage. *HA Elag.* 32.9 may mock an earlier version of this Christian criticism.

58. See chap. 5.

buildings and did not simply appear on the days of performances, when a larger number of potential clients probably attracted more prostitutes than usual.⁵⁹

Another type of public building where prostitutes might be found was temples. The evidence derives from authors as diverse as Plautus, Juvenal, and Dio of Prusa.⁶⁰ Juvenal, in assimilating adulteresses to prostitutes, asks “. . . quo non prostat femina templo?”⁶¹ Temples were evidently regarded as hotbeds of adultery and prostitution.⁶²

Baths

The Roman baths under the Principate developed from popular recreational venues to multipurpose entertainment centers as well as to municipal and—especially at Rome—imperial showcases.⁶³ The procedure of taking a bath was for the Romans a complex and varied activity; in addition to participating in the bath itself, they might engage in a number of other diversions ranging from weightlifting to philosophical discourse. Most importantly, food, drink, and sex were all for sale.⁶⁴ The baths, above all in their public, imperially funded form, were pleasure palaces dedicated to the principle of enjoyment. They celebrated beauty, luxury, love, and sexual charm.⁶⁵ Even smaller, privately owned operations might offer a taste of these attractions, however.⁶⁶

59. The escapades described at Suet. *Nero* 27.2 took place, of course, on a special occasion, though they include some of the more pathological behaviors associated with the *comissatio* (drinking party): see chap. 3.

60. Plaut. *Poen.* 265–70, 339; Dio Chrys. 7.133–34; Iuv. 6.489 (Isis as a *lena*).

61. Iuv. 9.24: “. . . at what temple does a woman not prostitute herself?” See also chap. 9.

62. See Herter, “Soziologie” (1960) 86; Dyson and Prior, “Horace, Martial, and Rome,” 254. The Christians, as one might expect, have plenty to say about the association of temples with adultery and prostitution. See, for example, Tert. *Apol.* 15.7 CCSL 1.114; Min. Fel. 25.11 Kytzler 24.

63. See, for example, Kleberg, *Hôtels* (1957) 106. On the design of Roman baths, see Yegül, *Baths*, (1992). Evidence from the Republic shows no explicit attestation of prostitutes at the baths, leading Bruun, “Water” (1997) 371, to argue for their absence. But this may simply be a function of the less abundant material for that period. In my view, Cicero’s treatment, in his defense of M. Caelius Rufus, of the famous scene at the Senian Baths depends on a close association between prostitutes and baths in the minds of his audience, and so forms a part of his general characterization of Clodia as a *meretrix*: *Cael.* 62–67.

64. See Fagan, *Bathing in Public* (1999) 32–36; Kardos, “*Vrbs*” (2001) 411.

65. See Dunbabin, “*Baiarum grata voluptas*” (1989) 19–20 (representations of Apolausis), 23–24, 32 (representations of Aphrodite/Venus), 28 (representations of Eros).

66. Note the promises of the pimp at Plaut. *Poen.* 699–703. For further discussion of privately owned baths offering sex for sale at Pompeii, see chap. 7.

Commercial sex was only one of several sensual pleasures that were associated with the bath.⁶⁷ Prostitution is hardly unique to the baths in ancient Rome, as surviving evidence for medieval England, France, Germany, and Japan suggests, but the precise role it played in the context of the Roman baths presents some unusual features worth exploring in detail.⁶⁸

Roman attitudes toward sex, status, and the bath are difficult to read.⁶⁹ This much seems clear, however. Male attendants were employed in baths used by females and vice versa.⁷⁰ The status of bath workers was evidently low, like that of prostitutes, with slaves and freedpersons being the majority.⁷¹ At least some workers in some baths were prostituted by bath keepers, who thereby qualified as pimps under the Praetor's Edict.⁷² Freelancers offered the employees competition and perhaps made offsite arrangements in some cases.⁷³ The sex sold by employees, however, seems more likely to have occurred at the baths themselves and not elsewhere. Though we cannot reasonably expect the archaeological record to preserve unambiguous evidence of this, there are some indications in the literary and epigraphic record that this was the case.⁷⁴

We do well to avoid the trap set for us by the sources and assume that no respectable woman would attend the baths when men were present.⁷⁵ There was, to be sure, some sensitivity about this. Prostitutes, as noted in chapter 7, might visit the baths strictly as bathers, a fact that helps raise the crux of the problem of respectability. The sources transmit some very mixed signals on

67. See, for example, Zajac, "Thermae" (1999).

68. For comparative evidence, see chap. 7.

69. For a useful discussion, which does not to my mind quite resolve the problem, see Toner, *Leisure and Ancient Rome* (1995) 53–64. See also Papi "Delenimenta" (1999) esp. 721–24.

70. Youtie, "Records" (1949/1973) 991. Iuv. 6.422–23 has a masseur sexually servicing a female patron. Juvenal may be reverse reading a service provided to male bathers. See also Mart. 7.67.

71. Wissemann, "Personal" (1984); Nielsen, *Thermae* 1 (1990) 126–30.

72. The jurist Ulpian specifically mentions personnel hired to watch bathers' clothing who worked as prostitutes at the behest of the *balneator* ("bath keeper"): D. 3.2.4.2. Cf. *Anth. Gr.* 5.82.

73. See Mart. 3.93.14–15 (which does not to my mind imply that only prostitutes were admitted); Amm. Marc. 28.4.9; *HA Elag.* 26.3.

74. Lucian. *Hippias* 5 implies that facilities for sex were a standard feature of the baths according to Nielsen, *Thermae* 1 (1990):146 n. 4; Jacobelli, *Terme Suburbane* (1995) 92. See also the erotic graffiti at the Suburban Baths in Herculaneum, some of which imply the availability of venal sex, even if they cannot be taken literally: *CIL* 4.10674–78, with Della Corte, "Iscrizioni" (1958) 306–7. Again, a series of small rooms at the Sarno Baths of Pompeii that were employed for toweling, massaging, and anointing clients with oil most likely served as a venue for prostitution: see chap. 7.

75. See Ward, "Women" (1992) 134–39, 143–44; Dauphin, "Brothels" (1996).

the subject of women and men bathing together.⁷⁶ What is remarkable is not the criticism,⁷⁷ which seems to have inspired at least one attempt at legislation,⁷⁸ but the widespread popularity of mixed bathing, a popularity that seems to have increased in the early Principate.⁷⁹

It is difficult to overemphasize the strangeness of the phenomenon, strange, that is, from what we can reconstruct of the Roman perspective itself. The paradox is that social mixing, which received vigorous disapprobation in the context of the cook shop, was widely practiced in buildings that were prized as public assets rather than shunned as low dives.⁸⁰ Aristocrats were evidently free to patronize baths but risked their reputations if they set foot in a brothel or *popina*.⁸¹ The logic seems similar to that which despises small-scale retailing but honors large-scale wholesaling, a sheer contradiction perhaps to anyone but a Roman.⁸² It finds at least a partial analogy in the popularity of luxury latrines of the imperial period, themselves municipal showcases designed to attract and cater to the needs above all of an elite clientele.⁸³ No

76. Sources and discussion in Merten, *Bäder* (1983) 79–100; Ward, “Women” (1992) 139–42; Fagan, *Bathing in Public* (1999) 26–29. See *AE* 1987.179, an epitaph in which a husband praises his deceased wife for never going to the baths (*inter alia*) without him.

77. See, for example, Plin. *NH* 29.26, 33.153; *Iuv.* 6.419–25. Some Romans display sensitivity even over nudity and/or bathing with members of the same sex: Ennius *apud* Cic. *Tusc.* 4.70; Cic. *De Orat.* 2.224; Cic. *Off.* 1.129; Val. Max. 2.1.7; Plut. *Cato Maior* 20.5; Ambros. *Off.* 1.79 *CUF* 1.134–35; *HA Gord.* 6.4. These sources suggest that Brown’s assertion about the “long survival of indifference to nudity in Roman public life” needs to be modified. See “Late Antiquity” (1987) 245.

78. We can only be reasonably certain about one such attempt, by Hadrian, which is recorded at Dio (in Xiph.) 69.8.2. Scholars are rightly skeptical about the various reports of such measures preserved by the *Historia Augusta*: see Merten, *Bäder* (1983) 89–92, 97–100; Ward, “Women” (1992) 139–42. Dio’s evidence, however, is difficult to ignore, as Merten acknowledges. All the same, a text by Clement of Alexandria suggests that mixed bathing was still popular in his day: *Paed.* 3.5.32 *SC* 158.72.

79. Fagan, *Bathing in Public* (1999) 27, suggests sensibly that Romans could choose between mixed and single-sex bathing establishments, but in my view presses this point too far. For one thing, such a choice could not feasibly be provided in every locale. Moreover Fagan’s prude/pervert dichotomy strikes me as implausible for the Romans. Some, I believe, preferred to bathe in private or only with members of their own sex, while others paraded their modesty by pretending to ignore the nudity or near-nudity of the people around them. The absence of a strict polarity of virtue and vice in the baths is precisely what generated both intense interest and criticism. See Ward, “Women” (1992) 137; Jacobelli, *Terme Suburbane* (1995) 94–95, and Fagan’s own comments at 51.

80. All the same, consorting with prostitutes at the baths might earn a person censure: Suet. *Dom.* 22; *HA Comm.* 5.4.

81. See chap. 3.

82. See, for example, Cic. *Off.* 1.150–51.

83. See Neudecker, *Pracht der Latrine* (1994) esp. 150–53.

one will be shocked to learn that many of these establishments were located in or near baths.⁸⁴

Not that it renders the problem any easier to resolve, but it is worth observing that an important difference between *popina* and bath lies in the fact that in the latter case the visitors were without all or most of their clothes.⁸⁵ Lack of what were otherwise socially—in some cases legally—obligatory social markers must have made it more challenging to rank the players without the proverbial scorecard,⁸⁶ and so perhaps heightened interest in attendance at the baths.⁸⁷ Social promiscuity of this sort enhanced an atmosphere of sexual intrigue that must have been good for business, especially the business of venal sex.⁸⁸ Bathing fostered sexual attractiveness.⁸⁹ The point might seem obvious, but merits emphasis in the context of a Mediterranean calculus of honor/shame that at another point of the spectrum discourages all bathing for women precisely for this reason.⁹⁰ It is unsurprising that *balnea vina venus* served as a Roman slogan for the good life.⁹¹

Special Events

Prostitutes were drawn to a variety of occasions that attracted a crowd of people, including potential clients, such as markets, fairs, and public shows of every kind.⁹² As a result, many prostitutes and pimps were not tied to a specific

84. Neudecker, *Pracht der Latrine* (1994) 83–91.

85. As Fagan, *Bathing in Public* (1999) 25, observes, the much-vexed question of whether Roman bathers were completely nude or scantily clad is of little practical import. Cf. Nielsen, *Thermae* 1 (1990) 140–42.

86. For legal rules on status-appropriate clothing, see McGinn, *Prostitution, Sexuality, and the Law* (1998) chap. 5.

87. So the parties held by Commodus at the baths, in which respectable women and prostitutes allegedly mixed, would have had added spice to the scene there: *HA Comm.* 5.4.

88. See Ov. *Ars* 3.639–40; Mart. 2.70, 3.72, 11.47.1–2, 5–6, 11.75. The baths had a reputation as a venue for illicit sex, that is, adultery: Quint. *IO* 5.9.14; Ulp. D. 48.5.10(9).1. On Ulpian's text, see McGinn, *Prostitution, Sexuality, and the Law* (1998) 242. For same-sex attraction, see Petron. 92; Mart. 1.23, 1.96.

89. Dunbabin, "*Baiaurum grata voluptas*" (1989) 12.

90. See Horden and Purcell, *Corrupting Sea* (2000) 491.

91. For evidence and discussion, see Kajanto, "Balnea" (1969).

92. There is an abundance of comparative evidence to support this assertion. See, for example, Symanski, "Prostitution in Nevada" (1974) 371; Rossiaud, "Prostitution, Youth, and Society" (1978) 4; Finnegan, *Poverty* (1979) 25; Bernstein, *Sonia's Daughters* (1995) 155; Schuster, *Freien Frauen* (1995) 45. On the importance of fairs and festivals in fostering a great mobility of persons in the Mediterranean, see Horden and Purcell, *Corrupting Sea* (2000) 432–44; cf. 380–81. See also the essays in Lo Cascio, *Mercati* (2000).

location but traveled broadly in the manner of the *fahrendes Volk* of the Middle Ages.⁹³ We find their presence registered at festivals and the like,⁹⁴ circuit courts,⁹⁵ and military encampments, even—or especially—when the army was on campaign.⁹⁶ The evidence from Egypt merits emphasis here. It tells us that on at least three occasions prostitutes were given special permission by tax collectors to ply their trade on a particular day.⁹⁷ These were almost certainly days when festivals, fairs, or similar occasions took place. Visitors to religious events and centers might have had more than one motive. In this context pilgrimage and tourism could be viewed as two sides of the same coin.

Prostitutes also attended dinner parties.⁹⁸ The atmosphere of these functions was often sexually charged, owing not only to the presence of these women, but to the dramatic entertainment being offered, to the room decor and table service, which often featured erotic representations, and to the other guests, who might include persons of doubtful or even unknown status.⁹⁹

The principle of circulation adumbrated here suggests an important fact about some prostitutes in the Roman world: they were mobile. Not only did clients travel to prostitutes, but prostitutes to clients. Mobility in this context must not, of course, be confused with freedom.¹⁰⁰ The lives of these prosti-

93. See the story of the traveling pimp and his prostitutes who mysteriously disappear during a nocturnal earthquake in Carura, a village on the border of Phrygia and Caria: Strabo 12.8.17. Roman comedy also has examples of some rather mobile pimps, such as Labrax in Plautus's *Rudens* and Sannio in Terence's *Adelphoi*. The entertainers in third-century Dura-Europos might also qualify: see chap. 8.

94. See Strabo 12.3.36 (Pontic Comana, already popular for a shrine and festivals dedicated to the goddess Ma, had large numbers of resident prostitutes who attracted many visitors in their own right: Strabo alleges, perhaps in error, that most of these women were sacred prostitutes); Dio Chrys. 77/78.4 (Thermopylae, the meeting place of the Delphic Amphictyony, attracted traveling pimps with their prostitutes).

95. See Dio Chrys. 35.15–16: Apamea Celaenae, every other year, with De Ligt, *Fairs* (1993) 226–27, 254–55, who places circuit courts in a broader economic context. On the “connectivity” of Apamea Celaenae, see Horden and Purcell, *Corrupting Sea* (2000) 392.

96. See Val. Max. 2.7.1; Frontinus *Strat.* 4.1.1; App. *Hispan.* 85: Scipio Aemilianus's ejection of prostitutes before Numantia suggests their presence was otherwise taken for granted, but cf. [Quint.] *Decl.* 3.12. For evidence of actresses, musicians, and dancers among the camp followers, see Petrikovits, “Lixae” (1980/1991). Many of these doubled as prostitutes to judge from the evidence from Dura-Europos examined in chap. 8. Overall, the evidence for the association between soldiers and prostitutes is surprisingly thin: see Wesch-Klein, *Soziale Aspekte* (1998) 115 n. 79.

97. For evidence and literature see McGinn, *Prostitution, Sexuality, and the Law* (1998) 279–80. Also see Montserrat, *Sex and Society* (1996) 126–29.

98. On pimps as banquet caterers, see Hor. *Serm.* 2.3.226–32.

99. See Fisher, “Associations” (1988) 1208, whose presentation, though somewhat antiquarian, is at bottom persuasive. On prostitution and the drinking party, or *comissatio*, see chap. 3.

100. See Horden and Purcell, *Corrupting Sea* (2000) 383.

tutes, therefore, did not radically differ from the lives of those confined to a brothel, a phenomenon explored above all in chapter 8.¹⁰¹ Women—whether slaves or not—were a valuable commodity and exploitable as a resource that could be trafficked like any other.¹⁰² Female performers were one part of this traffic, prostitutes another, and sometimes the two categories overlapped.¹⁰³

Other Venues

The preceding discussion may foster the impression that prostitution was virtually universal in the Roman world. This was not, in fact, the case. Prostitution was widespread, but not universal. The elite Roman male did much to exaggerate this notion of universality because he was liable to identify almost any lower-class woman as a prostitute, especially if she worked in a trade that exposed her to indiscriminate contact with males outside of her family, that is, in any part of the Roman service economy, from selling vegetables in the marketplace to serving wine in a bar.¹⁰⁴ In this light, for example, Martial's insinuations about the Suburan *tonstrix* appear to reflect this simple bias rather than to serve as evidence that permits us to conclude that hairdressers typically worked as prostitutes.¹⁰⁵ A similar point holds for Plautus's *alicariae* ("mill-girls"), whose identification as prostitutes owes as much to modern ideas of whore-taxonomy as to ancient attempts to make sense of the text, which is far from clear.¹⁰⁶ What perhaps influenced ancient elite males to entertain suspicions of prostitution is paradoxically that mills were places where the sexes might routinely encounter each other without sex being the only or most

101. Heyl, *Madam* (1979) 95, records a high turnover rate for a modern brothel, where the average stay for a prostitute is six months.

102. See Horden and Purcell, *Corrupting Sea* (2000) 379.

103. To my mind, Horden and Purcell, *Corrupting Sea* (2000) 386, risk overrating the essentially "male" aspect of human mobility in the ancient Mediterranean (cf. 389, 391 on the Middle Ages and 447 on traveling performers, a number of whom must have been women).

104. See the evidence and discussion in McGinn, "Definition" (1997[1998]) esp. 89–97, 107–12. DeFelice, *Roman Hospitality* (2001) deserves honorable mention here for a noble, if uncontrolled, attempt to combat the misogyny of the sources.

105. Mart. 2.17; cf. Plaut. *Truc.* 405–6.

106. Plaut. *Poen.* 266. Festus 7L takes a sexual joke (*alicariae* = "women who deal in grain" becomes "women who grind" or "are ground") and turns it into a job description: see Adams, "Words" (1983) 335–37. The bakery scam reported at Socr. *HE* 5.18 PG 67.609–13 suggests no more in this regard than that prostitutes were associated with *popinae*, hardly a novelty.

obvious purpose.¹⁰⁷ This does not mean, however, that no mill-girl ever doubled as a prostitute.¹⁰⁸

For this reason we have no way to be absolutely certain whether the Pompeian (*h*)*alicaria* Glyco, if she were a prostitute, was a part-timer or this term simply functioned as slang for “prostitute.”¹⁰⁹ The sad truth is that the elite male misogyny of our literary texts almost certainly blurs to the vanishing point a flourishing part-time and casual economy of prostitution.¹¹⁰ This leaves us ill-equipped at times even to interpret a simple epigraph in a satisfactory manner.

To put the problem another way, there is a parallel danger of hyperskepticism over the extent of prostitution in the Roman world. Its widespread nature is first suggested by a wealth of comparative evidence that shows lower-class women in a variety of trades who do supplement their incomes by resorting to prostitution.¹¹¹ In other words, it is quite possible to read the bias of the sources as a kind of backhanded acknowledgment of the existence of part-time and/or cyclical prostitution in the Roman world. What is more, not all prostitutes remained in a brothel, but went out to solicit customers or simply worked in the streets independently of a brothel.¹¹² Thus the presence of prostitutes in forum or marketplace is securely attested, whatever exaggerations may safely be ascribed to class and gender bias.¹¹³

The breadth and variety of the evidence for prostitution is suggestive. Any attempt at quantification is clearly out of the question, but it is clear that prostitution must be regarded as a major service industry in the Roman world.

107. See the insult leveled against Octavian’s mother by Cassius of Parma recorded at Suet. *Aug.* 4.2. For a parallel example from medieval Germany, see Schuster, *Freien Frauen* (1995) 221. Cf. the medieval English attitude toward laundresses: Karras, *Common Women* (1996) 54–55.

108. For insight into the nature of this problem, see, for example, the discussion of the occupational backgrounds of nineteenth-century New York City prostitutes in Gilfoyle, *City of Eros* (1992) esp. 59–61.

109. *CIL* 4.3999, 4001. Glyco is otherwise attested as a male name: Hor. *Ep.* 1.1.30; Suet. *Aug.* 11.

110. For more discussion of the problem of part-time and casual prostitution, see below in this chap. in the section on “Recruitment.”

111. See Finnegan, *Poverty* (1979) 24, 29, 73, 168, 202–5; Mahood, *Magdalenes*, 6, 58–59, 84, 116, 130–34, 150–51. I concede that no small part of this evidence may have arisen from the same sort of prejudice that colors the Roman sources on the subject, and I have tried to eliminate obvious examples of this.

112. For late antiquity, see Proc. *Aed.* 1.9.4–5; Iustinian. Nov. 14 (a. 535). These sources show that both prostitutes who worked in and those outside of the brothel might be subject to the control of pimps.

113. See chap. 9.

Brothels also existed in rural areas, anywhere, in fact, where clients could be found.¹¹⁴ Nevertheless, prostitution was overwhelmingly an urban phenomenon, one of the distinct pleasures of life in town.¹¹⁵ In cities, prostitution was fairly pervasive, at least in lower-class milieus, a fact supported by evidence that the clients of the establishments surveyed here were themselves typically of low status. Even so, considerations of commercial advantage, rather than Christianizing concerns with public morality or the aesthetics of the public sphere, determined the widespread presence of venal sex in Roman urban contexts.¹¹⁶

OWNERSHIP OF BROTHELS

Over the past quarter century, increasing attention has been paid to the investments in urban property made by members of the Roman upper classes. The evidence has shown the elite invested not only in upper-class housing such as the *domus* and the better sort of *insulae*, but also in the kinds of housing described in the preceding paragraphs.¹¹⁷ Though the ancient economy was overwhelmingly agricultural,¹¹⁸ comparative data suggests that as much as

114. Inns too were located outside of cities and might offer the services of prostitutes. Varro *RR* 1.2.23; Suet. *Claud.* 38.2 (the scene is possibly urban); *CIL* 9.2689 (= *ILS* 7478). See also Gassner, *Kaufläden* (1986) 79. For brothels outside cities in the Byzantine period, see Magoulias, "Bathhouse" (1971) 238, 241, 246; Leontsini, *Prostitution* (1989) 70–72. For other cultures, see Butler, *Daughters of Joy* (1987) 7–8 (nineteenth-century American West); Karras, *Common Women* (1996) 24–25 (medieval England).

115. See, for example, Hor. *Ep.* 1.14.18–26; Tac. *Hist.* 3.83.2; cf. Iuv. 11.81. Of course, the emphasis laid by the sources on this aspect is not simply a reflection of reality but of a moralizing bias. For a discussion about the criticism directed at entertainments in the city, see chap. 9.

116. For the complete argument, see chap. 3. Tombs perhaps functioned as improvised brothels (or at least cribs); they offered shelter and were aptly located near main gates and roads, as brothels themselves were: Catull. 59; Mart. 1.34.8, 3.93.15; Iuv. 6.016 (prostitutes thought to practice their trade near the city's walls perhaps used tombs for sex: see Mart. 1.34.6, 3.82.2, 11.61.2, 12.32.22). For the same reasons, tombs served as a refuge for squatters and as lavatories: Scobie, "Slums" (1986) 402–3.

117. For an overview of upper-class investment in urban property, see Garnsey, "Investment" (1976). For a detailed description of Cicero's management of his urban properties, see Frier, "Management" (1978/9); for discussion of the urban rental market as a whole, see Frier, "Rental Market" (1977). Also see Frier's extensive treatment of the social, economic, and legal aspects of urban housing in *Landlords* (1980). Such investment in urban property was regarded as profitable but risky; Frier, "Rental Market" (1977) 34–35, 36 n. 51. At Pompeii, wealthy families exploited the position of their houses on commercial thoroughfares by attaching shops on the street sides: Zanker, *Pompeii* (1998) 41–42.

118. For emphasis on the importance of agriculture in the economy as a whole, see, for example, Jongman, *Economy* (1988) esp. 199, 203.

one-third of the gross domestic product was generated by commerce.¹¹⁹ The superior prestige of farming made it an attractive investment, while the lure of a higher rate of return and the advantage of greater liquidity made commerce appealing, even to many aristocrats.¹²⁰

We might suppose that, given the close connection between tenement housing and prostitution, upper-class investment in the former might at least in some cases amount to investment in the latter.¹²¹ In fact there is explicit evidence that this was the case. The jurist Ulpian¹²² lays it down that urban rents, even if they derive from a brothel, should fall within the scope of the *hereditatis petitio* (suit on an inheritance), because brothels are operated on the property of “many honorable men.”¹²³

Any attempt to take precise measure of the import of “many” would be misguided, but the jurist’s holding is without question motivated by widespread contemporary practice, which, in turn, suggests profitability. Indirect evidence for this argument is found in a passage of Varro,¹²⁴ in which a speaker implies that the construction of inns (*tabernae deversoriae*) on opportune country estates (that is, convenient for travelers) was not only common but also profitable. Given the typical association of prostitution with *tabernae* and *deversoria*, it is likely that a good share of these profits derived from the practice of prostitution.

There is a wealth of evidence from other cultures to suggest that, despite the scorn accorded prostitutes, pimps, and procuresses, prominent, wealthy,

119. Frier, “Pompeii’s Economy” (1991) 246.

120. See, above all, D’Arms, *Commerce* (1981). Also see Gabba, *Buon Uso* (1988); Wallace-Hadrill, “Elites and Trade” (1991); Harris, “Problems” (1993) 15, 22, 24–25; Purcell, “*Plebs Urbana*” (1994) 665; Dyck, *Commentary* (1996) 331–38 (on Cic. *Off.* 1.150–51); Mouritsen, “Mobility” (1997) 62–64; Parkins, “Consumer City” (1997); Niquet, “Senatorial Agriculturalist” (2000); D’Hautcourt, “Banquier” (2001) esp. 204–5. On the varied sources of elite income, see Mratschek-Halfmann, *Divites* (1993) 95–127. For a discussion of the modern literature, see Andreau, “Rome” (2001) 310–11. On elite problems with liquidity, see Jongman, *Economy* (1988) 223. For the monetization of the Roman economy, see the section below on “Prices.”

121. I do not mean to exaggerate the economic significance of urban investment: see the cautions of Garnsey, “Investment” (1976) 131–32 and Frier, “Management,” (1978/9) 1 n. 1; *Landlords* (1980) 25–26. All the same, such investment was by no means negligible. For example, the local elite of Pompeii invested in hotels: Kleberg, *Hôtels* (1957), 80. See, in general, Parkins, “Consumer City” (1997).

122. Ulp. (15 *ad edictum*) D. 5.3.27.1. For a brief discussion, see McGinn, *Prostitution, Sexuality, and the Law* (1998) 328–29.

123. Only *fructus* deriving previous to the *litis contestatio* go to the plaintiff if victorious: Kaser, *Privatrecht* 1² (1971) 738, with literature. The same rule applies to rural rents: Ulp. D. 5.3.29. An example of the former occurs when Cicero is able to recover a prorated portion of the rents that had already been paid to the banker Cluvius when he inherits this man’s Puteolan property (*Att.* 14.10.3); see Frier, “Management” (1978/9) 3.

124. Varro *RR* 1.2.23.

respectable members of society derive large profits from the practice of prostitution, usually in the form of rents accruing from brothels.¹²⁵ The Christian society of late antiquity was no exception.¹²⁶ The point, in fact, is fairly obvious. Who, but members of the elite, is in the best position to profit from commercial sex? While we should exercise caution when generalizing about prostitution from culture to culture, we can observe how often it is a profitable, cash-rich business, and one that is moreover conducted by highly exploitable parties. Social and legal privilege often means insulation from the obloquy directed at pimps and freedom from arrest and prosecution in societies where prostitution has been criminalized.¹²⁷ This combination of factors has proven irresistible across cultures to at least some members of the upper classes, lured in so small measure by the generous return on investment, the price— or reward—of their complaisance.¹²⁸ “Prostitutes were deviant; landlords who profited from prostitution were not.”¹²⁹

125. In medieval France, very prominent persons were the proprietors of baths and brothels, including municipal authorities, noble families, and high-ranking clergy: Rossiaud, *Medieval Prostitution* (1988) 6, 30, 61, 123. For medieval England, see Karras, *Common Women* (1996) 33, 43–44; Kelly, “Bishop” (2000); for medieval Florence, Trexler, “Prostitution florentine” (1981) 991; for medieval Venice, Pavan, “Police” (1980) 245–46, 249. In early modern Seville, we find city officials and religious corporations (at times employing middlemen) owning brothels: Perry, “Lost Women” (1978) 209, “Deviant Insiders” (1985) 145, 155. In 1990s China, the People’s Liberation Army and the Public Security Bureau played this role: Hershatter, *Dangerous Pleasures* (1997) 336, 366. On prominent persons owning property containing brothels in nineteenth-century New York City, see Gilfoyle, *City of Eros* (1992) 42–53, 86–87, 266–67, 339–40, 366, 407; Hill, *Their Sisters’ Keepers* (1993) 133; on the nineteenth-century Comstock Lode, Goldman, *Gold Diggers* (1981) 31; in nineteenth-century Glasgow, Mahood, *Magdalenes* (1990) 133–34; in nineteenth-century Paris, Harsin, *Policing Prostitution* (1985) 285–87; in nineteenth-century York, Finnegan, *Poverty* (1979) 63; in nineteenth-century England, Walkowitz, *Prostitution* (1980) 200, 208; in the early twentieth-century United States, Rosen, *Sisterhood* (1982) 70–72.

126. See Neri, *Marginali* (1998) 219.

127. Sullivan, *Politics of Sex* (1997) 111–13, on the Australian state of New South Wales in the mid-twentieth century. In some cases, publicity has acted as a discouragement to prostitution. See Walkowitz, *City* (1992) 226, on late nineteenth-century London, where notoriety forced respectable landlords out of a district associated with prostitution.

128. On the huge profits landlords made from prostitution in late nineteenth-/early twentieth-century America, see Rosen, *Sisterhood* (1982) 29, 69–77 (see, 71, for mention of the use of middlemen); Mackey, *Red Lights Out* (1987) 127, 260; Gilfoyle, *City of Eros* (1992) 34–36 (middlemen), 42–53, 124–25, 163, 166 (middlemen), 168–69; Hill, *Their Sisters’ Keepers* (1993) 292; Best, *Controlling Vice* (1998) 16, 72. On the profits made in medieval France, see Rossiaud, *Medieval Prostitution* (1988) 61; for medieval England, Karras, *Common Women* (1996) 43–44 and Kelly, “Bishop” (2000); for nineteenth-century York, Finnegan, *Poverty* (1979) 65; for nineteenth-century Glasgow, Mahood, *Magdalenes* (1990) 133–34; for early twentieth-century Buenos Aires, Guy, *Sex* (1990) 123; for early twentieth-century Minsk, see Bernstein, *Sonia’s Daughters* (1995) 32; for early twentieth-century Shanghai, Hershatter, *Dangerous Pleasures* (1997) 72.

129. Best, *Controlling Vice* (1998) 75.

Given the few investment options available and the imperative to avoid—or at least distribute—risk, investment in prostitution might fit either of the two important hypotheses that have attempted in recent years to explain the behavior of Roman upper-class property owners, “bounded rationality” or “rationalism.”¹³⁰ In fact it falls in with a whole series of behaviors observed to be characteristic of Mediterranean producers, who for long periods tried, in the face of adverse and unpredictable conditions, to reduce risk.¹³¹ A consistent aim of theirs was to maintain flexibility of production.¹³² They achieved this, in part, by keeping in play a maximum variety of productive resources.¹³³ The other side of the coin in their aversion to risk was a strong appetite for profit.¹³⁴ Profit was sought wherever feasible; one did not simply choose, or feel compelled to choose, agrarian pursuits over commercial.¹³⁵ Such factors are hardly unknown outside the Mediterranean, of course, and, as seen, elites the world over in diverse eras have found the prospect of investment in prostitution irresistible. Still, they appear to have converged in this area to great effect in Roman antiquity.

All the same, the involvement of members of the Roman upper classes in the business of prostitution raises something of a paradox that in turn suggests further questions. Did this involvement have a measurable effect on attitudes, or social policy, toward prostitution? For example, did it encourage toleration? There is no direct evidence for such a trend and the ambiguity of modern evidence prompts caution.¹³⁶ Ulpian’s evidence suggests that, at the very least, these interests could become factors in policy considerations, though only in a manner that benefited members of the elite.¹³⁷ The matter remains open for discussion later in this study.

130. For a statement in favor of “rationalism,” see Rathbone, *Economic Rationalism* (1991). For the thesis of “bounded rationality” see Kehoe, “Investment” (1993); Pleket, “Agriculture” (1993); Kehoe, *Investment* (1997) esp. 16–21. The former emphasizes the sophisticated economic choices made by elite landowners and investors, the later the limits on those choices: see Kehoe, “Economic Rationalism” (1993); Rathbone, “More (or Less)?” (1994). Kehoe appears to have had the better of the debate: see Andreau and Maucourant, “Rationalité” (1999). His model is certainly better suited to economic decision making inside the world of prostitution: see chap. 3.

131. Horden and Purcell, *Corrupting Sea* (2000) 179, 221, 263, 283, 329.

132. Horden and Purcell, *Corrupting Sea* (2000) 186, 200.

133. Horden and Purcell, *Corrupting Sea* (2000) 181, 224, 263.

134. Horden and Purcell, *Corrupting Sea* (2000) 293, 366; cf. 286.

135. Horden and Purcell, *Corrupting Sea* (2000) 349, 396.

136. Often the upper classes encouraged toleration of prostitution for economic reasons; at the same time, public demands for reform could arise from similar quarters: Rosen, *Sisterhood* (1982) 72–75, 101.

137. On policy, see chap. 5.

It seems quite possible that brothels, like other kinds of property, passed into the ownership of the emperor and/or state through sale, gift, or bequest. It is even possible that they were installed on urban property already owned by either the state or emperor for the same motives that animated private individuals.¹³⁸ We have no direct evidence for this phenomenon, except for Caligula's experiment on the Palatine, which I argue elsewhere to have been of brief duration.¹³⁹ The brothels listed in the late-antique Regionary Catalogs may have been state-owned, but other explanations for their appearance are available.¹⁴⁰ Finally, the use of brothels as a form of punishment may reflect state ownership, but this too is speculative.¹⁴¹

Another question arises here: How closely involved were investors in the running of brothels? The role played by middlemen in various sectors of the Roman economy seems to have been crucial. For example, rich investors commonly employed middlemen to mediate between investors and the actual inhabitants of apartment houses.¹⁴² Bruce Frier has shown that these men acted as an economic buffer, insulating building owners from a portion of the risks associated with renting urban properties.

The evidence on patterns of investment relating to prostitution suggests that middlemen provided a kind of social and legal insulation as well.¹⁴³ By leasing to an intermediary, the owner could disassociate himself from the unsavory business (if he, in fact, knew about it) that brought him a sizable rental income and be freed from the indelicacy of dealing directly with pimps and prostitutes as tenants.¹⁴⁴

138. For the—at first separate—regimes of imperial and state property, see McGinn, *Prostitution, Sexuality and the Law* (1998) 272.

139. For a discussion of Caligula's brothel, see chap. 6.

140. See chap. 6.

141. For more on this practice, see chap. 8.

142. On middlemen, particularly their economic role, see Frier, "Management" (1978/9) 3–6, *Landlords* (1980) 30–31, 78–82, 180; Pleket, "Elites" (1984) 6, 9; Kirschenbaum, *Sons* (1987) (the legal arrangements could vary considerably); Paterson, "Trade and Traders" (1998) 1161–62; Gardner, "Women in Business Life" (1999) esp. 13–15, 18; Morley, "Markets" (2000) 217–21; D'Hautcourt, "Banquier" (2001) 206; Mouritsen, "Roman Freedmen" (2001). On social prejudice directed against middlemen, see Kudlien, "Makler" (1997).

143. For a general discussion of this role of middlemen, see Frier, "Management" (1978/9); Di Porto, *Impresa Collettiva* (1984); Reduzzi Merola, *Servo Parere* (1990); Joshel, *Work* (1992) 76; Aubert, *Business Managers* (1994) 352; Purcell, "*Plebs Urbana*" (1994) 662; Földi, "*Caupones*" (1999) 134; Morley, "Markets" (2000) 17–21; Niquet, "Senatorial Agriculturalist" (2000) 127. Recognition of their role might suggest a partial resolution to the modern debate over the extent of elite investment in on-agricultural sectors of the economy; see Andreau, "Rome" (2001) 310–11. For middlemen acting as social buffers between wealthy landowners and brothel operators in nineteenth-century St. Paul, Minn., see Best, *Controlling Vice* (1998) 75. See also Corbin, *Women for Hire* (1990) 64, 69.

144. The ultimate goal was to avoid being identified as a pimp, given the legal and social disabilities that would follow. Herter "Soziologie" (1960) 75 implies this same point. Note that

To be sure, investment in prostitution was not always so indirect as we might take the reliance on middlemen to imply.¹⁴⁵ The existence of innumerable slave prostitutes suggests a more direct link between owner and asset, as does, to an even greater extent, the evidence for slave pimps, above all a text by the jurist Ulpian. In this passage, Ulpian cites a holding of his predecessor Pomponius,¹⁴⁶ which concerns the denial of procedural rights to pimps under the Praetor's Edict. These jurists speak of a slave pimp and slave prostitutes, who are said to form part of the former's *peculium* (fund-for-use). We can only guess at the frequency of this phenomenon, but it is safe to conclude that Romans of means did occasionally set up their slaves, freedpersons, and perhaps dependent free persons as well, in the business of running brothels, just as they set them up in a variety of other businesses.¹⁴⁷ Given the state of the evidence, there is no point in speculating on how common this phenomenon was.¹⁴⁸ Freedpersons were quite able to operate independently of their former masters, and many did not even have living patrons.¹⁴⁹ Livy's Faecenia Hispala seems to have been very independent, at least as a freedwoman.¹⁵⁰

Of course, when sources refer to slaves prostituted by their masters,¹⁵¹ we rarely know whether the ultimate financial interest lay with the "owner," or

caupones were frequently identified as pimps (see above in n. 21). On indirect involvement of members of the elite in the slave trade, see the recent study by Bosworth, "Vespasian" (2002), who is in my view perhaps a bit too sanguine about its respectability.

145. It is worth noting that Justinian, in his campaign against pimps, punished landlords who knowingly rented property to them: Nov. 14 (a. 535).

146. Pomp.-Ulp. (6 *ad ed.*) D. 3.2.4.3. See McGinn, *Prostitution, Sexuality, and the Law* (1998) 55–58.

147. On the operation of the *peculium*, see Buckland, *Law of Slavery* (1908) 187–238; Kirschenbaum, *Sons* (1987) esp. 31–89; Watson, *Roman Slave Law* (1987) 90–114. On setting up freedmen in business, see Treggiari, *Freedmen* (1969) 87–106, 160–61; Kirschenbaum, 127–60. I can find no Roman evidence for the involvement of freedmen in managing prostitution, but I regard it as likely. For a couple of Greek parallels showing a freedwoman managing a tenement house containing a brothel and another manager who was a slave and prostitute, see Isaeus 6.19–26.

148. I argue in *Prostitution, Sexuality, and the Law* (1998) 256–64, that the elite of Tauric Chersonesus in the late second century A.D. were closely involved in the operation of brothels.

149. See Garnsey, "Independent Freedmen" (1981). Garnsey (366–67, 370) recognizes that the situation of freedmen in business showed great diversity. Even some freedmen acting as agents or managers might be very independent. For an example from Puteoli, see the activity of the freedmen moneylenders known as the Sulpicii as preserved in the Murecine archive: Rowe, "Trimalchio's World" (2001) 229–31. Their numbers may not have been as great as their social profile suggests, however: see Mouritsen, "Roman Freedmen" (2001).

150. See the discussion in McGinn, *Prostitution, Sexuality, and the Law* (1998) 86–89. Venal sexual acts did not count as *operae*, the services an ex-slave might owe an ex-owner: Call. D. 38.1.38 pr., with McGinn, 330–31.

151. Faecenia Hispala (Liv. 39.9.5) and P. Atilius Philiscus (Val. Max. 6.1.6), are two examples of slaves prostituted by their masters.

with the latter's *patronus* if he were a freedman or *dominus* if he were a slave. One or the other of the second pair of alternatives is at least a possibility in some cases, since the social and legal disabilities inflicted on pimps presumably motivated elite investors to distance themselves from the business.¹⁵² One should be careful not to make facile assumptions either way.¹⁵³ Slave prostitutes might form part of the *peculium* of a slave pimp, who himself might be the *vicarius* (underslave) of another slave or the property of a freed or freeborn manager. Free middlemen might operate a brothel, while exploiting their own slaves as prostitutes. Or a pimp might combine in one person the roles of slave owner, brothel operator, and investor in venal sex.¹⁵⁴ Some pimps became quite prosperous, to judge from the example of one Elius, whom Seneca cites as a paradigm of wealth in an argument about why wealth should be despised.¹⁵⁵

The general observation that the use of intermediaries in agriculture did not in the final analysis succeed in distancing the high elite from the world of production might with some qualification find application in the economy of prostitution as well.¹⁵⁶ What we might reasonably expect to find here is a spectrum of relationships varying in the degree of closeness between upper-class investor and working prostitute. A component of social distance worth mentioning here is physical distance. Some of the brothels identified from Pompeii (in later chapters) appear to have operated, from the perspective of elite owners, very close to home.¹⁵⁷

152. A son or slave might be employed to put an extra layer of social insulation between *pater familias* or owner and the agent who ran the business: see Gardner, *Being* (1993) 77–78, and the literature cited for “middlemen” above in nn. 142 and 143.

153. Note the different ways in which the involvement of independent freedmen in commercial enterprises was structured. For the commercial activity of independent freedmen in Puteoli and Ostia, see D’Arms, *Commerce* (1981) 121–48.

154. One notes the imprecise terminology used to describe merchants and retailers: Joshel, *Work* (1992) 111. Cf. Kneißl, “Mercator-Negotiator” (1983) whose attempt to distinguish between the terms for merchants and retailers is a bit optimistic to my mind; see Drexhage, “Bemerkungen” (1991) for the Egyptian evidence; Colin, “Commerçants” (2000). A similar set of options existed for the economic exploitation of privately owned baths: management by owner, lease, operation by manager. See Nielsen, *Thermae* 1 (1999) 126. Fluidity of terminology implies flexibility of role.

155. Sen. *Prov.* 5.2.

156. For more on this point, see Purcell, “Villa” (1995) 156.

157. On the lack of physical distance between elite residences and commerce in general, see Wallace-Hadrill, “Elites and Trade” (1991) 260–61.

OPERATION OF BROTHELS

Brothel management is a broad and varied field. Important factors were the size of the establishment (the largest commonly known example is the Purpose-Built Brothel at Pompeii with its ten *cellae*),¹⁵⁸ its nature (whether it was run in connection with a bath, inn, etc.), and the legal status of the prostitutes (whether slave or free). Slave prostitutes seem to have been fairly tightly controlled,¹⁵⁹ and the sources often suggest an environment of coercion. It is clear that these prostitutes were expected to live and eat in the brothel and were perhaps permitted to leave only rarely.¹⁶⁰

Larger establishments would have had a support staff, which might have included assistants to look after the prostitutes,¹⁶¹ cooks,¹⁶² water-boys,¹⁶³ hairdressers,¹⁶⁴ scouts for rounding up customers,¹⁶⁵ and others.¹⁶⁶ That such

158. For the Purpose-Built Brothel, including a glimpse of one of its *cellae*, see figs. 4–11.

159. A leaden collar from Bulla Regia in North Africa (*ILS* 9455) reads: “adultera meretrix; tene me quia fugivi de Bulla R(e)g(ia)” (“adulteress-prostitute: detain me, because I have run away from Bulla Regia”). *Meretrix* may, however, be intended as mere abuse, as *adultera* surely is. The collar is perhaps from the fourth century; earlier, tattooing (or perhaps branding) the face would have served a similar function: see Thurmond, “Slave Collars” (1994) esp. 465–66. See also chap. 8.

160. See *Sen. Contr.* 1.2, esp. 1, 11–12, 16; *Hist. Ap. Tyr.* 33–36 (the permission given Tarsia to leave the brothel is presented as extraordinary). A line of Juvenal (6.127) suggests that some prostitutes went home when the brothel closed: see n. 161.

161. At *Hist. Ap. Tyr.* 33, we encounter a *villicus puellarum* (sic), himself a slave. The title may be an invention, but the man’s function surely is not: cf. the *lenonum minister* at *HA Comm.* 2.9. *Villicus* can mean any kind of business manager working on someone else’s behalf: Aubert, *Business Managers* (1994) 169–75. I do not mean to imply that such persons were not used with free prostitutes, though the evidence is sparse. See, for example, evidence from the Byzantine period: Leontsini, *Prostitution* (1989) 120–21.

162. *Sen. Contr.* 1.2.11, 16 has prostitutes eating in the brothel. See also Plaut. *Poen.* 835. Lower-class lodgings of the sort routinely identified with brothels or the practice of prostitution typically maintained cooks to feed the tenants: Frier, “Rental Market” (1977) 31. On cooks et al. in modern brothels, see Rosen, *Sisterhood* (1982) 157.

163. Presumably, there were water-boys to bring water for washing after intercourse, as in Cic. *Cael.* 34. See also Festus 20M: “aquarioli dicebantur mulierum impudicarum sordidi adseculae” (“the lowly attendants of unchaste women used to be called *aquarioli*”); Apul. *Apol.* 78.1; cf. Plaut. *Poen.* 224. Tert. *Apol.* 43 CCL 1.158 ranks *aquarioli* with pimps and procurers. See Butrica, “Using Water Unchastely 2” (1999) with references to earlier literature. For Byzantine evidence, see Magoulas, “Bathhouse” (1971) 237. For sources on the need for water after sex, see Krenkel, “Fellatio” (1980) 80.

164. See *CGL* 2.100.45: “cinerarius: doulos eteras [i.e., hetairas]” (“hairdresser: prostitute’s slave”).

165. Plaut. *Men.* 338–43; Petron. 7; Suet. *Cal.* 41.1, perhaps also the *perductores* (“procurers”) at Tert. *Apol.* 43 CCL 1.158, as well as the wearers of the famous “come-hither” sandals denounced by Clem. Alex. *Paed.* 2.11.116.1 SC 108.220.

166. For example, the *ovariolus*, given at *CGL* 5.636.17 as the pimp’s “boy” or “slave” (“ovar-

details are not simply the stuff of literary fantasy is suggested by the evidence of other cultures. For example, a brothel in nineteenth-century St. Paul, Minnesota, might sport cooks, maids, porters, scouts, and a wine steward.¹⁶⁷ Food and drink were served to customers as well as to the prostitutes themselves, especially when the brothel doubled as a tavern.¹⁶⁸ Otherwise, such items might be brought in from a nearby establishment.

A few sources provide a glimpse of various aspects of brothel operations. In Petronius, a prostitute charges two outsiders a small fee (one *as*) for the use of a booth or small room (*cella*) for sexual purposes, which suggests that brothels catered to different types of walk-in business, much like inexpensive hotels of the present day.¹⁶⁹ When, in Juvenal, a pimp dismisses “his girls” (“*suas puellas*”) from the brothel after a night’s work, we might infer that they—or their owners—are independent contractors leasing space.¹⁷⁰

A tantalizingly fragmentary text from Egypt indicates just how complex running a brothel might have been.¹⁷¹ This document appears to be a denunciation made against two pimps who had leased brothels in the city to other, local pimps, referred to as *hoi epidēmountes autoi pornoboskoi*. These men, hav-

iolus: puer lenonis sic dicitur”), and whose precise function is unclear: see Adams, “Words” (1983) 321. Musicians are attested in comedy, though were probably rare, if they are not the projections of a Hellenizing fantasy. See, for example, Ter. *Phormio* 80–84, 109, who has a cithern player as the slave of a pimp. Comedy also suggests the possibility of an elaborate massage, complete with oil or perfume, but this seems as likely for most brothels as musical accompaniment. See Plaut. *Poen.* 220, 231, 701–3. It is easier to postulate that most massage was performed by the prostitutes themselves and was explicitly sexual in nature: see n. 70 above. Brothels had all-purpose servants as well: see Brock and Harvey, *Holy Women* (1987) 48, 55–56.

167. See Best, *Controlling Vice* (1998) 63. See also Harsin, *Policing Prostitution* (1985) 287–88; Hill, *Their Sisters’ Keepers* (1993) 223; Seigle, *Yoshiwara* (1993) 176; Hershatter, *Dangerous Pleasures* (1997) 77–79, 114.

168. On liquor and food, see n. 167. For late antiquity, see *Vita Sanctae Mariae* 7 PL 73.656; Brock and Harvey, *Holy Women* (1985) 31, 33, 37, 48; Leontsini, *Prostitution* (1989) 106, 165. See Rossiaud’s statement on the medieval French brothel, “[t]he managers found the kitchen nearly as profitable as the bedroom”: *Medieval Prostitution* (1988) 5.

169. Petron. 8. Here Ascytylos is assaulted by the *pater familiae*, who has led him to the brothel. We cannot know for sure if the rate is for an entire night, as Frier, “Rental Market” (1977) 34, suggests, but in any case the point of the transaction is clear. This is another confirmation of the general identification of brothels with the site and function of lower-class lodgings. On the modern link between room rental and informal prostitution, see Gilfoyle, *City of Eros* (1992) 55–56.

170. Iuv. 6.127. That is, if we do not take “*suas*” to signify that he owns them. Nonresident status may also mean that they at least occasionally solicited customers outside the brothel: see Karras, *Common Women* (1996) 38, 46–47, for suggestive parallels from medieval England.

171. PSI 1055a: probably from Arsinoe, and from a period before A.D. 265, according to the editors. See Heyl, *Madam* (1979) 8, for a modern parallel.

ing paid four times the normal rent, claim to have earned little in return.¹⁷² The dispute also centers around the unauthorized sale of a slave woman. The leasing out of a number of brothels by one group of pimps to another,¹⁷³ as well as the dispute over a productive asset, suggests a fairly sophisticated arrangement, and one that confirms the argument, made above, that investment arrangements in prostitution might be complex. It also suggests that, notwithstanding the objections of the two complainants in this case, prostitution was a profitable enterprise for those with capital to invest.

I must concede, however, that the sources are not very informative on the subject of brothel operation, in large part because their purpose was anything but a close description of this phenomenon. This is true even in the case of the most extensive treatments of brothels in the literary sources.¹⁷⁴ To take just one example, when Apuleius wants to depict Herennius Rufinus as his wife's pimp, he describes the man's house as a brothel, which means of course that the design elements more closely correspond to the layout of an upper-class *domus* than to a *lupanar*.

There is general agreement that the prostitute worked in a booth or small room (*cella*) within the brothel,¹⁷⁵ its entrance marked by a patchwork curtain (*cento*) and the booth itself closed by a door (*ostium*),¹⁷⁶ above or next to which a small notice advertising her price (*titulus*) was sometimes placed.¹⁷⁷ These arrangements did not, it seems, guarantee a great deal of privacy.¹⁷⁸ Nor did customers have a great expectation of privacy to judge from an epigram of

172. I follow the editors of *PSI*, who view the local pimps as the aggrieved party. Admittedly the text is difficult.

173. The suggestion of Johnson, *Survey* 2 (1936) 537, that the text refers to the prostitute tax is not persuasive.

174. See Sen. *Contr.* 1.2; Petron. 7–8; Iuv. 115–32; Apul. *Apol.* 75; *Hist. Ap. Tyr.* 33–36. See also [Verg.] *Copa*, which, given my definition of brothel, should be included in this group of sources.

175. Sen. *Contr.* 1.2.1, 5; Petron. 8; Iuv. 6.122, 128; *Hist. Ap. Tyr.* 33. See also the discussion of cribs in chap. 7. For a glimpse of a *cella* in the Purpose-Built Brothel, see fig. 6.

176. On the curtain, see Petron. 7; Mart. 1.34.5, 11.45.3; Iuv. 6.121. Door: Ov. *Am.* 3.14.9–10; Mart. 1.34.5, 11.45.3 (with a bolt); *Hist. Ap. Tyr.* 34. Many brothels perhaps had either a curtain or a door.

177. See Sen. *Contr.* 1.2.1, 5, 7; Petron. 7; Mart. 11.45.1; Iuv. 6.123 (with schol.); Tert. *Spect.* 17.3 CCSL 1.242 (who, evidently referring to a recital of the *titulus* at the Floralia, suggestively calls it an *elogium*); *Hist. Ap. Tyr.* 33.

178. For evidence that seems to contradict this, see the rhetorical assertion of the modesty of prostitutes: Ov. *Am.* 3.14.9–10; Val. Max. 3.5.4; Sen. *Nat. Quaest.* 1.16.6; Mart. 1.34, 11.45; Iuv. 6.014–16, 11.171–73. These assertions prove nothing about privacy in brothels in my view. We may compare the social atmosphere that prevailed in public latrines: see, for example, Barattolo and Romaldi, “Impianti igienici” (2000) 265.

Martial, in which he chides a man for seeking it.¹⁷⁹ Prostitutes inside the brothel were often nude (or at most scantily clad),¹⁸⁰ and payment was demanded up front.¹⁸¹ A variety of sexual services might be offered, as discussed in the following section on prices.

The sources describe the brothel itself as a filthy place, though more in a tone of moral censure than as a literal depiction of uncleanness. In other words, descriptions of brothels tend to reflect upper-class prejudice more than objective reality. This hardly means of course that the Roman brothel was typically a clean, well-lit place. In addition to appearing dirty, dark, and smoky, brothels were associated with violence and seem to have generated an atmosphere of criminality about them, as we shall see in chapter 3.

PRICES

Like many goods and services available to purchasers in the Roman economy, sex often came with a price and was bought with cash.¹⁸² The availability of coins throughout the Empire, even in some rural areas, was essential to the business of prostitution.¹⁸³ The towns enjoyed a fully monetized economy, to judge from the evidence of Apuleius.¹⁸⁴ The evidence from country estates, where it exists in abundance, namely Egypt, suggests that much of the rural economy was monetized as well.¹⁸⁵

Pimps often determined the prices prostitutes charged their customers, particularly when the prostitutes were slaves.¹⁸⁶ As mentioned previously,

179. Mart. 11.45.

180. See chap. 3.

181. Sen. *Contr.* 1.2 *thema*, 2, 7, 20; Petron. 8; Iuv. 6.125; *Hist. Ap. Tyr.* 34; cf. Labeo-Marcel.-Ulp. D. 12.5.4.3. It is difficult to find an example of prostitution in any culture where this practice does not hold true.

182. See the evidence in Temin, "Market Economy" (2001) 173.

183. On the monetization of the Roman economy—potentially of great importance for the economic profile and extent of prostitution—see Harris, "Problems" (1993) 20; Temin, "Market Economy" (2001) 174, 177. The matter is controversial. For a contrary view, see Garnsey and Saller, *Roman Empire* (1987) 46–51; Duncan-Jones, *Structure and Scale* (1990) 48–58, 187–98; Duncan-Jones, *Money and Government* (1994) 3, 20–22.

184. Millar, "World of the Golden Ass" (1981) 72.

185. Rathbone, *Economic Rationalism* (1990) esp. 327–30. De Ligt, "Demand, Supply, Distribution 1" (1990): 33–43, stresses the great diversity in the level of monetization among rural regions, as well as the coexistence in many places of cash and barter.

186. There is, of course, no way of knowing how many prostitutes were slaves: see below in the text.

sometimes the woman's name and her price were placed together above or adjacent to the door to her *cella* in an epigraph called a *titulus*.¹⁸⁷ Other types of informal advertising appear in the Pompeian inscriptions, and there is even evidence prices were sometimes negotiated.

Sources dating, with few exceptions, from the early imperial period give a range of prices for sexual services, from .25 *as* to 16 *asses* and perhaps more. I omit amounts said to be given to prostitutes (or perhaps adulteresses) that appear to be too high to be prices for a sexual act or even a short period of sexual activity, such as the HS 100,000 said by Martial to be squandered by a lover on Leda.¹⁸⁸ Some of the other fees cited by the epigrammatist should inspire caution as well. The details of the poet's downward spiraling negotiations with Galla are too fantastic to be reckoned as actual prices for a prostitute's services, at least until the end of the transaction. They suggest the device, familiar from both literature and law, of transforming an adulteress into a prostitute. They also indicate that negotiating prices was a reasonably common practice.¹⁸⁹ The 2 *aurei* (= 50 *denarii*) he cites as Galla's standard fee should be ranked in the same category.¹⁹⁰ The *amphora* of wine requested by Phyllis after a night of lovemaking is a gift, and perhaps figures in a similar transformation, or its reverse.¹⁹¹ Other examples might easily be added.¹⁹²

This does not mean that the epigraphic evidence is free from problems. I am especially suspicious of prostitute graffiti in which a prostitute purportedly praises a client's sexual prowess.¹⁹³ But while projections of male fantasy in their content, these graffiti do posit the existence of actual clients and actual prostitutes. Though only a few of the readings given in the list below are explicitly rated as unclear, we cannot assume the rest are without error.¹⁹⁴ Many are no longer available to be verified and those that survive are of course subject to revision. Their value as evidence of *prices* is discussed below.

187. For the *titulus* and its functions, see above in the text.

188. Mart. 2.63.1–2.

189. Mart. 10.75.

190. Mart. 9.4.1.

191. Mart. 12.65. The view that the relationship is one of prostitute and customer cannot be utterly excluded however. See Ramirez Sabada, "Prostitución" (1985) 228; Stumpp, *Prostitution* (1998) 220.

192. See the discussion in Ramirez Sabada, "Prostitución" (1985) 227 n. 4.

193. Cf. DeFelice, *Roman Hospitality* (2001) 98, with n. 306.

194. Though not impossible as a source for the prices of prostitutes, *CIL* 4.8565 seems more likely to record the (partial?) wages of workmen.

The known examples are weighted toward the lower end of the scale, with 38 that are 2.5 *asses* and lower, 28 that are 3 *asses* and above.

.25 *as* (not a real price?): 3 examples¹⁹⁵

1 *as*: 6 examples¹⁹⁶

2 *asses*: 25 examples¹⁹⁷

2.5 *asses*: 4 examples¹⁹⁸

3 *asses*: 5 examples¹⁹⁹

4 *asses*: 7 examples²⁰⁰

5 *asses*: 4 examples²⁰¹

7 *asses*: 1 example²⁰²

8 *asses*: 3 examples²⁰³

9 *asses*: 1 example²⁰⁴

10 *asses*: 2 examples²⁰⁵

16 *asses*: 3 examples²⁰⁶

23 *asses*: 1 example²⁰⁷

32 *asses*: 1 example²⁰⁸

195. All three examples allude to the same person, Clodia Metelli, as a *quadrantaria* (“quarter-as whore”): Cic. *Cael.* 62; Cael. *apud* Quint. *IO* 8.6.53; Plut. *Cic.* 29.4. The hostile tone of these sources, the extremely low price (compared with the other prices attested) implied for Clodia’s services, and the fact that .25 *as* was the price of admission to the men’s baths all prompt the conclusion that this price is not genuine, but rather is invective: see below in the text.

196. *CIL* 4.5408 (fellatio), 8248; Mart. 1.103.10 (cheap sex); Iuv. 6.125 (uncertain); *Anth. Lat.* 794.46R (insult); Firm. *Mat. Err.* 10 CSEL 2.91 (mythological). The *as* cited at Petron. 8 is the price for a room in a brothel, not for a sexual act. All the same it does seem to confirm the lower end of the spectrum as represented above all by Pompeian prices. On this price, see Frier, “Rental Market” (1977) 34.

197. *CIL* 4.1374 (reading uncertain), 1969 (fellatio), 2028 + p. 704 (fellatio), 3964 (reading uncertain), 3999 (cunnilingus), 4023, 4024, 4150 (bis), 4441, 4592, 5105, 5206 (reading uncertain), 5338, 5345, 5372, 7068, 8185 (bis: fellatio; reading uncertain), 8394, 8454, 8465a, 8465b (fellatio; reading uncertain), 8511; Mart. 2.53.7 (cheap sex).

198. *CIL* 4.4150, 7764 (bis), 8224.

199. *CIL* 4.3964 (bis, including a price evidently labeled “*commune*”) 4259, 4439, 8160 (fellatio).

200. *CIL* 4.3964 (bis), 4259, 4277, 8939 (cunnilingus), 8940 (cunnilingus, the same person as 8939), 10078a.

201. *CIL* 4.2450 (dated to 3 B.C.), 4025, 5048 (with 10004, uncertain), 5204.

202. *CIL* 4.10033c (uncertain).

203. *CIL* 4.5203, 8187; 9.2689 (= *ILS* 7478), from Aesernia.

204. *CIL* 4.5127.

205. *CIL* 4.4259, 8357b.

206. *CIL* 4.1751, 2193 (1 denarius); Mart. 2.51 (1 denarius).

207. *CIL* 4.8034.

208. Mart. 9.32.3 (2 denarii). Possibly the sum, the equivalent of 32 *asses*, refers to a gift or to an arrangement that involves more than a single sexual act: see esp. vv. 4–6.

These prices may be compared with the sample rates of 16 *asses* (1 denarius), 8 *asses*, and 6 *asses* found in the Palmyrene tax document, a bilingual inscription (Greek and Palmyrene) dating to A.D. 137. In this document, the town council clarifies the local tax structure (including both import/export duties and a variety of local taxes, including the one imposed on prostitutes) and sets up a grievance procedure to manage disputes between taxpayers and local tax contractors.²⁰⁹

Before turning to an analysis of the prices listed above, an important objection, especially to some of the lower amounts, must be considered. Do they represent actual prices or are they intended to defame a woman's character?²¹⁰ Prices from antiquity, above all those reported in the literature, are often quite incredible, as we have seen in relation to Martial.²¹¹ It is useful to mention the evidence for prostitutes' fees from ancient Athens, which comes mostly from Comedy. Here, prices are exaggerated upwards and downwards for various comic purposes, though 3 obols does appear to be typical.²¹²

Despite these difficulties, the prices set forth above seem plausible for the most part. The references to the *quadrantaria* ("woman who charges one-quarter *as*") are perhaps sheer insults, insofar as the "price" of one-quarter *as* falls far below the attested range. In my view, it is the only one we can safely ascribe to mere defamation, although even this argument does not guarantee it could not be a price for a low (perhaps older) prostitute. Thus I include them on the list.

Some of the lower prices in inscriptions refer to fellatio, a service perhaps provided at a discount over vaginal intercourse.²¹³ Other prices occur in con-

209. IGR 3.1056-OGIS 2.629-CIS 2.3.3913. On the prostitute tax, see McGinn, *Prostitution, Sexuality, and the Law* (1998) chap. 7 (esp. 282–86, for this evidence from Palmira).

210. For brief discussion of this question, see McGinn, *Prostitution, Sexuality, and the Law* (1998) 267 n. 132. Add Eichenauer, *Arbeitswelt* (1988) 121; Richlin, *Garden of Priapus* (1992) 81–83; Herrmann-Otto, *Ex Ancilla Natus* (1994) 344 n. 9 (345); Savunen, *Women* (1997) 109–10, 113; Cantarella, *Pompeii* (1998) 92, 113.

211. See Scheidel, "Finances, Figures, and Fiction" (1996) who finds reason to distrust not only figures derived from fiction but from historical and antiquarian accounts as well. Of the evidence for relatively large sums he examines, he is able to reject ninety to one-hundred percent. See also Scheidel, "Progress and Problems" (2001) 49, 71.

212. See Loomis, *Wages* (1998) 166–85, who is compelled to reject nearly three-quarters of his sources as inadequate. He concludes that three obols was the fee for the average prostitute and that there is no evidence the fee changed over the classical period. This conclusion seems justified given the citation of this price by Procop. *Anec.* 17.5 in the mid-sixth century. Loomis puts it, as well as others he has collected from non-Athenian Greek literature, in a helpful list (see 334–35). Of those from the period under study, none seem, at first glance, sufficiently reliable for our purposes, though I will make an attempt below to make sense of some of them.

213. 3 *asses*: CIL 4.8160; 2 *asses*: 1969, 8185 (probable), 8465b (possible); 1 *as*: 5408. See also Mart. 9.4. The lower price might be explained by the advantage to the prostitute of avoiding pregnancy. For this reason, a client might also be charged less for masturbation by a prostitute,

texts that suggest advertising, not insult.²¹⁴ When the name of a prostitute does not appear, abuse seems unlikely.²¹⁵ The precision implied by the price of two and one-half *asses* seems odd as a slur. We cannot be confident, of course, that none of these prices were meant to defame, but it is difficult to determine which ones, if any, should be understood in this way, except for the insult, which even so could be construed as a realistic price for some prostitutes, delivered against Clodia Metelli.

All the same, there is some reason to regard 1 *as* as an atypically low price,²¹⁶ though even this might have been asked by older or less attractive prostitutes. Two *asses* may be accepted as a common base rate for inexpensive prostitutes, at least at Pompeii.²¹⁷ Given the nature of the evidence, these were all, or almost all, streetwalkers and brothel prostitutes. The evidence from Palmyra gives two levels below a denarius, 6 and 8 *asses*, that can be understood as typical prices for that city. It is not safe to conclude from this evidence that sex was generally cheaper in Pompeii, however, than in many other parts of the Empire.

The generally lower Pompeian prices may not be typical for all prostitutes there, but only for those prostitutes whose activity was advertised (or who in some cases were targets of abuse).²¹⁸ The upper end of the scale should be defined as 16 *asses*, whatever exceptions exist. The famous hotel account from Aesernia is obviously meant to parody the real thing.²¹⁹ But the point of the

though no data are available on prices charged for this service: see Catull. 58; Sen. *Contr.* 1.2.21, 23. Cunnilingus is another service in the same category: see notes 197 and 200 for evidence.

214. A price might appear with the phrase “*moribus bellis*,” or one of its variants, which seems to be a recommendation. See, for example, *CIL* 4.4024, 4592. Cf. 2202, which does not contain a price, but only the name of the prostitute with this phrase, and 5127, where the phrase appears with a price of 9 *asses*. See also n. 215.

215. See *CIL* 4.5372, an apparent advertisement, which simply reads “*sum tua ae(ris) a(ssi-bus) II* (“I’m yours for two *asses*”). Two passages of Martial are apposite here. The first criticizes a man who is wealthy but miserly and contents himself with *asse Venus* (1.103.10). In the second, the joys of the simple life are said to include *plebeia Venus*, which costs two 2 *asses* (2.53.7).

216. At both *Iuv.* 6.125 (evidently) and *Anth. Lat.* 794.46R a woman, who is not really a prostitute but is identified as one so as to criticize her promiscuity, is accused of selling herself for 1 *as*, much as Clodia is described as a *quadrantaria*. So also *Venus* at *Firm. Mat. Err.* 10 CSEL 2.91. As for the other three examples, one forms part of the poet’s charge of meanness against the client (*Mart.* 1.103.10), while another advertises *fellatio* (*CIL* 4.5408); the third simply has the prostitute’s name and the price (*Prima: CIL* 4.8248).

217. *Mart.* 2.53.7 suggests that 2 *asses* was a very low price for Rome.

218. Cf. Flemming, “*Quae Corpore*” (1999) 48, for whom “2 *asses* is the clear mode,” across the Empire.

219. *CIL* 9.2689 (= *ILS* 7478). Cf. Viti, “*Insegna*” (1989) who inclines to take this evidence very seriously indeed.

joke seems to depend on taking 8 asses as a realistic high-end price for a prostitute and a room. This seems credible for a country inn in Italy, especially given the range of prices at Pompeii. One place where the price scale for sex may have been somewhat higher is at Rome, for which our evidence is even scantier. We can safely assume that prices in general were higher there than elsewhere in the Empire.²²⁰

Of course, it is conceivable that prices fluctuated, as they did with other commodities, so that a range of “spot” prices cropped up in different areas of the empire.²²¹ The Romans themselves were acutely aware of this latter phenomenon:²²²

Gaius (9 *ad edictum prov.*) D. 13.4.3.

Ideo in arbitrium iudicis refertur haec actio, quia scimus, quam varia sint pretia rerum per singulas civitates regionesque, maxime vini olei frumenti: pecuniarum quoque licet videatur una et eadem potestas ubique esse, tamen aliis locis facilius et levibus usuris inveniuntur, aliis difficiliter et gravibus usuris.

On that account this action (the actio arbitraria) is left to the discretion of the finder of fact, because we are aware of how varied the prices of commodities are in different cities and areas, especially (the prices) of wine, oil, and grain. Although money too may seem to have one and the same purchasing power everywhere, nevertheless it is raised more easily and at lower interest in some places, with greater difficulty and at higher interest in others.

Because of this variation in prices, we cannot use a comparison of data from Italy, for example, to construct hypothetical prices for sex elsewhere on the basis of the prevailing costs of goods and services. Roman Egypt, where our documentary evidence for prices and all else is the most abundant, unfortunately does not preserve any clear data on the prices charged by prostitutes.²²³

220. See Hopkins, “Rome, Taxes, Rents and Trade” (1995/1996) 58–59; Prell, *Armut* (1997) 180 (cf. 152); Hopkins, “Rents, Taxes, Trade” (2000) 261.

221. See Horden and Purcell, *Corrupting Sea* (2000) 152.

222. See Andreau, “Deux études” (1997) 112–16, on the economic context for this passage.

223. We cannot, without great difficulty, derive prices from the amounts given for tax payments by prostitutes: see McGinn, *Prostitution, Sexuality, and the Law* (1998) 278–79. For information on prices from Roman Egypt, see Drexhage, *Preise* (1991); Rathbone, “Prices and Price Formation” (1997).

A similar point holds for Roman Britain, where some price information, especially from Vindolanda ca. A.D. 100, is available.²²⁴

The argument could be made that the particular conditions of post-earthquake (A.D. 62–79) Pompeii encouraged a flood of prostitutes that depressed prices in that city in that period, but this seems to press the evidence very hard indeed.²²⁵ In fact, it may be possible to use these prices to “rescue” some of the numbers given by the sources in Greek currency from suspicion of literary invention and vice versa. On the traditional exchange rate of 1 denarius to the tetradrachm, 3 obols are equal to 2 *asses*.²²⁶ As noted above, the typical Greek price was precisely 3 obols. In this light, the figure of 2 obols or the like given in our sources, chiefly Plautus, does not seem utterly unrealistic.²²⁷ To be plain, I am attempting to use two sets of uncertain data to shore each other up, but the result seems reasonable enough.

This evidence, taken with the ceiling of 1 denarius placed on the per diem Caligulan tax rate linked to the price of sex,²²⁸ suggests that most prostitutes in the Roman Empire charged less than 1 denarius, and many asked significantly less. We can speculate that prices above that amount (see, e.g., the last two items on the price list) were given for more than a single sexual act, that is, for a night spent with the prostitute.²²⁹ This practice is attested in various cultures at different periods ranging from ancient Greece to modern-day Nevada (where the management of brothels frowns upon and tends to restrict the practice because of its implicit opportunity costs).²³⁰

The factors that help determine the prices charged by prostitutes are for most cultures, in a word, understudied. Common sense suggests that a prosti-

224. See Drexhage, “Preise” (1997), who calculates the subsistence level in Roman Britain as c. 8 denarii per month.

225. For discussion of the problem of post-earthquake Pompeii, see chap. 6.

226. See McGinn, *Prostitution, Sexuality, and the Law* (1998) 278.

227. See the sources collected in Loomis, *Wages* (1998) 334–35. We might even add the title of a play by Plautus, “*Trinummus*” (= 3 obols?), to the list of sources. If the title does indeed represent a price for sex, it was probably not as high as HS 3, as proposed by Krenkel, “Prostitution” (1978) 54.

228. See McGinn, *Prostitution, Sexuality, and the Law* (1998) chap. 7.

229. So Mart. 12.65.1 in my view suggests a potential identification of Phyllis as a prostitute, in contrast perhaps with her “actual” status (i.e., a “respectable” woman is cast in the role of a prostitute). See also Plaut. *Amph.* 288; Petron. 81.5. The evidence for contracts for the hire of prostitutes in a long-term capacity is not as strong as assumed by Herter, “Soziologie” (1960) 81.

230. See Magoulias, “Bathhouse” (1971) 246; Rossiaud, “Prostitution” (1976/1978) 20; Prus and Irini, *Hookers* (1980) 57; Otis, *Prostitution* (1985) 82; Reynolds, *Economics of Prostitution* (1986) 115; Leontisini, *Prostitution* (1989) 164–65; Schuster, *Frauenhaus* (1992) 69–70, 113–14; Sturdevant and Stoltzfus, *Let the Good Times Roll* (1992) 177, 192; Schuster, *Freien Frauen* (1995) 146–47; Loomis, *Wages* (1998) 173, 182.

tute's age, appearance, and skills all play a role here, but any statement more concrete than this is in the vast majority of cases sheer speculation. The point holds, no matter whether the pimp or brothel sets the price or the prostitute is allowed to negotiate with the customer.²³¹ Speculation, even informed speculation, about the role of market forces, subsistence levels, and similar economic factors may, in some areas of the modern world at least, be compelled to take second place to hypotheses suggesting a link between the price of drugs and the price of sex.²³² I am not suggesting here that the "world" of prostitution is utterly irrational, but that its rationality must be qualified as different from that pertaining to other areas of social and economic life, a point to be pursued further below.

The lower prices do seem very modest. Two *asses* is, after all, the price of a loaf of bread.²³³ But in order to understand better the economic position of prostitutes and derive an idea of their economic value to their exploiters, their earnings-potential must be considered in a more realistic manner. This potential is determined both by the prices charged and by the number of sexual contacts per day. There is no direct evidence from antiquity on this last point, but comparative data at least suggest possibilities. One important principle to emerge is that more expensive prostitutes tend to see fewer customers while less expensive prostitutes see more.

- In the medieval German brothel, prostitutes were required to service a minimum of 3 clients each day on the 20 days a month that they worked.²³⁴
- In nineteenth-century Nevada, prostitutes of the "middle rank" saw one customer per night and working-class prostitutes saw 3 or 4. No estimate is given for a category of prostitutes below that level.²³⁵
- In late nineteenth/early twentieth-century New York, 30 customers per evening are recorded, as well as ranges of 2–4, 1–10 (and sometimes 20), and 100 per week.²³⁶
- In late nineteenth/early twentieth-century Russia, streetwalkers had

231. Hart, *Buying and Selling* (1998) 108–9, 118, 128, 165, examines some aspects of the latter phenomenon.

232. See Høigård and Finstad, *Backstreets* (1992) 42–43, for a discussion of the principle "one fuck = one fix."

233. So remarks Duncan-Jones, *Economy*² (1982) 246. Cf. Duncan-Jones's # 1176e (at 209).

234. Schuster, *Freien Frauen* (1995) 152.

235. Goldman, *Gold Diggers* (1981) 76.

236. Gilfoyle, *City of Eros* (1992) 415, 459 n. 5; Hill, *Their Sisters' Keepers* (1993) 226–27.

- difficulty finding more than two clients a night, while brothel prostitutes serviced 10–15 customers, or under certain circumstances, 30–40, 40–50, and even 60–70.²³⁷
- In late nineteenth/early twentieth-century America, high-priced prostitutes saw 4–5 customers a day and the lowest crib prostitutes saw as many as 13–30 customers.²³⁸
 - In early twentieth-century Paris, a contemporary estimate yielded 7 or 8 clients each day for prostitutes working in regulated brothels, though this is now thought to be too low.²³⁹
 - In early-twentieth-century Buenos Aires, a successful prostitute might have had 300 customers each week on average.²⁴⁰
 - In 1924 Tokyo, prostitutes had on average 2.5 customers each day and that number declined to under 2 in the years that followed. Wartime “comfort women” might be compelled to service 30 men each day.²⁴¹
 - A 1948 Chinese survey of 500 prostitutes found they saw between 10 and 30 or even up to 60 customers each month, while reformers estimated they saw between 4 and 20 customers each night.²⁴²
 - In 1970s “Middleburg,” a fictional name for a U.S. city, the average number of clients was 6.2 per night for an average work week of 4.5 nights.²⁴³
 - Twenty per night is given as a general estimate by a prostitute servicing American military personnel in Korea.²⁴⁴
 - In late twentieth-century Calcutta, estimates range from 12–29 each week and 3–4 each day, not allowing for seasonal variations.²⁴⁵

237. Bernstein, *Sonia's Daughters* (1995) 149.

238. Rosen, *Sisterhood* (1982) 98, with references. This estimate receives rough confirmation elsewhere in Rosen's book. Included are anecdotes about the rapidity of sexual encounters for lower-priced prostitutes: Rosen, 92, 95–96 (one estimate is three minutes). There are also descriptions of the long lines outside the doors of crib prostitutes and the turnover in brothels housing Chinese and African-American prostitutes: Rosen, 94. Inhabitants of a one-dollar house (considered middle rank by Rosen, 86–87) are said to earn eighteen dollars per day: Rosen, 76.

239. Corbin, *Women for Hire* (1990) 81 (cf. 184: 2–4 for prostitutes in a *maison de rendez-vous*).

240. Guy, *Sex* (1990) 110.

241. Garon, *Molding Japanese Minds* (1996) 96, 111.

242. Hershatter, *Dangerous Pleasures* (1997) 49.

243. Decker, *Prostitution* (1979) 14, 166.

244. Sturdevant and Stoltzfus, *Let the Good Times Roll* (1992) 228.

245. Sleightholme and Sinha, *Guilty Without Trial* (1996) 85.

- In late twentieth-century Amsterdam, Birmingham (England), and New York, estimates by prostitutes range from 3 (sometimes 5–6), to 5–9 to 10–15 each day.²⁴⁶
- In 1990s “Marito,” a fictional name for a Spanish city, the average is 2 clients per day.²⁴⁷

Since not all of this information is equally reliable, and the conditions of employment—especially the degree of compulsion—must vary considerably, we cannot apply these figures in any straightforward sense to the Roman context. They can only suggest ranges of possible numbers of clients. If we apply these figures to our price data in a conservative fashion, using, say, 5 sexual encounters for prostitutes who charge 8 to 10 *asses* and 15 to 20 encounters for those who charge only 2, the earnings-potential is HS 10 to 12.5 per diem for high-priced prostitutes and HS 7.5 to 10 for lower-priced prostitutes.²⁴⁸ These sums are, of course, intended to serve as no more than very rough suggestions; free prostitutes may have worked less, and slave prostitutes may have been made to work more, regardless of the potential consequences for health.²⁴⁹ For many prostitutes, the higher daily averages may have been unsustainable over time for medical and ultimately economic reasons. We cannot determine if even slave prostitutes worked all day every day. While some modern evidence suggests that not many prostitutes do work that much, the question of days and hours worked is usually ignored in the reporting of average numbers of clients in the evidence just given. The calculations made for Roman prostitutes serve simply to provide a very rough idea of earnings-potential. The results illustrate the economic context of the evidence that Roman prostitution was a profitable business for the wealthy and (given the choices, as we shall see) an attractive if illusorily remunerative employment option for the free poor.²⁵⁰

In order to get an idea of what these earnings might have signified in terms of living standards, the figures should be compared with the HS 3 (i.e., 3 ses-

246. Goodall, *Comfort of Sin* (1995) 36; Chapkis, *Live Sex Acts* (1997) 61, 90, 115.

247. Hart, *Buying and Selling* (1998) 33.

248. The conversion depends on the rate of 16 *asses* = 4 sesterces = 1 denarius. Note that the abbreviation HS = sesterces.

249. The health problems of modern prostitutes, especially those working in conditions of relatively great compulsion, are understudied. Some aspects of these problems are explored in McGinn, *Roman Prostitution* (forthcoming).

250. Cf. Clarke, *Looking at Lovemaking* (1998) 174, who bases his conclusion that prostitution was not a profitable business on the price range attested for Pompeii.

terces) that Duncan-Jones suggests was the daily wage rate for male laborers in the city of Rome in the late Republic and with the HS 2 that was the daily rate for an agricultural worker and (perhaps one) team of oxen in the second century B.C.²⁵¹ We have some different, at times slightly higher figures from the early Empire, where the daily amount of 1 denarius (= HS 4) emerges, though not always without ambiguity, from Seneca,²⁵² Pompeian epigraphy,²⁵³ and the New Testament.²⁵⁴ Here we do well to consider the pay of some privileged workers as well, who were also among the more likely clients of prostitutes, the legionary soldiers of the early Principate, who were paid at the rate of HS 2.5 per diem, amounting to HS 900 each year, from which evidently was deducted HS 600–700 for fodder, food, and clothing.²⁵⁵

This left soldiers with an income of less than 1 HS *per diem* to spend at their discretion in the context of steady work, and some fixed costs covered. They also had extraordinary, if fairly regular, opportunities for supplementing that income, such as shaking down pimps and prostitutes while collecting the Caligulan tax. A fair comparison with the condition of prostitutes, however, demands that we take such “outside” sources of income into account. And the tables could be turned in that exploitation could cut both ways between prostitute and client. While prices may vary, one aim of the prostitute in many societies has simply been to separate as much money from the client as possible, another factor that renders precise comparison difficult.²⁵⁶

All the same, while the individual soldier lived well, his rate of pay, after deductions were made, would not have been sufficient to support a family.²⁵⁷ Some soldiers were more privileged than others of course, with the Praetorians

251. The sources are Cic. *Rosc. Com.* 28–29 and Cato *Agr.* 22.3. Duncan-Jones, *Economy*² (1982) 54, estimates that the rural pay rate was not more than half the urban pay. On the Cicero passage, see also Axer, “Prezzi” (1979).

252. For the (evidently) monthly wage of five denarii plus five *modii* of grain given a slave, see Sen. *Ep.* 80.7. The value breaks down to about one denarius per day, according to Prell, *Armut* (1997) 173 (cf. 187), which may be a bit high as an estimate (see below in the notes). See the other literary evidence surveyed by Prell, 174.

253. Figures of five asses and one denarius (plus bread) are suggested by two Pompeian inscriptions (*CIL* 4.4000, 6877). See the other epigraphic evidence showing a daily range of HS one to six and one-half cited by Prell, *Armut* (1997) 173.

254. The daily pay of one denarius given the vineyard workers according to Matt. 20.2 is perhaps a reflection of the cost of this kind of specialized labor, if it is not an exaggeration meant to help convey the point of the parable.

255. See Tac. *Ann.* 1.17.4–6 with Phang, *Marriage of Roman Soldiers* (2001) 182.

256. The point is made well by Butler, *Daughters of Joy* (1985) 56. See also the data examined in the section “Operation of Brothels.”

257. So Phang, *Marriage of Roman Soldiers* (2001) 182–83.

(elite soldiers stationed in Rome and responsible for the security of the Emperor's person) receiving more and the auxiliaries perhaps less.²⁵⁸

Also of relevance are data for subsistence allowances: HS 10–20/month during the late Republic for grain distributions, HS 30–40/month for an urban slave in the first century A.D., and HS 10–20/month for children in various alimentary schemes.²⁵⁹ Minimal urban rent costs have been suggested of HS 360 and 500/year,²⁶⁰ and thus from HS 30–48/month. More recently, Raymond Goldsmith has estimated that total national expenditures per head were around HS 380 (at least in Italy), while the average of monetary or attributed income per recipient was near HS 1000, which, when discounted for dependents, yields a total income per person of HS 380 (+/–15%, i.e., a range from HS 320–440).²⁶¹ Bruce Frier uses juristic data on subsistence annuities to show that these fall in the range of HS 376–600. Frier points out that since these annuities benefited adults, it is logical that they exceeded average annual income, while the annual values for the alimentary programs benefiting children (HS 120–240) would have been lower.²⁶² The annual cost of subsistence rations has been calculated by Willem Jongman—evidently for adult males—at HS 115.²⁶³ Some anecdotal evidence might be cited in this context, such as Seneca's assumption that 2 asses worth of food was a feast for many poor persons and slaves.²⁶⁴

Of particular interest here is the possibility that even low-priced prostitutes earned more than two or three times the wages of unskilled male urban laborers.²⁶⁵ The subsistence data are introduced in order to suggest that many prostitutes, at least independent prostitutes, may have lived far better than

258. See Phang, *Marriage of Roman Soldiers* (2001) 183–85.

259. Alimentary schemes were foundations designed to provide an allowance to feed children. The information is set forth in Duncan-Jones, *Economy*² (1982), 208. Note the possibility of a much higher rate of support for Pliny's freedmen: HS 70/mo. (Duncan-Jones # 1169 [at 208]). For the rate 1 *modius* = HS 2–4, see Duncan-Jones, 145–46.

260. See the discussion in Frier, "Rental Market" (1977) 34.

261. Goldsmith, "Estimate" (1984) 268–269, 272. Cf. Goldsmith, *Systems* (1989) esp. 35–36.

262. Frier, "Annuities" (1993) 229. Mrozek, *Lohnarbeit* (1989) 111–12, estimates that a comfortable level of subsistence costs was HS 2 at Pompeii, and 4 at Rome in the early Empire.

263. Jongman, *Economy* (1988) 195 n. 2.

264. Sen. *Ep.* 18.7–8. See the discussion in Prell, *Armut* (1997) 182–83, on basic living costs.

265. Of course, we have no information on wages for unskilled female laborers; given the limited opportunities for such work, wages may have been considerably lower (see in the section on "Recruitment"). Rosen, *Sisterhood* (1982) 83–84, points out that in turn-of-the-century America a woman working merely as a waitress in a milieu catering to prostitution might easily make three times the wages of a domestic worker. The standard wage for a shop girl or factory worker was under \$7/week, while prostitutes are said to have made \$30–\$50 in various cities and sometimes much more: Rosen, 147–48.

these laborers. If a prostitute worked for a pimp, much of her earnings may have gone to him, or perhaps all of them in the case of many or most slave prostitutes.²⁶⁶ In return, the prostitute received basic necessities: food, shelter, clothing.²⁶⁷ But such maintenance costs pale beside the possibilities for profits, even when the cost of purchasing slaves is taken into account.

If we shift our focus from the interest of the exploiters to that of the prostitutes themselves, however, a grimmer picture begins to emerge. Common sense suggests that low-priced prostitutes, as advantaged as they appear to have been relative to many types of workers, found it difficult to conserve an adequate amount of money as a bulwark against slow periods or what seems to have been an inevitable falloff in earnings with the passage of time.²⁶⁸ In many cultures, even better-situated prostitutes find themselves laboring under what might be described as “the illusion of profitability.”²⁶⁹ Prostitution does typically function as a cash-rich business with few—in strictly economic terms—start-up or marginal costs to the individual seller. It therefore offers the prospect of a great deal of instant income. To be sure, this income is often exaggerated for their own purposes by male observers—on whom for societies like Rome we must rely exclusively or almost so for our knowledge.²⁷⁰ Even when realized, a prostitute’s income is often diminished by a series of exploiters operating to the prostitute’s detriment even in the best of circumstances, including exigent pimps and madams, greedy landlords, and a state that veers between complaisance and punitiveness.²⁷¹

The means of such exploitation varies. Of course, a slave owner prostituting slaves receives in a legal, if not also practical sense, all they earn.²⁷² But

266. Dion. Hal. 4.24.4 suggests that at least in some cases slave prostitutes profited from their labor. See also *Priap.* 40. Both sources speak of slave prostitutes earning their freedom. Late antique evidence shows that some independent (i.e., without pimps) prostitutes might prosper. See the *Lives* of prostitute-saints translated from the Syriac by Brock and Harvey, *Holy Women* (1987) 35, 54, 55; see also Proc. *Bell. Pers.* 2.13.4.

267. For food and shelter, see the remarks on brothel-management in the section “Operation of Brothels.” For clothing, see Sen. *Contr.* 1.2.7.

268. So Ramirez Sabada “Prostitución” (1985) 233 sensibly argues.

269. See, for example, Rosen, *Sisterhood* (1982) 72; Reynolds, *Economics of Prostitution* (1986) 11–23 (esp. 20); Højgård and Finstad, *Backstreets* (1992) 44–50; Schuster, *Frauenhaus* (1992) 98; Sturdevant and Stoltzfus, *Let the Good Times Roll* (1992) 223, 314–15; Bernstein, *Sonia’s Daughters* (1995) 4, 138.

270. This phenomenon is well-observed by Reinsberg, *Ehe* (1989) 112, 146, 153–54.

271. On landlords, see the section “Ownership of Brothels.” On the state, see Harsin, *Policing Prostitution* (1985) 216; Best, *Controlling Vice* (1998) 27.

272. Compulsion might be better conceived as falling along a spectrum rather than imagined as a question of slavery or its absence in a legal sense. For example, the economic exploitation of Chinese prostitutes in the nineteenth-century United States was so total as to suggest a kind of servitude: Tong, *Unsubmissive Women* (1994) 13, 103–4.

even in the absence of slavery, a pimp or madam may demand a sizeable share of the prostitute's income: one-third or more is common.²⁷³ The pimp or madam may exercise an official or unofficial monopoly, charging her inflated prices for food, clothing, and personal items, sometimes even furniture, as well as exacting exorbitant amounts of rent.²⁷⁴ They may also inflict fines for petty offenses.²⁷⁵ Often, pimps and madams force the prostitute into debt that would make a loan shark blush, so they can increase their control over the prostitute and maximize the level of exploitation.²⁷⁶ The use of debt to control the laborer is, of course, a tactic familiar to the ancient historian,²⁷⁷ and one I would argue, despite a lack of evidence, that was applied to the Roman "free" prostitute.

Being a prostitute can be very expensive in other ways. Given that sexual attractiveness affects earnings, prostitutes often invest much money in expensive clothing, often sold to them at inflated prices, and seek the services of hairdressers and other beauticians.²⁷⁸ The atmospherics of the bars and other locales where they ply their trade do not foster attention to long-range planning and are for various reasons costly places in which to work.²⁷⁹ The behavior of many prostitutes, judged strictly in economic and not moral terms, does not appear to allow for the accumulation of savings.²⁸⁰ The various drains on resources imposed by their lifestyle, their mentality, and the competitive aspects of their profession mean that pimps themselves can find it impossible to succeed financially.²⁸¹ Profit margins shrink as the cash flows to the exploiter of last resort, often a landlord.²⁸²

It is not surprising therefore that in many cultures prostitution can serve as a metaphor for a voracious, almost limitless mode of consumption that merges

273. See Prus and Irini, *Hookers* (1980) 33; Schuster, *Frauenhaus* (1992) 107, 110–11; Sleightholme and Sinha, *Guilty Without Trial* (1996) 19, 93, 95; Chapkis, *Live Sex Acts* (1997) 115, 117, 163.

274. Harsin, *Policing Prostitution* (1985) 38; Schuster, *Frauenhaus* (1992) 97; Hill, *Their Sisters' Keepers* (1993) 94.

275. Bernstein, *Sonia's Daughters* (1995) 156.

276. Bernstein, *Sonia's Daughters* (1995) 156–57; Schuster, *Freien Frauen* (1995) 139–41; Sleightholme and Sinha, *Guilty Without Trial* (1996) 95.

277. De Ste. Croix, *Class Struggle* (1981) 162–70, 238–40, has a good survey.

278. See Højgård and Finstad, *Backstreets* (1992) 49–50; Hill, *Their Sisters' Keepers* (1993) 89; Sleightholme and Sinha, *Guilty Without Trial* (1996) 95; Best, *Controlling Vice* (1998) 67.

279. Prus and Irini, *Hookers* (1980) 83, 176, 184, 251, 256.

280. See the account by Bernstein, *Sonia's Daughters* (1995) 158–60, on the futile efforts made by the late nineteenth-century sanitary commission in Minsk to shelter prostitutes from financial exploitation.

281. See Decker, *Prostitution* (1979) 258; Heyl, *Madam* (1979) 72; Prus and Irini, *Hookers* (1980) 251; Reynolds, *Economics of Prostitution* (1986) 26–28.

282. Heyl, *Madam* (1979) 99–101.

the sexual and the material.²⁸³ The conclusion seems valid that prostitution does not profit most prostitutes, and that many women entering prostitution experience a decline in their economic status and standard of living.²⁸⁴ Exceptions to this rule do not weaken it overall.²⁸⁵

My point is easier to argue in regard to late antiquity, since aside from some fourth-century evidence that may reflect the influence of the literary tradition, the sources are frank and full about the poverty of prostitutes in this period. This perhaps reflects in part the interest of Christians in poverty as a motive for resorting to prostitution in the first place.²⁸⁶ Their inadequate earnings left prostitutes no way out of the profession, moreover.²⁸⁷ So the (still-pagan) astrologer Firmicus Maternus can refer to their “wretched earnings” (*miserus quaestus*).²⁸⁸

To look at these prices from the perspective of potential clients, their overall low level suggests that venal sex was accessible to many low-status males. The less-expensive prostitutes charging two *asses* took one-sixth of the daily wage from late-Republican male laborers. For legionary soldiers, the percentage of pay taken was apparently a bit higher, more than one-half of daily discretionary income. But when we factor in the amounts they had to pay for fodder, food, and clothing, this begins to look like much less. If we compare the cost of a visit to a brothel in fifteenth-century Nuremberg, which Peter

283. See the comments of Davidson, *Courtesans and Fishcakes* (1997) 209–10.

284. For the Byzantine Empire, see Leontsini, *Prostitution* (1989) 169; for nineteenth-century Paris, see Harsin, *Policing Prostitution* (1985) 204; for the nineteenth-century United States, see Hobson, *Uneasy Virtue* (1990) 108; for twentieth-century Norway, see Høigård and Finstad, *Backstreets* (1992) 117–19; for medieval Germany, see Schuster, *Frauenhaus* (1992) 96; for medieval England, see Karras, *Common Women* (1996) 80, 97; for twentieth-century Calcutta, see Sleightholme and Sinha, *Guilty Without Trial* (1996) 93–94. Cf. Hill, *Their Sisters' Keepers* (1993) 86–91, who strains for a somewhat rosier scenario than a reasonable interpretation of the facts she cites warrants. Cf. 103, when she cites the tax assessment records of “at least” twenty-four prostitutes in nineteenth-century New York in order to argue that they might easily have acquired assets over time. This cannot be a representative sample of the city’s prostitute population at that time. See also the opinion of Stansell, *City of Women* (1987) 181, 186, and Decker, *Prostitution* (1979) 179 and 301 (cf. 202 and 240), about the relative profitability of prostitution for working women, which strikes me as naive, as does the recent analysis by Edlund and Korn, “Theory of Prostitution” (2002) which seems sophisticated in theory, but uninformed as to reality.

285. See, for example, the prostitute who made a testamentary bequest to Sulla: Plut. *Sulla* 2.4.

286. See Neri, *Marginali* (1998) 202–208, 223, who is more inclined than I am to trust the late-antique evidence about well-off prostitutes. Such evidence drops off after the fourth century.

287. Neri, *Marginali* (1998) 203.

288. Firm. Mat. *Math.* 6.31.79.

Schuster estimates was equal on average to three hours of work for an apprentice, to that of a visit at Rome in the late Republic and early Empire, we see that prostitution was relatively inexpensive for the Roman male.²⁸⁹

RECRUITMENT

The task of acquiring slave prostitutes fell to the pimp—who might be acting in the guise of a *caupo* (innkeeper), for example—in other words, the person responsible for running the brothel. The means of acquisition do not seem to have differed greatly from those employed for acquiring slaves in general.²⁹⁰ Women and children who were captured in war were often enslaved and prostituted²⁹¹ and persons who were already slaves might be traded across frontiers.²⁹² Those kidnapped by robbers and pirates are often said to have endured a similar fate: the literal truth of the sources may sometimes be doubted,²⁹³ but they hint at a widespread trade, for which other evidence is available.²⁹⁴ Clement of Alexandria appears to make a distinction between wholesalers and retailers. Wholesalers, he notes, transport prostitutes as if they were grain or wine, while retailers acquire them as if they were bread or sauce.²⁹⁵ In his remarks, Clement also unites prostitution with the trade in exposed chil-

289. Schuster, *Frauenhaus* (1992) 113.

290. The relative importance of each of the means given here is controversial: see Horden and Purcell, *Corrupting Sea* (2000) 389. For a recent discussion, arguing for the importance of the mix of sources for slaves, see Harris, “Demography” (1999) esp. 64–72. For criticism of this view and emphasis on the importance of slave offspring for the slave supply, see Scheidel, “Quantifying the Sources” (1997).

291. For the practice in general, the clearest evidence is Dio Chrys. 7.133. Sen. *Const.* 6.5 suggests the truth of this argument. Lact. *Div. Inst.* 4.21.4 CSEL 19.1.368 cites the fate of the captives in the Jewish War. Dioclet. et Maxim. C. 8.50(51).7 (a. 291) tells of a captive woman ransomed by a third party and then prostituted (more on this text below).

292. A very profitable trade involving the importation of slave prostitutes from the Red Sea into Egypt is suggested by *I. Portes* 67 (-OGIS 2.674-IGR 1.1183; Coptos A.D. 90). See McGinn, *Prostitution, Sexuality, and the Law* (1998) 281–82.

293. The sources in general seem to derive from comedy, rhetoric, and romance: Plaut. *Curc.* 644–52; *Persa* 134–36; *Rudens* 39–41, 1105; Sen. *Contr.* 1.2; Apul. *Met.* 7.9–10; *Hist. Ap. Tyr.* 33. Though these sources might exaggerate the phenomenon of pirates procuring slaves (an argument that makes better sense for the imperial period), it still took place, especially in certain locales and time periods. See, for example, Shaw, “Bandit” (1993) 325. It does seem more based in fiction than in real life during the imperial period, though piracy was far from eradicated: Braund, “Piracy”; de Souza, *Piracy* (1999) 60–65, 214.

294. See IG 14.2000, the sarcophagus, from Rome, perhaps second or third century, belonging to one M. Sempronius Neikrokrates, a self-described “merchant of beautiful women.”

295. Clem. Al. *Paed.* 3.3.22 SC 158.52.

dren.²⁹⁶ A letter of Augustine indicates that kidnapping children for the purpose of enslavement was quite common in his day.²⁹⁷

At any rate, the pirate, pimp, and slave dealer were linked in the popular imagination, to judge from a text of Seneca the Elder.²⁹⁸ While it is reasonable to suppose that some free immigrants to Rome practiced prostitution, most foreign prostitutes were probably slaves, or at any rate had been brought to Rome as slaves to be prostituted.²⁹⁹

The practice of raising abandoned children to be prostitutes, a favorite theme of Comedy, attracted the unsympathetic attention of Christian moralists.³⁰⁰ There is also some evidence indicating parents sold (to pimps), or prostituted, their children, actions usually said to be motivated by poverty. There is no evidence that the prostitution of children by parents, especially by *patres familias*, that is, those wielding paternal power (*patria potestas*), was illegal during the classical period. In fact, legislation enacted by Christian emperors in the early fifth century allowing daughters and slave women exploited by their fathers or owners to escape from prostitution suggests that prostituting one's children, above all those in one's *patria potestas*, was every bit as legal as prostituting one's slaves.³⁰¹

The sale of free citizen children by their parents was almost certainly illegal during the classical period.³⁰² This does not mean, of course, that it was not done. Quintilian,³⁰³ who says that a common theme of the rhetorical exercises known as *controversiae* concerns a person "who has sold his child to a pimp" ("qui filium lenoni vendidit"), may provoke skepticism. Yet his assertion receives support from other sources, which also suggest that parents themselves at times prostituted their own children.

296. For all that the distinction Clement seems to draw may not precisely reflect reality, to judge from other evidence from Egypt: see Drexhage, "Bemerkungen" (1991). If so, the second group may be understood to be prostitutes' clients, and not retailers.

297. Augustin. *Ep.* 10* CSEL 88.46–51. On stealing—and buying—free children in late antiquity, see Nathan, *Family* (2000) 136–39.

298. Sen. *Contr.* 1.2.9.

299. See Evans, *War* (1991) 140–41; Noy, *Foreigners* (2000) 122–23.

300. See McGinn, *Roman Prostitution* (forthcoming).

301. Theod., Valent. CTh. 15.8.2 (a. 428) (= C. 1.4.12 = C. 11.41.6).

302. Here I take the view of Brunt, *Manpower* (1987) 131 n. 4, against that of Boswell, *Kindness* (1988) 65–75, 110, 171. See Mayer-Maly, "Notverkaufsrecht" (1958) 120–22; Kaser, *Privatrecht* 1² (1971): 342; Memmer, "Findelkinder" (1991) 43. There does not seem to be much evidence for the sale of children by parents, to judge from Harris, "Slave-Trade" (1980) 124. The practice of prostituting one's own children, however, does not seem to have been outlawed until late antiquity: see Theod., Valent. CTh. 15.8.2 (= C. 1.4.12 = C. 11.41.6) (a. 428) Leo C. 1.4.14 (a. 457–467) (= [?] C. 11.41.7).

303. Quint. *IO* 7.1.55.

Seneca names,³⁰⁴ among the shameful bargains made to stay alive, that of “personally handing over one’s children for the purpose of fornication” (“liberos ad stuprum manu sua tradere”). This may imply direct prostitution, rather than the sale of children to a pimp. Musonius knows a father who sold his handsome son “into a life of shame.”³⁰⁵ Justin Martyr castigates those who prostitute children and wives and who castrate children for (commercial) sexual purposes.³⁰⁶ A late fourth-century papyrus from Hermopolis includes the record of a trial for the murder of a prostitute.³⁰⁷ The mother of the dead woman claims financial compensation from the murderer, who has robbed her of her sole means of subsistence.³⁰⁸ She explains, “it was for this reason that I gave my daughter to the pimp, so as to have a means of support.” The mother wins her case and receives a tenth of the man’s property.³⁰⁹

More difficult to evaluate is the practice of husbands prostituting their wives. The adultery law of Augustus renders this practice, which it identifies as criminal pimping, *lenocinium*, illegal. I argue elsewhere that the fairly plentiful sources that describe husbands prostituting their wives are grounded more in anxiety than in reality, and they were often shaped by literary convention or motivated by personal hostility.³¹⁰ This hardly means such was behavior was nonexistent, of course, especially for the lower orders about whose doings the upper-class sources tend to silence.

One might under Roman law sell oneself into slavery with attendant prostitution.³¹¹ Although direct evidence is lacking, given the apparent readiness of pimps to acquire children and the—absolutely unquantifiable—role that breeding played in slave acquisition in general, it is likely that many slave

304. Sen. *Ep.* 101.14–15. Note the rhetorically charged allegations at Zos. 2.38 over the consequences of Constantine’s tax program.

305. Muson. 83H. See also Augustin. *Ep.* 24* CSEL 88.126–27.

306. Iust. *Apol.* 1.27 Munier 70–72.

307. BGU 3.1024.6–8. On this text, see Bagnall, *Egypt* (1993) 196–98, who persuasively defends its reliability against critics; see, for example, Beaucamp, *Statut* 2 (1992): 56. Montserrat, *Sex and Society* (1996) 108, argues that the mother did not sell her daughter to the pimp given that she continued to derive an income from her daughter’s earnings. Law and logic are on his side, but it seems possible that the very illegality of the transaction fostered an informal arrangement of payments over time, as though her daughter’s prostitution provided a kind of annuity.

308. BGU 3.1024.7.

309. BGU 3.1024.8.

310. McGinn, *Prostitution, Sexuality, and the Law* (1998) 171–94. For a late-antique complaint, see Val. Cem. *Hom.* 20.8 PL 52.754.

311. Dio Chrys. 15.23 alleges that the practice of selling oneself was common. A person had to be older than twenty: Marci. D. 1.5.5.1.

prostitutes were *vernae*.³¹² In other words, the sources of slave prostitutes, like those of slaves in general, were mixed.³¹³

We are not well-informed about the prices charged for—as opposed to by—slave prostitutes. The evidence of Plautus is suspect, and not only because he tends to give Greek monetary units.³¹⁴ Prices given in two other sources seem too high to be judged typical if they are reliable at all. The emperor Elagabalus is alleged to have bought a *meretrix notissima et pulcherrima* (“a very prominent and beautiful prostitute”) for 100,000 sesterces;³¹⁵ the episode introduces a chapter devoted to his extravagance. The same amount is the successful bid offered by a pimp for the slave Tarsia during the (fictional) auction scene in the *Historia Apollonii Regis Tyrii*.³¹⁶ Such a price was extravagant and highly unusual, but perhaps not utterly impossible.³¹⁷

Much lower prices were the norm, in any case. Martial records a bid of 600 sesterces for a *puella* “of reputation none too exalted . . . such as sit in mid-Subura” (“*famae non nimium bonae . . . /quales in media sedent Subura*”).³¹⁸ The bid is withdrawn after the auctioneer, in a vain attempt to up the bidding, tries to convince the crowd that she is *pura* (“chaste”) by grabbing her and kissing her several times. This price is very low for a slave,³¹⁹ but hardly incredible.³²⁰ Perhaps the most important piece of information to be derived from this poem is that a slave’s status as a prostitute might exert a strong

312. By “*verna*” I mean slave by birth. On the difficulty of understanding this word in the context of Pompeian prostitute-graffiti, see app. 3.

313. I note in passing the consignment of women, particularly Christians, to brothels as a form of punishment. The practice is well-attested, but it is impossible to judge its economic significance: see chap. 8.

314. For a brave attempt to justify this evidence, see Delcourt, “Prix” (1948).

315. *HA Elag.* 31.1.

316. *Hist. Ap. Tyr.* 33.

317. Duncan-Jones, *Economy*² (1982) 253–54, remarks that the amount offered for Tarsia is “comparable to the sums paid at Rome under the early Principate for slaves of the highest accomplishments” (note omitted). Still, the price per trick would have to be very high to recoup such an investment.

318. *Mart.* 6.66.

319. We are told this at *Mart.* 6.66.4: “*parvo cum pretio diu liceret.*” The joke turns in part on the understanding that this is a low bid but not outrageously so. A comparison with the other prices listed in Duncan-Jones, *Economy*² (1982) app. 10, confirms the impression that this price is at the lower end of the scale (see n. 320, however, for a similar price). Despite some extravagant exceptions, Martial tends to present female slaves as of little worth: Garrido-Hory, “Femmes” (1999) 304.

320. This price corresponds to the other lowest “price” for a slave recorded in Rome and Italy, namely, the HS 600 for which a *puella* is pledged at Herculaneum: *Tab. Herc.* 65 = Duncan-Jones, *Economy*² (1982) app. 10, # 14 (Martial’s evidence is listed as # 27).

downward pressure on her price.³²¹ This suggests that slave prostitutes could be purchased for a relatively low amount, whether the reason was economic (i.e., there was a good supply) or social/moral (the low public regard for prostitutes), or a mixture of both.³²² One contributing factor may have been that women and children slaves seem to have been generally cheaper to purchase than adult male slaves.³²³ For what it is worth, Byzantine data suggest that it was not expensive for a pimp to set up shop.³²⁴

When the ancient evidence registers the status of a prostitute, more often than not she is a slave.³²⁵ The easiest explanation is that most were, in fact, slaves. Another explanation is that our sources tend to take a relatively higher interest in slaves as opposed to the free poor.³²⁶ Or it might suggest that prostitution as practiced by the Romans was so fundamentally stamped by slavery, that the idea of this was present even where prostitutes were actually of free status, and was encouraged by the fact that so many of course were slaves.³²⁷ These explanations do not of necessity exclude each other, and, all three are in fact more or less persuasive. The link between slavery and prostitution is confirmed further by the fact that a good many prostitutes were almost certainly freedwomen, who had been prostituted as slaves and continued to engage in the profession after being freed.³²⁸ One cannot, to be sure, ade-

321. On the possible diminution of the value of a slave put to prostitution, see McGinn, *Prostitution, Sexuality, and the Law* (1998) chap. 7; see also 321.

322. See the suggestion that the sexual vulnerability attendant on being the slave of a pirate would have lowered the value of a slave woman: Sen. *Contr.* 1.2.4.

323. For children, Boswell, *Kindness* (1988), seems right to rely on the evidence of Plautus. For women, see Scheidel, "Reflections" (1996); Scheidel takes data from Diocletian's Price Edict to show that female teenagers were an exception to this rule, since their reproductive capacity (and sexual attractiveness?) was on the rise.

324. See Leontsini, *Prostitution* (1989) 79.

325. For collections of sources, see Herter, "Dirne" (1957) 1171; "Soziologie" (1960) 78. Slavery was not evenly distributed across the Empire: Bradley, *Slaves and Masters* (1984) 17. But it is difficult to relate this fact to the practice of prostitution. In ancient Athens, the evidence suggests a close association between slavery and prostitution, especially brothel-prostitution: see Schaps, "Athenian Woman" (1998) 168, 175; Cohen, "Economic Analysis" (forthcoming). On the other hand, the fact that prostitutes as well as pimps paid the Caligulan tax suggests that some, perhaps a significant number, of the former were independent: McGinn, *Prostitution, Sexuality, and the Law* (1998), chap. 7.

326. See Scheidel, "Silent Women 1" (1995); "Silent Women 2" (1996). Note in this connection the skepticism of Evans, *War* (1991) 139–40, over the idea that the vast majority of prostitutes were slaves or freedwomen.

327. See Flemming, "Quae Corpore" (1999) 40–41, 51, 56–61.

328. So argues Treggiari, "Ladies" (1970/1) 197, citing the case of Livy's Faecenia Hispala (39.9.5). Her assertion that prostitutes were most often slaves or freedwomen is persuasive, with the evidence stronger for the Empire. See Treggiari, *Freedmen* (1969) 142, where she cites the

quately emphasize the poor evidentiary base on which this argument, no doubt correct, about freedwomen prostitutes rests.³²⁹ Freedom for the slave prostitute did not necessarily mean freedom from prostitution, a cold fact that makes the connection between slavery and venal sex even closer.³³⁰ The evidence for possible prostitutes in Pompeii, given in appendix 3, suggests most were slaves, ex-slaves, or lived in social conditions that were close to slavery.³³¹ The same, no doubt, holds true for prostitutes living elsewhere.

It seems unlikely that one could legally compel women who were not slaves or in paternal power to prostitute themselves. But if this was the rule in practice, it was almost certainly ignored if it was not in fact unenforceable.³³² Diocletian and Maximian react forcefully when a well-born woman captured by the enemy is prostituted by the woman who redeems her and her father complains to them.³³³ Not everyone could have been so lucky, even if we are correct to assume that justice triumphed here. Whether compulsion, lifestyle, or lack of realistic alternatives played a role, the original motivation to enter prostitution for freeborn women who had not been prostituted while in paternal power and freedwomen who had not been prostituted while slaves would have been different than that for slave prostitutes, only in an objective sense.

All the same, we should not exaggerate even this distinction. Roman women who were not slaves were often as vulnerable to the importunities of procurers as women in other societies without slavery. The methods of recruitment into prostitution that were uncovered by Justinian's investigative commission in the sixth century, which included promising poor women and children clothing and shoes, were not at all likely a recent development.³³⁴ What

poetry of Horace, who "makes the *libertina* the mistress and harlot *par excellence*." On the social significance of this fact, see below in the text.

329. Fabre, *Libertus* (1981) 354, in his massive study of freedpersons, can cite apart from the fictions of comedy, lyric, and other works of literature, only two "historical" freedwomen prostitutes whose names we know, Faecenia Hispala and Volumnia Cytheris; and he is tentative as to the latter's status as a prostitute.

330. See Liv. 39.9.5; *Priap.* 40.

331. See also see Treggiari, "Lower Class Women" (1976) 73 with n. 36.

332. See Treggiari, *Freedmen* (1969) 142; "Ladies" (1970/1) 197, for a similar argument. Call. D. 38.1.38 pr. prohibits acts of commercial sex from counting as *operae*. For a brief discussion of this text, see McGinn, *Prostitution, Sexuality, and the Law* (1998) 330–31.

333. Dioclet., Maxim. C. 8.50(51).7 (a. 291). The father is freed from the responsibility of reimbursing the woman for the ransom and his daughter is ordered to be returned to him. On this text, see Beaucamp, *Statut* 1(1990): 19 n. 22; Cursi, *Struttura* (1996) 207 n. 36; Neri, *Marginali* (1998) 233.

334. Iustinianus Nov. 14 (a. 535).

is new is the official concern with this phenomenon. I must regrettably leave aside here the important contemporary debate among feminists as to whether prostitution is inherently exploitative.³³⁵ It was almost certainly so at Rome. Slave prostitutes, insofar as they counted as economic assets, might even have received better treatment in some cases than free prostitutes.³³⁶

Where explicit compulsion of one form or another was not in play, a primary motivation for women to enter prostitution was economic, that is, the desperation of poverty.³³⁷ The evidence suggests that the supply of labor overall for the Romans was generous, while work conditions were unpredictable at best and unemployment was widespread.³³⁸ Wages tended to support the worker at a subsistence level, but not the worker's family as well.³³⁹ Modern studies of prostitution suggest that poverty, resulting from or combined with low wages, limited opportunities for work, disastrous events in the family economy, and a desire for relatively rapid and easy social mobility, has played a decisive role in influencing women's choices to enter prostitution.³⁴⁰

The steadily growing literature on lower-class women's occupations in Roman society seems to confirm the impression that their employment prospects were narrow.³⁴¹ Our focus, as ever, is on women, but it is worth invoking Epictetus's parable of the freedman who, compelled by want to pros-

335. For literature, see below in the section on "Prostitution and the Roman Economy."

336. This principle, however, may not have applied to slave children who were prostitutes, since slave children overall were so heavily exploited in terms of the labor they performed. See Bradley, "Social Aspects" (1986) 49–51; Bradley, *Discovering the Roman Family* (1991) 103–24.

337. The ancient evidence is abundant. See, for example, Plaut. *Asin.* 530–31, *Cist.* 40–41; Ter. *Andria* 70–79 (cf. 796–800), *Heauton* 443–47, *Phormio* 415–17; Sen. *Ep.* 101.15; Artemid. 1.56, 58; Lucian. *Dialog. Mer.* 6; Ulp. D. 23.2.43.5; Firm. *Mat. Math.* 3.6.22; BGU 3.1024.6–8; Theod., Valent. C.Th. 15.8.2 (= C. 1.4.12 = C. 11.41.6) (a. 428); Proc. *Aed.* 1.9.1–10; Justinian. Nov. 14 (a. 535). For Christian sources, which tend to be more insistent on this point, see, for example, Lact. *Inst.* 5.8.7 CSEL 19.1.422; . More evidence in Krause, *Witwen* 3 (1995):190 n. 67, 191 n. 78, 192 nn. 81–82. For discussion of the poverty motive for Byzantine prostitutes, see Leontsini, *Prostitution* (1989) 163.

338. See Mrozek, *Lohnarbeit* (1989) 94–95, 119, 161; Evans, *War* (1991) 144; Prell, *Armut* (1997) 163–69.

339. See Mrozek, *Lohnarbeit* (1989) 162.

340. See Walkowitz, *Prostitution* (1980) 15–21; Rosen, *Sisterhood* (1982) 31, 115, 137–68; Corbin, *Women for Hire* (1990) 209; Guy, *Sex* (1990) 24, 40; Gilfoyle, *City of Eros* (1992) 59; Gibson, *Prostitution and the State*² (1999) 104.

341. Susan Treggiari's numerous contributions to this subject supersede previous work and remain essential: "Domestic Staff" (1973); "Jobs in the Household" (1975); "Volusii" (1975); "Jobs for Women" (1976); "Lower Class Women" (1979); "Questions " (1979); "Urban Labour" (1980).

titute himself, found himself less free than he was when still a slave.³⁴² This story speaks volumes about the lack of real choice experienced by—I would argue—the overwhelming majority of Rome’s prostitutes, male or female.

The situation regarding the domestic staffs of the great houses is instructive. Because of their size and corresponding distribution of highly specialized work assignments, these establishments offered a variety of jobs for both men and women.³⁴³ Nevertheless, the roles allotted females were relatively few in number and narrow in scope.³⁴⁴ Women were not employed in great numbers by male owners,³⁴⁵ and, even among female owners, positions for women were not as many or as varied as those held by male servants.³⁴⁶

It may be supposed that many female slaves in the great *familiae* held no separate position of their own but simply functioned as the partners (*contubernales*) of male slaves or freedmen who did have a position.³⁴⁷ In any case, the relative lack of women slaves found in large households has been noted.³⁴⁸ The conclusion seems justified that employment opportunities for women in the great houses were extremely limited. They tended to be confined to strictly domestic tasks such as making clothes, which as we shall see, tended to define women’s work experiences generally.³⁴⁹ In the countryside, jobs were filled

342. Epict. 4.1.35.

343. It was considered shameful and mean to have the same slave perform more than one role: Cic. *Pisonem* 67.

344. Flory, “Family” (1978) 87–88. The gender imbalance may have been even more dramatic in the *familia Caesaris*, the imperial household, where women played no role in administration: see Herrmann-Otto, *Ex Ancilla Natus* (1994) 117–18, 346.

345. See Treggiari, “Domestic Staff” (1973) 243–50, “Volusii” (1975) 92; Bradley, *Slaves and Masters* (1984) 73–75.

346. Treggiari, “Domestic Staff” (1973) 248, “Jobs in the Household” (1975) 58. Female servants served as hairdressers, masseuses, escorts/attendants, dressers, medical orderlies (all typically, if not exclusively, for the women of the household), wet nurses, midwives, spinners, weavers (production of clothing was in fact the principal occupation), and (probably, though unattested) humble domestics. The owner’s gender affected the distribution of staff by sex, as one might expect.

347. Brunt, *Manpower* (1987) 144, points out that the lack of positions for women on domestic staffs reduced the number of these relationships. On the marriage partners of female servants, see Treggiari, “Domestic Staff” (1973) 249.

348. See Treggiari, “Questions” (1979) 189–90 (cf. “Volusii” [1975] 400–401); Sigmund Nielsen, “Ditis Examen Domus?” (1991) esp. 230–32; Herrmann-Otto, *Ex Ancilla Natus* (1994) 346–47; Smadja, “Affranchissement” (1999) 360–61, noting some correction of earlier work. It is significant that female positions did not display the same complex hierarchy that male jobs did: Treggiari, “Questions,” 191.

349. So Brunt, *Manpower* (1987) 143–44, esp. 144 n. 1 drawing his conclusion on the basis of an examination of M. Maxey’s evidence; Treggiari, “Domestic Staff” (1973) 245, “Questions” (1979) 190. See also Günther, *Frauenarbeit* (1987) 136; Eichenauer, *Arbeitswelt* (1988) 126;

overwhelmingly by males.³⁵⁰ We can assume that female job holders are to an extent underrepresented in the evidence, because they held positions that the Romans felt were not worth recording or too shameful to report.³⁵¹ But their underrepresentation might also be taken as evidence of depressed employment chances *tout court*.

Prospects seem to have been even more limited in the free labor market, or, at any rate that not tied to the great households.³⁵² The available evidence suggests job offerings were very meager, particularly when jobs that were obviously domestic are excluded,³⁵³ and those jobs available to women of a higher social level or in a favored position.³⁵⁴ In Le Gall's *CIL* survey,³⁵⁵ there is a total of about fifteen to twenty professions, most of which are attested only once or twice in the inscriptions. Treggiari adds a dozen more items to this list,³⁵⁶ and

Evans, *War* (1991) 115; Rodríguez Neila, "Trabajo" (1999) 13; Smadja, "Affranchissement" (1999) 362. For the definition and identification of domestic job titles, see Treggiari, "Jobs for Women" (1976) and the next note. For the ideological aspects of domestic wool-working, see Maurin "Labor" (1983); Lyapustin, "Women" (1985); Eichenauer, esp. 301 (it was shameful for elite women to work, but idleness for them was suspect); Larsson Lovén, "*Lanam Fecit*" (1998).

350. See Krause, *Witwen 2* (1994) 127, who, citing Artemid. 1.31, declares that, unlike most households, which included both males and females, farm households only included men, just as brothels only included women (see chap. 8). See also Bradley, *Slaves and Masters* (1984) 75, and below in the text.

351. See Günther, *Frauenarbeit* (1987) 21, 42; Herrmann-Otto, *Ex Ancilla Natus* (1994) 346; Dixon *Reading Roman Women* (2001) 114–15, 120–24, 130–32.

352. Out of eighty-five types of jobs attested at Pompeii, only about a half-dozen are unambiguously female: for the total, see Hopkins, "Growth" (1972) 72. For a general survey of the limited employment opportunities available to women, see Krause, *Witwen 2* (1994) 123–73; Krause, *Witwen 3* (1995) 178–93.

353. Job designations for slave women and freedwomen in a household include the *omatrix*, *obstetrix*, *lanipenda*, *quasillaria*, *nutrix*, *unatrix*, *sarcinatrix*, *canatrix*, *medica*, and others: see Treggiari, "Jobs for Women" (1976), "Questions" (1980). Cf. Le Gall, "Métiers" (1969) 124, whose list is incomplete; the evidence for *sarcinatrix*, *canatrix*, and *medica* as domestic positions is not fully taken into account. Treggiari shows that the last two positions, together with *obstetrix*, could be freelance ones. The position of *tonatrix* should perhaps be included among the domestics, as Le Gall, 125 n. 6 suggests, given the epigraphic instances from Rome. Bradley, *Slaves and Masters* (1984) 72, argues that many women of low status worked as wet nurses. See also Bradley, *Discovering the Roman Family* (1991) 13–36.

354. These would include the position of *vilica*, and the isolated attestations of *actrix*, *negotiatrix*, and *conductrix* (not a real job), and possibly *medica* as well: see Le Gall, "Métiers" (1969) 126–29.

355. Le Gall, "Métiers" (1969). In addition to the jobs excluded in the previous two notes I would omit *popa* from Le Gall's list. The word seems to refer exclusively to males: *OLD*, s.v. "*popa*." *Popinaria* is the correct female equivalent: *CIL* 14.3709.

356. Treggiari, "Lower Class Women" (1979) 80 n. 1. See the list she provides at "Urban Labour" (1980) 61–64.

estimates the total to be about thirty-five.³⁵⁷ Once again, a certain level of underreporting must be assumed.³⁵⁸ But the overall comparison with the number of jobs available to men is still striking.³⁵⁹

No doubt many women and children participated in the economy as marginal producers, who were summoned when conditions permitted or demanded.³⁶⁰ In many traditional societies, we can detect the phenomenon of “substitution,” in which women function as a labor reserve for their husbands or male members of their families.³⁶¹ Flexibility and adaptability are essential, though most women perhaps have to work at something on a regular basis. A similar point should be made for casual or part-time prostitutes in Roman society. This was the kind of choice likely to be invisible to, or misunderstood by, the elite observer.³⁶² Evidence for casual and part-time prostitutes is abundant for other cultures, while all but nonexistent for Rome.³⁶³ Part of the problem is that it is difficult to establish the status of many women, whether they appear in the sources as historical or fictional figures, as prostitutes in the first place.³⁶⁴ Another problem is the difficulty of drawing a line between part-time and full-time prostitution, a problem we cannot simply attribute to the elite

357. Treggiari, “Lower Class Women” (1979) 78. The best attested nondomestic female professions are jewelry making, clothing production, retail sales, and various service industries (especially prostitution): Treggiari, 66–68. Eichenauer, *Arbeitswelt* (1988) 56–59, drawing upon epigraphic, literary, and legal sources, is able to raise the total to a much more comforting, though highly doubtful, 103. A few of the difficulties with her list may be canvassed briefly. Some of the job titles Eichenauer cites are not given in the sources. Others are unlikely to be real titles at all, such as *puella*. It would be useful to have a matching list of male titles for comparison. One hopes this is possible without having to list, for example, all of the ranks in the Roman army.

358. For what it is worth, 31 percent of the persons named in the index of *gentilicia* in Zimmer, *Berufsdarstellungen* (1982), are female.

359. See Eichenauer, *Arbeitswelt* (1988) 146.

360. See Horden and Purcell, *Corrupting Sea* (2000) 268–69. Here they cite Columella’s advice (12.3.6) that women and children should be set to wool working when the weather made work outside impossible. See also Frasca, *Mestieri* (1994), 89.

361. See Signorelli, “Legittimazione” (1999) 8–11.

362. For this point, see Horden and Purcell, *Corrupting Sea* (2000) 266.

363. See Evans, “Prostitution” (1976) 112; Decker, *Prostitution* (1979) 4–5, 13; Harsin, *Police Prostitution* (1985) 15; Tong, *Unsubmissive Women* (1994) 19; Bernstein, *Sonia’s Daughters* (1995) 119; Karras, *Common Women* (1996) 53–54, 60, 71; Sleightholme and Sinha, *Guilty Without Trial* (1996) 11; Sullivan, *Politics of Sex* (1997) 27; Hart, *Buying and Selling* (1998) 33. I agree with Flemming, “*Quae Corpore*” (1999) 42, that the story in Sext. Emp. *Pyrrh.* 3.201, about Egyptian girls earning a dowry through prostitution, while dubious in itself, does suggest the possibility that some women sold sex for a short period of time. For more on part-time and casual prostitution, see above in this chapter in the section “The Milieu of Prostitution.”

364. I examine this difficulty in *Roman Prostitution* (forthcoming).

male bias found in the sources discussed above. In modern society, many prostitutes do not work all day every day and yet would not therefore qualify as casual workers.³⁶⁵ Two possible examples may be cited from Pompeii to illustrate the poverty of our evidence and the challenges this poverty presents. One is the mill-girl (if she was, in fact, a mill-girl) Glyco, the price of whose services is given as two *asses*.³⁶⁶ The other is the weaver Amaryllis, who is said to offer *fellatio* (if this is not pure insult).³⁶⁷ In neither case can we be certain that the woman was both a (part-time) prostitute and worked in another profession as well.

Evidence for women leaving the profession is very rare. There is no room here to explore the contours of the comic/elegiac procuress, who is typically presented as a former prostitute.³⁶⁸ That portrait is too expressive of elite male prejudice to be of much help to us in attempting to sketch the lived experience of such women. We can be certain that some prostitutes eventually came to act as procuresses, while no doubt others married and left the profession.³⁶⁹ Still others perhaps entered and left the profession from time to time.³⁷⁰ It is important to know something about when and under what circumstances the majority of women left the profession. Was prostitution a short-lived part of the life cycle for many lower-class women or did they have no way out? The answer would tell us a great deal about the degree of exploitation that characterized Roman prostitution. But the sources are deeply disinterested in this problem. We can only say that the association of slavery with prostitution does not encourage optimism on this score.

To return to women workers in general, of particular interest are those cases in which a woman was married to a man in the same trade.³⁷¹ It is likely

365. See Prus and Irini, *Hookers* (1980) 8.

366. *CIL* 4.3999, 4001 ("grinder-girl").

367. *CIL* 4.1510; cf. 1507. For the suggestion of part-time prostitution, see Evans, *War* (1991) 144. It is quite possible Amaryllis prostituted herself, though she might simply have been the recipient of a slur. See Dixon *Reading Roman Women* (2001) 128, 151.

368. A good treatment of the *lena* from literature is in Myers, "Poet and Procuress" (1996).

369. On marriage with prostitutes, see McGinn, "Marriage Legislation and Social Practice" (2002). Artemid. 5.67 has a case of a long-term relationship that evidently did not involve marriage (and which was deemed not at all auspicious). Marriage by itself, of course, did not guarantee retirement. For a rare ancient recognition of marriage as a way out of the profession, see Iustinianus Nov. 14 pr. (a. 535).

370. For a sense of this phenomenon in nineteenth-century New York, see Gilfoyle, *City of Eros* (1992) 167–68.

371. See *CIL* 5.7023; 6.9211. See also Treggiari, "Lower Class Women" (1979) 67–72, 76, 79.

that for many lower-class women participation in a profession was conditioned by the existence of a family business, especially one conducted by a husband, and which represented in many cases an extension of “domestic” labor.³⁷² Social status mattered greatly here. Behavior, that is, women’s participation in business on the level of society visible to us, may have reflected to a certain extent the practice of the upper classes, for whom profit-making ventures were viewed, often at least ideally, as an extension of the domestic economy.³⁷³ A woman’s status might determine whether her “work,” for example, in making clothes for the household, was viewed as virtuous or degrading.³⁷⁴

While it was far from impossible for women to work outside the home in Roman antiquity, it was risky, since some of the fundamental reasons limiting women’s participation in the workforce were cultural and not economic.³⁷⁵ The job titles that survive often do not allow us knowledge of the scope of a woman’s role. For example, we cannot be certain that a worker in gold leaf (*brattiaría*) actually worked on the gold leaf or simply sold what her husband produced.³⁷⁶

As in the case of prostitutes, most of the working women attested in the sources were slaves or freedwomen. All the same, to understand the overall position of women in the labor market, we must view practically all of them as operating in conditions of dependency.³⁷⁷ This cultural ideology was not just dominant but overwhelmingly so. Yet to judge from comparative evidence, it was perhaps flexible enough to permit accommodation when circumstances,

372. Evans, *War* (1991) 119–20, 121, 124–25, 136, has a useful survey of a series of fields, including the crafts industry, retail, and medicine. See also Treggiari, “Urban Labour” (1980) 55–56; Eichenauer, *Arbeitswelt* (1988) 21, 126, 295, 297; Bradley, *Discovering the Roman Family* (1991) 108–9, 115 (with an interesting evocation of honor/shame); Bradley, *Slavery and Society* (1994) 59; Frasca, *Mestieri* (1994) 89–91; Rodríguez Neila, “Trabajo” (1999) 112–13 (treating evidence from Roman Spain); Günther, “Matrona” (2000) 354; Traina, “Mestieri” (2000) 118; Dixon, *Reading Roman Women* (2001) 115, 122, 132. A useful comparative perspective is afforded by Mitterauer, *Familienforschung* (1990) 305–7. See also Hobson, *Uneasy Virtue* (1990) 57, 65.

373. See Treggiari, *Roman Marriage* (1991) 378.

374. Günther, “Matrona” (2000) 354–55.

375. See van Minnen, “Trade” (1998) who adduces exactly three examples of apprenticeship contracts for freeborn females from Egypt (but three more than previously known). In all cases, there was provision for supervision by a woman, reaffirming the general principle asserted here.

376. Eichenauer, *Arbeitswelt* (1988) 296. See also Savunen, *Women* (1997) 117; Gourevitch and Raepsaet-Charlier, *Femme* (2001) 186.

377. So Eichenauer, *Arbeitswelt* (1988) 298–99. The point extends in some measure to the labor market overall, which is marked both ideologically and in practical terms by notions of dependency: Prell, *Armut* (1997) 147–50, 161, 168.

above all the necessity of making a living, dictated a change.³⁷⁸ Thus some of the women attested, for example, in the commercial sector of Pompeii seem to have worked relatively independently.³⁷⁹ The ancient sources in general tend to advertise virtue rather than acknowledge necessity, except when it came to prostitution.

For those women without a husband or, at any rate, a husband engaged in a suitable trade, opportunities were more limited,³⁸⁰ though there is some tantalizing evidence of small-scale female production and/or distribution networks.³⁸¹ Moralizing views that supported a gender-based division of labor, approved moral behavior, and a proper lifestyle for women accentuated the job squeeze.³⁸² One great exception to the general trend appears to have been acting, where stars at least were richly rewarded and, as slaves, cost a great deal.³⁸³

Objections may be raised to my use of the evidence. The list of jobs developed by modern scholars is obviously incomplete. We can hardly assume that the epigraphic and literary record adequately represents even the middling to upper-middling social stratum, let alone what lay beneath.³⁸⁴ Such criticism is valid and yields a useful caution. Yet Treggiari's totals of "some 160" different male job titles for Rome itself and 225 just in the Latin inscriptions for the Roman West provide a valuable perspective.³⁸⁵ Viewed in this light, Treggiari's estimate of about 35 women's professions suggests employment opportunities for lower-class women were meager indeed. Nevertheless many were compelled to find some way of making a living.³⁸⁶

378. The fascinating study by Giovannini, "Dialectics" (1985) shows how the ideal that women should work exclusively in the home counterintuitively allowed for their extensive participation as workers in a clothing factory opened in Garre, Sicily, in 1966. Further contextualization and generalization are found in Giovannini, "Female Chastity Codes" (1987); Horden and Purcell, *Corrupting Sea* (2000) 500.

379. See the cautious optimism on this score in Savunen, *Women* (1997) 117.

380. Some of those involved in luxury-oriented occupations, such as making gold leaf or spinning gold (see *CIL* 6.9211; 9213), may have been exceptional: they may have owned property and perhaps possessed a marketable skill. For more on the argument made in the text, see Honoré, *Sex Law* (1978) 114.

381. Clark, *Women* (1993) 94, 104. All the same, the economic profile of these women was lowered by both social and legal factors: see Gardner, "Women in Business Life" (1999).

382. See the comments of Scheidel, "Silent Women 1" (1995): 206.

383. Leppin, *Histrionen* (1992) 84–90.

384. Social stratification existed even among peasants: see De Ligt, "Demand, Supply, Distribution 1" (1990) 49.

385. Treggiari, "Urban Labour" (1980) 56. I count 162 examples in her appendix.

386. For a caution against simply assuming a difference in attitudes about women's work dependent on class, see Scheidel, "Silent Women 1" (1995) 206–7.

A final objection is that the small number of possible jobs conceals large numbers of women working in them. There is no doubt that women are under-represented in the epigraphic evidence, above all in such positions as vendors, because of animus and/or the subsumption of female activity into that of male family members. To put it another way, women's role as wife trumped their role as worker.³⁸⁷ It is difficult to believe, for example, that the four examples of female food sellers or the twelve of female retailers overall from the city of Rome cited by Rosmarie Günther exhaust these categories.³⁸⁸ The evidence, whether literary, epigraphic, legal, or artistic, tends to idealize women workers, denigrate them, or omit them altogether.³⁸⁹

A partial response to this objection is that, as noted, many of the professions attributed to women are only occasionally attested. The majority of female laborers perhaps worked in agriculture, and their labor went almost as unrecorded as that of their male counterparts.³⁹⁰ Beyond agriculture, there is no evidence that large numbers of women were employed outside the household. That women, slave or free, were valued economically less than men is suggested by the gender-differentiated valuation of slaves under Diocletian's Price Edict.³⁹¹

The story is a familiar one then, though perhaps more extreme than in some other cultures.³⁹² Women had access to fewer jobs, and these were less prestigious and (we may perhaps assume) less well-paid.³⁹³ So it is no surprise to find the ancient sources citing economic need as a motive for resort to prostitution. Lack of employment opportunities for women, however, is not a sufficient explanation for the decision to become a prostitute, since many poor

387. See the comments of Joshel, *Work* (1992) 142; Günther, "Matrona" (2000) 354; Dixon, *Reading Roman Women* (2001) 115, 122, 132.

388. Günther, *Frauenarbeit* (1987) 129–30. See also Eichenauer, *Arbeitswelt* (1988) 83–89.

389. See the comments of Scheidel, "Silent Women 1" (1995) 206.

390. See Sigismund Nielsen, "Ditis Examen Domus?" (1991) 224. Sigismund Nielsen, relying on the evidence of Columella, suggests that female workers were vastly outnumbered by males in the countryside; more comprehensive is Scheidel, "Silent Women 1" (1995) esp. 208, and "Silent Women 2" (1996) with references to his earlier work on this subject. On seasonal and structural underemployment in Roman agriculture overall, see Erdkamp, "Agriculture" (1999).

391. Scheidel, "Reflections" (1996): only at or just before puberty did the valuations achieve parity, explained by the fact that women were in, or about to enter, their childbearing years.

392. See, for example, Gilfoyle, *City of Eros* (1992) 344–45 nn. 9–14.

393. On prestige see the comparison drawn between *medicus* and *medica* by Günther, *Frauenarbeit* (1987) 118. More generally, see Maurin, "Labor Matronalis" (1983) 147; Eichenauer, *Arbeitswelt* (1988) 301. For cross-cultural comparisons, essential reading is Mitterauer, *Familienforschung* (1990) 303, 310–12. The point may be derived simply from the failure to record women's jobs on tombstones: see Flory, "Family" (1978) 80.

women did not become prostitutes. Poverty, in other words, did not “cause” prostitution.

“Immorality” is adduced, both by ancient and modern commentators,³⁹⁴ in order to explain a woman’s decision to become a prostitute.³⁹⁵ Often the language used to explain this decision includes words like “lust” or “nymphomania.” Recent research encourages great skepticism about the value of this kind of explanation.³⁹⁶ Indeed, other factors emerge as more important. We do not know anything about the wages paid to women workers at Rome, but even if they resembled those paid to men (a generous assumption, in my view),³⁹⁷ the earnings-potential of a prostitute was greater, or at least would have seemed greater for low-status women in straightened circumstances.³⁹⁸ Prostitution is not caused by poverty in any simple sense but is part of a culture that is shaped by poverty.³⁹⁹

Charity, public or private, was unlikely to provide a respite for many. Under any definition, the numbers of poor in Roman society were likely to have been vast.⁴⁰⁰ Their ranks would have swelled from time to time through

394. For the ancients (especially patristic authors), see Herter, “Soziologie” (1960) 78; Montserrat, *Sex and Society* (1997) 109; Flemming, “*Quae Corpore*” (1999) 41, cites evidence of Firmicus Maternus describing women driven by lust to prostitute themselves: *Math.* 3.6.22, 6.31.91, 7.25.9; cf. 8.4.10. This differs from Christianizing explanations in that the “lust” is generated by a birth constellation, compelling such women to act and implicitly relieving them of fault. (Firmicus does explicitly recognize necessity as a motivation at 3.6.22.) See Augustine’s denunciation of this belief at *Enarr. in Ps.* 140.9 CCSL 40.2032. The first Firmican text also speaks of *necessitas vitae* as a motive for prostitution. For the moderns, see below in nn. 396–99.

395. Personal and political enemies were accused of being prostitutes, as were their wives and children, and of prostituting their wives and children. Examples are too numerous to relate; see, for example, the gossip about Verres’s son: Plut. *Cic.* 7.5.

396. Rosen, *Sisterhood* (1982) 137–68 (especially 166–68). “Depravity” is useless as an analytic category: see above. In fact, early sexual initiation and exposure to incest played an important role: Walkowitz, *Prostitution* (1980) 17–21; Rosen, 144–45, 161–65.

397. See n. 337 for ancient sources that recognized that economic pressures forced some women into prostitution. The important role played by low wages (for women’s professions besides prostitution) in motivating women to enter prostitution is demonstrated in a modern context by Rosen, *Sisterhood* (1982) 147–61. (See literature above in n. 340.)

398. Prostitution may also have seemed easier to some women in comparison to other obvious possibilities for earning money. For ancient evidence of dislike of the hard work of spinning, weaving, and so forth, as a motivating factor in entering prostitution, see Herter, “Soziologie” (1960) 78; for a modern parallel, see Rosen, *Sisterhood* (1982) 156–61. This is not to say that Roman prostitutes escaped textile work, though the evidence is not decisive (see, e.g., Petron. 132). For spinning prostitutes in other cultures, see Schuster, *Frauenhaus* (1992) 11; Davidson, *Courtesans and Fishcakes* (1998) 87–88.

399. Rosen, *Sisterhood* (1982) 147. See also Gibson, *Prostitution and the State*² (1999) 101, 104–9.

400. Bruhns, “Armut” (1981) 31; Prell, *Armut* (1996) 66.

seasonal work stoppages, crop failures, and sudden spikes in prices.⁴⁰¹ Even a well-organized and well-funded system of social welfare might have found such challenges daunting. As it was, however, the Romans did not even conceive of the poor as a special social category.⁴⁰² Benefits from both public and private sources did not accrue on the basis of need but rather in pursuit of political aims and/or out of an existing social relationship, such as patron and client.⁴⁰³ Public largesse in particular was structured along status lines, so that privileged recipients were typically adult citizen males.⁴⁰⁴ What this means is that during the classical period the poor did not receive charity because they were poor, but rather because they were members of a privileged group of “poor.” This only changed with the spread of the Christian ethic of relief for the poor and the structural changes in society that accompanied the advent of late antiquity.⁴⁰⁵ In the classical period there was nothing resembling a “social safety net” in the modern sense for the vast numbers of poor.⁴⁰⁶

Another important factor in becoming a prostitute, when compulsion was not explicit, was a major disruption of the family economy, whether this was provoked by the death of one or both parents or the loss of a husband through death, desertion, or divorce.⁴⁰⁷ Comparative data suggest that women without men, above all, unmarried girls and widows, were especially vulnerable.⁴⁰⁸ Direct evidence from antiquity is lacking, but it is likely that the loss of husbands and fathers in foreign and civil wars, or simply their prolonged absence from home, reduced many women to prostitution.⁴⁰⁹ The most important point is perhaps that most women, with or without the support of an adult male, simply had to work to eke out a living.⁴¹⁰ Many children found them-

401. Prell, *Armut* (1996) 65.

402. Bruhns, “Armut” (1981) 37, 42; Prell, *Armut* (1996) 64; Brown, *Poverty* (2002) 3–5.

403. Bruhns, “Armut” (1981) 34–38, 42; Brown, *Poverty* (2002) 3–5.

404. See Bruhns, “Armut” (1981) 35; Purcell, “Rome and Italy” (2000) 434.

405. Bruhns, “Armut” (1981) 43–49; Brown, *Poverty* (2002) 6, 74.

406. See Prell, *Armut* (1997) 144.

407. Modern studies emphasize the relatively high number of prostitutes who are half or full orphans, or who have lost their husbands and may have children to support: Walkowitz, *Prostitution* (1980) 20; Rosen, *Sisterhood* (1982) 143, 149. See, for example, Lucian, *Dialog. Mer.* 6; *Lib. Or.* 45.9; and Krause, *Witwen* 3 (1995) esp. 190–93.

408. See, for example, on thirteenth-century Paris, Farmer, “Down and Out and Female” (1998) 353–55.

409. The economic changes and dislocations in Italy following upon the Hannibalic War and the subsequent rise of a free and poor urban populace perhaps contributed to a widespread growth of prostitution in Rome and in other cities in Italy: see Evans, *War* (1991) esp. 101–65. Generally, demographic probabilities made a high number of widows and orphans very likely: Krause, *Witwen* 1 (1994) esp. 7–85.

410. See Scheidel, “Silent Women 1” (1995) 207–8.

selves in a similar position, which rendered them likewise vulnerable to sexual exploitation.⁴¹¹ Dependency does not always take obvious forms.⁴¹² All of these elements contributed to an economy that encouraged freeborn women and freedwomen to enter prostitution.

PROSTITUTION AND THE ROMAN ECONOMY

The economic importance of prostitution at Rome seems guaranteed by a number of factors. Its widespread diffusion, as well as its complex and varied structure, suggest a brisk, prosperous trade, and one that might well attract, as we have seen, upper-class investors. Such investment took place despite the social opprobrium associated with it, which the investors seem largely, if not entirely, to have escaped. It, in turn, assured a good supply of slave prostitutes, supplemented by lower-class free women who were propelled most of all by economic and familial considerations and attracted by the prospect of a relatively generous remuneration, a prospect that I argue was largely illusory.

I do not mean to imply here that upper-class investors were the only ones to profit from prostitution. Despite the generally exploitative character of the business, individual pimps and even some prostitutes were able to improve their economic positions dramatically. In fact, some rare exceptions appeared at the fringes of the upper classes.⁴¹³ The consistent refusal of the Romans to allow these individuals to gain admittance to the upper rungs of the social scale, despite their new economic status, does not diminish its significance.

At the same time, the overall economic importance of prostitution and the apparent success enjoyed by some of its practitioners should not blind us to the fact that its location on the Roman socioeconomic scale was very low. The trappings and atmosphere of Roman brothels,⁴¹⁴ which were inextricably associated with lower-class housing, the low prices charged by many prosti-

411. Petermandl, "Kinderarbeit" (1997) esp. 124–26, 128. The emphasis in the ancient sources is decisively on the exploitation of male children, at least in classical antiquity. (I find Petermandl's conclusion a tad optimistic.) For the Byzantines, see Leontini, *Prostitution* (1989) 85–86; Dauphin, "Bordels" (1998) 188–89.

412. Horden and Purcell, *Corrupting Sea* (2000) 275. See also Prell, *Armut* (1996) 147–50; Günther, "Matrona" (2000) 366.

413. This is indicated not only by the large economic potential that prostitution had for some of its practitioners but by many of the legislative enactments concerning prostitutes and pimps: see McGinn, *Prostitution, Sexuality, and the Law* (1998) chap. 2. For example, both were denied a role in municipal government. The lives of such women as Volumnia Cytheris and Chelidon suggest that it was possible for some prostitutes to exist at the fringes of upper-class society.

414. This is so despite the fact that an attempt was sometimes made to mimic an upper-class ambience: see chaps. 4, 7, 8, and 10.

tutes, and, above all, the information we have about the clients of brothels, who were usually of lower-class if not servile status, speak to this point.⁴¹⁵ All of this helps explain the odium attached to visiting brothels for members of the upper classes.⁴¹⁶

The somewhat surprising lack of evidence for upper-class brothels is partly explained by the elite's negative attitude toward venues for prostitution and partly by the sexual availability of slaves in *familiae* (slave households) owned by the upper classes.⁴¹⁷ Even more fundamental was the elite Roman male's low estimate of prostitutes themselves. Despite some slight indications to the contrary, prostitution was by and large a lower-class phenomenon at Rome. This seems to have been chiefly because the Romans preferred it that way.

As with most other aspects of the Roman economy, it is impossible to quantify the presence of prostitution.⁴¹⁸ Comparative evidence drawn from societies where prostitution is also common may help illuminate the order of magnitude of venal sex in ancient Rome, but only in a very approximate sense.⁴¹⁹ One is limited to making the following generalizations, which must by and large remain impressionistic.

Prostitution was, on any estimate, widespread.⁴²⁰ Its popularity as an elite investment vehicle seems to have been in part a function of the fact that relatively little investment, beyond the cost of urban real estate, even given the

415. Most of the evidence consists of epigraphic data from Pompeii: See Della Corte, *Case*³ (1965) 170; Franklin, "Games and a *Lupanar*" (1986); Clarke, *Looking at Lovemaking* (1998) 196–99. For prostitutes, see the list of names in app. 3. Treggiari, "Volusii" (1975) 401 n. 37, suggests that the slave clients of brothels "lived in households with an unnatural balance of the sexes."

416. See chap. 3.

417. On the sexual exploitation of slaves, see the evidence given in McGinn, *Prostitution, Sexuality and the Law* (1998) chap. 8. Slave ownership was not confined to the elite (see Bradley, *Slavery and Society* [1994] 10–12), though it was hardly universal. While we can imagine that members of the sub-elite sexually exploited slaves as well, the practice would not have been as widespread—or possible—as it was among the upper classes.

418. For a discussion of the difficulties in understanding the Roman economy, see Garnsey and Saller, *Roman Empire* (1987) 43–103.

419. Even in modern societies, the data do not allow us to do more than make guesses: see, for example, Sleightholme and Sinha, *Guilty Without Trial* (1996) 10, 146; Hershatter, *Dangerous Pleasures* (1997) 264. Prostitution is estimated to comprise between 0.25 and 1.5 percent of the GDP in contemporary Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand: Edlund and Korn, "Theory of Prostitution" (2002) 182.

420. For a sense of the broad extent of prostitution in a modern setting with little regulation, see Sturdevant and Stoltzfus, *Let the Good Times Roll* (1992) 173: "[I]n Seoul women were available on almost every block—in a bathhouse, massage room, restaurant, or in the ubiquitous tea houses all over the city." Compare this statement with the following about nineteenth-century New York City, "prostitutes were readily found in saloons, theaters, dance halls, tenements, and even restaurants": Gilfoyle, *City of Eros* (1992) 164 (see also 197–223, 224, 394 n. 2, 399 n. 41).

need to purchase slaves, might lead to sizeable profits.⁴²¹ Partly for these reasons, it was commonplace and accessible to customers and did not show any obvious signs of being tucked away in remote areas of the Roman city. Its association with various venues and forms of public entertainment guaranteed this accessibility. A Roman might encounter prostitutes in bars, hotels, outside circuses and amphitheaters, and at festivals and fairs.

For the male customer, venal sex was both widely available and relatively inexpensive. This fact, taken with the evident profitability of prostitution, presents something of a paradox that might be explained in the following way. The two factors of availability and low cost perhaps interacted with each other; for example, vigorous competition depressed prices to an extent. At the same time, the heightened exploitation of individual prostitutes generated more opportunities for clients and, ultimately, more cash for upper-class investors. The truth of this paradox seems borne out by the experience of the Nevada brothels, where prostitutes who are free to set their own prices and retain a goodly share of their earnings find it easier to maximize profits by charging less and attracting more customers.⁴²²

In Roman society, this win-win scenario for the two main types of exploiter, the Roman brothel owner and the client, did not spell prosperity for most prostitutes. Slave owners and aggressive pimps probably compelled the vast majority of slave and free prostitutes to work and to work a great deal for little reward. For those few women who were not otherwise coerced into entering the profession, economic constraints, above all the depressed job market for women, might have made prostitution seem more remunerative than was actually the case. The supply of women must have been at all times full.

Female prostitution at Rome involved relationships characterized by sheer dependency. Slave owners prostituted their slaves, fathers their daughters, and husbands their wives. In a sense, prostitution functioned as a just another form of exploitation of women's labor, one of a series of unprestigious jobs in which slaves worked for their masters, daughters their fathers, and wives their husbands. In this way, prostitution reflected women's participation in the economy as a whole, with selling sex only one in a series of quasi-domestic responsibilities that were foisted upon women.⁴²³

421. This fact undermines the assertion that, if only repressive laws were repealed, profiteering from prostitution by landowners would abate or even cease altogether: for this argument, see Ericsson, "Charges against Prostitution" (1980) 352.

422. See Symanski, "Prostitution in Nevada" (1974) 361.

423. See the comparison of the lifestyles of respectable women and prostitutes from the municipal brothel in medieval Germany drawn by Schuster, (*Freien Frauen* [1995] 14).

One sign that this is not the whole story is the criminalization of husbandly *lenocinium* (pimping) under Augustus. Another is the animus directed at pimps in general. Prostituting one's slaves or daughters was not, in fact, the moral equivalent of making them work wool or run a shop. It is precisely this moral calculus that distinguishes the prostitution of women from other forms of economic exploitation of women's labor. All are embedded nonetheless in the relations of dependency just described. These factors of morality and gender hierarchy are what distinguished "women's work" in Roman culture. This means that professions in which women played a role were not "economic" in the modern ideal of rational, profit-maximizing enterprises, but were deeply influenced by considerations of status and social as well as moral constraint. Prostitution, in that it was oriented toward maximum exploitation and therefore maximum profits, does appear more "economic" in the modern sense at first glance, but only if one absolutely refuses to view it from the perspective of the woman herself, whose choice of a profession was very likely to have been forced upon her. For the Romans, the prostitute was a "good" rather than a "worker."⁴²⁴ For this reason alone, it is not accurate to speak of Roman prostitutes as "sex workers."

The link between Roman slavery and prostitution is so central and so peculiar that it raises the question of whether the Roman experience has much to teach students of venal sex in other cultures and at other times. The first point to make is slavery was simply the most obvious of a series of institutions involving power and dependency in which ideally masters ruled over slaves, fathers over daughters, and husbands over wives. The balance of power was far from equivalent in each case, and few would argue, in the wake of important work by Richard Saller and Susan Treggiari, that sons and wives were treated like slaves, certainly on the social level of the upper classes from which the vast bulk of our sources derive.⁴²⁵ In the sub-elite world in which prostitution flourished, however, these differences may have diminished considerably.

When thinking about the economics of venal sex at Rome, it is important to consider gender, which leads to my second point. What slavery, paternal power, and husbandly authority do is to take a given, the inequality in Roman society between men and women, and allow for its articulation in a number of rather nuanced ways. So it is agreed that the status of slave women, daughters-

424. This strengthens the statement on exploitation made by Flemming "Quae Corpore" (1999) 57.

425. Treggiari, *Roman Marriage* (1991); Saller, *Patriarchy* (1994).

in-power, and wives is not at all the same, unless of course they are prostituted by their owners, *patres familias*, or husbands. In other words, in Roman society slavery facilitated patriarchy but was not an essential, indispensable component of patriarchy. As for the link between prostitution and slavery, this seems to be especially apt, as an element of patriarchy, for female slaves. When authors such as Martial and Juvenal develop the themes of sexual exploitation (Martial) and sexual degeneracy (Juvenal) they rely on this connection as a datum, so that, to generalize the distinction, Martial assumes female slaves are eminently exploitable as slaves and/or prostitutes while Juvenal criticizes the behavior of high-status women precisely as servile and/or whorish.⁴²⁶ It is well to raise the caution that male prostitution may well have a different relationship to slavery than female. This is one reason why it merits separate and further study.

The last point to make is that the experience of the antebellum American South suggests that we cannot automatically link slavery and a flourishing economy of prostitution.⁴²⁷ Even where slave owners could have profited from prostituting slaves, such as in the brothels of Nashville, they refrained from doing so. Their motives remain obscure, and race, as well as economics, may well have played a role in this decision.⁴²⁸ It is beyond doubt that these slave owners found other means of exploiting their slaves both sexually and economically. What is of central importance for us is that slavery as a legal institution is not inevitably tied to prostitution across cultures.

Paradoxically, this fact allows us both to recognize the Roman experience as particular and, at the same time, to draw lessons for other societies crucial to the sociological, historiographical, and ultimately moral debate between liberal and radical feminists over the nature of prostitution.⁴²⁹ The central issue at stake is this: is prostitution inherently degrading to prostitutes—the radical position—or does it deserve recognition as a legitimate means of making a living, as liberals argue?

The debate will continue regardless of what we conclude about Rome. It is

426. See the analysis of Garrido-Hory, "Femmes" (1999).

427. So the classic econometric study of American slavery, Fogel and Engerman, *Time on the Cross* (1989) 131–35. This point is conceded by Flemming, "*Quae Corpore*" (1999) 58–60, with whom I am otherwise at variance. In my view, she relies too heavily on the deeply flawed study of prostitution in colonial Nairobi by White, *Comforts of Home* (1991).

428. Fogel and Engerman, *Time on the Cross* (1989) 135, characteristically prefer an economic explanation.

429. The literature is vast, so that only a small sample can be given here. For the liberal position, see, for example, Chapkis, *Live Sex Acts* (1997); Delacoste and Alexander, *Sex Work*² (1998). For the radical position, see Barry, *Prostitution of Sexuality*² (1995); Jeffreys, *Idea of Prostitution* (1997).

risky to attempt a definitive response to this question even for Roman culture given the lack of evidence provided by the voices of prostitutes themselves. But I would maintain that the evidence we do possess offers cold comfort for those who wish to argue that prostitution is not inherently degrading to women. The Romans represent an extreme when it comes to the sexual and economic exploitation of women, no doubt, and they were also perhaps simply more blatant about this. I believe, however, that when we compare this evidence to evidence from other cultures without legalized slavery, we find these cultures have equivalents or substitutes for this exploitation, rather than a really kinder, gentler version of prostitution than that found at Rome.

A final factor to consider here is the role of the state. It too could not resist the vast profits to be made from the sale of sex. Beginning with the emperor Caligula, a tax was collected that appears to have more than fulfilled expectations of revenue levels. The tax on prostitution turned out to be so indispensable that many Christian emperors in late antiquity could not do without it.⁴³⁰ The tax, of course, gave the Roman state a financial interest in the profitability of prostitution, an interest it shared with many upper-class Romans. But it was not the extent of that financial interest. As we shall see in subsequent chapters, it is likely that municipalities leased public space to prostitutes or their exploiters and not impossible that the state owned brothels at least by the fourth century.⁴³¹

We must not assume that because prostitution was “legal,” it required no legitimization to function as it did or was not in fact legitimized by the creation of the Caligulan tax.⁴³² Prostitution had been, and remained afterwards, a sordid business operated by a class of persons the Romans regarded as the proverbial scum of the earth, *lenones* and *lenae*.⁴³³ What Caligula accomplished, in part, was to legitimize the interest of private landowners in profiting from prostitution at a polite remove. He did not escape criticism for this initiative, though it is impossible to say whether he would have escaped caricature as a pimp if he had not gone as far as setting up a brothel on the Palatine.⁴³⁴ Recognition that the tax legitimized prostitution is the reason why Christian emperors fought so long and so hard to eliminate it.

430. See McGinn, *Prostitution, Sexuality and the Law* (1998) chap. 7.

431. See chaps. 5 and 6.

432. For another view, see Flemming, “*Quae Corpore*” (1999) 54.

433. See McGinn, *Prostitution, Sexuality, and the Law* (1998) 68–69, on how this prejudice was articulated into a core set of civic and legal disabilities.

434. This may be doubted. See McGinn, “Caligula’s Brothel” (1998) esp. 96; *Prostitution, Sexuality, and the Law* (1998) chap. 7.

Prostitution permeated many aspects of the Roman service sector and leisure economy. Its association with various businesses and special occasions increased profitability, a fact that renders attempts to isolate the precise role it played in the economy problematic. While there is no reason to assume prostitution was ubiquitous, it was very common.⁴³⁵ Like other economic aspects of slavery, it tended toward the maximum exploitation of its workers, no matter what their actual legal status in this case. For all of these reasons, there is something close to paradigmatic about the Roman economy of prostitution in that a series of factors converged here to assert the primacy of male privilege in almost every way conceivable.

⁴³⁵. For further discussion of this theme, see chap. 9.