Introduction

Manumission was an institution that reconciled the categories of "slave" and "citizen," which were otherwise in a dialectical relationship, as the slave defined what the citizen was not, and vice versa. Since slaves lacked personal agency, bodily integrity, official kin, and a social identity independent of their owner, they could fulfill duties and roles deemed inappropriate for citizens. This deficiency was the fundamental difference between freedpersons and individuals descended from ex-slaves. While the descendants of a freedperson may still have suffered a moderate stigma from their slavish ancestry, they had always been Roman citizens, never having experienced the degrading lifestyle of slaves – a lifestyle that defined them as not being citizens.[1]

Historians have meticulously explored the matter of how men navigated the manumission process, but freedwomen's histories – and the ideas that made these histories possible – have been relatively underinvestigated. Gendered attitudes toward morality, sexual conduct, and social status complicated a woman's manumission and passage to citizenship, as lawmakers and social commentators needed to reconcile her experiences as a slave with the expectations and moral rigor required of the female citizen. In a woman's case, the primary obstacle was that the sexual identities of a female slave and a female citizen were fundamentally incompatible, as the former was principally defined by her sexual availability and the latter by her sexual integrity. A woman's sexual conduct was so critical to evaluating her standing and moral worth that it completely overshadowed and nearly subsumed all of her other virtues or positive personal qualities. This is not to say either that sexuality was not an important component in determining male social

status or that female status was unaffected by any other factors. Rather, I would argue that sexuality was a singularly important factor in judging female value and standing in the classical world, especially when authors considered virtue in a more abstract sense. While sexual honor was an essential indicator of male social status, it did not subsume other masculine virtues to the same extent. Just as men's and women's citizenship had different modes, so too did the manumission process of men and women.

In seeking to gain insight into the puzzle of why women were manumitted, and, if manumitted, why they were granted citizenship, my project draws upon ancient sources grouped into three very broadly defined categories: literary texts (nonlegal writing published for public consumption), legal texts (primarily juridical opinions), and epigraphic texts (primarily funerary epitaphs). This book is principally concerned with the laws, attitudes, and experiences of Roman citizens and their slaves during the classical era (ca. 200 BCE to 235 CE). While concentrated primarily on Italy and the city of Rome, the geographical focus of the project necessarily changes with the expansion of Roman culture and citizenship. I draw upon a wide range of textual source material, and the specific type of material influences the extent to which I am able to account for change over time. For example, the discursive nature of legal sources allows for a more diachronic analysis, whereas the lack of precise dating for most funerary epitaphs, the primary type of epigraphic source considered in this project, requires a more synchronic approach.

Yet even with all this breadth in the sources' genres, there are scant documents pertaining to the experiences of female slaves, with still-fewer about how freedwomen themselves viewed their progression from slavery to citizenship. Modern historians are uncertain even as to the number of female slaves made into free citizens, or about the ratio of women to men manumitted. The problems posed by the meagerness of the source base are compounded by the elite male bias inherent to most of the surviving texts. Some individuals, by virtue of their birth, talent, wealth, or achievements, possessed greater prestige and access to power than other Romans, and these were the people whose voices dominate in preserved historical documents. I am pushing the boundaries of "elite" a little beyond its traditional association with individuals of elevated

status (where status is one's recognized place in the community) in order to signify those who possessed the means to shape and influence societal beliefs and customs. All of this leaves historians to sift through the limited evidence containing an elite male bias, peppered with intriguing but mostly elusive voices from freedwomen themselves.

While it is unsatisfying not to have more evidence of freedwomen's experiences and attitudes, the available sources are still useful for gleaning something significant regarding the gendered *ideology* of manumission. This book's primary focus is an analysis of the powerful beliefs, assumptions, and desires embedded in the vast and complex institution of Roman manumission. I have sought to interpret the discourse about a woman's transition from slavery to freedom, which must have been, at least in part, shaped by reality and at the same time contributed to shaping the real life opportunities and limitations confronted by individuals.[2] It is my hope that I contribute to scholars' understanding of how slavery and manumission worked in intellectual, cultural, and legal registers, and that I do so without denying the variety of freedwomen experiences that must have existed, including those that required reinterpreting or resisting the dominant ideology, or the diverse ways in which such women viewed themselves and were viewed by others.

The figure of the freedwoman represented in the ancient sources provides an extraordinary lens into how Romans understood, debated, and experienced the sheer magnitude of the transition from slave to citizen; the various social factors that impinged upon this process; and the community stakes in the practice of manumission. By invoking images of sexualized and scandalous freedwomen, literary authors linked them to slaves, calling attention to their servile origins and their separation from respectable free citizens. This depiction is intriguingly at odds with the more respectable and relatively ordinary freedwomen appearing in legal and epigraphic sources. While representations of these women still distinguish them from freeborn citizens, they nonetheless suggest a more inclusive vision of freedwomen. When taken all together, the sources on freedwomen suggest pervasive anxieties among the Roman elite regarding their success at transforming ex-slaves into authentic citizens.

At stake in these anxieties was the concept of "citizenship" itself. In his monumental study of Roman citizenship, A. N. Sherwin-White argues

that all the motives commonly used to explain Roman manumission practices were to a degree inadequate because they failed to account for the enfranchisement of ex-slaves. He maintains that these rational explanations would have applied equally well to the grant of freedom without citizenship.[3] My book analyzes citizenship not just as an aspect of the manumission process, but as its central component; the bestowal of citizenship was critical to Romans' understanding of manumission as societal institution. It was the creation of citizenship that made manumission such a significant transition, and that deeply invested a society of people not necessarily directly involved with the transaction. Rome was unique among classical polities in that it bestowed full citizenship on freed slaves, granting them rights nearly equal to those of freeborn individuals. This practice was all the more remarkable given that Romans attached substantial meaning to citizenship, routinely hesitating to bestow full citizen rights upon freeborn foreigners.[4]

This book contributes to a rising field of scholarship that examines manumission not only in terms of the motivations of individual actors, both owners and slaves, but also as an institution designed to incorporate outsiders into the citizen community. Often responding to earlier theories premised on individual goodwill or an ethical/religious stimulus, historians writing in the late twentieth century have prioritized rational aims such as masters' economic incentives, the maximization of slave labor, and the creation of large, exploitable client groups.[5] While recognizing the importance of these individual motives, some scholars have emphasized the wider social meanings of manumission, focusing on the legally mandated lifelong relationship between freedpersons and their former masters. Andrew Wallace-Hadrill pragmatically reasons that patrons were essential conduits for social and legal knowledge, which consisted largely of orally transmitted custom.[6] Jane Gardner, in turn, argues that freedpersons' ongoing relationships with their ex-masters provided a link to an established Roman *familia*, which served as a means of social control as well as integration.[7] Most recently, Henrik Mouritsen stresses the importance of the patron-freedperson relationship as both a familial and a financial institution, and highlights its critical role in the Roman economy.[8] These historians have persuasively argued that, although a particular manumission might have intensely personal meanings for the slave/freedperson and the owner/patron, these

meanings existed within, and thus were informed by, the wider social implications of the institution. Roman manumission cannot be understood simply as a transaction between two individuals, but must be examined within a larger social and political context, and as a process that required and received support from the Roman people as a whole.

The process of making slaves into citizens takes on additional significance from the frequency with which manumission took place over the course of centuries. Although the precise percentage of slaves who were ever freed has been much debated by modern scholars, the ancient sources clearly suggest that manumission was routine and commonplace in the Roman world. The very simplicity of the manumission process suggests that however much Romans might have been conflicted about the process of making slaves – both male and female – into citizens, they were also deeply committed to continuing this practice. Nonetheless, the ease by which manumission was legally executed magnified, rather than diminished, the underlying complexity of its social meanings, meanings that Romans themselves explored with not only anxiety but also enthusiasm.

It is this book's focus on gender and status, and its analysis of a female manumission model, that distinguishes it from previous works. Even as it destabilized the idea of the benevolent master, modern scholarship analyzing the transition from slavery to freedom has remained overwhelmingly male-normative, in that authors have treated the male experience as the definitive version, from which others are deviations. Thus, women appear only as a series of scattered "exceptions" throughout the narrative. (In this respect, modern studies reflect the treatment of the topic by the bulk of the ancient source material.)[9] This mode of scholarship continues to advance our understanding of the experiences of slaves and freedpersons, but it does not fully account for the impact of gender on this process. In this book, I build upon this scholarship, drawing heavily upon research that has explored how gendered attitudes and understandings influenced the peculiar experiences and representations of female slaves and freedwomen.[10]

Tracing the stages in a woman's manumission journey from property to citizen, this book begins by demonstrating how gendered assumptions about the relationship between sexual conduct and social status shaped Roman authors' and lawmakers' interpretation of female slaves'

standing and worth. The second chapter explores how the relationship between gender and labor impacted a woman's experiences as a slave, her chances for manumission, and her assimilation into the category of female citizens. Chapter 3 investigates the legal relationship between freedwomen and their ex-owners, analyzing how Roman lawmakers and jurists carefully structured and limited the obligations in order to protect freedwomen's ability to live as respectable citizens. Chapter 4 continues the examination of the patron-freedwoman relationship by considering epigraphic evidence and the various ways that ex-slaves represented themselves, and were represented by their patrons. In particular, it focuses on descriptions of the patron-freedwoman relationship, and the work this reference did in depicting an ex-slave as an individual worthy of citizenship. In the final chapter, I examine various representations of freedwomen as a discrete rank, distinct from and socially inferior to freeborn women, and how this status meant something different in literature and law.

The institution of manumission prompted a peculiar understanding among the Roman elite of what slavery was or could be. It urged them to draw upon the gendered dimensions of sexuality, labor, and social relations in order to reinterpret and recast the experiences from a freedwoman's slave life in ways that illuminated her deservedness of citizenship. Having freedom as its outcome encouraged elite Romans to come to understand slavery as a process that did not necessarily make a woman unredeemable. A female slave was without honor rather than dishonored. To this end, Romans used legal codes articulating a particular understanding of the patron and his or her responsibilities to institutionalize a relationship that provided a former slave with a connection to the citizen community. This connection meant perpetual obligation and exploitation for women, but also the possibility of intimacy and legitimacy. Through these mechanisms, manumission achieved widespread – though never absolute – acceptance among Romans who might have otherwise challenged its capacity to produce authentic female citizens.

Once manumitted, the freedwoman remained a subject for debate among literary authors, jurists, patrons, and freedwomen themselves, all of whom investigated the meaning of slave and freedwoman sexuality, the rights and legal protections granted to ex-slaves, and the

significance of freedwomen's continuing obligations to their former masters. Ultimately, I argue, it was the idea of marriage that could best assure the integrity of a freedwoman's citizenship by ascribing to her the responsibilities and respectability of the Roman matron. By creating an absolute set of boundaries that defined a woman as respectable, marriage alone solved the perceived ambiguity in the status of a freedwoman, effectively completing her transformation from slave to citizen. Or at least so went the discourse.

1 Gender, Sexuality, and the Status of Female Slaves

On the basis of the nearly unquestioned principle that sexual activity was a gendered characteristic, Roman society elevated women whose sexuality was restricted and denigrated those who usurped the masculine prerogative of promiscuity.[1] This chapter explores how assumptions about gender and status shaped the meanings of female sexual behavior in ancient Rome, and how a woman's legal status as a slave complicated the boundaries separating illicit from acceptable behavior. There was a potential tension wrought by a female slave's sexuality that was rooted in the conflict between the feminine ideal of chastity and the servile obligation to acquiesce to the carnal demands of one's master. This question about how female slaves *should* behave speaks to two critical issues in Roman social history: ideas of respectability and status among individuals who had minimal legal agency and the persistence of gendered social conventions across categories of women.

Literary authors and legal policy makers consistently and systematically excluded female slaves from the category of "Roman women," holding female slaves outside the social expectations and bodily rights of free individuals. A free woman possessed a sexual honor that needed protection, lest she and her relatives incur shame and disgrace. In contrast, female slaves were owned property and therefore lacked such honor, as was manifest in their expected performance of sexual duties and their inability to protect their own physical integrity. Their degraded status meant that sexual conduct deemed shameful for free women was not shameful for female slaves in the same way. At the same time, the routine sexual exploitation of slaves, both in real acts occurring in daily life and in images reproduced in cultural texts, reinforced and validated

their debased status, acutely distinguishing these individuals from free Roman women. Essentially, there was a circular logic buttressing assumptions about slave sexuality and status in ancient Rome: female slaves experienced forms of sexual conduct unsuitable for free women because of their degraded legal status, but female slaves possessed a degraded legal status because (at least in part) they experienced degrading sexual conduct.

Although modern scholars have well noted how sexual standards, particularly a lack of sexual honor, distinguished female slaves from free women, they have left largely unexplored how these same standards determined the standing of female slaves relative to each other.[2] Sexual standards for female slaves were not rooted solely in the assumption that chastity was superior to promiscuity, but were also shaped by expectations that correlated with the women's status as owned property. A model of licit sexuality, similar to that governing free women but adjusted to allow for sexual duties expected of female slaves, shaped perceptions of the standing of slaves and their worth as individuals. Only by understanding slaves' dual natures and the expectations governing their duties is it possible to comprehend the relationship between their sexual conduct and their perceived economic and moral worth.

HONOR-SHAME AND THE DEGRADATION OF FEMALE SLAVES

The principles of honor and shame provide an invaluable model for evaluating the social meanings of particular types of behavior by formalizing an assumed relationship between sexuality, gender identity, and social standing in the Roman world. Several modern scholars have asserted the usefulness of the honor-shame model (sometimes referred to as the honor-shame syndrome) for understanding the relationship between sexual conduct and social standing in the Greco-Roman world.[3] In its most basic sense, honor is an individual's estimation of his or her self-worth, and the larger society's recognition of that worth.[4] Individuals accumulated and maintained honor, which contributed to their prestige and status, by satisfying various cultural principles and societal requirements. Failing to meet prescribed standards or transgressing certain

social norms could lead to shame – both an internal sense of failure and a public devaluation of worth – which could cause a decrease in honor, and thus a decrease in social standing.[5]

Honor and shame are not purely personal qualities in this model; an individual's honor is determined not only by his or her own behavior, but also by the conduct of close affiliates: spouse, children, kin, and even slaves. And an individual's behavior also affected the honor and shame of family and kin in turn. This interconnectedness, effectively localized these qualities in the household. Accordingly, a man's honor depended in good part on his ability to protect the integrity and reputation of his female family members.[6]

Although there has been substantial criticism of the honor-shame model, most of the critiques hinge on modern scholars' understanding and application of the model rather than the validity of the constitutive concepts themselves. Criticism of the model in general has largely focused on two issues: (1) the reification (or potential reification) of the Mediterranean as a socially homogeneous region and (2) the gendered association of honor with men and shame with women. In the first case, critics have noted that many scholarly proponents of the model treat it as a product – and often as a unifying product – of a shared Mediterranean culture. They argue that, in doing so, proponents do not take enough account of the diverse beliefs and practices of different Mediterranean communities and effectively misinterpret evidence as they attempt to fit beliefs and practices to a "universal"paradigm.[7] This mode of criticism has led to reservations about whether the honor-shame model, which was originally developed from anthropological studies of rural agrarian communities, is applicable to more urbanized societies (including ancient Rome).[8] The second point of criticism has called attention to proponents' assignation, either intentional or unintentional, of honor as a masculine virtue/trait and shame as feminine, which, critics argue, effectively masks and/or discredits female agency.[9] While these critiques all have significant merit, they have more to do with precisely how modern scholars wield the concepts of honor and shame rather than the validity of the fundamental principles of the model itself. Accordingly, I believe that the basic structure of the honor-shame model – namely, the existence of the interrelated (and perhaps analogous) concepts of honor and shame, and the interconnectedness of the honor and shame of