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978-1-107-04031-1 - Gender, Manumission, and the Roman Freedwoman

Matthew J. Perry

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GENDER, MANUMISSION, AND THE ROMAN FREEDWOMAN

This book examines the distinct problem posed by the manumission of female slaves in ancient Rome. 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. Accordingly, those evaluating the manumission process needed to reconcile a woman's experiences as a slave with the expectations and moral rigor required of the female citizen. The figure of the freedwoman – fictionalized and real – provides an extraordinary lens into the matter of 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 institution of manumission.

Matthew J. Perry is Assistant Professor of History at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, City University of New York. His research focuses on Roman social history, especially issues related to gender, sexuality, law, and social status.

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32 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10013-2473, USA

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www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107040311

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First published 2014

Printed in the United States of America

A catalog record for this publication is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication data

Perry, Matthew J., 1973–

Gender, manumission, and the Roman freedwoman / Matthew J. Perry, Assistant Professor of History, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, City University of New York.

pages cm

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-107-04031-1 (hardback)

1. Women slaves – Rome – History. 2. Slaves – Emancipation – Rome – History. 3. Rome – Social conditions. 4. Rome – History. I. Title.

HT863.P47 2014

306.3'62082–dc23 2013022246

ISBN 978-1-107-04031-1 Hardback

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Acknowledgments

It is a pleasure to thank the many people whose efforts and insights helped me to write this book. This project began as a Ph.D. dissertation at the University of Chicago, and my advisor, Richard Saller, always made time to discuss new ideas, suggest invaluable critiques, and provide much-appreciated encouragement and guidance. Jonathan Hall, Cam Grey, and David Wray offered comments, advice, and support in equal measure. Emily Brunner, Fanny Dolansky, and Cameron Hawkins helped me better articulate my ideas and directed me toward useful sources. More recently, Lisa Andersen and Sara McDougall read the entire manuscript and prompted me to think more broadly about slavery and gender. Moderators and fellow panelists at meetings of the American Philological Association and the Association of Ancient Historians, as well as members of the University of Chicago Ancient Societies Workshop, raised numerous questions that prompted me to refine my ideas. My editor, Beatrice Rehl, and her staff supportively guided the manuscript through production. Finally, I would like to thank the anonymous readers from Cambridge University Press. Their detailed and thoughtful comments were extremely helpful in bringing this book to its final form.

Support for this project was provided by a PSC-CUNY Award, jointly funded by the Professional Staff Congress and the City University of New York. I would also like to thank the Interlibrary Loan staff at John Jay College, whose efforts went above and beyond the call of duty.

Finally, I would like to offer my deepest thanks to all of my family and friends, whose love and support made this project possible.