CULTURAL EXCHANGE IN ROMAN SOCIETY:
FREED SLAVES AND SOCIAL VALUES

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ABSTRACT

Although slavery was a widely accepted practice throughout the ancient Mediterranean, the Roman system was distinctive for its high rates of manumission and grant of citizenship to slaves manumitted through official channels. This dissertation sheds new light on the role of ex-slaves in Roman society by examining the cultural exchange that took place between members of this population and the ruling orders. Rather than reproduce ancient stereotypes, on the one hand, or idealize the level of agency that freedmen enjoyed, on the other, I focus on the dialogue between status groups and on the media through which that conversation occurred. Particular attention is given to the interaction between literary and epigraphical writing.

I argue that during the early Empire, when elite values were being reconfigured to accommodate the rise of monarchy, freed slaves offered constructive models of behavior even as they were subject to intense social prejudice. Inscriptions are our best source of evidence for the beliefs and practices of Roman freedmen, and I analyze these texts alongside the literary sources to show how the virtues of deference and industry were adapted from freed culture by members of the imperial elite as they renegotiated traditional concepts of honor and glory. Using a similar method, I demonstrate how the familia Caesaris came to symbolize the principate and to propagate the ideology of empire. The ways in which freedmen represented the individual life course in their commemorative monuments are studied as a basis for the emergence of alternatives to the cursus honorum, primarily in Stoic and early Christian thought. Finally, freed slaves’ inclusion in the citizen body and their complex responses to enfranchisement are shown to have been integral to the development of the Roman citizenship and to the definition of the civic community.

I conclude that freed culture did not simply imitate that of the ruling orders but rather participated in a dialogue about social values, and that this dialogue was instrumental in shaping elite ideology under the Principate.
# Table of Contents

Abbreviations ........................................................................................................ v

Acknowledgments .................................................................................................. vi

Chapter 1 : Problems and Methods ..................................................................... 1

Chapter 2 : Immortal Virtues ................................................................................. 28

Chapter 3 : Imperial Freedmen, Imperial Power .................................................. 71

Chapter 4 : The Individual Life Course ................................................................. 119

Chapter 5 : The Civic Community ......................................................................... 177

Conclusion ............................................................................................................. 229

Bibliography .......................................................................................................... 236
**ABBREVIATIONS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AE</td>
<td>L'Année Épigraphique</td>
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<tr>
<td>CIL</td>
<td>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum</td>
</tr>
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<td>CLE</td>
<td>Bücheler, F. Carmina Latina Épigraphica</td>
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<tr>
<td>FRB</td>
<td>Birley, A. The Fasti of Roman Britain</td>
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<td>ILLRP</td>
<td>Degrassi, A. Inscriptiones Latinae Liberae Rei Publicae</td>
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<td>ILS</td>
<td>Dessau, H. Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae</td>
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<tr>
<td>MANN</td>
<td>Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli</td>
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<td>MNR</td>
<td>Museo Nazionale Romano</td>
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<td>NSc</td>
<td>Notizie degli Scavi</td>
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<td>PIR</td>
<td>Klebs, E. et al. Prosopographia Imperii Romani saec. I. II. III</td>
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<td>SIG³</td>
<td>Dittenberger, W. Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum, 3rd ed.</td>
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CHAPTER 1: PROBLEMS AND METHODS

For members of contemporary Western societies, nearly 150 years after slavery was abolished in the United States, it is difficult to envision a world in which the ownership of human chattels was once a legal and socially acceptable practice. To be sure, the exploitation of unfree labor persists, for example through false promises of compensation or the trafficking of female sex workers. One recent study has estimated that 27 million people are being held in servitude worldwide.\(^1\) Yet despite the efforts of modern-day abolitionists and an increase in public awareness, these practices remain disturbingly invisible in everyday life.\(^2\) Most of us would be hard pressed to identify someone we know who has been a slave or who has owned one. Stories of men and women who have been abducted and held against their will as domestic or agricultural workers elicit shock and anger that such egregious violations of the law and of human rights could be allowed to continue in the 21\(^{st}\) century. The thought of purchasing another person as if buying a household appliance seems utterly foreign, a contradiction of contemporary values that belongs to the dark underworld of our society and should be excised at all costs.

An opposite mode of thinking prevailed in the ancient Mediterranean, where a world without slavery in some shape or form would have been just as unthinkable as the legal reinstatement of this practice would be today.\(^3\) Although the nature, treatment, and manumission of slaves were all raised as points of contention by ancient thinkers, the abolition of slavery per

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\(^1\) Zales – Trodd – Williamson 2004; Zales 2004. For a review of the estimates advanced by advocacy groups and government agencies, see Brysk – Choi-Fitzpatrick 2012, 1–2.

\(^2\) On the modern abolitionist movement, see especially Zales 2004; Brysk – Choi-Fitzpatrick 2012; Quirk 2011. For those interested in learning more about abolition or becoming involved, I recommend Free the Slaves, a non-profit organization based in Washington, DC (http://freetheslaves.net).

\(^3\) Veyne 1997, 64.
se hardly ever emerged as a possibility.⁴ Even Seneca, who espouses the Stoic belief that slaves and masters share a common humanity, would never suggest that everyone stop owning slaves, but rather that they treat them with kindness.⁵ Although the large-scale use of agricultural slaves was concentrated in Greek-speaking lands and, later, in Roman Italy, inhabitants of these and surrounding regions would have perceived this institution as a fact of life, manifest differently from culture to culture but ubiquitous throughout the known world. In the ancient Near East, for example, slaves were employed in a variety of roles, from servants at the royal court to janitors in temples.⁶ The conquests of Alexander helped to spread Greek-style chattel slavery to this part of the globe, despite the perpetuation of other forms of dependence.⁷ Societies or sects that did not employ slaves were marked exceptions that proved the rule.⁸

Even against this background, there can be no doubt that Roman society depended heavily on slave labor. According to the most reliable estimates, between one-half and one million urban slaves and between one-quarter and three-quarters of a million rural slaves lived in Augustan Italy.⁹ These figures stand in contrast to roughly four million Roman citizens in Italy and between five and six million citizens overall, on the basis of census reports for 28 BCE, 8 BCE, and 14 CE cited in the Res Gestae.¹⁰ It is important to point out that such estimates – while generated in the context of sophisticated studies of ancient demography – must remain speculative in the absence of reliable data. They are superior, however, to the common but

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⁴ On critiques of slavery, see Garnsey 1996, 75–86.
⁵ E.g., Ep. 47.18: Dicet aliquis nunc me vocare ad pilleum servos et dominos de fastigio suo deicere, quod dixi, “colant potius dominum quam timeant.” Notice how the suggestion of Seneca’s imaginary interlocutor is framed in terms of manumission (vocare ad pilleum) rather than abolition.
⁶ On slavery in the Near East, see Snell in Bradley – Cartledge 2011; Dandamaev 1984.
⁸ See, for example, the reactions of Philo to philosophical sects who did not own slaves (Quod omnis probus liber est, 79; De vita contemplativa, 70); discussed by Garnsey 1996, 78–9.
⁹ Scheidel 2005, 71.
¹⁰ Scheidel 2004, 9. On the debate about the significance of these figures, specifically whether they include women and children, see Beloch 1886, 342 ff.; cf. Brunt 1987, 113–114; contra Lo Cascio 1994a, 32.
unfounded assumption that slaves comprised about one-third of the total population, as was the case in the American South, but does not account for the lower end of the scale.\textsuperscript{11} And they remind us of the prevalence of slavery at the core of the empire as opposed to in the provinces, where we find almost no evidence of large-scale slave agriculture on the model of the Roman \textit{latifundium}.\textsuperscript{12}

Given the widespread presence of slave-holding in the Roman world, historians have long appreciated the need to study this practice in detail and to integrate our knowledge of the Roman slave system into examinations of other issues, including the economy, law, demographics, political life, even art and literature.\textsuperscript{13} Research on the reception of ancient slavery in Western culture and the influence of the classical tradition on African American writers has also yielded compelling results.\textsuperscript{14} However, given that the majority of literary sources for ancient Rome speak most clearly to the beliefs and behaviors of slave-owners, we have been far better informed about the masters’ perspective than about the subjective experiences of slaves and freedmen.\textsuperscript{15} In a recent study that offers detailed analyses of ex-slaves’ role in Roman society, the question of what it may have been like to belong to this status

\textsuperscript{11} Scheidel 2005, 64–6.
\textsuperscript{14} The history of scholarship is best approached through Finley (1998, 79–134); on treatments of manumission, specifically, see Mouritsen 2011, 1–7. The relationship between classics and African American literature is the subject of Cook – Tatum (2010); cf. Greenwood 2010.
\textsuperscript{15} Even in decades when recovering the voices of and ascribing agency to subalterns have been academic concerns, studies of slaves in Roman literature have focused primarily on the public discourse that explored the ideologies of slavery from the master’s point of view. Thus McCarthy (2000, 18) states that “it is the desires of the dominant in Roman society, rather than those of subordinates, that exert the primary force shaping these plays.”
group is relegated to a brief final chapter without being integrated into the rest of the discussion. In the spirit of revision, some historians have attempted to correct this imbalance by drawing on extant ancient materials and comparative case-studies from the New World. Yet one could argue that the pendulum has swung too far in both directions, and that focusing on the exchange of ideas between social groups would help to achieve a more nuanced view of slavery’s place in Roman culture.

In keeping with this observation, the primary aim of the present study is to find a middle ground between ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-up’ approaches to Roman slavery by asking how the servile and freeborn populations participated in a dialogue about social values during the early Empire. To gain insight into freed culture, I draw heavily on inscriptions, which are frequently our only evidence for the lives and experiences of these people, and which represent a medium of communication that was employed with remarkable consistency and ingenuity by those who had survived enslavement at Rome. In studying the exchange of ideas between freedmen and members of the ruling orders, we will be concerned not just with the content of this dialogue but also with the channels through which it occurred – that is, in particular, with the interaction between literary and epigraphical writing.

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16 Mouristen 2011, 279–99. Also see my comments below, pp. 229–30.
17 In this latter respect, see especially Bradley 1984 and 1996, 174–82; Bell – Ramsby 2012; Mouritsen 2011, 279–99. Spivak’s famous (1988) essay on the dangers of this goal for post-colonial studies is well taken, although it will become clear that my focus is the dialogue between discourses rather than non-elite subjectivity as a solitary object of study.
18 Here and throughout, the term “servile” means of slave or freed status in a technical sense and is not meant to convey the personal qualities that this word evokes in some English usage.
1.1 FREEDMEN IN ROMAN SOCIETY

The Romans’ unique approach to manumission recommends freedmen as a focal point for an investigation of slavery and the discourse of values. Within the ancient Mediterranean, as I have already noted, the assumption that human beings could be reduced to the status of chattels would have been unremarkable. On the other hand, the nature and frequency of manumission at Rome and the place of freed slaves in Roman society were distinctive. In the first place, most of our evidence seems to indicate that the Romans freed their slaves more frequently than did slave-owners in Greece, as well as later in the American South. The estimates for the ancient world represent no more than educated guesses because the data required for such analyses were never collected or have not survived. However, one conservative figure recently ventured suggests that the freed population of urban Rome may have corresponded to as little as 10 to 15 percent of freeborn inhabitants of the capital who came from Italy. Proposed as a corrective to theories in which freedmen and their descendants are supposed to have accounted for nearly all urban plebs, this model offers a conservative baseline without eliminating the possibility that the population of ex-slaves was in fact significantly larger. We are still looking at a situation where one in 10 people at Rome would have been former slaves, and given that manumission usually happened in one’s twenties or later, many of these would have been adults who had lived a large portion of their lives in captivity.

19 I use “freedmen” or “liberti” to refer to both male and female ex-slaves to avoid the more cumbersome “freedpersons.” This is not intended as an ideological statement but rather as a matter of literary style. When one or other gender is meant, I make that clear in the text.
23 On the age of slaves at manumission, see the discussion of Mouritsen 2011, 186–9; cf. Weaver 1990; Shaw 1991, 74. Younger freedmen are probably overrepresented in funerary epigraphy because of the tendency of parents to commemorate children and as a result of deathbed manumissions for young slaves. The age requirement of 30 years
The most up-to-date review of the demographics of Roman slavery repeats the warning that our evidence will not support a clear conclusion about how many freedmen there were or what percentage of slaves could expect to be freed.24 All we can ascertain with an acceptable level of certainty is that manumission was more common at Rome than in many other slave-holding societies, including the poleis of classical Greece, and that freedmen comprised a significant proportion of the urban population of Italy.25 In the antebellum United States, by contrast, legal restrictions on manumission prevented the freed population from attaining either numerical or social prominence.26 These rates would have been lower in the Italian countryside, in part because members of a familia rustica would have had fewer opportunities to learn a trade; but manumission tends generally to be an urban phenomenon, and we should not be surprised that most of our direct evidence for Roman freedmen comes from cities and towns.27 Whatever the actual statistics, Rome stands out for the fact that the existence of freedmen was a highly visible social phenomenon.

Secondly – and perhaps more importantly than the frequency of manumission – when a Roman slave was manumitted through formal channels, he attained the rights of citizenship.28 Freed slaves at Rome, like other cives, could own property, vote, marry legally, produce freeborn children, and contract a legitimate will. Although freedmen were usually barred from becoming decurions, holding magistracies, and joining some priestly colleges, avenues did exist through

established by lex Aelia Sentia was (as Mouritsen observes) unlikely to codify standard practice without making at least some upward adjustment. It is just as unlikely that the law would have demanded that slave-owners make overly excessive changes, so the normal age of manumission should still be set in the 20’s or 30’s, with the caveat that this would have fluctuated according to the specific needs and desires of individual manumittors.

25 Mouritsen 2011, 141.
26 On Roman manumission and the American slave system, see Watson 1989, 22–49.
27 Patterson 1982, 269 and 282.
28 The forms of manumission that qualified a freedmen for citizenship were manumissio vindicta, censu and testamento, all of which involved a magistrate or (in the final case) legal documentation. Slaves freed informally attained freedom without citizenship, a status formalized by the Augustan lex Iunia and assigned the title “Junian Latin.” See Mouritsen 2011, 85–6; Bradley 1984, 81–112; Weaver 1990 and 1997; López Barja de Quiroga 1998. On the legal parameters of manumission, see Buckland 1908, 437–597.
which they could participate in public life. Freeborn children, moreover, enjoyed the full range of rights and privileges and could embark upon public careers. These features of ex-slaves’ citizenship and their implications for the construction of the Roman political community will be the subject of one of my chapters. The general point is that the extension of the citizenship to liberti set the Roman slave system apart from the Greek, in which manumitted slaves were usually relegated to the status of metics. The fact that the Romans enfranchised their freedmen so regularly in such high numbers helped to create the specific set of conditions under which this social group interacted with others.

Practically speaking, interactions between the freed and freeborn orders would have taken place through multiple channels, particularly in crowded urban environments, where slave-owners lived under the same roof as their chattels, and members of the freeborn plebs worked alongside slaves and liberti. A wide array of literary and material sources demonstrate the integration of the servile population into the economic, social, and political fabric of Rome and its municipalities. As we hear from Tacitus, for example, a great outcry arose among the plebs when it was proposed that the entire slave household of Pedanius Secundus, an urban prefect murdered by one of his slaves, be executed “according to ancestral custom.” Presumably, mere pity could not have caused such a riot (concursus plebis... seditio) without the existence of at least some personal ties between the 400 members of Pedanius’ household and the residents of

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29 See below, ch. 5.
30 Patterson (1982, 252–3) draws parallels with the ancient Near East, as well as with ancient China, India during the Buddhist period, and medieval Korea. On Greek manumission, see Zelnick-Abramovitz 2005, esp. ch. 6.
31 On slaves in the Roman house, see George 1997; Wallace-Hadrill 1988, 77–81 and 1996, ch. 3; Webster 2005 considers the problem of locating slave quarters in archaeology. Thompson 2003, 91–126 is a good introduction to the material remains of agricultural slavery in imperial Italy.
32 Tac. Ann. 14.42 and 45: Ceterum cum vetere ex more familiarium omnem, quae sub eodem tecto manserat, ad supplicium agi oporteret, concursus plebis, quae tot innoxios protegebat, usque ad seditionem verum est senatusque [obsessus], in quo ipso erant studia nimiam severitatem aspernantium, pluribus nihil mutandum censentibus... ita dissonae voces respondebant numerum aut aetatem aut sexum ac plurimorum indubiam innocentiam miserantium: praevalluit tamen pars, quae supplicium decernebat. The appeal to vetus mos glosses over (for rhetorical purposes) the SC Silanianum of 10 CE, on which see Dig. 29.5, Cod. Iust. 6.35 and Paulus, Sent. 3.5; Watson 1987, 134–8; Buckland 1908, 94–7; Gamauf 2007; Bradley 1994, 113.
Rome who came to their defense, many of whom would have been slaves, ex-slaves, or the descendants of freedmen.\textsuperscript{33} In addition to familial relationships and friendships which existed between freedmen and fellow slaves who had not yet achieved manumission, such ties would have been formed through business, attendance at public festivals, or simple residential proximity. Trade guilds regularly included both slave, freed, and freeborn members; and nowhere to my knowledge do we hear of a “freed part of town” such as existed along the lines of American racial segregation.\textsuperscript{34}

Informal relationships and institutionalized settings like collegia and public spectacles enabled the engagement of various social groups in a broader ideological discourse. Moreover, despite the dishonor that freedmen endured as a result of enslavement, on the whole they enjoyed greater access to the upper echelons of society than did the freeborn masses. As one recent study has observed, the patron-freedman relationship had strong familial undertones, with manumission being constructed as a kind of rebirth and the former owner taking the position of father.\textsuperscript{35} The similarity between children and slaves with respect to patria potestas helped to strengthen this aspect of the definition of ‘the freedman’ as a social category. At the same time as the paternalistic model sustained an original imbalance of power very different from that between patrons and clients, it presented significant economic and social opportunities for the manumitted slaves of elite Romans. Education and training followed by grants of start-up capital allowed liberti to establish their own businesses and ascend economically, while the support of

\textsuperscript{33} This point is stressed by Finley 1998, 170–1: “The plebeian riots were aimed not at slavery as an institution, but at saving the lives of individuals with whom the plebs (many of them freedmen or descendents of freedmen, some of them presumably slaves themselves) associated with daily in their work and their social life” (p. 171). It should also be noted that the figure of 400 plebeians is subject to the same type of distortion that plagues ancient literary sources in general, with numbers being rounded more liberally than would suit contemporary standards. By “400” Tacitus means “a lot.” On the accuracy of figures in Roman literature and the conventional use of multiples of 40, in particular, see Scheidel 1996b.

\textsuperscript{34} On the range of statuses who participated in neighborhood organizations, see Lott 2004, 4. The social composition of trade guilds (collegia) is discussed in detail by Tran 2006.

\textsuperscript{35} Mouritsen 2011, 36–51.
an ex-master might help a freedman advance his son’s career in municipal politics.\textsuperscript{36} In these and in other ways, freed slaves’ chances of upward mobility often exceeded those of the freeborn poor; and those \textit{liberti} who did rise to positions of wealth and prominence represent a type of subset within the upper orders, separated by status but of equal means and influence.\textsuperscript{37} Freedwomen who married their former owners had an additional avenue by which to advance their status within the community, particularly if those unions produced freeborn children.

Within these demographic and social contexts, the ideology of slave-owning exerted a critical influence on nearly all areas of Roman thought. By “ideology of slave-owning” I mean the beliefs and the conceptual frameworks on which the institution was founded – the basic assumptions about power and society that allowed masters to justify and perpetuate the ownership of human chattels and to regulate the transitions of status that enslavement and manumission entailed. As we will see, these frameworks were constantly being reworked and contested as Romans attempted to understand their own hierarchies, but several key themes are put forward at this stage because of their importance to my overall argument. In the first place, as Patterson argued in his landmark comparison of slavery across human cultures, masters’ authority is sustained by the “natal alienation” of slaves and by the belief that they are “socially dead.” Natal alienation entails the complete separation of an enslaved individual from his ancestral past, and social death prevents him from maintaining an identity separate from that of his master.\textsuperscript{38} Although I will seek to complicate these paradigms in the case of the Romans, they offer a point of departure for understanding how masters secured their ascendancy over slaves.\textsuperscript{39}

\textsuperscript{36} These issues are discussed at length by Mouritsen 2011, 206–47.
\textsuperscript{37} Here I refer to the model of Alföldy 1985, (fig. 1), where wealthy freedmen and imperial freedmen constitute a social segment that penetrates the decurial, equestrian, and senatorial orders. See also Kellum 2010, 202.
\textsuperscript{38} Patterson 1982, 1–13.
\textsuperscript{39} Likewise, see Patterson 1982, 13: “Even at this most elementary level of personal relations, it should be clear that we are dealing not with a static entity but with a complex interactional process, one laden with tension and contradiction in the dynamics of each of its constituent elements. The power of the master, in its very extremity,
In addition to these cross-cultural patterns, the Roman ideology of slaveholding was specifically situated within and conditioned by Roman culture.\textsuperscript{40} My overall goal is to demonstrate how dominant discourses participated in a dialogue with those generated by slaves and freedmen, but the fact that Roman masters found their slaves “good to think with” is both a starting point and a partial justification for this inquiry. Although ancient philosophers, most famously Aristotle, took a variety of approaches to the theory of natural slavery, any concept of the natural slave was typically rejected by Romans in favor of the idea that slavery was a result of misfortune.\textsuperscript{41} According to the latter view, slave status did not reflect a prior disposition toward weakness or an inferior nature, although such qualities were expected to develop as a result. Still, there was a strong sense, especially among Stoic thinkers, that slaves were human beings, fully capable of human virtue.\textsuperscript{42} This may have served as a foundation for the acceptance of slaves’ and ex-slaves’ intellectual contributions, whether as tutors and secretaries or as authors of major works of Latin literature. In contrast to the American South, where Frederick Douglass struggled to learn how to read, Romans appreciated the value of educating their chattels and of benefitting from that investment, despite the anxieties raised by the stereotypical clever slave (\textit{servus callidus}) who was always outwitting his master.\textsuperscript{43}

The fact that Roman ideology allowed for the basic humanity of slaves and freedmen did not preclude the existence of strong prejudice against those who had been fully subject to the will of another.\textsuperscript{44} Although Roman writers found ways to avoid confronting the brutality of this

\textsuperscript{40} Bradley 1994, 10–30.
\textsuperscript{41} On natural slavery, see Garnsey 1996, 11–16; Mouritsen 2011, 14.
\textsuperscript{42} Garnsey 1996, 128–52.
\textsuperscript{43} On the education of slaves, see Forbes 1955; on the clever slave, McCarthy 2000, 19–20.
\textsuperscript{44} Mouritsen 2011, 15–22.
institution, we need not hold any illusions about the intense physical and psychological violence that slaves were forced to endure.\textsuperscript{45} Put most simply, Roman masters defined personal agency through and against the idealized submission of slaves. The authority of a \textit{paterfamilias} was predicated upon his ability to control his dependents, and no member of the household represented passivity more clearly than did the slaves, whose bodies could be subjected to domination through rape and corporal punishment.\textsuperscript{46} This impetus to define power through slavery supported a host of metaphors associating servitude with the perceived effeminacy of foreigners from the Greek east.\textsuperscript{47} At the other end of the spectrum from discourses that recognized slaves’ human capacities, such assertions of domination provided a way to police the boundary between status groups and to define \textit{libertas} for freeborn citizens.

I have simplified two extremes of a complex ideological framework that was adapted to fit different contexts and intersected with multiple axes of thought, including gender, sexuality, personal identity, and political values. In fact, one of the most striking features of the way that the Romans thought about slavery was their allowance for contradiction. Time and again, we find Latin authors holding conflicting beliefs about this institution, asserting slaves’ basic humanity or describing close personal ties with a favorite, only to turn around and offer instructions on how to manage one’s chattel or issue a scathing diatribe about the “slavishness” of a rhetorical target. As one recent critic of slaves’ depiction in Roman literature has summed up:\textsuperscript{48}

\begin{quote}
… the cohabitation of slave and master generated a set of problems about the moral status of the slave that could not be definitively solved, and… it is more fruitful to see the master’s (and probably the slave’s) experience of slavery in terms of such conflicts than in terms of fixed attitudes, especially when one is dealing with literature.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{45} Bradley 1984, 113–37.  
\textsuperscript{46} Bradley 2000, 24–30.  
\textsuperscript{47} E.g., Cic. \textit{Prov. cons.} 5.10: Iam vero publicanos miseratos (me etiam miserum illorum ita de me meritorum miseriis ac dolore!) tradidit in servitutem Iudaeis et Syris, nationibus natis servitutii.  
\textsuperscript{48} Fitzgerald 2000, 8.
We will find that this statement applies just as well to the material evidence, even to inscriptions set up by and for slaves and freedmen. Encountering such levels of cognitive dissonance will require patience, but the benefits of appreciating the dynamic tension between opposites has already been shown to be worth the effort.49

Understanding the ideology of slave-owning from the masters’ perspective is a necessary point of departure, both because of the extent to which it permeated all aspects of Roman life and because it involved a high level of sensitivity to slaves’ status as human agents. Together, these features of the Roman system increased the chances that members of the elite would recognize slaves’ and freedmen’s cultural output and allow it to shape their own modes of thought, even if only obliquely in the face of intense social prejudice. Because of slavery’s ubiquitous presence in Roman culture and social relations, the areas in which one might look for such a dialogue are virtually endless in number. My analyses will center on four basic themes. Chapter 2, “Immortal Virtues,” sets the stage with an examination of what qualities were perceived as worthy of commemoration and how elite views on this subject changed with the rise of monarchy, with a certain constellation of virtues that was deeply embedded in servile culture offering a model of behavior for the newly subordinated aristocracy. In Chapter 3, “Imperial Freedmen, Imperial Power” I seek to expand our understanding of freedmen’s role in the political culture of the early Empire by looking closely at the familia Caesaris. In Chapter 4, “The Individual Life Course,” and Chapter 5, “The Civic Community,” I consider the interplay between servile and elite approaches to defining personal and communal identities. These chapters will be summarized in greater detail below, but let me first outline the methods through which I propose to reach my conclusions.

49 Fitzgerald 2000, 6–8.
1.2 SOURCES AND METHODS

For historians interested in studying Roman slavery from any other perspective than that of the slave-owning elite, the nature of our source material has presented seemingly insurmountable problems.\(^{50}\) The prevailing assumption that classical literature was produced by and for a small group of aristocrats has prevented most critics from using these texts as evidence for the experiences of slaves and *liberti*.\(^{51}\) Fictional characters like Pseudolus and Trimalchio do not speak directly to the beliefs and behaviors of the social groups they are meant to depict; nor can Horace’s comments on his father’s libertine background be decontextualized from his poetic persona. This situation stands in contrast to the study of slavery in the American South, for which we have (among other resources) the autobiography of Frederick Douglass, the poems of Phillis Wheatley, and nearly 4,000 narratives of former slaves collected in the 1930s.\(^{52}\) Although such texts present their own range of interpretive problems, they offer a level of insight into the experience of slavery and freedom that Latin authors either did not possess or declined to record. “The historian of antiquity is therefore reduced to comparative study, to such comfort as he can obtain from analogies in modern slavery.”\(^{53}\) Despite a few successful ventures into this intellectual minefield, the vast discrepancies between ancient and modern slave systems have (to my mind) made this approach more fruitful in producing questions than in reaching definitive answers.\(^{54}\)

\(^{50}\) A strong argument has been made by McCarthy (2000, 18) on the basis of J. C. Scott’s theory of a “public transcript,” which precludes the expression of values that deviate from those of the dominant class. Cf. Stewart 2008.

\(^{51}\) This is not entirely true, given that some of the most prominent Latin authors came from servile backgrounds, were “new men,” or were members of the equestrian order.

\(^{52}\) Rawick 1972–9; Douglass 1845; Wheatley 2001; Tatum and Cook 2010.

\(^{53}\) Finley 1998, 304.

\(^{54}\) See especially Bradley 1994; Schiavone 2000; Kleijwegt 2006; and Stewart 2012.
In the absence of testinia like those originating from the Americas, inscriptions offer the most extensive and most direct body of evidence for the beliefs and behaviors of Roman slaves and liberti. For institutions like the *Augustales*, they are the only record we have. Among the roughly 190,000 Latin funerary inscriptions estimated to have survived from the Roman world – a figure that continues to increase with new discoveries – freed slaves have been found to comprise a remarkably large proportion of persons attested, at least in certain regions.⁵⁵ A foundational study of funerary epitaphs in the city of Rome suggested that freedmen account for at least 75% of those commemorated; and similar figures have been proposed for Ostia and other Italian cities, with Pompeii trailing only slightly at about 60%.⁵⁶ Because of the extreme implausibility that these proportions correspond to the actual make-up of the population, alternative explanations have been sought to account for this striking feature of the epigraphical record. Freed slaves’ desire to advertise their new status has offered to many a convincing reason for why this social group commissioned funerary monuments with such high frequency, in addition to the fact that former slaves were in a good position to succeed economically.⁵⁷ Other motives, such as a heightened appreciation of family, have been proposed as an antidote to this sole focus on status.⁵⁸ But there is general agreement that ex-slaves’ epigraphical habit was a cultural, as opposed to a demographic, phenomenon somehow connected to their collective experience of slavery and manumission.⁵⁹ Inscriptions are a unique reflection of this Roman subculture.

My approach to epigraphy seeks to account for this fact by treating each monument as a cultural artefact capable of sustaining close reading. My analyses are qualitative, rather than

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⁵⁵ Saller and Shaw 1984, 124; Carroll 2006, 15.
⁵⁶ Taylor 1961; Mouritsen 2005, 38 (with bibliography).
⁵⁷ See especially Taylor 1961; reiterated most recently by Carroll 2006, 247–53.
⁵⁸ Mouritsen 2005.
quantitative, in search of deviations from regular formulae, as well as for patterns in the material. To gather evidence pertaining to each topic covered – commemoration, imperial power, the individual life course, and the definition of the political community – I first identified words or phrases that could shed light on how freedmen dealt with these issues. In the case of the life course, for example, I considered the application of the word *contubernalis* to freed spouses and the dedicatory formula *servus vovit, liber solvit* as assertions of continuity between slavery and freedom in ex-slaves’ personal narratives. 60 Similarly, in the final chapter, I sought out instances where freedmen used the word *patria* to describe their connection to Rome or a former homeland. Texts were collected from the indices for three volumes of the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum (CIL)* covering Rome, Ostia, Campania, Bruttium, Lucania, Sicily, and Sardinia, and from two online databases that offer search capabilities of a large proportion of the inscriptions collated in *CIL, L’Année épigraphique*, and numerous regional corpora. 61

Interpreting these inscriptions as evidence for slave and freed culture raises a number of problems, foremost among which is the question of authorship. What level of intentionality can we attribute to the commemorator of a given monument? Epigraphical writing was highly formulaic, and despite the occasional flash of obvious humor or creativity, most tombstones and honorific inscriptions appear to adhere to established conventions. An epitaph usually included, after a dedication to the *Di Manes*, the name of the deceased, age at death, familial or occupational details, a descriptive epithet, and the name of the person who commissioned the

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60 See below, pp. 145–51.
61 Epigraphic Database Roma (http://www.edr-edr.it/Italiano/index_it.php) contains 45,374 inscriptions from Italy, Sicily and Sardinia. Casting a wider geographical net, Epigraphik Datenbank Clauss-Slaby (http://www.manfredclauss.de/gb/index.html) contains information for 442,322 texts from nearly every region of the empire. Precise figures are available on that web site under the heading “Statistics.” Find sites of inscriptions presented for analysis in the following discussions are indicated in the text or footnotes, except for those from volume six of the CIL, which covers the city of Rome.
monument. However, even inscriptions limited to these generic components involved a series of decisions on the part of the commemorator about what pieces of information to cite. Probably in consultation with a *lapidarius*, and perhaps further assisted by a handbook of funerary epigrams and quotations, individuals made choices about how they wanted to represent themselves and their loved ones to posterity – the only afterlife an ordinary person could be sure to achieve.63

The identity of the commemorator is often stated explicitly on Latin funerary epitaphs and should be taken into account when considering the nature and significance of these epigraphical decisions. In cases where the person who commissioned the inscription is a master or patron, the contents will be best interpreted as representing the ideology of slave-owning. Even slaves commemorating one another are likely to have done so in terms dictated by their station. Freedmen, on the other hand, provide a useful control because of the probability that they would be responsible for erecting their own funerary inscriptions or for performing this service for their immediate family. What is more, in a large number of instances, the inscription does not include the name of the commemorator, and we can only guess as to this person’s social status or relationship to the deceased. But when we consider each text as an historical document, capable of multivalency and of being interpreted differently by different viewers, these issues can be resolved individually or at least accounted for in the analysis.

Epigraphical choices are often most significant – though, by nature, numerically fewer – when they deviate from expected norms. It would be unsurprising, for example, to find a freed slave celebrating his citizenship on a funerary monument by including his *tria nomina* and

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62 Dedications to the *Di Manes* appear from the reign of Augustus but became popular in the middle of the first century CE; see Carroll 2006, 126.
63 On the process of commissioning and producing a monument, see Susini 1972 and Carroll 2006, 165–8; on tombstones as a vehicle for immortality, Carroll 2006, 20–1 and 30–58.
foregrounding his ability to contract a legal marriage by commemorating his spouse and freeborn children. The funerary portrait reliefs that were popular among ex-slaves in the Augustan period depict such benefits of manumission in especially vivid terms, but one finds evidence that *liberti* valued their freedom throughout the epigraphical record.64 When freed commemorators select other information to highlight, the results are even more striking. To return to the example of *contuberales*, the fact that some freedmen chose to apply the word for slave marriage to what they could have claimed as a legal union suggests a countercurrent to the culture of assimilation so often attributed to this social group, who are supposed to have made every effort to advertise the benefits of freedom.65 Likewise, as one study has shown, not all *liberti* gave their children traditional Roman names, but rather preferred to stress the continuity of familial ties by naming their children after themselves.66 The fact that these variations were symbolically possible demonstrates the complexity of freed slaves’ culture, which embraced a range of responses to enslavement and manumission.

Other problems with the epigraphical material I have not been able to solve in all cases. We often lack precise information about the date and about the original context in which a monument was displayed and can only surmise from its content and style when it was commissioned and whether it was viewable to the public or only to a specific audience.67 Even this provisional method has been shown to be potentially misleading, since inscriptions whose

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64 On the portraiture, see Kleiner 1977.
65 See below, pp. 133–5.
66 Mouritsen 2005.
67 Carroll 2006, 26–7. On issues of dating, see Bodel 2001, 49–51. The inscriptions that I subject to close reading are dated within a century when possible, and in the case of imperial freedmen this issue is usually resolved by nomenclature. Without suggesting that freed culture was static or monolithic (cf., e.g., Borbonus 2006), I am interested specifically in identifying how enslavement shaped social values, and in this sense strictly I agree with the synchronic approach of Mouritsen (2011, 9). When a second-century inscription supports evidence from preceding periods, I see no reason to discount that testimony on chronological grounds if it can be shown to be reflective of freedmen’s responses to their status and if it correlates with evidence from other eras. Fortunately, we are on firmer ground when mapping diachronic change in elite culture.
content might suggest a public setting have been found inside family tombs or other spaces with restricted access. I have been able to study first-hand only some of the inscriptions discussed in the following chapters. Despite the importance of including a monument’s physical attributes and iconography in an interpretation of its overall message, some can be read only as texts, at best accompanied by a photo or drawing. Analyses that focus on word usage and diction alleviate this problem to a certain degree, but we cannot exclude the possibility that an inscription’s visual surroundings may have altered its meaning.

Despite these limitations, the epigraphical record provides the best available avenue into the beliefs and behaviors of Rome’s servile population. Inscriptions were one of the only media through which slaves and freedmen could participate as such in the broader discourses that shaped dominant ideological frameworks. But another set of difficulties emerges when one attempts to examine the ways in which the values articulated by freed commemorators interacted with those of the slave-owning elite – the values, that is, most commonly reflected in classical literature. One foundational problem involves the application of social categories such as “slave,” “freed,” and “elite” to the study of Roman culture. Although Roman law drew a basic distinction between slaves, freedmen, and ingenui, the boundaries between status groups did not necessarily map onto identifiable subcultures. In response to the invention of the category of “freedmen’s art” by students of Roman visual culture, a recent analysis of domestic and monumental commissions of freedmen has found little evidence to support the idea that this

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68 Bodel 2001, 10.
69 As noted above, slaves and freedmen did participate in the production of canonical texts; in such cases, however, their personae were shaped by the demands of the literary tradition and the expectations of their intended audience. Epigraphical monuments may not have been more “authentic,” in any simple sense of the word, but they were more capable of reflecting freed culture because they took as their primary goal the representation of individual identity.
70 The term “elite” is itself problematic, but here I take it to mean members of the decurial, equestrian and senatorial orders who accepted Greco-Roman traditions as their main source of cultural unity.
71 On the Roman law of persons, see Gaius Inst. 1.9 with Buckland 1908, 56–100.
social group had its own style, but sought rather to highlight the integration of so-called “freedman art” with surrounding social and visual contexts.  

Particularly with respect to epigraphical writing, it would be perverse to deny the existence of a subculture in which manumitted slaves were the main participants. Nor does the identification of such a subculture require that it was embraced by all *liberti* at all times; when a Roman freedman attended the games or did business in the Forum, he was as involved in dominant ideological frameworks as in those specific to his status group. As we have become more cognizant of the fluidity of cultural practices and of people’s ability to negotiate several identities simultaneously, the need to draw strict lines around one subculture or another has given way to an appreciation of dialogue, conflict, and synthesis. Likewise, historians of the Roman provinces have begun to abandon static models of cultural imperialism in favor of the concept of ‘creolization’, whereby Greco-Roman and native cultures interacted to form something entirely new. If we follow these leads, freedmen comprised a discreet segment of Roman society and developed beliefs and behaviors that were conditioned by their collective experience of enslavement and manumission, but that subculture was in constant contact with others, including those ascribed to by the elite. In this sense, ‘creolization’ was happening not just at the periphery of the Roman empire, but also at its core, across different levels of the status hierarchy.

The porosity of cultural boundaries heightened the influence that freed slaves were able to exert on other areas of discourse, and their integration into Roman society enhanced this

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72 Petersen 2006.

73 On the theoretical foundations of this approach to ancient history, see Dougherty – Kurke 2003, 1–12.

74 On ‘creolization’ as a model for ancient cultural exchange in the Roman world, see Webster 2001; cf. Woolf 1998. By no means am I suggesting that this view of Romanization ought to be accepted without a review of the criticisms leveled against it; rather, I point to parallels in other areas of Roman history that complement my approach at the theoretical level.
exchange even further. Tracing this phenomenon from inscriptions into the literary sources does, however, pose serious difficulties, especially because of the biases that prevented Roman masters from consciously adopting the values of slaves. Therefore, when possible, I have sought out evidence that the patterns identified in the epigraphical material were recognized by Latin authors, even if filtered through a lens of satire or outright disdain. Petronius’ depiction of the wealthy freedman, Trimalchio, for example, supports the claim that members of the elite recognized the importance of continuity between slavery and freedom to ex-slaves’ construction of their biographies.\footnote{See below, pp. 158–63.} And Tacitus’ use of the word \textit{obsequium} to describe aristocratic conduct with respect to the \textit{princeps} makes an implicit connection with slaves’ and ex-slaves’ ability to find honor in the performance of duty.\footnote{See below, pp. 58–64.} While by necessity often subtle, these types of statements show that Roman masters were sensitive to the cultural practices of their slaves and \textit{liberti}, above and beyond the fact that the master-slave and patron-freedman relationships served as a paradigm for a range of power dynamics.\footnote{Fitzgerald 2000, 69–86.}

Metaphors of slavery and manumission can also shed light on the ways in which servile values affected other areas of Roman thought. In keeping with the idea that this literary device is based on conceptual structures derived from lived experience, I take as a given that metaphors of slavery were embedded in the social and ideological frameworks that defined this institution.\footnote{On contemporary theories of metaphor, see Lakoff 1993; one application of this idea to the ancient material is found in Martin 1990, discussed below, p. 168. Although I do not agree with every one of his points, I accept the basic premise that metaphorical language is connected to social and political realities and may be interpreted in its historical context.} To say in the first century CE that the Senate was enslaved to the emperor or that a Stoic \textit{proficiens} must seek to be liberated from the bonds of his passions conveyed the basic image of disempowerment but carried none of the racial or abolitionist nuances that similar statements
Metaphors of slavery in ancient literature reflect a particular view of what a slave was and how he might stand as a model. Further, because of the perceived distance between figurative language and ‘the real world’, metaphorical uses of slavery presented a channel through which members of the Roman elite could allow slaves and freedmen to influence their behavior without consciously surrendering their dignity as freeborn masters. Metaphor was a realm in which actuality could be suspended just enough to allow the exploration of ideas that would otherwise have been abhorrent to status-conscious Roman slave-owners. In some cases, slaves offered explicit models of virtue – as seen, for instance, in the exempla of loyal slaves collected by Valerius Maximus. But the indirect parallels that metaphor drew between servile and freeborn values are equally (if not more) helpful in understanding the dialogue between these status groups because of their partial displacement of social realities.

The most detailed depiction of liberti in Roman literature has confronted historians with a host of interpretive problems. The famous episode in Petronius’ first-century novel, the Satyricon, that describes a lavish dinner party at the home of Trimalchio amplifies social stereotypes about freedmen to an extreme degree. Although Veyne declared in his foundational article on this text, “c’est un excellent document d’histoire,” others have been reluctant to treat Trimalchio as anything more than a literary fiction. Further difficulties arise from a series of correspondences between the Cena and accounts of the emperor Nero, whom (according to Tacitus) Petronius

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79 In a paper on the French author George Sands, Rogers (1979) offers one clear example of how the metaphor of slavery interacted with contemporary concerns in the nineteenth century.
81 On the authorship and dating, see Rose 1971, 1–60.
82 Veyne 1961, 213; for an up-to-date review of the arguments, see Andreau 2009.
criticized in writing just before he committed suicide in 66.\textsuperscript{83} And although the evidence remains inconclusive, connections between the \textit{Satyrica} and other aspects of Neronian culture have led critics to see this work as participating more broadly in first-century discourse about the nature of representation.\textsuperscript{84} Despite all these issues, however, Petronius’ characterization of successful ex-slaves on the Bay of Naples has proven so captivating and so rich in detail that it has exerted an undue influence over the historical study of this social order that has been called aptly “Trimalchio vision.”\textsuperscript{85}

To use this text as an historical document, we must take care to appreciate its multivalency, while not allowing Trimalchio to dominate our analysis at the cost of ignoring the cultural output of actual freedmen. Like other historians in recent years, I have taken an approach based on the understanding that Petronius’ satire is exploiting stereotypes about freedmen that would have been recognizable as such to his readers.\textsuperscript{86} There are enough bombastic freedmen in Latin literature and a sufficient number of disdainful comments made by Roman aristocrats to ensure that Trimalchio was not entirely a figment of his creator’s imagination but rather a reflection of a prevailing discourse concerning this social group.\textsuperscript{87} Even if the \textit{Cena} was designed to parody Nero’s court on some level, the reasons why Petronius used a group of wealthy freedmen for this purpose must be grounded in a set of assumptions about former slaves that his audience would have acknowledged, and probably shared. When aspects of Trimalchio’s self-presentation correlate with patterns in the epigraphical record, we should be even more cognizant of the fact that stereotypes, while objectifying and brutal in their impetus

\textsuperscript{83} Parallels are compiled by Rose 1971, 82–94. Tac. \textit{Ann.} 16.19: …sed flagitia principis sub nominibus exoletorum feminarumque et novitatem cuiusque stupri perscripsit atque obsignata misit Neroni.
\textsuperscript{84} Vout 2009 (with bibliography).
\textsuperscript{85} Petersen 2006.
\textsuperscript{86} Andreau 2009.
\textsuperscript{87} E.g., Calvisius Sabinus of Sen. \textit{Ep.} 27.5; and Tac. \textit{Ann.} 12.53, Plin. \textit{Ep.} 7.29 and 8.6 (on Pallas).
toward generalization, can still be highly complex, connected with social realities, and therefore of use to historians. The fact that members of the Roman elite were threatened by the status dissonance that successful *liberti* presented does not mean that they were unaware of the values and practices unique to this social group, nor that cultural influence travelled only from top to bottom.\textsuperscript{88}

1.3 SUMMARY OF THE ARGUMENT

In the following chapters, I present detailed analyses of specific epigraphical patterns as they relate to developments in elite social values that emerge from Latin literature and philosophy, primarily under the early Empire. Chapter 2, “Immortal Virtues,” examines how slaves and freedmen established themselves in the common memory by combining assertions of personal agency with expressions of deference toward masters and patrons. This integration of industry and obedience as an avenue to immortality stands in contrast to traditional conceptions of elite masculinity that relied on the *cursus honorum*. Under the Principate, however, the ruling orders were compelled to reevaluate these key issues, as political authority became centralized in the hands of a single individual. The modes of self-representation that slaves and freedmen had by necessity used to negotiate their place in society became applicable to the aristocratic discourses of fame and military glory, which now had to be acquired under the authority of the princeps. Thus Tacitus celebrates the qualities of *obsequium* and *modestia* in his father-in-law, Agricola, as well as *industria* and vigor. Despite the term’s association with slavery, *obsequium* became the watchword of the nobility, for whom honor derived from imperial approval. Many of these individuals, including Tacitus, were provincials who in a sense were outsiders at Rome,

\textsuperscript{88} Cf. Horsfall 2003; on “status dissonance,” see Hopkins 1965.
and although some of the most virulent criticisms of powerful freedmen issued from their pens, their role in imperial government demonstrates the importance not only of coming to terms with the principate but of doing so from a position of marginality.

In Chapter 3, “Imperial Freedmen and Imperial Power,” I examine the dialogue between Latin inscriptions and Latin literature around the problem of monarchical rule. Augustus’ innovative deployment of monuments – while in some ways a continuation of trends developed by Sulla, Pompey and Caesar – had a remarkable impact on Roman visual culture. Moreover, I show that the inscriptions produced by the familia Caesars became talismanic of this form of government because they delineated a type of authority that operates on personal influence and proximity to the center, as opposed to an electoral system. These monuments participated in a mutually reinforcing dialogue with descriptions of imperial slaves and freedmen by Seneca, Martial and Statius. In contrast to the virulent attacks mounted by Tacitus and other detractors, these authors suggest that the emperor’s domestic and administrative staff made a formative impact on elite ideology by demonstrating the most effective ways in which to relate to the princeps.

Chapter 4, “The Individual Life Course,” continues the discussion of how identities are defined in relation to centers of power. Here I move from a consideration of personal virtues to an account of how slaves, freed slaves and freeborn citizens constructed the narrative of a human life – that is, biography and autobiography. For members of the Republican nobility, biographies were structured according to the traditional values of ancestry, virtue, and political office. The ideology of slaveholding, on the other hand, imposed a sharp break in the individual life course at the point of manumission; and patronage offered the main source of unity that could bind the past to the present. In commemorative inscriptions, many ex-slaves reproduced this format, but
others appealed to friends and family, the Roman calendar, and religious cult to define their lives as coherent wholes. These frameworks illustrate freedmen’s striking ability to construct biographical narratives along alternative lines. Moreover, when the traditional basis of elite biography was weakened by the rise of the princeps, the use of slavery and manumission as metaphors for philosophical and religious transformation comprised another area in which imperial writers reacted to phenomena manifest in the epigraphical landscape.

Finally, Chapter 5, “The Civic Community,” pursues the question of how ideas about the relationship between individuals and civil society were exchanged between status groups, particularly in light of the developing concepts of citizenship that evolved from Republic to Empire. I consider first how ex-slaves employed the word patria to articulate their connection to Rome or a former homeland and, in so doing, find a component of freed culture that supported the retention of ties to a native ethnicity or place of origin. In contrast to the belief that natal alienation deprived slaves of legitimate ancestry, the desire to recall one’s past before slavery was able to coexist with the impetus to assimilate as a Roman civis. This ability to balance two political identities provided an important precursor to the concept of dual citizenship that emerged under Augustus. Further, I argue, as one of the most significant groups of newcomers to the Roman state, freedmen exemplified the tension between inclusion and exclusion that faced members of the provincial elite as they sought to participate from the margins. In their honorific and burial monuments, liberti celebrated their involvement in civic life through benefaction, the advancement of freeborn children, and connections to imperial power. Despite the limitations imposed by their status, freedmen modeled these basic principles of citizenship for others engaged in the process of becoming Roman.
Throughout, I hope to show that freedmen were integral to the evolution of Roman ideology, particularly under the Principate, when definitions of self, community, power, and honor all transformed within the currents of political change. Slaves and *liberti* did not simply offer a mirror in which members of the elite could interrogate their own values – although that, too, was a widespread phenomenon; rather, this social group contributed actively to Roman culture by representing themselves and each other in ways that both adopted traditional forms and responded to a specific set of social and legal conditions. Finding agency in subjugation was an art perfected by the servile orders and communicated through epigraphical monuments to members of the Roman elite, who, upon the rise of monarchy, had all the more reason to listen.

To say that Rome was a slave society is to acknowledge that slavery profoundly affected every aspect of its history, from economic development to ideology. With the help of the epigraphical record and the techniques of close reading, we are able to examine another dimension of this problem – namely, the evolution of cultural frameworks through a dialogue between social groups at the core of the empire. As Buckland once wrote in reference to Roman law, “There is scarcely a problem which can present itself, in any branch of the law, the solution of which may not be affected by the fact that one of the parties to the transaction is a slave, and, outside the region of procedure, there are few branches of the law in which the slave does not prominently appear.” Here I propose taking a similar approach to Roman cultural history by exploring the influence of slaves and freedmen, not just because these juridical categories existed but because the people that belonged to them generated a discourse about social values that was distinct to their shared experience. To be sure, former slaves represent only one level of the

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89 Buckland 1908, v.
status hierarchy, but their unique role in Roman social and political life placed them in a particularly advantageous position to communicate with and be heard by the ruling orders. The strength of ex-slaves’ epigraphical habit was both a product and a cause of their ability to participate in elite discourse while preserving the qualities that distinguished them as a subculture within Roman culture. Understanding these processes in their full complexity will help to shed further light on the ways in which Roman values took shape in the crucible of the Roman slave system.
**Chapter 2: Immortal Virtues**

*Sed fulgente trahit constrictos gloria curru non minus ignotos generosis.*

— Horace, *Satires*, 1.6.23–4

In a world with conflicting views of the afterlife, high mortality rates, and intense competition for honor and resources, establishing one’s name in the common memory was a highly coveted goal. Monuments – whether literary or epigraphical – were the primary vehicles for this type of immortality. Among members of the office-holding elite, having one’s *res gestae* enshrined in a work of literature or inscribed on a statue base represented a pinnacle of civic achievement. Regardless of status, moreover, funerary inscriptions promised to safeguard the *nomina* of those who could afford even a modest burial. Thus, many epitaphs claim to preserve the memory of the deceased, and tombs are regularly figured as the soul’s *domus aeterna*. In these ways, the broad arc of Rome’s commemorative culture offered to people of various backgrounds the opportunity to transform individual and communal identities into artefacts that would endure for the foreseeable future.

Such acts of commemoration were indicators of personal agency, both for the men and women whose accomplishments were being depicted, and for the author of the *monumentum*;

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90 This is, of course, not to suggest that the impetus to commemorate the dead was specific to Roman society, but rather to say that its intensity and modes of expression were conditioned by cultural context; see, for example, Carroll 2006, 1–29. Carroll’s valuable study focuses on Western Europe, and for Roman funerary commemoration more generally, Toynbee 1971 remains fundamental. Also see Hinard 1987 and 1995; Von Hesberg – Zanker 1987; Heinzelmann 2001; and, with emphasis on social structure and demographics, Morris 1992.


94 Carroll 2006, 28.
often, these were one and the same.\textsuperscript{95} Cicero, for example, speaks directly to these concerns in a letter to the historian L. Lucceius:\textsuperscript{96}

\smallskip
\footnotesize
\begin{center}
\begin{quote}
\ldots neque autem ego sum ita demens, ut me sempiternae gloriae per eum commendari velim, qui non ipse quoque in me commendando propriam ingenii gloriam consequatur.
\end{quote}
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Nor am I so mad as to wish to be entrusted to undying glory by someone who does not also pursue, by praising me, the glory that rightfully belongs to his talent.

The fame that Cicero derives from political action – in his case, the resolution of the Catilinarian conspiracy – finds an analogue in the renown that Lucceius will achieve by producing a work of lasting value. Political power and literary skill combine to generate immortal glory. What is more, although self-praise was not the ideal, Cicero’s decision to write his own epic \textit{De consulatu suo} strengthens the link between public office and rhetorical skill found elsewhere in his oeuvre.\textsuperscript{97}

When we consider other social groups, particularly slaves and \textit{liberti}, it becomes clear that the ways in which individuals sought to commemorate themselves and each other were profoundly conditioned by status. Whereas men like Cicero could secure lasting acclaim by demonstrating \textit{honos} and \textit{virtus} in a political context, enslavement largely destroyed one’s capacity to partake of this value system.\textsuperscript{98} By necessity, then, slaves and freedmen legitimated their commemorative acts by appealing to modes of self-definition that were more readily available to them – notably, as I will argue, by integrating an ethos of obedient service with more positive constructions of agency based on the performance of labor.\textsuperscript{99} Members of other social

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{Conspicuously, in the case of Augustus’ \textit{Res Gestae}; see Lowrie 2007. Agency is the ability to act in the world; but its specific manifestations in a society depend on the relationship between self and community, among other factors. Here I categorize the dimensions of agency in the Roman world according to the contexts in which its impact could be realized – political, social, material/economic, discursive – thus making it roughly synonymous with power, control, and authority. This is not to deny, however, that the precise meanings of all of these words are contested.}
\footnote{Cic. \textit{Fam.} 5.12.6.}
\footnote{On the orator as ideal citizen, see Connolly 2007; Dugan 2005.}
\footnote{Patterson 1982, 10–12 and 77–101.}
\footnote{On occupational identity, see Joshel 1992, esp. 49–61, 78–85 and 124–45.}
\end{footnotes}
strata, particularly freeborn women, sometimes sought to combine deference with industriousness as a path to immortality, but this strategy was particularly well developed among the slave and freed population and found heightened expression in that group’s epigraphical habit.

Like many aspects of servile culture, this approach to monumentality provided a model for the negotiation of other types of power relationship that proliferated through Roman society.\textsuperscript{100} The importance of finding a productive balance between respect for hierarchy and the exercise of one’s own volition had always been a problem for the Roman elite but became especially pronounced after the rise of Augustus, when traditional avenues by which to achieve civic honor were reoriented around the figure of the \textit{princeps}.\textsuperscript{101} In this context, I will suggest, Tacitus and other imperial authors treat the question of how to achieve immortality under a monarch in ways that correlate with the methods employed by slaves and freedmen. For the highest echelons of Roman society, the most effective path to glory now lay in the same combination of activity and obedience, \textit{industria} and \textit{obsequium}, that had been pursued by slaves and freed slaves for centuries.

\section*{2.1 Slave and Freed Virtues}

The valuation of deference and occupational skill in the commemorative culture of slaves and \textit{liberti} derived in large part from the demands of the Roman slave system and the ideologies

\textsuperscript{100} Fitzgerald 2000, 59–86.  
on which it depended. Freedmen were expected to follow a standard of conduct different from that which applied to freeborn adult males and freeborn women and children (although the divergences were less pronounced in these two latter cases, and we will see that the question of gender adds another layer of complexity to the whole problem). The definition of slaves as dishonored, cowardly, weak, and childlike had important implications after manumission, which left ex-slaves in a position of continued dependency and subordination that was stronger and more embedded in family structure than was the relationship between patrons and freeborn clients. As has been recently argued, the Roman ideology of slave-owning accounted for the crossing of status boundaries inherent in the manumission process by constructing the libertus as free but still inferior to those who had never undergone servitude, as the bearer of a macula servitutis. In principle, masters were supposed to free only those slaves who had matured sufficiently to participate in the civitas, but the quasi-familial nature of the patron-freedman relationship ensured at least the ideal of continued oversight at the individual level. Although Roman law did specify several measures by which patrons could control their liberti, social ideology proved even more powerful in inculcating certain modes of behavior among the freed population by constructing the ‘good’ freedman as loyal, industrious, and respectful of social limits.

102 The appreciation for combined loyalty and industriousness is reflected in technical writing and imaginative literature alike; e.g., Lucilius’ epitaph for his slave, Metrophanes (579f. Marx: Servus neque infidus domino neque inutilis quanquam/ Lucili columella hic situs Metrophanes). See Bradley (1984, 21–6) on masters’ concern for efficiency, particularly in agricultural writing, and 33–45 on obsequium; Vogt (1975, 129–45) on faithful slaves’ moral significance.

103 Intersections of slavery and gender in classical antiquity has been explored from a number of angles by the papers collect in Joshel – Murnaghan 2001.

104 The limits of manumission were not specific to Rome, as Patterson’s survey shows (1982, 240–7). On the importance of the patron-libertas relationship in constricting former slaves’ freedom but also providing a means of support, see Mouritsen 2011 (esp. pp. 36–65); and Bradley 1984, 81.


106 On the extent of patrons’ legal rights, see Mouritsen 2011, 56; and Treggiari (1969, 68–81) on legal particulars under the Republic.
These expectations were articulated in terms of specific virtues. Most important were *obsequium* and *fides*, both of which focused on the freedman’s continued obligation to his former master and functioned best in conjunction with *industria*. The juridical sources do not offer a precise definition of *obsequium*, but rather use the term to refer to a general sense of deference owed by ex-slaves to their patrons. This concept could be expressed by a range of words in the same semantic field – for example *reverentia*, *officium*, *modestia*, and *pietas* – all of which describe modes of conduct considered proper among freedmen with regard to those who had granted them the ‘gift’ of freedom. The ideal of obedience also manifested itself in a range of practical regulations, including the restriction of freedmen’s ability to bring legal action against patrons. Moreover, although many freedmen were required by contract to perform certain duties for their patrons (*operae*), the concept of *obsequium* encompassed a broader set of attitudes and behaviors that worked to define the ‘good’ freedman, versus the ‘bad’ *libertus ingratus*.

Similarly, *fides* focused on a freedman’s commitment to his former master and highlighted the importance of the patron-freedman relationship as the foundation of Roman manumission. The high valuation of this quality in *liberti* was to a large degree carried over from slavery, as the exemplary stories of loyal slaves recorded by Valerius Maximus in his *Facta et dicta memorabilia* demonstrate. Often, such exemplary slaves appear in accounts of a crisis that has befallen their master, especially in the midst of civil war or during the reign of a tyrannical emperor; and by deviating from the standard assumption that slaves were ignoble and

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108 *Dig.* 37.15 and 38.2.1; see, for example, Watson 1967, 227–9 and Gardner 1993, 23–5.
109 Gardner 1993, 23; on manumission as a gift exchange, see Patterson 1982, 211–18.
111 For a detailed discussion of the public discourse concerning the ‘good’ and ‘bad’ freedman, see Mouritsen 2011, 58–65.
112 Treggiari 1969, 81; Mouritsen 2011, 61; Patterson 1982, 243; Fabre 1981, 224–38
113 Val. Max. 6.8.
could not be trusted, these stories worked to emphasize, and in some ways to contain, the chaos brought about by conflict within the nobility.\textsuperscript{114}

The Romans’ appreciation of obedience and fidelity in slaves and freedmen went hand in hand with the valuation of industry, diligence, and vocational skill. One recent discussion has rightly pointed out that Cicero’s praise of his freedman Tiro gave primacy to \textit{fidelitas} but tied that quality very closely to the skills that made Tiro such a valuable servant.\textsuperscript{115} Without loyalty, patrons would have been able to make little use of freedmen’s services, but the effective performance of those services was also critical to determining the benefits to be extracted from this relationship. Likewise, when the Senate commended Pallas for praetorian honors, they singled out both \textit{fides} and \textit{industria} as virtues that could be emulated by future custodians of the emperor’s affairs.\textsuperscript{116} Overall, we see in the Roman ideology of slave-owning an intensified relationship between the social dynamics represented by \textit{fides} and \textit{obsequium} and the virtue of industry in the performance of labor: \textsuperscript{117}

\begin{quote}
The construction of specific libertine qualities reflected the notion that they realized their potential for virtue differently from freeborn male citizens; essentially it happened through fidelity and hard work rather than valor and independent action. Modesty, discipline, and obedience were their fundamental qualities, and striving for those virtues that were reserved for the freeborn, especially those related to war and politics, meant going beyond the natural limits entailed by their separate nature.
\end{quote}

From a top-down perspective, the inculcation of deference as a standard of conduct ensured that ex-slaves’ hard work and diligence would provide the greatest possible profit where former masters were concerned. Practical and economic concerns thus found expression and reinforcement in the moral discourse about \textit{liberti}.

\textsuperscript{114} Parker 1998, 153; examples of slaves are collected and analyzed on pp. 156–63.
\textsuperscript{115} Mouritsen 2011, 61.
\textsuperscript{116} Plin. \textit{Ep}. 8.6.6: \textit{singularis fidei, singularis industriae}. For a more thorough discussion of Pallas’ honors with relevant bibliography, see below pp. 76–82.
\textsuperscript{117} Mouritsen 2011, 64. This statement is meant as a general observation on Roman values produced by Mouritsen’s synchronic approach to the ancient evidence on freedmen. I am concerned in this chapter to explore how the relationship between ‘libertine’ and ‘elite’ virtues may have shifted under the principate; but I take his conclusion as a point of departure for more detailed analysis.
To be sure, such ideals did not exist solely to structure relations between slaves and masters or freedmen and patrons. They were present to some degree in the norms which regulated interactions between children and parents, wives and husbands, soldiers and commanders, patrons and freeborn clients, and even among persons of the same social status.\textsuperscript{118} So, too, were ties between individuals and the state or men and gods often couched in these terms. In the case of \textit{obsequium}, for instance, the main section of the \textit{Digest} that treats this issue is entitled “De obsequiis parentibus et patronis praestandis,” a formulation that places parents and patrons in parallel with one another.\textsuperscript{119} Similarly, stories of loyal slaves and loyal wives were two closely related strands of the Roman discourse about power where it crossed the axes of status and gender.\textsuperscript{120} As the existence of the proverb “\textit{Obsequium amicos, veritas odium parit}” makes clear, this type of behavior could even be envisioned as taking place among persons of the same social rank, if perhaps at different levels of authority as encompassed by the terminology of \textit{amicitia}.\textsuperscript{121} \textit{Fides}, on the other hand, was integral to the institution of patronage among the freeborn, as well as to Roman political ideals as they developed through the Republic and Empire.\textsuperscript{122}

In light of such correspondences, it has been suggested that freedmen were not associated with a specific vocabulary of virtues, but several considerations militate against this conclusion.\textsuperscript{123} In the first place, as has been observed, broader patterns and combinations are more telling than individual instances, and “\textit{fides} was the pivotal virtue, to which came industry, 

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\textsuperscript{118} In military contexts, for example, the expectation of obedience could sometimes be deemed so extreme that soldiers protested their continued service as a type of enslavement; e.g., Tac. \textit{Ann.} 1.17–18.
\textsuperscript{119} \textit{Dig}. 37.15. On \textit{pietas} and \textit{obsequium} in the nuclear family, see Saller 1994, 102–114.
\textsuperscript{120} For a detailed discussion of this phenomenon, see Parker 1998.
\textsuperscript{121} Ter. \textit{Andr.} 68; cf. Cic. \textit{Amic.} 88–9; on the history of the proverb, see N’Diaye 2005.
\textsuperscript{122} On \textit{fides} in political discourse, see Hellegouarc’h 1963; on \textit{fides} and origins of patronage vis-à-vis those of manumission, see Rouland 1979, 95–107.
\textsuperscript{123} Blänsdorf 2001 (on Cicero, in particular).
modesty, and frugality.”

Although these qualities were not valued in freedmen alone, they were embedded in the institution of slavery in ways that made them qualitatively different for persons of freed status than for ingenui. In contrast to the relationship between freeborn clients and patrons, that between liberti and former masters was based on a pre-existing imbalance of power into which the libertus had entered against his will. Not only was the fides owed by a freedman to his patron compulsory, the language of friendship with which Romans sought to downplay the discrepancies in status between patrons and freeborn clients had no correlate in the discourse of slavery. Ex-slaves’ familial bond with their former masters and their continued involvement in the economic life of the household also helped to define the spectrum of attitudes and behaviors according to which they were evaluated in the eyes of slave-owners. The resultant combination of virtues—with fides and obsequium closely tied to industria—carried unique significance in its application to freedmen.

Traditional aristocratic values such as military prowess and political honor hardly ever entering the discourse on the ‘good’ libertus. To the contrary, slaves and freedmen were barred from serving in the legions except in unusual circumstances or in supporting roles as rowers, grooms, or personal attendants. When liberti did take on roles of political prominence, our sources usually describe them as having exceeded the bounds of their status. However, if

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125 Even in the earliest stages of development, a fundamental difference existed between manumission and clientage; see Rouland 1979, 102: La condition romaine de libertus, envisagée comme destinée à purger un <<lignage>> du vice de l’esclavage, est unique dans l’histoire sociale, et répondant aux impératifs d’une mentalité fortement aristocratique. La situation est très différente pour le lien de clientele entre particuliers qui est, lui, le résultat d’un engagement de caractère contractuel.
126 On amicitia, see Saller 1982, 11–15. If anything, the use of servus for libertus suggests an opposite tendency in the terminology; see below, p. 129.
127 E.g., the case of Pallas, on which see below, pp. 72–82.
freedmen went about their lives with the proper blend of energy, skill, and obedience, they stood to receive acknowledgment from even the most disparaging of Latin writers.128

These aspects of Rome’s ideology of slaveholding are well documented in the literary sources, but their effect on servile culture is worthy of further inquiry. On the basis of epigraphical texts, I will argue that slaves and freedmen construed this unique combination of virtues as a highly effective path to immortality, as achieved through funerary commemoration. By highlighting loyalty and industry, obedience and professional skill, as qualities that legitimated the perpetuation of individual identities in the common memory, liberti articulated a cultural response to their social conditions that was (for better or worse) highly pragmatic. Yet more than simply reiterating values imposed from above, slave and freed commemorators transformed existing social norms into qualities that supported the construction of positive and lasting fama. Thus, despite being a product of enslavement and its attendant social constraints, slaves’ and freed slaves’ approach to monumentality presented a model of how to produce and legitimate individual memory from a position of severe disempowerment and, in so doing, set a precedent for the Roman elite when they came under the reign of a princeps.

Economic concerns played a significant role in this process, not least because the material rewards that ensued if a freedman adhered to the principles of hard work and deference would have provided the funds necessary to purchase a monument. Here, it is crucial not to think only of Trimalchio, the fictional libertus whose immense wealth finds expression in an elaborate funerary monument that he conjures up at his dinner party.129 Rather, as one study concluded, “while not all Romans were commemorated after death, memorial stones were within the means of modest men, many of whom felt a strong impulse to preserve their own memories or those of

129 Petr. 71; on the importance of avoiding “Trimalchio vision,” see especially, Petersen 2003 and 2006.
Although not all freedmen acquired even modest means, the continued security and guidance offered by the quasi-familial relationship between patrons and freedmen improved ex-slaves’ chances of succeeding in business. And in the world of funerary commemoration, it was freed slaves and their descendents (not heirs or freeborn clients) who were regularly charged with the upkeep and continued use of a family tomb, as demarcated by the formula *libertis libertabusque posterisque eorum* found so commonly in the epigraphical record. By contrast, the freeborn poor lacked easy access to start-up capital and other forms of support, as well as the resultant ability to commemorate, although they may not have been subject to the same level of social subordination, even in the role of a client. Although these observations do not explain completely ex-slaves’ remarkable epigraphical habit, they do point toward a set of economic factors that would have combined with this group’s unique social position to create an identifiable subculture within Rome’s broader culture of commemoration.

### 2.2 The Tomb of the Baker

The tomb of M. Vergilius Eurysaces will help to clarify some of these issues before we proceed to a more extensive analysis of the epigraphical evidence. Still visible today outside the Porta Maggiore in Rome, this monument has become an icon of freed slaves’ commemorative behavior. Although one scholar has recently questioned the assumption that Eurysaces was a

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130 Saller – Shaw 1984, 128 (with bibliography).
132 On patronal relations among the freeborn, see especially Saller 1982, 7–40; Rouland 1979.
133 Rossetto 1973; Brandt 1993.
*libertus*, it would be perverse to deny that most ancient viewers would have interpreted the Greek *cognomen* as a sign of servile origin, especially in the case of a baker.\(^{134}\) The tomb comprises a trapezoid of travertine block that originally stood about 33 feet above street level; according to the current *communis opinio*, it dates from the second half of the first century BCE.\(^{135}\) Three of the four sides are intact. Each contains a bottom level of columns and pilasters, followed by a narrow panel with a dedicatory inscription that names Eurysaces in his capacity as baker, contractor and, according to one reading, public servant: *est hoc monumentum Marcei Vergilei Eurysacis pistoris redemptoris appellant* [apparitor].\(^{136}\) The middle level consists of a large panel framed by pilasters and punctuated by rows of circular openings, which have been persuasively identified as kneading machines.\(^{137}\) These references to the deceased’s commercial activities are complemented by a frieze that depicts a large-scale bakery at various stages in the production process. Above the frieze are a cornice and pediment that mimic the architecture of a free-standing building.

Although reconstructions of the monument vary, these features may have been augmented by a full-length portrait and a second inscription, both discovered near the tomb and attributed to its fourth face. The portrait shows a togate man and palliate woman standing next to

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\(^{134}\) Petersen 2003. On the preponderance of slaves and freedmen among epigraphically attested *pistores*, see Fujisawa 1995, 176; Sirks 1991, 308. Trimalchio, moreover, is not the only indication that a tradesman with a Greek *cognomen* would have been placed in the mental category of a *libertus*; see, e.g., Cic. *Off.* 1.150 (ec enim quicquam ingenuum habere potest officina).

\(^{135}\) For a review of the debate about dating, see Brandt 1993, 13.

\(^{136}\) *CIL* 6.1203–5 = ILS 7460a-c = ILLRP 850. The reading of *apparet* as an abbreviation for *apparitoris* is supported by Coarelli 1980 and Petersen 2003, 230, 249 and n. 2; the most commonly accepted alternative is to take *apparet* as a form of *apparere*, thus rendering the translation “This is the tomb of Marcus Vergilius Eurysaces – it is obvious,” *pace* Rossetto 1973, 36; Brandt 1993, 14–15. I follow the former reading because it fits into the format of an occupational *cursus*; however, the verb *apparere* would add emphasis to the visual puns discussed below, and the possibility of an intentionally ambiguous reading need not be eliminated.

\(^{137}\) Rossetto 1973, 34.
each other; their heads are turned inward, probably to show that they are husband and wife.\textsuperscript{138} The epitaph celebrates a marital bond:\textsuperscript{139}

\begin{quote}
Fuit Atistia uxor mihei
femina opituma veixsit
quoios corporis reliquiae
quod superant sunt in
hoc panario.
\end{quote}

Atistia was my wife, an excellent woman during her lifetime; what remains of her body is in this breadbasket.

The archaizing language and reference to a “breadbasket” strongly suggest an association with the extant monument of Eurysaces. Whether or not the portrait and epitaph were displayed together on the face of the tomb remains open to question; but any reading of the overall composition must take these elements into account.

If we follow this reconstruction, the visual and epigraphical program of Eurysaces’ tomb establishes a progression from slavery to citizenship that ancient viewers would easily have associated with the model of a slave who cultivates his master’s favor to acquire freedom and, eventually, money and influence.\textsuperscript{140} In the first place, Eurysaces’ epitaph traces his ascent to a

\textsuperscript{138} Kleiner 1977, 22–5.
\textsuperscript{139} CIL 12.1206 = MNR Inv. 72876; Friggeri 2001, 63; De Rosalia 1972, 60.
\textsuperscript{140} Again, cf. Petersen 2003 and 2006 for arguments against the overwhelming influence of Trimalchio on contemporary scholarship on “freedman art.” While important, this point does not negate the fact that Petronius’ treatment of \textit{liberti} offers insight into how the beliefs and practices of this social group would have been viewed by the imperial elite.
position of importance in the community by listing three occupational titles that imply different levels of involvement with the means of production. The first, *pistor*, refers to the actual work of milling and baking; as such, it may be found on the monuments of slaves who performed these tasks in large households, as well as private and imperial freedmen. *Redemptor*, however, indicates that the deceased held contracts, probably for grinding flour or baking bread at a fixed rate, and the appearance on the West frieze of several togate figures overseeing the weighing of bread and usually identified as public officials supports the interpretation that these contracts were held with the state. Whatever the specific terms of his service, this title creates distance between Eurysaces and the actual bread-making—a distance which, for many successful *liberti*, would have attended the shift from slavery to freedom, or from apprenticeship to managerial status. Finally, if *apparat* is in fact an abbreviation of *apparitor*, we have travelled even further from manual labor into the realm of public service. These administrative positions, which *liberti* and other upwardly mobile citizens were able to attain through ties of patronage, signaled not only achievement in the civic sphere, but also increased opportunities for freeborn offspring. On this reading, Eurysaces’ progression from laborer, to contractor, to *apparitor* represents his fulfillment of the terms of his servitude, as well as the fruits of his own productive energies.

Although it is too easy to assimilate Eurysaces to the fictitious and overly stereotyped freedmen in the *Satyricon*, the baker and his literary associates appear to give special attention to the movement from a status in which one labors under compulsion to one in which the community at large stands to benefit. These transitions are marked in inscriptions by titles and other formulae, and Petronius’ depiction of freedmen’s careers can only be taken as an indication

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143 Petersen 2003, 244 and 249, n. 112.
144 Horsfall 1983.
that he and his elite readers were likely to have comprehended the extent to which freed culture valued these changes in the individual life course. Nevertheless, the parallels between Eurysaces’ epitaph and the Petronian narrative are suggestive. Trimalchio’s biographical wall-painting, which Encolpius views on his way into the house, depicts the wealthy ex-slave’s ascent from trainee to *dispensator.* In the broader context of the *Cena,* this scene works to show how freedmen’s occupational skill was the motivating factor in their acquisition of *otium,* though Petronian satire overtly denigrates ex-slaves’ claims to an aristocratic lifestyle based on landed wealth and literary sophistication.

From this perspective, the inscription on Eurysaces’ tomb offers a gloss on the monument’s three surviving friezes, which are usually understood as demonstrations of the deceased’s pride in his work or as a celebration of his service to the state. The north frieze is shown here as an example of the monument’s iconographical style:

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145 Petr. 29: hinc quemadmodum ratiocinari didicisset, deinque dispensator factus esset...
146 Petr. 30: Et quod praecipue miratus sum, in postibus triclinii fasces erant cum securibus fixi, quorum imam partem quasi embolum navis aeneum finiebat, in quo erat scriptum: C. POMPEIO TRIMALCHIONI SEVIRO AVGVSTALI CINAMVS DISPENSATOR.
Throughout a series of scenes such as this one, workers in tunics (presumably slaves) carry out the tasks of grinding and sifting the flour, then kneading, baking, and weighing the bread. Their dynamic poses create a strong sense of activity, which each panel’s orderly composition in turn helps to contain.

Togate figures supervise the work – whether as representations of Eurysaces, his managerial staff, or as public officials. Modern commentators usually choose between these disparate options; but in the interest of appreciating the tomb’s multivalency, I would suggest that all of the characters, including the slaves, symbolize a particular stage in Eurysaces’ (auto)biography, as delineated by the inscription. The obedient, yet highly productive, workers demonstrate how such a combination of passive and active qualities might lead out of slavery into freedom, which is embodied by the men wearing togas. The potential significance of these latter figures as Eurysaces, his free employees, or state officials articulates a second level of ascent from entrepreneurship to civic involvement. Eurysaces’ movement through this hierarchy mirrors a shift from forms of personal agency manifest in labor and wealth, to those embedded in the civic sphere. Even more crucially, this progression is depicted in a simultaneous assertion of deference and industriousness that led to the construction of an expensive monument that will preserve the deceased’s name for posterity.

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149 Rossetto (1973, 56) supports the identification of central togate figures with Eurysaces; but on the multivalency of the images, see Petersen 2003, 245. I share her opinion that not all viewers would have been compelled to identify a single figure as the deceased, and that all possible interpretations must be taken into account. My analysis pushes back toward a biographical interpretation by suggesting that the different figures, while not necessarily meant to be Eurysaces himself, symbolize a stage of his life course.

150 Freedmen’s willingness to embrace their servile past is discussed in detail in ch. 4.
2.3 A FREEDMAN’S GUIDE TO FAMA

One might argue that Eurysaces’ patron is absent from his burial monument and therefore that the ideal of obsequium does not apply in this case, but if we read the iconography as a biographical continuum, the quality of obedience plays a significant role in the characterization of the deceased. As we move to a more comprehensive analysis, we will find that other inscriptions are quite explicit in their veneration of servile virtues as a means to immortality, especially in cases where such words as fama, nomen, gloria, and memoria call attention to the monument’s role as a vehicle for the perpetuation of memory. In the following discussion, I focus on monuments that refer directly to fama, a term selected for its complex epigraphical usage, literary history, and association with popular speech and communal judgment – all of which recommend the concept as a window into how Roman commemorative culture evolved through the interaction between social groups.\(^{151}\) A review of inscriptions that refer directly to fama will show how epigraphical approaches to memory were shaped by social hierarchies and, further, how freed slaves in particular combined the virtues of deference and vocational skill to mold their eternal personae.

By way of introduction, it is important to recall that the word fama embraced a wide range of meanings, from reputation and renown to rumor, report, and tradition. A fragment from Ennius’ Achilles is sometimes taken as evidence that fama originally carried a pejorative nuance, while gloria was the product of virtue.\(^{152}\) In the same vein, Cicero criticizes fama popularis for being a paltry imitation of the truly noble qualities of gloria and honestas; and Republican...

\(^{151}\) On fama in general, see Neubauer 1998; Néraudau 1993; Hardie 2002a and 2012 (non vidi). Roller (2004) emphasizes the importance of the judgment of the community in the creation of exempla. For one account of how this may have developed under the Empire, see Bartsch 2006.

authors tend not to use *fama* in a positive sense without a qualifying epithet like *bonus*.\textsuperscript{153} This tradition is adopted, famously, by Virgil’s horrid personification of Rumor in Book 4 of the *Aeneid*, a swift and towering monster “who for each feather on her body had as many watchful eyes beneath (amazing to say!) as many tongues, as many mouths speaking, as many ears pricked up to listen.”\textsuperscript{154} Perhaps even more tellingly, the adjective *famosus* did not develop a laudatory sense of ‘famous’ or ‘renowned’ until the imperial period.\textsuperscript{155}

One attractive explanation for the primordial baseness of *fama* in the Roman literary imagination relies on its association with popular discourse. Persons of high rank who sought to distance themselves from the masses (so the theory continues) differentiated *fama* from more securely aristocratic terms like *gloria*, *laus*, *honos*, and *nomen*. Already by the time of the elder Cato, moreover, our sources begin to reveal a heightened awareness of *fama*’s utility in the political sphere. This aspect of *fama* becomes even more striking during the late Republic, when civil war demonstrated with savage accuracy the self-destructive potential of a system that allowed individuals to manipulate popular opinion in the interests of acquiring personal power.\textsuperscript{156}

This schematic interpretation of *fama*’s development relies heavily on the literary record. Yet a close inspection of how *fama* was used in commemorative and honorific inscriptions will do much to complicate this picture. First, monuments set up by and for freeborn aristocrats as early as the Tomb of the Scipios show that *fama* did not always require qualification to signify a noble personality trait. In these instances, a positive definition of *fama* was implied through association with such aristocratic values as ancestry, civic participation and – for women

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\textsuperscript{153} Cic. *Tusc*. 3.2.4.
\textsuperscript{154} *Aen*. 4.181–3: cui quot sunt corpore plumae,/ tot vigiles oculi subter (mirabile dictu),/ tot linguae, totidem oras sonant, tot subrigit auris.
\textsuperscript{155} Néraudau 1993.
\textsuperscript{156} Néraudau 1993; Habinek 2000, 268–9.
especially – restraint and familial piety.\textsuperscript{157} These definitions of \textit{fama} reflect the sentiment behind Sallust’s praise of former generations of Romans who considered military achievement, not material gain, to be the foundation of \textit{bona fama} and \textit{magna nobilitas}.\textsuperscript{158} Second, as I will argue, the epigraphical culture of slaves and freedmen allowed for the articulation of a different sort of \textit{fama}, one that derived not from lineage or civic honor but from the combination of obedience to one’s master and the industrious performance of labor.

These patterns, which we will explore in detail momentarily, emerge when we analyze the virtues that attend references to \textit{fama} in burial inscriptions with particular attention to the commemorand’s social rank.\textsuperscript{159} While quantitative results from such a small sample do not attain statistical significance, the distribution across status groups of virtues appearing in tandem with \textit{fama} are nevertheless highly suggestive.\textsuperscript{160}

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\textsuperscript{157} On the aristocracy’s monopoly of the definition of honor, see Lendon 1997, 90 and 103. On honor and shame in the culture of aristocratic imagines, see Flower 1996, 14–15.

\textsuperscript{158} Sall. \textit{Cat.} 7.6.

\textsuperscript{159} My conclusions regarding the treatment of \textit{fama} are based on an analysis of 34 inscriptions drawn from the major corpora for Rome and Italy. Among these, three commemorate slaves; 16 attest definite or probable liberti; eight freeborn men; and 7 freeborn women. Excluded from the immediate analysis are 22 inscriptions attesting incerti and two erected for official display. Twenty-nine Christian epitaphs have also been excluded because of the need to evaluate these texts specifically in terms of Christians views of the afterlife; some points of potential relevance have been noted, however. In almost every case, the epigraphical meaning of \textit{fama} is fundamentally positive, but nuances vary between the reputation enjoyed during one’s lifetime and eternal glory achieved after death. The only negative use of \textit{fama} appears in the verse epitaph of a four-year-old boy named Telephus, whose parents were deceived by the “\textit{maxima/ mendacis fama mathematici}” (CIL 6.27140 = CLE 1163). Legal status has no discernible impact on the choice between these alternatives.

\textsuperscript{160} In the following table, “military/civic” virtues include standard municipal, equestrian or senatorial \textit{cursus honorum}, as well as references to military victory or service, priesthhoods and other civic honors. The category of “\textit{pietas}” is restricted to direct citations of the word, while “conjugal” virtues cover praise of a husband or wife as beloved, loyal, \textit{vel sim}. “Other domestic” virtues include non-political qualities that do not apply specifically to a spousal relationship. An inscription was taken to value “deference” when it explicitly praised the deceased’s obedience to a social superior or made this point implicitly by highlighting such a relationship. “Vocational” virtues involve the ability to perform tasks effectively.
As one can see, military and civic achievements such as political or religious office are associated with *fama* in the epitaphs of freeborn male citizens, all of whose memory after death stems from their activity in the public sphere. The single instance of this correlation among freeborn women comes in the so-called *Laudatio Turiae*, when the deceased is praised for political action on behalf of her exiled husband; and two inscriptions link a freedman’s *fama* with euergetism or participation in a trade guild, both of which can be defined as pertaining to the civic realm. On the other hand, while conjugal and other domestic virtues are popular across status groups, the citation of qualities related to deference toward one’s superiors and to the ability to perform one’s vocation is restricted almost exclusively to the epitaphs of *liberti*. This latter combination defines freed slaves’ approach to the construction of *fama* in commemorative discourse and, as we will see through further examination, becomes an important model for the elite, which was faced with imperial power under the Principate.

The inscriptions promoting the *fama* of freeborn male citizens provide an immediate point of comparison for scholarly arguments that have focused almost exclusively on literary usage. Some of these texts need no introduction. For example, the *elogium* of P. Scipio, probably a son of the elder Africanus, includes *fama* in a series of virtues that are presented as having been shortened by early death.161

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Quae apice insignis Dial[is f]ilaminis gesistei
mors perfect[u] tua ut essent omnia
brevia, honos, fama virtusque
gloria atque ingeniun quibus sei
in longa licu[i]sset tibi uter vita,
facile superasses gloriam
maiorum…
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161 ILLRP 311 (Rome, mid-second century BCE). The first line was a later addition, perhaps at the behest of Aemilianus. I am interested specifically in the use of *fama* in the original epitaph, but for other readings see Moir 1986 and 1988; Tatum 1988; Flower 1996, 166–70.
For you who wore the distinctive cap of the Flamen Dialis, your death caused everything to be short – honor, *fama*, virtue, glory, and character; and if you had been allowed to use these things over the course of a long life, you easily would have surpassed the glory of your ancestors.

Rather than activate the contrast between *fama* and *gloria* attested by Ennius and others, this inscription associates Scipio’s reputation with other noble qualities cultivated during his lifetime – and does so without the use of *bonus* or another adjective. This shows that *fama* could in fact carry a positive nuance, even among the highest echelons of Roman society in the early second century BCE. In contrast to the anxiety about *fama* that has been observed in the literature of this period, this text attests a strand of thought that acknowledged the capacity of ‘reputation’ to contribute to individual glory.

In addition to demonstrating the laudatory capacity of *fama* in elite commemorative inscriptions, Scipio’s epitaph binds the word to other key values among the nobility at this time. If death had not cut short his career, the deceased would have risen to the heights of civic achievements, or so his commemorator would wish to imagine. *Fama* is placed seamlessly between *honos* and *virtus* (line 3) and is followed just as elegantly by *gloria* and *ingenium* (4). This list provides a nearly flawless account of the conventional ideology of achievement and leads directly to a citation of the hallowed idea that one ought to imitate and surpass the exempla provided by one’s noble ancestry. In these ways, Scipio’s epitaph embeds *fama* in the fundamental tenets of exemplarity and elite competition in the civic sphere.

The close relationship that *fama* enjoyed with virtue, talent and the *cursus honorum* likewise emerges with particular strength from two other epitaphs that apply this term to freeborn male citizens. One commemorates an equestrian from Rome named M. Ulpius Maximus, *cuius*...
fama in eterna nota est (second century CE).\textsuperscript{163} The other celebrates M. Sentius Redemptus, who received a public statue from the people of Interamna ad perpetuam famam in 408 CE.\textsuperscript{164} In Maximus’ epitaph, fama appears in conjunction with the deceased’s civic role, as a priest of the Lupercal, and his happy marriage. Likewise, Redemptus’ statute base commemorates civic involvement, this time in the form of a subvention for the onerous chrysargyrion and restoration of a bath complex. Although this text is rather late for our purposes, it does suggest that the fama of local aristocrats – while clearly dependent on their financial contributions to the community – was expressed in terms that emphasized the impact of their wealth, rather than the means by which they maintained it.\textsuperscript{165} This stands in direct contrast to the tendency among freedmen to publicize their dependent relationships and the specific occupations through which they had earned the right to be remembered.

Before looking closely at slaves and liberti, it is worth pausing to reflect upon the fact that freeborn women were also expected to acquire fama through means other than military and political success.\textsuperscript{166} In the first century BCE, for example, the author of the Laudatio Turiae took comfort in his wife’s fama, which she gained by supporting him during the proscriptions; her actions, while carried out in the public sphere, were performed on behalf of her husband – a secondary kind of honor when compared to the cursus honorum.\textsuperscript{167} In another commonly cited

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{163} CIL 6.2160 = ILS 4947; for the date, see Rüpke 2008, no. 3321.
\textsuperscript{165} Giardina (1981, 141) makes the point that Redemptus’ statue benefitted the commercial class, most of all, but was phrased in terms of its relevance to the entire citizen body.
\textsuperscript{166} \textit{Nota bene}: two inscriptions commemorate the same woman, Atilia Pompitilla (CIL 10.7566 and 10.7575).
\textsuperscript{167} CIL 6.1527 and 31670.
\end{footnotesize}
text, the epitaph of a woman named Murdia, the generic quality of female virtue justifies the claim: *satisque sit/ eadem omnes bona fama digna fecisse*.\(^{168}\) Under this umbrella fall Murdia’s *modestia, probitas, pudicitia*, and *diligentia*, as well as *lanificium, fides*, and *opsequium*. These last three qualities, in particular, remind us of the overlap between slaves and wives in the exemplary tradition.\(^{169}\) Thirdly, under the Antonines, an inscription from the tomb of Atilia Pomptilla in Carales suggests that the urn inside *facit ad famae [viven]tibus argumentum*.\(^{170}\)

These epitaphs provide an illuminating comparison to Scipio’s epitaph by demonstrating how elite ideology defined a woman’s *fama* according to conventional domestic virtues and her ability to support her husband in his public role.

An essential quality underlying all of these texts is the commemorand’s *pietas*, the sense of duty and obligation through which women might achieve worthy *fama*. An imperial funerary stele from Campania makes this connection explicit.\(^{171}\)

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Calpurniae L. f.
Severae femina(e)
rarissimae qu(a)e
vixit ann(os) XXIII
m(enses) IIII Viria Prima
mater infelicitis
simm(a) qu(a)e supra e(a)m
vibit fecit filiae
incomparabili
 cuius fama pietas
vibit in aeternum
```

To Calpurnia Severa, daughter of Lucius, a most remarkable woman who lived 23 years and 4 months. Viria Prima, her most unfortunate mother, who survived her, made this for her incomparable daughter, whose *fama* and *pietas* live forever.

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\(^{168}\) CIL 6.10230 = ILS 8394, 9–10 (late first century BCE).

\(^{169}\) Parker 1998.

\(^{170}\) CIL 10.7575.

\(^{171}\) CIL 10.1091 = MANN Inv. 3879 (Nuceria, second to third century CE).
Calpurnia Severa died at age 23 and was commemorated by her mother, Viria Prima, who chose to include in the last two lines of the epitaph the phrase *cuius fama pietas/ vicit in aeternum*. The grammar makes it difficult to know whether *fama* is an ablative of means or another subject of *vicit*, though the latter reading is probably correct. Still, the ambiguity brings out an important point about *fama*’s dual role as an end in itself for freeborn women, and as a vehicle for the perpetuation of memory. Moreover, the close association between a woman’s reputation and her dutifulness toward her family is manifest here in the placement of the words *fama* and *pietas* directly beside one another.

From Scipio’s epitaph to that of Calpurnia Severa, *fama* is used in a positive sense in conjunction with the foundational elements of elite ideology – ancestry, virtue, and political action. Slaves and freedmen, by contrast, were stripped of their family histories and excluded
from the areas of political life that brought the greatest honor to freeborn citizens.\textsuperscript{172} As a result, individuals of servile background can be expected to have identified alternative sources of \textit{fama} according to the channels to which they had access. In particular, as a study of the relevant inscriptions will show, freedmen emphasized not only the support and approval of their patrons, but also the forms of personal agency that were manifest in work and its profits. The skillful integration of both of these elements provided a basis from which to generate authority in commemorative discourse.

One of the clearest examples of the link between \textit{fama} and patronage appears in an epitaph commissioned by Calpurnia Anthis, a freedwoman of Caesar’s wife, for her son, Ikadium, at some point after the dictator’s deification in 42 BCE:\textsuperscript{173}

\begin{quote}
Calpurnia Anthis fecit
dextera fama mihi fuit et fortuna patrona
magnifici coniuxx Caesaris illa dei
qua bene tutus eram caris nec vilis amicis
quis etiam mecum plurima cura fuit
Anthis causa meae vitae quae cara sepulcro
condidit ossa suo nominor Ikadium
\end{quote}

Calpurnia Anthis made this. I was blessed in my \textit{fama}, fortune, and patroness. She was the wife of Caesar, the magnificent divinity, and through her I was kept safe from cares; nor was I of little value to my friends, who cared for me greatly. Anthis was the author of my life; she buried my dear bones in her own tomb. I am called Ikadium.

In the first line of the poem, written in elegiac couplets, Ikadium’s reputation and success in life are represented in close connection to his relationship with his mistress (\textit{dextera fama mihi fuit et fortuna patrona}, line 2).\textsuperscript{174} For slaves and freedmen, belonging to a great household carried a significant amount of prestige, and \textit{fama} here is inseparable from the fact that the deceased’s mistress was the wife of the deified Caesar. In this way, this epitaph stands as a precursor for the

\textsuperscript{172} On these aspects of freed slaves’ citizenship, see above, pp. 6–7 and 9–10.
\textsuperscript{173} CIL 6.14211 = CLE 964 (known from transcriptions); Boyancé 1956.
\textsuperscript{174} Cf. CIL 6.34175, in which Suetrius Hermes is commemorated by his wife Tertia. Two lines in the inscription speak to the nature and source of the commemorand’s \textit{fama} with respect to his service of a divine master, the Christian God: \textit{de cuius fama multi cum laude locuntur;/ quod fuerit cultor domini rerumque et amator}. 

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monuments of imperial freedmen, whose impact on the evolution of ideologies of power under the Principate will be the subject of the next chapter. Even before the rise of monarchy, this inscription makes clear that Calpurnia’s protection, which must have been even more important after Caesar’s assassination, allowed the members of her familia to flourish (qua bene tutus eram, line 4). As Anthis well knew, this benevolence needed to be maintained through displays of gratitude like this inscription.

The posture of deference toward one’s master or patron is commonly attested in burial monuments, aristocratic literature, and Roman legal codes that protected a former owner’s right to collect operaе and obsequium from his freedmen. At the same time, Ikadium’s monument does invest the deceased with a certain level of personal agency, not least in the use of the first-person voice. Parentage and friendship also delineate sources of identity outside the patron-freedman dyad, and Anthis is keen to point out her own role as the causa of her son’s life (line 6). What is more, although fama itself has no intrinsic association with wealth, the epitaph unites this quality with fortuna, a word that often does bear such a nuance. As we see in the case of Trimalchio, the veneration of Fortune was perceived to be an important part of freed culture, in large part because of the material rewards that attended financial success. Likewise, the choice of nec vilis to describe Ikadium’s value to his friends uses language with economic undertones to instantiate the concept of amicitia. These latent allusions to the material

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175 Calpurnia’s marriage to Caesar in 59 BCE preceded his departure for Gaul by less than a year, and while he was away she managed the household. She was also involved in his political activity, attempting to prevent him from going to the Senate on the Ides and delivering his will and other papers to Antony after his death. (For the will, see Plut. Ant. 15; App. BC 2.125. Events on the Ides: Suet. Iul. 81.4; App. BC 2.115; Dio 44.17; Plut. Caes. 63.) Her domestic staff would also have been involved in the tumult, as is illustrated by the story of Calpurnia’s rushing out of the house in grief accompanied by a throng of women and slaves (Nic. Dam. 26 = FrGH 130.26.216: μετὰ πολλοῦ ὀχλοῦ γυναικῶν τε καὶ οἰκετῶν).
177 CIL 10.4167, in which a slave is praised for being amans domini, opseuens amicos.
178 The goddess Fortuna is featured at Trimalchio’s dinner at Petr. 29 (with Mercury), 43 (in Phileros’ speech about Chrysanthus), and 55 (in a bit of doggerel produced by the host), as well as being consistently present in the name of Trimalchio’s wife, Fortunata.
conditions of the deceased’s worldly existence in turn color his *fama*, which derived not just from the status or care of his mistress, but probably also in correlation with the practical gains that were achievable with her support.

In another verse epitaph, from Venafrum, the metaphorical connection between work, wealth, and *fama* comes across even more strongly. This inscription was commissioned for a flute-player named Iustus by his parents, whose names are not given:179

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{D(is) M(anibus) s(acrum)} & \\
\text{Substa, praeccor, paulum festinas ire viator} & \\
\text{et maea post hobitum rogantis concipe verba,} & \\
\text{tale(m) co speres et ipse venire diae(m).} & \\
\text{Iustus ego non patrio, set materno nomine dictus} & \\
\text{paupere patre quidem, set fame divite vixi.} & \\
\text{Tibicinis cantu modulans alterna vocando} & \\
\text{Martios ancentu stimulans gladiantem in arma vocavi;} & \\
\text{qui vixi annis XXI, m(ensibus) XI, d(iebus) XXVIII.} & \\
\text{Iustus ego morte acerba peri. Parentes filio incomparabili.} & \\
\end{align*}
\]

Sacred to the divine shades. Please stop for a moment, traveler, as you hurry along, receive my words as if you had asked me, since you yourself expect such a day to come. I am Iustus, called not by my father’s, but my mother’s *nomen*; indeed, my father was poor, but my *fama* was rich. Playing one pipe, then the other, by calling out with a flute-player’s song, I beckoned Mars’ gladiators to arms as I goaded them on with my signal. I lived 21 years, 11 months, and 29 days. Although my name was Iustus, I died an untimely death. His parents set up this monument for their incomparable son.

The deceased, we read, took his mother’s *nomen* because his father was ‘poor’ (*paupere patre*, line 5); but in light of what we know about Roman naming practices, in addition to the evidence of Iustus’ vocation, *pauper* may well be a euphemism for *servus*.180 Horace twice uses *pauper* to refer to his father’s servile origins rather than the alternative, *libertinus*.181 If this reading of the inscription is correct, the next phrase in the line, *set fame divite vixi*, creates a meaningful opposition between poverty and wealth, or social status and reputation.182 What is more, Iustus’

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179 CIL 10.4915 = ILS 5150 = CLE 1319 (Augustan; see Morra 200, 149).
180 Children of a slave father and freed (or freeborn) mother took their mother’s name.
181 Hor. *Carm.* 2.20.5–6 and 3.30.11.
182 Cf. CIL 11.1122a-b.
parents offer as grounds for his *fama* not an official *cursus honorum*, but a vivid description of his work as a flute-player in the arena (lines 7–8). Flourishes like *modulans alterna* (cf. Verg. *Ecl. 5.14*) and *Martios... gladiantes* imbue these lines with a literary self-consciousness that is reinforced by the concluding pun on the ‘injustice’ of Iustus’ death (line 10). In these ways, the inscription traces the young man’s progression from a humble background to praiseworthy *fama*, and attributes that ascent to his skillful performance of labor. The very depiction of the work demonstrates a high level of discursive engagement.

As the epitaphs of Ikadium and Iustus suggest, slaves and *liberti* developed an approach to *fama* that drew on the unique significance of service and labor to their cultural *milieu*. This willingness to combine acts of deference with assertions of personal agency also features prominently in the epitaph of T. Aelius Faustus, an imperial freedman at Rome in the late second century CE who was most likely in charge of public distributions of oil:

M oribus hic simplex situs
  est Titus Aelius Faustus
A nnis in lucem duode
  triginta moratus
C ui dederant pinguem
  populis praebere liquorem
A ntoninus item Commodus
  simul induperantes
R ara viro vita et species
  rarissima fama
[i] nvida sed rapuit semper
  Fortuna probatos
V t signum invenias quod
  erat dum vita maneret
S elige litterulas primas
  e versibus octo

Here is buried a man of honest character, Titus Aelius Faustus. He died having tarried 28 years in the light. To him Antoninus and Commodus, during their joint rule, granted that he furnish the people with rich liquid; he had a rare life and appearance, and the rarest *fama*, but jealous Fortune always snatches those who have won approval. To discover the *agnomen* which he had while life remained, extract the first letters from eight verses.

Here, the commemorand’s impeccable reputation (rarissima fama, line 10) stands in relation to his faithful service of Marcus Aurelius and Commodus, as well as his active role in the provision of material goods to the people. This tension is embodied in the language used to describe Faustus’ involvement with the distribution of pinguis liquor, probably wine or oil, although the exact meaning is unclear (lines 5–6). This role was bestowed upon him by the emperors during their joint rule in 177–80 CE; and the archaic induperantes (line 8) adds a sense of reverence to this already deferential statement. Likewise, in the conventional lament that Fortune snatches to an early death those whom she has favored, the word probatos (line 12) alludes to fama’s reliance on external approval, whether from the gods, the emperors, or even the populus. All of these elements speak to the virtue of obedience toward one’s masters and patrons – an undeniable product of servitude that shapes the meaning of the inscription’s opening characterization of Faustus as guileless, honest, and forthright (line 1: moribus... simplex). In these ways, Faustus appears as a classic example of virtuous and loyal service within the imperial bureaucracy.  

184 Again, the monuments of imperial freedmen and their relationship to imperial ideology will be discussed in detail in ch. 3.
Yet the monument is anything but simple in its presentation of the deceased; for alongside these celebrations of imperial power, the commemorator pays heed to Faustus’ engagement with the material world, and to his or her own mastery over language. Whether or not Faustus held an official title in relation to the *annonna*, the inscription’s vagueness on this point serves to highlight the activity itself as a source of acclaim (line 6: *praebere*). Faustus was Macarius (“Blessed”) not just because of imperial favor but because of the task he performed. In expressing this idea in an acrostic, moreover, the epitaph manifests a control over discourse that parallels Faustus’ material agency. In these ways, the integration of obedience and economic activity legitimates a *rarissima fama* whose continued existence is secured through creative participation in commemorative culture.

Another prominent *libertus*, M. Quintilius of Ostia, included in his epitaph a set of attributes that bear a striking resemblance to those immortalized on Faustus’ tombstone. The text has been reconstructed as follows:185

[D(is) M(anibus)]
M(arcus) Quintilius [--- sevir Au]gust(alis)
idem q(uin)q(uennalis) fecit s[ibi corp(orum) lenunc(ulariorum)]
_traiect(us)
Luculli et stu[ppatorum q(uin)q(uennalis)] perpetu(u)s
[i]s talia passus vita[m trah]ens qui semper
[a]micos mente bona [--- *splendid* fama per mare
[pe]r fluuium qua ping[uis ---]ret bis compilatus
[---] gladium fugi *simplex*
[--- b]ona semper *sine fraude*

To the divine shades. M. Quintilius [? sevir Au]gustalis and *quinquennalis* made this for himself, *quinquennalis perpetuus* of the college of ferrymen and caulk-makers at Ostia. Having experienced such things during his life, a man who always [?] friends with good intentions… brilliant *fama* through the sea, through the river [Tiber], where rich [?], twice plundered I fled the sword, artless, good [?] always without trickery.

In the second part of the epitaph, Quintilius moves from a list of offices to a more personalized message, which contains praise of his *splendid* fama (line 6). Although the inscription is

185 AE 1987, 196 (second half of the third century CE); see Licordari 1987 (with photos).
fragmentary, this phrase is clearly elaborated upon by the words that immediately follow: *per mare*, on the same line, and *per fluvium* on the next. Like Faustus’ epitaph, this text links the commemorand’s *fama* to the skillful performance of labor – and, by extension, to the acquisition of sufficient funds to erect a monumental inscription. Again, praise of the deceased’s occupational success is accompanied by a citation of his *simplicitas*, which, together with the phrase *sine fraude*, counteracts the stereotype of the duplicitous, servile trader. This combination of elements integrates qualities valued by masters with a celebration of Quintilius’ effectiveness at carrying out his role in the world of commerce and trade.

A final example from the funerary realm will help to consolidate the themes that run through these texts:  

\[\text{Cl(audius) hic iaceo Diadume} \]
\[\text{nus arte poeta olim Cae} \]
\[\text{sareis floridus officiis} \]
\[\text{quem numquam cupidae} \]
\[\text{possedit gloria famae} \]
\[\text{sed semper modicus rex} \]
\[\text{sit ubique tenor Hylle} \]
\[\text{pater veni nolo move(a)re} \]
\[\text{tumultu hospitium} \]
\[\text{nobis sufficit ista domus} \]
\[\text{//} \]
\[\text{Cl. Fructiane} \]
\[\text{b(ene) m(erenti) f(ecit)} \]

Here I lie, Claudius Diadumenus, a poet by trade, once abounding with imperial duties, though the glory of eager *fama* never overcame me; rather, I always conducted myself in proper measure, wherever my career led. Hyllus, father, come; I do not want you to be moved in a commotion. That home is a sufficient dwelling place for us both… Claudia Fructiana made this [for a man, who was] well deserving.

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\[^{186}\text{CIL 6.33903 (mid-first to early second century CE).}\]
Claudius Diadumenus was almost certainly a member – or at least descended from a member – of the imperial family; his commemorator, Claudia Fructiana, may have been his mother or other relative, although no specific relationship is provided. Another inscription discovered with this one was dedicated by the same Diadumenus to his own son, whom he named Hyllus after his father.\textsuperscript{187} Diadumenus’ epitaph, more than any other, demonstrates the combination of deference and active agency on which these \textit{liberti} based their claims to \textit{fama}. The first three lines describe the commemorand’s \textit{ars} in conjunction with his \textit{officia} under the emperor; the adverb \textit{olim} gives at least chronological precedence to poetry as the defining feature of his career. Yet Diadumenus is also praised for not letting his pride exceed the bounds of moderation; even as the pleonasm \textit{cupidae... gloria famae} (lines 4–5) underscores the extent of his fame, he never allowed it to own him (line 5: \textit{possedit}). This sentiment articulates the precise terms under which slaves and

\footnote{\textsuperscript{187} CIL 6.32299: D. M./ Claudii Hylli/ lictoris popularis/ v(ix) a(nnis) XXIII d(iebus) XVIII/ Cl. Diadumenus/ pater obsequentissimo/ filio.}
freedmen could most effectively develop an identity that would survive into posterity.

Slaves’ and freedmen’s willingness to integrate deference and occupational skill as a means of acquiring renown and winning a place in the common memory reflects one way in which legal and social status informed the understanding of commemoration within a distinctive subculture. In contrast to aristocratic conventions that privileged ancestry, *virtus*, and political action, slaves and *liberti* strove to find a productive balance between obedience to authority, on the one hand, and the development of a positive identity through the creative possibilities offered by work and material wealth, on the other. To be sure, freeborn citizens were also compelled to operate within hierarchical structures that demanded respect for superiors – most notably, the family and the army – and women represented an alternative approach to *fama* from among the non-servile orders. Nevertheless, slaves and freedmen embodied a distilled version of human power dynamics and, on these grounds, figured prominently in Roman ideology as both negative and positive *exempla* for other types of relationship. As a result, their epigraphical culture would have provided a model of how to construct one’s identity in the common memory within the constraints of current social norms.

### 2.4 Immortality under a Princeps

Slaves and freed slaves’ unique approach to commemoration took on new significance under the Principate, when members of the ruling classes began to reevaluate the nature of personal agency in order to accommodate the rule of the *princeps*. The seismic shift undergone by Roman cultural mores in the early Imperial period are both well documented and well studied, so I focus here on how these changes related to the qualities and behaviors regarded as most

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effective in the acquisition of *fama*. In contrast to Republican traditions in which the most obvious path to glory consisted in the exercise of military and political agency – attended, of course, by healthy levels of moral virtue – the belief that one could gain a position of lasting renown under an autocratic regime required a major adjustment of modes and expectations. The ways in which the Roman elite reconfigured their understanding of *fama* brought their ideals much closer to those generated by slaves and freedmen through the addition of obedience as a critical element. Further, the use of slavery as a metaphor for tyranny articulated an underlying connection between elite and servile cultures that facilitated the transfer of such values in both directions.

One of the clearest statements of the Roman elite’s new mode of thinking about power and memory reaches us through Tacitus’ biography of his father-in-law, Agricola. Although Agricola’s connection to the historian did much to enhance his achievements, his successful command in Britain (77–84 CE) earned him the *ornamenta triumphalia* and a career worthy of preservation in the historical record. Yet the terms in which Tacitus commemorates one of the Principate’s most accomplished generals differ strikingly from those used to describe Republican magnates, particularly in the elevation of qualities like *obsequium* to positions of critical value, with deference now presented alongside more conventional skills and virtues. Most famously:

> Sciant, quibus moris est inlicita mirari, posse etiam sub malis principibus magnos viros esse, obsequiumque ac modestiam, si industria ac vigor adsint, eo laudis excedere, quo plerique per abrupta enisi, sed in nullum rei publicae usum ambitiosa morte inclaruerunt.

Let it be known by those who are wont to admire rebellious deeds, that it is possible for there to be great men even under bad emperors. Obedience and humility, if combined with diligence and activity, may reach a level of praise that most men attain after a precipitous career, by means of an ostentatious death, but of no use to the state.

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189 For a recent overview of the issues, see Roller 2001, 6–9. Syme 1939, 440–524 remains fundamental.
190 PIR 84; FRB pp. 73–81.
191 On Agricola’s career, see Braund 1996, 147–96; along with classic studies by Syme (esp. 1958, 19ff.). Increased focus on Agricola’s predecessors has been suggested by several studies, including Birley 1953, Hanson 1987, and Shotter 2000.
192 Tac. *Agr.* 42.4.
The diction is significant, particularly in the choice of obsequium, which Tacitus uses elsewhere to describe Agricola’s response to authority. Throughout the work, we are confronted not with a hero whose greatness was marked by personal freedom but rather with one who “knew how to obey” and who managed to dampen the emperor’s jealousy by demonstrating moderatio in the pursuit and advertisement of fama.¹⁹³ In this context, the valuation of restraint as a political virtue strikes a different cord than the more common definition of the term as a form of self-mastery or control in the exercise of (versus submission to) power.¹⁹⁴ What is more, the qualification that these behaviors are needed only under “bad emperors” (malis principibus) is surely motivated by Tacitus’ desire to absolve himself of having built his career under Domitian, rather than historical proof that the political environment depended so heavily on the character of the current emperor. Succeeding under any princeps, even a “good” one like Trajan, demanded this type of approach to power and acceptance of the values it entailed.

The notion that deference could lead to glory emerged in the ideology of the Roman elite in consequence of the rise of monarchy and the degradation of traditional forms of civic honor. For Syme, obsequium was the watchword of the imperial nobility, in the sense of a “rational deference to authority – the obedience which an officer owes to his commander, a senator to the Senate, an emperor to the gods of the Roman State.”¹⁹⁵ Yet this term was already deeply

¹⁹³ Tac. Agr. 8.2–3: Temperavit Agricola vim suam ardoremque compescuit, ne incresceret, peritus obsequii eruditusque utilia honestis miscere… Nec Agricola umquam in suam famam gestis exultavit; ad auctorem ac ducem ut minister fortunam referebat. Ita virtute in obsequendo, verecundia in praedicando extra invidiam nec extra gloriam erat. On Domitian’s response, in particular, see Agr. 42.6: Domitiani vero natura praeceps in iram, et quo obscurior, eo inrevocabilior, moderatione tamen prudentiisque Agricolae leniebatur, quia non contumacia neque inani iactatione libertatis famam fatumque provocabat.
¹⁹⁴ Classen 1988, 98–104.
¹⁹⁵ Syme 1958, 28 (citing Plin. Ep. 8.23.5, 10.3a.3, 100; Pan. 9.3 and 5, 78.1). Tacitus most commonly applies obsequium to deference toward imperial authority (Ger. 42.5.3; Dial. 40.2.4 and 41.3.7; Hist. 1.15.24, 19.4; 2.87.11, 97.8; 4.3.19, 8.6; Ann. 2.43.11; 3.16.24, 55.17, 65.6, 75.10; 4.20.16; 6.8.10; 14.13.2) and toward military commanders (Agr. 8.1.3 and 3.3; Hist. 1.80.13, 80.19, 83.23, 84.6; 2.19.13; 3.15.3, 50.11, 59.5; 4.19.10, 27.17, 56.8; Ann. 1.19.9, 28.25, 40.2, 43.14; 3.12.7; 4.18.8; 15.25.16). The other main political usage is the obedience paid by
embedded in the laws of social hierarchy, according to which children were expected to show respect for their parents, wives to their husbands, and slaves and freedmen to their masters and patrons.\textsuperscript{196} From its earliest usage, \textit{obsequium} encompassed a range of meanings from submission, to dutifulness, to the gracious consideration of others; and in Latin burial inscriptions, it most often applies to demonstrations of social deference by inferiors toward superiors.\textsuperscript{197} Along with \textit{fides}, as we have seen, it was also a dominant value in the ideology of slaveholding, with obedience acting as a central value in both slave-owning and servile cultures. Its transfer to the center of elite political discourse therefore entailed a high degree of interaction with such frames of reference.

Importantly, the consistent application of \textit{obsequium} to slaves and freedmen colored its meaning when different types of relationship were at stake. Thus Cicero argues in the \textit{De amicitia} that \textit{obsequium} among friends, without the proper amount of honesty, becomes mere \textit{assentatio}, an act unworthy of a free man (\textit{ne libero quidem digna est}).\textsuperscript{198} Given \textit{obsequium}’s strong connections with slavery, it makes sense that it would imply at least a potential denigration of status. From a different perspective, \textit{exemplum} literature used slaves and freedmen to illustrate the virtues of \textit{fides} and \textit{obsequium}, particularly during political crises. In addition to demonstrating the extent of such turmoil, and the enduring potential for virtue, such tales of faithful service could also encourage members of the Roman elite to uphold their duties provincial to Rome Agr. 30.5.1; Ger. 29.3.1; 40.1.2; Hist. 1.76.16; 3.5.9; 4.71.19, 86.1; Ann. 4.72.2; 12.11.2; 13.24.17; 14.31.2.

\textsuperscript{196} On the chronological development of \textit{obsequium} (from an abstract to concrete noun), see Callebat 1964.

\textsuperscript{197} Hardly ever does a master pay \textit{obsequium} to his slave, a husband to his wife, or a father to his child. Of 24 epitaphs in the Epigraphic Database Roma that contain the words \textit{obsequium}, \textit{obsequens}, or their variants, 10 apply the term to a wife or daughter; two to a son; one to a freedwoman (Allia Potestas); one to a brother; and one to a slave, who is \textit{amans domini et obsequens amicis}. Two refer to \textit{obsequia} in the noun form as rites, and seven are fragmentary. Here, as in the case of \textit{fama}, we see a connection between legal status and gender in the representation of virtue.

\textsuperscript{198} Ter. An. 68; Cic. Amic. 89: in obsequio autem, quoniam Terentianus verbo libenter utimur, comitas adsit, assentatio, vitiorum aditrix, procul amoveatur, quae non modo amico, sed \textit{ne libero quidem digna est}; aliter enim cum tyranno, aliter cum amico vivitur.
to the state. Tacitus is a master of this type of exemplum and, on the same basis, Valerius Maximus organizes tales of fides in Book 6 according to the categories of loyalty shown by citizens to the state, wives to husbands, and slaves to masters (in that order). If one follows the recent argument that Valerius Maximus was writing a sort of cultural handbook for upwardly mobile equestrians and senetors under the Empire, the importance of slavery as a model for aristocratic behavior becomes even more evident from his work.

The emergence of obsequium as an elite virtue under the Empire therefore brought slave and freed culture into contact with other areas of Roman discourse, including the construction of personal identity through acts of commemoration. As we saw in the inscriptions, however, what distinguished slaves’ and ex-slaves’ approach to obsequium was their tendency to integrate this virtue with that of occupational skill, thus creating a specific constellation of values that were assessed together as an effective pathway to fama. The vocabulary may have been similar to that used in reference to immortal virtues among the freeborn, but slaves and freedmen configured these ideals in a way that reflected the unique parameters of their social position. Despite the facts that obedience to authority was expected from all types of social subordinate and was articulated epigraphically through the veneration of pietas among freeborn women, the strong link between deference and productivity most likely originated within Rome’s servile orders, where the impact and visibility of these ideals would have been strongest. As a result, when assessing the extent to which slaves and ex-slaves provided models of behavior for the imperial

199 Parker 1998, 153; Vogt (1975, 139–45) is concerned primarily with slavery’s impact on Christian thought. 
200 See, e.g., Tac. Hist. 3.1, in which the endurance of slaves under torture is compared with the fidelity of wives, relatives, and sons-in-law. Also see Val. Max. 6.6–8; stories of loyal slaves, he remarks, are even more surprising because they are unexpected (8.i.: Restat ut servorum etiam erga dominos quo minus expectatam hoc laudabiliorem fidem referamus).
elite, we need to examine not just the increasing emphasis on *obsequium* but rather on how that quality worked in tandem with other values.

Again, Tacitus’ portrayal of Agricola provides an important point of departure, especially in the passage cited above, where *obsequium* and *moderatio* are paired with *industria* and *vigor*. In addition to maintaining the proper levels of deference toward the emperor, a high-ranking official needed to perform his tasks energetically and with diligence to achieve the military successes that would maintain the empire and further his own career. The fact that these tasks were now undertaken in a system where the *princeps* retained the right to claim ultimate credit for Roman victories caused such qualities to become paired with obedience, a combination especially important to slaves and freedmen in their construction of *fama*. Throughout the *Agricola*, Tacitus’ father-in-law epitomizes this new ethos, since his acclaim rests not simply on the ability to negotiate imperial power dynamics but on the concomitant strength of his occupational skill and commitment. Under the rule of an emperor – particularly an emperor who freely exercised his autocratic power over fellow members of the elite – the importance of *industria* rose in tandem with that of moderation, since one was more or less useless without the other as a means of securing a position of civic prominence.

This synthesis of passive and active qualities defines Agricola’s approach to political life through the eyes of his biographer, but one could argue that Tacitus had a vested interest in valorizing his subject’s pragmatic submission to imperial authority because of the support his own career had received from Domitian. Nevertheless, when we look further, Agricola does not appear to be an exception among successful imperial leaders. Instead, we find similar modes

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202 Tac. *Agr*. 42.4.
203 Tac. *Agr*. 8.4 (*integre ac strenue*); and 41.3 (*comparantibus cunctis vigorem, constantiam et expertum bellis animum cum inertia et formidine aliorum*).
204 Syme 1958, 25 and Birley 2010, 49 (n. 5). On Tacitus’ motivations in the *Agricola*, see also Devillers 2007; Whitmarsh 2006; Turner 1997.
of behavior being employed by other members of the elite whose careers have survived in the historical record, with the unification of *industria* and *obsequium* emerging as a key theme throughout.\(^{205}\)

The acclaimed Domitius Corbulo, to offer another example, needed to strike a balance between effective generalship and measured obedience to the reigning *princeps* as he competed with other aristocrats for what accolades were available in the field of military action.\(^{206}\) Despite a conservative outlook that let him to comment (in response to Claudius’ order that he withdraw his troops from across the Rhine) “*beati quondam duces Romani,*” Corbulo maintained a basic loyalty to the throne until Nero’s rising fear and suspicion finally led to his downfall.\(^{207}\) In the process of building his career, however, Corbulo managed to balance his ambitions with the realities of imperial politics, to the extent that the Armenian client-king Tiridates could be said to have remarked to Nero during his visit to Rome in 66 AD, “You have a good slave in Corbulo.”\(^{208}\) What is more, although people may have encouraged Corbulo to set his sights on the purple, he stopped short of using his troops to turn back on Rome in open revolt.\(^{209}\) By contrast, those who failed to maintain at least the outward appearance of deference put their

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\(^{205}\) On the interpretation of *obsequium* as the watchword of the imperial nobility, see Syme 1958, 28.

\(^{206}\) On Corbulo’s competitiveness with other members of the elite, see Tac. *Ann.* 15.5.2.

\(^{207}\) On the possibility of Corbulo’s posing a serious threat to Nero’s reign, particularly in the poorly documented conspiracy of Vicinianus, see Cappelletti 1992–33 and Vervaet 2002; also Hammond 1934, 102–3. Throughout his study, Hammond argues that Corbulo was willing to resist the emperor’s wishes to a degree, and that the general’s loyalty was not to Nero *per se* but to the state that the *princeps* represented (p. 94). But Corbulo remains a useful exemplar of the changing aristocratic ethos because his actions reflect the exigencies of operating within a monarchical system if one wanted to build a career without risking execution. Whether or not Nero was justified in his suspicion of Corbulo, moreover, the general’s demise demonstrates the importance of displaying *moderatio* in one’s approach to honor as clearly as do his successes.

\(^{208}\) Dio 63.6.4. Dio interprets this comment as a jibe at Nero’s indulgent behavior – since only a good slave could brook such a master – but in light of Tiridates’ elaborate displays of obsequiousness during the ceremonies surrounding his receipt of the diadem, it is possible to see the remark as being more straightforward. An eastern monarch, after all, would have easily seen Corbulo as a “servant” of the emperor.

\(^{209}\) Remarked upon by Dio (62.19.3–4 and 62.23.5).
careers and their lives at great risk; and, as Tacitus understood, praise achieved by these means generated a very different sort of *fama* than that gained through more conventional channels.\(^{210}\)

Nevertheless, *obsequium* on its own was not enough to ensure a senatorial or equestrian *cursus honorum* without the attendant qualities that made one good at one’s job. Just as Agricola is lauded for *industria* and *vigor*, Corbulo was known for his endurance and experience in the field, virtues that became even more pronounced in light of the embarrassing defeat of Caesennius Paetus in 62.\(^{211}\) Dio cites the general’s physical strength, courage, and intelligence, as well as his parentage and fair treatment of friends and enemies.\(^{212}\) When exercised with the right level of deference to imperial authority, such qualities continued to pave the way to civic honor under the Principate, just as they had for the generations of *summi viri* who stood as exemplars of military glory.\(^{213}\) In a narrow sense, then, the Roman elite remained consistent in its identification of which core virtues would lead to a positive reputation in life and, through commemoration, after death.\(^{214}\)

The integration of measured obedience into the conventional ideology of civic achievement is presented by Tacitus as an alternative to both suicide and total subservience.\(^{215}\) In its relevance to the construction of *fama*, this ideological development marked a transformation in elite values that brought them into increasingly greater proximity with those of

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\(^{210}\) Tac. *Agr.* 42.4.


\(^{212}\) Dio 62.19.2.

\(^{213}\) This is not to suggest a simple narrative of continuity in Roman ideology from Republic to Empire but rather to point out the survival of certain central values, even if the application of such ideas had shifted relative to political context – which is, after all, the fundamental historical framework that I am working with here.

\(^{214}\) Other examples of successful political leaders described as integrating traditional virtues with *obsequium* and moderation vis-à-vis imperial power include Suetonius Paulinus (*diligens ac modestus*, Tac. *Agr.* 5.1); Verginius Rufus (Dio 63.25); Mucianus, despite his negative character traits (Tac. *Hist.* 1.20.12).

\(^{215}\) E.g., Tac. *Ann.* 4.20.2–3 (*on M. Aemilius Lepidus*): Unde dubitat cogor fate et sorte nascendi, ut cetera, ita principum inclinatio in hos, offensio in illos, an sit aliquid in nostris consilis liceatque inter abruptam contumaciam et deforme obsequium pergere iter ambitione ac periculis vacuum.
the servile orders. A large portion of the senatorial and equestrian elite operated with a new model of civic honor that combined *obsequium* with *industria* and other vocational talents to meet the cultural imperative of preserving one’s identity in the common memory. As I have already noted, such developments in the ethos of the Roman elite can be linked to the rise of a so-called “service aristocracy,” as Veyne has suggested.\textsuperscript{216} From a different perspective, however, we are witnessing a synthesis of conventional and servile values within a newly defined pyramidal hierarchy whose apex was occupied by the *princeps*. This synthesis supported an increased valuation of such virtues as *obsequium* and *industria* as key elements in the construction of *fama*.

Despite the fact that most Romans would still have been hard pressed to admit that they were adapting modes of behavior that they had learned to expect in slaves and freedmen, slavery and freedom were the precise terms in which elite behavior toward the emperor was assessed by critics like Seneca, Lucan, and Tacitus. Not only were Rome’s most prominent citizens obliged to see the *princeps* as a patron, extreme manifestations of that relationship were reconstituted as the imbalance between master and slave.\textsuperscript{217} The emperor’s control over admission to the senate, for instance, or over the consulship and triumphal honors, demonstrates the practical and symbolic effects of this reconfiguration of power.\textsuperscript{218} Among the *equites*, the development of an administrative career path defined by salary gradations provided a framework for the acquisition of both wealth and prestige through loyalty to the emperor.\textsuperscript{219} The concept of honor may still have provided an ideological basis for the *cursus honorum*, but that did not stop Tacitus from

\textsuperscript{216} On Veyne’s theory of the “aristocracy of service” and its relevance to my arguments, see below p. 85.
\textsuperscript{218} A more detailed account of the emperor’s control over the senatorial *ordo* and offices may be found in Millar 1997, 290–313; cf., with respect to the ideology of honor, Lendon 1997, 176–201. On the triumph, see now Beard 2007.
\textsuperscript{219} Saller 1980.
remarking that Seneca’s brother, Mela, chose an equestrian over a senatorial career partly on financial grounds.\textsuperscript{220} Even more famously, Tacitus chastises the Augustan nobility for exchanging \textit{libertas} for wealth, in addition to the symbolic rewards of political office (\textit{quanto quis servitio promptior, opibus et honoribus extollerentur}).\textsuperscript{221} Lucian, too, found it worthwhile to defend the distinction between administrative posts and forms of wage labor that bordered more closely on servitude.\textsuperscript{222}

Such critiques reveal a serious discomfort about service and obedience that the notion of honor did not fully assuage. Men who continued to seek enduring glory through channels of imperial patronage were thus confronted with a set of ideological tensions that required, at least on some level, a reconfiguration of personal agency relative to the imperial household.\textsuperscript{223} Commemorative texts – whether literary or epigraphical – were a key medium for the negotiation of these issues, given the fact that monuments had always been a primary site for the construction and perpetuation of \textit{fama}. We have seen how slaves and \textit{liberti}, as participants in Roman burial culture, advertised a specific relationship between acquiescence and vocational skill that was contingent on their social status. When members of the imperial elite found themselves engaged in a dynamic with the \textit{princeps} that was theoretically comparable to that between master and slave, or between patron and freedman, they too were inclined to negotiate

\textsuperscript{220} Tac. \textit{Ann.} 16.17: Mela, quibus Gallio et Seneca parentibus natus, petitione honorum abstinuerat per ambitionem praeposteram ut eques Romanus consularibus potestia aequaretur; simul adquirendae pecuniae brevius iter credebat per procurationes administrandis principis negotiis.

\textsuperscript{221} Tac. \textit{Ann.} 1.2: … munia senatus magistratum legum in se trahere, nullo adversante, cum ferocissimi per acies aut proscriptione cecidissent, ceteri nobilium, quanto quis servitio promptior, opibus et honoribus extollerentur ac novis ex rebus aucti tuta et praesentia quam vetera et periculosae mallent.

\textsuperscript{222} Lucian \textit{Apol.} 11.

\textsuperscript{223} One extreme, which I will not examine in detail here, was to ‘opt out’ by retreating from political life or committing suicide; on these tactics, and their relationship to power and selfhood, see Bartsch 2006 and Edwards 2007, 113–43.
their position in and through monumentality.²²⁴ In so doing, they needed to look no further than their own slave and freed dependents for a model of how to transform expected behaviors into virtues that could support the preservation of memory.


From Eurysaces’ innovative funerary monument to the epitaph of Diadumenus, the poet, we have seen how slaves and freedmen mapped a path to immortality by balancing deference with occupational skill – two qualities that could bring economic benefits, but also provided their own source of legitimacy. Such approaches to the construction of personal identity were shaped by the shared experience of slavery and articulated through the only durable medium to which most persons of this status had access. At this level of the social hierarchy, lasting fama was sought, by necessity, through a particular set of social and economic transactions that culminated in the opportunity to demonstrate one’s adherence to a specific set of core virtues. As another socially marginalized group, freeborn women adopted a similar approach to fama, but slaves’ and freedmen’s central role in economic production placed special emphasis on industria and related ideals, as well as on dutiful obedience to authority.

This model of power and memory stood in contrast to traditional conceptions of elite masculinity and the cursus honorum. With the emergence of a autocratic system in the Roman state, however, the ruling classes were compelled to reevaluate their position with respect to these crucial issues. For Tacitus, as for others, the metaphor of political slavery represented in vivid terms the violence done to elite autonomy by the existence (or even the threat) of a

²²⁴ Forbis (1996) points out that honorific inscriptions that attest the benefactions of members of the local elite commemorate public displays of wealth that were, for all their relevance to the community, often a prerequisite for promotion by the princeps.
tyrannical leader. Yet by the same token, the strategies that slaves and *liberti* had always employed to negotiate their place in society became more applicable in a positive sense to aristocrats’ search for fame and glory, and a combined ideal of *industria* and *obsequium* emerged as a central element of monumental culture among Rome’s ruling orders.

In these ways, literary and epigraphical monuments comprised a point of interaction for different groups’ distinctive views about virtue and monumentality. This contact was facilitated by the Roman slave system’s high rates of manumission and enfranchisement of *liberti*, as well as by the enthusiasm with which slaves and freedmen adapted traditional commemorative forms to suit their rhetorical needs. To be sure, this status group had long played an important role in defining elite identity through a nexus of sameness and difference; and the power dynamics of Roman social relations were not limited to those between master and slave, or patron and freedman. Yet the rise of the princeps expanded slavery’s semantic range in the broader discourses of power and memory. In this context, the ways in which Latin authors derived modes of behavior from slave and freed culture reflect the shifting structures of authority within the highest orders. The specific contours of this political environment now warrant our full attention, as we turn to the role which the emperor and his *familia* played in determining slavery’s impact on Roman thought.
CHAPTER 3: IMPERIAL FREEDMEN, IMPERIAL POWER

I have considered the emergence of deference and industry as core values among the imperial elite with respect to the acquisition of *fama* and the preservation of identity through commemoration. Now, in an attempt to broaden the discussion to aristocratic political culture more generally, I set out to examine the ways in which the ruling classes conceptualized the emperor’s authority through the lens of chattel slavery and manumission. Specifically, the slaves and freedmen who were closest to the emperor, whether practically or ideologically, as part of the so-called *familia Caesaris* played a crucial role in demonstrating how one ought to behave in the presence of this type of ruler.\(^{225}\) Despite the fact that the influence of imperial slaves and freedmen acted for some as a testament to the loss of political freedom, this special subset of the servile population provided an equally strong constructive paradigm for how to negotiate the imbalance that existed between the emperor and his court. As such, they embodied the basic terms of Rome’s transition from a republican to monarchical government and showed how one might derive legitimate honor from loyal service to a *princeps* rather than abandon the pursuit of civic honor completely.

This line of inquiry incorporates two historical questions that have received significant attention as separate issues but which are rarely discussed in tandem: first, the nature and function of the emperor’s slaves and freedmen (conventionally known as the *familia Caesaris*);

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\(^{225}\) My exclusive focus on imperial freedmen necessitates an explanation of the absence of the *Augustales* from this chapter. Although this group had strong associations to the emperor and imperial power, I have decided to postpone my discussion of them to ch. 5 (on “The Civic Community”) with reference to the issues raised here, but with additional attention paid to the construction of corporate identity. Likewise, the imitation of imperial forms in the sculptural programs of burial monuments set up by freedmen (on which see Kleiner 1977, 88–117) falls outside the immediate scope of this chapter but should be noted as an example of private freedmen asserting legitimacy through a stylistic connection to the imperial family.
and, second, changes in the aristocratic ethos brought on by the introduction of autocracy to a previously oligarchic/republican system.\textsuperscript{226} Most work on the former problem has already addressed such technical questions as nomenclature, career structure, and marriage patterns.\textsuperscript{227} The domestic and clerical workers who made up the imperial household numbered in the thousands at any given time and became increasingly institutionalized over the course of the first two centuries CE.\textsuperscript{228} While their center of operations was the Palatine, the emperor’s slaves and ex-slaves performed their duties throughout the provinces, whether in residence or for the purpose of undertaking specific assignments. Over 4,000 inscriptions survive that document these individuals, who can be identified by the onomastic formulae \textit{Caes(aris) ser(vus/a)} or \textit{Aug(usti) lib(ertus/a)}.\textsuperscript{229} Although \textit{liberti Augusti} were often subject to ridicule because of the status inversion that their successes entailed, studies of the inscriptions have shown that they enjoyed a number of privileges, including the increased likelihood of marrying freeborn women.\textsuperscript{230} In this sense, and in their proximity to imperial power, they constituted a subgroup within even the freed elite, with many financial and social opportunities comparable to that of a knight or senator.

While our knowledge of the \textit{familia Caesaris} depends largely on inscriptions, studies of aristocratic political culture have a wealth of sources at their disposal, including the writings of men who moved in the highest circles of imperial society, as well as epigraphical evidence for

\textsuperscript{226} The debate over relative levels of democracy and oligarchy under the Republic is beyond the purview of my study, but I tend to follow those such as Morstein-Marx (2004), who emphasize the importance of public opinion and \textit{contiones} without conceding fully the idea that patronage was a governing factor in political decision-making during this period. For the terms of the debate, see Morstein-Marx 2004, 207–30; the oligarchic model is based on Syme 1939, influenced by Gelzer 1969 (first published in 1912); and the strongest proponent of a democratic model was Millar 1984, 1986, 1989, 1998; cf. Mouritsen 2001.

\textsuperscript{227} See especially the surveys of Weaver 1972 and Boulvert 1970; Chantrain 1967 on nomenclature; and Schumacher 2001b.

\textsuperscript{228} See most recently, Mouritsen 2011, 93–8.

\textsuperscript{229} Weaver 1972, 17; in some cases, an imperial \textit{praenomen} and \textit{nomen} such as Ti. Claudius is sufficient to mark an individual as an imperial freedman.

\textsuperscript{230} Weaver 1972, 122–33.
“senatorial self-representation” and the equestrian career path.231 In part, our appreciation of the ideological transformations effected by the foundation of monarchy stems from a shift in focus from the regime’s ‘constitutional’ foundations to its reliance on an amorphously defined auctoritas manifest through a complex set of rituals and social contracts.232 Most importantly for my purposes, the intra-elite competition that characterized Republican politics continued to operate but was reoriented around the acquisition of imperial favor, which became the single most effective way to succeed in civic life. Further, as we see for example in letters of commendation written to emperors by high-ranking Romans, even at the beginning of the equestrian and senatorial career paths, imperial favor was at the center of aristocratic mentalities of honor.233 A similar dynamic took hold in the provinces, where cities now competed among each other in elaborate displays of obedience to the imperial center.234

This focus on a single personage as the ultimate arbiter of civic honor let to the emergence of new values and new ways of talking about (and talking to) power. One critical shift, which I have already discussed in relation to commemorative culture, involved the heightened attention to deference as an expected mode of behavior within the court. The virtue of obsequium did not only apply under ‘bad’ emperors who wielded their authority brashly, but continued to guide aristocratic relationships with those emperors who, like Trajan, were considered a civilis princeps. Rhetorically, emperors could be divided starkly into categories, with the fall of a perceived tyrant being followed by an equally subjective “Golden Age,” even

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231 On elite epigraphical culture, see especially Eck 1984, 1995, and 1998. A classic study of the ideological foundations of the principate is offered by Béranger 1953; but more recently, see Flaig 1992; Roller 2001; Ando 2000 (with particular attention to the provinces).

232 Two important points of divergence from Mommsen’s “constitutional” interpretation of Roman government are Alföldi 1970 and Syme 1939; for an overview of the history of scholarship, see Potter 2006.

233 On Pliny’s letters of commendation as evidence for the role of imperial patronage in the senatorial and equestrian career paths, see Saller 1982, 46–7; in the same work, pp. 41–50 amass evidence from a range of sources to support the view that the emperor’s favor was considered a key factor in acquiring all kinds of civic appointments.

though the basic structures of power and modes of interaction with the princeps remained relatively consistent. As a result, even in his most triumphant moment at the beginning of the Histories, Tacitus praises a revived political climate in which it is “allowed” (licet) to think and speak freely. And the sense that freedom is a benefit – whether bestowed by good emperors or withheld by tyrants – only thinly masks the fact that the decision flows from above. In short, in a world where (as Ovid put it, already under Augustus) res est publica Caesar, a public career became less about serving the state per se than about fulfilling one’s obligations to Rome as dictated and embodied by the authority of the princeps.

On the other hand, a common feature of human social relations dictates that when one submits to authority one does so with the expectation of support, protection, or other benefits in exchange for obedience. The Roman view of hierarchy incorporated this concept in multiple ways, including a basic reciprocity inherent in the system of patronage, whereby a level of sponsorship and guidance was required from the upper party in return for the loyalty and esteem of dependents. Similarly, with the princeps often constructed as a kind of patron, father, or master, there prevailed in Roman imperial ideology the ideal of a benevolent ruler who protected his subjects and bestowed beneficia upon individuals and on the community through acts of euergetism. The increased valuation of obsequium among the aristocracy was therefore attended by a complementary focus on the emperor’s personal virtues as markers of the quality of his reign – for instance through the representation of aequitas and pietas on imperial coinage,

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236 Cf. the symbolic gift of manumission, which helped to ensure that ex-slaves would remain indebted to their former owners; Patterson 1982, 240–3; also see Wallace-Hadrill 1982, 38 on how the ritual of recusatio and the rhetoric of libertas actually proved the emperor’s fundamental power over the Senate and the law.
237 Trist. 4.4.15. This is not to say that republican values were completely abandoned by everyone who participated in politics but rather that the terms of engagement had changed and a new basis of civic honor created.
238 The reciprocity of virtues like fides in the context of the patron-client relationship is discussed by Saller 1982, 7–23 with attention to the sociological background. Also see Saller 1994, 105–14.
239 On imperial beneficia as an instantiation of the princeps’ role as patron, see Saller 1982, 41–58. On the emperor as euergete, see Veyne 1990, 347–77.
with the latter element connoting the fulfillment of obligations to subjects and family, as well as to the gods.240

The ideology of slavery made key contributions to this discourse about imperial power and its impact on the Roman elite. In large part, this process operated at the metaphorical level, with the relationship between the emperor and his subjects being construed as that between master and slaves. In many cases, drawing a link between the principate and chattel slavery served to cast the former in a negative light, since the type of authority implied by dominatio precluded the existence of libertas.241 Nevertheless, there are indications that correlations between slavery and the political sphere could be taken in a more positive sense, for instance in the analogies that Pliny and Seneca readily draw between one’s slave household and a res publica, in the first case suggesting that for slaves, the domus is a kind of state (servis res publica quaedam et quasi civitas est) and in the second commending an approach to mastery in which one considers the household as a mini republic (domum pusillam rem publicam esse iudicaverunt).242 Furthermore, no segment of the servile population exemplified the benefits of obedient service to the emperor more directly than did the members of his slave and freed familia. On this basis, the following analysis is aimed at discovering how imperial slaves and freedmen helped to construct the principate and offered models of how one might negotiate the parameters that monarchy imposed on civic life. In studying the familia Caesaris and elite ideology as facets of the same problem, we will reach beyond the world of metaphor to its

240 Noreña 2001, esp. 159.
242 Plin. Ep. 8.16.2: Mandant rogantque quod visum; pareo ut iussus. Dividunt donant relinquunt, dumtaxat intra domum; nam servis res publica quaedam et quasi civitas domus est. Sen. Ep. 47.14: Ne illud quidem videtis, quam ommem invidiam maiores nostri dominis, ommem contumeliam servis detraxerint? Dominum patrem familiae appellaverunt, servos - quod etiam in mimis adhuc durat - familiares; instituerunt diem festum, non quo solo cum servis domini vescerentur, sed quo utique; honores illis in domo gerere, ius dicere permiserunt et domum pusillam rem publicam esse iudicaverunt. In this metaphor, the master takes on the role of monarch in a way that emphasizes the ideal of having absolute control over one’s household. On the refocusing of male elite identity on the private sphere during the early Empire, see especially Foucault 1984, 81–95.
interaction with social practice, and to an exploration of how values circulated through various media in the context of a political culture that was evolving to meet the demands of autocracy.

I begin with Claudius’ infamous freedman, M. Antonius Pallas, as a test case for how the achievements of such individuals were represented in epigraphical texts and how imperial authors like Tacitus and Pliny reacted to these monuments as degradations of conventional values. Upon closer inspection, an alternative strand of discourse emerges from our literary sources on Pallas and other imperial freedmen, according to which *liberti Augusti* provide constructive models for how to conduct oneself most beneficially in the presence of extreme power. The idea that a person can derive legitimate honor from obedient service to the *princeps* informed the behavior of a large segment of the aristocracy even while it evoked criticism in certain contexts. Further, an analysis of monuments commissioned by and for members of the *familia Caesaris* will demonstrate that members of the elite did not create these paradigms out of thin air, but rather encountered them in the inscriptions of actual slaves and freedmen that populated the cemeteries and public spaces of Rome and its municipalities.

3.1 MARCUS ANTONIUS PALLAS

No emperor is more famous for promoting his freedmen, and no *libertus* more famous for winning imperial favor, than Claudius and his *a rationibus*, M. Antonius Pallas (d. 62 CE).

We know little of Pallas’ early life beyond the fact that he belonged to Claudius’ mother, Antonia, who either freed Pallas while still living and passed on patronal rights to her son or

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243 Claudius’ reliance on freedmen may in part have been a result of his disability and reluctance to trust the senators who had opposed his accession; but the use of slaves and *liberti* in the imperial administration had roots in republican practice, and their political influence (especially under Claudius) cannot be explained away by the rhetorical tradition of claiming that ‘bad’ emperors were overly reliant on their servile advisors. On Claudius, see Mouritsen 2011, 95–6 and Levick 1990, 83.
manumitted the slave *ex testamento*. The claim that Pallas’ lineage descended from Arcadian kings was no doubt a flattering play on his *cognomen* rather than a statement of fact, although we do find a similar assertion being made by a freedman in the *Satyricon* and hear of actual *ingenui* selling themselves into slavery to pursue career opportunities. Regardless of Pallas’ origins, his service to more than one member of the *domus Augusta* calls attention to the extent and prominence of that household, beyond just the *princeps* himself. As such, the careers of slaves and freedmen that span members of the imperial family or reigns of multiple emperors stand as markers of the dynastic structure of the principate and, later, of the institutionalization of the administrative service.

Pallas’ prominence under Claudius seems to have been overshadowed by that of his fellow *liberti*, Callistus and Narcissus; but according to Tacitus, by the year 48, he had achieved the “extreme influence” (*flagrantissima gratia*) that marked an imperial favorite. Further, Pallas’ victory in the debate about whom Claudius should marry after Messalina—he advocated for Agrippina the Younger—helped him become the most influential of the emperor’s freed advisors. Predictably, after the accession of Nero, he learned firsthand the dangers inherent in being so closely involved with the imperial family. As Agrippina fell out of favor, he was dismissed from his administrative post and, having been acquitted of a charge of *maiestas*, was

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244 For a thorough discussion of the evidence for Pallas’ career, see Oost 1958.
245 Petr. 57.4; Harris 1999, 73.
246 The columbarium preserving the household of Livia is one of the best-documented examples of slave and freed dependents who belonged to a member of the *domus Augusta*. See Treggiari 1975.
247 For the continuation of careers despite dynastic changes, see Panciera 2007 and Mouritsen 2011, 94. The issue of institutionalization is discussed further below, pp. 76–82.
lucky to spend the rest of his years in retirement. In these ways, the vagaries of Pallas’ life demonstrated the risks and benefits that attended such a position, particularly because his involvement with dynastic politics both sparked his career and hastened its end.

Yet despite the final decline in his fortunes, Pallas for a time enjoyed the highest levels of influence and prestige available to a freed slave in the Roman empire. The official accolades that attended this remarkable career were both substantial and highly publicized – though much to the chagrin of Tacitus and Pliny, our most important sources on Pallas. Tacitus recounts how Claudius outlined to the Senate a measure known as the *S.C. Claudianum* that would reduce the status of women who cohabited with slaves to that of *serva* if the master’s sanction had not been acquired, and to that of *liberta* if it had. In his speech, Claudius gave credit for the idea to Pallas; and in response, the consul designate Borea Soranus proposed that the Senate award the freedman the praetorian insignia and 15 million sesterces, with a further grant of public thanks being moved by a no less traditional eminence than Cornelius Scipio. Pallas, who had amassed a huge fortune already, reportedly turned down the money and was simply “content with the honor” (*honore contentus*). A bronze plaque advertising the Senate’s decree was to be set up in a public place, which Pliny identifies as a statue of the Deified Julius, probably in front of the temple of the same name.

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250 Oost 1958, 133–138; as he points out, the story that Pallas was poisoned by Nero is in all likelihood a mere rumor.
While it is generally agreed that these events did occur, the nature of our sources makes it difficult to evaluate the motives of the Senate or to gauge the full range of reactions that the bestowal of such honors upon an imperial freedman may have evoked among Claudius’ subjects.

One the one hand, speaking from the perspective of a Trajanic ‘renewal’ of senatorial libertas, Tacitus and Pliny are unstinting in their revulsion for the Senate’s praise of Pallas and sycophancy toward the emperor. With Pallas long dead and the threat of offending Claudius gone, both are able to use the rhetoric of the ‘bad’ freedman freely in its connection to the related topos of the ‘bad’ emperor. Tacitus alludes to the irony of Pallas’ being lauded for “traditional frugality” (antiquae parsimoniae) for rejecting 15 million sesterces when he already had 300 million.254 Pliny issues even stronger criticism in his two letters on the subject to Montanus. He first exclaims how Pallas’ epitaph, which celebrates these accolades, only strengthens his conviction that such honors are “farcical and unfitting” (mimica et inepta).255 Pliny’s indignation escalated by the time he wrote his second missive, in which he describes to Montanus the results of his research into the Senate’s decree. Casting this document in highly negative terms as “verbose and fulsome” (copiosum et effusum), he evokes the common metaphor of political slavery to express the conditions under which the Senate might offer such honors to a slave (quippe offeruntur a servis).256 From this point of view, Pliny can rejoice in the fact that he did not live during that age (quam iuvat quod in tempora illa non incidi) when senators were enslaved to a tyrannical princeps.257

Modern commentators usually assume that the Senate was being sarcastic when it voted these honors to Pallas. Sherwin-White declares in conclusive terms that although Pliny briefly

255 Plin. Ep. 7.29.3.
entertains the idea that the decree could represent the Senate’s collective *urbanitas*, “none of [our sources] seem to perceive… that there was a satirical twist to these wordy resolutions;” and others have ascribed a similar irony to the proceedings.258 There is no reason to accept these readings over the authority of our source, who is appalled at the fact that the Senate could in all seriousness grant such honors to a *libertus*. Despite a certain *pro forma* quality, the Senatorial grants to Pallas were certainly not disingenuous; like the town councils who gave *ornamenta* to freedmen, the Claudian Senate saw the need to honor Pallas and did so in the proper fashion. The presence of two discursive alternatives – one promoting reverence for the head of the state at all costs and one characterizing such behaviors as servile and obsequious – should come as no surprise to readers of Latin literature from this period, when members of the elite were constantly renegotiating their position with respect to competing rhetorical stances.259 Only by appreciating this aspect of Roman political culture can we account for the fluorescence of imperial encomium at the same time as the end of *libertas* and free speech was lamented with equal (if not greater) intensity as when an emperor was being praised.

If we abandon Sherwin-White’s anachronistic reading, which suggests that the Roman Senate would issue a decree as a kind of subversive joke, how does our understanding of Pallas’ honors evolve? Following Pliny’s report of the contents of the monument and the *acta senatus* (but momentarily disregarding his trenchant distain) we begin to see how an imperial *libertus* could stand as a constructive model for aristocrats, even amidst the prevailing anxiety about such inversions of status. For one thing, as Pliny transcribes it, Pallas’ tomb inscription proclaims that

259 See, for example, Lucan’s praise of Nero at lines 33–66, where the poet simultaneously follows the form of encomium (e.g., quod si non aliam uenturo fata Neroni/ inuenere uiam magnoque aeterna parantur/ regna deis caelumque suo seruire Tonanti/ non nisi saeueorum potuit post bella gigantum,/ iam nihil, o superi, querimur, lines 33–7) and satirizes the emperor’s well-known corporeality (aetheris inmensi partem si presseris unam,/ sentiet axis onus, lines 56–7).
the Senate rewarded the deceased freedman for his “loyalty and piety toward his patrons” (*ob fidem et pietatem erga patronos*). 260 The traditional valuation of the loyal slave and the domestic virtue of *pietas* are here transcribed to the public sphere while remaining anchored in the institution of patronage. Yet the use of the plural (*patronos*), presumably in reference to Antonia as well as the current emperor, represent service to the entire *domus Augusta* as a legitimate source of civic honor. As we will see, no less amount of *fides* was expected from the aristocratic orders in their performance of public duties.

Then again, the senatorial decree, as related by Pliny, refers directly to Pallas’ function as an *exemplum* for the administrative elite, a role that is cited as a major motivation behind the public display of such a document: 261

> Utique, cum sit utile principis benignitatem promptissimam ad laudem praemiaque merenti illustri ubique et maxime iis locis, quibus incitari ad imitationem praepositi rerum eius curae possent, et Pallantis spectatissima fides atque innocentia exemplo provocare studium tam honestae aemulationis posset, ea quae X. kal. Februarias quae proximae fuissent in amplissimo ordine optimus princeps recitasset senatusque consulta de iis rebus facta in aere inciderunt, idque aes figeretur ad statuam loricatam divi Iulii.

Since it will be useful to make known the emperor’s most ready kindness in praising and rewarding persons of merit, everywhere but especially in settings where those placed in charge of overseeing his affairs may be encouraged to imitation, and the proven loyalty and innocence of Pallas may through example evoke zeal of emulating such nobility, let those things which the *optimus princeps* said before a full meeting of the Senate on January 23 and the decrees of the Senate concerning those matters be inscribed in bronze, and let this tablet be affixed to the loricate statue of Divus Julius.

Even if some or all of the senators would have admitted in private that the decree was intended to meet a political need rather than express true admiration, the contents were sufficiently important to merit such widespread publication in places of high visibility. In the context of Rome’s tradition of exemplarity, moreover, the document emphasizes its own importance in conveying a positive model for “those placed in charge of [the emperor’] affairs” (*praepositi rerum eius curae possent*). The expression is sufficiently vague, and the location of the inscription

sufficiently prominent, for us to understand *praepositi* as incorporating not just other imperial freedmen, but also the equestrians and senators involved in the administration of the empire. Pliny makes the same inference when he comments that “men of upstanding birth” (*honesto loco nati*) could be found competing for such sullied honors.²⁶² Pallas’ *fides* and *innocentia* were meant to stand as *exempla* to be rivaled by posterity, regardless of legal status and however odious this idea may have been to certain members of the aristocracy in certain rhetorical settings.

Considering the award of honors to Pallas from this angle encourages an appreciation of the multiplicity of approaches that the aristocracy might take toward powerful imperial freedmen. On the one hand, *liberti Augusti* undoubtedly evoked a high degree of discomfort among the high-ranking orders. Yet the vociferousness of critics like Tacitus and Pliny has skewed modern readings of the evidence too heavily in this direction. Rather, as I will argue in greater detail, this critical mode coexisted with a more positive way of conceptualizing the *familia Caesaris*, namely as a model of how most effectively to negotiate one’s relationship with the reigning monarch. Further, as Pliny’s account of the grants to Pallas suggest, inscribed texts were an important mechanism through which this alternative view could find expression, both in publicly displayed records of actions taken by the Senate, and in the private monuments set up to commemorate slaves and freed slaves of the emperor. The Latin writers who discuss these texts predominantly draw a negative portrait of the aristocracy’s relationship to such powerful freedmen, but as we examine the issue more closely, it will become apparent that this disparaging attitude was not the only available response.

Having enjoyed a long history in the Republican period as the antithesis to civic *libertas*, slavery continued to provide a powerful metaphor in political rhetoric during the Empire.\(^{263}\) A compelling study of this problem as it concerns the Julio-Claudian elite has observed that figurative language derived from slavery and applied to political life takes on predominantly negative overtones, with ‘bad’ emperors fashioned as masters and obsequious or oppressed aristocrats as slaves.\(^{264}\) This phenomenon is further complicated by competing paradigms that represent imperial authority as that of a father, although one could argue that the ideal of the *paterfamilias* was so closely entwined with that of the slave-owner – given that the two statuses were frequently held together – that the boundary between father and master was always on the verge of collapsing.\(^{265}\) Beginning with Augustus, moreover, people saw it fit to call the emperor *dominus*, even if some *principes* rejected the title in a demonstration of their adherence to republican values.\(^{266}\) Because context shapes the meaning of terms laden with social value, Pliny can lionize Trajan for being a citizen and father (*civis*… *parens*) rather than a tyrant and master (*tyrannus*… *dominus*) in the *Panegyricus*, even though he consistently uses the polite form of *dominus* to address the emperor in the *Letters*.\(^{267}\) This opposition of parent and master refines the definition of imperial authority, while *dominus* is able to shed its negative association with chattel slavery in application to a ‘good’ emperor.

\(^{263}\) See especially Patterson 1991; Brunt 1988; and Wirszubski 1950.  
\(^{264}\) Roller 2001, 227.  
\(^{266}\) On *dominus* as a form address in Roman social relations, see Friedländer v. 4, 1979, 199 ff.; Bang 1921.  
\(^{267}\) Plin. *Panegyricus* 2: non enim de tyranno, sed de cive; non de domino, sed de parente loquimur. Roller 2001, 258. For Pliny’s use of *dominus* as a form of address to Trajan, see for example *Ep*. 10.1.1, 10.2.1, 10.3.1, 10.5.1, 10.6.1, 10.8.1, 10.10.1, and so forth.
Despite the basic legitimacy of these arguments, certain instances did arise in which *dominus* could signify “master” in a positive sense without reverting to the more general, acceptably deferential appellation of “sir.”\(^{268}\) One such occasion is described by Suetonius in his biography of Augustus as evidence of that man’s *moderatio*:\(^{269}\)

> Domini appellationem ut maledictum et obprobrium semper exhorruit. Cum spectante eo ludos pronuntiatum esset in mimo: “O dominum aequum et bonum!” et universi quasi de ipso dictum exsultantes comprobassent, et statim manu vultuque indecoras adulationes repressit et insequenti die gravissimo corripuit edicto; dominumque se posthac appellari ne a liberis quidem aut nepotibus suis vel serio vel ioco passus est atque eius modi blanditias etiam inter ipsos prohibuit.

*Dominus* as a form of address he always abhorred for being a bad word and reproachful. When he was watching the games and the line was delivered in a mime: “O good and fair master!” and the crowd sprung up and applauded this phrase, Augustus immediately suppressed the inappropriate flattery with his gesture and expression, and the next day issued a reproach in an exceedingly serious edict. Afterward he did not even allow his own children and grandchildren to call him *dominus*, whether in earnest or in jest, and banned flatteries of this type even among themselves.

The motive of the crowd was undoubtedly to please the *princeps*, although Suetonius looks down on this act as mere flattery (*adulatio*). Still, we need not go further than the ideal of paternalism to understand how the assembled subjects might have understood this line in reference to their current leader. Enslavement to a “good and fair master” increased a slave’s chances of enjoying physical protection, well-being, and rewards that were proportional to his loyalty and merit.\(^{270}\)

Although Suetonius finds such behavior offensive, and Augustus recognized the danger of allowing things to proceed in this direction, the episode demonstrates the existence of a strand of political discourse in which imperial subjects could model themselves publicly as *servi boni* and the *princeps* as a beneficent master.\(^{271}\) As we will see, such constructive uses of the metaphor of slavery are often less obvious than those which equate masters with tyrants, but the very strength

\(^{268}\) Bang 1921.

\(^{269}\) Suet. *Aug.* 53.1; my interpretation differs slightly from that of Roller (2001 254–8).

\(^{270}\) Cf. the stereotype of the “bad master” enshrined, for instance, in Plautus’ character Ballio (*Pseud.* 133–228). For a sobering discussion of the treatment of slaves, see Bradley 1994, 81–106. As members of the Roman system of patronage, those motivated to call Augustus *dominus* would have been envisioning not total subordination but rather a reciprocal exchange of *beneficia* such as that described by Saller 1982, 119–139. As he demonstrates, social relations among the elite continued to operate on the basis of patronage despite the transition to monarchy.

\(^{271}\) Roller (2001, 258) focuses on Augustus’ awareness of a potentially pejorative reading.
of Tacitus and other writers’ reactions to elite political subordination belies the prevalence of this type of behavior. Moreover, only a close examination of the epigraphical material will show how imperial slaves and freedmen were in part responsible for the production of positive models for submission to imperial power.

In exploring why the ruling orders may have been amenable to replicating social forms that they observed among slaves and liberti, it is worth turning back to Veyne’s ideas about the rise of an “aristocracy of service” under the Empire. For Veyne, the shift in elite power dynamics helped to issue in a new era in which rivalry among ruling families, at the head of which stood an all-powerful paterfamilias, gave way to a system in which aristocrats served the state and the princeps in polite harmony with one another. With the ebbing of traditional structures of competitive honor and authority, members of the elite reoriented their sexual mores toward conjugal love, self-control, and other inwardly focused values that Veyne links to a transformation in notions of self and community even before Christianity made its impact.\(^{272}\) Under these conditions, the emperor’s public acts were tied to his personal virtues through the ideology of beneficia, legal decisions, grants of citizenship, and other normal state functions were seen as benefits bestowed by the monarch in the context of his relationship with individual subjects.\(^{273}\)

At the same time, basic concepts like fides were reshaped by the overarching presence of a single figure who served as patron of the ruling orders. As several studies of fides have shown, this and other related concepts like obsequium and industria evolved over the course of the first century CE to convey not just a sense of duty and obligation to the state and one’s fellow

\(^{272}\) Veyne 1978, 37 and 1985; Foucault 1984; see also Bartsch 2006.
\(^{273}\) Veyne 1990, 347.
citizens, but even more strongly to the emperor. 274 A close examination of the representation of fides in the work of Tacitus, for instance, shows that “mantenere integra la propria credibilità nei confronti del principe sembra perciò ora costituirsì come l’unico sostegno per poter ottenere e preservare posizioni politiche di prestigio.” 275 While Pliny’s letters to Trajan demonstrate the importance of that virtue in constructing a senator’s interactions with the emperor, fides remained instrumental in shaping relationships within the elite and between individuals and the senate. Thus, while the patron-client system continued to operate in much the same way that it had during the Republic, monarchy created a new status for the emperor as a patron to whom all Roman citizens owed loyalty and deference, and from whom they could expect beneficia in exchange. 276

Such theories run the risk of underplaying the continuity in the ruling orders’ agonistic ethos, which remained vibrant despite being qualitatively different from a conventional Republican model. Public displays of wealth continued, particularly outside the capitol; civic offices were still sought-after markers of honor; and members of the imperial elite constructed elaborate villas in order to demonstrate ascendency within their peer group. 277 Men like Pliny and Fronto continued to support the careers of younger friends and to confer other benefits on social inferiors, even those who could be considered fellow aristocrats. 278 Nevertheless, the development of a political system that was centered on a core auctoritas vested in the person of the monarch certainly encouraged changes in social values. These changes arose in part from the fact that the composition of the senatorial and equestrian ordines was itself in a state of flux, with

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274 See Barbuti 1994; Freyburger 2002.
275 Barbuti 1994, 286.
276 Von Premerstein 1937, 13–16.
277 Platts 2011.
278 Saller 1982, 121 and 126.
most of the so-called ‘old nobility’ having declined by the second century. A family’s continuing ability to achieve praetorian or consular status, while in part the prerogative of the Senate, relied ultimately on the support of the current emperor. Conceptually speaking, the head of the state was the ultimate distributor of civic honor, which served rhetorically to mask the expectation that one would obey his orders.

With the help of existing Greek models of kingship where the ruler was envisioned as a kind of master, the ideologies generated by the practice of slave-holding and by the cultural responses of slaves and freedmen to their ambiguous position in Roman society coalesced to offer new alternatives for conceptualizing imperial power. In particular, despite precedents in the Republic, the novel position of the familia Caesaris came to represent a new kind of political authority – one based on the exercise of individual will through channels of personal influence, as opposed to the acquisition and transfer of imperium within an electoral system. Imperial slaves and freedmen were powerful symbols of autocracy in part because the princeps elevated certain members of his household to a position of honor and prestige that was inconsistent with their legal status. Tacitus speaks most directly, and most indignantly, to the discursive significance of liberti Augusti – for instance, when he describes how Africa’s demonstration of loyalty to Otho in 69 was initiated by one of Nero’s freedmen, rather than the proconsul, Vipstanus Apronianus:

Crescens Neronis libertus (nam et hi malis temporibus partem se rei publicae faciunt) epulum plebi ob laetitiam recentis imperii obtulerat, et populus pleraque sine modo festinavit.

Crescens, a freedman of Nero (for in bad times, even these men make themselves part of the state) had given a public feast in celebration of the recent accession, and the people rushed to take the usual steps.

\[279\] The classic account is Syme 1958, 490–508.
\[281\] Tac. Hist. 1.76.18.
Tacitus’ parenthetical comment on the civic participation of freedmen during “bad times” (*mala tempora*) insinuates the worst possible link between imperial freedmen and monarchy; violent conflict over succession (or perhaps autocracy in any form) created opportunities for *liberti* to partake actively in the *res publica*, and such a phenomenon in turn exacerbated the degradation of the political order. Beneath the Tacitean rhetoric of “good times versus bad” lies the assumption that imperial freedmen were always a part of the state and that their power depended on the preeminence of their patron. Similarly, in the ethnographical mirror provided by the Germans, kingship is portrayed as a form of government that encourages slaves and freedmen to rise above their rightful station, whereas “freedmen who remain inferior are a testament to political liberty (*argumentum libertatis*)”282. From this point of view, prominent freedmen are both a product and an icon of monarchical rule, whatever the character of the current monarch.283

If we look beyond the anger and resentment that such figures evoked in certain, highly vociferous, members of the senatorial aristocracy, we see that the *familia Caesaris* helped to define the contours of the Principate by revealing its strengths and weaknesses, the avenues along which it operated, and the ways in which power might be acquired, lost, or transmitted.284 To begin with, the encompassing nature of the emperor’s rule was reflected in the powers and duties bestowed on his slaves and freedmen. According to Philo, for instance, one of Caligula’s attendants named Helicon was thought to have been bribed by the promise of special honors in Alexandria, where he hoped to become “almost supreme in his power over a great portion of the world.”285 Alexandria constitutes a microcosm in which Helicon’s authority will approach that

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284 On elite anxiety about powerful freedmen, see Roller 2001, 264–72.
of his master, who presides over the *orbis terrarum*. Both Philo and Josephus demonstrate immense sensitivity to the Jews’ dependency on individual emperors for favor and protection, particularly through the ties of *amicitia* that linked the kings of Judaea to Roman rule. Yet coextensive with this, and clearly manifest in the case of Caligula, was the potential for the system to malfunction as a result of specific agents and personalities.\(^{286}\)

On a rather more positive note, Statius’ praise for the father of Claudius Etruscus in *Silvae* 3.3 includes a well-known description of the duties of the *a rationibus*, which office marked the pinnacle of a freed career on the Palatine. Although the poem as a whole interrogates the instability of imperial favor in light of the elder Etruscus’ ultimate decline and exile to Campania, Statius’ description of his duties while still in office resonate with the imperial motif of “one for many.”\(^{287}\) Twice, Statius uses the word *unus* to emphasize that a single individual is responsible for an entire world’s worth of revenue:\(^{288}\)

\[
\text{...iam creditur uni}
\]
\[
\text{sanctorum digestus opum partaeque per omnis}
\]
\[
\text{divitiæ populos magnique impediam muni}
\]
\[
\text{quicquid ab auriferis ejectat Hiberia fossis},
\]
\[
\text{Dalmatico quod monte nitet, quod messibus Afris}
\]
\[
\text{verritur, aestiferi quicquid terit area Nili},
\]
\[
\text{quodque legit versus pelagi scrutator Eoi},
\]
\[
\text{et Lacedaemonii pecuria culta Galesi}
\]
\[
\text{perspicuaeque nives Massyloque robora et Indi}
\]
\[
\text{dentes honos: uni parent commissa ministro,}
\]
\[
\text{quae Boreas quaeque Euris atrox, quae nubilus Auster}
\]
\[
\text{invehit.}
\]

Now to one man is entrusted the distribution of the sacred wealth, riches collected through all the peoples, the payments made by the wide world. Whatever Iberia ejects from her gold-bearing trenches, what gleams in the mountains of Dalmatia, what is gathered in the African harvests, whatever the threshing-floor of the seething Nile threshes, and what the sunken surveyor of the Eoan sea retrieves, cattle-grazed fields of Spartan Galaesus and clear snows, and Massylian oak, and the pride of Indian ivory: entrusted to one minister, all obey, what Boreas, what fierce Euris, and what cloudy Auster brings in.

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\(^{286}\) Hadas-Lebel 2006, 41–74.


By anchoring this freedman’s economic responsibilities in a geographical description of the empire, Statius presents an analogue for the overarching authority of the princeps, whose presence is implicated by the term minister (line 95). One function of the a rationibus, then, is to mirror the scope of the emperor’s authority in a particular sphere; both the influence and the subordinate position of this financial agent allow the model to develop without threatening the stability of the imperial order.

If freed offices could align symbolically with the principate, so too could certain personal traits deemed necessary for the successful execution of these posts. The levels of responsibility assumed by the emperor and his subordinates carried an obligation to apply oneself to one’s work and to forgo the gratification of personal needs and desires. Few were able to attain this goal, regardless of legal and social status; yet as an ideal, it was reinforced through related discourses that surrounded the princeps and the familia Caesaris. The expectation that a monarch would be assiduous and consistently available to his subjects is most clearly articulated by an anecdote (albeit one modeled on a common trope) in which Hadrian dismisses a woman’s request for a hearing with the excuse that “I don’t have time.” She responds, “Then stop being emperor,” and so convinces him to grant her an audience.289 The antithesis of the industrious princeps was of course the lascivious one, whose corrupted nature could also be figured in relation to slaves and liberti. We will explore in due course this negative association between the emperor and the language of slavery, but it is worth pausing to ask how servile administrators might also have provided constructive paradigms for the type of effort and self-sacrifice required from an effective leader.

In Silvae 3.3, for example, Statius lauds the father of Claudius Etruscus for the attentiveness and wisdom he applied to his office, as well as for his self-restraint in the

289 Cass. Dio 69.6.3; the significance of this passage is explored by Millar 1992, 3; also see 203–72.
indulgence of pleasures. In another *consolatio* for a deceased member of the imperial household, Seneca urges Polybius, *a studiis* of the emperor Claudius, to assuage his grief by concentrating on his obligation to repay the emperor’s favor with *fides* and *industria*. In this text, Claudius serves as an example for Polybius in the tireless observance of *labor*, *industria*, and *occupatio* to protect the peace and leisure of the Roman people. This is formulated as an act of self-sacrifice, for “from the moment when Caesar dedicated himself to the world, he deprived himself of himself.” The *exemplum* manifests the parallelism between a freedman’s devotion to his patron and the emperor’s devotion to his subjects. “While Caesar possesses the world, you cannot give yourself to pleasure, to grief, or to anything else; you owe yourself entirely to Caesar.” The interaction of freed and imperial virtues creates an affinity between these two levels of the status hierarchy that in turn brings the nature of the principate into high relief.

Speaking about imperial authority as a kind of self-sacrifice ties into the Roman view that patronal relations were reciprocal, but it also looks ahead to the emergence of a new kind of ‘pastoral power,’ which Foucault argued was introduced to the Greco-Roman system of government by the Christian Church. Represented in iconography by the image of the Good Shepherd, this kind of power emphasized benevolence toward the weak and construed the

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290 Stat. Silv. 3.3.98: vigil idem animique sagacis; and 106–8: rara quies animoque exclusa voluptas/ exiguaeque dapes et numquam laesa profundo/ cura mero.

291 On the combination of *fides* and *industria*, and its implications for the imperial elite, see above, pp. 59–68.

292 Sen. *Ad Polyb.* 7.2.1–2: Caesari quoque ipsi, cui omnia licent, propter hoc ipsum multa non licent: omnium somnos illius vigilia defendit, omnium otium illius labor, omnium delicias illius industria, omnium vacationem illius occupatio.

293 Sen. *Ad Polyb.* 7.2: Ex quo se Caesar orbi terrarum dedicavit, sibi eripuit, et siderum modo, quae inrequieta semper cursus suos explicant, numquam illi licet subsistere nec quicquam suum facere.

294 Sen. *Ad Polyb.* 7.3: Caesare orbem terrarum possidente impertire te nec voluptati nec dolori nec ulli aliis rei potes; totum te Caesari debes.

pastor’s humility before God as an aid to his flock’s salvation. Early Christian texts also promulgated the view that governance required the submission of self to the service of the divine and of one’s congregation. Christ was therefore the paradigmatic Good Shepherd, not just because of his kindness, but because in coming to earth as the savior of mankind, he relinquished his divinity to become the servant of God. What is more, in a famous episode in the Gospel of John, Christ says, “I am the Good Shepherd; the Good Shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.” That is to say that in this model of leadership, the ruler must be both subservient to a higher power and willing to sacrifice himself for the good of his people. Without digressing too far into this massive and important topic, here I merely point to the connection between the language of slavery and the construction of a new kind of authority that came to full fruition with the rise of the Church. Even earlier, as suggested by Seneca’s reflections on monarchy in the Ad Polybium, the ability to conceptualize the principate as a kind of service – comparable at least rhetorically to the services that a slave performed for his master – was already nascent in Roman ideas about government before ‘pastoral power’ became institutionalized. Likewise, though perhaps an extreme example of Roman emperors’ pro forma refusal of honors, Tiberius could be said to have claimed that a good emperor “ought to serve (servire) the Senate, often the entire populace, and sometimes even individuals.”

Slavery may have been a degrading legal and

296 Foucault 2004, 171–3, on the notion of “alternate correspondence,” whereby the merit of the pastor depends on the weakness of his flock, but the salvation of the sheep is advanced by the pastor’s own imperfection and humility before God. The infiltration of the notion of benevolent control into the social imagination of Late Antiquity is addressed by Brown 2002, 1–73.

297 On Christ as the servant of God, see the discussion below, pp. 166–9 and 172–5.

298 John 10.1–21, esp. 11: Ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ποιμὴν ὁ καλὸς· ὁ ποιμὴν ὁ καλὸς τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ τίθησιν ὑπὲρ τῶν προβάτων·

299 I plan to discuss these issues in more detail in a forthcoming paper on the iconography of political and religious authority under the early empire.

social status, but it could serve in political discourse as a template for elite behavior, even in application to the *princeps* himself.

The integration of servile virtues into Roman ideals of political leadership is barely visible outside the Christian material, but a far more common trope placed the emperor in the position of master or patron and defined his virtues and responsibilities in those terms. At the level of social practice, a ‘good’ emperor was expected to demonstrate the qualities of a moderate slave-owner rather than a cruel or unjust one. Augustus, for example, was “no less severe than gracious and merciful,” keeping some of his slaves and freedmen in close confidence, and punishing some leniently for minor offenses, others more harshly for crimes like adultery and extortion.\(^{301}\) These approaches to slave-owning complement the civic actions that helped to express Augustus’ *clementia* and *civilitas*.\(^{302}\) Likewise, during the earlier part of his reign, Tiberius kept his slave and freed staff to a minimum, along with his holdings in Italy and the adjudication of cases outside the court.\(^{303}\)

By contrast, less popular emperors were said to be “enslaved” to their own slaves and freedmen. Claudius was portrayed as being most notorious in this respect; and Nero’s supposed decline is marked in narratives about his reign by his friendship with a freedwoman and the son of a *libertus*, as well as a young man from a consular family.\(^{304}\) In the biographical tradition reported by Suetonius, Nero’s innate cruelty was already apparent in his father’s execution of a freedman for not drinking as much as ordered.\(^{305}\) Pliny sums up this conceptual rubric in the

\[^{301}\text{Suet. Aug. 67: Patronus dominusque non minus severus quam facilis et clemens multos libertorum in honore et usu maximo habuit…}}^{301}\]

\[^{302}\text{Suet. Aug. 51.1: Clementiae civilitatisque eius multa et magna documenta sunt.}}^{302}\]

\[^{303}\text{Tac. Ann. 4.6.23: Rari per Italian Caesaris agri, modesta servitia, intra paucos libertos domus; ac si quando cum privatis disceptaret, forum et ius.}}^{303}\]

\[^{304}\text{Suet. Cl. 25.5 and 29.1; cf. Vit. 2.5.5: Claudium uxoribus libertisque addictum…; on Nero, Tac. Ann. 13.12.}}^{304}\]

\[^{305}\text{Suet. Nero 5.1.4.}}^{305}\]
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gyricus, where he praises Trajan for honoring freed slaves in proper measure and for the right reasons (*probitas* and *frugalitas*); “for you know that the primary indicator of an emperor who is not great are freedmen who are.”

A monarch’s autonomy and self-restraint were thus configured through his ability to preserve domestic hierarchies, which had now come to bear on the public sphere more directly than ever.

Perhaps even more important than the successful fulfillment of imperial virtues was the nature of the power on which the principate rested. The triumph of personal favor over popular sanction defined, above all else, the boundary between Republic and Empire. To be sure, republican magistrates had used their own domestic staff in carrying out civic duties; and this set a precedent for the development of an imperial bureaucracy of slaves and freedmen. Civil conflict between republican dynasts enhanced the prominence of such *liberti*, whose influence and access to extraordinary military commands reached an apex at the end of the Republic.

Both Marius and Sulla employed large numbers of freedmen – the former as agents of violence, and the latter to establish among the *plebs* 10,000 men who would do his bidding. Appian reports Sulla’s manumission of the Corneliis in a passage that describes how the dictator retained a semblance of republican government but behaved like a monarch (*οἷα βασιλεύων*).

Cicero’s attacks on Sulla’s freedman, Chrysogonus, in the *Pro Roscio Amerino* probably downplay the role played by Sulla, but Plutarch’s account places more weight on Sulla’s

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307 Cf. Apollonius’ speech on kingship to Vespasia at Philostr. *VA* 5.36, where he encourages the emperor, among other things, to lessen the pride of slaves and freedmen, who ought to be humble in the light of their master’s power; on status inversion, see Roller 2001, 265–6.
309 Treggiari 1969, 178, 184 and 192.
influence, and it is highly unlikely that Chrysogonus acted independently of his patron.

Imperial historians looking back on Sulla’s career reiterate the link between freedmen and autocracy that we have seen in other sources, just as much as they identify the probable roots of this discourse.\footnote{Cicero probably downplays the connection between Sulla and his freedman, Chrysogonus; but Plutarch’s account of the trial gives a greater role to Sulla, and it is unlikely that Chrysogonus acted independently of his patron. Cic. Rosc. Am. 22; Plut. Cic. 3.5; Treggiari 1969, 183–4.}

Marius and Sulla were not the only republican leaders to set a precedent for the use of freedmen by later principes. Pompey’s associates in the East included his libertus, Demetrius, whom Plutarch identifies as the most influential of the general’s friends, part of the vast web of associates, freed dependents and veterans through whom he organized this region “like a monarch.”\footnote{Plut. Pomp. 40.1; Badian 1984, 81.}

The connection between Pompey and Demetrius was so strong that Pompey rebuilt Gadara to please his freedman, who hailed from that city.\footnote{Jos. BJ 1.155: ἀνακτίζει δὲ καὶ Γάδαρα ὑπὸ ἱουδαίων κατεστραμμένην Γαδαρὴν τινὶ τῶν ἰδίων ἀπελευθέρων Δημητρίῳ χαριζόμενος.}

Cato is said to have discovered the extent of Demetrius’ power in Antioch when he encountered a throng of youths decked out in white raiment. Ever the Stoic, Cato was dismayed at the thought that these provincials were honoring him; but upon approaching the group’s leader, he found instead that they were awaiting Demetrius.\footnote{Plut. Pomp. 40.10.}

No matter its level of accuracy, this anecdote speaks to a world in which Pompey’s kinglike status in Asia translated to the local prominence of his freedman. Demetrius’ proximity to his patron was enough to legitimate such flattery from the citizens of Antioch, who undoubtedly saw the benefit of ingratiating themselves with someone who had strong personal ties to the Roman conqueror.

Such public displays of deference to a freedman would have come more easily to inhabitants of the former Hellenistic kingdoms than to Romans who espoused a republican
worldview. Likewise, an excessive reliance on servile staff by Roman governors in the provinces could elicit criticism from some parties. Cicero, for instance, warns his brother Quintus (praetor of Asia in 62 BCE; propraetor 61–59) to control his slaves and restrict their services to private affairs. Cicero is especially concerned by how many people have asked him for a recommendation to Statius – that is, for access to Quintus through a personal liaison with a man of low social status. “The very sight of a slave or freedman of such popular standing can have no sense of authority (species ipsa tam gratiosi liberti aut servi dignitatem habere nullam potest).” In this way, Cicero foreshadows imperial anxiety not just about inversions of status, but also about the ideological problems surrounding a slave or freedman who has acquired an abundance of gratia through his relationship to a man with imperium.

Julius Caesar, it has been noted, preferred to use political agents of freeborn or provincial extraction than his own slaves and liberti. Nonetheless, Caesar’s gestures toward monarchy are represented in part through his appointment of his own slaves at the head of the mint and revenues. Suetonius reports this aspect of Caesar’s administrative activities to help demonstrate that the dictator had overstepped the bounds of his authority. Even if this claim had been generated by Caesar’s opponents, as some scholars suspect, it reflects a strand of political ideology that was already linking powerful slaves and liberti to one man’s ascendency.

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315 Cic. Q. Fr. 1.1.17: Ac, si quis est ex servis egregie fidelis, sit in domesticis rebus et privatis, quae res ad officium imperii tui atque ad aliquam partem rei publicae pertinebunt, de his rebus ne quid attingat.
316 Cic. Q. Fr. 1.2.3: Quod autem me maxime movere solebat, cum audiebam illum plus apud te posse, quam gravitas istius aetatis, imperii, prudentiae postularet – quam multos enim mecum egisse putas, ut se Statio commendarem? quam multa autem ipsum ἀφελῶς mecum in sermone ita posuisse: “id mihi non placuit; monui, suasi, deterrui?” quibus in rebus etiamsi fidelitas summa est, quod prorsus credo, quoniam tu ita iudicas, tamen species ipsa tam gratiosi liberti aut servi dignitatem habere nullam potest. Treggiari 1969, 181.
317 Suet. Iul. 76.6: praeterea monetae publicisque uectigalibus pecuiliares seruos praeposuit. trium legionum, quas Alexandrae reliquenbat, curam et imperium Rufioni liberti sui filio exoleto suo demandauit.
318 Suet. Iul. 76.1: praegrauant tamen cetera facta dictaque eius, ut et abusus dominatione et iure caesus existimetur.
within the state.\textsuperscript{320} Likewise, Caesar is said to have purchased the favor of men from all backgrounds, including the favorite slaves and ex-slaves of those whose support he desired; these gifts were both offered by Caesar and requested on the recipients’ own initiative (\textit{sponte}).\textsuperscript{321} Although not exactly the same status inversion that Cicero identifies in his brother’s freedman, Caesar’s willingness to include the servile orders in his constituency and tendency to give them special consideration in his colonial program foreshadow later developments.\textsuperscript{322}

From these republican origins, the public employment of private slaves and \textit{liberti} came to exemplify a political system that operated on ties of personal influence and revolved around the favor of one man, a \textit{princeps}. For the most prominent members of the \textit{familia Caesaris}, direct contact with the emperor formed the basis of their authority within the state.\textsuperscript{323} This is already apparent in Augustus’ habit of watching games in the Circus from the upper rooms of his friends and \textit{liberti}, and in his tendency to retire to a suburban villa owned by one of the latter.\textsuperscript{324} Tiberius had Sabinus executed for “corrupting his freedmen and plotting against him” – a charge that makes sense because of the level of access to the emperor that these \textit{liberti} enjoyed.\textsuperscript{325} Statius, too, praises the father of Claudius Etruscus for keeping close company with the \textit{princeps}.\textsuperscript{326} As secretaries, attendants, and go-betweens, slaves and freedmen were not only privy to sensitive information but also, through personal contact with the emperor, exerted control over the means of communication that relied on face-to-face interaction. Despite the fact

\textsuperscript{320} On the veracity of the anecdote, see Treggiari 1969, 186; cf. Sutherland 1985.
\textsuperscript{321} Suet. \textit{Iul.} 27: Omnibus uero circa eum etiam parte magna senatus gratuito aut leui faenore obstrictis, ex reliqui quoque ordinum genere uel inuitatos uel sponte ad se commeantis uberrimo congiario prosequebatur, libertos insuper serulosque cuiusque, prout domino patronoue gratus qui esset.
\textsuperscript{322} This is evidenced in part by the exception to the rule in some Caesarian colonies that freedmen were barred from the \textit{ordo decurionum}; see Mouritsen 2011, 73–4.
\textsuperscript{323} Millar 1992, 72–4.
\textsuperscript{324} Suet. \textit{Aug.} 45 and 74.
\textsuperscript{325} Tac. \textit{Ann.} 4.70.3: Sed Caesar sollemnia incipientis anni kalendis Ianuariis epistula precatus vertit in Sabinum, corruptos quosdam libertorum et petitum se arguens, ultionemque haud obscure poscebat.
\textsuperscript{326} \textit{Silv.} 3.3.64–5.
that our sources often portray these features of imperial politics as a dangerous threat to civic *libertas*, the rhetorical nature of such biographical anecdotes do not override the actual importance of a servile infrastructure to the Roman imperial government, which employed a surprisingly small number of freeborn officials.\(^{327}\)

Moments of leisure, especially, presented ex-slaves with opportunities to influence the emperor through informal channels that were unavailable to the vast majority of citizens, even those of senatorial rank. Philo explains how Helicon insinuated himself into Caligula’s good graces by attending upon the emperor day and night – even when the *princeps* was alone or resting – and by becoming his master’s partner in exercise, at the baths, and at table.\(^{328}\) This constant proximity enabled Helicon to manipulate Caligula through the employment of wit and charm, talents that worked all the more effectively on a man of dubious moral integrity.\(^{329}\) According to Dio, moreover, Claudius deteriorated because of his association with slaves and women, who took the greatest advantage of him when he was indulging in the pleasures of sex or drink.\(^ {330}\) Although these types of statement play into the rhetoric of the “bad” emperor and cannot be taken at face value, they are reflective of a political mechanism that had real implications. Being close to the emperor when his mind was most open to suggestion presented an avenue to political influence that was emblematized by the *familia Caesaris*.

While this may be true at some level of all courtiers in all monarchies, it has unique relevancy for Rome and Italy, where the practices and ideologies of slaveholding created a particularly rich environment in which such concepts developed. The specific parameters of Roman slave society, and of the Roman principate, conditioned the valence of the *familia*
Caesaris as a political symbol. First, the ongoing prevalence of slavery as an integral part of social life and thought, reflected in Latin literature as early as Plautus, heightened the intensity of elite reactions to these imperial servants *qua* slaves and freedmen.\(^{331}\) Second, because Romans were accustomed to using slavery as a metaphor for other types of hierarchical relationships, the *familia Caesaris* presented an accessible and versatile trope for imperial authority within a pre-established tradition. Importantly, the cultural dialectic that we have been tracing between servile and freeborn social groups through the medium of inscriptions was unique to Roman society; and the place of the emperor’s slaves and freedmen in this exchange must likewise be examined as specific to its historical background.

In light of these considerations, we might delve further into the particular ways in which imperial slaves and *liberti* were iconic of imperial power. Freeborn citizens who wanted to gain entry to the emperor’s inner circle had to consider imperial freedmen as one effective route to success. The disruptions of traditional status norms implied by such a strategy raised the hackles of some members of the elite, but Seneca’s *consolatio* to Polybius demonstrates remarkable pragmatism in the use of an influential freedman to affect an imperial decision.\(^{332}\) Again, Helicon supposedly took bribes from the Alexandrians; and Dio says that Antonia Caenis, Vespasian’s freed mistress, acquired a fortune by selling imperial offices and decisions as a result of her proximity to the emperor.\(^{333}\) Martial speaks to the role of written texts in this negotiation of imperial favor when he asks Parthenius, Domitian’s *cubicularius*, to give his work to the *princeps*.\(^{334}\) Statius, too, claims in his introduction to a consolatory poem for the *ab*

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\(^{331}\) For the Plautine background, see McCarthy 2000, esp. 17–25 and 211–13.

\(^{332}\) On the *Ad Polibium* see Atkinson 1985.

\(^{333}\) Philo *Leg.* 172; Dio 65.14.3–4; Dio’s depiction of Caenis in this context is not completely unfavorable.

\(^{334}\) Mart. *Ep.* 5.6.7–9: admittas timidam breuemque chartam/ intra limina sanctioris aulae./ Nosti tempora tu Louis sereni…
epistulis, Abascantus, that he always tries to deserve well of the imperial household; “one who honors the gods in good faith also loves the priests.”\footnote{335}

For all the virulent criticism that such statements evoked from certain corners, the role of slaves and liberti as mediators of imperial favor marked these figures as representatives not just of the reigning princeps, but of the type of behavior advisable under this form of government. The prominence in our sources of a discourse castigating supposedly tyrannical emperors and lionizing more moderate rulers overshadows the fact that such modes and values were always required in the face of monarchy, no matter who happened to be occupying the office. Seneca, after all, uses Callistus as an example of how a former master can succumb to the type of flattery required from a member of the familia Caesaris when paints a scene in which this now-powerful imperial freedmen turns his former owner away at the door.\footnote{336} The anecdote functions to remind the reader of the Stoic tenet that human beings issue from the same stock, and a change of circumstances may find one paying homage to a man whom one had earlier sold as chattel. Even future emperors learned how to ingratiate themselves with their predecessor’s dependents; and the ‘servility’ of aristocrats vis-à-vis the emperor is one of the dominant political metaphors of the age.\footnote{337}

Similarly, honors bestowed upon freedmen served to demonstrate the crucial role of imperial favor in achieving civic success. Augustus was supposed to have been moderate in this regard, only twice using freedmen as soldiers, and even then keeping low-status troops separate

\footnote{335} Stat. Silv. 5 (praef.): praeterea latus omne divinae domus semper demereri pro mea mediocritate conitor. nam qui bona fide deos colit, amat et sacerdotes.

\footnote{336} Sen. Ep. 47.9: Stare ante limen Callisti dominum suum vidi et eum qui illi impegerat titulum, qui inter reicula mancipia produxerat, alii intrantibus exclusi. Rettulit illi gratiam servus ille in primam decuriam coniectus, in qua vocem praeco expetur: et ipse illum invicem apologavit, et ipse non iudicavit domo sua dignum. Dominus Callistum vendidit: sed domino quam multa Callistus!

\footnote{337} Freedmen and women as a means of accession: Suet. Oth. 2.2.1 and Vit. 2.5.5.
from the citizen army. Nonetheless, Suetonius tells us, Augustus “held many freedmen in the highest honor and employment” (*multos libertorum in honore et usu maximo habuit*). The emperor Claudius, of course, receives the most attention from our written sources for having carried the valuation of freedmen to its extreme, for example by bestowing the senatorial stripe on ex-slaves’ sons; giving military honors and commands to Posides and Felix; and having Polybius, his *ab studiis*, walk between the consuls. Most flagrantly, Claudius ‘allowed’ the senate to bestow official insignia on Narcissus and Pallas. This event marks the senate’s willingness to play its designated role in the theater of Roman politics by honoring Claudius’ *liberti* in ways usually reserved for members of the freeborn ruling class. The senate’s complicity in making such exceptions to conventional social norms solidifies the implications of the *familia Caesaris* as a symbol of monarchy.

At the same time, however, the rise and fall of *liberti Augusti* signified the instability of such a political system. Just as often as the emergence of a prominent freedman marked him as the emperor’s favorite, an ill-timed alliance or turn of opinion could catapult him to ruin. This discursive role of *liberti Augusti* was especially apparent in moments of succession, when the personal basis of imperial rule came to the fore in the transfer of power from the *princeps* to a close relative, or in violent conflict that involved the legions’ swearing oaths of allegiance. Likewise, numerous plots to assassinate a reigning *princeps* utilized one or more of his freedmen. The closeness of these figures to the emperor, the level of access they had to his chambers, and the amount of trust he put in the members of his domestic staff, all increased the

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338 Suet. *Aug.* 25.2: Libertino milite, praeterquam Romae incendiorum causa et si tumultus in graviore annona metueretur, bis usus est: semel ad praesidium coloniarum Illyricum contingentium, iterum ad tutelam ripae Rheni fluminis; eosque, servos adhuc viris feminisque pecuniosioribus indictos ac sine mora manumissos, sub priore vexillo habuit, neque aut commixtos cum ingenuis aut codem modo armatos.
341 Millar 1992, 74.
342 Suet. *Cal.* 56.1.5; *Cl.* 13.2.3; *Gal.* 10.5.4; *Oth.* 6.2.5; *Dom.* 14.12.
threat they posed to power, as well as the influence they could wield. In this way, the familia Caesaris contained on the one hand some of the most obvious agents of subversion, but was also talismanic of the instability of regimes based on the rule of one man.

These metaphors worked in support of the reorientation of concepts like fides, industria and obsequium as foundational concepts in the ideology of a service elite whose main source of civic honor had become loyalty and obedience to the emperor. To be sure, this discourse was complicated by the existence of multiple layers of social and political authority, which in part preserved the system of patronage on which much of republican government had based, and by the elevation of the familia Caesaris above other categories of slaves and freedmen.³⁴³ Yet in the conceptual world of senators and equestrians critiques of servitus to an autocrat coexisted with constructive applications of slavery as a model of how to succeed in public life under a monarchy. Even Tacitus and the Younger Pliny, vigorous proponents of senatorial libertas, in certain rhetorical settings find value in deference.³⁴⁴ Yet other moments, such as many of those discussed here, called for the presentation of liberti Augusti as potential exempla for aristocratic behavior; as in the case of M. Antonius Pallas, interpretations of such figures depended on the perspectives and rhetorical needs of those who stood in judgment, as well as on the medium and genre in which a given reading was being conveyed. Turning now to the epigraphical output of the familia Caesaris, we will see how the emperor’s slaves and freedmen produced their own commentaries on their roles in society and government, and how these utterances were integral to how Romans thought about empire.

³⁴³ Alföldy 1985, fig. 1.
³⁴⁴ See ch. 2, above.
3.3 Alternatives Communicated through Public Writing

Despite the fact that slaves and freedmen were fundamentally dishonored in the eyes of freeborn Romans, their social standing could be improved by the nobility of their master or patron. Being the slave of a prominent citizen brought not only material benefits and opportunities for economic success, but also a certain level of prestige on account of being linked to an elite household. Such ties were reflected especially in ex-slaves’ nomenclature, which mirrored that of their patron; to be a L. Cornelius or C. Iulius was worthy of recognition. When displayed on funerary and civic monuments, such appellations commemorated the freedman’s connection to Rome’s highest families, even if that link was one of ownership rather than birth. Of course, this applied primarily to the skilled personnel who staffed large urban households, and we have witnessed the types of disparaging comments that Republican authors reserved for slaves and liberti who exploited their proximity to power. Nevertheless, the relationship between a paterfamilias and his dependents was an effective conduit for honor and authority; and epigraphical writing was a primary medium for the advertisement of these linkages by individuals who stood to benefit.

We can observe a similar phenomenon among private freedmen in the imperial period and note the elite’s awareness of its cultural relevance by way of satire in the Satyricon.345 The full name that Petronius gives to Trimalchio, Gaius Pompeius Trimalchio Maecenatianus, instantiates this fictional ex-slave’s aristocratic pretensions by referring to great men of the past. Even though Pompeius was a common enough nomen in the first century CE, in conjunction with Maecenas it makes at least an oblique allusion to the Pompeys of the Civil Wars. Further, adoptive agnonima in –anus had been employed primarily among elite families until the late

345 Veyne 1962, 1617.
second century BCE, when the customary procedure involved changing the adopted son’s full name to that of his new father and adding a cognomen formed from his original nomen; thus L. Aemilius Paullus became P. Cornelius Scipio Aemilianus. These conventions underwent significant alterations in the late Republic, however, and many of those adopted into Rome’s leading families chose to retain their original cognomen instead of or in addition to a modified version of their birthfather’s nomen. According to a thorough review of the imperial evidence, adoptive names in –anus lost popularity in the first century CE and were replaced by a variety of styles, such as the reduplication of the original nomen and cognomen in addition to the adoptive praenomen and nomen. In particular, agnomen in –anus came to suggest a servile background in the Julio-Claudian period, when they were used mainly to preserve the name of the former master who had sold, given or bequeathed the libertus to his current patron, thereby strengthening the link between patronage and parenthood already embedded in the derivation of patronus from pater and reflecting upon the fact that some ex-slaves could benefit from retaining ties to their former owners even after they had been sold and manumitted.

For readers interpreting Petronius’ satire in light of contemporary nomenclatural practices, Trimalchio’s name demonstrates his ignorance of aristocratic culture in several ways. Not only does he fail to realize that his agnomen emphasizes his legal status rather than a sense of nobility, he forms it with a cognomen rather than a nomen and mixes historical metaphors by suggesting a connection to opposing factions in the fall of the Republic and rise of Augustus. As in other moments throughout the Cena, Trimalchio’s attempts at high culture go awry and

349 Veyne 1962; Weaver 1972, 90–2 and n. 3; on the actual adoption of freedmen, see Gardner 1989.
350 I discuss how Petronius treats Trimalchio’s acceptance of his servile past in ch. 4.
only end up serving as markers of ignorance. If Maecenas represents the literary patron par excellence, the misuse of his name by a freedmen comes across as even more boorish than ever.

Notably, readers of the Satyricon encounter Trimalchio’s full name on inscriptions, whereas throughout the work he is referred to simply by his cognomen – that is, his original slave name. A dedication from the dispensator, Cinnamus, is addressed to C. Pompeius Trimalchio; and the epitaph that our host composes aloud for his tomb begins with the extended appellation, C. Pompeius Trimalchio Maecenatianus. Likewise, other freedmen in the novel are referred to by their tria nomina only in the quasi-official context of epigraphical texts. Although Petronius is interested in satirizing this aspect of freed culture, he offers important testimony about the role of inscriptions in demonstrating how nomenclature could add to an ex-slave’s prestige. One the one hand, some liberti chose to downplay their servile past by omitting direct references to their patrons; but even in the absence of libertination, a freedman’s nomen and (in some cases) agnomen served to articulate the familial connections that were critical to his standing in the community.

These features of the Roman slave system gained new significance under the Principate, when the emperor became the single most important citizen in public life and the social arena. In an excursus that lists powerful freedmen throughout Roman history, Pliny the Elder first provides examples of liberti whose patrons were Republican magnates – specifically, Sulla, Catulus, Lucullus, Pompey and M. Antony. With respect to his own times, however, Pliny need only mention the Senate’s grant of praetorian insignia to an imperial freedman (probably

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351 Petr. 30 and 71.
352 Petr. 38: C. Pompeius Diogenes and C. Iulius Proculus.
353 Notice the exclusion of Julius Caesar and Octavian/Augustus from this list.
Pallas) at the command of Claudius’ wife, Agrippina.\textsuperscript{354} The transition between a republican and imperial political context is marked by the shift from many to one \textit{patronus} who has the capacity to elevate his freedmen to such heights. The fact that the emperor’s wife ordered (\textit{iubere}) the Senate to give this ex-slave honors that were normally reserved for the ruling elite only underscores the authority exercised by the members of the \textit{domus Augusta}, to the exclusion of all other families. This is not to say that the freedmen of imperial aristocrats did not enjoy the same sorts of opportunities as their counterparts in the Republic, but rather that the difference between these \textit{mileux} could be marked by a change in focus from private households to the \textit{liberti Augusti}.

Inscriptions played an important role in this process of signification. With the rise of monarchy, displays of social and political authority were reoriented around the figure of the \textit{princeps}, including messages communicated through material artefacts. This phenomenon has been examined in detail by Zanker, and others, particularly with respect to the visual arts and the emergence of a new iconography.\textsuperscript{355} Likewise, Alföldy has sought to recognize fully the impact of the Augustan program on Roman epigraphical culture.\textsuperscript{356} As he argued, in the design of inscriptions from entablature on buildings to milestones to funerary monuments, Augustus drew on existing traditions while developing an approach to inscribed writing that supported the principles of his regime. A style of lettering that exemplified clarity, gravity, and uniformity, for

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item[\textsuperscript{355}] Zanker 1988; Wallace-Hadrill 2008.
\item[\textsuperscript{356}] Alföldy 1991.
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example, mirrored the return of order to the res publica; and the proliferation of such inscriptions established the imperial presence throughout Italy and the provinces.

The reproduction of the emperor’s nomina in the inscriptions of his slaves and freedmen was one way in which this process took hold, above and beyond acts of self-representation that issued directly from the center. I would like to suggest here that members of the familia Caesaris took an active role in the redefinition of political power through their use of epigraphical media. As we have seen in the literary sources, imperial freedmen presented the ruling orders with models of how the principate functioned. Acquiring the personal favor of the emperor, rather than reaching the consulship through election, became the focal point of elite competition; and the patron-freedman relationship between the princeps and his liberti underscored the triumph of such personal ties over political and social conventions. On the one hand, inscriptions that celebrate this aspect of imperial patronage give material expression to the fundamental difference between Republic and Empire. At the same time, however, certain aspects of the monuments erected by liberti Augusti demonstrate the institutionalization of an autocratic regime. In both of these respects, the epigraphical culture of the familia Caesaris contributed to the development of Roman political ideology in the first two centuries CE.

Inscribed monuments commissioned by members of the imperial household articulated the extent to which personal or quasi-personal relationships connected citizens to the emperor. In some cases, liberti Augusti are quite explicit about the fact that power travelled through a narrow set of social channels, rather than by popular mandate, or even according to the tenets of oligarchy. Consider this dedication to Antoninus Pius by one of his former slaves:\textsuperscript{357}

\textsuperscript{357} NSc 1892, p. 480, nr. 1.
To Imperator Caesar Titus Aelius Hadrianus Antoninus Augustus Pius, pater patriae, best and kindest patron; Fortunatus, his freedman, ordered in his will [worth?] 300,000 HS that this be made.

The epithets *optimus* and *indulgentissimus* (line 3) had long been used by the freedmen of private citizens to commemorate their former masters. Whether or not these words reflect actual emotions is impossible to determine, and in some senses irrelevant, although correlations between certain epithets and types of relationships have been documented. 358 *Optimus* and *indulgentissimus* comprise a discourse of paternalism that helped to cement ties of patronage without necessarily articulating the full range of opinions that freed commemorators may have held of their former masters. Thus, even in the mid-second century CE, a member of the emperor’s extensive, and highly bureaucratic *familia* can refer to the *princeps* in strikingly familiar terms (even if the sincerity of such statements may be called into question). 359 By drawing on formulae more commonly used to describe bonds between private citizens and their dependents, as well as among kin, Fortunatus reveals an essential factor contributing to his substantial wealth and high status; he claims both a social and a civic connection to imperial authority. 360

The relationship between freedman and patron, even when framed in benevolent terms, involved a basic imbalance of power in which the latter controlled the former. Like the

359 Cf. CIL 6.1052 (Severan; the emperor is addressed by a group of freedmen as domino indulgentissimo) and 6.1887 (Vespasian cited as patronus in a freed cursus). Emotive epithets in inscriptions are discussed by Nielsen 1997 in relation to their ability to express a connection with basic values. From this perspective, *optimus* and *indulgentissimus* are not merely formulaic but refer the reader to the language and tradition of personal patronage, despite the fact that the commemorator may very well never have expected to meet the emperor in person.
360 It is extremely unlikely that Fortunatus set up a monument worth 300,000 HS, so I interpret the sum as referring to the value of the deceased’s estate rather than as the cost of the monument. The inscription is designed to highlight this freedman’s wealth in connection with his membership in the *familia Caesars*. 

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conflation of private and public authority that was displayed in the monuments of the *familia Caesaris*, as well as in the emperor’s own epigraphical self-presentation, loyal obedience to the *princeps* was also perceived by freedmen as a source of legitimate honor. The epitaph of an actor named Ti. Claudius Pardalas offers a particularly strong articulation of this basic concept.\(^{361}\)

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Ti(berius) Claudius Aug(usti) l(ibertus) Pardalas} \\
\text{Apollinis parasitus} \\
\text{ego sum bene tibi sit qui me legis [et tibi]} \\
\text{Apolausti Maioris condiscipulus Apolausti Iunioris doctor //} \\
\text{Ti(berius) Claudius Pardalas Aug(usti) l(ibertus) Apollinis parasitus} \\
\text{aego sum} \\
\text{bene tibi sit qui me legeris //} \\
\text{Quisquae me vexaverit} \\
\text{quisquae meo corpori manus intulerit} \\
\text{quartanas dabo ex viso magno} \\
\text{imperio iussus sum cum viverem}
\end{align*}
\]

Tiberius Claudius Pardalas, freedman of Augustus. I am a member of the *Parasiti Apollinis*. May you fare well who reads me [and you]. Fellow student of the elder Apolaustus and teacher of the younger Apolaustus, Tiberius Claudius Pardalas, freedman of Augustus, I am a member of the *Parasiti Apollinis*. May you fare well who reads me; and whoever disturbs me, whoever lays a hand on my body, I shall give him a fever that occurs every fourth day [malaria], according to a vision. When I was alive, I was commanded by a great *imperium*.

A freedman with the name Ti. Claudius Aug. lib. probably lived no later than c. 110, or roughly 40 years after the death of Nero.\(^{362}\) The elder and younger Apolausti are two of several pantomimes known by this name from the second century; like ‘Pylades’, Apolaustus was an appellation favored by actors.\(^{363}\) Of greater interest here, however, are the terms in which Pardalas curses potential violators of his tomb. To add force to the threat of malaria, he reminds his audience of the ‘great *imperium*’ by which he was commanded during his lifetime (*magno im...*)

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\(^{361}\) *AE* 1916, 64 (Fiano Romano, mid-first to early second century CE); reproduced on a sarcophagus inscription found at Capena (CIL 11.7767); the same Ti. Claudius Pardalas, with the *agnomen* Tertullianus, probably also appears in CIL 6.8534.

\(^{362}\) Weaver 1972, 33.

\(^{363}\) Robert 1930, 112; Potter in Potter – Mattingly 1999, 274.
imperio iussus sum cum viverem, line 11). In this case, submission to the leader of the Roman world enhances the freedman’s authority after death.

While distinctive, this statement articulates an ideological assumption that underlies less detailed inscriptions in which imperial freedmen derive honor from their service to the princeps. There are, of course, outstanding examples of freed slaves on whom the emperor bestowed the anulus aureus and ornamenta generally granted only to the freeborn. I have already discussed how Pallas’ monument was an extreme manifestation of this principle of imperial favor.364 Beyond these anomalies, however, the nomenclature of all imperial freedmen reflects the distinctive type of prestige to be gained from membership in the familia Caesaris. Members of the imperial household, for instance, persisted in the use of the status indication, whereas ex-slaves of privati increasingly omitted evidence of their legal background in the first and second centuries CE.365 Likewise, beginning under the Flavians, imperial freedmen resisted the tendency to abbreviate lib. to l., preferring to give the extended form that made their connection to the princeps more visible.366 Among adult males these labels almost always appear in conjunction with an occupational title, thus approaching a “badge of office” rather than a simple citation of legal status.367

Importantly, the evidence for these trends comes largely from the epigraphical material and thus speaks to modes of self-definition that liberti Augusti displayed on their own monuments. Members of the imperial familia were especially likely to find honor in

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364 See above, pp. 76–82.
366 For the figures, see Weaver 1963, 276; ser. for servus and vern. for verna also predominated over abbreviations of one letter.
367 Weaver (1972, 168–9) makes this point in his discussion of the SC Claudianum, regarding the small proportion of male children born to servi Caesaris and ingenuae who receive the imperial status indication: “This is to be explained, at least in part, by the tendency for the prestigious Imperial status indication to be used more by adult males as a badge of office. There are very many cases of father or son being the only members of a family to have status indication. And status indication almost invariably accompanies the use of an occupational title in the Imperial service.”
subjugation, because the emperor’s staff comprised an elite sub-group among the slave population.\footnote{Again, see Alföldy 1984, 125.} As a rule, the higher the status of one’s owner, the higher one’s status as a slave or libertus – and as the single individual of preeminent status, the emperor transferred an air of authority even to his servile subordinates. In addition, with the help of more detailed statements found in the inscriptions of Fortunatus and Pardalas, we can conclude from widespread onomastic patterns and references to imperial service that the ‘servile’ ideology of willing obedience had fused with that of imperial government. This was in part a result of the epigraphical strategies employed by members of the familia Caesaris throughout Rome and the provinces. In particular, the evolution of Aug. lib. into a marker of civic involvement is perhaps the visible attestation that such non-elite, domestic values had come to be applied to the political sphere in new ways.

To be sure, the line between public and private had been vaguely drawn in the Republic, as well, when political leaders conducted civic business in the atria of their houses or with the help of slave and freed agents. Yet never had a single individual’s personal staff reached such a high level of prominence, spread over such a broad area, or been identified so consistently with the Roman state.\footnote{Pace Friedländer 1921, vol. 1, 33.} The honors bestowed upon men like Pallas were the most obvious examples of how imperial favor could elevate one’s prestige; but even less prominent members of the emperor’s household set up monuments that expressed this connection. When faced with such inscriptions, as well as with the daily realities of this system, the ruling orders were compelled to confront the distinction between their own times and the Republican past – or at least to recognize the instability of traditional narratives about elite power and honor.
A similar phenomenon emerges from the use of the word *verna* with regard to the imperial household. In general, *verna* referred to a slave who had been born to one of the master’s slave women. The father could be another slave or the woman’s owner, as was likely often the case.\(^{370}\) In burial inscriptions from private households, these ‘home-born’ slaves are often depicted as enjoying a special relationship with the *paterfamilias*, perhaps even one of surrogate kin.\(^{371}\) They may occupy a prominent place in group epitaphs or receive emotive epithets like *dulcissimus* and *carissimus*, as well as more detailed statements of inclusion within the family, although *vernae* did not have the same status as freeborn children even if they shared a father.\(^{372}\) In the literary sources, moreover, these slaves tend to be surrounded by a halo of idealism that euphemizes the violence involved in the ownership of human chattel and in the sexual violation of slave women by masters.\(^{373}\) *Vernae*, above all, embodied the rhetoric of personal affection and paternalism as it operated in the ideology of slave-holding.\(^{374}\)

Not until the reign of Hadrian did the designation of *verna* become popular in the nomenclature of the *familia Caesaris*, although imperial *vernae* are attested in the Julio-Claudian and Flavian periods.\(^{375}\) Yet when applied to the emperor’s household, the term expanded its meaning to indicate not just the children of *servae Caesaris*, but an administrative elite of both slaves and *liberti*.\(^{376}\) This may have been facilitated by the *SC Claudianum* of 52 CE, which demoted *ingenuae* who married slaves to the status of *servae* or *libertae*.\(^{377}\) The maintenance of the *familia Caesaris* was probably a motivating factor in this measure, because not only did the

\(^{370}\) On private and imperial *vernae*, see the thorough study of Herrmann-Otto 1994.


\(^{372}\) E.g., CIL 14, 1641: Dis Manibus / Steiae Fortunae P(ubli) Stei Felicis vern(ae) / cuius heres fuit p(ro) p(atre) [(sexta) Sex(tus) Gavius / Sex(ti) f(ilius) Scantianus matri suae p/entissimae et Sex(tus) Gavius Augusta [sic] / coniugi suae carissimae fecerunt] / cui virgo nupsit et vivit cum eo / in diem fati sui dulcissime an(nos) XXI.

\(^{373}\) Wiedemann 1985, 164; Hor. *Ep.* 2.64–5; Mart. *Ep.* 2.29.

\(^{374}\) Cf. Herrmann-Otto 1994, 98.

\(^{375}\) Weaver 1972, 51.

\(^{376}\) Herrmann-Otto 1994, 195; Weaver 1972, 177.

\(^{377}\) Esp. Gaius 1.84; Tac. *Ann.* 12.53.1.
SC give the emperor rights over the patrimony of such women, it also ensured that their sons would be eligible for enrollment in the administrative service.³⁷⁸ Thus *verna*, like other forms of status indication, approaches a career title in its application to imperial slaves and *liberti*.³⁷⁹

While the *princeps* was indirectly present in the monuments of his *familia*, the form and content of these artefacts were determined by slaves and *liberti*. As one historian who has studied both private and imperial *vernae* in detail has insightfully noted: “In every line the emperor is present, but only indirectly, because in none of the 137 inscriptions [of imperial *vernae*] does he appear as the *dominus* or *patronus* dedicating or granting the burial.”³⁸⁰ The depiction of imperial *vernae* on inscriptions was therefore in large part dependent on the cultural practices of this social sub-group. While a Hadrianic date is rather late for such a change, it is probable that the emergence of ‘*verna*’ as an element of the administrative *cursus* reinforced the ideology of empire by advertising the benefits to be gained from this type of connection to the *princeps*. Like the inscriptions of Fortunatus and Pardalas – both of which refer to the emperor’s role as master and patron – monuments that attest *vernae Caesaris* and *vernae Augusti* are suggestive of the personal authority on which the imperial system relied. Neither the commemorators nor the viewers of these inscriptions can have forgotten that this word referred to the most ‘personal’ of all master-slave relationships when applied to private households. The cooption of this terminology into the discourse of imperial service reflects the centrality of a single individual to the organization of political power.

In these ways, the monuments of imperial slaves and *liberti* supported ideological bases of monarchy – particularly the circulation of honor and power around the focal point of one man...

³⁷⁹ Also see Herrmann-Otto 1994, 126.
³⁸⁰ Herrmann-Otto 1994, 128: In jeder Zeile ist der Kaiser präsent, aber nur indirekt, denn als dedizierender oder die Grabstätte gewährender *dominus* oder *patronus* tritt er in keiner der 137 Inschriften hervor.
and his immediate family. At the same time as the epigraphical culture of the *familia Caesaris* helped to define the principate by emphasizing its affinity with the system of private patronage, it also demonstrated the institutionalization of this mode of government. We have seen how the nomenclature of imperial freedmen and references to the emperor’s role as master and patron publicized the fact that personal ties were effective conduits of influence and authority. No matter how ‘oligarchic’ the Republic may have been, the restructuring of power under Augustus demanded a fundamental ideological change within the ruling elite, not simply on the basis of official propaganda but also in core definitions of honor and authority and in patterns of behavior. Part of this new ideology rested on the acceptance of an individual ruler as the arbiter of civic achievement, and the terms in which the *familia Caesaris* represented its place in society comprised a crucial mechanism for the solidification of this type of regime.

Changes in the nomenclature of imperial freedmen was one way in which the routinization of the principate came to be articulated in the epigraphical landscape as the Augustan solution coalesced into monarchy. Most strikingly, *Aug(usti) lib(ertus)* became the standard form of status indication around the time of the emperor Claudius. Whereas alternatives such as *Divi Aug(usti) lib(ertus)* appear in the *tria nomina* of ex-slaves up to this point, little variation occurs later. An explanation of this phenomenon contains powerful consequences:

... the main reason for this change is the general movement of freedmen away from considering themselves associated with a particular emperor. Among freedmen there grew a sense of belonging not to a particular emperor but to an increasingly institutionalised Familia Caesars. From being an emperor’s freedmen they became ‘Imperial’ freedmen.

More could be made of this fact, particularly as it reflects the emergence of a political cultural in which the endurance of the principate went unquestioned. Modern historians often identify 69

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381 Weaver 1972, 45.
CE as a point when the elite collectively demonstrated its acceptance of an autocratic system by asking not what type of government would follow Nero’s death, but who would be the next princeps.\textsuperscript{382} While this approach may be useful for teaching, it misrepresents the length, breadth, and complexity of an ongoing process through which Romans renegotiated their basic values to accommodate monarchy, and ignores the fact that they did so in dialogue with members of all status groups. Decades before this supposed milestone, the institutionalization of the principate had become apparent in the ethos of the \textit{familia Caesaris} and was being articulated in the civic and funerary monuments that they commissioned for themselves and each other.

While it may seem paradoxical at first glance, onomastic trends suggest that the emperor’s slaves and freedmen symbolized both the personal nature of the \textit{princeps}’ authority and the institutionalization of a political system that operated on this basic assumption. Similarly, as we have seen, the application of ‘verna’ to the \textit{familia Caesaris} entailed a shift in the word’s significance from ‘home-born slave’ to a quasi-official element of the administrative \textit{cursus}. The difference between private and imperial \textit{vernae} is also reflected in varying patterns of usage – for example, in the scarcity of private \textit{vernae} who are known to have died after age 20, versus the number of imperial \textit{vernae} who retained this title well into adulthood.\textsuperscript{383} Like the regularization of status indication, changes in the nuance of the \textit{verna} as a title in honorific and funerary monuments helped to manifest the solidification of the principate and the ideologies on which it was founded.

One particularly detailed example comes from the tombstone of a man named Laeona, who served as a \textit{dispensator} and was buried by his son, a freed \textit{procurator}, at Formia.\textsuperscript{384}

\textsuperscript{382} E.g., Potter 2009, 190; cf. Mackay 2004, 221–2.
\textsuperscript{383} Herrmann-Otto 1994, Appendix I (Lebensaltertabelle): 52% (N=108) of \textit{vernae} in the \textit{familia Caesaris} died at age 21 or older, versus 5% (N=312) among \textit{vernae} in private households.
\textsuperscript{384} CIL 10.6093 (late second century).
Laeonae
vern(ae) disp(ensatori) qui
vixit ann(os) LXVI
et est conversatus
summa sollicitudine
in diem quoad vixit
circa tutelam prae
tori Amazonicus
Augg(ustorum) lib(ertus) procurat(or)
[p]atri piissimo cum
[fr]atribus suis b(ene) m(erenti) f(ecerunt)

To Laeona verna and dispensator who lived 66 years and served the praetor in charge of tutela with the greatest care, every day as long as he lived. Amazonicus, imperial freedman and procurator made this for his father, who was well-deserving, in conjunction with his brothers.

Although imperial ownership of the deceased is not stated explicitly through the inclusion of Caesaris after verna, Amazonicus’ status as Augustorum libertus clarifies that of his father. Thus, like other slaves of the emperor, Laeaon’s prestige is elevated by his connection to the center of power as articulated by the title of verna, which itself exemplifies the transposition of the personal and private into the political sphere. The rest of the inscription complicates this basic tension, however, by celebrating the care (sollicitudo) with which Laeona carried out his duties not for the princeps but for the praetor in charge of guardianship. The phrase in diem quoad vixit underscores the continuity of the slave’s post in contrast to the praetorship, which changed hands from year to year, and thus allows the emperor’s authority to permeate the entire structure of command. In contrast to Republican magistrates’ employment of their own slaves and liberti, the familia Caesaris comprised an institutional layer, a true civil service, whose stability and removal from intra-elite competition rested on the ascendancy of one man.
Whether by reproducing the imperial *nomina* or offering more detailed articulations of the nature of monarchical power and its capacity to bestow honor, the civic and funerary monuments of *liberti Augusti* testified to the emergence of a new regime under Augustus and his successors. Some of these freedmen, like Pallas, became their patron’s advisor and confidant, while others went about their work rarely or never setting eyes on the *princeps*. Nevertheless, representations of the emperor as master of the *orbis terrarum* or as the common patron of his subjects evolved in close relation to the social practices and ideologies of slavery, particularly as manifest in the *familia Caesaris*. The ideologies at play, moreover, were not limited to those of freeborn slaveholders or of the senatorial and equestrian orders, but included those generated by *liberti Augusti*, both a sub-elite among the servile population and a group whose culture had been shaped by the terms of enslavement.

In presenting an alternative reading of the literary and epigraphical sources, I do not wish to deny the importance of rhetorical *topoi* in which metaphorical enslavement to the emperor was framed in starkly negative terms nor to suggest that Tacitus and Pliny were alone in their prejudice against imperial freedmen. But these aspects of Roman political discourse were in constant and productive dialogue with others which recognized the efficacy of ‘servile’ behavior in dealing with the extreme power differential that autocracy posed for the elite. As the case of Pallas makes clear, the epigraphical culture of the *familia Caesaris* was a crucial setting for the contestation of social and political values, including the nature of honor, *fides*, and the validity of the *princeps’* authority. The monuments commissioned by *liberti Augusti* were instrumental in enacting these changes because they confronted the elite with powerful examples of the benefits...
to be gained not just from adopting a stance of deference toward the emperor but also embracing the virtues that were attendant to this position.
CHAPTER 4: THE INDIVIDUAL LIFE COURSE

In the preceding chapters, I discussed from two different perspectives how slave and freed culture interacted with elite discourses about virtue, honor, power, and commemoration. Focusing on specific ideas or institutions, such as the preservation of memory or the familia Caesaris, helped to clarify some of the ways in which slaves and freedmen modeled virtues and behaviors that were taken up by the imperial aristocracy as it negotiated its position with respect to the princeps. Moving forward, I seek to expand this study to a pair of closely related issues that were critical to how the Romans understood their society – namely, the definition of self and community. In this chapter, I treat the problem of the individual by asking how slaves and freedmen chose to represent the human life course in their inscriptions, and how those choices convey a unique approach to personal identity that contributed to other areas of Roman discourse. In turn, Chapter 5 presents an examination of slavery and manumission’s role in the construction of the Roman political community, which was influenced by freedmen’s cultural response to the tension between inclusion and exclusion that they experienced as a result of enfranchisement.

To begin with the question of the individual, the development of the life-course approach in sociology has shown how our lives are shaped by contextual factors, all of which are historically situated to reflect the parameters in which we make decisions.\(^{385}\) Major changes in the modern life course (known as ‘transitions’) include moving out of one’s parents’ house,

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\(^{385}\) Elder et al. 2004, 12.
having children, serving in the military, or retiring from the workforce. The form of these transitions depend on multiple factors, including socio-economic conditions, political change, and cultural norms, as well as biological determinates such as disease. In the United States, for example, a recent PhD facing unemployment may decide to move back in with her parents, switch careers, or join the Army, three very different choices made under the same constraints. Although such decisions imply a certain level of personal agency, external factors impose significant limitations on the possibilities, even in a culture that idealizes free will. What is more, the measures of progress (or regress) that we choose to impart on the life course are not universal to all populations, but rather reflective of our basic values. Living with one’s parents into adulthood, for instance, would be seen in some cultures as normal behavior, whereas for our doctoral student it may represent a failure to mature at the expected pace.

The nature and timing of life-course transitions differed substantially in the Greco-Roman world from those in contemporary Western societies; and the application of demographic techniques to the ancient evidence has in many cases enhanced our understanding of what the ancient life course may have looked like. Youth and old age have both been the subject of book-length studies in recent decades, as has the impact of military service on family life, particularly with respect to population patterns. The age at which Roman women and men were likely to marry has also been the subject of much discussion, with an average age of 15 for women and 20 for men being advanced against previous estimations of the late teens and late 20’s, respectively. The ongoing debates concerning each of these topics lie beyond the

386 Elder et al. 2004, 8; on military deployment in particular, see the review article of MacLean – Elder 2007.
389 The lower figures are provided by Lelis, Percy, and Verstraete 2003, in response to higher estimations in Saller 1987 and Shaw 1987. The details and background of this debate are far too complicate to discuss here in full, but for a sober assessment of the issues, see Scheidel 2007.
pursuit of my arguments, but it is important to note that these and other elements of the Roman life course were historically conditioned and, even within the ancient world, varied significantly according to region and social status. The nature and timing of many transitions would have been very different, say, for a slave or freedmen than for a member of the ruling elite.

Rather than try to quantify the demographic factors that helped to shape the ancient life course, I am concerned to ask how people at different levels of the Roman status hierarchy chose to represent the individual lifespan in terms of important milestones. Whether expressed through epigraphical or literary media, representations of the human life course are by necessity highly selective, with the author or commemorator being compelled to choose certain markers of personal progress. In designing a funerary monument, for example, a commemorator might choose to include a political or administrative career, changes in legal status, kinship, or relocation to a new town or province. These types of transition often appear together on the same monument, but each signals a particular institution or ideological framework from which it derives its primary meaning. Along similar lines, literary biographies might depict a chronological sequence of achievements, a set of character traits, an ethical or spiritual journey, or some composite of themes. In either medium, the author’s choice of what frameworks to

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390 Scheidel 2007, 390.
391 The point that well-to-do freedmen may have imitated elite practices, such as age at marriage, is well taken (although cf. Scheidel 2007, 398); but the cultural significance of these moments would have been very different, for example because marriage created political ties among the elite, whereas for freed slaves it was a manifestation of their rights at citizens. On the increased valuation of family among freedmen, see Mouritsen 2011, 285–90.
392 In reference to the art of biography, see Momigliano 1993, 11.
393 This is not to suggest that there was always (or ever) a rigid distinction; again, it is a matter of emphasis and negotiation between multiple sources of meaning.
use, and in what combinations, speaks to his underlying assumptions about how best to define the individual in relation to the community.\textsuperscript{395}

My analysis of these issues will begin at the formal level by examining the organization of biographical data. Turning first to the material evidence, I will consider what structures freedmen employed to represent personal identity in their commemorative and votive inscriptions. From the perspective of slaveholders, the master-slave and patron-freedman relationships defined the main transitions in a freedman’s life; manumission divided his personal history into two distinct chapters, which were united by the perpetuation of his subordinate status. Many freedmen reproduced this paradigm when commemorating their patrons, themselves, and each other. Yet many others, I will argue, drew on such alternative frameworks as the family or religious cult to connect their servile past to the present. In doing so, they looked beyond the institution of slavery to define their lives as unified wholes rather than as comprising two separate segments, one in enslavement and one in freedom. Such cases demonstrate how value systems independent of the ideology of slaveholding could take precedence over standards of measure imposed from above.

Secondly, on the basis of these observations, I will examine how freedmen’s approach to the life course correlates with the literary evidence, either when Roman authors comment directly on freed slaves’ epigraphical habit, or when slavery and freedom are employed as metaphors for personal growth. Not surprisingly, Petronius offers our most explicit reaction to the commemorative strategies used by \textit{liberti} when he satirizes the willingness of Trimalchio and his friends to celebrate their servile past. These stereotypes, however, do not represent the society’s full range of responses to freedmen and the problems they posed. Upon closer

\textsuperscript{395} For a summary of the relationship between biography and the history of the individual, see Swain in Edwards and Swain 1997, 3–22.
investigation, biographical applications of the slavery metaphor in Stoicism and Pauline Christianity suggest how the cultural practices of Rome’s slave and freed population may have contributed to philosophical and religious discourse in more subtle, but constructive ways. Here, as elsewhere, we may note the extent to which chattel slavery – specifically as practiced by the Romans – helped to shape conceptions of the individual by creating a dialogue between social groups with distinctive experiences of power and agency.

4.1 Continuity in the Freed Life Course

When deciding what information to include in their commemorative and votive inscriptions, and how to organize these texts as accounts of a human life, freedmen encountered a rhetorical problem unique to their social position. According to the ideology of slaveholding, a master was the sine qua non of his slaves’ existence. Whether captured and sold or born into slavery, human chattel were ‘socially dead’ and ‘natally alienated’ because they had no identity apart from their masters and lacked an ancestral past. Under these conditions, a slave’s life took shape along lines stipulated almost entirely by his owner. Training, occupation, even familial relationships, were at least notionally under the master’s control; and even the most indulgent owner retained the power to sell his slaves away from the household. In these and many other ways, slavery placed extreme limitations on the extent to which slaves could exercise any personal agency in determining the course of their lives.

Manumission held an important place within the dominant model of a servile life course, if it progressed to this stage. On the one hand, officially changing a person’s status from servus

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396 Patterson 1982, 2–8 and 337.
397 Bradley 1994, 52.
to *libertus* created a profound distinction between his past and present identities. It placed him on the other side of the foundational legal division between slave and free; bestowed many benefits of citizenship that he had previously lacked; and changed his name by adding a *praenomen* and *nomen* (usually that of his owner) to the slave name he already had. Likewise, in Roman law, formal manumission did not simply transfer *dominium* from one party to another, but generated an entirely new entity, the freedman, who might be expected to start his life over.\(^{398}\) In practice, there existed a whole class of former slaves who had been freed informally (*Latini Iuniani*) and therefore occupied a middle ground between slavery and enfranchisement, but the *lex Aelia Sentia* (4 CE) allowed them to become citizens if they produced a child who survived past the age of one.\(^{399}\) Yet despite the existence of a substantial gray area in the categorization of legal status, formal manumission was represented in the Roman ideology of slaveholding as the single most important point of transition for members of the servile orders.

This would have been especially pronounced in the case of “independent freedmen,” who probably comprised a substantial percentage of the Italian freed population.\(^{400}\) Such individuals would certainly have been well represented among those ex-slaves who had the resources to set up a monument or make a religious dedication.\(^{401}\) To fall into this category of analysis, former slaves need not have been the wealthy heirs of deceased patrons – that is, they need not have been like Trimalchio – but rather of moderate means and entitled to a fair amount of economic

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\(^{398}\) On manumission as a creative act, see Patterson 1982, 210–11 (on Buckland 1908). Mouritsen (2011, 38) suggests that manumission could be construed as a type of birth, though he sees this as a way of perpetuating the master’s authority at the same time as imposing a break in the life course of the slave.

\(^{399}\) For Junian Latins, see above p. 6, n. 28.

\(^{400}\) That is, freedmen whose patrons had died or otherwise relinquished authority; see Garnsey 1981; Veyne 1961, 224–36.

\(^{401}\) Garnsey 1981, 368.
freedom, even if they functioned as business agents or partners of their former master.\textsuperscript{402} Under these conditions, manumission would have appeared to impose major changes both on lifestyle and personal freedom, in comparison to a \textit{libertus} who continued to work within the household. Walking the streets of Pompeii, for example, one might have had the impression that freedmen who owned their own shops and employed their own slave \textit{familiae} had undergone a complete transformation.

This presents far too rosy a picture, both at the ideological and practical levels. In reality, manumission failed to absolve many freedmen of concrete duties and obligations to their ex-masters, and even an “independent” freedman depended on his ex-master for his social identity.\textsuperscript{403} At a basic level, freed slaves took their new names from their former master or mistress, with \textit{libertus} standing where \textit{filius} would in the freeborn \textit{tria nomina}.\textsuperscript{404} This connected freedmen indelibly to the household in which they had served and acted as a proxy for the ancestral history of which their status deprived them. More practically speaking, the law protected ex-masters’ right to \textit{obsequium} – or dutiful respect and compliance – and imposed a range of punishments on freedmen who were found to be \textit{ingrati} in this respect.\textsuperscript{405} Finally, freedmen could be required to perform certain services for their patrons according to a contractual agreement formed at manumission. These duties, known as \textit{operae}, enacted in tangible terms ex-slaves’ continued indebtedness to those who had given the ‘gift’ of freedom.\textsuperscript{406}

On these grounds, the prevailing theme that spanned the divide between slave and freed status

\textsuperscript{402} Garnsey 1981, 367. In some cases, I think that Garnsey’s argument goes too far in the attribution of freedom to former slaves who continued to work in their ex-master’s business, since (as he concedes, p. 366) the position of the freedmen depended on the attitude of the patron, above and beyond other factors.\textsuperscript{403} Again, the level of control exerted by the patron would have varied according to circumstances and personal preference; see Bradley 1994, 81.\textsuperscript{404} Mouritsen (2011, 36–42, 49–51, 70, 98 and 147–8) makes much of this paternal dimension of the patron-freedman relationship.\textsuperscript{405} Waldstein 1986, 60–9.\textsuperscript{406} Patterson 1982, 240–3; on \textit{operae} in general, see Waldstein 1986; Duff 1958, 44–7; Treggiari 1969, 75–8.
was the perpetuation of an original power imbalance in the shape of obedience to one’s former owner.\textsuperscript{407}

Many freedmen replicated these paradigms in their epigraphical monuments. In the first place, we often find \textit{liberti} trying to obscure their servile past, at least to the extent allowed by the medium. Late Republican and Augustan funerary reliefs provide a striking testament to ex-slaves’ desire to foreground the imagery of citizenship and celebrate the production of freeborn children, who often received ‘good’ Roman names.\textsuperscript{408} In their funerary inscriptions, moreover, freedmen increasingly decided to omit the abbreviation for \textit{libertus} from their \textit{tria nomina}, probably to draw attention away from their servile background.\textsuperscript{409} In the epitaphs from Rome and its environs, the use of \textit{libertus} as a status indicator has been shown to decline in the first century CE and more or less disappear in the second, except among the \textit{familia Caesaris}.\textsuperscript{410} The conclusion drawn from these data has by and large been accepted by later studies: “The decline of the use of \textit{libertus} in the freedman’s name is undoubtedly a reflection of the freedman’s unwillingness to declare his inferior status and his dependence on and obligation to his patron.”\textsuperscript{411} According to this interpretation, freed slaves’ commemorative behavior followed the dominant ideology in separating the individual life course into two distinct phases defined entirely by legal status; the earlier of these was better left uncommemorated.

When \textit{liberti} did choose to refer to their origins on an epigraphical monument, they might adopt the biographical framework provided by the slave society – that is, they might commemorate the relationship between master and slave as it changed into one between patron

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\textsuperscript{407} A similar connection might be made with the subordinate status of freedmen in general; but such assumptions of inferiority are difficult to identify in the epigraphical record.
\textsuperscript{408} For the portrait reliefs, see Kleiner 1977; on names, Gordon 1931, 73; cf. Mouritsen (281–3).
\textsuperscript{409} Taylor 1961, 120–2.
\textsuperscript{410} Taylor 1961, 121.
\textsuperscript{411} Taylor 1961, 122.
and freedman. 412 The sentiment underlying this strategy appears on stones purchased by ex-slaves for patroni, who could receive such glowing (if formulaic) epithets as optimus, dignissimus and indulgentissimus. 413 So, for example, at Rome, an argentarius named L. Canidius Euelpistus set up a monument for his patron, L. Canidius Priscus, that describes the latter as his patronus suus indulgentissimus. 414 While the focus of these inscriptions is on the patrons, rather than the liberti, elsewhere we find freed commemorators thanking their ex-masters directly for manumission. 415 Such affirmations of the patronal relationship as the perpetuation of an original power differential served to create continuity in the personal histories of these individuals. In so doing, they connected the past to the present according to terms generated by the institution of slavery and the values on which it depended.

Despite this capacity to reiterate the masters’ perspective, freedmen also utilized modes of biographical representation that derived from other sets of assumptions. In what follows, I will explore several of these alternatives, particularly those which helped to establish coherence in the individual’s life course as it progressed from birth to death. Although frequently accompanied by elements of the master-slave model, references to social relationships, birthdays, and cult provided freedmen with opportunities to organize their biographies according to frameworks external to the institution of slavery, which had in so many other ways governed their lives. These rhetorical strategies deserve consideration not just for the light they can shed on the experience of ancient slavery and manumission, but also (to look ahead) for their potential interaction with literary and philosophical discourse.

412 Again, “independent freedmen” would have had less incentive to commemorate their former masters, but cf. even Trimalchio’s praise for his patron at Petr. 39.4.
413 E.g., CIL 10.1723, 1753; 6.28290, 32884 and 32296.
4.1.1 Personal Relationships

Although the master-slave relationship held pride of place in the ideology of slaveholding, other types of bond existed between slaves in slavery, and sometimes endured into freedom.\footnote{On the importance of intra-familial bonds, see Flory 1978.} When they did, I will argue, they helped to minimize the gap that liberation imposed on freedmen’s biographies – at least as conceived by Roman slave society. One clear way to identify this pattern in the epigraphical record is to look for moments when freedmen commemorate a family member or close associate in technically ‘servile’ terms. To preview the examples I will proffer, some liberti chose to call a fellow freedman conservus, even though this word means “fellow slave.” Others opted to describe a (now) legal marriage as contubernium, which refers to a type of de facto union commonly formed between slaves. Freed commemorators who apply the language of slavery to their current relationships have manifestly decided to highlight, rather than downplay their past status.

Freed slaves were not alone in blurring the boundary between servus and libertus, and we should not expect these legal categories to be maintained perfectly in everyday usage. Cicero, for example, can be ambiguous about the status of a freedman without intending an overtly negative judgment, but he also deploys this change in terms to disparage Sulla’s freedman Chrysogonus as “a most worthless slave” (servus nequissimus).\footnote{Cic. Fam. 5.20.1 and 2; Pro Rosc. 48.140.} Although the latter statement is clearly based on the dishonor attached to enslavement, neither usage is neutral, as Cicero’s ambiguity about the legal status of his own dependents reflects the assumption that a master’s authority remained intact after manumission and that liberti remained closely tied to the

\footnote{Cic. Fam. 5.20.1 and 2; Pro Rosc. 48.140.}
Rather than weakening the significance of the patterns we find in the epigraphical record, these observations alert us to the fact that manipulations of terminology should be read as ideological statements, and that a freedman’s choice to use the language of slavery to construct a memorial was invested with meaning specific to his cultural context.

Ex-slaves’ efforts to emphasize continuity over status have already been observed in the naming practices of Roman freedmen. Contrary to the belief that most ex-slaves tried to obscure their children’s servile roots by giving them Latin names, a more thorough examination of the inscriptive evidence has shown that a substantial minority named their offspring after themselves – even if that meant preserving a Greek *cognomen* and thus retaining the ‘stain’ of servility. In light of this fact, we can no longer assume that freedmen’s commemorations of their own freeborn children simply reflect a desire to advertise upward mobility. Rather, they may speak to the value that *liberti* placed on their own capacity to generate a line of descent after the pressures of servitude had been alleviated by manumission.

One concern here is with the children of ex-slaves, and so with the link between present and future; but it is equally true that freedmen celebrated continuity with the past at the risk of drawing attention to their inferior status. A *columbarium* inscription from the Via Appia speaks eloquently to this sentiment. In this epitaph, A. Memmius Urbanus commemorates his friend and fellow-freedman (*collibertus*) with the following words:

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418 Fabre 1981, 104–5 and 222: L’utilisation du terme *servus* pour désigner un affranchi, utilisation que l’on trouve dans des texts épigraphiques ou juridiques du troisième siècle et à laquelle Cicéron recourt, le plus souvent dans un sens péjoratif, montre bien l’état d’esprit dans lequel se trouvait un patron rêvant d’un passé plus favorable à l’autorité patronale.
420 CIL 6.22355a = ILS 8432 (late first century BCE to mid-first century CE); this text is known from a drawing, reproduced by Lanciani 1989, 196, fig. 120.
A. Memmius Urbanus
conliberto idem consorti
carissimo sibi
inter me et te sanctissime mi
conliberte nullum unquam
disiurgium fuisse conscius
sum mihi hoc quoque titulo
superos et inferos testor deos
una me tecum congressum
in venalicio una domo liberos
esse factos neque ulus unquam
nos diunxisset nisi hic tuus
fatalis dies

To Aulus Memmius Clarus, by Aulus Memmius Urbanus to his dearest fellow freedman and fellow heir. That between me and you, my most esteemed fellow freedman, there was never a quarrel, I am aware. And with this epitaph I call to witness the gods above and below that I met you in the slave-market; that we were made free under one roof; nor did any day tear us apart except for this one, the day of your death.

Rather than diminish the fact that he and Clarus had been slaves, Urbanus places it front and center, even mentioning the slave-market where they first met (line 11). Their relationship, he takes care to point out, extended beyond manumission and was interrupted only by Clarus’ death (lines 11–14). Thus, while slavery’s benchmarks are present, Urbanus uses friendship as the encompassing framework to describe how their lives intertwined.421

This epitaph contains a rare level of detail, but it may serve as a guide to less elaborate inscriptions that attest the continuity of a personal bond. Following the lead of Urbanus, let us look first at ties of collegiality among members of the same slave familia. Among the epitaphs that survive from Campania, Bruttium, Lucania, Sicily, and Sardinia, 11 contain the title “conservus -a,” and nine of these commemorate relationships between two or more slaves.422

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421 One must recall here the important distinction between the slave familiae of wealthy urban households and those of a lower-status or rural domus, where the visibility and attractiveness of elite values would have been less pronounced, as would have been the viability of engaging with this discourse.

422 These texts were identified using the index of CIL 10 which covers the stated regions.
However, we also find a freed *cubicularius* from the imperial family being honored by a woman who had served with him, but was still a slave:  

```
Cerdoni Luerci  
Aug(usti) l(iberto)  
cubiculario  
vixit annis LV  
Ampliata fidelis  
conservo loco  
empto de suo
```

To Cerdo Lu[percus, imperial freedman and *cubicularius*, who lived for 55 years. Ampliata purchased this burial with her own money, for her loyal fellow slave.

Technically *conservus* had ceased to be an accurate title for Lupercus when he joined the ranks of the imperial freedmen. Ampliata, however, seems more interested in emphasizing the endurance of their relationship than in finding an appropriate term, such as *amicus* or *coniunx.*  

Her use of *fidelis* (line 5) as a descriptive epithet supports this reading, and gives some indication that Lupercus’ character was a factor in maintaining their bond. This sense of collegiality, which originated in slavery and lasted to the moment of death, forms the outer boundaries of Lupercus’ biography; it surpasses in scope both his legal status and occupation.

Comparanda from other regions tend to agree with this pattern. *Conservus* -a most often identifies relationships between slaves, but can also apply to those between slaves and freedmen or even between two *liberti*. In Ostia and Old Latium, for example, of the 12 inscriptions attesting *conservi*, 10 were commissioned by one or more slaves for an individual of the same legal status. Yet two epitaphs from the *familia* of the Egrilii deviate from the rule. In one, a freedwoman named Egrilia Tyche commemorates a slave named Hilarus, whom she calls her

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423 CIL 10.695 (Surrentum, Julio-Claudian). See Maghalaes 2003, 263, no. 32.
424 There are instances when *conservi* bore such supplementary titles; e.g., CIL 6.14697 and 16304.
425 On the importance of *fides* in the dialogue between servile and elite cultures, see above pp. 32–5.
426 Again, I have relied on the index of CIL to compile these examples, in this case of volume 14.
In another, the status differential is reversed:

\[
\text{Egriliae Felicitati} \\
vixit annis XXVIII \\
\text{Carpophorus conservae} \\
servos
\]

To Egrilia Felicitas, who lived for 28 years; Carpophorus, a slave, set this up for his fellow slave.

Carpophorus’ use of *conserva* to describe the deceased creates a link between the portion of her 28 years that she spent in servitude and those that she spent in freedom. Notably, Carpophorus not only draws attention to Felicitas’ servile past, he also makes his own status explicit in the final line. This language grounds Felicitas’ biography in a personal relationship that was formed in servitude but lasted beyond manumission. Any motivation to downplay her background must have ceded to this objective.

Likewise, of the 155 inscriptions from Rome that contain the term *conservus* -\(a\), 12 follow the patterns outlined above. Even more striking, however, is a dedication to the god Silvanus in which two freedmen identify themselves as *conservi*:

\[
\text{Sacrum Silvano} \\
P. Aelius Philetus \\
et P. Aelius Philetianus \\
conser(vi) et larum penati[um] [sodales?] \\
v(otum) m(erito) d(onom) d(edit)
\]

This dedication to Silvanus P. Aelius Philetus and P. Aelius Philetianus, fellow slaves and [fellow worshippers] of the house-gods, gave willingly in fulfillment of a vow.

The use of *conservus* in this votive inscription may indicate service to the god, but the dedicators’ shared *praenomen* and *nomen* show that they had been fellow slaves in the imperial

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427 CIL 14.1110.
428 CIL 14.956 (Ostia, second or third century CE).
429 This would rule out death-bed manumission, perhaps unnecessarily.
430 CIL 6.582 (first half of the second century CE).
Below I will offer a more detailed discussion of how religion lent unity to freedmen’s biographies, but here I want simply to note the rhetorical significance of replacing *colliberti* with *conservi*. By opting to use servile language, Philetus and Philetianus accentuate the durability of their relationship, whatever it may have been.

Of all the connections formed between slaves, friendships perhaps had the greatest potential to survive the vagaries of enslavement and manumission. A closer, and thus more fragile bond was that between slave husbands and wives, who were prohibited from contracting legal marriages but may have been encouraged to form unions for reasons of stability and procreation. Such relationships fell under the category of *contubernium*, or “cohabitation,” which could also exist between freeborn individuals with an interest in keeping their union informal. Importantly, among the freeborn elite, concubinage usually occurred in cases where one partner was of much higher status than the other – for instance, Vespasian and Caenis, or Antoninus Pius and Galeria Lysistrate, both of the female partners being freedwomen. Despite the acceptance of this practice among the upper orders, the vast majority of *contubernia* attested in the extant inscriptions from Rome failed to attain legal legitimacy because of the servile status of one or both partners. For freedmen, moreover, this term would not only have carried the nuance of status imbalance, as it did throughout Roman society, but would have resonated with the language used to describe conjugal unions during enslavement, and in that sense would have hearkened back to the servile past.

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431 The commonality in their *cognomina* is difficult to explain without more information, but they may also have been related by blood; on divine slavery, see below (4.1.4).
432 On quasi-kinship within the *familia*, see Flory 1978.
433 Varro *Rust.* 2.10.6; Columella *Rust.* 1.8; Bradley 1994, 50–1.
434 For example, when a widower remarried and wanted to avoid an inheritance dispute between his children and his new spouse. See McGinn 1991, 337–8.
436 Rawson 1974; Treggiari 1981.
An analysis of the *contubernales* in southern Italy, Sicily, and Sardinia corroborates these observations. Of the 13 entries indexed under this heading, 12 commemorate unions in which at least one partner was of slave or freed status. One epitaph identifies two *incerti* as *contubernales*, but none shows a person of uncontested free birth participating in this type of relationship. For my purposes, the most intriguing type of *contubernium* is that attested between two freed slaves. People in this status group could easily have used words like *coniunx*, *vir*, *maritus*, and *uxor* to describe each other, because *de facto* marriages that began in slavery became legitimate if both parties were freed and maintained their union. What is more, even slaves commemorated their ‘spouses’ as *coniuges* (et sim.) despite the technical imprecision involved. Freed husbands and wives who call each other *contubernalis* were therefore choosing to highlight continuity when they could have let their origins fade into the background.

Consider, for example, the funerary monument commissioned by a freedwoman named Rullia Adepta for herself and two other *liberti*:

[R]ullia Æ l. Adepta  
sibi et  
[P.] Brittio P. lib. Epich[armo?]  
contubernali suo  
et C. Rullio Æ l. Communi  
et suis  
H M S S E H N S

---

437 These texts are drawn from CIL 10.  
438 The *incerti* are Q. Venafrus Probus and Tampia Venusta of CIL 10.5297.  
439 CIL 10.4319, 6336 and 7685.  
440 Treggiari 1981, 58–9, on *Dig.* 23.3.39 pr.  
441 E.g., CIL 10.1734; other examples cited by Bradley 1994, 49.  
442 Again, we have a more detailed inscription that may guide our interpretations of other texts; CIL 1(2).1221 (= ILS 7472 = Shelton 54, trans.): I was called, while alive, Aurelia Philematium, a woman chaste and modest, unsoiled by the common crowd, faithful to her husband. My husband, whom, alas, I now have left, was a fellow freedman. He was truly like a father to me. When I was seven years old he embraced me. Now I am 40 and in the power of death. Through my constant care, my husband flourished.  
Rullia Adepta, freedwoman of a woman, set this up for herself and P. Brittius Epicharmus, freedman of Publius, her contubernalis, and for C. Rullius Communis, freedman of a woman, and her descendants. This monument or tomb does not descend to my heir.

In all probability, Adepta and Epicharmus lived under the same roof but were owned by a wife and husband, respectively. This would explain the variations in their nomenclature, and may further suggest that Communis was their child, since he would have belonged to his mother’s mistress if he had been born into slavery. Whatever the constellation of relationships among these three freedmen, however, the only one explicitly stated is contubernium (line 4). Rather than foreground her citizenship by asserting the legality of this union, Adepta prefers to turn backward in time, presumably to celebrate the endurance of her relationship in the face of other, uncontrollable factors that could easily have placed it in jeopardy.\footnote{444} Like the application of conservus to friendships that had survived manumission, such uses of contubernalis draw on an alternative set of social connections to bridge the theoretical divide between slavery and freedom.

4.1.2 Collegia

Personal relationships were not the only potential sources of continuity in ex-slaves’ biographical narratives. To look beyond the familia, the trade guilds and burial societies that were common features of Italian cities may have provided another thread of constancy within the servile life course.\footnote{445} The law codes make clear that slaves could enroll in collegia with their master’s permission, and many servi who joined under these conditions would probably have remained active members after they had been freed.\footnote{446} Although no precise data exist with which to evaluate this phenomenon, it happened with sufficient frequency to be addressed in the

\footnote{444} Bradley 1994, 52–3; Flory 1978.  
\footnote{445} On the spectrum of social groups in collegia, see Tran 2006, who gives a much more complex account than can be reproduced here.  
\footnote{446} Dig. 47.22.3.2.
by-laws of a second-century burial club, which had instituted a rule that “any slave from this collegium who has been made free must donate an amphora of good wine.” Such a donation would have reinforced the freedman’s position within the organization, even as it marked a change in his legal status. In this sense, the collegium was a place where the transition from servus to libertus could be both noted and absorbed by an overarching institutional framework.

This feature of Roman collegia recommends them as another alternative to the master-slave relationship in freedmen’s epigraphical monuments. Interestingly, the texts that deal with such organizations are less fertile in this respect than those attesting domestic relationships. This may stem from the fact that civic inscriptions, such as membership rolls, concentrate on group identity and are therefore less likely to contain detailed information on any one individual. Secondly, the ordo Augustalium would not have been a very likely source of biographical unity, since slaves were generally associated rather with the Lares Augusti. In their inscriptions, Augustales tend to focus on things they achieved after manumission – civic honors, acts of euergetism, the production and advancement of freeborn children, as well as the office of itself. Some holders of the sevirate also had wives with different nomina, a fact which suggests that they formed new unions after slavery. It should be noted that other Augustales found ways to create links with their past, for example A. Plautius Apella, a magister Augustalis who commemorates his colliberta and concubina pia. Nevertheless, Apella expresses continuity in his life course by means of a personal relationship, and we may only guess as to

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447 CIL 14.2112 (Lanuvium) = ILS 7212 = FIRA 3.35: ut quisquis servus ex hoc collegio liber factus fuerit, is dare debeat vini [bo]ni amphoram.
448 But cf. CIL 10.6514 discussed below in regard to religion. I have placed religious collegia under a different heading in order to isolate the importance of members’ relationship to the divine.
449 Beard, North and Price 1998, 357; Scheid 2003, 144. Again, I postpone a more thorough discussion of the Augustales until the next chapter; see below pp. 211–18.
450 E.g., CIL 10.4760 (freeborn son, cf. 112, 448, 5929, 1209).
451 E.g., CIL 10.1209, 1871, 1875; an example of an Augustalis who had a freeborn wife is found in 10.466.
452 CIL 10.6114.
why *liberti* seem to use trade and burial guilds for this purpose to a lesser degree than friendship and *contubernium*.

This is not to say that creative uses of the *collegium* are entirely absent from the epigraphical record. In one text from the city of Rome, a charioteer named Epaphroditus is commemorated by his wife, Beia Felicula.\(^{453}\)

\[
\begin{align*}
&D. M. \\
&Epaphroditus \ \\
&agitat\text{or} f(\text{actionis}) \ r(\text{ussatae}) \ \\
&vic(it) \ CLXXVII \ et \ \\
&at \ purpureum \ \\
&liber \ vic(it) \ VIII \ \\
&Beia \ Felicula \ \\
&f(\text{ecit}) \ coniug(i) \ suo \ \\
&[\text{bene}] \ merenti
\end{align*}
\]

To the divine shades of Epaphroditus; as a charioteer of the Reds, he won 177 victories; and having become a member of the Purples as a free man, he won 8 more. Beia Felicula set up this monument for her spouse, who is well deserving.

The deceased is identified only by his slave name, Epaphroditus, despite the fact that *liber* (line 6) reveals that he was a freedman when the stone was erected. This nomenclature foregrounds his servile past, and with excellent reason; during that time, as a member of the Reds, he won 177 races. Later, upon manumission, he became a Purple and won only eight more victories before he died.\(^{454}\)

As a biography, the epitaph acknowledges Epaphroditus’ transition from slave to free but ties those two phases of his life together by means of his involvement in the system of organized teams (*factiones*) and the triumphs he gained under these banners.\(^{455}\)

Like domestic relationships, these types of corporate body may have given some freedmen a way to conceive of

\(^{453}\) CIL 6.10062 (Domitianic).

\(^{454}\) This dates the inscription to the age of Domitian, who added the Gold and Purple factions (Suet. *Dom.* 7.1); Letzner 2009, 88. On slaves’ possible participation in the fan-club aspect of the *factiones*, see Petr. 70.10.

\(^{455}\) The significance of moving from one *factio* to another is somewhat beside the point; coherence originates in the deceased’s continued participation in this institutional framework, regardless of what sub-group he belonged to. On possible collaboration between factions, see Letzner 2009, 88.
their personal history as a coherent narrative, rather than as two discreet chapters divided according to status.

4.1.3 Birthdays

The rhetorical strategies discussed thus far were rooted in the social and economic conditions under which slaves and freedmen formed their identities. Other 

liberti appealed to more abstract frameworks when faced with the problem of how best to integrate the past with the present. Some, for example, used chronology to supplement the dominant paradigm of continued obeisance to one’s former master. As I will suggest, citing a dies natalis in the context of a burial monument achieved this type of coherence by enunciating a point of origin for a life that had reached its conclusion. While birthdays also had implications for status, they created a sense of order in epitaphs by casting the biography as a progression of calendrical years.

Before considering some specific examples, it is worth digressing briefly on the function of birthdays in Roman culture more generally, and on their unique relevance to the slave and freed population. To begin with, birthdays located one’s life within the official calendar, which was itself a developing construct, part and parcel with Roman identity. After the Julian reform, the Romans’ penchant for birthdays gained new significance within a 365-day system that created an identity of days from year to year. Under the Principate, moreover, celebrations of imperial birthdays and natales imperii became important tools for maintaining

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456 This may perhaps be expanded to look at the commemoration of freedmen’s geographical origins, for example in CIL 10.713 and 6.21695(?); cf. 6.28228. References to a nationality or place of habitation before slavery clearly privilege geography over legal status as an encompassing biographical frame.

457 It is impossible to argue ex silentio that certain commemorators did not possess this statistic when they set up an inscription; rather, I have selected texts that attest knowledge of a birthday, whether through the citation of a precise life span (years, months, and days) or an actual dies natalis.

458 See Feeney 2007.

459 Feeney 2007, 156–9.
loyalty to the regime. Thus the Romans’ appreciation for the cyclical dimensions of human life tapped into a broader discourse about the nature of time and political authority; concomitantly, as we will see, it provided individuals with a way to structure their own personal histories.

The private aspects of the dies natalis are well attested by the rituals it involved. Foremost among these was the cultivation of one’s genius through incense and other offerings, which were accompanied by vows for the cult’s renewal the following year. Historians have debated the precise character of the genius, which some sources represent as an extension of the self, others as a sort of guardian angel. The ambiguity of the genius has rightly been stressed, “for it is his essential nature to be both a part of a man as well as an external deity.” The celebration of birthdays, particularly among clients and patrons, worked to solidify these social relationships in a ritual context. Equally important, however, was the birthday’s intense concentration on the individual, whether in the flesh or through his genius. Not knowing one’s date of birth excluded one from participating fully in these rites or from consulting a horoscope, which was an important part of Greco-Roman culture with a visible role in literature and in politics.

For freedmen – who all at some level had experienced the dehumanizing impact of slavery – celebrating a birthday would have heightened the problem of defining oneself alone or in relation to others. Yet the unique relevance of birthdays to the slave and freed population went well beyond their inherent focus on the individual. To celebrate a dies natalis, one needed to have precise knowledge of one’s date of birth; and the conditions of servitude would have

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460 Argetsinger 1992, 176.
461 Argetsinger 1992, 185 (with bibliography, n. 15).
462 Argetsinger 1992, 186.
463 Argetsinger 1992, 190–1.
464 This phenomenon might be continued after death in the form of graveside cult performed on the deceased’s dies natalis; see Toynbee 1971, 63.
denied this to many. On this point, the evidence from the American South is so conspicuous as to deserve mention; for Frederick Douglass begins his *Narrative*:

> I have no accurate knowledge of my age, never having seen any authentic record containing it. By far the larger part of the slaves know as little of their ages as horses know of theirs, and it is the wish of most masters within my knowledge to keep their slaves thus ignorant. I do not remember to have ever met a slave who could tell of his birthday. They seldom came nearer to it than planting-time, harvest-time, cherry-time, spring-time, or fall-time. A want of information concerning my own was a source of unhappiness to me even during childhood. The white children could tell their ages. I could not tell why I ought to be deprived of the same privilege.

Throughout his life, Douglass tried to estimate the time of his birth and eventually settled on February 1817. In need of greater specificity, he adopted the 14th as his birthday because he remembered his mother calling him her ‘little Valentine’; and, in old age, he may have received word from his master’s great-granddaughter that the estate records contained an entry of his birth in “Feb’y 1818.” Even so, Douglass’ striking persistence in attempting to counteract this deficiency in his basic self-knowledge only speaks to the severity of the psychological pain it had caused.

> We possess no such testimony from an ancient slave or *libertus*, but a similar type of deprivation was especially likely for captives or foundlings sold on the open market. For example, in a standard list of 154 Egyptian papyri that record sales of slaves, only 26 cite the slave’s age; and four of these give an approximate figure. Along similar lines, Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses* depicts an auction scene in which people try to guess Lucius’ age from his teeth, and the auctioneer uses flippant humor to distract from his ignorance on this key point. This episode brings out the servile undertones in Lucius’ character more generally, and may be

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466 Douglass 1845, 15.
drawing some of its details from an economic environment in which buyers and sellers lacked accurate data on the age of their chattels.\textsuperscript{470}

The humblest members of the slave and freed population cannot be expected to have known exactly how old they were, let alone to identify their \textit{dies natalis} in the Roman calendar.\textsuperscript{471} Slaves born in the household (\textit{vernae}) or otherwise favored by their masters would have been in a better position to know and celebrate their birthdays.\textsuperscript{472} We may think of Trimalchio’s \textit{dispensator}, for instance, who is angry at another servant for having permitted the theft of a cloak that had been a birthday present from a “client.”\textsuperscript{473} This slave’s pride in his status within the domestic hierarchy finds expression not just in his mimicry of the elite role of patron, but more specifically in his receipt of a birthday gift from a so-called dependent.\textsuperscript{474} Perhaps also relevant is an epigram in which Martial chides a certain Clytus for celebrating eight birthdays per year in order to amass as many presents as possible.\textsuperscript{475} If Clytus’ Greek \textit{cognomen} connotes a servile background, his self-importance may align with that of Trimalchio’s steward.\textsuperscript{476}

Inscriptions that attest birthdays of slaves and freedmen give some indication that access to this knowledge was associated with status. Fifteen epitaphs from southern Italy cite the number of years, months and days lived.\textsuperscript{477} Among the commemorands of these monuments, eight are of certain or probable slave origin; five are \textit{incerti}; and two are freeborn. More

\begin{footnotes}
\item[470] Bradley 2000 offers an illuminating discussion of slavery in the \textit{Metamorphoses}.
\item[471] Age-rounding has been shown to be characteristic of Greco-Roman society in general, in part because of low literacy rates; see Duncan-Jones 1977 and 1979.
\item[472] The would also have been among the group of urban slaves most likely to receive a burial monument in the first place. On \textit{vernae} see Hermann-Otto 1994; Wiedemann 1985; Rawson 1986; and Weaver 1972, esp. 49–56, 76–80 and 177–183.
\item[473] Petr. 30.9; on Trimalchio’s own birthday, see below (4.2.2).
\item[474] Verg. \textit{Ecl.} 3.76 has Damoetas sing: \textit{meus est natalis}; on the historical value, see Fitzgerald 2000, 71.
\item[475] But on Greek versus Roman modes of celebration, see Feeney 2007, 148 and n. 76.
\item[476] Mart. 8.64; Garrido-Hory 1981, 64. Martial is playing with a literary form here, but that does not preclude his making a social allusion as well. For Clytus, see Solin 1982 and 1996 \textit{ad loc}.
\item[477] CIL 10.2086, 2143, 2144, 2145, 2147, 2166, 2974, 2999, 3010, 3380, 4387, 4407, 4811, 6604 and 6627.
\end{footnotes}
significantly, four of the eight in the servile category have imperial *nomina*, and thus may have belonged to an elevated stratum of the slave population.\(^{478}\) If naming customs can be of use here, it may be worth observing that a compendium of Roman slave names lists 20 slaves or freedmen with the name Natalis, six of whom are from the imperial family and three of whom are private *vernae*.\(^{479}\) Even in this provisional analysis, we may see the inklings of a correlation between a slave or freedman’s domestic rank and his ability to know the date of his birth.

Status, as usual, attracts our immediate attention; but it is possible to delve further into the rhetorical impact of the servile *dies natalis*. In funerary contexts, a birthday fixed the beginning of the commemorand’s life in time, even in the process of marking his death.\(^{480}\) These two points formed the outermost frame of the biography being presented, thus subsuming all other changes in career, status, geographical location, even social relationships. For slaves and freedmen, as I have argued, using the calendar to organize a biography would on the one hand have signaled a level of privilege that allowed them to participate in this Roman custom. From a different perspective, however, this formal structure provides an alternative to the dominant ideological paradigm, with its unrelenting focus on slavery and manumission.

To illuminate this concept, let me point to one recurring theme that cuts to the heart of the issue – the celebration of individuals who died on their *dies natalis*.\(^{481}\) The ironic qualities evoked by this type of symmetry are not uncommon in Latin epitaphs, and the motif seems to

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\(^{478}\) Weaver 1972.


\(^{480}\) There were other, non-mortuary contexts, for the epigraphical commemoration of birthdays – most notably the bequest of funds for feasts and *sportulae* to be carried out on the donor’s *dies natalis*. Examples listed in the index of CIL 10 are 4643 (freedman given the decurial *ornamenta* on his birthday); 5853 (A. Quinctillius A. f. Pal. Priscus, possible son of a freedman); 107, 4736 and 5654 (*ingenui*). Two fragmentary inscriptions also record such bequests, but the status of the honorands cannot be determined; these are 10.5849 and 5857. Parallels for freedmen undertaking such donations appear, to name some examples, at CIL 9.1618 (Beneventum); 11.4391 (Ameria); 14.367 (Ostia); and 14.2793 (Gabii). Cf. bequests by freeborn individuals at CIL 2.1174, 9.3160 (?), 10.4736 and 5654, and 11.379.

\(^{481}\) Using the index heading *mortes singulares*, I counted CIL 10.2933 (slave?, Cumae); 6740 (daughter of a freedwoman, Antium); 4881 (freeborn, Venafro). Parallels from Rome include CIL 6.8517 (slave?) and 29317 (slave?, *buried* on his birthday); 20320 (freed); 8471 and 18153 (children of *liberti*?).
have had widespread appeal, above and beyond its relevance to the technicalities of funereal ritual. In the absence of a rigid formula or standard abbreviation, commemorators used phrases like “he died on his birthday” (*decessit natali suo*), as well as the citation of identical dates. One particularly poignant example, from the city of Rome, was commissioned in honor of a girl named Philete, who died on her seventh birthday:

Dis Man(ibus)
Philete Epitynchanus
Hesychi
dispensatoris
fisci castrensis
arcarius
filiae
dulcissimae quae
vixit ann(is) VI obit
natali suo intrans
annum septum

To the divine shades of Philete; Epitynchanus, treasurer of Hesychius, paymaster of the Military Treasury, made this for his sweetest daughter, who lived for six years and died on her birthday while entering her seventh year.

Like other servile inscriptions that mention the deceased’s date of birth, this text reflects upon the status of the commemorator, Epitynchanus, and thus of his daughter. He is the *arcarius* of another slave, Hesychius, whose post as *dispensator* of the military treasury adds even further prestige. Yet Epitynchanus’ concluding remark that Philete “died on her birthday while entering her seventh year” (lines 9–11) adds another layer of meaning to this composition. Rather than defining human existence wholly in terms of status, this commemorator uses the coincidence of

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482 On humor in Latin epigraphy, see Carroll 2006, 148–50; Bodel 2001, 25–6. Some literary comparanda are noted by Feeney 2007, 148–9 and 158–9; on the implications for graveside ritual, see Toynbee 1971, 63.
483 Variations include *suo natali mortus est*, *obit suo natali* and *natali suo elatus*.
484 CIL 6.8517 (probably Flavian, in which period this *fiscus* appears at Rome; evidence for it dies out by the Severans. See Jones 1950, 27–8 and Brunt 1966).
his daughter’s birthday and death-day to cast her life as a movement from one calendar year to the next.\textsuperscript{485}

Applied to freedmen, this theme has even greater significance. Consider, for example, the case of Iulia Hilare, a \textit{liberta} from Rome who was commemorated by her son, C. Iulius Victorinus.\textsuperscript{486} She lived for 73 years and died on her birthday (\textit{suo natali mortua est}). Looking back across this respectable lifespan, Victorinus makes the primary feature of Hilare’s biography a temporal, rather than a social, progression. The correlation of birthday and death-day thus provide an opportunity for the commemorator not only to reflect upon the bitter irony of the human condition, but also to shift the monument’s emphasis from legal status to the passage of time. The unity imposed by this chronological framework to some degree suppresses the rift created by manumission – and does so through other means than those provided by the ideology of slaveholding.

\textbf{4.1.4 Cult}

Cult also offered a source of biographical unity for slaves who had been granted their freedom. While a detailed account of slave religion at Rome is beyond our scope here, it is worth noting that cults, like other types of collective, frequently integrated a range of social groups into one institutional setting.\textsuperscript{487} With their master’s permission, slaves could participate in the worship of a deity, and might remain devoted to the same god when and if they became free. What is more, ex-slaves who had cultivated a divinity with such a high level of

\textsuperscript{485} Parallels from CIL 10 include 4428 (fragmentary, \textit{incertus}) and 5020 (\textit{incerta}); also 14.1706 (\textit{ingenuus}). The importance of the birthday to slaves’ autobiographies is perhaps reflected in the epitaph of a certain Saturnina (from Cumae, CIL 10.2933): D. M. / Saturninae / die Saturni/ nata diem Satur/ni diem functam/ vix. annis iii/ m. v d. x. Her name’s derivation from her birthday, which happened to coincide with her death-day, draws a close connection between these pieces of information and the slave’s personal identity.

\textsuperscript{486} CIL 6.20320.

\textsuperscript{487} On slave religion, see Bömer 1981, v. 1; also (briefly) Beard, North and Price 1998, 24–5.
commitment benefited from the chance to attach their biographical narratives to that relationship and the rituals that sustained it.\textsuperscript{488}

The essence of this phenomenon is contained in the formula \textit{servus vovit, liber solvit}, or “he made the vow as a slave and fulfilled it as a free man.” This expression and its variants appear on ex-slaves’ votive inscriptions throughout Italy and the provinces, often in abbreviated form.\textsuperscript{489} The formula’s geographical range is matched by a chronological span from Republic to Empire; and the divinity held in receipt of the vow also varied considerably. Hercules, Apollo, Bona Dea, Mercury, and Belenus are all attested, as well as the cult of the Lares. Thus, despite the small number of extant examples, the phrase seems to have enjoyed a long lifespan and widespread usage, in addition to its flexibility with respect to the identity of the god being worshipped.

A marble statue base which L. Coelius Surillio dedicated to Mercury in the territory of Apta is perhaps our clearest and most straightforward case:\textsuperscript{490}

\begin{verbatim}
Mercurio
L(ucius) Coel(ius) Surillio
ser(vus) v(ovit), liber s(olvit)
\end{verbatim}

To Mercury; L. Coelius Surillio made the vow as a slave and fulfilled it as a free man.

In a similar format, though no longer extant, is a pair of Republican inscriptions commissioned by C. Marcius Alexander, freedman of Gaius, and attributed by Mommsen to Puteoli.\textsuperscript{491} Alexander made a vow to Hercules while a slave, and followed through on his end of the bargain

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\item \textsuperscript{488} The performance of cult across the span of an individual’s life (versus only at certain critical moments) is noted by Rüpke in Flower 2004, 184–5.
\item \textsuperscript{489} E.g., two inscriptions from Rome (CIL 6.30953 and 30688); one from the territory of Apta (CIL 12.1081); and one from Puteoli (CIL 10.1569). Inscriptions reconstructed on rather less secure grounds originate from Cora (CIL 10.6514); Capua (CIL 10.3822); Alesia (CIL 13.11241); and Aquileia (CIL 5.737).
\item \textsuperscript{490} CIL 12.1081 = ILN IV Apt 76.
\item \textsuperscript{491} CIL 10.1569.
\end{thebibliography}
after he had been freed. Likewise, the extant inscriptions from the city of Rome include a dedication to Bona Dea by Q. Mucius Trypho, freedman of Quintus – also of Republican date. In a second example from the capital, C. Epidius, freedman of Gaius, records a gift he gave to the Lares.

Interpretations of this formula sometimes assume that the freedman had asked specifically for manumission. The dedicant’s primary reason for attesting a status change would therefore have been to convey the terms of the vow. While logical, this reading does not necessarily fit best with the evidence. For one thing, there was an easier way to get that information across – by including the words ob libertatem. Nothing in the phrase servus vovit, liber solvit explicitly makes such a claim; and although divine favor would have been helpful in furthering a slave’s hopes for freedom, we should be wary of attributing this motive to all liberti who include the formula in a votive inscription.

This suspicion increases in light of a monument commissioned by one Q. Samicus Successus in fulfillment of a vow to Lake Benacus and another deity, whose name has since been eroded:

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[…]clo et Lac(o) Benaco Successus Q. Samici Myrini v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito) Q. Samicus Suc[cessus] iter
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To [?] and Lake Benacus; Successus, slave of Q. Samicus Myrinus, dispensed his vow willingly and justly. Q. Samicus Successus repeated the dedication.

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492 (A) Herculei/ sacrum/ C. Marci C. l. Alex fecit servos/ vovit liber solvit; (B) Herculei/ sacrum/ C. Marci C. l. Alex/ dat.
493 CIL 6.30688: Q. Mucius Q. l./ Trypho ser(vus)/ vovit leiber solv(it)/ l(ibens) m(erito)/ Bonae Deae/ s(acrum); see Brouwer 1989, no. 15.
494 CIL 6.30953: C. Epidiu[s C. l. ... ]/ laribus [ quas]/ vovit se[rvus imagin][as]/ aureas po[ndo ]/ Ω IIII liber s[olvit].
495 Along lines suggested by Veyne 1964, 33.
496 E.g., CIL 14.3456 = ILS 3526.
The nomenclature in lines three and four indicates that the commemorator was still a slave when he made and fulfilled his vow the first time; he is “Successus, slave of Q. Samicus Myrinus,” whose name appears in the genitive. Interestingly, a line added later at the bottom of the inscription says that he repeated the dedication (iter). The use of the tria nomina, Q. Samicus Successus, demonstrates that he had been freed by this stage. Since the purpose of the initial vow could not have been manumission, Successus must have had another reason for repeating his dedication and recording that act on the same stone.

One final inscription should put to rest the theory that commemorators invariably used the phrase servus vovit, liber solvit to display the contents of their prayer. On this Republican monument from Cora, a group of priests (magistri) record a joint dedication which they made to Mens Bona:

Mentei Bo]nae serveis contul(erunt) HS
    Φ Φ Φ [L]V mag(istani) X
ded(erunt) HS V
    ]us Saleivi P(ubli) s(ervos) leiber coeravit
    ]Timoteus Pophli L(uci) M(arci) s(ervos) Anti[ ]us pop(uli) s(ervos) leiber coeravit
    ]Petro Furi L(uci) s(ervos) Ra(?) Furi L(uci) P(ubli) G(ai) s(ervos)

The lettering in this line is clearly engraved by a different hand, thus indicating two rounds of inscription, one when the dedicator was a slave and another after he had been freed.

To Mens Bona. [Her?] slaves collected sesterces... 3055; ten magistri... gave five sesterces... [?]s, of P. Saleivus, made the vow as a slave and carried it out as a free man. Timotheus of L. and M. Poplius, a slave. Anti[ochus?]... [?]us, a public slave, made the vow as a slave and carried it out as a free man... Petro, of L. Furius, a slave; Ra[?]. of L., P. and C. Furius, a slave... Antiochus, slave of Cn. Utilus, made the vow as a slave and carried it out as a free man.

The names of three commemorators are followed by the letter “s” and the phrase leiber coeravit (lines 4, 6 and 8). If we understand the “s” as an abbreviation for servus, we get a variation of the formula servus vovit, liber solvit, thus indicating a change of status for these individuals. The fact that they appear on the same stone with magistri who were still slaves makes it unlikely that they decided to include this information as a way of thanking Mens Bona for their freedom. Such an interpretation would simply not make sense in the context of a collective dedication by a priestly college.

If servus vovit, liber solvit was not just another way of saying that a vow was made ob libertatem, the expression’s overall rhetorical force takes on greater significance. One obvious effect of juxtaposing servus and liber is to advertise upward mobility. In this regard, as with birthdays, we ought not to lose sight of the fact that status did matter to freedmen; and manumission could accompany the citation of alternative frameworks in defining the progression of an individual’s life course. When fulfilling a vow he had made as a slave, a newly minted libertus would have encountered perhaps his first opportunity to commemorate this important transition.

This has clear parallels in the votive inscriptions of freeborn citizens who made a vow at one stage of their career and fulfilled it at another. Not least among these is the inscription on the inner gate at Eleusis, which Ap. Claudius Pulcher vowed to Ceres and Proserpina as consul in 54 BCE, which he began after being hailed imperator, and which he left to be completed by his
heirs. In this monumental text, the phrase *consul vovit, imperator coepit* maps out Pulcher’s political success in terms of a change in his title – even though he received the latter appellation as governor of Cilicia, not as consul. Likewise, at the municipal level, we find a *duovir* from Achaia fulfilling a vow to Stata Mater that he had made as aedile. In both of these dedications, the fulfillment of a religious duty provides an opportunity to advertise the successive steps in one’s public life. The same applies to votive inscriptions that use the formula *miles vovit, veteranus solvit* and its variants, or attest a promotion in rank, for instance from centurion to *primus pilus*. Within the servile population, moreover, a man named Pudens noted in an inscription from northern Italy that he had made the vow as *contrascriptor* and fulfilled it as an *arcarius*. Next to these comparanda, the formula *servus vovit, liber solvit* seems to represent a point at which ex-slaves capitalized on the opportunity to celebrate their freedom. We need not assume that these slaves and freedmen are simply mimicking the behavior of their social superiors but rather find in Roman epigraphical culture more generally a common impetus to commemorate major transitions. For a soldier, one such point would have been retirement from active duty; for a slave, manumission.

While noteworthy, such affirmations of legal and social advancement comprise only one aspect of the life courses being described by these freedmen in their dedications. The marked contrast between *servus* and *liber* is balanced by the continuity between *vovere*, on the one hand, and *solvere*, on the other. Having made a vow to a god and received a favorable outcome, the worshipper was required to follow through on his original promise. Thus the logical progression

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501 CIL 3.500: M. Lollius/ Epinicys/ aed(ilis) vovit/ IIvir/ dec(urionum) decr(eto)/ Statae Matr(i)/ de sua pecun(ia)/ posuit sacrum. It would also be possible to restore *aed- as aedem*, however.
502 Veterans: CIL 3.3484 (Aquincum), 11.3057 (Horta); *Primus pilus*: CIL 14.3545 (Tibur).
503 CIL 5.7213.
from *vovere* to *solvere* draws as much strength from the principles of Rome’s religious conventions as the divide between slave and free draws from its social hierarchies. By these lights, the overall effect of the formula is to articulate a tension between status, which changes, and cult, which stays constant throughout.

Freedmen like Surillio and Alexander may therefore have found the expression *servus vovit, liber solvit* attractive not just because they wanted to celebrate their transition from one status group to another. They may also have been keen to draw attention to the continuity provided by their relationship with a particular deity in the interest of presenting their lives in a coherent format. As a legitimate source of continuity, moreover, the exchange between god and worshipper stood in contrast to that between master and slave. Like domestic bonds, collegia, and the *dies natalis*, religion helped to tie freedmen’s biographies together without direct recourse to the institution of slavery.

**4.2 Cultural Interactions**

These features of the material record indicate an ability on the part of *liberti* to draw upon sources other than the master-slave relationship to present coherent accounts of the individual life course. In particular, social, temporal, and religious frameworks helped to connect the past to the present – and to remind freed commemorators and their audiences that legal status was not the only way to define a life or to identify points of continuity and transition. Inscriptions commemorated by freedmen gave us access into a subculture that would otherwise remain invisible, but in the case of the Roman elite, both the literary and epigraphical sources offer a far more detailed picture of what transitions were considered important and what ideological bases
existed for the creation of a personal history. Biography and autobiography are obvious starting points from which to examine these issues, but we will also consider representations of the spiritual life course as evidence for the ways in which the individual was constructed in Roman thought. The central question becomes how these spheres of discourse responded to (or adapted) rhetorical strategies developed by freedmen.

In the first place, a review of the political background will demonstrate that the redistribution of authority under the Principate destabilized the conventional biographical frameworks that had been pillars of aristocratic self-definition. Roman authors who observe this shift in the nature of honor and its representation combine the imagery of slavery and freedom with that of epigraphical writing to emphasize the perceived obsequiousness of men who still defined their lives according to ancestor masks (imagines) and inscriptions (tituli). Simultaneously, at least some aristocrats noticed ex-slaves’ attempts to create unity in their life stories through alternative structures. Petronius is content to satirize this aspect of freed slaves’ commemorative habit; but others may have used it as an intellectual model. The application of slavery and manumission as metaphors for philosophical and religious transformation comprise one area in which imperial writers responded constructively to phenomena that were evolving around them in the epigraphical landscape.

4.2.1 Biography and Political Change

We have already seen in general terms how certain members of the Roman elite responded with marked acrimony to freed slaves’ inscriptions – especially those which appropriated traditional symbols of honor. From this perspective, prominent liberti who availed themselves of Rome’s commemorative traditions threatened to degrade the very discourses
which they sought to engage.\textsuperscript{504} Moreover, although freedmen had been commissioning inscribed monuments since the Republican period, the transition to monarchy under Augustus restructured political power in ways that rendered such claims to inclusion even more dangerous to the elite. As the new arbiters of honor, emperors could elevate their own slaves and freedmen to influential positions and award formal titles to favorites in the \textit{familia Caesars}.\textsuperscript{505} Inscriptions that memorialized such enactments of the imperial prerogative reminded the senatorial class of just how tenuous its authority had become.\textsuperscript{506} In the eyes of the aristocracy, as I have argued, freedmen’s monuments were emblematic of a political system in which honors were controlled by an autocrat.\textsuperscript{507}

These trends in Roman political culture had implications for biography and autobiography, whether inscribed on stone or written in books. When control over honors and titles moved definitively from the possession of the nobility into the hands of the \textit{princeps}, conventional modes of defining the life course of an elite Roman male were likewise called into question. For centuries, commemoration in the funerary realm had rested on two basic principles – ancestral lineage, which connected the deceased to his familial past, and the \textit{cursus honorum}, which documented his service to the community. These hallowed forms were epitomized, above all, by the procession of \textit{imagines} at aristocratic funerals and laudatory inscriptions like the \textit{elogia} preserved from the tomb of the Scipios.\textsuperscript{508}

In Latin literature, moreover, the autobiographical writings of statesmen like Sulla, Caesar, and Cicero show how this type of self-representation worked both to preserve one’s \textit{res gestae} and to enhance one’s prestige in the competitive world of Republican politics. While

\textsuperscript{504} Woolf 1996.
\textsuperscript{505} On imperial slaves and freedmen, see above, ch. 3; Weaver 1972, esp. 112–36 and 282–96; Millar 1992, 69–83.
\textsuperscript{506} See Tacitus and the Younger Pliny on the monumental display of Pallas; Plin. Ep. 7.29, 8.6; Tac. \textit{Ann}. 12.53.
\textsuperscript{507} On imperial control, see Eck 1984.
\textsuperscript{508} Plin. \textit{HN}. 35; Polyb. 6.53–4; Flower 1999.
biography did not take shape as a genre at Rome until the first century BCE, early works in this field by Varro, Atticus and Cornelius Nepos all reflect a concern with documenting the origins and political careers of the summi viri, in addition to the character traits that underlay their success.509 Atticus, for example, appears to have written a compendium of Roman magistrates and genealogical treatises that, in Nepos’ view, brought great pleasure “to those who have some desire for knowledge of famous men (viri clari).”510 These literary texts, like inscriptions, served both a commemorative and an exemplary function with respect to posterity.

As organizational principles of elite biography and autobiography, ancestral heritage and official titles highlighted the individual’s embeddedness in the community through family and civic involvement. Not surprisingly, these frameworks had to adapt to a world where imperial favor, rather than birth, determined one’s access to honor and status.511 The extent to which Augustus made his power visible through inscriptions and monuments has been studied in detail; and although in some ways he continued preexisting trends in Roman visual culture, there is no denying the impact of the changes he introduced.512 In terms of biography, the prominence of the emperor found expression through inscribed texts (above all, the Res Gestae) and the appearance of imperial vitae as a distinctive subgenre.513 At the same time, honorific displays like the triumph and public funeral procession became the domain of the domus Augusti. Not

509 Nep. Praef. 1; of course, late Republican biographers’ attention to figures from Greek history and the publication of Roman traditions to a wider audience show a more subtle treatment of the biographical genre than can be discuss here. Momigliano 1993, 95–100.
510 Nep. Att. 18: Quibus libris nihil potest esse dulcius iis, qui aliquam cupiditatem habent notitiae clarorum virorum; Plin. HN 35.11.
513 This is not to ignore the fact that imperial biographies were not limited to simple encomium; rather, I am concerned to note simply that the principes became epicenters of literary production, as well as controllers of knowledge.
only were careers now subject to the whim of the princeps, so too were the commemorative forms that defined the individual according to his civic achievements.

Even in the midst of these changes, however, Romans never abandoned the great men of the past or the cursus honorum; rather, it was the task of certain cynics to observe that the old symbols of honor had been deprived of their substance. Interestingly, the language of slavery and commemoration often merged to describe this phenomenon.514 In Latin historiography, for example, Tacitus had a penchant for unveiling the slavishness of the nobility in the face of imperial power. Most famously, the opening chapters of the Annales describe how Augustus took over the functions of the Senate, magistrates and laws (munia senatus magistratum legum in se trahere) and how members of the elite strove to gain wealth and titles through willing submission to his authority (quanto quis servitio promptior, opibus et honoribus extollerentur).515 Here, as elsewhere, Tacitus draws upon a common motif that associated political compliance with chattel slavery. The language of slaveholding sharpens his criticism of senatorial aristocrats who were content to vie for official honors that had been cheapened by monarchy.516

The epigraphical significance of honores remains implicit at the beginning of the Annales.517 In other places, however, the loss of political freedom under the Principate was framed precisely in terms of a desire for tituli – that is, by a compulsion to define one’s life according to a symbolic system that had become obsolete. For examples of this, we may turn to

514 On the master-slave relationship as a model for imperial authority, see Roller 2001, 214–33.
515 Tac. Ann. 1.2: Postquam Bruto et Cassio caesis nulla iam publica arma, Pompeius apud Siciliam oppressus exutoque Lepido, interfecit Antonio ne Iulianis quidem partibus nisi Caesar dux reliquus, posito triumviri nomine consulem se ferens et ad tuendum plebem tribunicio iure contentum, ubi militem donis, populum annona, cunctos dulcedine otii pellexit, insurgere paulatim, munia senatus magistratum legum in se trahere, nullo adversante, cum ferocissimi per acies aut proscriptione cecidissent, ceteri nobilium, quanto quis servitio promptior, opibus et honoribus extollerentur ac novis ex rebus aucti tuta et praesentia quam vetera et periculoosa mallent.
516 On the theme of libertas in Roman culture, see Wirszubski 1968; Lyasse 2003.
517 Tac. Ann. 1.2.
the Stoa, which had long applied the metaphor of ethical slavery to describe the condition of the bad man, versus the good.  

A related tenet stipulated the common origins of every human mind, whether its possessor be slave or free, and this too may have had roots in the Hellenic tradition. Unfortunately, the damaged state of our evidence for early Stoicism has prevented a detailed account of the long-term development of these topoi. Nevertheless, the biographical aspects of such metaphors included, even as early as Cicero, an awareness of the need to define the human life course in terms other than a series of offices. Such rhetoric combined the imagery of slavery and monumentality in a uniquely Roman milieu.

Cicero’s *Paradoxa Stoicorum* provide the first extended treatment in Latin of the precept that “only the wise man is free, and every fool is a slave.” His discussion rests on the idea that freedom is the ability to live according to one’s own volition. Here we may witness the germ of a connection between philosophy and biography, in the practical application of the former to constructing the latter:

> Quis igitur vivit, ut volt, nisi qui recta sequitur, qui gaudet officio, cui vivendi via considerata atque provisa est... qui nihil dicit, nihil facit, nihil cogitat denique nisi liberenter ac libere, cuius omnia consilia resque omnes, quas gerit, ab ipso profectisconsunt eodemque referuntur, nec est ulla res quae plus apud eum polleat quam ipsius voluntas atque iudicium?

Who therefore lives as he wishes, if not the man who pursues things that are right, who takes pleasure in duty, whose way of life has been thought out and planned... who says nothing, does nothing, and thinks nothing unless willingly and freely, whose intentions and affairs all originate from him and return to the same place; nor is there anything which prevails upon him more than his own will and judgment?

In the phrase *via vivendi*, Cicero evokes both senses of *via*, which may refer to a style or method, as well as to an actual journey that can be planned out beforehand. Moreover, as Cicero goes on

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520 Garnsey 1996, 129.
523 *Cic. Paradoxa Stoicorum* 5.34.
to note several times, a righteous progression through life has nothing to do with one’s place in the political hierarchy, nor with one’s legal status. From this perspective, a fool who brags about having been acclaimed imperator is no different than a degenerate slave who thinks he excels his peers because he holds some special post in the household. In other words, a man’s ethical biography should be divorced from worldly rank and ambition.

Seneca, nearly a century later, embraces the motif of ethical slavery, but pays greater attention than Cicero to the problem of epigraphical commemoration. In advocating a humane approach to managing one’s familia, for example, Seneca brings together the Stoic precepts that all men come from the same stock and that morality, not status, is the foundation of true libertas. Rank, wealth, and other mundane achievements are futile markers of character – whether one is speaking of the senatorial career path or the hierarchies in a slave household. This theme takes on an epigraphical tone when (to name one example) Seneca warns in De brevitate vitae that a man who has reached the pinnacle of civic achievement may yet realize that he has wasted his life in pursuit of a funerary inscription (laborasse... in titulum sepulcri). For Seneca, moreover, the rejection of traditional biographical frameworks applies also to the question of ancestry. Looking at Rome’s commemorative tradition, he admonishes his readers

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524 Cic. Paradoxa Stoicorum 5.33, 40 and 42.
526 E.g., Sen. Dial. 3.21.4.1, 9.2.5.5, 10.20.1.8; Ep. 88.38.4.
527 Sen. Ep. 47.10.
529 Sen. Dial. 10.20.1: Cum videris itaque praetextam saepe iam sumptam, cum celebre in foro nomen, ne invidieris; ista vitae damno parantur. Ut unus ab illis numeretur annus, omnis annos suos conterent. Quosdam antequam in summum ambitionis enenterent, inter prima luctantis aetas reliquit; quosdam eum in consummationem dignitatis per mille indignitates erespissent, misera subit cogitatio laborasse ipsos in titulum sepulcri... Cf. 3.21.4, on the desire of the overweening soul to occupy the fasti with a single name and to spread tituli throughout the world. This was in essence what Augustus and his successors had done.
not to be impressed by rows of *imagines* or elaborate family trees (*stemmata*); the universe is our common parent.\(^{530}\)

In this fashion, Seneca develops a connection between slavery, Stoicism, and the human life course that is already apparent in Cicero. Yet in doing so, he displays a heightened concern for the significance of inscriptions, especially in their capacity to manifest the conceptual bondage that (from one perspective) plagued the nobility. Nor was Seneca alone in his realization that the redistribution of political power had weakened the capacity of *tituli* and *imagines* to define the individual in relation to the community. In what follows, I suggest that Seneca and other imperial authors solved this problem by mirroring the patterns we have observed in freed slaves’ epigraphical monuments. As a necessary first step, however, Petronius’ treatment of Trimalchio will stand as a demonstration that members of the elite were generally conscious of these rhetorical strategies. On this basis, Stoic and early Christian texts may offer some specific examples of the ways in which ex-slaves’ epigraphical practices contributed to the development of biographical forms in other areas of imperial discourse.

### 4.2.2 Trimalchio’s Autobiography

Petronius’ attentiveness to freed slaves’ commemorative habits in general is strongly suggested by his description of Trimalchio’s house.\(^ {531}\) From the moment Encolpius arrives, he sees epigraphical writing at every turn.\(^ {532}\) An inscription fastened to the front door warns slaves

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\(^{530}\) Sen. *Ben.* 3.28.2: *Qui imagines in atrio exponunt et nomina familiae suae longo ordine ac multis stemmatum inligata flexuris in parte prima aedium collocant, non noti magis quam nobiles sunt? Unus omnium parens mundus est, sive per splendidos sive per sordidos gradus ad hunc prima cuiusque origo perdueitur.*

\(^{531}\) Regarding the historical value of the *Satyricon*, I generally agree with the view summarized by Andreau 2009, 114–15; both the ‘reality effect’ and Petronius’ own biases are important subjects of study, but specific themes should be approached on a case by case basis with as much outside evidence as possible.

\(^{532}\) See Nelis-Clément and Nelis 2005; Beard 1997.
not to leave without their master’s permission. Nearby is a painting of a dog with block-letters spelling out CAVE CANEM; and a biographical mural in the portico has been carefully labeled with exegetical captions. Inside, Encolpius notices that the doorway to the triclinium is adorned with rods and axes, as well as a ship’s beak bearing the inscription, “To C. Pompeius Trimalchio, sevir Augustalis, from his steward, Cinammus.” These are only the first examples of Trimalchio’s penchant for epigraphical writing, even before we reach the famous scene in which he designs his own tomb.

The self-referential quality of Trimalchio’s mural and epitaph speaks to the importance of these forms of writing in commemorating the individual life course at a level of society where a literary autobiography would have been out of place. What is more, I would submit, the ways in which Trimalchio treats his personal history display some striking parallels with the patterns we have observed in the inscriptions of actual freedmen. On the one hand, Petronius creates distance between Trimalchio’s present circumstances and servile past by writing this ex-slave’s patron out of the picture and giving him the modus vivendi of a freeborn aristocrat. At the same time, however, Trimalchio expresses deference for his dead master, thus bridging the gap between slavery and freedom by way of continued obeisance – however compulsory that loyalty may have been.

For all their bombast, the freedmen of the Satyricon embrace their origins to the point of trading stories about their slave days. “When I was still a slave…,” begins Neros’ tale about

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533 Petr. 28.7–8: QVISQVIS SERVVS SINE DOMINICO IVSSV FORAS EXIERIT ACCIPIET PLAGAS CENTVM. Whatever slave goes outside without the master’s orders shall receive 100 lashes.
534 Petr. 29.1–2: …omnia diligenter curiosus pictor cum inscriptione reddiderat.
535 Petr. 30.2–3: C. Pompeio Trimalchioni, seviro Augustali, Cinnamus dispensator.
536 Other tituli appear on dishes (Petr. 31.10) and wine jars (34.7); for the tomb, see 71. On the funereal quality of the whole Cena, see Bodel 1994.
537 Veyne 1961. Cf. Petr. 38 on other freedmen’s changes of fortune.
538 Petr. 39.4; cf. 76.1.
the werewolf; “When I still had [a slave’s] hair…,” counters Trimalchio. Predictably, our host seems especially eager to recount his autobiography, not just in monumental form, but also before a live audience. Although Veyne’s reading of these passages focus primarily on Trimalchio’s relationship with his master, the narrative strategies that Trimalchio employs are equally worthy of interpretation with respect to their cultural context. Following this line of inquiry, we might ask what other motifs serve to unite the life story of this fictional freedman and how these compare with what has emerged from the material record. To be sure, the answers say more about Petronius’ viewpoint than about any other; but they do suggest an initial point of contact between literary and epigraphical discourse, both of which were heavily invested in the production of commemorative texts.

On the face of it, Trimalchio is rather less concerned than some other, actual freedmen with the durability of his marriage and friendships over the entire course of his life. His relationship with Fortunata apparently postdates his manumission, although her dramatic rise from prostitution to luxury in many ways parallels that of her husband. As a slave-owner, however, Trimalchio does recognize the attraction of preserving conjugal bonds from slavery into freedom. His last will and testament provides not just for his slaves’ liberation but also, in the case of a certain Philargyrus, a substantial grant of property and that man’s contubernalis. Even more striking in this respect is Hermeros’ assertion that “I paid for my contubernalis’ freedom, lest anyone put a hand on her.” If not a feature of Trimalchio’s own biographical

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539 Petr. 62–3: Cum adhuc servirem… cum adhuc capillatus essem; cf. Ganymede at 44.4–5: O si haberemus illos leones, quos ego hic inveni, cum primum ex Asia veni.
540 To the mural at Petr. 29 and tomb at 71 can be added Trimalchio’s speech at 75–8.
542 Petr. 37.2–5. See D’Arms 1981, 97–120.
543 Petr. 71.2: Ad summam, omnes illos in testamento meo manu mitto. Philargyro etiam fundum lego et contubernalem suam...
544 Petr. 57.6: contubernalem meam redemi, ne quis in <capillis> illius manu tegeter.
narrative, the goal of staying with one’s slave wife or husband is part of the rhetoric that Petronius ascribes to this subculture.

Equally as suggestive, perhaps, is the description of Trimalchio’s friends as *colliberti*.\(^{545}\) While the legal status of all the guests is not explicitly stated, their Greek *cognomina* have the same effect here as they do in epigraphical texts. The fact that Trimalchio shares a *praenomen* and *nomen* with C. Pompeius Diogenes may further indicate that at least some of them had the same master.\(^{546}\) Moreover, although Trimalchio’s fellow freedmen play a minimal role in his autobiography, he at times reveals a level of familiarity with them that attests a longstanding relationship. Thus he is able to admonish Hermeros, who was a slave for 40 years, “When you were a young rascal, you were quite the strutting rooster, and you had no brains to boot.”\(^{547}\)

Nevertheless, the longevity of the relationships between freedmen in the *Satyricon* pales in comparison to the flagrant egotism of its main character. The strategies that Trimalchio uses in his relentless program of self-promotion include repeated attempts to demarcate his life within systems related to the passage of time.\(^{548}\) The commemoratory power of such frameworks lies behind Trimalchio’s instructions to Habinnas to put a sundial in the middle of his tomb complex “so that anyone who checks the time shall read my name, whether or not he wants to.”\(^{549}\)

Slightly less abrasively, Trimalchio obsesses over his own death and (on the basis of an astrologer’s reckoning) keeps a running tally of how many days he has left.\(^{550}\) Earlier in the *Cena*, moreover, Trimalchio explains his own position in a platter of delicacies arranged by the

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\(^{545}\) Petr. 38.6, 57.1, 59.1 and 58.3.

\(^{546}\) Andreau 2009, 117.

\(^{547}\) Petr. 59: Et tu cum esses capo, coco coco, atque cor non habebas. On the meaning of *capo* as ‘young cock’ or ‘rascal’, see Smith 1975 *ad loc.*; Hermeros states the duration of his servitude at Petr. 57.9.

\(^{548}\) At its most benign, this simply entails marking his personal activities and business endeavors in the Roman calendar. He dines out on 30 and 31 December (Petr. 30.4); serves 100-year-old wine (34.7); and hears a daily report from his estates (53.1–5).

\(^{549}\) Petr. 71.11: ut quisquis horas inspiciet, velit nolit, nomen meum legat.

\(^{550}\) Petr. 77.2: 30 years, four months, and two days.
Zodiac: “I was born under the Crab. I therefore stand on many feet and have many possessions at sea and on land; for the crab is suited to both.”

Through this autobiographical scene, Petronius offers a possible parallel to freedmen’s commemoration of the dies natalis; as a satirist, however, he colors Trimalchio’s appeal to his birth sign with an insatiable desire for wealth.

In addition to this auspicious horoscope, Trimalchio takes pains to note that the gods have given him their unflagging support from his childhood onward. The wall-painting in his front portico monumentalizes this fact by showing our hero at the slave market with a caduceus, being led to Rome by Minerva, and receiving his freedom with Mercury’s help, in the company of Fortune and the three Fates. While one might argue that the mural’s biographical frame is limited to the period of Trimalchio’s life that lasted from enslavement to manumission, the whole visual narrative leads to his house, and thus implies continuity with the present. Encolpius goes on to hear on multiple occasions how Mercury and the other gods smiled down on his host. What is more, Trimalchio has put his house-gods on display in the foyer, along with Venus and clippings from his first beard. This connection between the gods and Trimalchio’s early biography evolves later in the dinner, when slaves bring out the Lares, fittingly identified as Cerdo, Felicio, and Lucrio. In aggregate, these passages weave the theme of divine benevolence into Trimalchio’s life story from start to finish. This narrative pattern bears a

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551 Petr. 39.8: In cancro ego natus sum. Ideo multis pedibus sto et in mari et in terra multa possideo; nam cancer et hoc et illoc quadrat.
553 Petr. 76.1. Trimalchio’s patron god, Mercury, attested at 67.8, 77.4.
554 Petr. 39: Praeterea grande armarium in angulo vidi, in cuius aedicula erant Lares argentei positi Venerisque signum marmoreum et pyxis aurea non pusilla, in quo barbam ipsius conditam esse dicebat.
555 Petr. 59.7 and 60.1: Inter haec tres pueri candidas succincti tunicas intraverunt, quorum duo Lares bullatos super mensam posuerunt, unus pateram vini circumferens “dii propitii clamabat... Aiebat autem unum Cerdonem, alterum Felicionem, tertium Lucronem vocari.
striking resemblance to that embedded in the formula *servus vovit, liber solvit*, despite the fact that Petronius deploys it in the service of a different rhetorical goal.

The heart of the satire lies in precisely how Trimalchio seeks to connect his servile past to his present. Social, temporal, and religious frameworks that were sources of legitimacy for actual freedmen become, for Petronius, opportunities to lay bare the inherent materialism behind the rags-to-riches motif. So Trimalchio boasts:556

Ad hanc me fortunam frugalitas mea perduxit. Tam magnus ex Asia veni, quam hic candelabrus est. Ad summam, quotidie me solebam ad illum metiri, et ut celerius rostrum barbatum haberem, labra de lucerna ungebam. Tamen ad delicias ipsimi annos quattuordecim fui... Ceterum, quemadmodum di volunt, dominus in domo factus sum, et ecce cepi ipsimi cerebellum. Quid multa? coheredem me Caesari fecit, et accepi patrimonium laticlavium.

Self-denial has brought me into this fortune. I came from Asia as tall as this candlestick. In fact, every day I would measure myself against it and oil my lips from a lamp so as to speed up the growth of my beard. Nevertheless, at 14 I was my master’s favorite... then, insofar as the gods willed, I became lord of the house, and held my master’s brains in my hand. Why say more? He made me co-heir with Caesar, and I got an inheritance big enough for a senator.

Here, as elsewhere, Trimalchio highlights the fact that his achievements before manumission led directly to his wealth as a freedman. Not only did he win over the affections and the estate of his master, he cultivated the personal qualities necessary for financial gain. As this passage implies, the thread of continuity that really matters to Trimalchio is cold cash above anything else. In this way, at least, Petronius’ treatment of the *nouveau riche* freedman critiques a set of cultural patterns that emerge from the material evidence.

4.2.3 Stoicism and Christianity as Alternative Frameworks

For this satire to have made sense, Petronius’ audience must have shared his awareness of these aspects of freedmen’s epigraphical habit. Although caricatures like Trimalchio emphasize the ‘otherness’ of the freed population, no amount of vitriol could obscure the similarities between the master-slave relationship and the position in which the nobility found itself with

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556 Petr. 75.
respect to the *princeps*. This resemblance added force to the metaphor of political slavery; but it also created an opportunity for members of the elite to learn new ways of exercising personal agency by observing a segment of Roman society that had, over time, developed techniques by which to negotiate its marginal status.

Two places in which this exchange may be detected are the literary sources for Stoicism and early Christianity, two related discourses that became increasingly prominent in the Roman world under the early Empire. In the writings of Seneca, Epictetus, and Paul – which form the core of our remaining analysis – modes of describing ethical progress evolved alongside the metaphors of slavery and liberation. These writers, I will argue, employed the language of slaveholding to advocate for sources of personal identity other than political honor, and to emphasize the integrity of the soul as it moved from one moral stage to another. These rhetorical forms had a long history in their respective traditions, but contemporary parallels with the commemorative behavior of freedmen strongly suggest that they came into contact with slave and freed culture during an historical period when the social position of former slaves recommended this group as a particularly relevant foil for the ruling orders.

As I have already mentioned, imperial Stoics used the metaphor of slavery in a negative sense to comment on the devaluation of traditional systems of honor. Men who invested themselves too deeply in the commemoration of an ancestral line or a *cursus honorum* revealed themselves to be slaves of ambition. In this same context, however, Seneca undertakes a more positive application of the slavery metaphor when he advises Lucilius not to interpret *imagines* as a sign of nobility. Rather, “think of yourself not as a Roman *eques* but as a freedman (*libertinus*); you will be able to achieve the goal of being the only free man among the
freeborn.” Seneca’s thought experiment works because ex-slaves had been alienated from their ancestral heritage and were barred from holding political office. By identifying with this group, the student of Stoicism could recognize men’s universal capacity for virtue and, on this basis, could replace established modes of self-definition with more meaningful, ethical ones.

Epictetus, who was himself a freedman, was in an even better position than Seneca to absorb the habits of Roman liberti. He, too, employs the language of slavery to offer Stoicism as a more effective measurement of individual progress than ancestry, offices, or legal status. A man who can claim noble birth, membership in the Senate, consulships, imperial favor, and ownership of his own chattel will nevertheless remain a slave as long as his ambitions subject him to the power of others. At the opposite end of the social ladder, but with the same implications, Epictetus gives us the slave who wishes to be manumitted in the expectation that he will suddenly acquire a new form of agency.

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557 Sen. Ep. 44.5–6: Non facit nobilem atrium plenum fumosis imaginibus; nemo in nostram gloriam vixit nec quod ante nos fuit nostrum est: animus facit nobilem, cui ex quacunque condicione supra fortunam licet surgere. Puta itaque te non equitem Romanum esse, sed libertinum; potes hoc consequi, ut solus sis liber inter ingenuos. I translate libertinus as “fledged.”

558 Bradley 1994, 174. I do not wish to make too much of this status, in part because Epictetus is working in the Stoic tradition and producing work designed to engage that tradition. Although helpful for hypothesizing about the experiential basis of some of his statements, Epictetus’ freed status does not make him a Frederick Douglass in the Stoic tradition and producing work designed to eng

559 Epictetus 4.1.8–10: ‘πῶς γάρ, φησιν, ἐγώ δουλός εἰμι; ὁ πατήρ ἐλεύθερος, ἢ μήτηρ ἐλεύθερα, οὐ ὡνὴν οὐδεὶς ἔχει; ἀλλά καὶ συγκλητικός εἰμι καὶ Καίσαρος φίλος καὶ ὑπάτευκα καὶ δοῦλος πολλοὺς ἔχω.’ πρῶτον μὲν, ὦ βέλτιστε συγκλητικέ, τάχα σου καὶ ὁ πατήρ τήν αὐτὴν δουλείαν δοῦλος ἢ καὶ ἢ μήτηρ καὶ ὁ πάππος καὶ ἔφεξις πάντων οἱ πρόγονοι. εἰ δὲ δὴ καὶ τὰ μάλιστα ἦσαν ἐλεύθεροι, τί τούτο πρὸς σέ; τί γάρ, εἰ ἐκεῖνοι μὲν γενναῖοι ἦσαν, οὐ δὲ ἀγεννήσι; ἐκεῖνοι μὲν ἄφοβοι, οὐ δὲ δειλός; ἐκεῖνοι μὲν ἐγκρατεῖς, οὐ δὲ ἀκόλαστος; “How am I a slave?” says he. “My father was free, my mother free; no one has a deed of sale for me. More than that, I am a member of the senate and a friend of Caesar, and I have been consul and I own many slaves.” Now in the first place, most worthy senator, it is very likely that your father was the same kind of slave that you are, and your mother and your grandfather, and all your ancestors from first to last. But even if they were free to the limit, what does that prove in your case? Why, what does it prove if they were brave and you a coward? If they were self-controlled and you unrestrained? (Loeb trans., as below).

560 Epictetus 4.1.34–5: ‘ἄν ἄφεθα,’ φησίν, ‘εὐθὺς πάσα εὔροια, οὐδενὸς ἐπιστρέφομαι, πάσιν ὡς ἰσος καὶ ὁμοιος ἀλλό, πορεύομαι ὅπου θέλω, ἔργαμαι δόθην θέλω καὶ ὅπου θέλω.’ “If I am set free,” he says, “Immediately it is all happiness, I shall pay no attention to anybody, I talk to everybody as an equal and as one in the same station in life, I go where I please, I come whence I please, and where I please.”
In this latter case, however, manumission only perpetuates servitude because it delivers the freedman into another state of dependency. Even if this notional freedman should ascend through Roman society – from riches, to military service, to enrollment in the Senate itself – he will not have avoided the same type of moral slavery that plagues his freeborn counterparts. In these passages, Epictetus revisits the common trope that only the wise man is free; but, like Seneca, he does so with reference to the structures of elite biographical commemoration that had come under scrutiny during the Empire. As an alternative to wealth or a public career, Epictetus recommends the cultivation of the self through philosophy, with one’s teacher playing the role of emancipator (karpistes) into ethical freedom.

Seneca and Epictetus thus demonstrate how the metaphor of ethical slavery could strengthen arguments in favor of adopting Stoicism as an alternative to conventional biographical formats, which depended on a series of meaningless titles. This appeal to an external source of legitimacy correlates with patterns visible in freedmen’s commemorative inscriptions, although the liberti we have considered turned toward personal relationships, time, and cult, as opposed to philosophy. In this respect, perhaps, Christian discourse contains a more compelling analogue to freed slaves’ epigraphical practice, when it asserts the individual’s relationship with divinity as a primary marker of personal growth. Specifically, as we will see, the biographical aspects of the Christian metaphor of servitude to God or Christ used the language of chattel slavery to

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561 Epictetus 4.1.35–40; this rise to faux nobility concludes with “the sleekest form of slavery” (ἡν καλλίστην καὶ λιπαρωτάτην δουλείαν δουλεύει).  
562 Epictetus 4.1.113: καὶ λέγε γομναξόμενος καθ’ ἡμέραν, ὡς ἕκει, μή ὅτι ϕιλοσοφεῖς (ἔστω φωτικόν τὸ ὅνομα), ἀλλ’ ὅτι καρπιστὴν δίδως. And every day while you are training yourself, as you do in the gymnasium, do not say that you are “practicing philosophy” (indeed an arrogant phrase!), but that you are a slave presenting your emancipator at court; cf. 4.1.146.  
563 Given the emphasis that some freedmen’s inscriptions place on literacy and education, however, we cannot rule out the idea that intellectual achievements may have played a similar role to the themes considered above; cf., for example, Sen. Polyl. 2.5: Eriperes bonam valetudinem? Sciebas animum eius liberalibus disciplinis, quibus non innutritus tantum sed innatus est, sic esse fundatum, ut supra omnis corporis dolores emineret. This laudatio of a member of the imperial household uses liberalia studia as a unifying biographical framework that does not rely on the institution of slavery.
propose a new mode of self-definition that would lead to spiritual freedom. Like Stoicism, early Christian thought interacted not just with the ideology of slaveholding, but also with the unique approach to individual identity that the experience of slavery had produced among freedmen at the cultural level.

Slavery metaphors appear throughout the New Testament, and particularly in the Pauline epistles, whereby ‘slaves of sin’ could liberate themselves by submitting to Christ. As in Stoic thought, such motifs worked to highlight the distinction between ethics and legal status by implying that any man is a slave if he lacks spiritual freedom. For Christians, moreover, all members of the Church were slaves of God, no matter what legal category they might inhabit. The main difference here is the paradoxical notion that one might escape moral servitude not through full manumission but by acquiring a new, divine master. In this way, the metaphor of spiritual bondage aligned with another Christian precept, that of “power accomplished through weakness.”

Before examining the biographical features of the metaphor of slavery to God, we should recognize that it emerged from a long discursive tradition and responded to multiple contextual factors at any given moment in time. For one thing, chattel slavery could describe a worshipper’s relationship to a pagan deity, not just to the Christian God. Spiritual liberation, it was thought, might arrive in the form of subservience to a divinity. This search for freedom in spiritual slavery was embedded in Hellenistic political discourse but came fully into awareness.

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564 Examples of the theme and its variants are collected by Harris 1999, 80–6. It is important to note that Paul/Saul was a Jew from Tarsus, although he was no stranger to the Greco-Roman style of slavery as practiced at that time throughout the empire. See Glancy 2001, 6–8.

565 1 Corinthians 7:22: ὁ γὰρ ἐν κυρίῳ κληθεὶς δοῦλος ἀπελευθερωμένος κυρίου ἐστὶν ὁμοίως ὁ ἐλευθερωμένος κληθεὶς δοῦλος ἐστὶν Χριστοῦ (“For one who has been called in the Lord as a slave is the Lord’s freedman; in the same way, a free man who has been called is the slave of Christ.”); for further negation of the importance of legal status see, e.g., Galatians 3:28 and Colossians 3:11.

566 2 Corinthians 12:9 (ἡ γὰρ δύναμις ἐν ἀσθενείᾳ τελεῖται).
under the Empire – for example in conversion stories like that of Apuleius’ Lucius. As the priest in this novel instructs our hero, “when you have begun to serve the goddess, then all the more will you feel the fruit of your liberty” (*cum coeperis deae servire, tunc magis senties fructum tuae libertatis*); it is only by entering a new type of servitude that Lucius will fully appreciate his escape from earthly bondage.

Such attestations of divine slavery among pagans help to contextualize, but do not explain, the origins of the *topos* in the New Testament. An extensive scholarly debate on this topic has created a fault line between those who give primacy to antecedents in the Judaic tradition, and those who focus on the contemporary context of Greco-Roman slaveholding. Still, there is nothing to discount *a priori* the hypothesis that, whatever their derivation, slavery metaphors in Christian doctrine interacted with the ideology and practice of the institution to an extent that is useful for exegesis. This approach has received wide acceptance, despite ongoing disagreement on specific points of contact between Christian rhetoric and the practice of chattel slavery in the greater Roman empire.

In keeping with this latter methodology, let me consider some of the ways in which Christian texts used slavery to configure the individual’s progression through life. In the first place, Christ was the paradigmatic example of willing servitude to God, as in the letter to the *Philippians*, where Paul is probably quoting a hymn already known among Christians:

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569 For the “slave of God” trope in the OT, see Garnsey 1996, 155 and 163–71; on the history of scholarship, see Byron 2003, 1–16; Byron 2004; Harris 1999, 20; Martin 1990; Bruce 1977.
570 For instance, on Martin’s (1990) controversial suggestion that upward mobility in the Greco-Roman slave system helped to shape the metaphor of slavery to God in early Christian texts; see Byron 2004 for a review of the scholarship, including reactions to Martin.
571 2:5–11: Τοῦτο προνεῖτε εἰς ὑμῖν δ καὶ εἰς Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, ὃς ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων οὐχ ἀρπαγμόν ἔγινε τὸ εἶναι ἱερὸ, ἀλλὰ ἐαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν μορφὴν δουλοῦ λαβὼν, ἐν ὑμισί μαθητεύσαν ἀνθρώπων γενόμενον· καὶ σχήματι εὐρεθές ὃς ἀνθρώπος ἐταπείνωσεν ἐαυτὸν γενόμενον ὑπόκος μέχρι θανάτου, θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ, διὸ καὶ ὁ θεός αὐτὸν ὑπερήφανωσεν καὶ ἔχαρισε αὐτῷ τὸ δόμα τὸ ὑπὲρ πάν ὄνομα, ἵνα ἐν τῷ ὄνομα Ἰησοῦ πάν γόνις κάμψι ἐπουρανίων καὶ ἐπιγείων καὶ καταχθόνων, καὶ πᾶσα γλῶσσα
May you be of such a mind as was Jesus Christ, who, though existing in the form of God, did not consider being equal with God to be thievery, but made himself of no effect, taking the form of a slave and coming into the likeness of men. In appearance found as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death – the death of the cross. Therefore God exalted Him and bestowed upon Him the name which is above every name...

According to this model, Christ descended from an original state of parity with God into the form of a slave – that is, of a human being – but through obedience and crucifixion was able to return to His former position. The theme of Christ’s service to God likewise appears in the Gospels, whose association with Greco-Roman biography has been affirmed on formal grounds. In this particular manifestation, slavery represents an intermediate chapter along a narrative of departure and homecoming that elevates a spiritual definition of status over a legal one.

To return to the main difference between Christian and Stoic applications of the ethical slavery *topos*, in some instances manumission from sin explicitly led to another form of servitude – that is, enslavement to righteousness, Christ, God, or even mutually to other people. A representative statement of this process comes at Romans 6:17–18: “And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.” In this formulation, man exists in a perpetual state of servility but may free himself by taking on righteousness as his new master. In its biographical aspects, such a model on the one hand reproduces the values of slaveholders by identifying the freedman’s continued obedience as the main thread connecting him to his

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έξομολογήσεται ὅτι κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός εἰς δόξαν θεοῦ πατρός. See Byron 2003, 150–80, although in closing he denies any connection to the institution of slavery; also Glancy 2002, 100–1.

572 Burridge 2004; e.g., John 4:34.

573 Examples collected by Harris 1999, 80–5; he cites OT precedents at Lev. 25:55, Ps. 116:16 and LXX 115:7.

574 Χάρις δὲ τῷ θεῷ ὑπηκοούσατε ἀπὸ τῆς ἁμαρτίας ἐλευθερωθέντες δὲ ἑκατάρκια ἐπεί δὲ ἐκ τῆς ἁμαρτίας ἐδουλώθητε τῇ δικαιοσύνῃ. Cf. 1 Thessalonians 1:9 and 1 Peter 2:15–16.
past. On the other hand, it allows for the insertion of an alternative system of meaning (belief in the Christian God) that can liberate the individual from any sort of worldly enslavement.

4.2.4 Continuity in the Spiritual Life Course

Thus far we have focused mainly on how Stoic and Christian thinkers sought to replace conventional forms of biography with ethical and spiritual paradigms through the imagery of slavery and liberation. In so doing, they replicated a tendency among freed commemorators to supplement the dominant ideology of slaveholding by appealing to other sources of meaning. Perhaps even more telling, however, are the ways in which Stoicism and Christianity mirrored the second unique feature of ex-slaves’ biographical inscriptions, namely the use of these alternative frameworks to define the individual in terms of a continuous development from birth to death. As I will argue in this concluding discussion, Stoic and early Christian discourse also sought to establish unity between the stages of figurative slavery and freedom that comprised the spiritual lifespan.

The Stoic proficiens, by definition, was in a state of becoming. This attention to process also characterizes the Stoics’ treatment of ethical slavery and freedom as biographical constructs. For instance, Seneca suggests on the one hand that domestic and political hierarchies could present an impediment to natural growth or suddenly dissolve in a downturn of fortune. Thus the wine-pourer who must preserve his boyish looks for his master “does battle with his age” and “cannot get away from his youth,” while members of the elite who are “beginning to ascend to senatorial rank by doing military service” may be captured in a massacre and forced to live out

575 This is true whether one is looking at Roman manumission, which makes the freedman his ex-master’s patron, or at Greek practice, where the slave is sold symbolically to a god.
576 Sen. Ep. 47.7: Alius vini minister in muliebrem modum ornatus cum aetate luctatur; non potest effugere pueritiam, retrahitur, iamque militari habitu glaber retritis pilis aut penitus evulsis tota nocte pervigilat, quam inter ebrietatem domini ac libidinem dividit et in cubiculo vir, in convivio puer est.
their lives in servility. Rather than succumb to either one of these pitfalls, the student of Stoic doctrine would do well to focus on ethics. Seneca reinforces this point when he advises masters to invite slaves to dinner on the basis of character, rather than duties or rank. Character should be evaluated in light of the slave’s potential (not current) *mores*, because “if there is anything servile in them due to their lowly associations, intercourse with more upright men will expel it.” For slaves, as for *ingenui*, a developmental view of the ethical self provides a salutary alternative to other ways of charting individual progress.

This model of the life course connects directly with Seneca’s interpretation of the precept that all souls can be free, and with his cynicism about ancestral masks and inscriptions as a valuable means of structuring one’s personal history. An upright soul, he reminds Lucilius “may descend into a Roman *eques*, or a freedman (*libertinus*), or a slave.” Drawing a metaphor from the plastic arts, Seneca urges his student to shape himself (*fingere*) in the likeness (*imago*) of God – not from gold or silver, but from the humble raw material of clay. Given its context, this rhetoric may allude not just to sculpture in general, but also to that medium’s commemorative function. Even more striking, however, is Seneca’s advice to relinquish the desire for elaborate *tituli* and be content with an inscription that reads merely, “O VIRVM BONVM.” These three words achieve with the notion of Stoic virtue precisely what freedmen accomplished with personal relationships, time, and religion; that is, they encompass an entire

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578 Sen. *Ep.* 47.15; note the existence of *manumissio per mensam*.
579 Sen. *Ep.* 47.15–16: si quid enim in illis ex sordida conversatione servile est, honestiorum convictus excutiet.
581 Sen. *Ep.* 88.38.4: Simus hoc titulo rusticore contenti: ‘o virum bonum!’
biography by appealing to a value system that was independent of the ideologies normally applied in this setting.

Epictetus, like Seneca, frames a progressive view of biography in terms of the language of slaveholding. In describing how best to attain a state of moral eleutheria, Epictetus employs the metaphor of “the road which leads to freedom” (hodos ep’ eleutherian) and suggests that the only dependable travelling companion is God.\(^{582}\) To move successfully down this path, a person must acquire a knowledge of what things are within his control and concern himself with these exclusively.\(^{583}\) Men who achieve this – Diogenes and Socrates, for example – are free in the knowledge that they are fundamentally alone in the world, at least in a spiritual sense.\(^{584}\) Yet the pursuit of such freedom is an ongoing struggle in which Epictetus himself is still mired.\(^{585}\)

Through such a focus on process, the Stoic metaphor of ethical slavery provides an alternative to conventional norms, not just in assessing one’s current status but also in describing one’s progress through life. That is, philosophy offers a framework for biography in which the protagonist is the ethical self as it proceeds from servitude through liberation.

While selective, these passages show how Roman thinkers employed the theme of ethical slavery in a generalized ‘biographical’ setting. In particular, Stoic philosophy comprises a standard of measure to replace debased systems like the cursus honorum or material wealth; and for Epictetus, especially, it lends coherence to the story of the soul’s journey through life. Such appeals to a supplementary ideological frame run parallel to the features of ex-slaves’ epigraphical culture that I have outlined – namely, the impetus to define human existence in

\(^{582}\) Epictetus 4.1.131 and 98, although this latter passage may also be a simple allusion to the ‘road of life’.
\(^{583}\) E.g., Epictetus 4.1.81–4 and 175.
\(^{584}\) Epictetus 4.1.159–62.
\(^{585}\) Epictetus 4.1.151–2: Σὺ οὖν, φησί, ἐλεύθερος εἶ; – Θέλω νῦ τοὺς θεοὺς καὶ εὐχομαι, ἀλλ’ οὕτω δύναμαι ἀντιβλέψαι τοῖς κυρίοις, ἔτι τιμῶ τὸ σωμάτιον, ὁλόκληρον αὐτὸ ἔχειν ἀντὶ πολλοῦ ποιούμαι καὶ τοῦ μηδ’ ὁλόκληρον ἔχων. Are you, then, free, says someone? – By the gods, I wish to be, and pray to be, but I am not yet able to look into the face of my masters, I still honor my paltry body, I take great pains to keep it sound, although it is not sound in any case.
ways that constructed personal agency within the realities of a subordinate status. The fact that Stoic writers express these ideas through the rhetoric of slavery and freedom is highly suggestive of an underlying relationship, whereby the philosophical *topos* responded to the cultural practices of slaves and freedmen.\(^{586}\)

In Christian texts, the question of biographical unity is somewhat more complicated than in the Stoic tradition. On the one hand, according to the model of Jesus’ descent into human form and subsequent return to heaven, metaphorical slavery lacks the ability to encompass the entirety of His journey. Rather, it is His relationship to God that provides the substance and structure of his biography. This pattern of descent into slavery and subsequent return to an original purity also emerges in the *Exegesis on the Soul*, a Gnostic tractate that configures the soul’s debased embodiment as prostitution.\(^{587}\) Like the Stoic doctrine of ethical freedom, such metaphors tend to preserve the identity of the soul over the course of its fall and salvation by drawing on a religious or moral system whose authority transcends more conventional structures for measuring one’s journey through life.

In this case, I would suggest, freedmen’s construction of biographical unity in terms independent of the master-slave relationship may have helped to strengthen the Christian metaphor of slavery, at least in some of its aspects. Like the votive formula *servus vovit, liber solvit*, this model of Christ and its Gnostic counterpart use divinity as a way of maintaining the integrity of the individual as he moves from one level of empowerment to another. What is more, the familial bond between Father and Son embedded in this religious framework helps to

\(^{586}\) This is much more plausible, I think, than a scenario in which slaves and freedmen gleaned narratological tips from the Stoics.

\(^{587}\) Robinson 1970.
smooth over any breaks in the narrative that would imply that servitude affected Christ’s essential connection to God.\textsuperscript{588}

On the other hand, while the example of Christ attests biographical coherence through an association with the divine, Paul sometimes uses the imagery of slavery and freedom to emphasize the importance for Christians of making a break with their previous state of ignorance and moral corruption. At Galatians 5:1 he exhorts, “Christ has delivered us to freedom; stand fast, therefore, and never again be held by the yoke of slavery.”\textsuperscript{589} The imagery of stagnation and rebirth has the power to strengthen this divide by showing how “tarrying in sin” (ἐπιμένωμεν τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ) may lead to an abandonment of the past in exchange for “the newness of life” (ἐν καινότητι ζωῆς) on the model of Christ’s resurrection.\textsuperscript{590}

Paul’s synthesis of these metaphors to describe the passage from vice to virtue has been interpreted in light of Patterson’s theory of slavery as a ‘social death’, which extinguishes the individual’s personal history.\textsuperscript{591}

Both liberty and slavery are the direct consequences of death. It is death to one’s own slavery which enables one to be alive in freedom; while at the same time death ‘to the world’ is an entry into the new slavery to Christ.

This insight reveals how the Christian metaphor of slavery interacted with two distinct elements of slaveholding ideology, one which imposed a firm separation between slavery and freedom, and another which lessened that gap by demanding humility from the freedman. In transforming liberation from sin into a new form of servitude, Paul intensifies the assumption that servility encompasses the individual’s life once he has been degraded; only by death into Christ does the perennial slave escape from this conceptual prison.

\textsuperscript{588} On fathers and sons, see Lyall 1984.
\textsuperscript{589} Τῇ ἐλευθερίᾳ ἡμᾶς Χριστὸς ἐλευθέρωσεν· στήκετε οὖν καὶ μὴ πάλιν ζυγῷ δουλείας ἐνέχεσθε.
\textsuperscript{590} Romans 6:1, 4.
\textsuperscript{591} Combès 1998, 87–9.
These examples suggest that Christian thinkers were as capable of combining the perspectives of slaves and masters as they were of replicating one or the other in the construction of slavery’s symbolic meaning within ecclesiastical discourse. Paul especially demonstrates a willingness to play on the tensions inherent in the institution, not just in the ideology of the slave-owning class but in the ability of slaves and freedmen to work with conflicting modes of self-definition. Christianity, like Stoicism, offered an alternative to the belabored social and political frameworks according to which freeborn citizens had conventionally organized their biographies. What is more, it gave the same emphasis to the integrity of the individual soul along its spiritual journey that freedmen created in their epigraphical monuments in an attempt to transcend the paradigms of legal status, servitude, and patronage. In both Stoic and Christian discourse, therefore, we may begin to appreciate the significance of conceptions of personal identity that freedmen developed in response to their collective experience of slavery and manumission.

Freed commemorators responded to a set of rhetorical demands that were unique to their social position. When deciding what biographical data to include in their commemorative and religious inscriptions, *liberti* had to confront the fact that the slave society defined their life stories primarily in terms of legal status. From this perspective, manumission imposed a sharp break in the life course; and patronage offered the main source of unity that could bind the past to the present. In this situation, many ex-slaves reproduced the dominant paradigms, but others appealed to friends and family, the Roman calendar, or the gods to define their lives as coherent
wholes. These frameworks might accompany celebrations of upward mobility, but they illustrate freedmen’s striking capacity to construct their biographies along alternative lines.

While this pattern may have been latent in the cultural practices of Rome’s servile population, it emerged with particular strength in commemorative inscriptions, because for most freedmen these texts presented a rare opportunity to create a lasting biographical record. Thus Petronius’ critique of Trimalchio’s self-advertisement reflects a pointed engagement with freed slaves’ epigraphical habit. The same is true for Seneca and other imperial authors who use the language of slavery to condemn a system of values that in turn are depicted as an excessive lust for imagines and a cursus honorum. Given the strong association between literary and inscribed forms of biography, on the one hand, and freed slaves’ penchant for epigraphical writing, on the other, it should come as no surprise that the metaphor of ethical slavery stood in the midst of this dynamic exchange.

Even more importantly, examining the construction of the human life course provides a window into definitions of the individual, honor, and personal agency as they evolved from Republic to Empire. Ex-slaves’ articulation of coherent biographies in the absence of ancestry or access to high political office speaks to the existence, within this subculture, of a reflexive form of self-definition that was grounded in private life and spiritual values, as opposed to political achievement. Through the medium of inscribed writing, freedmen conveyed this model to the imperial elite, which was developing new ways of understanding power and identity in the first century CE. Slave and freed culture was not the only source from which the metaphor of slavery derived its contextual meaning, but the ability of former slaves to create continuity in their lives by appealing to alternative frameworks would have added an important social dimension to this traditional form. When Seneca advised his readers to think of themselves as libertini, he was
both leaning on the Stoic principle that human beings share a common origin and drawing a socially embedded connection between members of the elite who would seek to abandon traditional markers of progress and a group of people who had already learned how to exist at the margins of civic honor.
CHAPTER 5: THE CIVIC COMMUNITY

In 214 BCE, Philip V of Macedon wrote to the city of Larisa with advice about how to replenish the citizenry after the city sustained major losses during the Social War. Famously, he encouraged the Larisians to enfranchise residents from other Greek cities on the model of the Roman state:

... and it is also possible to consider others who make use of similar enrollments, among whom are the Romans, who even enfranchise slaves, when they have freed them, giving them a share of the magistracies; in this way, not only have they increased their own homeland, but they have also sent colonies to nearly 70 locations.

This statement is one of many that issued from the pens of Greeks impressed (or alarmed) by the openness of the Roman citizenship, a quality exemplified for Philip by the enfranchisement of former slaves. Likewise, the ability to draw outsiders into the civitas was an integral component of Rome’s own self-perception and a major contributor to her success as an empire. In particular, the supposedly exclusive world of the Athenian polis stood as a consistent point of comparison for Roman plurality; and Athens’ claims to autochthony cast into even greater relief

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592 SIG³ 543.32–4: …ἔξεστι δὲ καὶ τοὺς λοιποὺς τοὺς ταῖς όμοιαις πολιτογραφίαις χρωμένους θεωρεῖν, ὡν καὶ οἱ Ρωμαῖοι εἰσίν, οἱ καὶ τοὺς οἰκέτας ὅταν ἐλευθερώσωσιν προσδεχόμενοι εἰς τὸ πολίτευμα καὶ τῶν ἀρχαίων με[ταθ]δόντες, καὶ διὰ τοῦ τοιούτου τρόπου οὐ μόνον τὴν ἱδίαν πατρίδα ἐπημεζήσασιν, ἄλλα καὶ ἀποικίας (σ)χεδὸν [εἰς ἔξοδον] δομήκοντα τόπους ἐκεπόμφασιν. See Walbank 1972, 156 (with bibliography).

593 Mouritsen 2011, 66–7; Dench 2005, 93–6. In citing this text, I am concerned primarily with its ideological relevance, but a few technical points should be covered. The statement that Roman freedmen “shared in the magistracies” is a misperception, as most commentators have realized. It is possible that Philip had heard of exceptions to the rule against liberti holding political office, or was simply mistaken. But I find it more likely that he stretched the truth for rhetorical purposes (i.e., to convince the Larissians to incorporate newcomers fully rather than in the partial manner of Roman freedmen). Where Philip learned of the Roman custom is a matter of pure conjecture, but it is interesting that the letter to Larissa was written a year after his treaty with Hannibal, who had been in Italy since 218 and would have had extensive knowledge of Roman society. On the delegations, see Livy 23.33–4 and 39. Those delegates who made it back to Macedonia represent one possible channel of communication, but the basis of Roman military success would have been a topic for consideration more broadly, especially during the conflict with Carthage. Livy (23.3.1) says that the struggle between these two superpowers (dimicationem duorum opulentissimorum in terris populum) had attracted the attention of everyone; and that Philip was for a time undecided about which side to take (ita utries populi mallet victoriam esse incertis adhuc uribus fluctuatus animo fuerat). In his deliberations, he surely would have taken into account the viability of Rome and Carthage in the long term and the various bases of their potential to sustain a hegemony.
the Romans’ anxiety about their own origins. Given that slave-owning was prevalent throughout the ancient Mediterranean, at least among the elite in urban settings, the unique approach to manumission at Rome represented a notable deviation from normal practice.

Because the Roman manumission was so distinctive, it played a key role in the construction of the political community, not just in the eyes of external observers like Philip, but also within Roman thought. By “political community” I mean not just the institutions and legal frameworks that defined the contours of the Roman citizenship, although these too will prove important, but rather a broader definition of the citizen body that includes women, freedmen, and the freeborn plebs, for whom political participation would have been limited in certain respects. The avenues through which such groups were able to effect political change were in some cases informal and in others institutionalized, although always separate from the cursus honorum. To cite one well-known example of women’s civic involvement, the motion to repeal the lex Oppia in 195 BCE was pushed through in large part by mass demonstrations of female citizens, even though the speeches and final decision were made by men. The plebs, moreover, engaged in republican politics not just by supporting their patrons, as one prevalent model has held, but by engaging a shared ideology that was articulated through public speeches (contiones).

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595 The fact that there is very little evidence for agricultural slavery in the provinces should not cause us to overlook the broad acceptance of slavery as an institution; see above, pp. 1–2.
596 For variation, I use “civitas,” “civic community,” and “body politic” interchangeably; and “citizenship” or “civic involvement” to connote inclusion within those entities. The legal parameters of citizenship, to which many historians apply the label “the Roman citizenship,” are only one aspect of the larger cultural formation that is the subject of the current study.
597 Livy 34.1–8; Bauman 1993, 30–4.
598 Morstein-Marx 2004, esp. 239 and 286–7; Connolly 2007, 60–64.
*populus* that took place in the theater and arena.\(^{599}\) In light of these and many other examples, we have come to appreciate the complexity of Roman political life as it extended beyond the official organs of government to embrace a wide array of ideologies and cultural practices.\(^{600}\)

In this chapter, I consider freedmen’s role in the construction of the civic community from two different perspectives. First, by way of introduction, it will be important to describe some of the ways in which the practice of manumission helped to define the nature of the *civitas* at the ideological level. Specifically, the connection between slavery and state formation brought these two discourses into contact with one another, with the iconography of conquest and enslavement representing two sides of the same coin. Likewise, the enfranchisement of *liberti* helped to determine the parameters of civic inclusion and to enhance the openness of the citizenship to outsiders. Put simply, Roman citizenship would not have been what it was without the influence of Roman slavery and manumission.

This preliminary analysis, like most modern studies, focuses on the ideology of slave-owning without taking into account how servile culture may have contributed to the ideas that emerge from our literary sources. Thus, in the second part of the chapter, I seek to identify aspects of slave and freed culture that participated in a broader dialogue about citizenship and civic involvement. In contrast to the dominant view that slavery erased one’s ancestral heritage, epigraphical texts reveal a range of approaches to the dislocation imposed by enslavement upon those not born into slavery. Although some freedmen emphasized their Roman citizenship,

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\(^{599}\) On the ideology of the arena, see Gunderson 1996. Bartsch 1994 (esp. ch 1) analyses the dynamic between emperor and subjects as a kind of performance, particularly with regard to the theatrical exploits of Nero. Hopkins 1983, 14–20 remains fundamental.

\(^{600}\) The impact of modern philosophy and cultural studies is largely responsible for this shift in the interests of ancient historians – or at least for providing a methodological basis for the pursuit of such inquiries. In the realm of imperial political culture, for example, Roller (2001, 9) looks to Geertz; Ando (2000, 19ff.) to Althusser, Bourdieu and others; and Bartsch (1994) to Foucault and performance theory. Foucault’s influence on Roman historians has been astronomical, beginning with work done by Veyne and Brown in the 1970s and ‘80s. For a brief review of critical theory and ancient history, see Rives in Potter 2006; but Clark 2004 is the best way into these issues, despite the fact that she is dealing with Late Antiquity.
others chose to retain a connection to a former homeland at the same time as they affirmed their status as *cives*. This ability to claim two political identities simultaneously provided one precursor for the Augustan concept of dual citizenship, whereby provincials could adopt the Roman status while remaining part of their native *polis*. Further, the ways in which freedmen negotiated the tension between inclusion and exclusion demonstrated the most effective ways to participate in civic life as a newly enfranchised outsider – notably, through public expenditure and paying homage to the emperor. Long before the Roman empire came to be considered a common *patria* that encompassed the entire known world, freedmen were modeling for other newcomers how one might integrate oneself into the political community from a place of social marginality.

Manumission was certainly not the only factor that influenced the construction of the Roman citizenship and its development from Republic to Empire. My arguments add to what we already know about the effects of imperialism, social conflict, the ‘Italian question’, demographic trends, and linguistics (to name just a few other influential factors). The ways in which these issues relate to the development and expansion of the Roman state have been the subjects of serious inquiry, and I will bring them into the current discussion when applicable to manumission. Still, in appreciating the complexity of Roman political thought, it will be salutary to consider not just the dialogue between emperor and subjects or between center and periphery, but to look across the status hierarchy and pay heed to a group who has left only a

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602 There is a mountainous bibliography on any one of these questions, but on the Roman citizenship in general, Sherwin-White 1973 is still a good place to start; cf. Garnsey 1970; Humbert 1978; Howarth 2006; Goodfellow 1935; Crawford 1998; Dench 2005; and the collection of papers in Ratti 2002. For Rome’s relations with Italy, see e.g., Mouritsen 1998, Brunt 1965 (rev. 1988); Gabba 1976, 70–4; Harris 1971; Nagle 1973. Demography and state formation are convincingly linked by Scheidel 2006, which provides an excellent introduction to the subject and its methods. Linguistic aspects are discussed by Farrell 2001 and Adams 2003.
meager record of their beliefs and behaviors.\textsuperscript{603} To this end, the conceptions of citizenship articulated by freedmen through the medium of inscribed writing are meant to add more voices to the conversation, without necessarily drowning out others.

\section*{5.1 Manumission and Roman Citizenship}

As is well known, Rome’s willingness to incorporate new citizens into the state was both a distinguishing feature among ancient political cultures and a source of internal and external conflict. The most extreme manifestation of the latter phenomenon was of course Rome’s war with her Italian allies from 91 to 88 BCE; and although the precise aims of the Italians continue to be debated, the domestic tension around the enfranchisement of the \textit{socii} is well documented.\textsuperscript{604} As Roman expansion began to affect states outside of Italy, moreover, the bestowal of citizenship upon members of the provincial elite and eventually upon nearly all free inhabitants in 212 CE again necessitated ideological changes in the construction of the civic community, particularly as the image of Rome as a conqueror shifted toward the ideal of a common \textit{patria}. Our literary texts show from both perspectives how the provincial elite and their Roman overlords were consistently having to work out the relationship between imperial unity and local identities at the practical and symbolic levels.\textsuperscript{605}

Despite the prominence of \textit{peregrini} in ancient and modern treatments of this problem, manumission was another mode of creating new citizens that figured prominently in Roman

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{603} To some extent, as I have discussed above (pp. 8–9), Roman freedmen in urban settings were a privileged group; and the fact that so many of them achieved the level of wealth necessary to set up an inscription is partially a marker of their advantage over the freeborn poor or agricultural workers. Nevertheless, as I mentioned, freed slave’s marginal legal and social status remains a useful tool for considering what types of dialogues may have existed between elite and non-elite, broadly defined.

\textsuperscript{604} On the bibliography of this debate, see above n. 10. Sherwin-White 1973, 134–49 documents the conflict at Rome concerning the enfranchisement of the \textit{socii}.

\textsuperscript{605} On the shift from \textit{imperium} to \textit{patria} see Ando 2000, 277–335.
\end{footnotesize}
conceptions of the state. We do not know exactly when the Romans began to offer citizenship to slaves freed through specific public channels, but ancient writers view this practice as dating back to the regal period or early Republic, and the Twelve Tables already assumed that freedmen had the rights of property ownership and inheritance. The reasons that such a system developed at Rome and not in the Greek world are equally difficult to ascertain. According to one argument, they relate to the fact that most slaves in the early period would have been Latins; given that freeborn Latins acquired the citizenship if they immigrated to Rome, manumitted slaves would have been assimilated to the status of their peers who had joined the community by other means. Over time, this principle would have come to apply not just to Latin slaves but to those from other regions, thereby broadening the range of liberti who could be integrated into the state. Even before Roman military operations began to extend throughout Italy and beyond, the definition of the civitas was being refined through the manumission of chattels.

To be sure, all slave-owning societies to some extent have used this institution to establish and police common boundaries, and some have also been known regularly to enfranchise former slaves. Yet the confluence of several key factors distinguishes the Roman

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607 Livy 2.5 (ownership of property): Secundum poenam nocentium, ut in utramque partem arcendis sceleribus exemplum nobile esset, praemium indici pecunia ex aerario, libertas et ciuitas data. Ille primum dicitur iudicis liberatus; quidam iudicatet quae nomen truca in ulla putant; Vindicio ipsi nomen fuisse. Post illum obseruatum ut qui ita liberati essent in ciuitatem accepti viderentur (cf. Dion. 4.22.4). XII Tabulae (Warmington) 8: Civis Romani liberti hereditatem Lex XII Tabularum patrono defert, si intestate sine suo herede libertus defecerit. The source for this is Ulp. 29.1.
608 Sherwin-White 1973, 324; cf. Mouritsen’s (2011, 68–70) belief that liberti were enfranchised because the close connection between libertas and civitas made it almost compulsory to think of a freed slave, who had lost his former ethnicity and been symbolically reborn to his patron, as a free member of the state. This relies heavily on Volterra 1955. As I will discuss further below, however, Romans retained an awareness of slaves’ native origins. For this reason, I follow Sherwin-White in associating the early enfranchise of ex-slaves with the likelihood that most were from Latium.
609 This is important to Sherwin-White’s (1973, 324) argument, but the theory itself is conjectural. It is the best alternative, however, to Mouritsen’s assumption that servi were completely alienated from their place of origin; in fact, it recognizes the Romans’ concomitant tendency to locate slaves in a single status group, regardless of ethnic background.
case not just from that of classical Greece, but also from New World slave systems. In addition to the incorporation of *liberti* as citizens, the regularity of manumission at Rome contrasts starkly with the exceedingly low rates found in the antebellum South, as well as with the more moderate estimates for classical Greece.\(^\text{611}\) Even in Brazil, which was relatively ‘open’ in its approach to manumission, ex-slaves did not achieve the same level of integration as they did in the Roman empire, largely because of the impact of racial bias.\(^\text{612}\) Finally, as is true of all institutions, Roman manumission was unique because it interacted with and helped to shape values that were distinct to the culture in which it existed.

More important than the origins or rates of manumission at Rome – problems that are impossible to solve with precision – is the fact that it continued with such strength through the Republic and Empire, despite the anxiety that powerful freedmen evoked among many freeborn aristocrats. This phenomenon has prompted the question “Why did the Romans free so many slaves?”\(^\text{613}\) While economic considerations surely did play a part, they worked together with social and cultural frameworks to shape and sustain the Roman practice. Although the prospect of freedom was thought to motivate slaves to work hard and remain loyal to their owners, this in itself cannot explain the markedly high manumission rates at Rome versus in other slave-holding societies.\(^\text{614}\) A wide range of factors contributed to the persistence of manumission as a common practice, most notably the familial nature of the patron-freedman relationship. The idea that patrons would be responsible for their *liberti*, and that *liberti* would remain tied to the family at a

\(^\text{611}\) Patterson 1982, 273–5; and Mouritsen 2011, 29–30 and 143–44.
\(^\text{612}\) On race and the status of freedmen, see Patterson 1982, 247–61 and 294–5.
\(^\text{613}\) Hopkins 1978, 115.
basic level, helped to allay discomfort about manumission, even if this paradigm was not always realized.\textsuperscript{615}

The tenacity of manumission and subsequent enfranchisement of \textit{liberti} as social practices had important implications for the ideology of citizenship as it evolved over time. For one thing, Roman manumission was an integral part of Roman identity, as we learn from both Greek commentators and Latin authors themselves. Dionysius’ account of Servius Tullius complements our knowledge of the Greek view (albeit one formed during a prolonged stay at Rome) by suggesting in the introduction to his \textit{Roman Antiquities} that the enfranchisement of \textit{liberti} was a custom worthy of note.\textsuperscript{616} Later in the work, he digresses into a diatribe about the current times, when masters freed criminals and other slaves unworthy of citizenship; but these negative comments are directed toward contemporary methods rather than the enfranchisement of freedmen \textit{per se}.\textsuperscript{617} In fact, he calls this tradition “useful and good” (τὰ πράγματα καὶ τὰ καλὰ τῆς Ρωμαίων πόλεως) and “well formulated by the ancients” (καλῶς μὲν ὑπὸ τῶν ἀρχαίων ἐπινοηθέντα).\textsuperscript{618} Beneath Dionysius’ incendiary rhetoric about freedmen, we thus discern the widely held belief that \textit{liberti} had been incorporated into the \textit{civitas} since the regal period and that this openness was characteristically Roman.

The myths through which Romans in the late Republic and Empire imagined the foundation of their state also contained a core ambiguity about legal status, epitomized by the story of Romulus’ asylum. We will return to this important myth in due course, but for the

\begin{footnotesize}
\footnote{Mouritsen 2011, 146–58.}
\footnote{Dion. Hal. \textit{Ant. Rom.} 1.9.4: ...ἐθνὸς τε ἐγίστον ἐξ ἐλαχίστου γενέσθαι σὺν χρόνῳ παρεσκεύασαν καὶ περιφανέστατον ἐξ ἀδηλοτάτου, τῶν τε δεομένων ὁικήσεως παρὰ φίλῳ φιλανθρώπῳ ὑποδοχῇ καὶ πολιτείας μεταδόσει τοῖς μετὰ τοῦ γενναίου ἐν πολέμῳ κρατηθείσι, δούλων τε ὅσιον παρ᾿ αὐτῶν ἔλευθερωθέντας ἀστοῖς δουλῶν τε ὅσιον παρ᾿ αὐτῶν ἔλευθερωθέντες ἀστοῖς εἷς συγχωρήσει, τύχης τε ἀνθρώπων οὐδεμίας εἰ μέλλοι τὸ κοίμων ὀφελέειν ἀπαξιώσει· ύπὲρ ταῦτα δὲ πάντα κόσμῳ τοῦ πολιτεύματος, ὅν ἐκ πολλῶν κατεστήσατο παθημάτων, ἐκ παντὸς καιροῦ λαμβάνοντες τι χρήσιμον.}
\footnote{Dion. Hal. \textit{Ant. Rom.} 4.24.}
\footnote{Dion. Hal. \textit{Ant. Rom.} 4.24.4 and 4.24.7.}
\end{footnotesize}
moment it is sufficient to note that the inclusion of both foreigners and persons of low social status was fundamental to the ways in which the foundation of Rome was imagined.\textsuperscript{619} Augustus’ attempts to regulate manumission and the behavior of freedmen reflects a similar understanding that the place of ex-slaves in society could symbolize order and moral stability, particularly in light of the perceived escalation of manumission in the last chaotic decades of the Republic and Augustus’ program of restoring traditional values. Furthermore, behind this legislation may be discerned a desire to increase the value of the citizenship as something to be coveted by outsiders.\textsuperscript{620} Still, Juvenal could chide snobbish aristocrats by reminding them that “you derive your race from a shameful asylum (ab infami... asylo); and your first ancestor, whoever he was, was either a shepherd or something I don’t want to say.”\textsuperscript{621} As these examples suggest, the porosity of the boundary between slave and citizen remained a point of focus in the debate about what it meant to belong to the Roman body politic.

In particular, manumission was tied very closely to the Roman brand of imperialism and its attendant ideologies. In practical terms, military expansion provided the most prolific source of slaves in the Republic, whether directly through the enslavement of prisoners-of-war or indirectly through the purchase and breeding of chattels by an increasingly wealthy landowning class. The imprecise nature of our demographic evidence has prevented historians from reaching a consensus on how many slaves were imported to Italy during any given period; but one recent estimate places this figure between two and four million during the last two centuries BCE, on the basis of a model that evaluates supply from likely levels of demand and attrition from death and manumission.\textsuperscript{622} Even though natural reproduction exceeded other sources of slaves under

\textsuperscript{619} Dench 2005, 143–6.
\textsuperscript{620} See especially Suet. Aug. 40.3; with Mouritsen 2011, 80–92.
\textsuperscript{621} Juv. Sat. 8.273–5.
\textsuperscript{622} Scheidel 2007.
the Empire, major military campaigns like the subjugation of Judaea produced tens of thousands of captives that would have been remarkable to contemporaries, if not significant demographically.\textsuperscript{623}

In terms of ideology, military victory predominated as the basis for defining the slave and, by contrast, the master.\textsuperscript{624} The word \textit{servus} was thought to be linked etymologically to the conqueror’s decision to “save” (\textit{servare}) the life of a captive rather than put him to death, and the practice of forcing defeated armies to pass under the yoke also signified this connection.\textsuperscript{625} The triumph was likewise concerned not only to celebrate the might of the Roman army and its victorious general, but also to display a procession of captives, complete with \textit{tituli} identifying the defeated nations to which they belonged. Visual representations of victory that survive on triumphal arches and in other media frequently exhibit \textit{captivi} in positions of subjugation, thus monumentalizing the symbolic alignment of conquest and mastery, even while bringing these ideals into question.\textsuperscript{626} In private contexts, moreover, many of the qualities that defined the active power of the \textit{paterfamilias} over the passive submission of slaves correlate with civic virtues that formed the basis of Roman militarism.\textsuperscript{627}

By contrast, there are notoriously few artistic depictions of the slave trade as it existed apart from Roman military activity, either in imperial literature or the material record.\textsuperscript{628} Those that do exist, such as the auction scene in Apuleius’ \textit{Metamorphoses}, tend to satirize or deride the

\textsuperscript{623} On the importance of natural reproduction, versus conquest, exposure, and the slave trade, see now Scheidel 1997; cf. Harris 1980.
\textsuperscript{624} As Patterson (1982, 39) argues, definitions of the slave tend to be based on a society’s original form of enslavement, even if those methods have changed over time.
\textsuperscript{625} Mouritsen 2011, 13–14 (esp. n. 20). As he points out, this may be a false etymology (see Rix 1994, 54–87); but it is more important for us that the juridical sources could articulate such a connection. After all, false etymologies do say quite a lot about culture, even if they are useless to linguists.
\textsuperscript{626} Beard 2007, 107–42.
\textsuperscript{627} The importance of \textit{laus} and \textit{gloria} to the Republican aristocracy, in particular, is treated in detail by Harris (1985, 9–34).
\textsuperscript{628} Harris 1980, 129.
business rather than glorify subjugation in the manner of the triumph. Even the archaeological remains of Greco-Roman slave markets are notoriously difficult to identify, to the degree that one recent study has questioned the existence of structures built specifically for this purpose. Further, merchants dealing in human chattels (mangones, venaliciarii) were generally considered to be despicable and degenerate, regardless of the fact that some of them are known to have been of high standing. Like pimps and other types of traders, mangones were stigmatized as liars and cheats, as well as being associated with the excessive sexuality evoked by the display of young boys for sale. In the same way that Roman culture idealized verna to distract from the brutality of enslavement, marginalizing slave traders and focusing rather on the ideal of conquest helped to displace harsh reality with a discourse that valorized the role of the master. Although many captives were sold on the market, warfare imbued slavery with a level of nobility that was denied to the trading of human chattels.

This link between slavery and conquest enhanced the impact of manumission on the discourse about the nature of the Roman citizenship. A mass enslavement like that in Judaea produced servi, it is true, but in the Roman system all servi were potential liberti and all liberti potential citizens. This may seem to state the obvious, but it has important implications for my argument. For one, the enfranchisement of foreign slaves provided a sociological background for the topos in Latin literature that Rome had become home to the dregs of the empire; and in general, concerns about the perceived dissolution of the old Roman stock relied heavily on the fact that foreign slaves were integrated into the civitas and produced new generations of freeborn

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629 Apul. Met. 8.23–4; also discussed also above, p. 140. The monument of Aulus Capreilius Timotheus, freedman of Aulus, from Amphipolis is unique in its depiction of the slave trade by someone proudly engaged in the business; see Scheidel in Bradley – Cartledge 2011, 300–1 (with bibliography).
630 Trümper 2009.
632 Bodel 2005.
633 See Wiedemann 1985; and above, p. 112.
Romans. As a result, in Tacitus’ report of a senatorial debate over the iniquities of freedmen, a proponent of leniency could argue that “most knights and many senators were descended from no other origin” (et plurimis equitum, plerisque senatoribus non aliunde originem trahi).634 Certainly the prevalence of enslaved foreigners at Rome would have been striking, but the enfranchisement of liberti posed a much greater ideological challenge because of the change of status that it implied and the transience of freedmen as a social order.

One important aspect of manumission’s relationship to state formation emerges from a recent consideration of the Roman triumph and the tensions that this ritual of conquest embodied.635 A selection of captives was regularly paraded in front of the car that carried the triumphing general through the streets of Rome and up to the top of the Capitoline.636 Accompanying these captivi were placards with ethnographical labels identifying the conquered lands from which they had been transported and, in a sense, already complicating the boundary between Roman and other by bringing the orbis terrarum inside the city walls.637 The focus of this spectacle was clearly Roman dominance and the submission of enemies who had been reduced to slavery and in some cases faced execution.638 Nevertheless, with enfranchisement always looming in the background when Romans thought about slaves, there existed alternative readings of the triumph that took account of the possibility that these foreigners (or the

634 Tac. Ann. 13.27: Disserebatur contra: paucorum culpam ipsis exitiosam esse debere, nihil universorum iuri derogandum; quippe late fusum id corpus. hinc plerumque tribus decurias, ministeria magistratibus et sacerdotibus, cohortes etiam in urbe conscriptas; et plurimis equitum, plerisque senatoribus non aliunde originem trahi: si separarentur libertini, manifestam fore penuriam ingenuorum.
636 The precise route that the ceremonial procession took has been the subject of some debate, on which see Beard 2007, 92–6; cf. Coarelli 1968.
638 It has been argued that captivi who were paraded in the triumph were regularly executed during or after the ceremony, but Beard (2007, 128–32) points out that our ancient sources do not always assume that this was the case and that the fate of the captives probably varied.
populations they represented) would eventually become Roman citizens.\textsuperscript{639} By these lights, the triumph was both a demonstration of victory and a rite of passage, whereby newly conquered states were amalgamated into the Roman political community in a highly visible and ritualized fashion.\textsuperscript{640}

Cultural symbols as powerful as that of the Roman triumph contain multiple levels of meaning, and although our sources tend to emphasize subjugation rather than the integration of conquered enemies, there is good evidence that this latter reading held currency as an alternative.\textsuperscript{641} Manumission, moreover, was the primary mode in which one imagined such captives making their way into the \textit{civitas}, or even into the Senate. After the murder of Tiberius Gracchus, Scipio Aemilianus is said to have quelled an angry mob by saying, “You won’t cause me to fear men whom I led here in chains but who since have been freed (\textit{solutos}).”\textsuperscript{642} Likewise, in Suetonius’ biography of Julius Caesar, we find a jesting bit of doggerel that suggests enfranchisement through manumission:\textsuperscript{643}

\begin{quote}
Gallos Caesar in triumphum ducit, idem in curiam; 
Galli bracas deposuerunt, latum clavum sumpserunt.

Caesar let the Gauls in triumph, and also into the Curia.
The Gauls took off their trousers and put on the \textit{latus clavus}.
\end{quote}

In reality, the Gauls who joined the senate after Caesar petitioned for their inclusion had not been enslaved as \textit{captivi}, but the logic of this verse reflects the belief that those who came to Rome

\textsuperscript{639} Beard 2007, 140: “Just as the ceremony itself was no less the beginning of peace than it was the culmination of war, so the victims were both humiliated and defeated enemies of Roman and at the same time new participants, in whatever role, in the Roman imperial order. The triumph was a key moment in the process by which the enemy became Roman.”

\textsuperscript{640} The triumph is just one example of the link between conquest, slavery, and the definition of community, but it should also be noted that this changed in the Empire, when triumphs became limited in number and restricted to members of the imperial family.

\textsuperscript{641} Beard 2007, 140–2 collects some of the relevant evidence, from which I have selected two examples specifically relevant to the issue of manumission as a form of integration within the state.

\textsuperscript{642} Val. Max. 6.2.3: cui dicto cum contio tribunicio furore instincta uiolenter suclamasset, “Taceant,” inquit “quibus Italia nouerca est.” Orto deinde murmure “Non efficietis,” ait “ut solutos uerear quos alligatos adduxi.”

\textsuperscript{643} Suet. \textit{Iul}. 80.2.
under these conditions could, through a change of status, become participants in Roman politics. What is more, the use of costume to describe this transition brings to mind the importance of the toga to the civic identity of *liberti*, whose funerary reliefs employ this garb to advertise their status as citizens. Manumission and enfranchisement functioned in the symbology of the triumph in ways that shed light on how the boundary between Roman and non-Roman was negotiated through the slave system.

The representation of manumission and enfranchisement as corollaries of Roman imperialism reflects an underlying ideological link between citizenship and the treatment of former slaves. Athens, to draw out one contrast, sustained low levels of manumission and a more exclusive approach to the body politic. The fact that Rome differed sharply from surrounding cultures in both these respects was surely not a coincidence. Nor can we determine the direction of causality between the openness of the Roman citizenship and the frequency of manumission, both of which were contingent upon a range of historical forces. Given the antiquity of these practices and the ambiguity of our sources on their respective origins, it is impossible to assert with confidence that the terms of inclusion in the Roman political community were formulated before freedmen were regularly enfranchised, or that the enfranchisement of *liberti* shaped Rome’s relations with its Latin neighbors. Rather, these practices developed in tandem and were mutually reinforcing, particularly as Rome expanded militarily and incorporated conquered enemies. From an ideological standpoint, manumission

644 It may be salient to point out in this setting that the enfranchisement of *liberti* caused anxiety at some points in history, for some people, but that the enfranchisement of the *socii* only proceeded an all-out war. This is not to say that early Romans would have been uncomfortable accepting a freeborn Latin immigrant as a citizen (in the archaic definition of the word), but Dionysius’ account of Servius Tullius (Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 4.22–3) suggests only a moderate level of resistance among the elite in contrast to that which we find in our sources on the Italian question. Livy’s tale of Vindicius (2.5), the first slave supposed to have been freed by *vindicta*, does not imply any such conflict.
relies as heavily on the definition of political community as did the citizenship on the integration of *liberti* into the state.

### 5.2 Freedmen’s Definition of *Patria*

In light of this connection between slavery and political identity, modern studies of the Roman citizenship have necessarily paid close attention to the legal and ideological character of manumission as practiced at Rome. The growth of the freed population in the late Republic and early Empire has been identified variously as a dangerous “diffusion” of the old Roman stock or, more recently, as an example of the Romans’ generosity with the citizenship that reflects an almost utopian cosmopolitanism. The cultural production of slaves and freedmen has played a part in these treatments, but far too often, this material enters the picture only to justify the heavily biased assumption that all *liberti* were proud of their citizenship and eager to parade it in public, as if becoming Roman were the ultimate goal of every *libertus*. Upon closer inspection, however, the epigraphical material will show that freedmen defined their place within the body politic in a number of complex ways, sometimes replicating prevailing values but at other times reshaping the symbols of citizenship to fit specific rhetorical needs. These discourses, I will argue, although not as well documented as those of the aristocracy, contributed significantly to the construction of the Roman *patria* as it evolved over time.

In particular, the honorific and funerary monuments of slaves and *liberti* reveal meaningful alternatives to the dominant view that enslavement obliterated one’s ancestral

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646 Dench 2005, 5–11.
647 This is especially true of studies on Augustan funerary portraiture but also applies to work on ex-slaves’ “epigraphical habit” more generally. Mouritsen 2005 and Petersen 2006 are notable exceptions to this rule.
648 On the flexibility of symbols of community, see Cohen 1985, 12–15.
heritage and that manumission did nothing other than birth a new *civis*. Even in the Republic, freedmen were demonstrating in their inscriptions a range of responses to the fact that they had been uprooted from their place of origin. Some, to be sure, preferred to omit any reference to their prior ethnic identity and focus only on their assimilation of Roman values. Others, however, found ways to retain a connection with their former homeland while at the same time integrating themselves into the state that they had joined upon manumission. This ability to manage both an original and a new, Roman identity was a precursor of the dual citizenship that arose under Augustus to accommodate the provincial elite. Further, the avenues through which *liberti* participated in political life – namely emperor worship, euergetism, and the advancement of freeborn children, amongst others – were powerful forces in defining the boundaries of the civic community at both the local and imperial levels.

### 5.2.1 Dual Citizenship

A major strand of slaveholding ideology defined the slave as natally alienated and socially dead – that is, as having no heritage, no homeland, and no social identity independent of that of his master. These concepts were first theorized in a landmark study of comparative sociology and have been applied to the Roman system on the basis of a huge range of legal and literary evidence. In particular, Roman law codes make clear that *servi* have no parents, and this idea is reiterated in the plays of Plautus and Terence, where slaves appear kinless, subject only to the authority of their masters. In application to freedmen, moreover, the principle of social death may have led to the construction of manumission as a type of rebirth, whereby a new social being was brought into existence by the grant of *libertas*. Patrons thus became quasi-

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649 Mouritsen 2011, 36–42.
650 Patterson 1982, 40, 55, 66–70.
651 Patterson 1982, 40; Mouritsen 2011, 13–14.
parents, offering the freedman a new life, a new name, and continued guidance as he joined the ranks of the citizen body.\textsuperscript{652} In this sense, despite social stigmas, a former slave could be integrated into the political community by tacitly agreeing to these terms and identifying himself as a Roman.

Yet the ideology of slavery was full of conflict and contestation. Alongside the belief that slaves were socially dead, we find frequent acknowledgment of the fact that enslavement was the result of misfortune, that anyone might find himself in this position if he were captured by pirates or experienced some other calamity.\textsuperscript{653} If a Roman citizen did fall into slavery, however, and underwent the social death of enslavement at the hands of another community, he retained the ability to reclaim his former status should he return to Rome under specific conditions – a right which contradicts the theory of natal alienation.\textsuperscript{654} Likewise, the legal fiction that was used to justify imperial grants of the \textit{ius anulorum aureorum} to freedmen operated on the assumption that a former slave could recuperate his \textit{ingenuitas}.\textsuperscript{655} In contrast to the model of social death and rebirth, these tenets of the Roman slave system allowed for the restoration of an ex-slave’s original, freeborn identity, at least under certain conditions.\textsuperscript{656}

Rather than ask how (if at all) these opposing formations were resolved in Roman culture, I set out here to examine the ways in which they influenced the epigraphical culture of slaves and \textit{liberti} who had been uprooted from their place of origin and enslaved by Roman citizens. Severed from their homelands and ancestral traditions, these individuals were confronted with the problem of whether to accept that loss and adopt Roman values or, by

\textsuperscript{652}Mouritsen 2011, 37–42.
\textsuperscript{653}Mouritsen 2011, 14–15.
\textsuperscript{654}Dig. 49.15. On this right, known as \textit{postliminium}, see Buckland 1908, 304–17; de Visscher 1956; Maffi 1992; Cursi 1996; Imbert 1945; and Sanna 2001. The details of the law, while interesting in their own right, are not as important for my argument here as is the simple point that it complicated the idea of natal alienation by suggesting that freed slaves could still have a homeland to which to return.
\textsuperscript{655}Mouritsen 2011, 107.
\textsuperscript{656}Patterson 1982, 215–16.
whatever means possible, to retain some connection to their former identities. Rather than simply reproduce the paradigm of social death by omitting from their epitaphs any reference to indigenous origins, some commemorators explicitly mention an ethnic identity or place of birth, even as they profess to have become Roman. To varying degrees, these texts highlight the fact that a newly enfranchised citizen—even one supposed to have no parents or ancestors—could in fact retain a cultural link to his past without claiming the right of postliminium directly.

People born into slavery faced a similar problem, given that they were also conceived of as without ancestry and (at least in the first generation) would probably have been aware of the geographical origins of their slave mother or of both parents. Such extensions of cultural memory would help to explain the onomastic practice of giving freeborn children Greek cognomina to stress continuity in the family line, as well as the fact that some slaves and freedmen whose place of birth is attested are commemorated alongside their own children.657 Additionally, we find vernae choosing to include this type of biographical information in inscriptions dedicated to other slaves or freedmen, thus indicating the appreciation of nativity throughout servile culture, whether or not one had been imported from abroad. In an epitaph from Corduba, for instance, a certain marmorius identifies himself as a verna urbic us (which I take to mean that he was from Rome) and the commemorand as provinciae Baeticae libertus, a formulation that places even greater emphasis on the deceased freedman’s origins because he was buried in Spain.658 Nevertheless, the tension between natal alienation and the retention of indigenous identities emerges most strongly in the inscriptions commissioned by and for slaves

657 On Greek cognomina, see above pp. 17 and 129. Children mentioned in epitaphs naming a slave or freed parent’s birthplace include CIL 10.388, discussed below, and CIL 6.8885 (see p. 198, n. 76).
658 CIL 2.301: P(ublius) Publicius / provinc(iae) / Baetic(ae) lib(ertus) / Fortunatus / marmorarius sig/nuarius verna ur/bicus ann(orum) LXXV / p(ius) i(n) s(uis) / [h(ic) s(itus)] e(st) s(it) t(ibi) t(erra) l(evis). The term urbic us can also mean “civic” in the inscriptions, so it is possible that this marmorius was a public slave, but a more appropriate parallel is given by the epitaph of a neg[ot]iator vestarius urbic us at Rome (CIL 6.33889).
and freedmen who had not been born in captivity, and this group forms the basis of the present analysis.\footnote{Two sets of inscriptions are used: (a) texts that identify the ethnic or geographical origin of slaves and freedmen; and (b) texts that employ the word \textit{patria} in reference to men and women of servile background.}

In contrast to familial relationships, age at death, and occupation, a commemorand’s place of origin was a less popular item to include in an inscription, although this makes such occurrences even more significant because they indicate a choice on the part of the commemorator to deviate from expectations. In most cases, commemorators fail to identify the birthplace of a slave or freedman, whether or not the deceased was imported from abroad or born into slavery, and the \textit{cognomina} given to slaves are notoriously unreliable as an indication of ethnic background. Nevertheless, a sufficient number of extant inscriptions do contain formulae expressing this information to suggest that it was recognized and accepted as a possible element in servile epitaphs.\footnote{Bang (1910, 225–44) collects literary and material evidence for the national origins of slaves from the republican and imperial periods.} The phrases most commonly employed to convey this idea are \textit{natus} or \textit{nata} accompanied by a locative or ablative indicating the commemorand’s birthplace; and a national adjective such as \textit{Germanicus}, often with \textit{natione} functioning as an ablative of respect. Thus Auctus, who belonged to a veteran from the Legio VI and was buried in northern Italy, receives an epitaph that identifies his Sardinian background with the abbreviation \textit{na(tus) in Sar(dinia)}.\footnote{CIL 5.2500: Auctus L(uci) Allien[i] / vet(e)ran(i) leg(ionis) VI / ei servit an(nos) XI / ita ei pro meritis / hunc tit(ulum) pos(uit) v(ixit) a(nnos) / XXV na(tus) in Sar(dinia) h(ic) / s(itus) e(st) hic et her(es) mihi / [fuit t]estamento.} Likewise, a woman named Euphrosyne is commemorated by her fellow slave as \textit{nat(ione) Phrygia}; an \textit{olearius} named Crescens receives the description \textit{natione Bessus}; and Valerius Lila, a freed \textit{scutarius}, is \textit{natione Maurus}.\footnote{AE 2005, 399; CIL 6.9719 and 33950.}

On the one hand, ethnicity mattered to owners, since the worth and character of human chattels was based in large part on relevant stereotypes, to the point that Roman law required a
slave’s origin to be displayed when he went up for sale in the market. But the reasons why slaves and liberti may have chosen to include these data on their own burial monuments cannot be assumed simply to have reduplicated the interests of masters and patrons; rather, such statements ought to be viewed within the context of servile culture, insofar as it comprised a collective response to the unique conditions imposed by enslavement. Looking at the evidence from this perspective reveals new layers of meaning, because even if a slave’s self-identified ethnic group corresponds with his owner’s criterion for assessing his worth, it also speaks directly to the processes of dislocation and alienation that were so critical to his becoming a slave in the first place.

The impetus to recognize, or even negate, the loss of one’s country of origin stood in tension with social and cultural forces that encouraged freedmen to assimilate when they became Roman citizens. If total abandonment of one’s past in favor of an emphatically Roman identity represents one side of the spectrum, and if actually claiming the ius postliminii represents the other extreme, we find a range of responses attested in the epigraphical record. Some epitaphs cite a slave or ex-slave’s birthplace or ethnicity without making a countervailing attempt to highlight the fact that he became Roman, other than giving his name in Latin. The tombstone of a woman named Data, born in North Africa and buried in Italy, demonstrates how one slave could make such a claim for another:

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663 Dig. 21.1.31.21: Qui mancipia vendunt, nationem cuiusque in venditione pronuntiare debent: plerumque enim natio servi aut provocat aut deterret emptorem: idcirco interest nostra scire nationem: praesumptum etenim est quosdam servos bonos esse, quia natione sunt non infamata, quosdam malos videri, quia ea natione sunt, quae magis infamis est. quod si de natione ita pronuntiatum non erit, iudicium emptori omnibusque ad quos ea res pertinebit dabitur, per quod emptor redhibet mancipium.

Buckland 1908, 58; Gordon 1924, 93.

664 In our sample, this type includes CIL 3.6618, 6.10098, 9.3365 and 11.3541.

665 CIL 9.3365 (Pinna Vestina). I read verna in line 10 as the name of the commemorator rather than a descriptive title meaning “homeborn” slave, because names are more likely to appear on their own than are general terms like verna or occupations.
Sacred to the divine shades of Data, daughter of Julia, born in the region of Hadrume, lived 70 years excellently without any blemish; this tomb Verna made for a fellow slave, well deserving.

Following a standard appeal to the Di Manes, the commemorator describes the parentage and birthplace of the deceased, as well as her lifespan and exemplary conduct (optime sine ulla macula). Significantly, Data’s fellow slave and commemorator has neglected to include a master’s name, job title, or other information that might direct the reader’s mind toward her servile status. Whether or not Verna was born into slavery, as his name seems to suggest, he recognizes the importance of Data’s birthplace to her monumental identity after death. Rather than simply providing a means to assess the market value of slaves, geographical origins were a component of one’s personal history that slave culture deemed worthy of mention.

Even more striking are texts in which a slave or freedman refers not just to his place of origin but also to ties of kinship that he was able to maintain before and after enslavement. In one such inscription, found in lower Pannonia, two freedmen identify themselves as the colliberti et fratres of the deceased, C. Iulius Euritus, who is said to have hailed from Alexandria (domo Alexandria). Given that Euritus died when he was 30, the legal age of manumission, it is more likely that he and his brothers came to Panonnia as slaves rather than voluntarily as freedmen.

That they combine nativity and kinship with manumission to describe their relationship with one

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666 CIL 3.10551: D(is) M(anibus) / C(aius) Iul(ius) Euritus / domo Alexandriae ann(orum) XXX / h(ic) s(itus) e(st) / fecerunt Iulii / Crispinus et / Lynx co(n)liberti / et fratres.
another testifies to the value that servile culture invested in the maintenance of indigenous ties. Similarly, in a tombstone from Rome, an imperial slave named Numida joins his mother, Aemilia Primitiva, in commemorating his deceased brother. The commemorators identify themselves collectively as originating from the African town of Theveste (*oriundi ex Africa col(onia) Theveste*). The chances that one could undergo the social and geographical dislocation involved in enslavement with such familial relationships still intact were remarkably slim; yet when this did happen, as in the cases just cited, there was symbolic space in epigraphical culture for the celebration of such continuity.

Approaches that emphasize indigenous ties over explicitly Roman values stand in contrast to the more common practice of not referring to one’s country of origin at all. Yet the intermediate stages between these two options allow us to see how slaves and ex-slaves negotiated their place in the Roman community without erasing the past. In some cases, strong assertions of indigenous identity appear in tandem with equally emphatic assertions of Roman values. This is especially true of the plaque which marked the burial niche of a freed doctor named L. Manneius, freedman of Quintus:  

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L. Manneius Q. [l.] medic[us]
veivos fecit φύσει δε
Μενεκράττης Δημη
τρίου Τραλλίανος
φυσικός οινοθότης
ζων ἐποίησεν
Maxsuma Sadria s[puria] f[ilia]
bona proba frugel salve
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667 CIL 6.13328: Catulo fratri / optumo pietatis / q(u)i v(ixit) an(nos) xxvi m(enses) iv d(ies) vi / Numida Aug(usti) n(ostri) ser(va) vil(ica) / Medaurianus et Aemil(ia) / Primitiva mater / oriundi ex Africa / col(onia) Theveste; cf. CIL 6.8885: Amatia L(uci) l(iberta) Calliste pia / it(a) ut e patria exit sui eam / exsuperarunt mater / Bathylli Caesaris ser(vi) qui / proxime manum Caesaris est.

668 Cf. the *Testamentum porcelli*, a 3rd-to-4th-century parody of a will, in which the testator (a pig) bequeaths his ladle and pestle to the cook, saying “de Theveste usque ad Tergeste liget sibi colum de reste.” We find in this depiction of the lower orders the idea that such persons might travel far from home and yet maintain a connection to their origins, but the text is both later in date and highly stylized satire.

L. Manneius, freedman of Quintus, a doctor, made this while living. By birth Menekrates, son of Demetrius the Trallian, doctor and prescriber of wine made this while living. Maxsuma Sadria, his illegitimate daughter, good, righteous, frugal, hail!

This bilingual inscription, from late Republican Italy, begins in a formulaic way with the name and occupation of the commemorator and a notation of the fact that he set up the tomb while still living (veivos fecit). Likewise, the last two lines attribute to L. Manneius’ daughter the traditional Roman qualities of bonitas, probitas, and frugalitas. These gestures toward assimilation frame a remarkable assertion of continuity. The Greek text (lines 2–6) seeks to repair the losses inflicted by slavery not just by stating the deceased’s former name, paternity, and occupation, but by doing so in his native language and in the language of his profession.

These references to the deceased’s life before servitude on the one hand work against the ideas that the severance of a slave from his homeland and its traditions was complete, and that becoming a Roman citizen through manumission meant relinquishing one’s ancestral past. 670 Particularly striking are direct testimonia like the tombstones of Data and L. Manneius that seek to counteract the loss of former identity by stating a name, locality, or occupation that preexisted enslavement. Similar to the unifying elements of freedmen’s biographies that we examined above (ch. 3), such ethnic and geographical data extend the commemorand’s personal history beyond the point at which he became dependent on another for his social existence. That slaves

and *liberti* make these connections for each other, as well as for themselves, suggests that slave
culture recognized nativity as a legitimate source of self-definition, regardless of the diversity of
backgrounds in a given *familia*.

For their part, Roman masters were sometimes able to recognize that slaves imported
from abroad could retain local and cultural identities without returning to their native land. In
his description of the murder of Pedanius Secundus, for instance, Tacitus has a proponent of
mass execution argue that fear is the only way to control a population of such disparate religious
customs, which reflect only one aspect of slaves’ otherness in the eyes of the speaker.\(^{671}\) In a
more positive light, educated Greeks enslaved at Rome were valued for their access to the
cultural traditions that descended from Homer. And in his *De Grammaticis*, Suetonius
repeatedly refers to the birthplace and early life of men brought to Rome to practice their
trade.\(^{672}\) One of these grammarians, C. Pompeius Lenaeus, was said to have escaped as a boy
and fled back to his homeland (*refugisse in patriam*), where he gained an education and amassed
enough money to offer to buy back his freedom.\(^{673}\) Although this biography agrees with Roman
law that flight does not terminate the rights of the master, it also acknowledges that slaves can
have *patriae*, to which they are capable of returning.\(^{674}\) Further, Romans occasionally admitted
that foreign slaves and ex-slaves possessed *maiores*, even if their change of status diminished the
relevancy of this ancestral line. An underlying tenet of *postliminium*, this concession
nevertheless extended to freedmen who had not yet exercised or never planned on exercising that
right. In discussing the case of the freed interpreter, Cn. Publicius Menander, for instance,

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\(^{671}\) Tac. *Ann.* 14.44: *postquam vero nationes in familiis habemus, quibus diversi ritus, externa sacra aut nulla sunt, conluviam istam non nisi metu coercueris.*

\(^{672}\) E.g., Suet. *De Gramm.* 15 (Lenaeus); 20 (Hyginus); 21 (Melissus).

\(^{673}\) Suet. *De Gramm.* 15.2.

\(^{674}\) Buckland 1908, 268–71.
Cicero refers to a senatorial act to preserve that man’s Roman citizenship even if he should be among his ancestors (apud maiores) during a mission to Greece.\textsuperscript{675}

Our literary texts often assume, however, that foreign slaves manumitted at Rome would rather become citizens and forget their past than return to their homeland. In what is probably a later interpolation, the Digest cites the senate’s decree on Menander as extraneous, because postliminium depends on the freedman’s desire to resume his former status.\textsuperscript{676} Such is the implication of Petronius’ portrayal of the freedman at Trimalchio’s dinner who chides Ascytlos for laughing condescendingly at their host’s antics: “So you’re a Roman eques? Well I’m the son of a king! Why were you a slave, you might ask? Because I gave myself into slavery and preferred to be a Roman citizen than a tax-payer!”\textsuperscript{677} This prince-cum-freedman goes on to describe his qualities as a member of the Roman community, claiming to be “a man among men”: homo inter homines sum. He never accrued any debts, became an Augustalis, and even during his 40 years of servitude was indistinguishable from a free man: nemo tamen scit utrum servus essem an liber. All of this represents, on the one hand, Petronius’ biting portrayal of the supposed assumption among former slaves that they could somehow outlive the stain of their past; but, on the other, it speaks to an even stronger belief of freeborn Romans that the

\textsuperscript{675} Cic. Balb. 11.28; cf. Dig. 49.15.5.3, which uses ad suos to express this idea.

\textsuperscript{676} Dig. 49.15.5.3: Captivus autem si a nobis manumissus fuerit et pervenerit ad suos, ita demum postliminio reversus intellegitur, si malit eos sequi quam in nostra civitate manere. Et ideo in Atilio Regulo, quem Carthaginenses Romam miserunt, responsum est non esse eum postliminio reversum, quia iuraverat Carthaginem reversurum et non habuerat animum Romae remanendi. Et ideo in quodam interprete Menandro, qui posteaquam apud nos manumissus erat, missus est ad suos, non est visa necessaria lex, quae lata est de illo, ut maneret civis Romanus: nam sive animus ei fuisset remanendi apud suos, desineret esse civis, sive animus fuisset revertendi, maneret civis, et ideo esset lex supervacua.

\textsuperscript{677} Petr. 57: Eques Romanus es? Et ego regis filius. Quare ergo servivisti? Quia ipse me dedi in servitutem et malui civis Romanus esse quam tributarius.
citizenship was so valuable as to merit extreme measures like voluntary enslavement with the hope, but not guarantee, of eventual manumission.\textsuperscript{678}

In the self-representation of actual freedmen we see a broad range of approaches to the related problems of separation from one’s native land and the acquisition of Roman identity. The citation of distinctly Roman values in the last line of the epitaph commemorating the freed doctor, L. Manneius, has already demonstrated how such gestures toward assimilation can accompany even the strongest claims to a past before slavery. This thread continues in epitaphs that refer explicitly to the process of becoming a citizen though manumission. In the following \textit{titulus}, for example, a freedwoman named Valeria Lycisca describes her migration to Rome in terms of her acquisition of the franchise, but at the same time demarcates the space occupied by her life before she became a slave:\textsuperscript{679}

\begin{verbatim}
Valeria Ɔ l. Lycisca
xii annorum nata
Romam veni
quae mihi iura[e] dedit civis dedit
mihi vivae quo in ferrer tum
cum parvola facta ceinis
\end{verbatim}

Valeria Lycisca, freedwoman of a woman. At the age of 12, I came to Rome, which gave me the rights of a citizen and gave me, still living, a place where I would be taken when I became a little bit of ash.

The phrase \textit{Romam veni} and the proceeding three lines draw readers’ attention to the metaphorical gift that Lycisca received from Rome as a freedwoman, namely the rights of the

\textsuperscript{678} The practice of self-enslavement for economic and/or political reasons is known to have existed in the Roman world, although it did not represent one of the main sources of chattel; see Harris 1999, 73.

\textsuperscript{679} CIL 6.28228 = CLE 1054 = AE 1992, 92.
civitas and a proper burial. The transfer of these duties to the anthropomorphized city from the deceased’s former mistress further underscores Lycisca’s success in becoming part of the Roman community. At the same time, by indicating the commemorand’s age at birth when she came to Rome (xii annorum nata), the inscription creates a sense of absence surrounding her first years of existence – thus suggesting, if only in negative terms, that the memory of a time before servitude could persist in the shadow of an acquired Romanitas.680

It may be tempting to interpret this type of inscription simply as an expression of freed slaves’ gratitude for the benefits conferred by the citizenship – a common reading of the funerary portraiture commissioned by freedmen in the Augustan period, for example.681 But at least some liberti appear to be equally concerned with preserving their indigenous identities, even if only by means of a conspicuous absence. Other texts more directly exemplify the tension between integrating oneself into the Roman body politic and attempting to preserve a link to one’s past before slavery. C. Ducenius Phoebus, freedman of Gaius, received a burial monument that records his birth in Syria to a certain Zeno (filius Zenonis, natus in Suria Nisibyn(e)) as well as his manumission at Rome (liber factus Romae).682 This type of dedication is not overwhelmingly common, perhaps because it required several lines of text and the fact of one’s manumission could be expressed more succinctly by inserting a term of libertination in the tria nomina. Nevertheless, its appearance reflects a capacity to hold two identities simultaneously without allowing the Roman citizenship to overshadow paternity and place of birth. That slaves and freedmen were able to articulate these ideas in full view of the freeborn public indicates that the cultural practices of the servile population presented real alternatives to the paradigm of natal

680 Cf. CIL 11.137 and 6.700. With inclusive counting, the deceased is 12 when she comes to Rome, although in our system she would have been 11.
682 CIL 6.700; cf. CIL 11.137: C. Iulius Mygdonius generi Parthus, natus ingenuus, capt(us) pubis aetate, dat(us) in terr(am) Romana(m) factus cives R(omanus).
alienation and rebirth, however crucial this model may have been to Roman definitions of self and community.

In contrast to the archaic belief that a free person’s domicile determined the political community to which he belonged, the range of approaches taken by slaves and ex-slaves constructed the civitas in ways that allowed it to coexist with other local and ethnic identities.\footnote{On the archaic connection between locality and citizenship, see Sherwin-White 1973, 292–3.} The scarcity of epigraphical sources for the early Republic makes it difficult to trace these patterns back further than the first century BCE, and therefore to know whether slaves and freedmen were responding to an existing notion of citizenship or contributing in new ways to the development of this idea. Still, a number of factors suggest the latter, with the implication that the ways in which ex-slaves responded to their integration into the Roman political community lay the foundations for the emergence of dual citizenship and a common patria in the early imperial period.

We should at least attempt to quantify the proportions of new citizens who gained the franchise through manumission, versus those (such as soldiers) who would have been freeborn peregrines before receipt of this status. Much of the work on this subject has focused on the city of Rome, which reached one million inhabitants by the first century CE and, because of high mortality rates, would have required a mass influx of new residents to sustain this level of growth. At one end of the spectrum we find the hypothesis that “manumission of slaves could and probably would have made up for a large part of the natural decrease of the free urban population.”\footnote{Jongman 2003, 118.} This theory has been challenged, however, due to a fault in the demographical model, and replaced with a scenario in which freedmen would have corresponded to no more
than 10 to 15 percent of freeborn inhabitants who came from Italy.\textsuperscript{685} An added caveat to this latter claim does not rule out the possibility that the proportion could have been significantly larger, however; “it simply means that there is no compelling reason to believe that this must have been the case.”\textsuperscript{686} We may therefore take this estimate as a baseline, while allowing for the possibility of much higher proportions as well as chronological variance.

Even in light of the conservative model, manumission probably exerted more consistent ideological force than the enfranchisement at Rome of \textit{peregrini}, many of whom were in the difficult position of having to petition (and often bribe) a magistrate for the citizenship without the help of a patron.\textsuperscript{687} Many more Romans would have been involved in facilitating the transition from slave to citizen than in attaining the franchise for a freeborn \textit{peregrinus}, and the laws governing the liberation of slaves demonstrate a high degree of personal agency in the hands of the manumittor, as opposed to the state. It has been astutely observed that, in contrast to the standard practice in Greek \textit{poleis} “a private citizen could… grant a political status with minimal involvement of state authorities.”\textsuperscript{688} The fact that both slave-owners and \textit{liberti} experienced this process on such intimate terms allow us to interpret manumission’s cultural impact while accepting that it may not have been as demographically significant as previously thought.

The negotiations that took place around the question of how to integrate freedmen into the Roman community would have carried an even greater symbolic impact because they touched on key familial values.\textsuperscript{689} In particular, it has been argued that the manumittor’s role in creating new citizens reinforced the powers of the \textit{paterfamilias} in relation to those of the state

\textsuperscript{685} Scheidel 2004, 17 and 18.
\textsuperscript{686} Scheidel 2004, 18.
\textsuperscript{687} Noy 2000, 24. Again, the debates that emerged from the Social War are an obvious exception.
\textsuperscript{688} Mouritsen 2011, 69.
\textsuperscript{689} I would like to thank Kate Meng-Brassel for bringing my attention to the importance of this idea.
by implying that *privati* had authority over who constituted the citizen body.\textsuperscript{690} We see these concerns reflected also in Augustan legislation that restricted the manumission of slaves by persons younger than 20 and in related attempts to limit the number of slaves that could be manumitted *ex testamento*, presumably to control the demonstrations of power achieved by funerals attended by hundreds of freedmen. Yet the link between manumission and family structure was embodied most strongly in the convention of passing one’s *praenomen* and *nomen* down to one’s freedmen and placing this line of fictive progeny in charge of maintaining one’s tomb, often with the formula “*libertis libertabusque posterisque eorum*.\textsuperscript{691}” In the same way as Roman law brought together the questions of how to define the civic community and the family, so too did onomastic practice and burial culture in their treatment of the relationship between freedmen and patrons.

Although ethnic background and legal franchise are not equivalent in theory or practice, the flexibility that we have seen develop within the epigraphical record left by *liberti* was a necessary first step toward the emergence of the dual citizenship in the first century CE. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the traditions surrounding the mythical foundation of Rome, stories which engage with persistent intensity the question of how to construct the Roman civic community and to demarcate its boundaries. Here I am concerned primarily with Romulus’ asylum and the rape of the Sabines, two interconnected myths that most clearly speak to these issues and that feature prominently in Roman thought of the Late Republic and Empire. While the histories of these narratives can be traced into the middle Republic, Cicero is the first Latin author to attribute to Romulus the conscious act of gathering “shepherds and immigrants” into a

\textsuperscript{690} Mouritsen 2011, 69; with Volterra 1954.
\textsuperscript{691} This formula and its significance is discussed by Carroll 2006, 102–3 and 244.
political unit. Some authors, notably Plutarch and Dionysius, managed to recount the story of the asylum without characterizing the newcomers as ignoble, but recent analysis has demonstrated that most retellings encapsulate the Romans’ anxiety about the plural nature of their society by casting the immigrants as “slaves, sinners, a deeply uncomfortable mixture of races and classes that upset a socially and cosmically pleasing emphasis on distinction.” Livy’s version, in particular, reveals not just an uneasiness with the incorporation of slaves into the nascent state, but also with the lack of distinction between these men and free immigrants (sine discrimine liber an servus esset). Paradigmatic of otherness, whether as slaves or simply as foreigners, these refugees are integrated into the civic body when, in the same breath, Livy has Romulus form the first Senate.

The story of the asylum addresses the problem of Romanitas by suggesting that one’s possession of this quality is founded on civic inclusion, rather than birth – an idea often heralded as the hallmark of the Romans’ unique form of citizenship and the foundation of their success as an empire. As we have seen, slaves and freedmen did reiterate this principle throughout their epigraphical culture by celebrating their inclusion in the body politic even in the face of social bias. Some monuments focus almost entirely on this idea, particularly in the depiction of the deceased wearing a toga, enjoying the benefits of legal marriage, and bearing a Roman name. Yet the range of responses that issued from the servile population was far more diverse than one would assume from looking narrowly at this type of material. What, then, of the impulse to

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692 Cic. De Or. 1.37; Dench 2005, 14–25.
693 Dench 2005, 3.
694 Livy 1.8.6: Eo ex finitimis populis turba omnis, sine discrimine liber an servus esset, avida novarum rerum perfugit, idque primum ad coeptam magnitudinem roboris fuit; with Dench 2005, 19.
695 Livy 1.8.7–8: Cum iam virium haud paenitet consilium deinde viribus parat. Centum creat senatores, sive quia is numerus satis erat, sive quia soli centum erant qui creari patres possent. Patres certe ab honore patriciique progenies eorum appellati.
retain local and ethnic identities that had preceded enslavement, at the same time as one chose to celebrate the acquisition of *iura civis* and specifically Roman values?

In telling the story of the asylum, Livy is content to describe Rome’s first immigrants as *ex finitimis populis* without specifying from which towns or tribes they had come. They are, like the ideal slave, alienated from their ancestral traditions that they might become Roman. The rape of the Sabine women, however, complements this partial image of the acquisition of citizenship by showing that a group of *captivae* could nevertheless retain a strong connection to their place of origin, and that this phenomenon was important for the formation of the state. In Livy’s version, Romulus’ exhortation to the Sabines stresses the benefits of assimilation through capture and subsequent marriage, a process which mirrors in structure the common practice of enslavement and manumission *matrimonii causa*. They will be participants in the Roman community (*in societate fortunarum omnium civitatisque*) and their husbands will try to compensate their losses (*parentium etiam patriaeque expleat desiderium*). Even after they have become Roman, the women act as powerful mediators between the armies of the Sabines and Romans on the basis of their kinship to each. Read together, the asylum and the rape exemplify the conflicting impulses among slaves and freedmen to forget the past and recall their origins. In both episodes, civic participation ultimately supersedes birth and status as the criterion for belonging to the Roman community, but the Sabines serve to embody the caveat that natal alienation need not be complete.

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697 Livy 1.8.6.
698 The Sabine women may not have been juridical slaves, but the violent nature of their capture and subsequent integration through marriage resonates far more strongly with the experience of *ancillae* than of freeborn *peregrinae*. Note, in particular, the repetition of *rapere* through the episode and the conventional act of reserving the most beautiful women for the leaders (*quasdam forma excellentes, primoribus patrum destinatas, ex plebe homines quibus datum negotium erat domos deferebant*).
699 On this form of integration into free society, see Patterson 1982, 22–32.
700 Livy 1.9.14 and 15.
701 Livy 1.13.1–4.
These stories are reflective not only of slavery’s role in Roman foundation myths, but of the ways in which this institution interacted with others to create a political ideology that could contend with civic plurality. In Livy’s narrative, they precede by almost an entire book the account of Vindicius, the first libertus to be enfranchised and the supposed namesake of manumissio vindicta, although this fictional chronology lacks historical merit. The Vindicius episode is presented in a way that expresses its link to the asylum and to the rape of the Sabines in the context of a re-foundation of Rome after the expulsion of the Tarquins. According to the tradition, envoys sent by the Tarquins to reclaim their property were conspiring with a group of disaffected Roman nobles, in one of whose households Vindicius served. Having suspected the plot, Vindicius waited until an incriminating letter changed hands, then alerted the consuls and, as Livy tells it, saved the nascent republic. While the conspirators were brutally executed, Vindicius was given a reward from the treasury, his freedom, and the citizenship (pecunia ex aerario, libertas et civitas). “After him, the rule was respected that those freed in this way were considered to have been received into the citizenship.”

The context in which Livy reports this tale invites us to read it against those of Romulus’ asylum and of the Sabine women. In his introduction, he wonders what would have happened if the power of the kings had been removed before the outsiders who comprised the original populace had coalesced to form a community:

Quid enim futurum fuit, si illa pastorum conuenarumque plebs, transfuga ex suis populis, sub tutela inuiolati templi aut libertatem aut certe impunitatem adepta, soluta regio metu agitari coepta tribunicius procellis, et in aliena urbe cum patribus serere certamina, priusquam pignera coniugum ac liberorum caritasque ipsius soli, cui longo tempore adsuescitur, animos eorum consociasset?

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702 Livy 2.4–5; see Ogilvie 1965, 241–2.
703 On the theme of foundation and re-foundation in Livy, see Miles 1995, esp. 75–109.
704 Livy 2.5: Post illum observatum ut qui ita liberati essent in ciuitatem accepti uiderentur.
What indeed would have happened, if that rabble of shepherds and refugees, fugitives from their own peoples, had obtained either their freedom or at least impunity under the protection of the inviolable asylum and, released from the fear of a monarch, had begun to be stirred up by the agitation of the tribunes and, in a foreign city, to start fights with the Fathers before the guarantees of spouses and children and the dearness of the very soil, to which one is accustomed over a long period of time, had joined their minds together.

Once again, we are faced with the ambiguity of status in Romulus’ group of immigrants and, through the reference to marriage and children, with the integration of the Sabines into the state. In a passage laden with the rhetoric of civil conflict, the discomfort caused by such conflations of self and other is brought to the fore, and the retention of a sense of foreignness (in aliena urbe) acts as a potential catalyst for disaster: Dissipatae res nondum adultae discordia forent.\(^{705}\)

In contrast to Livy’s account of the Sabine women, which I read as recognizing the positive impact of the captives’ ability to maintain strong ties with their origins at the same time as they became Roman matrons, this passage paints a familiarly alarmist picture of what might happen if slaves and foreigners fail to assimilate. The foundational incorporation of outsiders by Romulus is imagined as being confined to the distant past, rather than as an ongoing process with relevance to contemporary concerns. We are now in the mental territory of owners who feared their slaves and disparaged successful liberti, owners who would believe the adage tot servi quot hostes, balk at the political involvement of freedmen, or complain that Rome had become home to the dregs of the empire.\(^{706}\) And yet, as in the case of the imperial discourse deriding the ‘servility’ of the Senate, Livy’s attempt to instill fear in his readers at the prospect of non-Roman elements infiltrating the civic community turns back on itself to reveal just how tenuous these boundaries were. Part of Vindicius’ role in the narrative is to present manumission in its ideal form in a way that controls the danger by showing how a slave without any stated place of origin could act valorously in the interests of the civitas and receive his citizenship as a reward. Those

\(^{705}\) Livy 2.4.5.
\(^{706}\) Festus 31.41; Sen. Ep. 47.5; Macr. Sat. 111.13.
unsettled by the ‘infiltration of servile blood’ into the body politic could be reassured by the idea that only the most Roman of Roman slaves would be allowed to achieve citizen status.\textsuperscript{707} 

The patterns I have identified in the epigraphical record suggest that slaves and freed slaves negotiated their citizenship in a variety of ways, in some cases placing great emphasis on Romanitas, as Livy does with the character of Vindicius, but in other cases giving more or equal attention to their lives before slavery. As in other slave-owning societies, the concept of natal alienation tends to prevail, and we see its strength both in the inscriptions that celebrate citizenship more or less unequivocally and in Roman myths of foundation that obfuscate the maintenance of native identities in favor of total assimilation and civic unity. The monuments commemorating slaves’ and freed slaves’ place of birth or indigenous ethnic identity represent an alternative to this discourse that took shape within servile culture and was articulated through the medium of public writing. Livy’s account of the rape of the Sabines offers one place in which this ability to belong to two communities simultaneously made its way into political discourse. If we see these women not just as virgins from a neighboring city but rather as primordial captivae, the connection between servile and elite discourse becomes even more apparent as it intersects with the axes of family and gender.

5.2.2 Separation and Integration

Citizenship was a necessary but not sufficient condition for joining the Roman political community, and the ways in which freedmen managed the tension between inclusion and exclusion helped to determine the parameters of civic belonging and refine the meaning of ‘patria’. As we will see in the remaining portion of this chapter, patterns emerge from freed slaves’ epigraphical culture that assert political participation even as they recognize the limits

\textsuperscript{707} On the importance of this ideal for the practice of Roman manumission, see Mouritsen 2011, 30–2 and 42.
imposed by status. Service as an Augustalis provided a mechanism though which wealthy freedmen could claim a place in the public sphere, despite the fact that these organizations were strongly associated with the servile classes. The case of the Augustales at Misenum (whom we shall investigate shortly) will explicate how the negotiation of boundaries was reflected in the epigraphy and architecture of this institution. Public benefactions were even more effective as a means of demonstrating one’s belonging to the civitas, and the monuments celebrating freed euergetes systematically reinforce this idea by applying such formulaic phrases as ob amorem eius erga patriam (“on behalf of his love for the fatherland”) to individuals who were, nevertheless, deemed to be social outsiders. The primary threads running through these discourses acknowledged the existence of three crucial channels through which a new citizen might involve himself in public life – association with imperial authority, expenditure for the common good, and the advancement of his descendants. Although these ideas will come as no surprise to modern historians, an analysis that focuses on the conflict between separation and integration rather than advocating for one extreme or the other is perhaps a better way of shedding more light on how former slaves contributed to the ideology of empire.

The importance of the Augustales as a mode of civic inclusion has long been recognized, although the exact nature and origins of this office continue to be debated. Once assumed to be a priesthood dedicated to the imperial cult, it now is most commonly interpreted as an ordo that was formalized by Augustus to draw on the resources of a socioeconomic stratum comprised primarily (but not exclusively) of former slaves. While not a priestly college per se, in at least some localities this institution was directly involved in the worship of the emperor – a dimension which may have been highlighted during the first years of the Principate, with the social aspects coming to the fore over time. As one recent evaluation has concluded, however, the paucity of
our literary evidence prevents a definitive answer to the questions of how and why the
Augustales were founded. In fact, the roughly 2,500 inscriptions that attest this post demonstrate
a high level of geographical variance in terms of both the legal status and the activities of these
officials. Notably, the evidence is concentrated in municipal Italy, with Campania representing a
hub of activity; but even within this region, the details of the office may differ from one town to
another. By these lights, we ought to think of ‘Augustales’ as an umbrella term for an institution
that developed at the local level rather than being imposed systematically from above.\(^{708}\)

There were, however, several common themes that unified the Augustales as an entity
within Roman society. Despite the fact that some members of this body in some locations are
known to have been ingenui, the institution was by and large associated with men of libertine
status. In addition to the fact that 85 to 95\% of known Augustales were freedmen, many
freeborn Augustales attested epigraphically may have been the sons of ex-slaves who had also
held the position.\(^{709}\) Furthermore, it is highly significant that the only treatment of the office in
imperial literature implies an ideological link with liberti. For the author of the Satyricon,
depicting Trimalchio and two of his associates as proud possessors of this title provided yet
another means by which to satirize wealthy freed slaves.\(^{710}\) Further, although we cannot ascribe
the origins of the Augustales solely to the imperial cult, the title itself carried an implicit nod to
the princeps that would have born symbolic weight, if not always manifest directly in actual
practice.\(^{711}\) Public benefaction, moreover, bound the local iterations of this office most strongly

\(^{708}\) Duthoy 1976; Mouritsen 2011, 250–5.
\(^{709}\) On the percentage of Augustales who were freedmen, see Duthoy 1974, 134–41.
\(^{710}\) Petr. 30.2; 57.6; 65.5; and 71.12.
\(^{711}\) On participation in the imperial cult, see Duthoy 1978, 1293–1306. At Rome, where the parallel to the
Augustales seems to have been the vicī magistri, even more explicit connections were made between the emperor
and ex-slaves, insofar as they comprised a social group recognized and employed by the state. See now Lott 2004,
42–3.
to one another; and the expenditure of personal resources in exchange for public prestige represents the most clear universal among Augustales, regardless of social background.⁷¹²

Freedmen who held this title were thus in a particularly conspicuous role with respect to defining the parameters according to which newly minted citizens could integrate themselves into public life. Traditional interpretations have focused on the extent to which the Augustales comprised an ordo below the decuriones and above the rest of the plebs – that is, a discreet segment of society that was conceptually separate from (and practically exploited by) the curial elite of Italian cities. From this perspective, prominent freedmen inhabited a world apart from ingenui of similar means and, in mimicry of their social superiors, spent vast fortunes acquiring empty honors for themselves or a chance at adlection to the town council for their freeborn children.⁷¹³ Recently, however, close examination of the epigraphical evidence has emphasized the high degree to which Augustales participated in civic activities and cultivated political connections.⁷¹⁴ Rather than see the office as a concession extended to rich liberti, these readings have urged us to recognize unity between the self-representation of freed Augustales and that of the freeborn upper orders – even to the point that “freedman art” be abandoned as a category of stylistic analysis.⁷¹⁵

A likely solution, as often, lies between the poles marked out by scholarly debate. Taken in aggregate, the epigraphical culture of the Augustales suggests neither complete subordination

⁷¹³ See especially von Premerstein 1895; Duthoy 1974; and an exemplary comment by Veyne (1961, 245) comparing Trimalchio and his ilk to wealthy blacks in the American south: “Pour en revenir à une analogie moderne déjà évoquée plus haut, il s’est formé, chez les Noirs des États-Unis, séparés des Blancs par la ségrégation raciale, une couche de millionnaires de couleur que la bonne société blanche tient résolument à l’écart; ils se sont constitués alors en une bourgeoisie noire, qui adopte les valeurs et les comportements de la bourgeoisie des Blancs et trouve dans cette imitation une compensation à ses sentiments d’inériorité.”
⁷¹⁴ Laird 200; Petersen 2006, 57–83.
⁷¹⁵ Petersen 2006, 70–80. Petersen does, however, note the duality inherent in the title Augustalis, “which paradoxically signified both social prestige (through acceptance by the decurions) and probable ineligibility for elected office (such as aedile and duumvir, which could be held exclusively by the elite nobility)” (p. 72).
to nor integration with the freeborn ruling order. Rather, the monuments established by and for these officials take this boundary as a problem that can be interrogated through the manipulation of linguistic and visual symbols. With respect to terminology, for example, it has been observed that the word ordo was applied to the Augustales primarily by its own members. In documents issued by the decurions, ‘corpus’ was more commonly used to identify this body as a type of collegium.\textsuperscript{716} Thus we find Augustales identifying themselves as an ordo in dedications to freeborn patrons as well as in private funerary monuments, beginning in the second century.\textsuperscript{717}

The recurrent phrase ordines decurionum et Augustalium (and its variants) places this idea in direct relation to the definition of the town councilors as an ordo.\textsuperscript{718} But rather than simply militating for one modern theory against another, these data indicate that the construction of the Augustales as an ordo was generated primarily from within, and that members of this group could identify themselves as a separate entity in contrast to the decurions.

On the other hand, most of the inscriptions that attest an ordo Augustalium create links with other civic institutions or refer to munificent acts performed by Augustales on behalf of the entire community. This is already apparent in the formulaic line ‘ordines decurionum et Augustalium’, which unites the two bodies as much as it draws a distinction between them. Other expressions of civic involvement that appear in the epigraphical material can be as simple as the abbreviation l(ocus) d(atus) d(ecreto) d(ecurionum), which indicates that the erection of the monument was authorized and a legal public space for it assigned by the town council; and, by extension, that the recipient had been accepted as a member of the political community.\textsuperscript{719}

Most important, however, is the simple fact that “their financial contributions toward the running

\textsuperscript{716} Mouritsen 2011, 257.
\textsuperscript{717} E.g., CIL 9.3181, 10.1249 and 10.5796 (ordo Augustalium to a patron); CIL 14.421 (private monument).
\textsuperscript{718} E.g., CIL 9.4891, 10.4760, 14.2410, 14.2809 and 14.2795 (ordines decurionum et Augustalium).
of Roman towns represent the one constant that runs through all our evidence for these organizations.\footnote{720 Mouritsen 2011, 258.} While euergetism by former slaves will receive our full attention in a moment, it is critical to point out here the role played by benefactions in integrating freed \textit{Augustales} into the municipal elite despite the stigmas and limitations implied by the title. Overall, the epigraphical depiction of \textit{Augustales} as both distinct from and integral to the social and political fabric of Italian towns calls attention not merely to the status inversion inherent in the success of these supposed usurpers, but to the necessity of examining the boundary between the freed and freeborn elite.

The \textit{sacellum} of the \textit{Augustales} at Misenum provides a particularly well-documented example of how this institution defined itself as both distinct from and integral to local and imperial politics. First excavated in the late 1960’s, the complex has yielded some of our richest evidence about this organization, with epigraphical testimonia spanning the first two centuries of the imperial era.\footnote{721 For an overall review of the complex, see De Franciscis 1991 and Miniero 2000.} In terms of its architecture and spatial layout, the site mirrors other known \textit{Augustea} in containing both a self-enclosed sanctuary and standing in proximity to other key public buildings, most notably in this case the theater.\footnote{722 For a parallel from Ostia, see now Laird 2000.} The establishment of such an enclosure would have demarcated an exclusive space for the \textit{Augustales} and in so doing would have helped to define them as a discreet body within the political sphere, just as a Curia would have done for the local council or a temple for a religious cult. Still, in the case of this particular group, one must imagine the implications of a public building frequented almost entirely by \textit{liberti}, whose segregation from freeborn citizens would have been less visible in other settings.\footnote{723 Even in the theater, \textit{Augustales} could be granted the privilege of sitting among the upper orders.}
These gestures toward segregation, however, were balanced by the location of the *sacellum* and by its sculptural and epigraphical programs, which drew consistent links to the imperial center and to the local civic community. Most notably, the excavations unearthed several statues of Flavian emperors that were likely employed in the *Augustales*’ activities surrounding the imperial cult and, as such, underscore the importance of that connection to the body’s corporate identity. Secondly, the series of 10 inscribed statue bases discovered in front of the *sacellum* present an account of the *Augustales*’ intensive involvement in the life of Misenum, not only in their capacity as members of the imperial cult, but more importantly as euergetes. Two of the most prominent *Augustales* mentioned, a married couple whose portraits were displayed on the pediment, demonstrate with particular clarity the lengths to which ex-slaves went to emphasize their participation in the community. Q. Cominius Abascantus and his wife, Nymphidia Monime, were commemorated at length for their substantial contributions to the *Augustales* and to the rest of the population – benefactions which included (in Abascantus’ case) statues of the Genius Municipii and Classis Tutelae in the Forum. The significance of such dedications, however, should not lead us to ignore the barriers created by libertine status, but rather to acknowledge the flexibility of a conceptual community that allowed for the political inclusion of social outsiders.

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724 De Franciscis 1991.
725 See especially D’Arms 2000 (with edited texts relating to Cominius and Nymphidia). The beginning of AE 2000, 344 is worth quoting as an example of the language used to commemorate the couple’s benefactions: Q(uinto) Cominio Abascanto / ornament(is) decurionalib(us) / honorato curator(i) / Augustalium perpetuo / hic statuas duas Geni(i) municipi(i) et / classis Tutelae in foro posuit quaram / dedicatione decurionib(us) sing(ulis) HS XX n(uumum) / Augustalib(us) corporatis HS XII iis qui / in corpore non sunt HS VIII ingenuis / corporatis HS VI municipib(us) HS IIII dedit / praeterea HS CX m(ilia) n(uumum) decurionib(us) / in mulsatione ipsorum et populi / XVI K(alendas) Ianuar(ias) die natalis sui / Augustalib(us) corporatis HS XX m(ilia) n(uumum) dedit / uti ex incremento earum summar(um) / quod annis die supra scripto / divisio fieret ex forma ipsius / et hoc amplius HS X(milia) n(uumum) in comparatione / vini eisdem Augustalib(us) largitus dedit / Nymphidia Monime coniugi optimo / cuius dedicatione Augustalib(us) corporatis / viri tem praeterea HS VIII n(uumum) et epulum dedit…
Again, though typically barred from entering the *ordo decurionum*, freed slaves figure prominently in the epigraphical record of benefaction, particularly from municipal Italy. Like Cominius and Nymphidia, many *Augustales* pursued the channels of civic involvement provided by benefaction, but in what follows we will be concerned specifically with the language used in inscriptions to describe ex-slaves’ financial contributions to the civic community. As with the benefactions of freeborn notables, these may have included games, feasts, handouts (*sportulae*), or public works projects, all with the intention of benefiting the local *populus* and increasing the prestige of the donor. The erection of a public statue or monument was only one, albeit highly tangible way in which the community thanked a euergete by honoring his public image; but these texts provide a valuable window into the specific nature of the exchange, particularly in the case of freedmen, whose benefactions are less likely to have gained the attention of Latin authors. Within the material landscape, wealthy freedmen were honored in ways strikingly similar to their freeborn peers – a practice that enhanced the integration of *liberti* into the citizen body but, in so doing, brought into question the very nature of the civic community.  

In exploring this issue, let us return to the treatment of the word *patria* as one useful avenue into the symbolic system that both expressed and revised definitions of the political order. Notably, monuments to local benefactors may employ a variation of the phrase *ob amorem eius erga patriam* to describe the rationale behind the erection of an honorific statue; *adfectio* also appears as a synonym for *amor* in these contexts. Specific benefactions may also be cited, but this phrasing speaks directly to the quality of patriotism that, in being identified as the euergete’s prime motivation, helps to veil his self-interest and strengthen his place in the

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726 Freedmen should therefore be viewed as participants in elite cultures of euergetism rather than as simple imitators; again, contra Veyne 1961, 245.
727 Italian examples are collected by Forbis 1996, 46–50; a search of the EDC under *amor* and *patria* also revealed a high concentration of relevant texts in North Africa, but I will limit my discussion to the examples from Italy to maintain a sense of regional difference.
town’s corporate ethos. Although particularly popular among the freeborn elite in North Africa, in Italy the formula is applied to both ingenui and liberti. The earliest known example was dedicated to a freedman at Castrimoenium in 31 CE for his being utilis rei publicae and an amator municipi. Without ascribing any statistical value to this small number of texts, we might yet glean through close analysis some insight into the meaning and implication of the concept in these Italian cases, where the political inclusion of and social bias toward freedmen came into intense conflict with one another.

At Puteoli, a benefactor’s love for the patria is celebrated in three honorific monuments, once in reference to a freeborn local elite and twice in reference to freedmen. All originate from the late second or early third centuries CE, when the citation of amor as a reason for civic contributions was most popular, and to which period the majority of extant honorific inscriptions can be dated. The equestrian procurator, Iulius Sulpicius Sucessus, was a vir egregius and municipal patron, awarded a public statue “in return for his deserts and esteem and love for his fellow citizens and his fatherland” (ob meritis et adfectione amoreque eius erga cives et patria(m)). The phrasing used to commemorate Puteoli’s freed benefactors, moreover, is nearly identical to that applied to freeborn euergetes. Aurelius Symphorus, freedman of Augustus, received both the decurial ornamenta and a public monument “on behalf of his love of and advocacy for the fatherland and citizens” (ob amorem et instantiam erga patriam).

728 On amor as a municipal virtue based on personal devotion rather than obligation, see Forbis 1996, 46.
729 Forbis (1996, 47 n. 8) divides her sample by senators and high-ranking equestrians (15); equestrian municipals (14); municipal magistrates and dignitaries (17); women (3); freedmen (5).
730 CIL 14.2466.
731 They are AE 1888, 126 (= Forbis 146); CIL 10.1727 and 5917 (= Forbis 4); CIL 14.2466 (= Forbis 23), 2973 (= Forbis 91) and 2977 (= Forbis 88).
732 De Bondt 2006/7.
733 AE 1972, 79 (AD 176): Sucessi // mirae prosapiae adque / nimiae integritatis / Iulio Sulpicio Sucesso v(iro) / e(gregio) p(atrono) c(oloniae) / procuratori portus Puteol(anorum) / ob meritis et adfectione / amoreque eius erga cives et patria(m) / ut ordo splendidissimus populusq(ue) / Pateolanus comprobat / regio decatriae cultores dei patri / vexillari statuam ponendam / sollicita adcura(ve)runt // dedicata VI Idus Aug(ustas) / T(ito) Vitrassio Pollione / II M(arco) Flavio Apr(ico) co(n)s(ulibus).
His rough contemporary, L. Aurelius Pyladis, an imperial freedman and pantomime, won the decurial ornaments and was praised for his *amor erga patriam et eximiam liberalitem*, apparently as a result of his sponsorship of gladiatorial games.\(^735\)

I use the example of late second-century Puteoli to show in microcosm how the language of patriotism could be applied to freed and freeborn in the same locality at the same time. The concept of devotion for one’s *patria* was not new, of course, although the application of the word *amor* to this idea is a distinctive feature of epigraphical, versus literary diction. Also remarkable is the fact that *amor* and *adfectio* imply a type of personal motivation that is qualitatively different from that conveyed by words such as *pietas* or *benevolentia*, which are based more in the recognition of duty than in a subjective sense of loyalty to the state.\(^736\) Thus, on the one hand, most *liberti* carried a stigma of slavery that limited their ability to participate fully in civic life by becoming *decuriones* or to be accepted as social equals. But these inscriptions highlight the extent to which Roman freedmen became members of the political community, in part as a result of manumission’s symbolic capacity to create a new *civis* who could be perceived as having fully embraced patriotic ideals.\(^737\) As we have seen in the cases of Pallas and other imperial freedmen, moreover, elite anxiety about ex-slaves’ activity in the public sphere was only one aspect of a complex picture. Prominent *liberti* could be held up as *exempla* in some settings, even as they were scorned as usurpers in others.\(^738\) The strength with which Symphorus

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\(^734\) CIL 10.1727 (AD 161–80): Aurelio Sym/phoro Aug(usti) lib(erto) / of(f)iciali veteri a memo/ria et a diplomatibus / exornato ornament(is) / decurionalibus / ordo splendidissim(us) / civi(tatis) / ob amorem et / instantiam erga / patriam / civesque.


\(^736\) Forbis 1996, 46.

\(^737\) Patterson 1982, 215–16 and 252.

\(^738\) See above, ch. 3.
and Pyladis are honored as fellow *amatores patriae*, comparable to Puteoli’s freeborn benefactors except in their libertine status, implies an understanding of the municipal *patria* that was flexible enough to incorporate outsiders in this highly visible and permanent way.

This is not surprising given what we know both about Roman conceptions of the *civitas* and about the legal status of Roman freedmen; but it is important to see former slaves as playing an active role in defining the *patria*, not simply as archetypes in the thought-world of the freeborn elite. The monuments that celebrate freedmen’s patriotism emphasize four criteria for civic inclusion. The first, which lies outside the direct control of any given *libertus*, is the assent of the *plebs* and its governing body; and we see this reflected most strongly in the official language granting a public statue or approving the use of public land for this purpose. The other criteria, however, depend on the freedman’s willingness to embrace certain modes of behavior, above all to express his *amor* for a Roman homeland through the expenditure of private funds, even despite the significant restrictions imposed on his citizenship and the social biases that he had to confront. Secondly, the fact that five out of the six freedmen praised publicly for their love of the fatherland were members of the *familia Caesaris* reinforces our conclusion regarding the *Augustales* – that celebrating one’s link to the emperor was a critical step in the process of becoming (and staying) Roman.

In these ways, along with the retention of indigenous identities, slave and freed cultures allowed for the acquisition of a new, Roman homeland predicated mainly on loyalty to the emperor and financial contributions to one’s local community. The language used in public inscriptions suggests a countercurrent to the ideological premises that slaves by definition lacked a *patria*, and that Rome was merely a “stepmother” to foreign immigrants.\(^\text{739}\) Although such negative images tend to predominate in ancient attitudes toward foreigners at Rome, they were

\(^{739}\) E.g., as claimed by Scipio Aemilianus at Val. Max. 6.2.3 (*noverca*).
indeed balanced by a set of more positive reactions discernible in our sources.\footnote{Noy 2000, 31–6.} While freed slaves’ activities in local politics served more to interrogate than to resolve the tension between inclusion and exclusion, acclaiming prominent *liberti* as benefactors of a common fatherland brought to the fore a definition of the *civitas* as a community with porous boundaries. The terms upon which one agreed to participate were demarcated even more clearly through dedications to freed euergetes who maintained connections to the imperial center.

These phenomena are apparent above all in the epigraphical record, to the point that we would have no knowledge of the *Augustales* aside from a few glancing references in the literary record. It is therefore worth pausing to reflect upon the extent to which freed slaves’ involvement in civic life took shape within the medium of inscriptions, just as the values examined above developed in and through the freed “epigraphical habit.” In the public sphere, moreover, we find town councils and plebs condoning and often contributing to the assertions of belonging that wealthy freedmen made through official titles or benefaction. Again, despite the ambivalence that some Latin authors express about the inclusion of *liberti* in the body politic, the attitudes conveyed by the literary record are by and large highly disparaging, and thus stand in contrast to an epigraphical discourse in which local *decuriones* could publicly honor freed slaves in ways almost (if never entirely) identical to those applied to the freeborn. To some extent, then, the accessibility of inscribed writing and its role in municipal politics precluded the intense focus on freedmen’s marginality that we find throughout Latin literature. Instead, it was the tension between social segregation and civic inclusivity that necessarily came to the fore.

These epigraphical patterns, centered at the core of the empire, made a significant impact on broader discourses about the nature of the Roman community. We have already seen how the maintenance of local identities by foreign-born slaves and *liberti* set a precedent for the
conception of dual citizenship that emerged under Augustus. In a similar fashion, I would argue, the ways in which ex-slaves marked themselves as both outsiders to and members of the Roman patria modeled for other newcomers how to participate from the margins. If we return to Philip’s letter to the Larisians, it becomes clear that the monarch was impressed not simply by Rome’s ability to increase its population by incorporating former slaves into the plebs. He states that liberti were given “a share in the magistracies,” thus belying an assumption that the Roman citizenship integrated these outsiders through channels of civic involvement. Second, Philip points out that enfranchising freedmen allowed the Romans “to send out colonies to nearly 70 locations.” His focus on the importance of manumission to Rome’s program of colonization once again highlights the participatory dimension of the citizenship, and in addition suggests that liberti comprised a significant force in the establishment of Roman enclaves abroad. In his eyes, freedmen were not just warm bodies to fill up the masses; rather, their membership in the state was founded upon their active involvement in domestic affairs and the capacity to represent Rome overseas.

It is striking that Philip V conveyed these ideas to the inhabitants of a Greek city in 214 BCE, almost 70 years before the sack of Corinth solidified Roman ascendency over the region, and centuries before the ideal of a common patria came to replace that of imperium in provincial rhetoric about Rome. Generally speaking, aside from actually coming to Italy, inhabitants of the periphery would have seen Roman freedmen performing the citizenship in multiple ways. When a libertus accompanied his patron on an embassy, governorship, or sightseeing tour, for example,

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741 Although Philip’s generalization here is inaccurate, he may have been extrapolating from the inclusion of liberti on town councils outside of Italy, for which we do have some evidence. Crawford 1996, n. 25.105 (Urso); Brunt 1971, 256; Mouritsen 2011, 52; Treggiari 1969, 63.
742 This is another point on which Philip is probably exaggerating for rhetorical purposes, but the discrepancy between his estimate and the colonies recorded in Livy may also be reflective of the latter’s failure to record every colonial venture.
that relationship would have taken center stage as a model of the Roman slave system. Yet in other cases, freedmen acted independently of their former masters and would have appeared to a large extent as free agents, even if their legal status was known. During the Empire, moreover, we have seen how the *familia Caesaris* not only served a practical purpose as an administrative body but also did ideological work by presenting a definition of imperial power that members of the elite could adapt to their own situation. It follows that the inhabitants of the provinces would have noticed how the uniqueness of the Roman political community was exemplified by *liberti*.

Dionysius’ digression on the enfranchisement of ex-slaves by Servius Tullius contains several points that are relevant to this question. In response to a patrician backlash against his introduction of this new rule, Servius rejects the concept of natural slavery and emphasizes the importance of character over one’s former legal condition. His arguments about the benefits to the state coincide very closely with those articulated in Philip’s letter, particularly on the issue of having a citizen population that would sustain Rome’s imperial ventures. Dionysius also has the king point out that the children of manumitted slaves represented a previously untapped source of military manpower, critical to the maintenance of a powerful army that could stand up against the whole world. Ex-slaves’ civic participation at home also emerges as a key benefit

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743 In a forthcoming paper, I will show how Roman forms of slavery were adapted by soldiers and veterans across the Empire as a means of substantiating their status as participants in the *civitas*.
745 See above, ch. 3.
748 Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 4.23.4: τελευτῶν δὲ τὸν περὶ τοῦ συμφέροντος εἰσηγήσατο λόγον τοὺς μὲν ἐπισταμένους ὑπομμήθοικον, τοὺς δὲ ἀγνοοῦντας διδάσκων, ὡς καὶ δυσανασχετούντας ἐξετάζουσιν καὶ μεγάλων πραγμάτων ἑαυτὴν ἀξιότητα οὐδενὸς οὕτω δεῖ πράγματος ὡς πολιομβρωτίας, ἱνα διαρκέσῃ πρὸς πάντας
– although this idea is described by Servius from the perspective of the freeborn elite, who would both receive electoral support from their *liberti* and gain the progeny of those men as clients.\(^749\)

These statements are indicative of the positive stance that some Greeks adopted concerning the inclusion of freedmen in the Roman community, but Dionysius goes further by having Servius draw a connection between manumission and the rhetorical topos of political freedom.\(^750\)

 Homer ς ς τυ τυ ς ς ς, ὅσι μὲν ἢ δὲ πόλεις έκ δουλείας μετέβαλον εἰς ἐλευθερίαν βάρβαροι τε καὶ Ἑλληνίδες, ὅσι δ’ εἰς δουλείαν εξ ἐλευθερίας.

He [Servius] asked them to consider also how many states, barbarian and Greek, had passed from slavery to freed men and from freedom to slavery.

Servius’ exhortation – as conceived by a Greek historian trying to explain Roman culture to other Greeks in the first century BCE – activates a familiar metaphorical connection between legal and political slavery, but does so in the context of a longstanding discourse about the “liberation” of Greek *poleis* from foreign powers. The analogy draws together the idea that slavery results from misfortune with the construction of the manumitted slave as part of the citizen body. A previously “enslaved” state had no lesser claim to political legitimacy than one who had never (but may sometime in the future) suffer this type of oppression. Just as the Romans defined the boundaries of the *civitas* by interrogating the place of freed slaves in their society, so too did foreign observers like Dionysius link manumission to Rome’s specific construction of the political community, centered as it was on the tensions that emerged around the inclusion of marginal groups in the activities of civic life.

\(^749\) Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 4.23.6–7: χωρίς δὲ του κοινή χρησίμου και ιδία πολλά ὄφελησσεθαν τους εὐποροτάτους Ρωμαίοις, ἐδών τους ἀπελευθέρωσε ἦπαι τις πολιτείας μετέχειν, ἐν ἐκκλησίαις τε καὶ ψηφοφορίαις καὶ ταῖς ἅλλαις πολιτικάς χρείαις τάς χάριτας, ἐν οἷς μάλιστα δέονται πράγμασι, κοιμησόμενος καὶ τούς ἐκ τῶν ἀπελευθέρων γενομένους πελάτας τοῖς ἐγγόνοις τοῖς ἐαυτῶν καταλείποντας.

The Roman practice of enfranchising manumitted slaves was unique in the ancient Mediterranean, not just in terms of its legal structure and demographic effects, but also because of the extent to which it shaped ideologies of community as they evolved over time. Specifically, as I have sought to demonstrate here, the enrollment of freedmen in the citizen body was a longstanding tradition in which most Romans would have participated directly at some point in their lives. This experience was repeated by generations of *ingenui* and *liberti* alike and, in the process, brought the civic sphere into dialogue with social and familial values. Manumission thus provided a locus for the interrogation of fundamental conceptual boundaries – between slave and free, Roman and non-Roman, political inclusion and social difference. In addition to Rome’s contact with neighboring states, slavery and its attendant discourses helped to shape the meaning of citizenship in ways that would be essential to the expansion of the empire and to its ability to cohere symbolically over time. In other words, the Roman approach to manumission was not simply the product of an innate generosity of spirit that prompted these people to extend rights to all types of outsiders; it was, rather, an active agent in the emergence of the highly flexible notion of *civitas* to which we attribute so many of the Romans’ successes (whatever their costs may have been).

Freedmen, moreover, were not simply “good to think with.” Having examined the epigraphical evidence, we are able to see how this group assumed an integral role in the production of values related to the nature of the civic community. In certain respects, of course, *liberti* reiterated ideals that were presented as originating from freeborn culture and remaining securely in its possession. In some contexts, freed slaves publicly forgot their heritage, assumed elite modes of behavior, and otherwise tried to “pass” as freeborn despite the clear status
restrictions. Nevertheless, the inscriptions reveal a broad range of responses to the widely held belief that slavery enacted social death and deprived one of one’s former homeland. The ex-slaves whom we have witnessed claiming connections to their past before slavery were able to demonstrate that a person could become Roman yet still maintain ethnic and geographical ties to his place of origin. Communicated through the medium of epigraphical writing, this concept helped lay the groundwork for the emergence under Augustus of dual citizenship for provincials. Likewise, we have explored some of the ways in which freedmen navigated the problem of how to integrate themselves into political life while staying cognizant of their marginality. Again, former slaves contributed actively to the development of a symbolic Roman community that was able to incorporate an array of outsiders.

For the Romans, as for all human cultures, establishing the parameters of political inclusion required a subtle negotiation of the boundaries between inside and outside, selves and others. This dynamic was particularly enhanced in Rome’s case, because the slave system in Italy embedded these questions in the social consciousness of vast numbers of people by involving them personally in the creation of new citizens through manumission. The frequency with which the Romans freed and enfranchised their slaves thus developed in a dialectic with ideals of civic belonging that were based more on participation than birth and allowed for a multiplicity of local identities. On the one hand, it is fair to attribute Rome’s unique approach to manumission in part to the porosity of the civic community and relative openness of the citizenship to newcomers. Yet the actual practice of owning and freeing slaves played an equally important role in the formation of those ideologies on which it rested. And this dialogue was not limited to members of the elite or even to the freeborn population, but rather included slaves and former slaves, who communicated with other social strata primarily through the medium of
inscriptions. In these ways, Roman slavery was essential to the definition of the *patria* as politically inclusive but conditioned by hierarchy.
CONCLUSION

During the time I spent researching and writing this dissertation, several new studies of Roman freedmen have been published, including the first comprehensive synthesis of the evidence from the Republic and Empire.\footnote{Mouritsen 2011.} I hope that my notes have made clear the debt I owe to this particular work, which sheds new light on the ideological construction of the former slave, as well as on the practical aspects of manumission and the role of freedmen in the Roman economy. To my mind, the most illuminating insights that emerge from this study involve the interaction between ideology, law, the economy, and social practice. The influence of these areas on one another was the primary engine of Roman manumission that allowed it to thrive with such vigor over such a long chronological period.

No single factor can be adduced to explain the phenomenon of the Roman freedman without reference to others. The ideal of the ‘good’ \textit{libertus}, for example, helped supplement the relatively sparse legal codes that were designed to control ex-slaves’ behavior.\footnote{Mouritsen 2011, 58–65.} Likewise, the quasi-familial nature of the patron-freedman relationship had important implications for the frequency of manumission and for the economic opportunities available to former slaves in comparison to the freeborn poor.\footnote{Mouritsen 2011, 159 and 239.} These conceptual frameworks were in turn strengthened by the rising prominence of freedmen and the pressing need to account for their social significance. Although this monograph is organized around a division between ideological and technical questions, I (for one) came away with a heightened awareness of how these issues represent different sides of the same problem.
The only major source of disappointment was the relegation of the freedman’s perspective to a brief epilogue in the final chapter, as if this topic ought to be separated from the main discussion rather than be integrated consistently into a study of how the slave system worked. As I have sought to demonstrate in my analyses of the epigraphical and literary sources, the cultural practices of the freed population participated in a dialogue with those of the freeborn ruling orders. Nor am I alone in recognizing the importance of ex-slaves’ cultural agency, if the recent appearance of a collection of papers entitled Free at Last! The Impact of Freed Slaves on the Roman Empire is any indication of current trends among classicists and art historians. As the editors note in their introduction, “A picture is thus emerging in the most recent scholarship that depicts the freed slave as more than a victim or a negative influence: he or she can also be seen as empowered and ‘elite’, an agent of social and political change, a mechanic to the machine of the economy, and the possessor of a can-do work ethic.” That is to say, we have consciously moved away from the replication of ancient stereotypes to an appreciation of the positive contributions that Roman freedmen made to their social, economic, and political environments, as well as to classical culture.

Nevertheless, a fundamental tension persists between the desire to understand liberti on their own terms and the need to acknowledge that their lives and culture were shaped by an extreme form of dehumanization, which manumission could not fully assuage. The title of the aforementioned volume encapsulates this methodological problem, with the phrase “Free at last!” conveying the assumption that every freedman would have viewed manumission as his greatest achievement, whereas a focus on “the impact of freed slaves” suggests that this population effected substantial change in the world and transcended the limitations of status. Put

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754 Bell – Ramsby 2012.
differently, historians who study this social group are caught between the danger of reproducing structures of inequality that formed the basis of ancient slavery and of negating the brutality of human domination by glorifying freedmen’s independence. In my view, it is equally unbalanced to portray *liberti* as a mob of wealthy usurpers as it is to read pride and empowerment into every example of economic success or moment of self-representation. Surely the situation was far more complex and varied from person to person, with a range of circumstances determining the types of response that a freedman might have had toward enslavement and manumission. Some ex-slaves appear to have been keen to advertise their citizenship and exercise the rights that came with it; but, as we have seen, the valuation of qualities like *industria* and *obsequium* are indicative of slavery’s continued influence on the cultural mores of those who endured it.

By way of conclusion, I wish to reflect on how I tried to resolve this conflict by considering the dialogue between status groups rather than isolating freedmen from their social context. To be sure, any study that aims to take the freedman’s perspective into account must begin by attending closely to the evidence for this subculture as a topic of study in its own right. The need for this type of intensified analysis may lessen as more sophisticated research emerges to fill out our picture of what it was like to be an ex-slave in various regions of the Roman empire and what cultural formations were distinctive to this population. At the moment, however, the mass of epigraphical and archaeological sources are still being re-examined in light of this new set of questions; and each of my chapters required an investigation of relevant inscriptions to formulate an idea of how former slaves represented certain social values or constructed individual and collective identities. In some cases, the sources responded well to the impetus to see *liberti* as breaking free of the constraints and expectations imposed on them by the ideology of slave-owning. The use of alternative frameworks to identify important markers in
the human life course, for example, presented an image of freed culture as resilient and
generative of new ideas, rather than purely mimetic. Those with a strong interest in recovering
voices from the margins of history will perhaps find these arguments most compelling.

In other cases, however, it was impossible to escape the realization that freed culture was
profoundly conditioned by slavery and the power imbalances it created. This was most
pronounced in the material on *fama* and in regard to the imperial household. Expectations that
freed slaves would be loyal, obedient, and hard-working were reflected in the identification of
these virtues by freedmen as effective means by which to achieve immortality. Likewise, when
members of the *familia Caesaris* celebrated their service to the emperor, they reinforced his
authority not just as their former owner but as the notional patron of all of his subjects. Despite
my efforts to find ways in which freedmen subverted or complicated these paradigms, the bulk of
the evidence seems to point toward the infiltration of the master’s perspective into the cultural
production of actual freedmen.

This difficulty was offset slightly by the fact that the adoption of elite values by former
slaves comprised a dynamic appropriation of models derived from above, rather than mere
imitation. In reading the act of commemoration as its own assertion of personal agency, I have
built this viewpoint into my approach to the material evidence. The appearance of *obsequium* as
a key virtue does not lessen the importance of the fact that ex-slaves derived legitimate honor
from the celebration of such qualities or from the economic success that could ensue.
Nevertheless, freed culture was by definition a product of slavery, and many of the ideals in
which freedmen invested were directly related to their subjugation.

This conclusion may be disappointing to some, but all dimensions of freedmen’s
collective experience – even those that cause us moral discomfort – are essential to
understanding this group’s impact on Roman history. Ex-slaves’ willingness to place stock in qualities that were also beneficial to patrons was attended by their ability to ennoble virtues that conventionally were construed as subordinate. In comparison to *honos* and *virtus*, the brands of obedience and diligence advertised by *liberti* were usually deemed more suitable for social inferiors. Only by seeing both sides of the picture can we begin to appreciate the ways in which freedmen stood as models of behavior for the imperial elite as it negotiated its relationship with the *princeps*. Although one might be tempted to see *obsequium* as degrading and *industria* as a sign of empowerment – and thus to hone in on the latter – these qualities took on the greatest significance when exercised together in tandem.

At other times, freed slaves’ deviations from social norms were at the forefront of my discussion. As I argued with respect to the life course, ex-slaves’ ability to look beyond the patron-freedman relationship as a source of biographical continuity contributed to the identification of Stoicism and Christianity as modes by which to measure personal progress that did not rely on the *cursus honorum*. Likewise, the ways in which freedmen sought to combat the effects of natal alienation by retaining ethnic and political identities that had preceded enslavement were instrumental in defining the civic community. The values and standards imposed on *liberti* were thus filtered through freed culture and back into the consciousness of the freeborn ruling orders in a variety of complex ways, in some cases appearing to replicate the ideology of slaveholding, but always containing an element of creativity.

Focusing on the dialogue between status groups is one way to mitigate the dichotomy between historical approaches that, on the one hand, reproduce ancient prejudices and, on the other, support an excessively rosy view of Roman slavery and manumission. Needless to say, the arguments presented here are by no means exhaustive. In looking primarily at freedmen and
the ruling elite, I was able to give only nominal attention to the role of other marginal populations such as women, provincials, and the freeborn poor, all of whom participated in the exchange and formation of social values. Freed slaves’ unique position in Roman culture and level of involvement with the upper orders recommended them as a test case, but other paths of influence still need to be charted. Likewise, although ex-slaves possessed a notably strong epigraphical habit, their activity in other areas of material culture has been shown to reflect high levels of integration in civic life and will continue to be an important area of study.\textsuperscript{756} Finally, I have indicated some ways in which phenomena that took hold under the early Empire may have developed into late Antiquity, particularly with respect to notions of power and selfhood as they transformed under the influence of Christianity. Had there been time to write another chapter, it would have addressed the possibility that the adoption of slave and freed values among the first-century Roman elite paved the way for the advent of the Church and the ideologies of government that it introduced.

Despite these shortcomings (and many others), I hope to have identified at least some points of exchange between two subcultures within Roman culture. Even as the evidence prevents us from advancing the hypothesis that Roman freedmen were truly free, examining the ways in which their responses to slavery and manumission were received in other areas of discourse allows us to ascribe to them a high degree of cultural agency without ignoring the harsh realities of enslavement. Commemorative inscriptions provided an important medium through which \textit{liberti} could communicate with members of their own order and with freeborn Romans, particularly in light of the relative availability of this form of writing to those of middling rank and its strong connection to the culture of memory. In all likelihood, however, the

\textsuperscript{756} Petersen 2006; Kellum (forthcoming).
beliefs and practices that we have discerned in epigraphical monuments reflect attributes of the freed population that would have been conveyed through multiple channels, from dress and body language to acts of public munificence. The material remains left by *liberti* are a laconic and imperfect record of what was clearly a vibrant community, both distinguishable from and deeply embedded within the citizen body. Still, when read closely, these texts reveal an exchange of ideas across the social hierarchy and demonstrate from yet another perspective how heavily Roman society depended on slaves and freedmen.
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243
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