# Dandies and Almost Wives: Agency and Prostitution In Imperial Roman Historiographies

*Nicole Aros*

Roman prostitution from the 1st century to the 4th century C.E. mainly focused on females and how society viewed them as shameful beings. Scholarly research from the 1990s to 2019 covers the legal, economic, and social treatment of female Roman prostitutes in the following three geographical locations. In Egypt, economic historians examine the process of Senate taxation of prostitutes, brothel owners, and clients in order to exploit their sex business. In Italy, economic and legal historians analyze the different structures that prostitutes have used as a location to perform their sexual deeds in order to determine the different types of services they offered to their clients. In ancient Rome, social historians investigate Roman society's perception of prostitutes as either shameful or dangerous women. These prostitutes lost their citizenship status; however, they could acquire political and social power through their elite lover's status. This paper endeavors to uncover what is missing from the field of Ancient Roman Prostitution, which consists of the majority of historians focusing on buildings, documents, and other people's perspectives instead of the Roman prostitutes' emotions and intelligence. This historiographic essay will inform scholars about the different paths that previous historians have taken regarding Roman prostitution and persuade them to explore an approach that focuses on prostitutes as people and investigates their intelligence on ancient law, business, and fashion trends.

A historical methodology that scholars have used too often to examine Roman prostitution is the economic lens. This methodology focuses on the perception of others, like how consumers and slaveowners viewed and exploited the product, specifically the prostitute's body. This economic lens dehumanizes the prostitute by examining how customers and pimps viewed prostitutes as sexual objects that "chose" this career path due to poverty or slavery. Social history represents the school of thought that brings new perspectives, analyses, and

understanding of Roman prostitutes' everyday lives. This lens examines how laws, clothing, language, art, and behavior became identifiers that indicated which woman was a prostitute and how society deemed their profession as shameful. The social lens demonstrates the Roman prostitutes' intelligence to remain aware of trends that determine what type of clothing to wear to attract customers and understand the laws to avoid getting into trouble since they had no legal protection. The social methodology would allow scholars to humanize Roman prostitutes by discussing the social and legal events that caused people to become prostitutes. This methodology enables scholars to discuss how this transformation in the sex worker's lifestyle modified how they viewed themselves and interacted in the public sphere.

Kelly Olson and William Craig, two scholars that take a new path in the historical discussion of Roman Prostitution as they investigate male sexuality in the social construction of a Roman man known as the "dandy," and the understanding of the terms and act of being a "penetrator" or "penetrated. Olson's "Masculinity, Appearance, and Sexuality: Dandies in Roman Antiquity" (2014) covers the essence of masculinity through clothing, moral reputation, and social status in Rome. Olson uses literary sources from the first to the second century C.E. to discuss how male appearance became linked with age, urbanity, and heterosexual activity in order to attract women. Olson argues that the male role model of Rome's urban environment was called the "dandy," as he represented trendy and popular clothing. This article examines Roman sexuality involving the terms penetrator and penetrated. Olson ties it to her discussion on clothing by discussing how the word *cinaedus* described a man as someone who wore "loose clothing, perfume, curled hair," and that enjoyed anal sex. For instance, Olson mentions that the politician and writer Petronius describes a male slave-prostitute as someone who wore make-up and combed their hair. Olson argues that boy slaves used make-up for sexual pleasure and feminized their looks to acquire Roman men's attention. This conclusion emphasizes that the passive partner turned themself into a woman or maintained the facial appearance of one to have men interested in sexually engaging with them, especially anal sex.

Olson introduces a new discussion to Roman sexuality and male prostitution, as young boys feminized their bodies with clothing and make-up to attract both men and women. Olson calls these young men "dandies," where she acquired this term from nineteenth-century Europe, as it defined men as fashionable and their sexuality as ambiguous. This classification implies that it was highly likely that male prostitutes received female clients since Olson argues that Roman women had interesting sexual tastes and desires for "soft" men. Therefore, if male prostitutes wore make-up and loose clothing, then; it would allow them to obtain double the number of customers than they would if they were female prostitutes. The use of make-up would have allowed male prostitutes to appear young or younger; hence, they would gain Roman men's and future clients' attention. The process of feminizing their bodies indicates that some male prostitutes mentally prepared themselves to play the passive partner as a means to fulfill their client's sexual fantasy.[1]

William Craig's "Roman Traditions: Slaves, Prostitutes, and Wives" (2010) examines graffiti from Roman Italy and literary sources from the 1st to the 2nd century C.E. to analyze Roman citizens' attitudes about homosexuality and the social indications of a Roman man's masculinity. Roman men's perception of young boys' and women's sexual parts involved penises, anuses, and vaginas. For instance, Roman men perceived a woman's anus as a "second vagina," while they considered a boy's anus as an anus. This sexual identification of body parts implies men's preferences or sexual desires for young men since their wife's anus would not satisfy their sexual urges. Craig states that young men who enjoyed anal penetration lost their gender status as men, specifically, their masculinity; therefore, they became sexually and socially identified as women. Craig argues that it was socially acceptable for Roman men to perform sexual deeds with both female and male slaves, prostitutes, and foreigners. Craig discusses Roman intellects' opinions regarding

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[1] Kelly Olson, "Masculinity, Appearance, and Sexuality: Dandies in Roman Antiquity," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 23, no. 2 (2014): 185.

prostitution and the continuous social affair that Roman men had with female prostitutes.

Craig is most effective when examining Roman men's attitudes towards prostitution and the Roman men that hired female and male prostitutes. For instance, Cicero argues that Publius Clodius Pulcher was immoral because he spent almost every day with prostitutes of both sexes[2]. This shameful behavior indicates that there was such a thing as having too much sex because that meant they were having sex with prostitutes instead of their wives, therefore, not having children and possibly causing problems with the marriage. Cicero's argument implies that a Roman man should not constantly hire a prostitute but do so only occasionally because prostitution was still a legal profession. Craig argues that Roman men could visit prostitutes but not so frequently that it causes them to squander their wealth. This argument implies that some Roman men could not resist a prostitute's charm or perhaps fell in love with them but could not legally marry them. Cicero's defense of Marcus Caelius Rufus forwards an interesting claim as he declares that Clodia's sexual activities imply that she is not an "honorable widow" but a "whore." The case also indicates that the type of crowd a person spends time with can reflect that person's reputation and influence their behavior. Therefore, Cicero saw Caelius as a young boy like any other who went to a brothel to hire a prostitute. Caelius' immoral behavior strongly demonstrates that there was a double standard because he did not lose his elite status and reputation, while Cicero placed all the blame on the elite widow Clodia by calling her a "whore" since she was single and engaged in "sexually loose" behavior.

Future scholars should add to the historical discussion of analyzing prostitutes' agency, as they could figure out more ways to remind readers how prostitutes are intelligent and emotional people. A few avenues that future scholars can explore is how prostitutes entered this lifestyle as a means of survival in order to escape poverty and homelessness because they had no other

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[2] Craig A. Williams, "Roman Traditions: Slaves, Prostitutes, and Wives" In *Roman Homosexuality: Second Edition*, Oxford University Press: England, 2010, 15-61, 41.

choice or simply desired economic independence. Another avenue that scholars can research is how perceptions of prostitution have not changed, as the state and society continue to see prostitutes as shameful beings. The final avenue scholars can investigate is how society viewed prostitution as an immoral lifestyle and not an acceptable one that granted people economic independence and sexual freedom.

Social historians Sarah Levin-Richardson, Anise Strong, Kelly Olson, Judith Sebesta, Thomas McGinn, Anne Duncan, and Sharon James focus on sexuality and the social customs involving clothing and social roles and norms that defined certain women as prostitutes. Levin-Richardson argues that at the beginning of a prostitute's career, they did not have agency until they learned from their experiences and regained their agency by mastering their art of seduction. Olson and Sebesta examine Roman women's clothing styles like the stolae and toga to comprehend how they symbolized the woman's morality and social status that determined if they were a matron or prostitute. Olson argues that noblewomen set the fashionable trends for prostitutes; clothing materials like Coan silk helped sex workers advertise their bodies to attract customers. Duncan and James analyze Roman men's perception of prostitutes through literary works, noting that Roman men viewed prostitutes as either a good or bad type of prostitute. Ancient literature characterized a good prostitute as emotionally vulnerable to their clients while a bad prostitute was greedy.

Sarah Levin-Richardson's *The Brothel of Pompeii: Sex, Class, and Gender at the Margins of Roman Society* (2019) examines the construction of brothels in Pompeii, as these structures allow scholars to determine prostitutes' working, living, and physical conditions. Richardson uses writings from graffiti, rooms, and art from the 1st to the 4th century C.E. to argue that prostitutes who worked in brothels could not legally and economically refuse clients since they did not have agency. The author furthers this claim by stating that these women were victims of violent sexual crimes involving rape, murder, and beatings because they had no legal protections. Levin-Richardson's main argument is that Roman citizens sexually and emotionally exploited new prostitutes as they started to form

relationships with their clients. Levin-Richardson continues her argument by stating that prostitutes regained their humanity by perfecting their performance and style. A prostitute's performance and style indicate the person's identity by displaying the form of seduction and sex techniques with which they are comfortable.

Levin-Richardson's method of analysis is intriguing, as she acquired a lot of information from material found in brothels in Pompeii such as a broken glass cup, bronze coins, and an iron blade. For instance, Levin-Richardson discusses how a glass bottle could indicate that prostitutes used drinking in order to loosen a client's tongue and wallet and as a type of entertainment. Levin-Richardson makes sound arguments; however, she might have missed that drinking was also a non-sexual service that clients could purchase if they were unable to pay for sex. These non-sexual services would allow prostitutes to earn money even if their sex business was having a slow day, therefore displaying prostitutes' intelligence and business savviness in constructing different types of services a client could choose. Levin-Richardson comments, "Joshel and Peterson suggest the trips to fountains may have afforded slaves an opportunity […to…] share gossip with others of low social status, and, while on this errand to resist the demands of their work by "stealing" time for themselves." Slaves used any opportunity to establish personal ties and share gossip to shape and maintain a prostitute's identity and sexuality.[3]

Levin-Richardson is at her best when discussing the possible ways in how prostitutes retained their humanity and gained agency through gossip and breaks from their clients. Levin-Richardson argues gossip could grant prostitutes power that they could use to retaliate, possibly if a client attempted to seek service from a different prostitute or if the customer refused to pay. These possible conclusions indicate how prostitutes could keep their customers loyal, preserving their business and ensuring that their clients did not sexually exploit them. This example of power also relates to Levin-Richardson's main argument as

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[3] Sarah Levin-Richardson, *The Brothel of Pompeii: Sex, Class, and Gender at the Margins of Roman Society,* Cambridge: (Cambridge University Press, 2019), 114.

prostitutes learned from their past mistakes and used that knowledge to create agency for themselves. Agency is found in many forms, either through power or self-care, as prostitutes found ways to reclaim their humanity and escape the reality of their everyday life. The act of creating appointments and location meetups for clients gave prostitutes an opportunity to find time for themselves and spend time with fellow prostitutes in the brothel or slaves. These types of conclusions allowed scholars to indicate that Roman prostitutions had to figure out how the sex institution worked, the risks of being a prostitute, and the art of seduction in order to survive it. These arguments strongly demonstrate that Roman prostitutes used their "street smarts" and knowledge of seduction to keep their customers from straying and as a means to maintain their business.

Anise Strong's "Powerful concubines and influential courtesans" (2016) examines elite prostitutes' social role in Roman society through Roman men's perceptions and the treatments towards these women. Strong uses literary sources from the 2nd century B.C.E. to 1st century C.E. to determine that Roman men either viewed prostitutes as a threat to Rome's "traditional family value" or as a tool of defiance to social standards. Strong argues that courtesans' social role was in between average prostitutes and matrons, as they maintained only one sexual relationship with a powerful and influential man as their sexual companion. Whereas a matron is legally and sexually committed to one man and their sexual purpose is to have their husband's children. Therefore, Strong argues that courtesans are socially "almost-wives" since they were not legally married to their lover; however, they played a role in politics by influencing their lover to vote a certain way. For instance, the courtesan Chelidon persuaded the judge Verres to sentence more generously when dealing with women. During Verres' trial, Cicero argued that allowing an impure woman or just a woman, in general, to influence his decision-making damaged his reputation as a judge and man. Hence, Strong claims that courtesans acquired power by influencing their lovers' judgment on important matters, such as

politics and ruining their reputation through intimate association and notorious behavior.[4]

Strong adds a new topic to the historical field of Roman prostitution as she analyzes courtesans' strategies and motives for charming powerful men. Strong also argues that the courtesan was a type of girlfriend who had multiple lovers and had the power to choose their sex partners. Strong further claims that the courtesan's ability to choose "her lover" threatened the "status quo." Courtesans were single women who had the agency choose her lover, and so powerful men sometimes hired them to ruin another man's reputation or help them form an alliance. For example, the courtesan Flora had sex with two men named Pompeius and Geminus due to a trading arrangement, where she helped solidify their relationship that eventually became an alliance. The two men's relationship grew because of their shared interest toward a woman for whom that they had feelings. This was at odds with contemporary literature which often archetyped men as romantically paranoid and self-centered. Therefore, this trading deal presents their relationship as one akin to a modern "throuple", as neither of the men became jealous but emotionally attached. This relationship further speaks to the courtesan's character because she had the opportunity to make both or one of the men jealous in order to cause a dispute amongst them so that she may acquire more gifts or influential favor from them. The courtesan's decision-making indicates her intelligence and business savviness, whereby agreeing to this trading arrangement, she acquired two elite men's favor and attention instead of one. Therefore, Flora will have a more secure social role in Roman society, making it difficult for "traditional" men to depose her from the elite community.

Kelly Olson's "Matrona and Whore: Clothing and Definition in Roman Antiquity" (2006) examines prostitution in Ancient Rome from the 1st century C.E. to 4th century C.E. Olson covers the essence of Roman femininity that involved clothing style, make-up, and clothing color that determined a woman's

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[4] Anise K. Strong, "Powerful concubines and influential courtesans," In *Prostitutes and matrons in the Roman World*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2016. 62-96, 94.

social status, morality, and purity. For instance, the Senate legally instructed prostitutes to wear a Roman clothing style known as the toga, which socially and publicly determined which woman was a prostitute. Olson argues that laws never implemented prostitutes to wear specific clothing, which allowed female prostitutes to dress however they liked without any legal interference and to attract customers. The author claims that clothing symbolized social status and could restructure social order. Olson argues throughout this article that these indicators blurred the lines between matronas and prostitutes. Olson uses ancient literature to discuss what a matrona should look like in terms of clothing and headwear.

Olson's most intriguing topic is when she discusses the influence noblewomen had on female prostitute clothing, as these elitists were the trendsetters that indicated what society considered fashionable, popular, and perfect for making their body attractive. Olson argues that female prostitutes later adopted material that was popular among noblewomen, such as Coan silk. This material was valuable to prostitutes, as it made their bodyline visible to the public eye and allowed viewers to draw lustful conclusions about the woman's body and how she would look while performing sexual acts. Olson claims, "The color and weight of a woman's clothing was ideally a reflection of her morality and the fashion among upper-class women […] whether truly transparent or simply an extremely thin material that outlined the body, confused sartorial and therefore moral and social definitions."[5] Olson's identifies the blurring of lines between *matrona* and prostitute that occurred as color and style became increasingly fashionable for both groups of women. This conclusion allows scholars to assume that due to the blurred line, the state constructed new ways involving laws such as forcing prostitutes to carry a license in order to clarify which women were honorable or shameful.

Judith Sebesta's "Women Costume and Feminine Civic Morality in Augustan Rome" (1997) examines the symbolic

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[5] Kelly Olson, "Matrona and Whore: Clothing and Definition in Roman Antiquity," In *Prostitutes and courtesans in the ancient world* eds. Faraone, Christopher and Laura McClure, University of Wisconsin Press: (Wisconsin, 2006), 186-204, 197.

meaning behind the color and design of female clothing, as it represented a woman's morality. Sebesta uses Roman reliefs and literary sources to discuss how the representation of Roman women protecting their chastity coincided with the image of them as defenders of the state's health, specifically the population. This article analyzes the Matrona's clothing style and headwear as these objects symbolize the woman's innocence and moral and social standing. Clothing is significant because it could indicate if a woman was shameful, honorable, married, a prostitute, rich, or poor as clothing can demonstrate what a person could afford and what society legally and socially allowed them to wear. Sebesta argues that Roman Emperor Augustus aimed to reinstate traditional morals by returning the moral representation of clothing in the Augustan period, as headwear indicated the confinement of the woman's sexuality until marriage. For instance, Suetonius Augustus ordered his wife Livia to weave clothing in order to become a role model for fellow Roman women to follow regarding the maintenance of exemplary virtue, sexual loyalty to one's husband, and providing him children to secure the property within the family.

Sebesta missed an opportunity to mention Roman Emperor Augustus' treatment of prostitutes, given that the laws he created instructed them to wear the toga. Olson and McGinn agree that the toga was a symbol he used to label these women socially shameful and, most importantly, physically display which woman was a prostitute. The decree of dress code suggests that Augustus aimed to have Roman men physically aware of which women were available for paid sexual engagements versus those who were marriageable. Under the Roman law *Lex Iulia de Adulteriis* of 18 C.E., an adulteress must wear the toga as punishment to represent their transition from honorable to shameful woman. McGinn argues that there is no legal difference between prostitutes and adulteresses as the state considered these women immoral and promiscuous. The mention of the "toga" would have elaborated Sebesta's discussion on Augustus' goal to return traditional social norms to Roman society. The law constructed two stereotypes of Roman women as either chaste or loose. Therefore, Augustus' decree implied that *matronas* could lose their social status if they were not sexually loyal.

Thomas McGinn's "Roman Prostitutes and Marginalization" (2011) examines Roman citizens' perception of prostitutes through laws, literary sources from the 2nd century B.C.E. to the 2nd century C.E., and archaeological evidence. McGinn argues that the state did not physically marginalize prostitutes by zoning brothels from sacred structures. Nevertheless, he claims that the state socially and legally separated prostitutes from society as the state deemed prostitutes promiscuous and shameful beings, specifically the "anti-wife." For instance, from McGinn's examination of Roman laws, he argues that there was no legal definition of prostitutes, which implies that Roman citizens deemed women prostitutes based on their behavior and social status, specifically poverty and promiscuous deeds. McGinn further points out that the Senate benefitted from the sex industry through taxation. This argument is an interesting conclusion because the Senate's tax on prostitutes indicate that the government economically exploited them. This exploitation is counterproductive since the Senate disapproved of the prostitutes' immoral deeds and did not desire honorable Roman citizens to follow in their footsteps; however, by allowing the sex industry to exist, Roman citizens had the opportunity to embrace the lifestyles of socially unacceptable people. McGinn claims that based on their gender, prostitutes lost their legal credibility and political reputation, while male prostitutes also lost the ability to join the army due to their shameful lifestyle. The author claims that it was probably due to pimps peer pressuring them and their slave owners' orders that caused women to become and continue their lifestyle as prostitutes.

A strong point in McGinn's argument is when he claims that prostitutes served two purposes in Roman society: the first focused on how prostitutes became reminding symbols to respectable women that their social status is not secured. McGinn claims that the Roman state socially defined respectable women as sexually loyal to their husbands while prostitutes were loose women that had multiple sex partners. Therefore, any Roman woman that strayed from the social expectations by engaging in adultery had their social and citizenship status taken away. The second purpose was that prostitutes helped men control their sexual urges, where instead of turning to respectable women, men

hired prostitutes. McGinn argues that prostitution was not illegal since the Senate acquires enormous amounts of income from their sex business; therefore, the Senate believed that the economic gain from prostitutes' services outweighed the moral damage it would have on Roman society. For instance, respectable women did not have to worry about enduring peer pressure from Roman men because if they desired sex, they would hire a prostitute. This conclusion possibly implies that a Roman man could only have sex with a matrona in order to produce children while having sex with a prostitute was for sexual release and education.

Thomas McGinn's "Zoning Shame in the Roman City" (2006) explores the possibility of moral zoning in Roman Italy during the Christian period. Moral zoning was an urban system that organized the location of morally corrupt institutions like brothels in specific areas that were far away from spiritually sacred ground and sanctuaries. Other scholars have argued that moral zoning occurred during the late antiquity period; however, McGinn disagrees by claiming that moral zoning could have possibly happened under the reign of the Roman Emperor Constantine since there is evidence to support it. McGinn backs his claim with evidence of Christian persecution towards prostitutes, lack of evidence to prove that Romans used moral zoning, and how it is misleading to focus on only the brothels while excluding prostitutes. The purpose of this article is to examine Roman thoughts or the lack of Roman ideas on "segregating prostitution."[6] McGinn argues that a literary source known as *De ordine* written by Augustine of Hippo discusses a Christian's perspective on zoning prostitutes. Moral zoning could indicate that period's social environment, as Christian citizens viewed prostitutes' behavior as immoral and shameful that harmed the moral capacity of the community.

McGinn is particularly effective when he counterargues other scholars' arguments regarding the usage of moral zoning by using literary sources to argue that Christians established a type of reasoning to argue for the zoning of prostitutes. McGinn does not

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[6] Thomas McGinn, "Zoning Shame in the Roman City," In *Prostitutes and courtesans in the ancient world* eds. Faraone, Christopher and Laura McClure, University of Wisconsin Press: (Wisconsin, 2006), 161-176, 161.

dismiss moral zoning entirely; instead, he argues that it is more evident that this organizational system occurred during the Christian period since Roman Christians had negative opinions about prostitutes and believed that society should prohibit the profession. For instance, in Augustine's *De ordine*, Augustine argues for the relocation of prostitutes, as Roman society deemed the sex workers a "social disgrace," and Augustine considered them evil. Augustine argued that prostitutes were a necessary evil that elaborated and demonstrated which group of women were good, for instance, the *matronas*. McGinn argues that Christians used this source to rationalize their thoughts and arguments for zoning prostitutes based on morality. The analysis of this primary source is significant because it allows scholars to understand the different ways Christians in Ancient Rome argued for the creation of laws and demands for change in social behavior influenced by their religious beliefs and morality. This primary source also grants scholars a Roman perspective on how they viewed prostitutes as a disgraceful profession; however, the state did not construct laws to disassemble the sex industry itself, which seems counterintuitive since they believed it was an evil profession. The state most likely viewed prostitution as a necessary evil since it would help Roman men release their sexual urges instead of sexually harassing and pressuring *matronas* to have sex, which would disrupt Roman society's morality and social standard that the state placed on its citizens.

Anne Duncan's "Infamous Performers: Comic Actors and Female Prostitutes in Rome" (2006) examines Roman comedies such as *Truculentus* from the 4th century C.E. to analyze the state's construction of similar moral characteristics and behavior between the actors and prostitutes that made them into objects of desire. Duncan argues that the same undesirable characteristics that the state placed on actors and prostitutes were the same identifiers that made them objects of desire. The comedies focus on the lives of prostitutes, as the Roman audience viewed the actor and their sexual role as one of the same since they considered actors promiscuous and believed they "faked it for a living." Throughout the comedies, Duncan discusses the actor's character that portrayed them as either good or bad prostitutes based on their morality and behavior towards their clients. The audience

identified the actor's character as having "good faith" or "bad faith," as they either established an emotional connection with their customer or only viewed them as their next victim to fall to their seduction. For instance, the comedy *Mostellaria* portrays two types of prostitutes: the good faith prostitute Philematium and the bad faith retired prostitute Scapha. The two prostitutes argue over Philematium's behavior, as she falls in love with her client Philolaches, while Scapha argues that she should not establish an emotional relationship.

Duncan tackles an important subject by studying the undesirable characteristics that led Roman citizens to secretly lust after prostitutes and the actors who imitated their behavior in a fashion that displays the Roman citizens' appeal to their "insincerity." The Roman comedy *Truculentus* tells the tale of an elite man named Truculentus who attempts to save his friends and their fortune from the prostitutes' clutches. However, in the end, these elite men did not learn their lesson and continued to fall prey to their seduction, including Truculentus. Duncan argues that Truculentus' fate portrays the elite Roman men's realistic behavior towards prostitutes, as they succumbed to certain extravagances involving wine, prostitutes, and an immoral lifestyle. This argument is interesting because even though Roman elite men believed prostitutes were shameful "infamias," they still viewed them as desirable, wild, and attractive. This strongly demonstrates that elite Roman men funded brothels and did not dismantle the sex industry because they valued them as women that could feed their sex fetishes and try sex positions and techniques that their wives would never dream of doing.

Sharon James' "A Courtesan's Choreography: Female Liberty and Male Anxiety at the Roman Dinner Party" (2006) analyzes Roman plays from the 1st to 2nd century C.E. discussing how Roman men writers portrayed a man obsessed with prostitutes in comedies. James argues that prostitutes' "noncitizen status" made Roman men scared of them because they could not control prostitutes' loyalty and had to pay for their time and sexual attention. Since prostitutes were not like *matronas*, they could engage in "shameful" behavior, which drove these men crazy because they had no way to control them. These men made their "lover" the object of their obsession, which created their anxieties

since they kept wondering what their "lover" was doing with their "free time." James introduces Roman men's state of obsession in several comedies, as their addiction gave prostitutes power over the men. His inability to control these women drove him to obsession. For instance, Ovid's *Amores* mentions three men that became obsessed with a prostitute. One of the men was known as "the speaker" and became paranoid with thoughts about "his lover" with another man. The man's thoughts portray that he was a victim of his own making by believing that a prostitute would remain sexually loyal to him since the woman made a living off selling her body. James continues her argument by declaring that this anxiety caused young Roman men to obsess over the prostitute, causing them to lose their identity and forget about their responsibilities. Overall, James' main argument is that courtesans were socially and financially independent businesswomen that made a living off selling their bodies and could decline a sex request without legal intervention. This independence indicates that Roman female prostitutes who were sex workers gained agency and power over their elite clients by embracing their "wild" and promiscuous lifestyle without any hesitation.

In conclusion, scholars have had many different takes on whether or not prostitutes had agency, and this article has made several arguments that prostitutes did have different forms of agency regardless of having no legal protection. Social historians have explored texts including legal decrees, graffiti from brothels, and literature, along with prostitutes' experience acquiring desired types of clientele. These factors granted prostitutes agency by giving them the opportunity to escape this social expectation of marriage, as they engaged and fulfilled their sexual desires with paid customers, acquired power from their elite lover's social status, and drove their "lovers" crazy with their lack of concern for their shameful deeds. In a world that considered prostitutes shameful, greedy, mischievous, and immoral beings, they were able to regain their humanity through experience, taking advantage of men's sexual desires, and accepting and embracing their lifestyle without shame.