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# Debating Womanhood, Defining Freedom: The Abolition of Slavery in 1880s Rio de Janeiro

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On 6 March 1886, Maria Rosa, a 'poor black freedwoman' living in the city of Rio de Janeiro, sent a letter to the Brazilian empress Teresa Cristina, wife of Emperor Pedro II.<sup>1</sup> Her letter requested that the empress help to have Maria Rosa's daughter, Ludovina, included among the slaves to be freed at the next emancipation ceremony financed by the municipal Livro de Ouro slave emancipation fund.<sup>2</sup> One of a series of lavish ceremonies held in the court city between 1885 and 1887, this event was scheduled for 14 March 1886, the empress's birthday. After anticipating that Teresa Cristina's 'Magnanimous Heart' would be 'trembling with joy' at the prospect of the ceremony, given the many examples of 'Your love and Your charity towards the poor class of the enslaved', Maria Rosa's letter came briskly to the point. 'Well then, lady: I am the mother of a miserable creature who is almost always ill and . . . coughing up blood, with three young children and still under the yoke of slavery'. She asked the empress to intercede on Ludovina's behalf with the municipal council. Her parting shot, addressed to a woman frequently described as the 'mother of the Brazilians', was to express the hope that the empress would enjoy the occasion 'together with Your August Family'. Teresa Cristina, who had watched two of her sons die in childhood and brought up two daughters, certainly knew something about motherhood and family.<sup>3</sup> Couched in a language of petition and humility, the letter nonetheless contained a radical message. It stressed that the empress, the black freedwoman Maria Rosa and her enslaved daughter Ludovina – three women who inhabited opposite extremes of the social, economic and racial spectrum of nineteenth-century Rio de Janeiro – all shared the condition of motherhood.

This article uses Maria Rosa's letter and the municipal council records of which it forms a part to consider how both the agency of women of colour, and a particular set of ideas about elite and enslaved femininity and maternity, played an important part in shaping the ending of slavery in Rio de Janeiro. The article traces womb-based thinking within the broader history of Brazilian slavery and emancipation, as well as the growth of 'feminised' abolitionist rhetoric and practices during the 1880s. It then examines the city council's main abolitionist initiative, the Livro de Ouro emancipation fund, designed specifically to free women like Ludovina. Finally, it addresses measures

the council took to shape the city's first generation of fully 'free' working families. Together, these programmes tell us much about the different ways in which Rio's councillors, and by extension many among Brazil's elites, hoped to engender freedom. Understandings about freedom were profoundly shaped by encounters among a range of political and social actors in the city, from councillors, abolitionists, slaveholders and even members of the Brazilian imperial family, to enslaved and freed women themselves.

The specific case study used here – the activities of the relatively ineffective municipal council of the Brazilian capital city – is intended to provide a way into a set of much larger issues.<sup>4</sup> Historians of Brazil have paid considerable attention to the question of the 'meanings of freedom', yielding crucial insights into how slaves and ex-slaves, and their former masters, conceived of legal freedom and abolition.<sup>5</sup> Less attention has been paid to the role of gender in the construction of such meanings. This article suggests that visions of freedom were inseparable from shifting gender identities, which were under debate as part of the transition process. Because such developments led enslaved women to play a major, specific role in the emancipation process, abolition cannot fully be understood without close attention to women's agency, and my analysis will be based on the use of women's and gender history in tandem.<sup>6</sup>

Such questions are beginning to be addressed by scholars interested in the abolition process. Historians have explored discourses of femininity in abolitionist campaigns in 1880s Brazil; the gender identity of Princess Isabel, a high-profile female figure in the abolitionist pantheon; the influence of ideas about slave motherhood on 1870s legal and parliamentary discussions of Brazil's 1871 'free womb law'; and the relationship between transition and notions of domesticity.<sup>7</sup> Based on rich municipal records whose full potential historians have yet to exploit, this article seeks to weave some of the threads in the gender history of Brazilian abolition into a broader tapestry, linking shifting elite and non-elite notions of gender to the agency of women of colour within the abolition process.

## **Slavery and emancipation in Brazil**

By the time Maria Rosa sent her letter to the empress, Brazilian slavery had a deep-rooted history. Over more than 300 years of trading, Brazil received around 40 per cent of all the Africans who arrived in the New World as slaves, more than 4 million people out of a total of just over 10.5 million disembarked in the Americas between 1501 and 1886.<sup>8</sup> Most toiled as plantation labour, but large numbers of enslaved and free people of colour also lived and worked in urban centres.<sup>9</sup> From 1808, the year the Portuguese court arrived, until at least 1850 when the slave trade ended, Rio was an 'African' city: roughly half the city's population was enslaved in 1850.<sup>10</sup> By 1872, enslaved people still made up a fifth of the city's population, of which – like other urban centres and unlike plantations – women made up around half.<sup>11</sup>

By 1850, British pressure helped force an end to the Brazilian slave trade.<sup>12</sup> With the external supply cut off, a major internal slave trade developed. Slaves were sold principally from declining sugar areas in the north to booming coffee plantations in the south-east. This created major variations in regional elites' attachment to slaveholding by the 1870s and 1880s.<sup>13</sup> Meanwhile, the 1860s saw the abolition of slavery in the French and Dutch colonies and, crucially, in the United States. This left Brazil and

Spain isolated as the last remaining slave-owning powers in the Americas, stimulating the growth of emancipationism in Brazil during the 1860s. The Paraguayan War (1865–70) temporarily delayed government action on slavery but also made attention to the issue more likely in the end, as the Brazilian army declared abolition in Paraguay and many male Brazilian slaves were freed, along with their wives, following their participation in the war.<sup>14</sup> In 1870, Spain freed children subsequently born to enslaved women in her remaining colonies, Cuba and Puerto Rico.<sup>15</sup> Watching the Spanish, and after heated parliamentary debates, the Brazilians passed their own ‘free womb’ law on 28 September 1871.<sup>16</sup>

The decision to end slavery through the womb reflected both a broad acknowledgement (though vehemently contested by many slave-owners) that slavery’s days were numbered, and a concern to ensure that transition would be peaceful and gradual.<sup>17</sup> Children born to enslaved mothers, who came to be called *ingênuos*, were nominally ‘free’, but in practice remained under the ‘protection’ of their mothers’ owners until the age of eight. Owners could then opt to keep using their ‘services’ until they were twenty-one, which almost all did. The law stipulated greater protection from family separation, and legalised the right to save to purchase freedom. It also established a national slave emancipation fund and slave register.<sup>18</sup>

However, at least as important as these provisions of the ‘free womb’ law were the hopes it created and then dashed. Growing frustration with the slow progress of emancipation under the law, and accusations of widespread violations of it, provided the catalyst for the development of a strong abolitionist movement, similar to earlier British and North American campaigns.<sup>19</sup> In 1880, Liberal politician Joaquim Nabuco founded the Brazilian Anti-Slavery Society, whose mission statement criticised the ineffectiveness of the 1871 law.<sup>20</sup> The Anti-Slavery Society was particularly visible on the national and international stages, but in practice it was often eclipsed locally by other dynamic, popular urban anti-slavery movements. Abolitionist sentiment in Rio coalesced by 1883 under the Abolitionist Confederation, headed by fiery Afro-Brazilian journalist José do Patrocínio.<sup>21</sup>

In 1884, under a national government then sympathetic to abolition, Rio’s municipal councillors launched what they saw as a conservative emancipation measure to free enslaved people in the capital. Their municipal ‘Livro de Ouro’ fund aimed to free the city’s slaves at a series of lavish municipal emancipation ceremonies, paying compensation to their owners. Councillors thus hoped to regain control of the popular abolition movement on the streets.<sup>22</sup> Yet in the course of its operation from 1884 to 1887, shifts in national politics made the fund a much more radical initiative than originally intended.<sup>23</sup> The pro-abolitionist administration of José Manoel de Souza Dantas had introduced a bill to free sexagenarian slaves without compensation in 1884 but, in the course of its tumultuous passage, Dantas was replaced by two successive conservative administrations. The final bill, the Saraiva–Cotegipe law, passed on 28 September 1885, infuriated abolitionists with a series of reactionary measures that made a mockery of the original Dantas project.<sup>24</sup> It became increasingly clear that abolition would come despite, not because of, national government action. From early 1886, the system began to show signs of collapse with mass flights by the enslaved from coffee plantations in São Paulo. The abolition of corporal punishment in late 1886 heralded the beginning of the end for a system that relied on the threat of physical violence to coerce enslaved labourers.

On 13 May 1888, amid great popular agitation, Princess Isabel of Brazil signed the 'Golden Law' abolishing slavery without compensation.<sup>25</sup> Heir to the throne and regent while her sick father the emperor was away in Europe, Isabel stood to become the first female Brazilian head of state. Her image as the slaves' 'Redeemer' was shaped by her signing of the 1871 'free womb' law during a previous spell as regent, and sealed by her act in 1888.<sup>26</sup> Her redeemer image was closely intertwined with notions of femininity, maternity and charity, which were central themes in discourses and practices of abolition in Rio de Janeiro.

### Brazilian 'free womb logic'

The Livro de Ouro fund which Maria Rosa hoped would free her daughter freed 797 adults between 1885 and 1887, at a series of nine emancipation ceremonies.<sup>27</sup> The fund was deliberately intended to free enslaved women, especially younger women with children.<sup>28</sup> Women made up 76 per cent of those freed with compensation through the fund. Yet councillors spent virtually no time discussing this policy, and never provided an explanation for the curious gender historian. The only time the issue was discussed was when councillor Germack Possolo noted in September 1886 that fewer women were being freed by the fund than originally planned, suggesting that henceforth only women should be freed. He did not explain why.<sup>29</sup> Councillors' silence on this matter is interesting, because it implies they saw the reasons as obvious.

A brief sketch of the role of the womb in the history of Brazilian slavery and emancipation reveals that the council's unstated assumption was informed by a 'free womb logic' as old as slavery itself.<sup>30</sup> The logic was contested and historically shifting; it was imposed from the top down, but also reshaped from the bottom up. In Brazil, and across the slave-owning Americas, the principle derived from Roman law of *partus sequitur ventrem* ('slavery follows the womb') had always ensured slavery's reproduction. Historians have paid surprisingly little specific attention to this practice.<sup>31</sup> The child's legal status followed that of the mother, not the father. For legal and official purposes, this helped reinforce the connection between enslaved mothers and their children while silencing the role of enslaved fathers.

As slavery followed the womb, so did Brazilian initiatives towards emancipation. Across the slaveholding Americas, women's childbearing role provided them with specific manumission opportunities. Male slaveholders might free children born to them of their enslaved women, conceived in unions ranging from 'consenting' partnerships to rape. Male or female slaveholders might assume 'paternal' or 'maternal' attitudes towards their slave women's children, manumitting the child with or without the mother.<sup>32</sup> When political elites embraced the ending of slavery, they chose to do so through the womb. Far from being an inevitable or easy step, the Brazilian 1871 law caused enormous controversy, revealing how radical it was to break the ancient link between the status of the enslaved mother and that of the 'fruits' of her womb that guaranteed her owner's property rights over her children.<sup>33</sup> The national emancipation fund, created by the same law, reflected this womb-based logic. It prioritised enslaved families which, since *partus sequitur ventrem* often prevented slave fathers from official recognition, usually meant in practice women and their children.<sup>34</sup> Beyond womb politics, freeing women and children also fitted other gendered ideas about slavery and abolition. They were seen as less physically threatening than adult men, at a time

of mounting elite anxiety about the maintenance of social order after abolition. Also, while enslaved women in Brazil were undoubtedly worked as hard as were enslaved men, they were seen as less valuable agricultural labourers, fetching slightly lower prices. Hence the national strategy of freeing women first sought to retain the most 'productive' agricultural slaves for long as possible.<sup>35</sup> Thus by 1884, when Rio's councillors planned their fund, a 'free womb logic,' stemming from both ancient roots and more recent developments after 1871, had helped engender their strategy for slave emancipation in the city. Freeing women and their children became an obvious, 'natural' act which did not need discussion. Many women freed by the Livro de Ouro fund would be mothers or future mothers of *ingênuos*, thus allowing the status of the mother to follow that of the 'fruits' of her womb.

Simultaneously, 'free womb logic' operated from the bottom up. As the womb was a legal tool for reproducing slavery, so enslaved women and their families had long recognised its potential to produce freedom. Families bought women's freedom first, ensuring future children would be born free. Enslaved women embraced maternity as a central part of their struggles for manumission, saving cash to purchase freedom, petitioning powerful potential patrons, or pursuing lengthy legal cases for their own and their children's freedom.<sup>36</sup> In 1871, new manumission opportunities were created which were specifically relevant to women, heightening their efforts.<sup>37</sup> Maria Rosa's 1886 petition to the empress formed part of both a long tradition of womb-related thought about slavery and freedom, and a new set of opportunities for women of colour to pursue freedom strategies.

### **Motherhood, femininity and elite abolitionist discourse**

If wombs had become a 'logical' means to abolish slavery, another development in the 1880s helped to place women at the discursive heart of the abolition question. An impassioned abolitionist movement took to the streets, squares and theatres of Brazilian cities in the face of national government recalcitrance. Part of the abolitionists' strategy was to seek popular participation from sectors traditionally outside formal politics. One key group was women. While a strong current in Brazilian antislavery continued to focus on the economic 'progress' represented by free labour, abolitionists also increasingly made impassioned moral arguments stoking sympathy with the slaves' plight. Paying attention to gender in Brazilian abolitionist discourse reveals how images of suffering enslaved women were used in order to generate fellow feeling among notional women in the audience or readership and, by extension, among broader elites.<sup>38</sup> Women were equated with emotional charitable impulses, making them suitable targets for this rhetoric. The key symbol used to signify womanhood, for free and enslaved women alike, was maternity. Abolitionists reserved particular condemnation for slaveholding women who were mothers and yet allowed their slave women's children to be sold, arguing that slavery perverted women's 'essential' nature.<sup>39</sup> As well as their rhetorical position in men's discussion of them, women became an important presence at public meetings, in fundraising and general beneficent work. Rio's abolitionist groups were interested in broadening women's participation in the movement. A series of articles in the abolitionist paper *Gazeta da Tarde* in 1884 debated whether or not 'the Brazilian woman' was a 'slaveocrat'. The debate reached the pages of *A Mãe de Família*, a publication aimed at elite women.<sup>40</sup> Newspaper stories about abolitionist

benefits and bazaars called for the participation of 'ladies', or trumpeted their presence after the events took place.<sup>41</sup>

Abolitionist discourse created particular gender identities for participants. Women who freed slaves were praised for sentimentality and impetuosity, confirming their family roles as wives, mothers or daughters. Men who did the same were lauded for patriotism, strength or boldness in their public positions.<sup>42</sup> In August 1886, visiting Italian singer Nadina Bulcicoff received a rapturous reception at the end of a concert she gave in Rio, when she publicly freed several enslaved women, hugging and kissing them on stage. The abolitionist newspaper *A Revista Illustrada* reported enthusiastically, 'The stage was full of ladies, who had brought [Bulcicoff] presents . . . Everyone stood up to congratulate the humanitarian benefactress . . . Her Majesty the Empress [Teresa Cristina] was crying, and on the benches, the handkerchiefs, after waving enthusiastically, were dampened with spontaneous tears'.<sup>43</sup> This contrasts with the praise allotted the 'reputable businessman' Manoel Ferreira Machado Guimarães who, in 1883, to celebrate the birthday of his 'charming daughter Edelvira', freed his slave Antonia. Guimarães's action was depicted as upholding both his masculine status as public businessman and his private patriarchal authority over his family.<sup>44</sup>

Gendered abolitionist fashions were enthusiastically adopted by city councillors for the showy Livro de Ouro emancipation ceremonies. They incorporated a cohort of 'ladies of our best society', waving their handkerchiefs, singing charitable hymns and shedding tears at appropriate moments, expressing emotions that it would be more difficult for the male councillors who made the speeches to demonstrate.<sup>45</sup> Most prominently, ceremonies incorporated members of the imperial family, on whose birthdays they were held, with gendered roles for each to play. As head of state, with significant power over the course of national politics, Emperor Pedro II received the longest speeches. Although absent from the last ceremony held in December 1887 because of illness, he was nonetheless praised for his 'titanic effort to establish a free and honourable fatherland for the Brazilians', and as a 'tireless warrior who had fallen victim to the 'patriotic fever that devoured him'.<sup>46</sup> But the person who handed out the manumission certificates to slaves being freed was always a woman – usually Isabel, but on occasion her mother Teresa Cristina.

Both women were described at ceremonies as the 'mother of the Brazilians'. For the more prominent Isabel, the title contributed to her growing image as a 'womanly', moral, compassionate future ruler. This was important because Isabel was under constant fire from the increasingly influential Republicans, who were wont to attack her very femaleness as a sign of her incapacity to rule.<sup>47</sup> Her deliberately feminine image as 'mother' of the enslaved became a way of answering such criticisms. Her presence from 1885 at all the Livro de Ouro emancipation ceremonies sent a public message to the national parliament about her support of popular abolitionist causes.<sup>48</sup>

The idealisation of Isabel's maternity, imagined as part of her wider public role, was particularly important.<sup>49</sup> In March 1888, the council president, referring to her support of abolitionist causes, praised how Isabel had 'made so many conquests in her dual capacity as wife and mother'.<sup>50</sup> President José Pereira Lopes, speaking at the fifth emancipation ceremony on 29 July 1886, called her 'that princess . . . who is rightfully the mother and protector of the enslaved'. Referring to Isabel's signing of the 1871 law, he praised 'the throne from which emanated that liberal and holy law which stopped,

in the breast of maternity, the fount of captivity'. He then appealed 'to your heart as a mother and as a Brazilian woman':

Lady: when . . . in your sweet family existence you receive your beloved sons in your arms and press them to your bosom; there, where that love, pure and sacred, called maternal love, resides . . . when, finally, in the sanctuary of family intimacy . . . you allow yourself to be carried away with an ecstasy of love for them, do not forget . . . the million poor creatures, as Brazilian as we are, who are also your children . . . who, aware of the celebrations which are being held here today . . . turn their pleas to Heaven so that their day of redemption may come, as it came for those to whom, in a few moments, you will extend your august hands.<sup>51</sup>

Such language, like that employed in Maria Rosa's petition, used motherhood to signify a universal aspect of womanhood and, by extension, of humanity in general, linking the person to whom the speech was made (here, the princess) and its purported beneficiaries (enslaved people). Such discursive constructions of femininity were important not just in helping abolition's advocates to gain the moral high ground but, along with the 'free womb logic' with which they were intertwined, in creating opportunities for women like Maria Rosa to formulate their own arguments for freedom.

### Women of colour seek freedom

Enslaved people were well aware of the opportunities available for emancipation through the Livro de Ouro. Announcements in the newspapers and the periodic grand liberation ceremonies held at the municipal palace ensured that the fund remained in the public eye.<sup>52</sup> The surviving handful of written records of the actions of the enslaved or their relatives can only reflect a tiny proportion of what were undoubtedly much wider struggles to influence decisions about manumission by owners and councillors. Virtually all record initiatives by women; some involve both men and women petitioners who nonetheless opted to focus on the theme of motherhood. Claimants' visions of maternity, femaleness and freedom undoubtedly differed considerably from those of the councillors to whom they addressed their missives. Nonetheless, both groups held motherhood in high esteem and assumed it to be a central facet of female gender identity.<sup>53</sup> Just as Brazilian men petitioning patrons and allies for public appointments invoked cultural values shared by writer and recipient, so enslaved women's petitions were able to draw on purportedly shared cultural ideas about motherhood.<sup>54</sup>

On 20 June 1885, an ex-slave couple, Manoel Caetano Alves d'Oliveira and Benedicta Caetana, wrote via a scribe to the members of the council, asking for help in freeing their daughter, Paulina. Manoel and Benedicta lived far beyond the capital, in Resende in Rio de Janeiro province, but had still heard about the municipal fund, implying that news travelled fast. Their appeal on behalf of a daughter, not a son, suggests they were perhaps aware of the fund's gendered priorities. The couple had saved 150 mil-réis to buy Paulina's freedom, but remained unable to pay the rest of her 400 mil-réis price. They asked the council to make up the difference.<sup>55</sup>

The appeal's first line mentioned both parents, portraying them as 'good' freed-people who had remained working hard on their ex-owner's land after gaining freedom, in an attempt to assuage typical elite fears that people of colour would become 'vagrants' after gaining legal freedom.<sup>56</sup> However, Manoel faded out of the rest of the petition, which then focused solely on Benedicta's desire to free her daughter. As 'her

last and embittered days are ending without the hope that had encouraged her until now of success in her worthy efforts[,] she comes with a tortured heart to make one last attempt, begging on bended knees', requesting councillors to 'take pity on the pain and despair of an unfortunate mother'. It is unclear whether the main driving force behind the petition was really Benedicta herself, or whether this was simply a discursive strategy on the part of scribe or petitioners for gaining the councillors' sympathy. The point is that in both law and rhetoric, slave motherhood carried a weight which fatherhood did not.

Some months later, in October 1885, Rita, a *parda* (light-skinned) enslaved woman, also made an appeal for freedom to the council. Rita had been imprisoned at the Casa de Detenção, a prison used to punish slaves, by her owner, Manuel José Dias Correa, who owned a store on Rua da América. There was a complicating factor, however: Rita was 'in an advanced state of pregnancy, that is, in the last stage'. Her appeal, drafted by her representative, therefore requested that she be freed at the next ceremony on 2 December. Rita, who 'begs the beneficent protection of the Illustrious Municipal Council, under whose auspicious protection she humbly places herself', hoped for the 'charitable granting' of her request.<sup>57</sup> Surviving records of the December ceremony are not detailed enough to show whether Rita was freed. In the case of Manoel and Benedita, we can be fairly sure the request was not granted as Paulina's name did not appear on the lists of slaves freed at the ceremony following their petition, and in any case they lived far beyond the boundaries of the city and of the council's remit. However, such appeals certainly suggest that 'free womb logic' and gendered fashions in abolitionist rhetoric were noted and used by the enslaved.

### 'Competent domestic servants' or 'enlightened family mothers'?

Abolitionism had multiple meanings for elites, many of which had little to do with enslaved people at all.<sup>58</sup> Among them, as we have seen, was the propensity of abolitionist discourse and practice to shore up elite gender identities. But as they freed enslaved workers and anticipated full abolition, what did councillors think 'freedom' should mean for ex-slaves themselves?

Councillors shared the fear of elites of their time that abolition would jeopardise both the labour supply and social control. While others fretted about labour on rural plantations, the city council had other anxieties closer to home. One worry was the domestic labour on which the city's households were run and through which their elite status was upheld.<sup>59</sup> Another was the far-flung slaughterhouse in the parish of Santa Cruz, which supplied the city's fresh meat and became the centre of major corruption scandals in 1880s municipal politics.<sup>60</sup> For many councillors, the answer to securing malleable workers for these essential jobs lay in education and other 'charitable' municipal projects.<sup>61</sup> They conceived such initiatives not as separate from their efforts at freeing slaves, but as an inherent part of them. Their concerns reflected broader debates occurring in Brazilian lettered society since 1871 about the education of the *ingênuos*, made urgent not only because of fears about vagrancy but because of the complex and shifting relationship between education and definitions of freedom and citizenship.<sup>62</sup>

On 30 July 1886, a day after the emancipation ceremony held on Princess Isabel's birthday, the council staged another event. This time, they celebrated the opening



of a school, named Santa Isabel after the princess, for the children of workers at the slaughterhouse. The imperial family travelled out to Santa Cruz, where they had a summer residence (and kept large numbers of enslaved workers until at least the 1870s), to attend the inauguration.<sup>63</sup> Councillor Luiz de Moura gave a stirring speech, linking education and emancipation, embodied by the ‘maternal’ princess who supported both:

if freeing slaves means breaking the shackles that bind their arms, educating children means freeing them from a captivity perhaps more burdensome . . . the captivity of ignorance . . . the harmony between such endeavours and Your Highness’s magnanimous tendencies is admirable, because with your angelic hand you broke [in 1871] the iron cuffs that would have bound a whole generation of unfortunates; and your heart . . . responds to the wails of unprotected children, of whom you have become the affectionate mother.

In contrast, back at the council chambers after the public ceremony, a report read about the school by councillor Dr Silva Rabello toned down the rhetoric of charity and femininity, instead highlighting more pragmatic links between education and abolition. He argued that ‘since the council has taken upon itself the initiative of freeing the municipality . . . it cannot neglect the provision of education, because yesterday’s slaves may be tomorrow’s workers’. Educating all these children, ‘born within the same social sphere and living under the same roof’, together would, he said, ensure they entered the same job as their parents. This would not only help mould the workers of the future, but also those of the present, as ‘the benefit of the child leads to the gratitude of the parent’. Thus, ‘the slaughterhouse labourer will become a zealous worker; because his future life will be linked to his children’s fate and if he severs the links which tie him to this establishment, he will destroy forever the guarantees which accompany his offspring and constitute the treasures of his old age’.<sup>64</sup> The ‘education’ of ex-slaves into dependent and grateful labourers would occur, then, through the exploitation of family ties.

It was generally assumed that elite and non-elite mothers had the greatest role in socialising children and future workers. Throughout the nineteenth century, and especially from the 1870s, calls increased for more education for free girls, as the mothers of future citizens, and more girls gained access to the city’s public schools.<sup>65</sup> Yet enslaved and free(d) women of colour also formed the backbone of future domestic labour in the city. This was especially true of the *ingênuas* – girls born of ‘free wombs’ after 1871 – who by the mid-1880s ranged in age from babies to teenagers. These children’s mothers, incidentally, were top of the council’s list for freedom through the Livro de Ouro fund. The competing claims of labour and reproduction caused some interesting contradictions among councillors about the kind of education *ingênuas* should receive.<sup>66</sup> The discussions about educating them for freedom became simultaneously a debate about the meanings of black and *mulata* womanhood.

In 1884, a teacher, Theresa Pizarro Filha, proposed that the council found a school for *ingênuas*, which she would run.<sup>67</sup> Pizarro Filha was one of Rio de Janeiro’s growing number of female teachers, to whom girls’ education was increasingly entrusted.<sup>68</sup> The councillor who reported on the idea, Torquato José Fernandes Couto, approved and the school, named Escola Isabel after the princess, was founded. In his report, Couto made similar arguments to those later voiced by councillor Rabello. With abolition, he said, came the need to educate domestic servants, ‘instructing them, teaching them to work, instilling in them good morals and the habit of industry’, since ‘otherwise freed and

free people will become a social danger'. Freedpeople, he continued, tended towards vagrancy, 'in order to have the pleasure of no longer being forced into working'. The problem, again, was all about families: 'In Europe there are families which from one generation to the next have worked in domestic service, the parents passing their experience to the children; for us, domestic service has been undertaken by slaves'. The *ingênuos*, though technically not slaves, were nonetheless 'naturally in contact with their parents, who transmit to them imperfect habits and ways of thinking'.<sup>69</sup>

Couto assumed that *ingênuas* could learn little – or only negative examples – from their mothers. The Escola Isabel was planned as a boarding school, so that children would be separated from both parents, receiving instead the cares of Pizarro Filha. We can only guess at how mothers who went to great lengths to free their children might feel about their removal from their own 'imperfect' example, to be trained as atomised, family-less domestic servants for elite families. Indeed, we know servant mothers struggled to maintain family life against tremendous odds.<sup>70</sup> The girls studied academic subjects which illiterate parents could not have taught them, but also devoted large amounts of time to learning to wash, iron and make drinks and sweets – tasks that their mothers, usually domestic slaves themselves, could easily have taught them.

Before long, however, other councillors voiced concerns over the school's operation. In December 1884, a report by a commission of three councillors objected that the school was teaching slaves' daughters separately from other girls also studying there. This was unacceptable 'in an age when equality is preached, when schools are being founded to create free citizens and enlightened family mothers'. The commission disliked what the girls were being taught, which was designed 'not to prepare future mothers of families, but rather competent domestic servants; not to enlighten the spirit or shape the character of the *ingênuas*, but to make her feel that she should not aspire to anything beyond domestic service'. For these councillors, the girls really ought to aspire, in freedom, to becoming 'enlightened family mothers' of (presumably male) 'free citizens'.<sup>71</sup>

Owners petitioning to have their enslaved women emancipated in exchange for compensation through the Livro de Ouro participated, consciously or not, in this wrangling about the meanings of freedom for ex-slave women. Councillors like Couto might have been favourably inclined towards the September 1887 petition of D. Rufina de Souza Villar, requesting compensation for her slave Marcellina. Apparently in order to help make her case, Villar noted that twenty-nine-year-old Marcellina was 'black, robust, healthy, a virgin [*moça*] and skilled at all domestic work, especially cooking'. Villar apparently assumed Marcellina would, in freedom, continue to perform the same domestic labour as undertaken while enslaved.<sup>72</sup> On the other hand, the councillors who criticised the way the school for *ingênuas* was being run would perhaps have been sympathetic to a petition in the same month from D. Maria Carmina Caldas Reys, requesting compensation for her *parda* slave woman Idalina. Reys assured councillors that Idalina was a 'very skilled' ladies' maid, and that 'the requested freedom will contribute directly to the greater happiness of the *pardinha* Idalina because since her hand has been asked for in marriage, her freedom is required in order to be in a more appropriate position to marry'.<sup>73</sup> Reys implied that freedom, for a girl like Idalina, promised respectable wifehood and presumably motherhood. The comparison between their owners' descriptions of the light-skinned, marriageable Idalina and the black, hard-working cook Marcellina also indicates the subtle intersections between

elites' perceptions of racial classifications and the meanings they ascribed to freedom for different enslaved women.

After the commission's objections about the girls' school, the council decided to educate all the girls together. Perhaps learning from this experience, Fernandes Couto recognised both the maternal and working roles of poor women in April 1888, suggesting the founding of crèches, which 'are greatly to the benefit of the poorer classes, because they allow mothers, especially, to work for the good of the family, without the apprehensions which the care of their children causes them'.<sup>74</sup> Thus, even if only in order to socialise future workers for their own ends, councillors found themselves obliged to consider both the maternal and the labouring roles of ex-slave women. Beneath these uneasy compromises lurked differing visions of freedom for ex-slave women. Were they to be feared as sources of cultural or biological contagion for their own children and those they nursed? Or should freedom grant them equal access to the 'wife-and-mother' role assumed to be the essence of white elite femininity?<sup>75</sup>

In reality, the underfunded and hopelessly corrupt council did not go very far towards improving education or welfare in the city, just as its emancipation fund did not make a significant dent in the enslaved population. Rabello proudly stated in his 1886 report that there were now all of ten municipal schools in Rio, a number dwarfed by existing numbers of public and private schools.<sup>76</sup> Despite the debates, education for freedpeople went almost completely neglected across Brazil.<sup>77</sup> However, councillors' debates and limited initiatives do help elucidate the intimate connections between gender roles and post-abolition meanings of freedom. Against this backdrop, ex-slave women freed by the council sought to live their own definitions of freedom and womanhood in the city.

### Women of colour give meaning to freedom

At the third grand Livro de Ouro emancipation ceremony on 2 December 1885, councillor Cláudio da Silva made a speech. Shortly, he reminded the audience, 'another hundred and thirty-three new citizens' who were 'free men [*homens livres*] as of today', would receive their freedom documents from the princess.<sup>78</sup> In fact, 113 (85 per cent) of the 'free men' present were women.<sup>79</sup> Unlike their male counterparts, they could not even potentially become 'citizens' in the full sense of the word. What did they make of Silva's speech, if they listened at all? What significances did freedom have for them? Their actions, after the ceremonies were over, suggest some answers.

Soon after the March 1886 emancipation ceremony presided over by Empress Teresa Cristina, the Rio police chief, João Coelho Bastos, wrote to the municipal council. He denounced an attempt by artisan Jeronymo José de Mello to take a *parda* woman, Gabriella, 'through violent means' to Nova Friburgo, a small city in Rio de Janeiro province. Gabriella, formerly Mello's slave, had been freed at the ceremony, and thus she was able to resist his attempts by turning to the same police that, to the anger of the abolitionist press, were meanwhile busily catching runaway slaves in the capital.<sup>80</sup> The police apparently prevented what they called the 'criminal act' of removing her by force.

Mello had owned at least two other enslaved women. At the same 1886 ceremony, he received compensation from the council in exchange for freeing another young *parda* woman, eighteen-year-old Maria, who had an *ingênuo* child. For Maria, the ability to

resist attempts to move her by force would have the added meaning of avoiding the tragic mother–child separations that were all too common in the experience of the enslaved. For such women, the rights – including sexual rights – Mello had had as owner of their enslaved bodies and reproductive capacities had been significantly curtailed. The dispute between Mello and Gabriella implies it was hard for Mello to adjust to this new situation. After all, only a few years previously he had been able to have a third woman, his domestic slave Martinha, incarcerated simply for ‘speaking obscenities’.<sup>81</sup>

Once they had attained legal freedom, freedpeople then had to work hard to uphold it. According to constant abolitionist condemnations of police racism, the city’s police often assumed people with dark skin were runaway slaves and imprisoned them or transferred them to rural areas where they would have less chance of accessing justice. In September 1885, the police in Espírito Santo district in the city centre imprisoned a black woman, Anna, at the request of a ‘foreign woman’ who said she was Anna’s owner. According to the *Gazeta da Tarde* newspaper, Anna ‘did not accept her imprisonment and declared . . . that she . . . had been freed at the ceremony on 7 September, that she had received her citizenship title from the hands of Princess Isabel, and that she did not have the letter with her, but would go and get it’. Yet apparently her protests were ignored and at the request of her ‘owner’, she remained imprisoned. Like others captured on suspicion of being slaves, she endured the dehumanising – and particularly defeminising – experience of having her head forcibly shaved.<sup>82</sup> The police’s version, according to letters they sent to the municipal council a couple of days after the article appeared, was that the Anna they had imprisoned, owned by a Mme F. Ruch, had somehow acquired a freedom document meant for a different woman, also called Anna but *parda*, belonging to one Dr Antonio Maria Teixeira.<sup>83</sup> It is not clear which version of events is closer to the truth, and we do not have access to the words of either woman herself. Nonetheless, the case suggests the major difficulties freedwomen encountered in holding onto legal freedom. It also suggests, like the case of Gabriella, intense struggles taking place between ex-owners and their ex-slaves, as well as perhaps between freedwomen themselves, undermining the picture of harmonious hierarchical labour relations that elites wished to create.

Manumission through the Livro de Ouro was fraught with other potential difficulties. Rosa, a nineteen-year-old *parda*, was freed at the same ceremony as Gabriella in March 1886. She then became involved in a dispute with one Delfino Lerma, who said she owed him 700 mil-réis because of ‘expenses’ he had helped her with during the process of manumission. Lerma insisted that to pay the debt, Rosa had to now ‘hand over to him the wages she receives as a domestic servant, which she refuses to do’. Like Gabriella, Rosa went to the police to defend herself against this new form of enslavement. Her case reveals women’s determination to shape their working lives after manumission as independently as possible.<sup>84</sup>

The appeal of the pregnant imprisoned slave Rita discussed above tells us not just about women’s discursive strategies for freedom but about the significance of freedom in the face of imminent childbirth. The Casa de Detenção was almost certainly a very difficult place in which to give birth, in a city with frighteningly high infant mortality rates among the enslaved and free poor even when they were not imprisoned.<sup>85</sup> Even if mother and baby survived, only a month earlier, in September 1885, the *Gazeta da Tarde* had denounced the continuing practice of forcibly removing enslaved

mothers' newborn children, who were left at the Casa dos Expostos, an institution for 'abandoned' children. Enslaved women were then made to nurse their owners' children instead of their own, and were thus denied 'the right to be a mother' – even though, since 1871, they were giving birth to legally 'free' children.<sup>86</sup> Freedom, for Rita, would have been bound up with acquiring this right, allowing her to preserve her child's life and avoid the tragedy of separation.<sup>87</sup> *Partus sequitur ventrem*, the 'free womb law', maternalist abolition rhetoric and women's own conceptions of their maternity meant that while fathers were surely involved, the struggle for custody of children as part of the struggle for emancipation was first and foremost women's battle.

Historian Hebe Mattos has taught us that the 'meanings of freedom' for ex-slaves centred on control of one's body, one's mobility and one's family.<sup>88</sup> Such definitions raise fascinating questions for future researchers about how these experiences differed for male and female ex-slaves, and about gendered power relations within ex-slave families and communities.<sup>89</sup> Cases like those discussed here certainly suggest that these 'meanings of freedom' had specific resonance for women. Bodily control for them implied wresting back some autonomy over their own reproductive capacities. Inextricably bound up with this struggle was presumably the need to resist sexual as well as other forms of violence. Meanwhile, women's concern to avoid being separated from their children – a threat that became both abolitionists' greatest moral argument and one of enslaved women's greatest fears – ensured that questions of mobility and family life were intimately interlinked. Future research will be important to tell us more about how women like Rita, Gabriella and Rosa conceived of freedom's promises to them.

## Conclusion

This article has proposed that ways of thinking and talking about gender, and particularly about femininity and maternity, profoundly shaped both the process of abolishing slavery in Rio de Janeiro and the meanings different people attached to the concept of freedom. 'Free womb logic' that informed emancipation initiatives brought women of colour to the front line of struggles to negotiate legal freedom. Their prominence was further encouraged as notions of elite women's maternal charity and morality were marshalled in the abolitionist cause, with the plight of enslaved mothers becoming a way of generating sympathetic emotional responses from readerships and audiences. In seeking post-emancipation social control, councillors ended up debating the meanings of free womanhood itself. Their efforts were complicated by the daily struggles of freed women, who made rhetorical use of elite ideas about femininity but also fashioned their own gendered meanings for freedom. The complex process of ending slavery became a moment at which gender identities – elite and popular, white and of colour – were evoked and reformulated by a range of social actors in the city.

One of these was Maria Rosa, the freedwoman whose petition opens this article. Her appeal's 'maternal' rhetoric to the empress was well placed. As it turned out, her daughter's owner, one Dr José Pereira Peixoto, was a member of the very same municipal council that was busily freeing slaves. Did the empress intervene, or was Peixoto simply sufficiently shamed by the petition to take action? Either way, he conceded Ludovina's freedom at the last minute a day before the ceremony on 14 March 1886, supposedly 'to commemorate the glorious birthday of Her Majesty the Empress'.<sup>90</sup> As

a consequence of Maria Rosa's initiative, Ludovina received her freedom letter from Teresa Cristina's hands.<sup>91</sup> Peixoto drew his own meanings from the incident, running for justice of the peace in Rio not long afterwards in what was perhaps an attempt to capitalise on his public 'charitable' act.<sup>92</sup> Meanwhile, based on the evidence of other women like her, Maria Rosa perhaps envisaged other consequences for her daughter: reuniting a family of at least five people; the ability to regain control of reproduction; and the hope of better and more independent material conditions through employment opportunities in the capital city. The actions of women like Maria Rosa, and the gendered visions of freedom that helped inform them, deserve their place in the story of Brazilian abolition.

## Notes

The author thanks the staff of the following institutions: Arquivo Geral da Cidade do Rio de Janeiro, Biblioteca Nacional (Rio de Janeiro), Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro (Rio de Janeiro). Research and writing were funded by the Institute for the Study of Slavery (University of Nottingham, UK) and the Leverhulme Trust, UK. Thanks to Maria del Carmen Baerga, Mark Cowling, Astrid Cubano, Jorge Giovannetti, Keila Grinberg, Scott Ickes, Hebe Mattos, Jessica Millward, Mariza Soares and anonymous readers at *Gender & History* for help and feedback on drafts. Special thanks to Celso Castilho for continual exchange and collaboration.

1. Maria Rosa to Empress Teresa Cristina, Arquivo Geral da Cidade do Rio de Janeiro (AGCRJ), Coleção Escravidão: Emancipação (E: E), Book 6.1.41, 6 March 1886, p. 35. It is not clear whether Maria Rosa herself penned and signed this letter or whether a scribe or literate acquaintance did so in her name. Only 0.9 per cent of Rio's male slaves and 0.5 per cent of female slaves were officially literate in 1872. Among the free population, however, literacy rates were higher – 48.7 per cent of men and 36.9 per cent of women were officially literate. While literacy rates were surely lower among freedwomen like Maria Rosa than among the free female population in general, it is possible that she had learned to read and write. See *Recenseamento da população do Município Neutro e Província de Parana a que se procedeu em 1 de Agosto de 1872* (Rio de Janeiro: n.p., 1872), pp. 58–9. On slaves' relationship with the literate world, see Sandra Lauderdale Graham, 'Writing from the Margins: Brazilian Slaves and Written Culture', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 49 (2007), pp. 611–36.
2. 'Rio' and 'Rio de Janeiro' denote the municipality of Rio de Janeiro, then the Brazilian capital, rather than the surrounding province of the same name, unless otherwise stated. The relevance of Maria Rosa's letter for the broader politics of Brazilian emancipation funds is explored in Celso Castilho and Camillia Cowling, 'Funding Freedom, Popularizing Politics: Abolitionism and Local Emancipation Funds in 1880s Brazil', *Luso-Brazilian Review* 47.1 (2010), forthcoming.
3. For the description of Teresa Cristina as 'mother of the Brazilians', see Lilia Moritz Schwarcz, *As barbas do imperador: D. Pedro II, um monarca nos trópicos* (1998; 2nd edn, São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2003), p. 94. On the births and deaths of the children of Teresa Cristina and Pedro II, see e.g., Pedro Calmon, *A Princesa Isabel: A 'Redentora'* (São Paulo: Companhia Editorial Nacional, 1941), pp. 9–18.
4. On the subordination of Rio's municipal council to central government, see Richard Graham, *Patronage and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Brazil* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), p. 47.
5. See Sidney Chalhoub, *Visões da liberdade: Uma história das últimas décadas da escravidão na Corte* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1990); Hebe Maria Mattos de Castro, *Das cores do silêncio: Os significados da liberdade no sudeste escravista – Brasil século XIX* (Rio de Janeiro: Arquivo Nacional, 1995).
6. See Karen Offen, Ruth Roach Pierson and Jane Rendall, 'Introduction', in Karen Offen, Ruth Roach Pierson and Jane Rendall (eds), *Writing Women's History: International Perspectives* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991).
7. Martha Abreu, 'Slave Mothers and Freed Children: Emancipation and Female Space in Debates on the "Free Womb" Law, Rio de Janeiro 1871', *Journal of Latin American Studies* 28 (1996), pp. 567–80; Roderick Barman, *Princess Isabel of Brazil: Gender and Power in the Nineteenth Century* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, 2002); Olívia Maria Gomes da Cunha, 'Criadas para servir: Domesticidade, intimidade e retribuição', in Olívia Maria Gomes da Cunha and Flávio dos Santos Gomes (eds), *Quase-cidadão: Histórias e antropologias da pós-emancipação no Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Fundação Getúlio Vargas, 2007), pp. 377–417; Robert Daibert Júnior, *Isabel: A Redentora dos escravos. Uma história da Princesa entre olhares negros e brancos (1846–1980)* (Baruru, São Paulo: Editora da Universidade do

- Sagrado Coração, 2004); June E. Hahner, *Emancipating the Female Sex: The Struggle for Women's Rights in Brazil, 1850–1940* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), pp. 36–41; Roger A. Kittleson, 'Women and Notions of Womanhood in Brazilian Abolitionism', in Pamela Scully and Diana Paton (eds), *Gender and Slave Emancipation in the Atlantic World* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), pp. 99–140; Roger A. Kittleson, 'Campaign of All Peace and Charity: Gender and the Politics of Abolitionism in Porto Alegre, Brazil, 1846–1888', *Slavery and Abolition* 22 (2001), pp. 83–108; Eduardo Spiller Pena, *Pajens da Casa Imperial: Jurisconsultos, escravidão e a lei de 1871* (Campinas: Editora Unicamp, 2001).
8. For details see *The Transatlantic Slave Trade Database*, <<http://www.slavevoyages.org/tast/assessment/estimates.faces?jsessionid=73108CA88C8254A7E05667E104AECC49>> (accessed 4 March 2010).
  9. Juliana Barreto Farias, Flávio dos Santos Gomes, Carlos Eugênio Soares and Carlos Eduardo Moreira de Araújo, *Cidades negras: Africanos, crioulos e espaços urbanos no Brasil escravista do século XIX* (São Paulo: Alameda, 2008).
  10. Maria Lahmeyer Lobo, *História do Rio de Janeiro: Do capital comercial ao capital industrial e financeiro*, 2 vols (Rio de Janeiro: IBMEC, 1978), vol. 1, pp. 122–3, 135–6, 225–6. See also Mary Karasch, *Slave Life in Rio de Janeiro* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), pp. xv–xvi, 3–28.
  11. *Recenseamento de 1872*, pp. 1–61.
  12. The trade had been partly illegal since 1807, and completely illegal since 1831, following treaties signed with the British and largely ignored by the Brazilians. Robert E. Conrad, *World of Sorrow: The African Slave Trade to Brazil* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1986), pp. 1–3, 171.
  13. On the internal trade, see e.g., Mattos de Castro, *Das cores do silêncio*, pp. 119–36; Conrad, *World of Sorrow*, pp. 171–91; Robert Slenes, 'The Demography and Economics of Brazilian Slavery' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Stanford University, 1976), pp. 120–269, 594–686.
  14. See Peter M. Beattie, *The Tribute of Blood: Army, Honour, Race and Nation in Brazil, 1864–1945* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001).
  15. Luis Figueroa, *Sugar, Slavery and Freedom in Nineteenth-Century Puerto Rico* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), pp. 79–199; Rebecca J. Scott, *Slave Emancipation in Cuba* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985). On women of colour and the law in Cuba, see Camillia Cowling, 'Negotiating Freedom: Women of Colour and the Transition to Free Labour in Cuba, 1870–1886', *Slavery and Abolition* 26 (2005), pp. 377–91. For other international precedents for the 'free womb' idea, see Robert E. Conrad, *The Destruction of Brazilian Slavery, 1850–1888* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), p. 90.
  16. Conrad, *Destruction of Brazilian Slavery*, pp. 70–88. My use of quotation marks recognises the fact that the law was not immediately called the 'free womb law'. Rather, the exact legal status of enslaved women's wombs was left undefined by the law and was instead negotiated in complex ways afterwards. I retain the term because it has subsequently become the general shorthand for the law. See Sidney Chalhoub, *Machado de Assis, historiador* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2003), pp. 171–82, 266–9.
  17. See Chalhoub, *Machado de Assis*, p. 186.
  18. Conrad, *Destruction of Brazilian Slavery*, pp. 90–117, 305–9; Joseli Maria Nunes Mendonça, *Entre a Mão e os Anéis: A lei dos sexagenários e os caminhos da abolição no Brasil* (Campinas: Unicamp, 1999), pp. 221–56.
  19. Seymour Drescher, 'Brazilian Abolition in Comparative Perspective', *Hispanic American Historical Review* 68 (1988), pp. 429–60.
  20. See *O Abolicionista: Órgão da Sociedade Brasileira contra a Escravidão* 1 (1 November 1880), p. 1.
  21. See Rebecca Baird Bergstresser, 'The Movement for the Abolition of Slavery in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 1880–1889' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Stanford University, 1973); Celso T. Castilho, 'Abolition Matters: The Politics of Antislavery in Pernambuco, Brazil, 1869–1888' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 2008), p. vi.
  22. José Ferreira Nobre, speech on Livro de Ouro, AGCRJ, E: E, Book 6.1.61, 21 January 1884, p. 18; 'Propostas, requerimento, resolução, e projeto de postura', *Boletim da Illustrissima Camara Municipal da Côte* (hereafter *Boletim*), 2 June 1885, pp. 102–3. On the council, see the unpublished, undated, untitled 1980s introduction to the council records held at the AGCRJ, written by Hebe Mattos and a team of researchers, herein referred to as Mattos, et al., 'Livro de Ouro', pp. 7–8.
  23. See Castilho and Cowling, 'Funding Freedom'.
  24. The law only immediately freed those slaves over the age of sixty-five and imposed harsh penalties for harbouring runaway slaves. See Mendonça, *Entre a mão e os anéis*.
  25. Conrad, *Destruction of Brazilian Slavery*, pp. 210–29, 310–16.
  26. Daibert Júnior, *Isabel*, pp. 110–34; Eduardo Silva, *As camélias do Leblon e a abolição da escravatura: Uma investigação de história cultural* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2003), pp. 7–18.

27. Of these, 766 were freed with compensation and thirty-one gratis. This figure represented only about 3 per cent of the decrease by 24,615 in the city's enslaved population in the years 1884–87, which left 7,488 slaves by 1887. My interest in the fund is not about the numbers freed but about what its operations tell us about gender within discourses and practices of slave emancipation. For slaves freed through the fund, see *Boletim*, 29 July 1885, p. 29; *Boletim*, 10 September 1885, pp. 115–17; *Boletim*, 18 March 1886, p. 122; *Boletim*, 16 September 1886, pp. 89–93; *Boletim*, 2 December 1887, p. 69; *Gazeta de Notícias*, 2 December 1885, p. 1; *Gazeta de Notícias*, 3 December 1886, p. 2; AGCRJ, E: E, Book 6.1.61, 29 July 1886, p. 74; AGCRJ, E: E, Book 6.1.41, 7 September 1887, p. 44. On the slave population's decrease see Conrad, *Destruction of Brazilian Slavery*, p. 285.
28. 'Regulamento substitutivo para o Livro de Ouro', *Boletim*, 10 July 1885, p. 26.
29. *Boletim*, 16 September 1886, pp. 94, 99.
30. Brazilian historian Hebe Mattos coined this term in summarising the arguments I had made in an earlier version of this paper. It has subsequently been very useful to me in encapsulating many of my ideas.
31. For important exceptions see Joseph Dorsey, 'Women Without History: Slavery and the International Politics of *Partus Sequitur Ventrem* in the Spanish Caribbean', *Journal of Caribbean History* 28 (1994), pp. 165–207; Hilary Beckles, *Natural Rebels: A Social History of Enslaved Black Women in Barbados* (London: Zed Books, 1989), pp. 115–35; Jessica Millward, "'That All her Increase May Be Free": Enslaved Women's Bodies and the Maryland Manumission Law of 1809', *Women's History Review*, forthcoming.
32. Among the extensive literature on Brazilian manumission, see Karasch, *Slave Life*, pp. 335–61; Kátia M. de Queirós Mattoso, *To Be a Slave in Brazil, 1550–1888* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1986), pp. 164–8; Stuart B. Schwartz, 'The Manumission of Slaves in Colonial Brazil: Bahia, 1684–1745', *Hispanic American Historical Review* 54 (1974): pp. 603–35. For a comparative discussion on the Americas, see Laird Bergad, Fe Iglesias and María del Carmen Barcia, *The Cuban Slave Market, 1790–1880* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 131–42.
33. Chalhoub, *Machado de Assis*, pp. 137–8, 168–82.
34. Fabiano Dauwe, 'A libertação gradual e a saída viável: Os múltiplos sentidos da liberdade pelo fundo de emancipação de escravos' (unpublished master's dissertation, Universidade Federal Fluminense, Niterói, 2004), pp. 76–7, 82, 100–01, 108.
35. See e.g., 'Novos aspectos', *A Revista Ilustrada* 456 (30 April 1886), p. 3. For what I interpret as specific fears that black male sexuality might threaten white male dominance – although they are not analysed as such by the author – see Wlamyra R. de Albuquerque, *O jogo da dissimulação: Abolição e cidadania negra no Brasil* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2009), pp. 120, 129, 135.
36. On women's quest for legal manumission, see Keila Grinberg, *Liberata, a lei da ambiguidade: As ações de liberdade da Corte de Apelação do Rio de Janeiro no século XIX* (Rio de Janeiro: Relume Dumará, 1994); A. J. R. Russell-Wood, "'Acts of Grace": Portuguese Monarchs and their Subjects of African Descent in Eighteenth-Century Brazil', *Journal of Latin American Studies* 32 (2000), pp. 307–32; Kirsten Schultz, *Tropical Versailles: Empire, Monarchy and the Portuguese Royal Court in Rio de Janeiro, 1808–1821* (New York: Routledge, 2001), pp. 165–76. On the political implications of women's petitions in the US, see Susan Zaekse, *Signatures of Citizenship: Petitioning, Antislavery, and Women's Political Identity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003). On women's economic activities towards manumission, see Sheila Faria, 'Sinhás pretas: Acumulação de pecúlio e transmissão de bens de mulheres forras no sudeste escravista (sécs. XVIII e XIX)', and Carlos Eugênio Líbano Soares, 'Comércio, nação e gênero: As negras minas quitadeiras no Rio de Janeiro, 1835–1900', both in Francisco Teixeira da Silva, Hebe Maria Mattos and Ciro Flamirion Cardoso (eds), *Escritos sobre história e educação: Homenagem a Maria Yedda Leite Linhares* (Rio de Janeiro: FAPERJ/Mauad, 2001), pp. 289–329 and 402–13 respectively.
37. For women's legal struggles for freedom via 'free womb laws', see Camillia Cowling, 'Matrices of Opportunity: Women of Colour, Gender and the Ending of Slavery in Rio de Janeiro and Havana, 1870–1888' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Nottingham, 2007), pp. 135–94.
38. Historian Célia Maria Marinho de Azevedo has argued that Brazilian abolitionism made little attempt to create sympathy with slaves or appeal to the emotions. This makes sense in the context of her comparative work with United States abolitionism, highlighting the evident differences between each case, but downplays real, gendered, changes in abolitionist rhetoric in 1880s Brazil. See Célia Maria Marinho de Azevedo, *Abolitionism in Brazil and the United States: A Comparative Perspective* (New York: Garland, 1995), pp. xix, 8–11, 19–20, 48. For examples of such rhetoric, see the speech by cleric Dr Augusto Joaquim de Siqueira Canabarro in Rio Grande do Sul, reproduced in the main national anti-slavery newspaper, 'A Emancipação na Tribuna Sagrada', *O Abolicionista*, 1 January 1881, pp. 7–8; or poems such as 'A Escrava', reproduced in Rio de Janeiro's most prominent anti-slavery organ, the *Gazeta da Tarde*, 31 January 1884, p. 2. See also Kittleson, 'Women and Notions of Womanhood', p. 99.



39. See e.g., 'A mulher brasileira é escravocrata?', *Gazeta da Tarde*, 18 January 1884, p. 1.
40. 'A mulher brasileira é escravocrata?', *Gazeta da Tarde*, 14 January 1884, p. 2, and subsequent issues daily throughout January 1884. For an examination of the debate in August 1884 in *A Mãe de Família*, see Cunha, 'Criadas para servir', pp. 393–4.
41. 'Chronica do Bem', *Gazeta da Tarde*, 15 January 1884, p. 3; 'Club Emancipador Vicsonde de Caravellas', *Gazeta da Tarde*, 29 September 1885, p. 2. For similar press attention to women's role, see Kittleson, 'Women and Notions of Womanhood', pp. 102–5, 111 n. 70.
42. My analysis of the strategic uses of 'masculine' and 'feminine' abolitionist rhetoric was sharpened through engagement with Kristin Hoganson's work on abolitionism in the United States. Kristin Hoganson, 'Garrisonian Abolitionists and the Rhetoric of Gender, 1850–1860', *American Quarterly* 45 (1993), pp. 563, 586.
43. 'Uma bella festa', *Revista Illustrada*, 20 August 1886, p. 6.
44. *Gazeta da Tarde*, 14 February 1883, p. 3. On 'family fathers' as the bedrock of Brazilian patriarchal society, upholding authority over their private households, see Sandra Lauderdale Graham, *House and Street: The Domestic World of Servants and Masters in Nineteenth-Century Rio de Janeiro* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1988), pp. 10–11; Graham, *Politics and Patronage*, pp. 18, 256–7.
45. For example, 'Festa Municipal', *Gazeta da Tarde*, 2 December 1887, p. 2. For pictures of the Livro de Ouro ceremonies, including various 'ladies', Princess Isabel, and the slaves being emancipated, see *Revista Illustrada*, 8 December 1886, p. 8; Daibert Júnior, *Isabel*, p. vi.
46. Speech, councillor Dr Constante da Silva Jardim at 2 December 1887 ceremony, reproduced in *Boletim*, 12 December 1887, p. 70.
47. See e.g., *A Republica*, 9 November 1871, pp. 2–3.
48. On Isabel's less public links to abolitionism in the Corte, see Silva, *As camélias do Leblon*, pp. 26–34.
49. Daibert Júnior, *Isabel*, pp. 230–31.
50. *Boletim*, 14 March 1888, pp. 97–9.
51. 'Acta da sessão ordinaria', *Boletim*, 5 August 1886, p. 42.
52. 'Libertações de escravos por conta dos donativos do Livro de Ouro', *Jornal do Commercio*, 19 June 1885, p. 4.
53. My understanding of this was clarified by Diana Paton, 'The Flight from the Fields Reconsidered: Gender Ideologies and Women's Labour after Slavery in Jamaica', in Gilbert M. Joseph (ed.), *Reclaiming the Political in Latin America: Essays from the North* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), pp. 175–204. See also Mary del Priore, *Ao sul do corpo: Condição feminina, maternidades e mentalidades no Brasil Colônia* (Rio de Janeiro: José Olympio, 1993), pp. 18–20.
54. See Graham, *Patronage and Politics*, pp. 251–2.
55. Manoel Caetano Alves d'Oliveira and Benedicta Caetana to municipal council, 20 June 1885, AGCRJ, E: E, Book 6.2.6, pp. 20, 28.
56. See e.g., Albuquerque, *O jogo da dissimulação*, p. 131.
57. Francisco Pinto da Silva on behalf of Rita, *parda*, to president of municipal council, 12 October 1885, AGCRJ, E: E, Book 6.1.61, p. 45.
58. For a controversial argument that the debates surrounding the 1871 'free womb law' were not primarily about slavery at all, but about the nature of representative government, see Jeffrey D. Needell, *The Party of Order: The Conservatives, the State, and Slavery in the Brazilian Monarchy, 1831–1871* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), pp. 272–314.
59. Lauderdale Graham, *House and Street*, pp. 108–32. See also the regulations for domestic servants produced by the council following abolition: 'Regulamento do serviço domestico', *Boletim*, 4 October 1888, pp. 3–4.
60. See satirical political cartoons in *Revista Illustrada*, 17 October 1885, p. 1 and 25 January 1887, pp. 4–5.
61. See *Boletim*, 5 January 1887, pp. 3–4; *Gazeta da Tarde*, 3 December 1887, p. 2.
62. Enslaved children were barred from Rio's schools from 1854. For one of the few works on race, citizenship, slavery and education in nineteenth-century Brazil, see Alessandra Frota Martinez Schueler, 'Culturas escolares e experiências docentes na cidade do Rio de Janeiro (1854–1889)' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Universidade Federal Fluminense, Niterói, 2007), pp. 212–9, 243. In 1881, an electoral reform introduced literacy requirements, effectively barring most ex-slave men from voting. Women were barred from voting in any case. Sidney Chalhou, 'The Politics of Silence: Race and Citizenship in Nineteenth-Century Brazil', *Slavery and Abolition* 27 (2006), pp. 81–4. On the reform see also Graham, *Patronage and Politics*, pp. 182–206.
63. See Schwarcz, *As barbas do imperador*, pp. 222–30.
64. 'Relatório da Fundação da Escola de Santa Isabel pelo Dr. Rabello', *Boletim*, 5 August 1886, pp. 44–5.
65. Schueler, 'Culturas escolares', pp. 64, 116–9, 139, 144.

66. For an analysis of girls' education for 'domesticity' at other schools during and after abolition, see Cunha, 'Criadas para servir', pp. 384–96.
67. 'Portarias', *Boletim*, 7 February 1884, p. 69.
68. Schueler, 'Culturas escolares', p. 258.
69. Report, councillor Fernandes Couto, *Boletim*, 13 March 1884, pp. 123–4.
70. During and after slavery, female domestic servants were generally required to 'live in', making marriage or the maintenance of family relations difficult. However, servant women struggled with some success for the greatest possible autonomy and space for family life in their living arrangements. See Karasch, *Slave Life*, pp. 295–7; Lauderdale Graham, *House and Street*, pp. 61, 80–82.
71. Dr Luiz de Moura, H. A. de Carvalho and Dr Pinto Guedes, 'Relatorio da comissão de instrucção sobre as escolas municipaes', *Boletim*, 18 December 1884, pp. 153–4.
72. D. Rufina de Souza Villar to council president, 30 August 1887, AGCRJ, E: E, Book 6.1.17, p. 90.
73. D. Maria Carmina Caldas Reys to council president, Rio de Janeiro, 31 August 1887, AGCRJ, E: E, Book 6.1.17, p. 81.
74. *Boletim*, 5 April 1888, pp. 9–10.
75. See Sandra Lauderdale Graham, 'A abolição na cidade: Amas-secas, contaminação e controle', in Manuel Correia de Andrade and Eliane Moury Fernandes (eds), *Atualidade e abolição* (Recife: Editora Massangana, 1991), pp. 75–90; Lilia Moritz Schwarcz, *O espetáculo das raças: Cientistas, instituições e a questão racial no Brasil* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1993).
76. 'Relatorio da Fundação da Escola de Santa Isabel pelo Dr Rabello', *Boletim*, 5 August 1886, p. 44.
77. Chalhoub, 'Politics of Silence', p. 11; Evaristo de Moraes, *A campanha abolicionista, 1879–1888* (Rio de Janeiro: Leite Ribeiro, 1924), p. 401. Some individuals bucked the trend, establishing private schools for *ingênuos* and *ingênuas*. See 'D. Maria Candida Jardim' and 'Collegio Felipe Nery', *Gazeta da Tarde*, 14 December 1885, pp. 1–2.
78. *Boletim*, 3 December 1885, p. 132.
79. *Gazeta de Notícias*, 2 December 1885, p. 1.
80. João Coelho Bastos, Secretaria de Polícia da Corte, to Secretário da Câmara Municipal, AGCRJ, E: E, Book 6.1.61, 17 March 1886, p. 59. Abolitionists loved to hate Bastos for persecuting slaves. See 'Serafim, escravo', *Gazeta da Tarde*, 20 October 1885, p. 1; *Revista Illustrada*, 30 November 1885, pp. 4–5.
81. Zephyr Frank, 'Layers, Flows and Intersections: Jeronymo José de Mello and Artisan Life in Rio de Janeiro, 1840s–1880s', *Journal of Social History* 41 (2007), pp. 307–28, here p. 317.
82. 'Polícia negreira', *Gazeta da Tarde*, 23 October 1885, p. 1.
83. See the three letters from João Coelho Bastos to president of municipal council on 31 October, 17 November and 12 December 1885, AGCRJ, E: E, Book 6.1.61, pp. 31, 30, 27 respectively.
84. *Gazeta da Tarde*, 24 May 1886, p. 2; *Boletim*, 18 March 1886, p. 122.
85. Karasch, 'Anastácia', pp. 85, 100; Lauderdale Graham, *House and Street*, pp. 82–4.
86. 'Casas de maternidade', *Gazeta da Tarde*, 4 September 1885, p. 1.
87. On slave motherhood, see Jane-Marie Collins, 'Bearing the Burden of Bastardy: Infanticide, Race and Motherhood in Brazilian Slave Society, Nineteenth-Century Bahia', in Brigitte H. Bechtold and Donna Cooper Graves (eds), *Killing Infants: Studies of the Worldwide Practice of Infanticide* (Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 2006), pp. 199–229; Renato Pinto Venâncio, 'Maternidade negada', in Mary del Priore (ed.), *História das mulheres no Brasil* (São Paulo: Contexto, 2004), pp. 189–222.
88. Hebe Maria Mattos, 'Os combates da memória: Escravidão e liberdade nos arquivos orais de descendentes de escravos brasileiros', *Tempo* (History Department, Universidade Federal Fluminense) 6/3 (December 1998), pp. 119–137, esp. pp. 125, 136. See also Ana Lugão Rios and Hebe Mattos, *Memórias do cativo: Família, trabalho e cidadania no pós-abolição* (Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2005), p. 49.
89. For enquiries along these lines, see Sueann Caulfield, 'The History of Gender in the Historiography of Latin America', *Hispanic American Historical Review* 81 (2001), pp. 421–90, here p. 476; Sandra Lauderdale Graham, *Caetana Says No: Women's Stories from a Brazilian Slave Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 4, 39, 60–62. On the shifting relationship between labour patterns and gendered power relations within families in São Paulo, see Verena Stolke, 'Trabalho e moralidade familiar', in Gomes and Cunha (eds), *Quase-cidadão*, pp. 171–215.
90. Pereira Peixoto to Municipal Council, AGCRJ, E: E, Book 6.1.41, 13 March 1886, p. 34.
91. AGCRJ, E: E, Book 6.1.41, 14 March 1886, pp. 41–3.
92. 'Eleições municipaes', *Gazeta da Tarde*, 1 July 1886, p. 1.