Mourning and the Making of Ancestors in the Testamentum Relief

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Abstract

A Trajanic funerary relief, known as the Testamentum Relief, depicts the members of a Roman household (a matron, a slave, and a father represented by his portrait) in the act of mourning a young man. Comparisons with *kline* sculptures, funerary reliefs of craftsmen, and shield portraits suggest a social background for the family among freedmen and their descendants in Rome and Ostia in the early second century A.D. Recent scholarship on the Roman family provides the basis for a discussion of the significance of commemorative art in rituals of mourning. Rather than documenting the transmission of wealth in the family, as previously thought, the relief indicates that the family properly honored its dead by commemorating them with works of art, which effectively transformed the dead into ancestors.*

A Trajanic funerary relief in the Museo Capitolino in Rome, traditionally known as the Testamentum Relief (fig. 1), has been thought to document a family lineage and the passage of property from one generation to the next.[1] It is striking that a relief that adorned the facade of a tomb offers a glimpse of life within the *domus*. The emphasis on the family suggests a social background for the deceased in the status-hungry society at the margins of respectability in which ambitious freedmen and their descendants demonstrated their worth by the acquisition of portraits, substantial households, and property to be transmitted through the line of descent.[2] The figures in the relief are depicted according to their roles in the household and their responsibilities to the deceased, with the aim of creating an image of a family of substance from previously inconspicuous stock.

The identification of the deceased and his tomb is impossible without an extant inscription or any evidence of the original location of the relief.[3] Much, however, can be gleaned from the relief itself: it is made of marble from Luni (ancient Luna), and is 0.85 m tall and 1.45 m long; it can be dated to the Early Trajanic period through the portraits and their hairstyles.[4] Restoration is apparent in the broken left edge of the relief—which is replaced by a modern molding, the foot of the reclining man, his purse, the tip of his nose, and the corner of the abacus held by the slave.

The relief represents the deceased as a man in the prime of his life, reclining half-nude on a *kline*, or couch, and holding a scroll in one hand that rests on the knee of the matron who is seated beside him (on her own chair and footstool). The veiled matron, whom I identify as his mother rather than his wife, embraces her son, who also turns his head toward her. A shield portrait, or *clipeata imago*, probably depicting the deceased's father and the matron's husband, is placed above and behind the reclining figure of the deceased. A small slave bearing an abacus or counting board stands at the left edge of the relief.

The semirecumbent figure of the deceased dominates the relief. He is reclining partially nude (although the sculptor seemed to have difficulty in giving the waist and lower abdomen definition)[5] on a kline. These characteristics are shared by a type of

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[1] H. Wrede, "Stadtrömische Monumente, Urnen und Sarkophage des Klinentypus in den beiden ersten Jahrhunderten n. Chr.," *AA* 1977, 404, 406, figs. 82–85; R. Winkes, *Clipeata Imago. Studien zu einer römischen Bildnisform* (Bonn 1969) 213–15; Stuart Jones, *Cap.* 138, n. 65, pl. 23; W. Altmann, *Die römischen Grabaltäre der Kaiserzeit* (Berlin 1905) 204, pl. 161; drawing in the Dal Pozzo Collection, Windsor, 8542.

[2] Wrede (supra n. 1) 400–10.

[3] R. Calza, *Scavi di Ostia* 5.1. *I ritratti* (Rome 1964) 68, n. 4, suggests an Ostian provenance for the relief through a comparison with a similar Ostian portrait (67–68, n. 105, pl. 61) and a pair of *imagines clipeatae* in Ostia. The dealer who acquired the Testamentum Relief handled many Ostian works; see Calza 51–52.

[4] Stuart Jones, *Cap.* 138; Winkes (supra n. 1) 214.

[5] For a similar distortion in the carving of the figure, see the relief of Ulpia Epigone in the Museo Gregoriano Profano in the Vatican: E. D'Ambra, "The Cult of Virtues and the Funerary Relief of Ulpia Epigone," *Latomus* 43 (1989) 395; F. Sinn, *Vatikanische Museen, Museo Gregoriano Profano ex Lateranense. Die Grabdenkmäler* 1. *Reliefs, Altäre, Urnen* (Mainz 1991) 36–37, n. 13, pls. 30–32.

Fig. 1. Testamentum Relief, Museo Capitolino, Rome. (Photo Museum)

funerary sculpture that elevates the deceased in a heroic fashion through partial nudity, and through allusions to the lying-in-state and the *pompa funebris*, the funeral procession of aristocrats (it is likely that kline figures were carried in them).[6] Independent sculptures of figures reclining on couches often adorned tombs from the Flavian period through the end of the second century (although there are a few earlier examples).[7] In many examples, heroic nudity—if only partial—is an important element, as are attributes that refer to the funerary banquet, religious commemoration, or emotional bonds.[8]

In his right hand the deceased holds an object that has been restored as a purse, although it is not clear if this was originally intended. In his left hand he holds a scroll that rests on the lap of his mother, who is seated at his side. He also turns toward her, as if entrusting this document, assumed to be the will, to her.[9] Although there is no completely extant last will and testament from the Imperial period, wills are described as tablets rather than as scrolls in the literary sources.[10] The relief representing a scene of the lying-in-state from the Tomb of the Haterii depicts the four tablets of the will at the feet of the deceased woman (and another scene may show her in the act of composing her will).[11] Clearly the abacus held by the slave displayed sums suggesting the family's wealth, but the function of the scroll as

[6] Dio Cass. 56.34; Wrede (supra n. 1) 395–99, on the Etruscan precursors to the *kline* monument, and 406–409, on funerary practices; W.M. Jensen, *The Sculptures from the Tomb of the Haterii* (Diss. Univ. of Michigan 1978) 37–49, on the lying-in-state; Petron. *Sat.* 78: the freedman Trimalchio plays dead, reclining on a couch propped up by pillows, imploring his guests to eulogize him while his musicians strike up a funeral march; perhaps this represents Trimalchio's attempt to emulate the aristocratic *pompa funebris*.

[7] Wrede (supra n. 1) 400–402, for the kline monument of Bathyllus, an Augustan freedman, in the Palazzo dei Conservatori (Stuart Jones, *Cons.* 72, n. 2, pl. 15) that dates to the Claudian-Neronian periods.

[8] J.M.C. Toynbee, *Death and Burial in the Roman World* (London 1971) 268–70; Wrede (supra n. 1) 409; F. Ghedini, "Raffigurazioni conviviali nei monumenti funerari romani," *RdA* 14 (1990) 25; C. Compostela, "Banchetti pubblici e banchetti privati nell'iconografia funeraria romana del I secolo d.C.," *MEFRA* 104 (1992) 658–89.

[9] Stuart Jones, *Cap.* 138, for the traditional designation as the Testamentum Relief.

[10] J.A. Crook, *Law and Life of Rome* (London 1967) 125, 128, with citations; E. Champlin, *Final Judgments* (Berkeley 1991) 29, 35–36, on wills surviving on papyrus in Roman Egypt.

[11] Jensen (supra n. 6) 42–43.

Fig. 2. Head of reclining male in Testamentum Relief. (Photo Museum)

a will is questionable. Instead the scroll may indicate the deceased's acquisition of culture by demonstrating his literacy or, perhaps, simply his assumption of the authority of written documents in a culture in which they are associated with the privileged and public life of the elite.[12] Yet, it is significant that the document is resting on the lap of the matron—it is passing into her domain.

The deceased appears to be youthful. The portrait type (fig. 2) recalls an Early Trajanic head in Copenhagen that depicts a young man with a similar hairstyle and features (fig. 3).[13] The Trajanic hairstyle with the hair combed forward from the crown to fall across the forehead in a thick curtain of bangs appears in many portraits of the early second century, yet the two heads share a facial structure with large eyes set far apart and defined by lower lids with ridges and upper lids fashioned like flattened bands; smooth unmarked skin revealing the cheekbones and a firm jawline; and a strong, angular nose (although the nose on the relief has been restored, its extant bridge indicates a substantial profile). Lacking the marks of age that are said to give character, the young men appear to have been in their late teens or 20s. Two other contemporary portraits, one in the Palazzo dei Conservatori and the other in Ostia, depict similar types of young men, although individual features vary.[14]

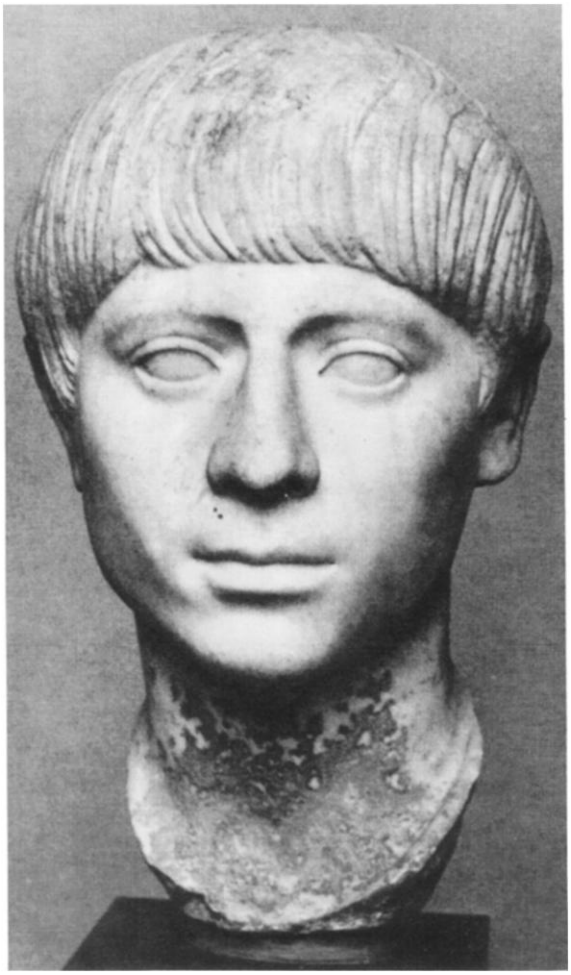

Fig. 3. Trajanic head of youth in Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen. (Photo Kieron Baker)

Another prominent head—in the form of a portrait in a shield—is placed above the deceased (fig. 4). The portrait in a round frame is an example of the clipeata imago commonly used for ancestor portraits.

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[12] W.V. Harris, *Ancient Literacy* (Cambridge, Mass. 1989) 194, ns. 104–105 on the costliness of papyrus, 202–204 on the value of literacy in careers and on written wills, 206–18 on the civic and political implications of literacy, and 248–53 on elite habits.

[13] F. Poulsen, *Les portraits romains* 2 (Copenhagen 1974) 78, n. 52, pls. 85–86; G. Daltrop, *Die stadtrömischen männlichen Privatbildnisse trajanischer und hadrianischer Zeit* (Münster 1958) 50, 67, pl. 14.

[14] Stuart Jones, *Cons.* 80, n. 7, pl. 27 (although the features do not indicate an "African" youth, as identified); Calza (supra n. 3) 67–68, n. 105, pl. 61; see also H. Wrede, "Das Mausoleum der Claudia Semne und die bürgerliche Plastik der Kaiserzeit," *RM* 78 (1971) pl. 80.1–2.

Fig. 4. Shield portrait in Testamentum Relief. (Photo Museum)

Originally painted images on shields, the shield portraits were made of bronze or silver and were hung in the *alae* of the house.[15] For example, a wall painting from the Villa of Oplontis at Torre Annunziata depicts shield portraits hanging high on the atrium wall.[16] The shield portraits symbolized *virtus* (virtue in the sense of military valor) by encouraging sons to seek the honors that their forebears had earned. The notion that only nobles or higher magistrates had the right to display ancestral portraiture in the home and in funeral processions no longer applied by the late first and early second centuries A.D. in Rome.[17] It was even possible for families to have shield portraits of men unrelated to them hanging on their walls because the portraits could not be removed if the houses were sold (surely creating situations in which new families were encouraged to acquire ancestor portraits of their own).[18] The popularity of clipeatae imagines increased as they were also displayed in libraries and public buildings, such as the Basilica Aemilia.[19] By the second century, women figured among distinguished ancestors in the Forum of Trajan, as witnessed in the colossal portrait of Agrippina the Younger, originally set in a tondo frame and hung on the great colonnade as part of the state's gallery of ancestors.[20] By honor-

[15] Pliny *HN* 35.4–5; 6–8; R. Winkes, "Pliny's Chapter on Roman Funeral Customs in the Light of *Clipeatae Imagines*," *AJA* 83 (1979) 481–84.

[16] A. de Franciscis, "La villa romana di Oplontis," in B. Andreae and H. Kyrieleis eds., *Neue Forschungen in Pompeji* (Recklinghausen 1975) 9–38.

[17] There are doubts about the *ius imaginum* being in effect in the Late Republic. K. Hopkins, "Death in Rome," in Hopkins ed., *Death and Renewal: Sociological Studies in Roman History* 2 (Cambridge 1983) 255–56, with bibliography.

[18] Winkes (supra n. 15) 482; D.E.E. Kleiner, *Roman Imperial Funerary Altars with Portraits* (*Archaeologica* 62, Rome 1987) 92, for the observation that funerary portraits in relief never appear among the aristocracy but were commissioned by the lower orders, particularly the freedmen active in the professions and trades, who populated the cities.

[19] H. Bauer, "Basilica Aemilia," in M. Hofter ed., *Kaiser Augustus und die verlorene Republik* (Berlin 1988) 200–11.

[20] S. Wood, "*Memoriae Agrippinae*: Agrippina the Elder in Julio-Claudian Art and Propaganda," *AJA* 92 (1988) 424–25, figs. 15–16.

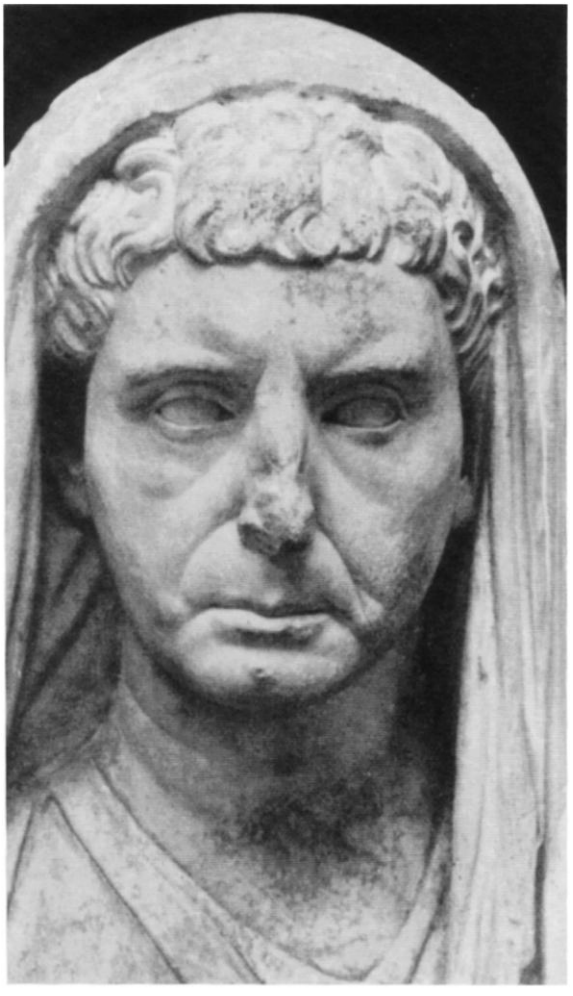

Fig. 5. Flavian relief portrait in Ostia. (After R. Calza, *Scavi di Ostia. I ritratti* 5.1 [Rome 1964] pl. 41)

ing Agrippina, Trajan rehabilitated the reputation of a woman deserving honor for her noble lineage (she may also have received sympathy because she was murdered by her son, Nero).[21]

This portrait of ancestor in tunic and toga can be dated to the Flavian period through the hairstyle, with its plastic rendering of curls and locks across the forehead. An Ostian Flavian relief portrait of an older man sacrificing also shares these features, along with that of the asymmetrical, thin-lipped mouth and set jaw (fig. 5).[22] Also in Ostia are two Flavian clipeatae imagines depicting mature men in frames with moldings that are nearly identical

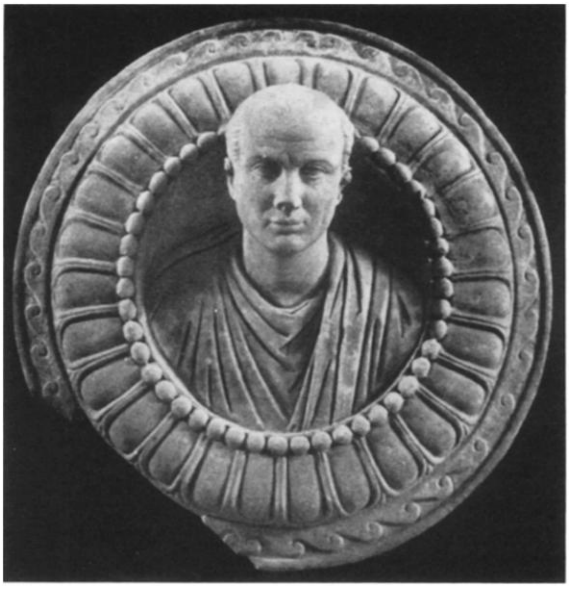

Fig. 6. Ostian *clipeata imago.* (After R. Calza, *Scavi di Ostia. I ritratti* 5.1 [Rome 1964] pl. 43)

to that depicted in the relief (fig. 6 depicts one of these).[23] Found in the Baths of Mithras, these shield portraits evidently provided an appropriate vehicle of commemoration for men prominent in civic life at the end of the first century A.D. in Ostia and Rome.

Yet, the shield portraits also served other purposes: a Trajanic or Hadrianic funerary altar in the Vatican depicts a sculptor in the process of carving a clipeata imago of a girl while a poised and proper matron, probably her mother, clad in a tunic and *stola* and wearing a Flavian or Trajanic hairstyle, looks on as the work progresses on the clipeata imago placed atop a pedestal (fig. 7).[24] Although one cannot always ascertain familial relationships, the matron's attitude as she gazes at the portrait while holding its frame implies a close attachment to the portrait's subject. The portrait then may have served as a funerary commemoration for the girl, who predeceased her mother. The clipeatae imagines appeared in both public and private life, in contexts indicating civic honor and emotional bonds within the family.

It is likely that the shield portrait in the relief depicts the father of the deceased. The family lineage, therefore, appears to have been of a recent vintage, only one generation old from the Flavian father to the son who reached maturity under Trajan. The rep-

[21] Wood (supra n. 20) 424–25.

[22] Calza (supra n. 3) 50–51, n. 71, pl. 41.

[23] Calza (supra n. 3) 51–52, ns. 72–73, pls. 42–43; G. Becatti, "Due '*Imagines Clipeatae*' ostiensi," *Le arti* 4 (1942) 172–80.

[24] G. Zimmer, *Römische Berufsdarstellungen* (*AF* 12, Berlin 1982) 157–58, n. 80, pl. 80; Vatican Museums, Galleria dei Candelabri, inv. 2671; G. Lippold, *Die Skulpturen des Vaticanischen Museums* 3.2 (Berlin 1956) 317, no. 52.

Fig. 7. Funerary altar with *clipeata imago*, Vatican Museums. (Photo Museum)

resentation of family groups is characteristic of funerary reliefs of freedmen, ex-slaves who wished to display their hard-won citizenship and marriages, from the Late Republican period onward.[25] A couple recently manumitted had no legal ancestors and frequently portrayed themselves with their freeborn children to show that they had proudly accomplished their obligation as Roman citizens to form a family (their social ambitions may have been fulfilled by the next generation who could rise above their parents' status as freedmen). By the early second century A.D., the emphasis in the reliefs of "new" or self-made men and their wives (that is, the imperial bureaucrats, the provincial elite, and prosperous merchants or craftsmen) is on the individual, often depicted with the utensils of the banquet or with the attributes of his profession or trade.[26] The Testamentum Relief is unusual with its crowding of the scene with members of the household, both deceased and living, and the clipeata imago with its allusions to the public career of service and funerary commemorations.

Depictions of works of art, portrait heads or busts, appear in other funerary reliefs from this period. A Late Flavian kline monument in the Museo

[25] D.E.E. Kleiner, *Roman Group Portraiture: The Funerary Reliefs of the Late Republic and Early Empire* (New York 1977); P. Zanker, "Grabreliefs römischer Freigelassener," *JDI* 90 (1975) 267–315; B. Shaw, "The Cultural Meaning of Death: Age and Gender in the Roman Family," in D. Kertzer and R. Saller eds., *The Family in Italy from Antiquity to the Present* (New Haven 1991) 66–90.

[26] Kleiner (supra n. 18) 101–102, n. 4, pl. 3.2–4, for one example, among others, of an altar depicting a tondo portrait resting on a pedestal; F. Sinn, *Stadtrömische Marmorurnen* (Mainz 1987); Wrede (supra n. 1) 409.

Fig. 8. Kline monument of Julia Attica, Museo Nazionale Romano. (Photo Museum)

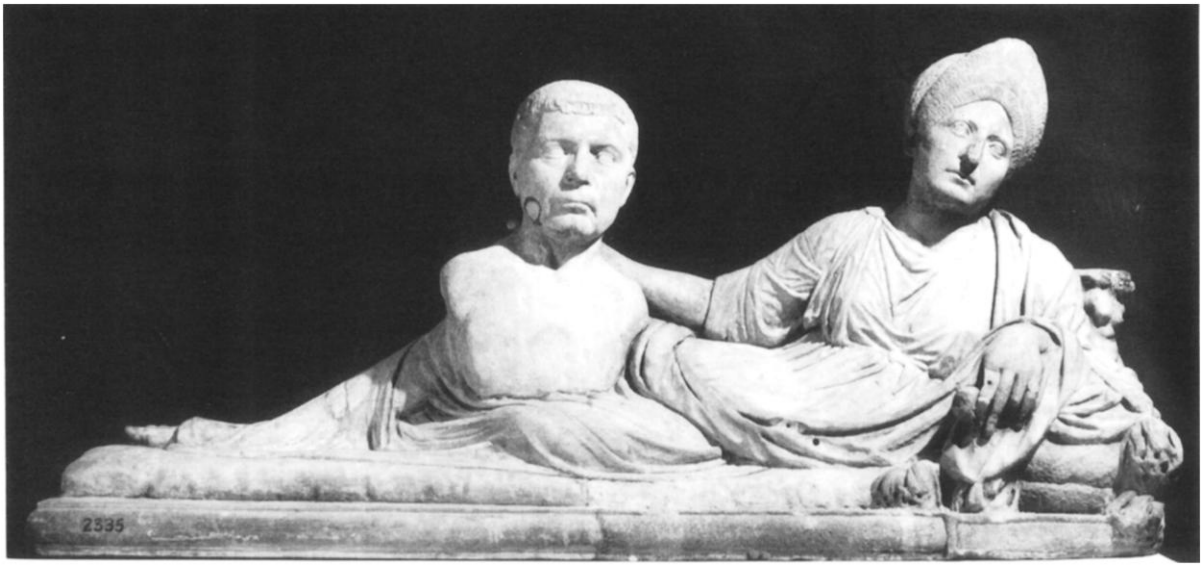

Fig. 9. Kline monument, British Museum, London. (Photo Museum)

Nazionale delle Terme shows the portrait bust of Julia Attica embraced by a man who was probably her patron and husband, C. Julius (fig. 8).[27] Depicted as a work of art—a head without a body rather than a complete figure of a woman—Julia Attica died before her husband, who is depicted reclining on the couch. He chose to depict her in the form of a funerary bust, perhaps to display his ability to honor the slave he may have freed (to become his wife) by commissioning a portrait. A kline in the British Museum, dated to the Trajanic period, depicts a reclining matron holding the bust of a man, probably her husband (fig. 9).[28] The couple strikes us as incongruous—the truncated torso of the man

[27] Wrede (supra n. 1) 403–404, figs. 79–81; Museo Nazionale Romano delle Terme, inv. 125829; Helbig[4] n. 2397 (H. von Heintze).

[28] Wrede (supra n. 1) 405, figs. 87–89; A.H. Smith, *A Catalogue of Sculpture in the Department of Greek and Roman Antiquities in the British Museum* (London 1904) 337, inv. 2335; for an earlier depiction of portrait busts in works of art, see the discussion of death masks, ancestor portraits, and the Barbarini Togatus: H. Drerup, "Totenmaske und Ahnenbild bei den Römern," *RM* 87 (1980) 81–129; G. Lahusen "Zur Funktion und Rezeption des römischen Ahnenbildes," *RM* 92 (1985) 261–89; M. Hofter, "Porträt," in Hofter (supra n. 19) cat. no. 192, 341–42, with bibliography.

whose squarish head stares purposefully out and the pensive and perhaps melancholy tilt of the matron's head, as if overcome by grief (the tilt may be exaggerated through the rejoining of the head). Both C. Julius and the Trajanic matron evidently wanted to be remembered in their roles as husband and wife devoted to the memory of their deceased mates. They hold the portrait busts to acknowledge that the relationship with their spouse may have been altered by an untimely death, yet they were still devoted to the memory of their late spouse at the time of their own death. Given the pressures among widowed Romans to remarry and begin new families, one can speculate that these marriages were their last or that C. Julius and the Trajanic matron followed their spouses to the grave fairly quickly.[29]

Social status is crucial: the inscription of the monument of Julia Attica informs us that she was a freedwoman with a patron, that is, she rose above her servile origins in slavery to a respectable station in life, probably through marriage to her former owner, and, no doubt, her portrait is a sign of this social ascent.[30] Unfortunately, the British Museum kline and the Testamentum Relief lack inscriptions to inform us of the social status and the relationships of the figures represented (perhaps in the relief the father was a freedman, and the son was freeborn). Recent studies of epitaphs have demonstrated that the newly enfranchised Roman citizen was more likely to be commemorated with an inscribed tombstone erected by a relative or an heir.[31] Citizenship brought privileges, and testation (the right to make a valid will and to appoint an heir to supervise the burial), the construction of the funerary monument, and the rites at the tomb figured prominently in the imagination of the freedmen and provincials who sought to settle their affairs. Status accrued not only through the size of the estate but also through the possession of an heir, who was obligated to maintain the deceased's memory by arranging the funeral and performing the rites.

The monuments commemorate a sequence of events: they tell us that a husband or wife predeceased his or her mate, and the surviving spouse displayed the portrait of the deceased partner. The portrait not only serves as a substitute for the deceased but also suggests that the survivor fulfilled responsibilities, in death as in life, by maintaining the funerary offerings and rites at the tomb, including meals held beside the grave on the deceased's birthday or on the anniversary of the death and during annual festivals of the dead such as the Parentalia, and the spreading of rose petals and violets over tombs on other feast days.[32] A funerary relief from the mid-first century A.D. in the Villa Albani may represent a funerary rite with its depiction of a seated male figure holding a portrait bust while a veiled female figure makes an offering of incense.[33] The busts depicted in the reliefs and kline monuments evince the respect and attention given to the memory of the deceased, and attest to the expense that was not spared for the outfitting of the tomb.[34]

The marital bond is honored as a union that survives death in the two kline monuments. Neither children nor parents are represented, and one may surmise that if there were no other works of sculpture depicting other family members, the tombs were not used over several generations.[35] The accumulation

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[29] S. Dixon, *The Roman Family* (Baltimore 1992) 79–90, on Augustan marriage laws, requirements for the dowry, and remarriage; K.R. Bradley, "Remarriage and the Structure of the Upper-Class Family at Rome," in Bradley ed., *Discovering the Roman Family* (New York 1991) 156–76.

[30] *CIL* 6.20383: OSSA
IVLIAE·C·L·ATTIC
The inscription indicates that C. Julius was the patron of Julia Attica (and I deduce that he freed her in order to make her his wife; Julia Attica, however, may have been a *conliberta*, rather than a *liberta*, of C. Julius). See S. Treggiari, *Roman Freedmen during the Late Republic* (Oxford 1969) 15–16, 209–12, and 215–16, on the circumstances of a master freeing a female slave in order to marry her.

[31] E. Meyer, "Explaining the Epigraphic Habit in the Roman Empire: The Evidence of Epitaphs," *JRS* 80 (1990) 74–96; I. Morris, *Death-Ritual and Social Structure in Classical Antiquity* (Cambridge 1992) 167–69 (following Meyer); see also Saller and Shaw (infra n. 34).

[32] D.P. Harmon, "The Family Festivals of Rome," *ANRW* 2.16.2 (Berlin 1978) 1600–1603, with bibliography; J. Maurin, "*Funus* et rites de separation," *AnnArchStorAnt* 6 (1984) 191–208.

[33] Zimmer (supra n. 24) 156–57, n. 79, pl. 79; Villa Albani, inv. 984.

[34] R.P. Saller and B.D. Shaw, "Tombstones and Roman Family Relations in the Principate: Civilians, Soldiers, and Slaves," *JRS* 74 (1984) 124–56, on the cost of memorial stones not being beyond the means of individuals with modest incomes; M. Bang, "Preise von Grabdenkmälern," in *Darstellungen aus der Sittengeschichte Roms* (Leipzig 1921) 304–309, on the costs of *cippi* and stelae of soldiers in the provinces as being as low as 100–900 sestertii. Portrait busts and reliefs, however, were considerably higher: Kleiner (supra n. 18) 29, for a case in which 10,000 sestertii were not sufficient for the erection of an altar and a presumably ostentatious tomb (no. 54, 177–78, pls. 30.3, 34.1–2). See also R. Saller, *Patriarchy, Property, and Death in the Roman Family* (Cambridge 1994).

[35] Hopkins (supra n. 17) 253–55.

of wealth, therefore, probably occurred within one generation and no illustrious ancestors existed (the notorious example of the freedman's rapid but problematic social ascent is, of course, the career of Trimalchio in the *Satyricon* of Petronius).[36] Yet, rather than depicting the couple reclining on a kline together as if they were alive and feasting or asleep, the works refer to the time when the couple was separated by death with one of them portrayed alive and the other already dead, the physical presence abbreviated in the form of a bust. The reclining figure is honored as one who proudly possesses a bust, a costly investment as well as a reminder of the distance between the living and the dead and of the many obligations owed by the living to the dead, as mentioned above. In other words, the most recently deceased spouse, the one shown reclining, is identified as the survivor whose social status is enhanced by the display of the portrait bust. The survivor fulfilled his duties to the dead simply by erecting an epitaph or tomb and making offerings;[37] since rituals of mourning focused on the public discharge of these duties, it is difficult to say whether commemorative sculpture merely provided an occasion to flaunt wealth or actually expressed emotion—grief and longing for the deceased (or, perhaps, both).

The British Museum kline may also represent the husband as the *paterfamilias,* transformed from a living person into an ancestor through his depiction in the form of a bust. Yet he seems to lack what is necessary to achieve ancestorhood: a successor, preferably a son.[38] Kline monuments tend to depict solitary individuals isolated from family relationships: rarely are members of different generations shown together, as they are depicted in the Testamentum Relief.

The remaining figures frame the central pair of father and son. The diminutive slave (fig. 10) stands furthest from the focus of glance and gesture. Typical of representations of slaves, the figure appears childlike and wears a plain tunic.[39] His face is damaged although he seems to have had a short cap of hair. He holds an abacus, the lower edge of which is restored, and points to one of the disks, as if he is moving it in place. The five rows of disks that could slide

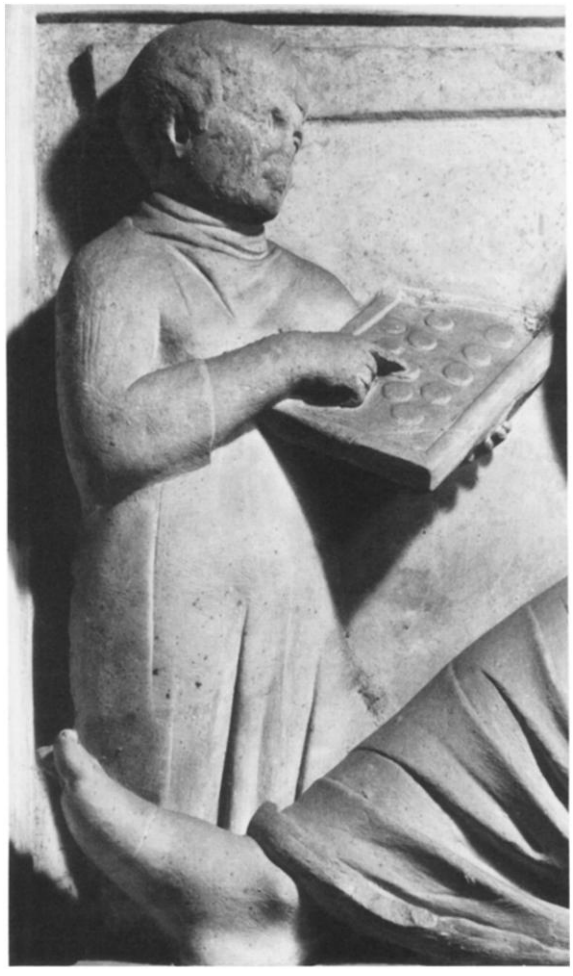

Fig. 10. Slave with abacus in the Testamentum Relief. (Photo Museum)

along grooves often indicated columns for digits, for example, 1, 10, 100, 1,000, and 10,000.[40] In the *Satyricon* of Petronius, the successful and semiliterate freedman Hermeros boasts that he can do percentages in weights and *sestertii*—the rudimentary education that he received as a slave emphasized arithmetic rather than reading and writing so that he could become a bookkeeper or agent in his master's business.[41] As a trusted member of the *familia* who kept the accounts of the household, the slave shows off his skill while pointing to a sum that probably

[36] J.P. Bodel, *Freedmen in the Satyricon of Petronius* (Diss. Univ. of Michigan 1984); J. Andreau, "The Freedman," in A. Giardina ed., *The Romans* (trans. L.G. Cochrane, Chicago 1993) 175–98.

[37] Dixon (supra n. 29) 13.

[38] M. Fortes, "Pietas in Ancestor Worship," in *Time and Social Structure and Other Essays* (London 1970) 164–200.

[39] E. D'Ambra, "A Myth for a Smith: A Meleager Sarcophagus from a Tomb in Ostia," *AJA* 92 (1988) 85–100.

[40] S.F. Bonner, *Education in Ancient Rome* (Berkeley 1977) 183–84, figs. 24–25; A.M. Reggiani, *Educazione e scuola* 10: *Vita e costumi dei romani antichi* (Rome 1990) 55–57, fig. 45.

[41] Petron. *Sat.* 58; Bodel (supra n. 36) 136–38.

reflects the household's wealth, perhaps their profitable interests in trade. Inscriptions frequently mention slaves who were freed upon their master's death, and this also may be why the slave is represented here.[42]

The relief is balanced on either side with depictions of documents: on the left, the slave displays his records of sums; on the right, the deceased rests the scroll on the knee of the matron. The scroll is not shown as a tightly rolled tube but is held as if it has just been opened, read, and gathered up in a loop to pass on to the matron.[43] The matron's hand rests in her lap (fig. 11), with fingers flexed as if holding an oblong but bent object that is difficult to discern (although it appears to be something inserted between the thumb and index finger, it may just be a clumsy rendering of a finger). Her other arm clasps the deceased's shoulder in a delicate embrace that adds to the somber and sober mood.

It is suggested by the composition—the alignment of the heads and gestures toward the viewer's right—that the exchange between the deceased and the matron dominates the relief. As in the kline monuments discussed above, the relief represents a sequence of events punctuated by death that marks the line of succession within the family: the father depicted in the shield portrait died, perhaps even before his son reached adulthood, and then the son passed away, leaving his mother to mourn both of them. The father in the portrait shield corresponds to the busts of the kline monuments that represent those who died first, while the reclining youth recalls the type of the spouses shown semirecumbent in full figure to indicate that the monument marks *their* death. They display their devotion to the dead by holding the busts that at the same time indicate the proximity and distance between the long-departed and the most recently deceased. Proximity is granted through the intermediaries of portrait busts kept in the house or tomb and the rituals—the commemoration of birthdays and the meals taken at the tomb—that kept memories alive; distance is created through the transformation of the deceased into an ancestor, a historical figure whose accomplishments account for the past and the origins of the family, for subsequent generations who were obligated to serve and revere the dead. It stands to reason that the matron, seated at the side of the deceased, is depicted as a survivor.

Fig. 11. Matron in the Testamentum Relief. (Photo Museum)

The scenario suggested by the relationships of the figures supports the observation that many men did not live long into their children's adulthood.[44] The high mortality rates, due to uncontrollable diseases and military fatalities, as well as to the practice of men marrying women eight to ten years younger than themselves, left many widows and fatherless children

[42] Treggiari (supra n. 30) 87, 95–98; J. D'Arms, *Commerce and Social Standing in Ancient Rome* (Cambridge, Mass. 1981) 132.

[43] T. Birt, *Die Buchrolle in der Kunst* (Leipzig 1907) 190, fig. 126; 191, fig. 130, for comparisons; 192, n. 2 on the Testamentum Relief.

[44] B. Rawson ed., *The Family in Ancient Rome: New Perspectives* (Ithaca 1986) 18.

(it has been proposed that "perhaps a third of Roman children had lost their fathers by age ten").[45] In the lower orders, mothers could run their own households while elite widows were more likely to remarry. The relief's depiction of a widow and her late husband reunited in mourning for their son attests to these demographic patterns (high mortality rates also indicate that many children did not reach adulthood nor live long as adults).

During the Republic and Empire a system of property transmission was gradually developed in which women could inherit, receive legacies, and dispose of their own wealth.[46] Women in marriages without *manus* (that is, they remained under the power of their fathers rather than their husbands) who became independent after the death of their fathers were obligated to have guardians to protect their interests and give consent to actions such as the making of a will. In some cases the consent of the guardian was not necessary (if a woman had at least three children, or four for a freedwoman, she was granted the *ius liberorum*) or could be compelled.[47] The mother depicted in the relief may have inherited from her husband with the intention of ultimately leaving the property to her son or she may have been entrusted with the management of the estate until her son reached maturity (legally, he reached puberty at 14 and could inherit as an adult at 25).[48] The relief, of course, does not affirm that the matron inherited but she figures prominently as the recipient of the deceased's attention.

First of all, she appears to be the only figure depicted who outlived the deceased, besides the slave. Secondly, her seated position with feet raised on a footstool and her garments and veil, in particular, recall the motif of the seated goddess or personification in state art and coinage. The depictions of goddesses and personifications usually connote their characteristic virtues and the possession of their domains.[49] The matron in the relief does not assume divine attributes through the adoption of the motif but, rather, displays her virtue as the *materfamilias*. The veiled head of the matron as a sign of her modesty and devotion implies her role of dignity and authority in the household. The Roman matron's traditional role as the *custos domus* entailed the protection of the integrity of the household: her body must remain inviolable and her duties were not only to safeguard the household's goods and valuables but also to promote its well-being and wealth through her labors.[50] The matron in the relief becomes the custodian of the patrimony and wealth indicated by the abacus and the shield portrait.

As I have stated above, the matron is most likely the mother of the reclining figure, rather than his wife.[51] The scholarship is divided on this point, no doubt because of the difficulty of determining age on the basis of portraiture: in funerary art portraits often appear older or younger than the age of the deceased as stated in accompanying inscriptions.[52] Although the matron is represented as a mature woman, with a double chin, full cheeks, and lined skin, and the deceased seems considerably younger, one cannot presume that they are mother and son on this evidence alone.

The garments worn by the matron are appropriate for either the grieving wife or mother of the reclining male: the *palla* or, rather, the *ricinium* worn for mourning, pulled up over her head as a veil, and the long belted tunic or stola. The stola in particular

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[45] P. Garnsey and R. Saller, *The Roman Empire: Economy, Society, and Culture* (Berkeley 1987) 146, based on computer simulation; T.G. Parkin, *Demography and Roman Society* (Baltimore 1992) 112: a family of more than two adult children would have been considered remarkable, and 120: freedmen's families were usually small because manumission occurred later in life with few years left for childbearing.

[46] J. Gardner, *Women in Roman Law and Society* (Bloomington 1986) 165–67; J. Crook, "Women in Roman Succession," in Rawson (supra n. 44) 63.

[47] Gardner (supra n. 46) 167.

[48] R. Saller, "Roman Heirship Strategies in Principle and Practice," in Kertzer and Saller (supra n. 25) 40–41, 44.

[49] E. D'Ambra, *Private Lives, Imperial Virtues: The Frieze of the Forum Transitorium in Rome* (Princeton 1993) 47–77.

[50] E. Stehle, "Venus, Cybele, and the Sabine Women: The Roman Construction of Female Sexuality," *Helios* 16 (1989) 148–49, with bibliography.

[51] Altmann (supra n. 1) 205: wife of reclining male; Becatti (supra n. 23) 174: mother of reclining male; C. Vermeule, "A Greek Theme and Its Survivals: The Ruler's Shield (Tondo Image) in Tomb and Temple," *ProcPhilSoc* 109 (1965) 381–82: mother of reclining male; Winkes (supra n. 1) 213: wife of reclining male; Wrede (supra n. 1) 404, 406: mother of reclining male; Winkes (supra n. 15) 484: woman described as matron with implications that she is the mother of the reclining male; Toynbee (supra n. 8) 268: probably the mother of reclining male.

[52] Kleiner (supra n. 18) 29, with examples: it may be that the elderly were depicted at the height of their powers earlier in their careers and that children appeared older in order to endow them with the stature of fully developed citizens (although most inscriptions do not state the age of the deceased). Conversely, the woman may have been depicted not as she appeared at the young man's death but as a more mature matron who embodies the responsibility and gravity worthy of her position. Our notions of aging (and what constitutes aging) differ considerably from those of the Romans.

Fig. 12. Funerary Relief, Vatican Museums. (Photo Museum)

indicated the moral stature of matrons, yet it is not clear if it is depicted here (without visible straps).[53]

It is worth considering whether the matron's gesture can elucidate the relationship of the pair. The gesture of embrace around the shoulder typically serves to unite husband and wife: there are kline sarcophagi that depict reclining couples linked in this way and in the Terme kline (fig. 8) the man places his arm around the shoulder of the portrait bust of a woman, presumably his wife.[54] Usually the husband embraces his wife (the British Museum kline, fig. 9, depicts the woman holding the portrait bust but this is rather atypical, especially when compared to pairs of reclining figures). A father, however, embraces his son with the same gesture in a Claudian funerary relief in the Museo Chiaramonti of the Vatican (fig. 12).[55] Perhaps the embrace expresses an emotional bond that is both protective and possessive on the part of husbands and fathers toward their wives and sons.[56] If the paterfamilias places his arm around the shoulder of his wife or son, then the gesture implies not only intimacy or affection, but also his custody of them, that is, his powers over and responsibility toward them. Although the authority of the mother did not correspond to that of the traditional paterfamilias, it seems more likely that the mother, as the surviving parent, would embrace her son in this context.[57]

The matron does not embrace the portrait bust of her deceased spouse as in the kline monuments (figs. 8–9); instead, she embraces the son whom she has most recently lost. The shield portrait presents

[53] Hor. *Sat.* 1.94–99; Mart. *Epigrams* 1.35.8–9; L.M. Wilson, *The Clothing of the Ancient Romans* (Baltimore 1938) 156; see also the essays in J.L. Sebesta and L. Bonfante eds., *The World of Roman Costume* (Madison 1994).

[54] H. Wrede, "Der Sarkophagdeckel eines Mädchens in Malibu und die frühen Klinensarkophage Roms, Athens und Kleinasiens," *Roman Funerary Monuments in the J. Paul Getty Museum* 1 (Malibu 1990) 15–46, figs. 15, 16, 26, 37, and 38, for embracing couples; Sinn (supra n. 5) no. 7, 27–29, figs. 12–13: a relief dated to 40–30 B.C. in which a veiled woman touches the toga of her husband (not equivalent to the shoulder embrace); Kleiner (supra n. 25) fig. 34: an Augustan relief in which a woman rests her hand on the shoulder of her husband (also not equivalent to the shoulder embrace); in funerary reliefs of the Late Republic and Early Empire and in second–third century sarcophagi, the *dextrarum iunctio* is the gesture that frequently connotes marriage; see infra n. 56.

[55] W. Amelung, *Die Sculpturen des Vaticanischen Museums* 1 (Berlin 1903) no. 6a, 315–17, pl. 31; D.E.E. and F.S. Kleiner, "A Sculptural Workshop in Claudian Rome," *ArchNews* 10 (1981) 3–8. See E. Goffman, *Gender Advertisements* (New York 1987) 55, figs. 254–60, on the "asymmetrical configuration" of the shoulder hold that requires the dominant partner to be taller and that "the held person accept direction and constraint."

[56] G. Davies, "The Significance of the Handshake Motif in Classical Funerary Art," *AJA* 89 (1985) 627–40, on the multiple meanings of the *dextrarum iunctio* in terms of parting at death, reunion in the afterlife, and harmony in the political and domestic spheres.

[57] S. Dixon, *The Roman Mother* (London 1988) 47–51, 188–94; D.E.E. and F.S. Kleiner (supra n. 55) fig. 1, for a relief depicting two women embracing children.

Fig. 13. Funerary relief of a butcher, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Dresden. (Photo Museum)

the youth's father only in memory, and the husband and wife who look on from either side are temporarily reunited in ensuring the young man's smooth passage from life to death. The relief then is similar to the kline monuments that bring together a couple separated by death, one member of which is holding a portrait bust as a sign of status or of devotion to the partner who died earlier. In the Testamentum Relief, however, the emphasis is on the nuclear family, the son framed by his two parents, one whom he joins in death and the other whom he leaves behind.[58] The mother, perhaps, takes leave of her son who is attended by a slave in the atrium of the house, which is indicated by the shield portrait.[59] Emotional bonds between husbands and wives, as well as between parents and children, dominate funerary art and epitaphs that usually avoid explicit references to professions or public service (more commonly found in commemorations of craftsmen or *seviri Augustales* in Ostia and Pompeii, as well as in other parts of Italy and the empire).[60]

A few reliefs of craftsmen and tradesmen, however, combine depictions of professions with those of the domestic sphere. The iconography of the seated female as the emblem of domesticity and moral authority figures prominently in these works. A Hadrianic relief from Rome, now in Dresden, depicts a butcher at work in his shop while a woman seated in an elaborate, high-backed chair with a footstool writes on a polyptych (fig. 13).[61] Whether the woman is the patron of the establishment or the butcher's wife is not clear but her hairstyle, furniture, and ability to write or keep accounts suggest prosperity and cultivation. Paul Zanker has observed that because the woman appears to be represented in her own space, separate from the butcher shop, she may instead depict a generic type of the cultivated woman, known from Pompeian painting.[62] As in the Testamentum Relief, the motif of the seated female figure serves to elevate the scene with its allusions to respectability. A Trajanic relief in Virginia also depicts the seated matron, the wife of a potter, who holds a fan and bread as attributes of femininity and domesticity (fig. 14).[63] Her complicated coiffure, popular in the Flavian and Early Trajanic periods, is similar to that of the matron in the Testamentum Relief. Her tunic slips from her right shoulder, a motif that alludes to Venus and, therefore, to the sexual

[58] Garnsey and Saller (supra n. 45) 129; R. Saller, "*Familia, Domus*, and the Roman Conception of the Family," *Phoenix* 38 (1984) 336–55.

[59] Winkes (supra n. 15) 484 suggests that the setting is the atrium.

[60] A. Woods, *The Funerary Monuments of the Augustales in Italy* (Diss. Univ. of Calif., Los Angeles 1992); Zimmer (supra n. 24); N. Kampen, *Image and Status. Roman Working Women in Ostia* (Berlin 1981); B.M. Felletti Maj, *La tradizione italica nell'arte romana* (Rome 1977); R. Bianchi-Bandinelli et al., *Sculture municipali dell'area sabellica tra l'età di Cesare e quello di Nerone* (*StMisc* 10, 1963–1964).

[61] Zimmer (supra n. 24) 94, no. 2.

[62] P. Zanker, "Bürgerliche Selbstdarstellung am Grab im römischen Kaiserreich," in H.-J. Schalles, H. von Hesberg, and P. Zanker eds., *Die römische Stadt im 2. Jahrhundert n. Chr. Der Funktionswandel des öffentlichen Raumes* (Cologne 1992) 352, pl. 235.

[63] Zimmer (supra n. 24) 199–200, no. 144, identifies the objects that the matron holds as a *patera* and a palm fan; J. Dobbins, "A Roman Funerary Relief of a Potter and His Wife," *Arts in Virginia* 25 (1985) 24–33, for the identification of the patera as a bread; H. Wrede, *Consecratio in Formam Deorum. Vergöttlichte Privatpersonen in der römischen Kaiserzeit* (Mainz 1981) 164.

Fig. 14. Funerary relief of a potter and his wife, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, Adolph D. and Wilkins C. Williams Fund. (Photo Museum)

life of the marriage. The allusion to Venus derives from the commemoration of imperial and non-elite women as divinities.[64] In all three reliefs the matron, seated opposite her husband, exemplifies her contribution to the domus as its caretaker and moral guardian.

In the Testamentum Relief, the materfamilias anchors the composition as the recipient of the deceased's attention. Her veil, among her other attributes, implies her devotion to her husband's memory, made manifest by the presence of his portrait, and her subsequent dutiful role in providing for the needs of her dead son, organizing the meals and rites at the tomb and honoring his birthday.[65] Only two generations of the nuclear family are shown: if the deceased left a wife or child behind or had siblings, they are not depicted here. Granted that the relief represents only one moment in the chronology of the family, its view of domestic affairs is limited and may not indicate that the line ended with the death of the son. If the mother is shown to survive her son (as I suspect), then she probably was entrusted with preserving the household's wealth as attested by the slave's abacus. Yet the relief does not (nor could it ever) account for the transmission of property in the manner of a legal document. More importantly, the depiction of the matron suggests the Roman concern with maintaining bonds between the living and

[64] T. Mikocki, "Faustine la Jeune en Vénus—mythes et faits," in N. Bonacasa and G. Rizza eds., *Ritratto ufficiale e ritratto privato, Quaderni della ricerca scientifica* 116 (Rome 1988) 383–89; Wrede (supra n. 63) 306–23; E. D'Ambra, "The Calculus of Venus: Nude Portraits of Roman Matrons," in N.B. Kampen ed., *Sexuality in Ancient Art* (Cambridge, forthcoming).

[65] Winkes (supra n. 15) 484, on the matronly figure emphasizing "traditional Republican values."

the dead and the ubiquitous presence of the dead among the living in families of modest origins striving for social acceptance and upward social mobility. The materfamilias's mourning for her husband and her son is enhanced by the depictions of or allusions to works of art in the relief, the shield portrait and the kline monument, conveying the achievements of a family that properly honored its dead and enabled them, eventually, to be transformed into ancestors through the scrupulous performance of services to the dead.

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