

A LIFE UNLIVED: THE ROMAN FUNERARY COMMEMORATION OF CHILDREN

A LIFE UNLIVED: THE ROMAN FUNERARY COMMEMORATION OF CHILDREN
FROM THE FIRST CENTURY BC TO THE MID-SECOND CENTURY AD

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A Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in Partial Fulfilment of the
Requirements for the Degree Master of Arts

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M. A. Thesis – B. N. Scarfo; McMaster University – Classics.

McMaster University MASTER OF ARTS (2012) Hamilton, Ontario (Classics)

TITLE: A Life Unlived: The Roman Funerary Commemoration of Children From the First Century BC to the Mid-Second Century AD

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NUMBER OF PAGES: (vii) (128)

ABSTRACT

This thesis is concerned with the representation of children on sculptural funerary commemoration, with a focus on freedmen panel reliefs and funerary altars. Although there is evidence found from all regions of the Empire, the majority of the material discussed here is from the city of Rome itself. Representations of young children first appear on freedmen panel reliefs, which date to the end of the Republic and were produced into the first century of the Empire. When this genre declined in popularity at the end of the first century AD, funerary altars emerged as the new, preferred form of commemoration. The goal of this thesis is to show that these two types of funerary monuments reveal much about the children themselves, but also provide insight into the social and cultural identity of their parents. Due to the family relationships expressed on these commemorations, I also evaluate the degree of affect demonstrated by the parents or the dedicatory towards the children present on these monuments. The first chapter provides a socio-cultural background on the role of children in the family and Roman society as well as the importance of funerary commemoration. In this chapter I also discuss the likelihood of high infant and child mortality rates and explore reactions towards the death of children in literary evidence and social conventions. In the first half of the second chapter I provide a background on the significance of the freedman family, I then delve into an examination of the panel reliefs themselves. The third chapter examines funerary altars that commemorate young children. The material discussed in this chapter is analyzed through a case study approach of nine altars, examining both the epigraphic elements and the sculptural components.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Michele George, for not only her support throughout this process, but also for introducing me to the fascinating institution of the Roman family and its representation in material culture. Her enthusiasm, insightful guidance, and constructive criticism have been absolutely vital to the completion of this thesis. Sincerest thanks must also be extended to the members of my thesis committee, Dr. Evan Haley and Dr. Martin Beckmann, for their patience, support, and interest in my findings. I also thank Dr. Claude Eilers who kindly supplied for Dr. Beckmann during my defense and for providing his own valuable input. I would like to warmly thank Dr. Spencer Pope and Dr. Paul Murgatroyd, whose kind words of encouragement caused me to pursue graduate level study in the first place. I acknowledge the Department of Classics, the School of Graduate Studies at McMaster University, and the E. T. Salmon Fund in Roman Studies for their financial support throughout this endeavour. I wish to extend my gratitude to my fellow graduate students in the department for their wonderful friendship and unwavering support, as well as to Carmen Camilleri whose advice and encouragement has proven to be most valuable. I also sincerely thank my family and friends for taking a genuine interest in my work and for tolerating my preoccupation with this thesis. Lastly, I would like to express my warmest thanks to Nate Tracey, to whom I am indebted. Your loving support and patience encourages me always.

D(is) · M(anibus)
Miroslava · Stribrny
Carissima · Avia
Vixit · A(nnis) · XCI · M(ensibus) · IV · D(iebus) · I

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| <i>AHB</i> | The Ancient History Bulletin = Revue d'histoire ancienne. Calgary: University of Calgary, Department of Greek and Roman Studies |
| <i>AJA</i> | American Journal of Archaeology: the journal of the Archaeological Instituted of America. Boston: Boston University, Archaeological Institute of America. |
| <i>AJAH</i> | American Journal of Ancient History. Cambridge: Harvard University. |
| <i>AJPh</i> | American Journal of Philology. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. |
| <i>AncSoc</i> | Ancient Society. Leuven: Peeters. |
| <i>Arctos</i> | Arctos: Acta Philologica Fennica. Helsinki: Klassilis-filologinen yhdistys. |
| <i>CIL</i> | Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum. |
| <i>CPh</i> | Classical Philology: a journal devoted to research in classical antiquity. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. |
| <i>CQ</i> | Classical Quarterly. Oxford: Oxford University Press. |
| <i>G&R</i> | Greece and Rome. Oxford: Clarendon Press. |
| <i>Historia</i> | Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte = revue d'histoire ancienne. Stuttgart: Steiner. |
| <i>IG</i> | Inscriptiones Graecae urbis Romae. |
| <i>JDAI</i> | Jahrbuch des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts. Berlin: de Gruyter. |
| <i>JRS</i> | The Journal of Roman Studies. London: Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies. |
| <i>REA</i> | Revue des études anciennes. Pessae: Université Michel de Montaigne, Maison de l'archéologie. |

DECLARATION OF ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

The author declares that the content of this research has been completed by Barbara Nancy Scarfo, with recognition of the contributions of the supervisory committee comprising of Dr. Michele George, Dr. Evan W. Haley, and Dr. Martin Beckmann during the research and writing process.

INTRODUCTION

The preservation of memory was of great importance in Roman society. Private Roman citizens were able to achieve this and convey aspects of their identity in a very public way through their funerary commemorations. These monuments were erected outside of the walls of Rome and lined the streets that led into the city, which ensured that they were visible to all who passed by them. While there are examples of dedications from individuals of different social and economic statuses, the majority of extant funerary commemorations were commissioned by those who were neither members of the elite nor the poor, but who came from the middle socio-economic groups. Funerary commemoration was an important aspect of the spread of Roman culture, as is indicated by its presence in the provinces. This category of material evidence is of particular interest to Roman historians as it was a cultural phenomenon that took a variety of forms and is one from which we are able to draw information.

Funerary commemoration took different forms, depending on the individual's economic means, and range from grandiose *mausolea* to smaller scale memorials such as the more modest *stelae*. Despite the numerous kinds of commemoration, two distinct elements that appear on many of these monuments are significant: portraiture and an inscription. In most cases these features complement one another and, when analyzed together, they can reveal important details about the identity of the deceased. Within the city of Rome itself, a considerable number of extant funerary monuments indicate through the inscription and the sculptural component that they were set up by families.

Furthermore, the most common relationship that is established in this group of commemorations is that between parents and their children.

Young children were differentiated from adults and were a unique group in Roman society. Children had specific roles in the family, which included demonstrating filial *pietas*, as well as fulfilling expectations that were established by their parents. Children, including infants and neonates, are also present in the literary record: they are discussed in legal texts, anecdotal accounts, correspondence, and medical writings. As for their presence in material evidence, children had a prominent position on funerary commemoration in the late first century BC to the mid-second century AD. The mention of children in written evidence and their inclusion in material culture has made them an important group for Roman social historians to study.

In this thesis I examine the representation of children on sculptural funerary commemoration, dedicating my focus to freedmen panel reliefs and funerary altars. Although there is evidence found from all regions of the Empire, the majority of the material discussed here is from the city of Rome itself and its immediate environs. Representations of young children first appear on freedmen panel reliefs, which date to the end of the Republic and were produced into the first century of the Empire. In this genre, they are depicted alongside members of their family; however, they are also clearly set apart from the rest of the figures in the panel through their dress and portraiture. When this genre declined in popularity at the end of the first century AD, funerary altars emerged as the new, preferred form of commemoration. There are extant examples of altars that were dedicated to children, but unlike panel reliefs, these monuments featured

depictions of children unaccompanied by their families. I will show that these two types of funerary monuments reveal much about the children themselves, but also provide insight into the social and cultural identity of their parents. Through an examination of these two genres, I attempt to establish what aspects of the children's identity are expressed on these monuments. In addition, I explore to what extent parents, or the dedicators of the monuments, conveyed their social status and position in Roman society. The monuments examined in this thesis indicate that they were erected by either the child's parents, or another dedicatory who had a quasi-parental relationship with the child, or a blood relative. Given the family relationships expressed on these commemorations, I also evaluate the degree of affect demonstrated by the parents or dedicatory towards the children present on these monuments.

The first chapter provides a socio-cultural background on the role of children in the family and Roman society as well as the importance of funerary commemoration. In this chapter I also discuss the likelihood of high infant and child mortality rates and explore reactions towards the death of children in literary evidence and social conventions. An investigation of the role of children in the family and the responses towards childhood death are essential for understanding cultural attitudes and the commemoration of children. The following two chapters are dedicated to the material evidence, in which I examine the material chronologically by genre, beginning with freedmen reliefs and then funerary altars. In the second chapter, before delving into the material evidence, I present a background on the significance of the freedman family. Due to the fact that the persons represented in this genre are mostly freedmen and their

children, knowledge of this status group is essential. These reliefs are valuable to this study as they are the first examples of sculptural funerary commemoration to feature representations of young children under the age of fifteen. The third chapter examines funerary altars that commemorate young children. In this chapter I analyze the evidence through a case study approach consisting of nine altars, beginning with an examination of the epigraphic elements followed by an investigation of the sculptural elements.

CHAPTER ONE

The Role of Children in the Roman Family and in Roman Funerary Commemoration

Introduction

The Roman family and household were the fundamental social institutions throughout the Republic and Empire. The standard household of a married couple of means comprised their slaves and freedmen, who were classified as the *familia*, but the family unit itself was the respected centre.¹ The ultimate goal of Roman marriage was the production of children to facilitate the control of family property, and the legitimate children who were produced became a source of social and economic support. Due to its social and legal advantages, the ideal family unit consisting of the *paterfamilias*, *materfamilias*, and *iusti filii* was not only valued by freeborn married couples, but was also an institution that was highly coveted by many slave couples who aspired to partake in it. While the family and household of a free Roman couple was a direct reflection of their social status and wealth, it also signified that they were able to continue the family line that was established by their ancestors, or, in the case of freedmen couples, they were able to begin a respectable lineage. Moreover, the family ensured that tangible assets as well as the family's *nomen* were properly transferred and protected. These aspects of the family made it a symbol of stability and security.² As a result, the family and its associated values were sacred and were protected by the legal authority of the *paterfamilias* through his almost absolute *patria potestas*.

¹ Dixon 1992: 2 and Saller 1984: 342.

² George 2005a: 39.

To judge from the large quantity of sculptural and epigraphic material from private citizens that has been found in Rome, it seems clear that the Romans valued commemoration and employed it as a means of self-promotion and the display of social status. In the funerary context, commemoration granted the dead a permanent place among their social equals, honoured them with respect, and let them display their identity. The bereaved dedicators were also able to express their grief through this medium and memorialize their relationship with the deceased, familial or otherwise.³ The bonds that are most often commemorated on these monuments are those between spouses and, more importantly for this study, between parents and children.

In this chapter I provide a background on children and their valuation in the family and Roman society as well as their importance in Roman funerary commemoration. First, I examine the function of children within the structure of the family. I then discuss the reality of high infant and child mortality rates, followed by an investigation of the reactions towards childhood death revealed in literary sources and in social conventions. Lastly, I consider the purpose and phenomenon of funerary commemoration and its use by Roman families.

The Role of Children in the Family

There are instances in the correspondence and anecdotal works of Roman authors that reveal a sentimental image of the Roman family. In a letter to Atticus, Cicero expresses the loneliness and anxiety caused by the absence of his brother and friends; however, he found solace in the company of his wife and young children. Moreover, he

³ Carroll 2006: 26.

states that his friendships, political or otherwise, bring him public renown, but, unlike his family, they are unable to bring him private satisfaction.⁴ While this example provides insight into the affective relationships within the family, there was also an established familial hierarchy in which every member had a distinct role. The *paterfamilias* was the authoritative head of the household and the *materfamilias* had the role of supportive wife and matriarch. While it is clear that the primary factor that motivated married couples to reproduce was the continuation of family lineage, children themselves had a defined set of responsibilities and expectations attached to them, which clearly differentiated them as a distinct social group.

The Roman father and his legal *patria potestas* (i.e., legal control over his household) is an intriguing aspect of the family that helps scholars understand the relationships between parents and their children. When a child was born, it was the father's decision whether or not the child would be reared, a commitment that was indicated by the ritual lifting of the newborn from the ground. The children that the father decided to raise were under his *potestas*, which meant that they had no power or property of their own nor were they permitted to create a will. Furthermore, the father possessed the power of life and death, *vitae necisque potestas*, over his children who were *in potestate* and therefore had the legal rite to either kill his children or abandon them.⁵ There is one law that suggests otherwise: the so-called law of Romulus. This ruling, which is recorded by Dionysius of Halicarnassus, reads as follows:

⁴ Cicero *Ad Atticum* 1. 18.

⁵ Saller 1997: 115. While fathers had this authority throughout the Republic and early to mid-Empire, the killing of a child in one's *potestas* was considered *parricidium* under Constantine.

'In the first place, he obliged the inhabitants to bring up all their male children and the first-born of the females, and forbade them to destroy any children under three years of age unless they were maimed or monstrous from their very birth. These he did not forbid their parents to expose, provided they first showed them to their five nearest neighbours and these also approved.'⁶

This law demonstrates a concern for population growth and eugenics, but it has been deemed unreliable by scholars. Eyben suggests that this is more of a religious law than a secular law since it is not compatible with *patria potestas*. Likewise, Harris suspects that there is a distinct Greek influence on this passage and addresses the fact that the showing of the infant to five neighbours was not Roman practice. He suggests that perhaps this excerpt might have been more of a comment on the prevalence of exposure in the late Republic. In reality, the *paterfamilias* maintained this power over his children until he died or decided to release them from his *potestas*. In the case of daughters, if they married *cum manu* (i.e., entering into the *manus*, or power, of the husband), they were transferred to their husbands' family and were no longer in the *potestas* of their father.⁷

The absolute influence exercised by the *paterfamilias* over his family, combined with the fact that children could not legally own any property, has caused some scholars to equate children who were *in potestate* to slaves. This interpretation has been adopted by Veyne who argues that there was no 'paternal or maternal instinct' among Roman parents and that children were never shown affection by their parents, since it was the slaves' job to do so. Furthermore, Veyne suggests that children were more of a symbol of

⁶ Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Antiquitates Romanae* 2. 15. 2: 'πρώτον μὲν εἰς ἀνάγκην κατέστησε τοὺς οἰκήτορας αὐτῆς ἄπασαν ἄρρενα γενεὰν ἐκτρέφειν καὶ θυγατέρων τὰς πρωτογόνους, ἀποκτιννύναι δὲ μηδὲν τῶν γεννωμένων νεώτερον τριετοῦς, πλὴν εἴ τι γένοιτο παιδίον ἀνάπτηρον ἢ τέρος εὐθὺς ἀπὸ γονῆς. Ταῦτα δ’ οὐκ ἐκώλυσεν ἐκτιθέναι τοὺς γειναμένους ἐπιδεξαντας πρότερον πέντε ἀνδράσι τοῖς ἔγγιστα οἰκοῦσιν, ἐὰν κάκείνοις συνδοκῇ.' (Trans. E. Cary 2001 [Loeb]).

⁷ Eyben 1980: 26-27, Harris 1994: 5, Dixon 1992: 40, and Tregiari 1991: 28.

their father's wealth, much like his slaves, and proposes that the death of the *paterfamilias* marked the end of his children's enslavement.⁸ Contrary to the asymmetrical relationship supported by Veyne that entailed complete submission by children to their father, Saller presents a more positive, and I think realistic, interpretation. In his study on corporal punishment in the household, Saller acknowledges the disciplinary function of the *paterfamilias*, but he also considers the important role within the family played by *pietas*, which means the reciprocal affection and obligation between members of the family. *Pietas* did involve filial obedience, but it also included parental duties as well, such as the granting of a portion of the parents' estate to their children. As for Veyne's slave-child analogy, while the *paterfamilias* did have the right to inflict corporal punishment on his children and his slaves, this type of discipline was administered to younger children whose behaviour needed to be corrected, since they did not understand reasoning. Moreover, the severity of the punishment that was inflicted on freeborn children differed greatly from that which was fitting for a slave.⁹ It is clear that the *paterfamilias* was the ultimate figure of authority; however, his control over his family and household also included his own obligations to his wife and children.

The ideal Roman *materfamilias* was the supportive wife who excelled in domestic responsibilities, specifically the management of the household, but perhaps her most important duty was to produce legitimate children. Despite the realities of frequent divorce and premature death, this image of the *materfamilias* was maintained in Roman

⁸ Veyne 1987: 16-18 and 29.

⁹ Saller 1991:147-148 and 161.

society.¹⁰ The *paterfamilias* exercised control over his wife if she had entered into his *manus* when they married. If this was the case, then her property and the inheritance granted to her from her birth family became part of her husband's estate. However, if the couple married *sine manu*, then the woman continued to be the *filiafamilias* of her father and remained in his *potestas*.¹¹ Although she was legally subordinate either to her husband or her father, the *materfamilias* had a respected role in the family and was regarded as a woman of dignity and respectable morals. Since punishment of children did not require the justification of *potestas*, the mother was viewed as a disciplinarian, who sometimes delivered severe punishment. While wet-nurses and other child-minders had a prominent role in the early development and education of children, mothers became more involved in their children's education and moral development as they got older.¹²

While the authoritative roles of the *paterfamilias* and *materfamilias* were integral elements in the structure of the family, the obligations they had to their children is indicative of the *pietas* that existed between parents and children. The importance of children to the family and Roman society in general has been made clear throughout this chapter thus far; however, in addition to ensuring posterity, children also had specific responsibilities assigned to them as well as certain expectations. *Filiusfamilias* and *filiafamilias* demonstrated *pietas* towards their parents through their obedience (*obsequium*), but their devotion was also expressed in other ways. Sons who came from families of elite status were expected to maintain the family's position in the social order,

¹⁰ Dixon 1991: 105.

¹¹ Dixon 1992: 2-3 and Treggiari 1991: 29.

¹² Saller 1991: 161, Dixon 1988: 131, Dixon 1992: 131, and Treggiari 1991: 279.

especially families of equestrian or senatorial rank. As a result, they were to obtain the skills required for their social role, such as political knowledge and oratorical skills, which prepared them for their entry into public life. Meanwhile, daughters were expected to marry a man of respectable social status which helped to further the advancement of her father and brothers.¹³

Families who were of modest social and economic status, on the other hand, often expected their children to provide some financial contribution. In both rural and urban contexts, children were used as a source of labour, as they helped with household chores and watched over young siblings. In the professional sphere, many lower status individuals were employed as tradespersons or craftsmen, such as accountants and masons, and their children would often undertake an apprenticeship in the trade at approximately the age of twelve or thirteen.¹⁴ It is evident that children served a rather functional role in lower status families, but it appears that parents of both the upper and lower social strata viewed their children as a sort of investment, whether the child was required to maintain the family's political presence or their commercial endeavours.

Children also had specific moral obligations that they were expected to perform. There were two primary duties that children had to carry out: they were required to care for their parents when they reached old age and were responsible for ensuring proper burial for them as well as funerary commemoration. These specific tasks clearly represent the reciprocal nature of familial *pietas*: the parents provided for their children when they were young and in return the children looked after their elderly parents. Ideally, familial

¹³ Rawson 2003: 182 and Dixon 1992: 109.

¹⁴ Laes 2011: 219 and Rawson 2003: 191-194.

relationships were positive ones and, as a result, a Roman's children and grandchildren became a source of companionship and support in old age.¹⁵ The fact that a married couple entrusted their children with not only these moral duties, but also with the continuation of their *nomen*, the task of providing future descendants, and maintaining the family's social status, suggests that children had a unique function within the family that only they as legitimate descendants had the ability to fulfill. Due to their important role within the family, it is logical to suggest that there was a high valuation placed upon children by their parents.

It is also apparent that the Roman family and its associated ideals were of concern to the state. Although the standard attitude towards the family and reproduction was positive, there were single citizens who deliberately avoided marriage and couples who chose to remain childless. It seems likely that Augustus considered this intentional childlessness a serious social problem, which caused him to introduce legislation that rewarded procreation and punished abstinence. The *Lex Iulia de Maritandis Ordinibus* of 18 BC and the *Lex Papia Poppaea* of AD 9 essentially promoted marriage and childbearing by offering political incentives such as rapid promotion. These laws also introduced harsh penalties for spouses who committed adultery and restricted inheritance for single persons and childless couples.¹⁶ Moreover, Dio presents a speech that Augustus delivered, allegedly, to members of the equestrian order who were rearing children. Throughout his address, Augustus praises these couples and acknowledges the life-fulfilling aspect of their decision to have children. While the account is anecdotal, it still

¹⁵ Wiedemann 1989: 39 and Dixon 1992: 108-109.

¹⁶ Brunt 1971: 563 and Dixon 1992: 120-121.

reveals that family and children were valued by the state and that there was an official ideology attached to them.¹⁷

Death in Childhood and Infancy

Although children were considered a valuable resource for the Roman state and an invaluable part of the family unit, there are certain circumstances that must also be considered when examining Roman attitudes towards children. Romans from all economic and social backgrounds were subject to high mortality rates. In his 1966 study on the age structure of the Roman population, Hopkins hypothesized that the life expectancy at birth fell in the age range of twenty to thirty years, an estimate that was later supported by the work of Parkin and Scheidel. Furthermore, it has been suggested that if an individual survived the critical period of childhood, then it was likely that they might live to at least middle age, approximately 40 to 50 years.¹⁸ On the surface, epigraphic, literary, and osteological evidence might be considered viable sources for demographers, but in reality they present problems to those attempting to draw conclusions about mortality rates and life expectancy. As a result, demographers have been greatly influenced by model life tables, specifically the South and West models, which have helped them to describe the population structures of antiquity in the absence of statistical data for the Roman population. These tables are based on the information provided by the demographic characteristics of societies whose patterns are comparable to that of Rome. Although they are only approximations, model life tables help determine

¹⁷ Cassius Dio *Historiae Romanae* 56. 3 and Dixon 1992: 121.

¹⁸ Hopkins 1966: 264, Parkin 1992: 84, Scheidel 2001: 24, and Hope 2009: 43.

life expectancy age ranges and provide insight into the general population patterns of Rome.¹⁹

Infants and young children were not exempt from high mortality rates and, in fact, were subject to higher rates than full-grown adults. Compared to a developed society in the modern world, whose infant mortality rate is approximately less than 10 per 1000, the numbers that have been suggested for the Roman population are noticeably more severe.²⁰ These rates have been the subject of debate among scholars who study ancient demographic patterns; however, it seems that the numbers differ only slightly from source to source. With the assumption of life expectancy at birth of 25 years, Hopkins estimates that about 28% of all newborn babies did not survive to the age of one year. Furthermore, he suggests that approximately 50% of children did not survive past the age of 10. Parkin provides a similar hypothesis, which states that in Rome the infant mortality rate was roughly 30% per year; in addition, he agrees with Hopkins' assessment that half of the children in one birth cohort died before reaching age 10. In a more recent study, Laes offers a number that is identical to Parkin's and Hopkins', but he also observes a more disconcerting reality from the life tables, which is that 30 to 35% of babies did not live to one full month.²¹ While scholars provide interpretations of the data that differ slightly, the rates lie essentially within the same range and, if we are to accept these numbers, they are therefore probable reflections of the reality that children were also, if not more, affected by high mortality rates than adults.

¹⁹ Parkin 1992: 80. The South Model Life Table, which is generated from Mediterranean tables, is characterized by high infant and child mortality and a low marriage age and the West Model is used when specific information about a society is missing.

²⁰ Parkin 1992: 93.

²¹ Hopkins 1983: 225, Parkin 1992: 92, and Laes 2011: 26.

Substandard living conditions, poor hygienic practices, and lack of proper diet had a significant impact on the Roman population as a whole, but improper child rearing and the lack of proper medical care were particularly detrimental to the health of children and infants. Although there is a considerable level of ignorance in his work, the medical writings of Soranus demonstrate an awareness of the infections and ailments that came to be associated with infancy and childhood.²² Infants in particular were vulnerable to bladder stone infections, which were a result of early weaning and the rapid transition from a diet composed entirely of milk to other foods.²³ The physician strongly advised mothers to not breastfeed their newborns since maternal breast milk that was produced immediately after birth (colostrum) was considered unwholesome, difficult to digest, and impure. In reality, colostrum is higher in antibodies, proteins, and nutrients, which protect the baby from infection, than mature milk.²⁴ Evidently, children and infants were denied essential nutrients that protected their immune system and malnutrition caused them to become prone to potentially fatal deficiency diseases. As for child rearing, the physician recommends that when a baby starts to sit up, the nurse should wrap up the infant tightly with clothing in order to support it. Despite the fact that Soranus believed that swaddling helped infants in their development, in reality this practice coupled with confinement indoors could cause bone deformation.²⁵ The existence of these guidelines suggests that Roman doctors and parents were acting in the best interest of their children, but it is clear

²² See Bradley 2005 for a detailed survey of the illnesses that were associated with childhood and their prescribed remedies.

²³ Garnsey 1999: 46-47.

²⁴ Soranus *Gynaecia* 2. 18 and Garnsey 1999: 107.

²⁵ Soranus *Gynaecia* 2. 45, Garnsey 1999: 53, and Garnsey 1991: 57.

that these well-meaning recommendations were harmful to the health of children and ultimately increased mortality rates.

It has been stated throughout this chapter that the primary goal for married couples throughout the Republic and Empire was the production of children, but at the same time there was also the application of family limitation methods, including abortion, infanticide, and exposure (the abandonment of an infant). While ensuring adequate assets for their heirs was a primary concern, it was a common situation that many couples were not able to support large families due to the lack of available resources, economic or otherwise. The gender of the child also had potential repercussions, as the parents of daughters had to provide a substantial dowry, which was considered a financial sacrifice for many families. Moreover, if children were born with an immediately apparent disability or deformity, they were often disposed of quickly by the midwife after their delivery.²⁶ In a Roman context, these were logical reasons to pursue drastic fertility control methods, regardless of how inhumane and harsh they might seem to modern sensibilities. However, this reasoning might not be as merciless as it seems. It is possible, and also reasonable, that the primary motivating factor behind family limitation was that parents were concerned for the well being of their family and, as a result, wanted to provide their children with sufficient means and financial stability.²⁷ Furthermore, the practices of exposure and infanticide shows us that the Romans' medical ignorance caused a lack of proper fertility control among high rates of mortality.

²⁶ Garnsey 1991: 56 (lack of resources), Eyben 1980: 81 (exposure of girls), and Harris 1994: 12 (disabled children).

²⁷ Eyben 1980: 81 and Dixon 1988: 23.

Reactions Towards the Death of Children

Child and infant death was a common reality for the majority of the Roman population due to socio-cultural influences, the inadequacy of medical care, and improper, albeit unintentional, child rearing techniques. Garnsey presents a rational argument which suggests that this frequency did not necessarily cause parents to become indifferent to the death of their children, but made them become more realistic and accepting of the fact that their early death was an event many parents would encounter.²⁸ This is a logical argument that I maintain is adequately reflected in the mourning practices that were applied to young children and infants as well as the extant literary evidence that addresses the death of a child.

i) Mourning Practices and Social Conventions

The mourning rituals that were applied to infants and children indicate rather succinctly the impact that the frequency of childhood death had on many parents. In addition, the rituals also provide insight into how Roman society as a whole responded to the high rate of child and infant mortality. The precise length of the mourning period, which ultimately depended on the age and status of the deceased, was a regulation that has been attributed to Numa. In Plutarch's account of Numa's life he mentions the funeral customs that the king passed down to the *pontifices*, focusing on the importance of honouring the chthonic deities, namely Proserpina and Libitina, as well as the regulated periods of mourning. Plutarch's account reads as follows:

'Numa himself also regulated the periods of mourning according to ages. For instance, over a child of less than three years there was to be no mourning at all;

²⁸ Garnsey 1991: 53.

over one older than that, the mourning was not to last more months than it had lived years, up to ten; and no age was to be mourned longer than that, but ten months was the period set for the longest mourning.²⁹

Evidently, infants were discounted in this respect and young children were also mourned considerably less than adults. This regulation is a clear reflection of the impact that high infant and child mortality rates had on Roman society. Furthermore, these rules were observed throughout the Republic and Empire, until approximately the third century. The continued use is evident in the writings of Julius Paulus, a jurist writing at the end of the third century, who states that those over ten years of age were mourned for a year. As for younger children, those who were three years old and younger were mourned for one month for each year of their age; for example, a two year old was mourned for two months.³⁰

Parents who grieved for their young child or newborn and mourned at the funeral of an infant were met with public disapproval. For example, Cicero states that the accepted practice was that the loss of a child must be dealt with calmly, whereas the death of an infant must not be mourned at all.³¹ Seneca's quotation from a rather critical letter he wrote to Marullus reproaches the grieving father outright and states:

'Is it solace that you look for? Let me give you a scolding instead! You are like a woman in the way you take your son's death; what would you do if you had lost

²⁹ Plutarch *Numa* 12. 2: 'αὐτὸς δὲ καὶ τὰ πένθη καθ' ἡλικίας καὶ χρόνους ἔταξεν · οἷον παῖδα μὴ πενθεῖν νεώτερον τριετοῦς, μηδὲ πρεσβύτερον πλείονας μῆνας ὅν ἐβίωσεν ἐνιαυτῶν μέχρι τῶν δέκα, καὶ περαιτέρῳ μηδεμίᾳν ἡλικίαν, ἀλλὰ τοῦ μακροτάτου πένθους χρόνον είναι δεκαμηνιαῖον.' (Trans. B. Perrin 1967 [Loeb]).

³⁰ Julius Paulus *Sententiae* 1. 21. 13.

³¹ Cicero *Tusculan Disputations* 1. 39.

an intimate friend? A son, a little child of unknown promise, is dead; a fragment of time had been lost.³²

In addition to being a rather blunt example of the socially acceptable Roman attitude towards child and infant death, this excerpt also reveals the rationale behind this thinking. In Roman society, the act of mourning itself was characterized by gender-specific conventions. On the one hand, it was understandable for women to mourn openly, while at the same time demonstrating some form of restraint; on the other hand, men were expected to control their emotions and grieve in a more private manner.³³ Therefore, it is not surprising that Seneca accuses his friend, a consul designate, of overindulging his grief over the death of his infant son.³⁴ Moreover, this passage suggests that it was believed that infants and children who died had yet to demonstrate respectable qualities and skills that were valued by the Romans. As a result, the mourning of a child was considered unacceptable and against social conventions.

ii) Literary Evidence

Cicero's correspondence provides insight into the differing reactions towards children and their deaths. On 19 May 49 BC his beloved daughter Tullia gave birth to a boy who was approximately two months premature. In a letter to Atticus, dated to either 19 or 20 May, Cicero expresses his happiness at Tullia's safe delivery, but his reaction to his actual grandson contains no affectionate sentiments. He describes his grandson as

³² Seneca *Epistles* 99. 2: ‘Solacia expectas? Convicia accipe. Molliter tu fers mortem filii; quid faceres, si amicum perdidisses? Decissit filius incertae spei, parvulus; pusillum temporis periit.’ (Trans. R. M. Gummere 2006 [Loeb]).

³³ Hope 2008: 127-128.

³⁴ Gummere suggests that this particular individual is Iunius Marullus who was the consul designate in AD 62. (128, 2006 [Loeb]).

follows: ‘as for the thing that has been born, it is a very poor specimen.’³⁵ By assigning the neuter ‘quod’ to his grandson, with no mention of his name, it is possible, as Treggiari suggests, that Cicero did not believe that his grandson would survive. Furthermore, the child is not mentioned again in subsequent correspondence with Atticus or anyone else; therefore, it seems likely that the child did not survive.³⁶

Cicero’s reaction is consistent with the socially accepted attitude towards the death of children, but his response to the death of Tullia proves to be a drastic contrast. Although there are no details on her illness or her death, Cicero’s grief is well documented in his correspondence. While isolated at Astura, Cicero wrote to Atticus thanking him for his sympathy, claiming that he has attempted to curb his grief by reading every written consolation in Atticus’ home, but to no avail. He laments:

‘But my sorrow is beyond any consolation. Why, I have done what no one has ever done before, tried to console myself by writing a book. I will send it to you as soon as it is copied out. I assure you no other consolation equals it.’³⁷

There is a degree of self-involvement present in this passage and others that discuss Tullia’s death; however, it does not suggest that Cicero’s grief for his daughter was not genuine. He claims that he thinks about her memory often and finds solace in drafting plans for a permanent shrine in her honour.³⁸ It must be mentioned that Tullia was a mature woman when she died, approximately 32 years old, who had been married three

³⁵ Cicero *Ad Atticum* 10. 18. The entire line reads as follows: ‘Quod εὐτόκησεν, gaudeo; quod quidem est natum, perimbellum est.’ (Trans. E. O. Winstedt 1966 [Loeb]).

³⁶ Treggiari 2007: 111.

³⁷ Cicero *Ad Atticum* 12. 14: ‘Sed omnem consolationem vincit dolor. Quin etiam feci quod profecto ante me nemo, ut ipse me per litteras consolarer. Quem librum ad te mittam, si descripserint librarii. Adfirmo tibi nullam consolationem esse talem.’ (Trans. E. O. Winstedt 1961 [Loeb]).

³⁸ Cicero *Ad Atticum* 12. 18 and 15. 15. The shrine was never constructed.

times and was a mother.³⁹ It is likely that the age difference between Tullia and the unnamed grandson accounts for Cicero's contrasting reactions. Cicero's grief at the death of Tullia suggests that he had invested in her and that she became a mature and respectable adult. As for the response to his grandson, Cicero's indifference reflects the reality of frequent infant death. Moreover, this response demonstrates the effect that cultural conventions had on emotional reactions, as parents who overreacted to the death of an infant or young child were the rare exception and were met with disapproval in literary accounts. These contradictions in Cicero's letters are also of particular interest because they present a unique and very human reaction to not only the death of children in general, but also to the death of one's own child.

Pliny the Younger's letter lamenting the premature loss of Minicia Marcella, the daughter of his friend G. Minicius Fundanus, is another revealing example of a parent's reaction towards the death of a child. Pliny describes Marcella to Aefulanus Marcellinus, a mutual friend of him and Fundanus, as a young girl who carried herself with dignity and wisdom while still possessing the modesty and innocence of youth. Pliny does not provide Marcella's specific age, but states that she had not yet reached the age of fourteen; the epitaph on her funerary altar, on the other hand, states that she lived 12 years, 11 months, and 7 days.⁴⁰ Although the two types of evidence differ with respect to her age, they both present a young girl who died just before she entered womanhood. The tragedy of her death is amplified further by the fact that Marcella was already engaged to a young man of respected status; the money that was set aside for her wedding jewellery

³⁹ This age is Tregiari's estimate (2007: 135).

⁴⁰ Pliny *Letters* 5. 16. 1-3 and *CIL* VI 16631.

and clothing had now to be used for funeral incense and ointments.⁴¹ This unfortunate change from young bride to deceased girl was in fact an established *topos* and Pliny's use of this and other conventions demonstrates his goal of adhering to established themes which displays his literary talents. Although the letter achieves this, it also laments Marcella's death by presenting her as a girl who was about to become a respectable woman, but suffered from a *mors immatura*.⁴²

This letter also contains conventions that were prominent in consolation literature (*consolatio*) which was an established literary genre that contains interesting comments about the appropriate philosophical response to death. Typically, these letters and essays focus on four primary arguments that are based on Stoic, Epicurean, and Peripatetic philosophies: first and foremost, life itself is short; the belief that the dead are far better off than the living; time eventually heals all things, even the loss of a loved one; and lastly, grief accomplishes nothing.⁴³ Unlike the critical remarks of Seneca, who insisted that lamenting the death of a child was pointless, Pliny strongly cautions Marcellinus to not offer any reproachful forms of consolation, but suggests a more gentle approach instead:

'If then you write anything to him in his very natural sorrow, be careful not to offer any crude form of consolation which might suggest reproof; be gentle and sympathetic. Passage of time will make him readier to accept this: a raw wound shrinks from a healing hand but later permits and even seeks help, and so the mind rejects and repels any consolation in its first pangs of grief, then feels the need of comfort and is calmed if this is kindly offered.'⁴⁴

⁴¹ Pliny *Letters* 5. 16. 7.

⁴² Bodel 1995: 456-457 and 459.

⁴³ Hope 2009: 132-133. For a detailed analysis of the consolatory genre, consult Kassel 1958.

⁴⁴ Pliny *Letters* 5. 6. 10-11: 'Proinde si quias ad eum de dolore tam iusto litteras mittes, memento adhibere solacium non quasi castigatorium et nimis forte, sed molle et humanum. Quod ut facilius admittat, multum faciet medii temporis spatium. Ut enim crudum adhuc vulnus medentium manus reformidat, deinde patitur

Evidently, Pliny maintains the conventional argument that time eventually heals all, but there is a greater sense of loss and sympathy present throughout this letter. Not only is Marcella presented in an admirable way, but her father's grief is also justified. However, it must be mentioned that like other *consolatio*, this letter, while reflecting genuine grief, was published for distribution and also served as a means of self-promotion for Pliny, as it demonstrates both his compassionate nature and his literary intelligence.⁴⁵

Roman Funerary Commemoration and the Family

Roman society was a commemorative culture, and just as emperors and state officials were able to place their name on a permanent monument or public structure, so too did private citizens memorialize themselves and convey aspects of their identity, such as social status and wealth, through their funerary commemorations. With the exception of infants who lived less than forty days, it was mandatory that burial and cremation occur outside the walls of Rome in order to prevent religious pollution, a law that was codified in the Twelve Tables.⁴⁶ Due to these regulations, the monuments that marked the location of deposited remains lined the streets that led into the city. The considerable range of achievements, cultural values, and ideologies expressed through these monuments indicates that a variety of persons from different social strata employed funerary commemoration to convey a specific message to the public. Furthermore, the

atque ultro requirit, sic recens animi dolor consolations reicit ac refugit, mox desiderat et clementer admotis adquiescit.' (Trans. B. Radice 1969 [Loeb]).

⁴⁵ Hope 2009: 136.

⁴⁶ Twelve Tables 10. 3, Jackson 1988: 107, and Rawson 2003a: 277.

permanence of these monuments enabled the memory of the deceased to be preserved in a dignified manner.⁴⁷

Funerary commemoration was also a socio-cultural phenomenon that occurred not just in the city of Rome itself, but also throughout the Empire. In their collaborative study on family relations in the Principate, Saller and Shaw observed that the majority of commemoration comes from status and economic groups whose place in society is between the elite and the very poor, a group which Saller and Shaw consider well represented in their collection of data. In addition, they found that funerary commemorations dedicated to members of the senatorial and equestrian orders comprise a significantly smaller percentage compared to those of non-elites.⁴⁸ Funerary commemoration was an important aspect of Roman culture and the material evidence from the western provinces and select parts of the East indicates the adoption of this funerary practice in these areas. This usage suggests that the commemorative aspect of Roman culture was accepted in these regions and that its function was highly valued.⁴⁹

The practical function of funerary commemoration coupled with its prominent role in Roman culture proved to be a primary avenue through which families preserved their memory. While there are numerous examples from a variety of groups in Roman society, such as soldiers and slaves, the commemoration of immediate family members are the most common.⁵⁰ Monuments that commemorate the family unit served as a

⁴⁷ Carroll 2006: 3, 18-19.

⁴⁸ Saller and Shaw 1984: 128.

⁴⁹ Rawson 2003a: 278. See George 2005: 55-65 for examples from Cisalpine Gaul, Edmondson 2005 for commemoration in Roman Lusitania, and Boatwright 2005 for monuments from Pannonia.

⁵⁰ Saller and Shaw 1984: 145 and see Table No. 1: Civilian Populations – 1 in the accompanying appendix ‘Funerary Commemorative Relationships’.

physical memorial that allowed them to express emotional bonds, such as the harmonious union between husband and wife or the affectionate relationship between parents and their children. Such sentiments were conveyed through a monument's inscription and its complementary sculptural component that featured depictions of family members, including young children. The inscription commemorated the deceased by preserving their name, but the name of the dedicato and other family members were often featured as well. This practice of including both sets of names ensured the commemoration of the dead in addition to serving as a public acknowledgement of the relationship between the deceased and their family.⁵¹ Although dedicated to one or two members of the family, the entire monument itself conveyed the identity of the family as a whole. Furthermore, familial dedications also served as a testament to the success of the *paterfamilias* and *materfamilias* who were able to continue their lineage that was established by their ancestors. As for those of freedmen status, the inclusion of family imagery in their monuments indicated that these individuals had achieved a position in a valued institution in Roman society. While mourning practices and literary sources provide one form of cultural expression that reveals attitudes towards children, the material evidence presents another response that provides insight into the valuation of children as well as the importance of the family.

Conclusion

The ancient attitude towards children and childhood death differs greatly among the sources and this disparity has resulted in considerable discussion among scholars.

⁵¹ Carroll 2006: 32-34.

Golden's short article, 'Did the Ancients Care When their Children Died?', published in 1988 was the first to ask this question directly, but it prompted other social historians, such as Rawson, Garnsey, Wiedemann, Dixon, and most recently Laes, to explore the attitudes towards children and their death more thoroughly through both literary and material evidence.⁵² Many scholars have attempted to explain the precise bearing that demographic and societal conditions had on the valuation of children, but it is difficult to reconstruct.

I maintain that the distinct roles that children had within the family and the function they fulfilled to the state suggests that there was a high valuation placed upon them. However, at the same time, their high mortality rates caused a reserved attitude towards the death of children to become the acceptable social reaction. The mourning practices, literary accounts, and social conventions discussed in this chapter are one avenue of cultural expression that existed in Roman society. The funerary commemoration of children and the family, which coexisted with this attitude, expressed a different reaction towards the death of children. Although they are different forms that adhere to different conventions, they are not contradictory, as they were both a part of the experience of death in Roman society. The following two chapters will explore the valuation of children and family identity conveyed in the representations of children on freedmen panel reliefs and funerary altars.

⁵² Golden 1988, Wiedemann 1989, Dixon 1988 and 1992, Garnsey 1991, Rawson 2003, and Laes 2011.

CHAPTER 2

Freedmen Reliefs

Introduction

The informal slave family unit differed greatly from the ideal Roman family, consisting of a *paterfamilias*, *materfamilias*, and *iusti filii*, that was discussed in Chapter 1. Slaves lacked the legal capacity to create their own recognized in Roman law, and were considered part of the household's *familia*. These individuals were considered property and, as a result, the same respect for the freeborn family was not necessarily extended to those of slaves. Freedom was not a guarantee and Augustan social legislation placed further regulations on manumission. The *lex Fufia Caninia*, a law that was enacted in 2 BC, placed limitations on the number of slaves that a *dominus* was allowed to free in a will, and the *lex Aelia Sentia* of AD 4 limited the unjustified manumission of slaves who had not yet served a satisfactory amount of years or who were under the accepted age of manumission.⁵³ These strict regulations thus caused the manumission of slaves to become less frequent.

Although hindered by legislation, a great number of slaves were formally manumitted and were subsequently admitted to a new level of society: Roman freedmen. In addition to their freedom from slavery, these individuals were granted Roman citizenship and were thus protected by Roman law. Freedmen were also granted the right to a legal marriage and therefore the children who were a result of such unions were freeborn Roman citizens.

⁵³ Carroll 2011: 127-128. A slave had to be at least 30 years of age and owned by quiritary right (the right of ownership reserved for Roman citizens) in order to be considered for formal manumission.

Legitimate marriage and family were significant achievements that were highly valued by freedmen, *libertini* and *libertinae*. Freedmen panel reliefs, or portrait reliefs, provide an excellent representation of these two values. Freedmen reliefs, which date to the end of the Republic and were produced into the first century of the Empire, were a prominent feature of the house tombs that lined the streets leading out of the city of Rome. Although more modest than some of their neighbouring funerary monuments, the considerable number of extant examples suggests that this form of commemoration was frequently used. This chapter consists of two separate parts. In the first half I will examine the socio-cultural background of the freedman family by focusing on the transition from slave unions to legitimate marriage and the status differentiation between freedmen and their children. In the second half I will consider the freedmen reliefs with a particular focus on the monuments that present the family unit of father, mother, and child.⁵⁴

The Socio-Cultural Background of the Freedman Family

Slaves were not granted the right to a Roman marriage due to their lack of legal capacity; however, this does not mean that they had no desire to have a *coniunx*. Informal unions, referred to as *contubernia* in Latin, were permitted by many slave-owners and seem to have been a feature of the *familia urbana*. The term *contubernium* was applied to informal unions between either two slaves or between a slave and a free person.⁵⁵ Since the freeborn Roman population believed that slaves were morally inferior and easily

⁵⁴ Although there are extant examples from the western provinces, this chapter will focus on the reliefs that were found either in the city of Rome or in its immediately surrounding areas.

⁵⁵ Treggiari 1981: 44. This term originally meant ‘tent-companion’ and was used frequently in the epitaphs of soldiers in reference to fellow soldiers and slave messmates.

corruptible, the motivation behind the master allowing *contubernia* was to provide some form of happiness and stability to his slaves, which ultimately made them more obedient and reliable.⁵⁶ Although *contubernia* were not recognized or protected by Roman law, there are several characteristics of these unions which parallel *matrimonium iustum*. Just as a *paterfamilias* provided a dowry to his daughter's husband, a *contubernalis* might have given her partner a quasi-dowry, and slaves who were living in *contubernium* often referred to each other as *coniunx*. In contrast to marriage between freeborn citizens, the existence of a *contubernium* depended on the consent of the owner. Technically, a woman who was living in one of these unions could not have been accused of adultery; but, as Treggiari notes, the fact that the issue of adultery could even be raised demonstrates how *contubernia* were compared to marriage.⁵⁷

Slave couples living in *contubernium* often produced children who were referred to as *vernae*, or house born slaves. It is important to note that these children were not *iusti* and that they were considered the property of the *dominus*. There were also instances where a female slave produced a child and either her owner or another free member of the household was the father. Since only one of the parents was a citizen, the child would always take the status of the mother, and was thus considered a slave.⁵⁸

Although there was no shortage of slaves, *vernae* were often viewed as a valuable resource for the owner of the household. Treggiari states that *vernae* were a luxury throughout the Republic, and Rawson suggests that they continued to be of economic

⁵⁶ Treggiari 1969: 209.

⁵⁷ Treggiari 1991: 53-54.

⁵⁸ Weaver 1991: 182.

importance in the Empire.⁵⁹ Rawson further emphasizes the importance of *vernae* by stating that they complemented, or even served as substitutes for, a master's own children and, as a result, were given better treatment than the other slaves of the household. Alternatively, den Boer suggests that masters prevented their slaves from producing children not only because of the abundant supply found at slave markets, but also because rearing *vernae* was expensive and, in some cases, dangerous. Although there is debate in modern scholarship surrounding their importance, it must be noted that these children were property and, as a result, there was always the risk that they would be sold to another household.⁶⁰

While the potential of forced separation was a reality and source of anxiety for slaves living in *contubernium*, there were some unions that managed to continue into a legitimate Roman marriage. This progression from slave union to formal marriage depended on the couple being formally manumitted, thus acquiring the legal capacity to marry as freedmen, and whether or not *affectio maritalis* was present.⁶¹ In order to obtain freedman status, a slave had to be formally manumitted by his or her master using one of the following three ways: *manumissio censu*, a method of manumission associated with Servius Tullius; *manumissio vindicta*, which dates to the beginning of the Republic; and *manumissio testamento*, a tradition mentioned in the Twelve Tables.⁶²

Manumissio censu, perhaps the least convenient method, required the master to present his slave as a free citizen before the censor when a census was taken and, as a

⁵⁹ Treggiari 1969: 212 and Rawson 1986: 186.

⁶⁰ Rawson 1986a: 186, Den Boer 1973: 41, and Rawson 1966: 79. The fact that familial separation was a reality for slaves indicates that the respect for family unity was not always extended to this group.

⁶¹ Treggiari 1991: 53.

⁶² Treggiari 1969: 20.

result, the slave's name was entered on to the register of Roman citizens.⁶³ When *manumissio vindicta*, the oldest form of manumission, was used, both the slave and his master came before the magistrate and his *adseritor*, who declared that the slave was free by touching him with the *festuca*.⁶⁴ The most common form of manumission, and coincidentally the most advantageous for the master, was *manumissio testamento*, which occurred when the master freed his slave in his will. Carroll suggests that masters used this form of manumission to manipulate slaves by announcing the contents of their wills in advance, thus ensuring obedience by threatening to amend them.⁶⁵ Slaves who were not formally manumitted were classified as Junian Latins. These individuals only experienced a 'quasi-freedom' at the discretion of their master and did not acquire Roman citizenship.⁶⁶ Evidently, manumission relied upon the discretion of the owner, who would have likely based their decision on factors such as the slave's reliability and obedience.

Masters often gave their slaves *peculium*, an allowance, which could have been used either on small, immediate material pleasures or could have been saved and used to buy their freedom, which was a part of formal manumission.⁶⁷ Evidently, the amount of *peculium* depended on the owner and the slave's role in the household; therefore, it was common for *contubernales* to jointly save their *peculium* and eventually purchase their freedom. While it was ideal for both partners to be freed simultaneously, it is most likely

⁶³ Bradley 1994: 155.

⁶⁴ Treggiari 1969: 23. Treggiari suggests that this method might have occurred *pro tribunali*; however, she does not elaborate.

⁶⁵ Carroll 2011: 127. She also notes that the master could impose a formal condition on his slaves that they must fulfill before they were granted their freedom.

⁶⁶ Bradley 1994: 155. Junian Latins, who experienced different social circumstances and legal conditions, had a familial arrangement that differed greatly from that of Roman freedmen. Therefore, this group will not be discussed further.

⁶⁷ Treggiari 1969: 17.

that one partner received their freedom before the other. Although the slave was granted his freedom by means of his own savings and at the will of his master, the *contubernium* would have ultimately been dissolved. However, there is evidence which indicates that there was a degree of permanence to these unions. It is possible that masters might have been motivated to free *contubernales* when they manumitted male slaves so that the *contubernium* might become a legitimate marriage.⁶⁸ In other cases when one slave was manumitted before the other, the freed partner bought and then subsequently freed the enslaved partner or the master freed the slave partner at a later time. Male slaves were often freed before their female partners, and it was more advantageous for the husband to buy his wife and free her as opposed to their patron. If bought and freed by her husband, the freedwoman would not have any legal obligations to a third party because her husband was her patron.⁶⁹

Not all freedmen were involved in a *contubernium* while in slavery and, as a result, did not immediately obtain a Roman marriage. However, as new Roman citizens, these individuals still possessed the legal capacity required for marriage and it was available to them, whether it occurred immediately or at some point in the future. Freedmen who did not marry *conlibertae* often married other freedwomen due to the social stigma of intermarriage with *ingenuae*, freeborn women. However, intermarriage between *libertinae* and *ingenuii* was not unheard of and occurred more often among the lower social strata of the free Roman population. Although marriage between freedwomen and freeborn men existed, there was a prejudicial attitude towards these

⁶⁸ Tregiari 1969: 209 and 1991: 53.

⁶⁹ Tregiari 1969: 209.

unions. The marriages which were specifically subject to disapproval were those between elite men and freedwomen, a critical view which was also shared by Augustus. Due to his concern for the preservation of the senatorial order, Augustus implemented legislation which banned marriage between elites and *libertini*, which appears in the *Digest* and was also recorded by the jurist Ulpian:

'The *lex Julia* provides that: "A senator, his son, or his grandson, or his great-grandson by his son shall not knowingly or fraudulently become betrothed to or marry a freedwoman, or a woman who is or has been an actress or whose father or mother are or have been actors. Nor shall the daughter of a senator, his granddaughter by his son, or great-granddaughter by his grandson become betrothed to or marry, knowingly or fraudulently, a freedman, or a man who is or has been an actor or whose father or mother is or has been an actor. Nor shall any of these people knowingly or fraudulently become betrothed to or marry such a woman.'"⁷⁰

'By the *Lex Julia* Senators, as well as their children, are forbidden to marry their freedwomen or any women when either they themselves, or their fathers or mothers were professional actors.'⁷¹

These rules, however, appear to have only been applied to members of the senatorial order and there is no evidence which suggests that freeborn individuals of lower social status were punished for intermarriage.⁷²

⁷⁰ *Digest* 23. 2. 44 (Paul): 'Lege Iulia ita cavetur: "Qui senator est quive filius neposve ex filio proneposve ex filio nato cuius eorum est erit, ne quis eorum sponsam uxoremve sciens dolo malo habeto libertinam aut eam, quae ipsa cuiusve pater materve artem ludicram facit fecerit. Neue senatoris filia neptisve ex filio proneptisve ex nepote filio nato nata libertino eiue, qui ipse cuiuseve pater materve artem ludicram facit fecerit, sponsa nuptave sciens dolo malo esto neue quis eorum dolo malo sciens sponsam uxoremve eam habeto.' (Trans. A. Watson 1985).

⁷¹ Ulpian 13. 1: 'Lege Iulia prohibentur uxores ducere senators quidem liberique eorum libertinas et quae ipsae quarumve pater materve artem ludicram fecerit.' (Trans. S. P. Scott 1973).

⁷² Brunt 1971: 145. There is another passage in the *Digest* attributed to Celsus (*Digest* 23. 2. 23) which supports this: 'Lege Papia cavetur omnibus ingenuis praeter senatores eorumque liberos libertinam uxorem habere licere.' ('The *lex Papia* provides that all freeborn men, apart from senators and their children, can marry freedwomen.' Trans. A. Watson 1985). Tregiari 1969: 83 suggests that although this passage is considered questionable due to the fact that it mentions the *Lex Papia* (AD 9) instead of the *Lex Iulia de Maritandis Ordinibus* (18 BC), it is not completely distrusted because the jurists consistently confuse the two laws.

Despite the social prejudices ingrained in the upper levels of Roman society and the restrictions enforced by Augustus, the transition from a slave *contubernium* to a proper Roman marriage is significant because the informal unions that these individuals had as slaves were now legally recognized and protected by Roman law. Upon manumission, *libertini* obtained the protection of Roman citizenship and, as a result, acquired social and legal stability. This stability allowed marriage between a *libertus* and a *liberta* to exist without the anxiety and constant threat of separation associated with *contubernia*.

In addition to an official marriage, Roman freedmen were also permitted to create their own family, complete with legally recognized children. The freedmen population was one of the target groups of the Augustan marriage legislation, the *Lex Iulia de Maritandis Ordinibus* of 18 BC and the *Lex Papia Poppaea* of AD 9. Although the primary goals of the laws were to eliminate barriers to marriage and to address issues of succession between spouses, the laws were also concerned with the promotion of the family and increased procreation among the free Roman population. As was mentioned briefly in Chapter 1, Augustus rewarded couples who produced a certain number of children and the financial compensation depended on their status and if they lived in Rome or the provinces. He gave priority and promotion to the political families of Rome who produced three children and also excused them from civil *munera*. Freedmen who had two children were excused from *operae* due to their patrons and, if they had five

children, they were no longer under the control of *tutores*.⁷³ Certainly these incentives would have been attractive to Roman freedmen and their families, but due to the high infant mortality rates, as Brunt suggests, this was a rather unrealistic number. In reality the size of freedmen families were characteristically small, consisting of either one or two children at most.

While high infant mortality rates were a prominent factor that influenced the size of the freedman family, the scholarship that has investigated this subject provides additional theories as to what caused freedmen to have smaller families. It is clear that freedmen couples who failed to reproduce were a concern for Augustus, which ultimately prompted their inclusion in his legislation on the family.⁷⁴ Tregiari's suggestion, which considers the biological factors, is perhaps the most reliable. She suggests that the main reason for small family sizes depended largely on the age of the female slave at manumission. Freedwomen surpassed the average age of freeborn women at first marriage, which ultimately caused their childbearing years to be limited. In addition, she states that high infant mortality rates and infertility were factors that attributed to small family size.⁷⁵ Brunt suggests that freedmen families were small because it was preferred. He mentions that in 168 BC the censors excused freedmen with one child under the age of five from registering in the urban tribes. His argument also considers the reality that a

⁷³ Brunt 1971: 563. Individuals who lived in the other regions of Italy had to have four children and those from the provinces had to have five. It was recognized that there was a higher birth rate outside of the city of Rome. While freedmen who had five children were no longer under the control of *tutores*, the freeborn population had to have three children.

⁷⁴ Parkin 1992: 120.

⁷⁵ Tregiari 1969: 213-214. There is debate among scholars as to the average age at first marriage for freeborn Roman girls; but suggested ages lie between early teens to early twenties. See Chapter 3: Funerary Altars, pages 77-78 for a brief overview of the scholarship.

number of freedmen couples had children while enslaved, who were subsequently bought and freed by their parents.⁷⁶ Therefore, it was more economical for freedmen to limit their family size. Den Boer argues that it is unlikely that freedmen preferred smaller families because larger families were a sign of high social status.⁷⁷ Although the size of freedman families is subject to debate, it is important to acknowledge their existence. Having been transferred to a new, more respected level of society, freedmen did create their own families and thus obtained a position in one of the most valued Roman institutions.

The status differentiation between parents and their children is a significant aspect of the identity of Roman freedmen families. When slaves acquired freedmen status they became Roman citizens and were protected by Roman law and their children were born *ingenui*, freeborn Roman citizens. Although the great majority of the children of freedmen were *ingenui*, the children who were born in slavery must be discussed. Treggiari, who used epigraphic evidence in her study of family relations and the social life of freedmen during the late Republic, states that inscriptions rarely mention families that consisted of both freed parents and children. From this evidence she concludes that it is possible, due to the high risk of separation, that children born in slavery rarely became part of a freedman's family.⁷⁸ However, there is evidence which proves that some freedmen did reunite with their children, but these former *vernae* were formally manumitted and were freedmen as well and not freeborn.

⁷⁶ Brunt 1971: 145.

⁷⁷ Den Boer 1973: 41-42.

⁷⁸ Treggiari 1969: 212-213.

The social stigma attached to intermarriage between the freed and freeborn population, especially in the upper levels of society, has already been mentioned, however, marriage restrictions were not the only hindrances that affected Roman freedmen. Their servile origins ultimately limited their social and political advancement. Freedmen were not allowed to serve in the Roman military and were permitted only to enlist in the *vigiles*, the fire brigade consisting of seven thousand men which was formed by Augustus in AD 6. Although they were also prohibited from the offices of the state priesthoods, they were permitted to serve as *Augustales*, priests of the imperial cult. Participation in the *seviri Augustales* granted wealthy freedmen some form of respect and allowed them to direct their wealth away from *luxuria*.⁷⁹ However, their involvement with the imperial cult was more of a symbolic honour than a position of authority. Freedmen were also subject to testamentary restrictions. The number of freeborn children that a freedman had determined how much property he had to leave to his patron in his will. For example, if a freedman had one child and owned more than 100,000 sesterces, he had to leave half of his property to his former owner.⁸⁰ Evidently, freedmen still maintained a relationship with their former owners, who now took on the role of the patron.

In some cases, the status of the patron might have had an impact on the freedman's position in society. For example, the freedman of an elite citizen had the ability to socialize with his wealthy patron and those of the more cultured social circles, while the freedman of a humbler tradesperson associated with the lower social strata.

⁷⁹ Mouritsen 2011: 259-260.

⁸⁰ Kleijwegt 2006: 90-91. The *Augustales* were more prominent in the western provinces than in the city of Rome.

Although they interacted with the freeborn population, it was imperative for freedmen to be aware of their status and remember that they were not equal to freeborn citizens. If freedmen maintained this awareness, they were able to socialize with *ingenui* on account of their intelligence, wealth, and other qualities.⁸¹ Although some were able to achieve this level of social interaction, there was another prejudice held against them: freedmen were believed to have been morally inferior to those of freeborn status. Since slaves were viewed as being immoral, prone to irrational behaviour, and ultimately corruptible, the freeborn population believed that this behaviour justified their enslavement.⁸² Even though freedmen had obtained freed status and Roman citizenship, this attitude was extended towards them because of their servile origins. This prejudicial attitude continued to increase the divide between the freed and the freeborn, but this stigmatization of freedmen appears to have been centralized in the city of Rome itself. Ultimately, freedmen were able to achieve social mobility on their own by acquiring property and then transferring it to their freeborn children.⁸³

The freeborn children of Roman freedmen were not hindered by the social and legal restrictions inflicted on their parents. In the private legal sphere, the only obligation that freeborn children had was to demonstrate *fides* to their fathers' patron, and they had the right to exclude him from inheritance. In addition, the marriage restrictions that were implemented on their freedmen parents did not apply to them. In the public sphere of Roman society, freeborn sons were not prohibited from pursuing a political career, and

⁸¹ Treggiari 1969: 226-227.

⁸² George 2005a: 42.

⁸³ Kleijwegt 2006: 91.

were allowed to become magistrates and even senators. Although freeborn sons were able to pursue high ranking offices and political positions, they still met with prejudice. The attacks that were made against the sons of freedmen had no legal justification, but were based on social grounds. This prejudicial attitude which exploited the servile status of their parents was usually restricted to the wealthier sons of freedmen.⁸⁴ The social stigma against servile origins was not applicable to the grandsons of freedmen, who displayed filiation (paternal lineage) in their nomenclature. On the other hand, a Roman freedman's name featured the *praenomen* and *nomen* of his former owner and his slave name was kept as his *cognomen*. While there is no certainty, it is possible that they could have been identified by the rest of the population because their *cognomina* were either Greek or of lower status in origin.⁸⁵

Although subject to insult on account of the former servile status of their parents, the freeborn sons of freedmen were able to obtain political offices through the influence of their fathers' patrons. The sons of freedmen, whose fathers were part of the wealthy set, had both financial support and the patronage of their fathers' former owners. Alternatively, freeborn sons who did not come from such a wealthy background could have gained the patronage of other influential Romans through their own means and abilities.⁸⁶ Freedmen were restricted legally and socially by ideals held by the Roman freeborn population, but they were able to find legitimacy through obtaining Roman citizenship and the right to a legal marriage. In addition, freedmen were also able to

⁸⁴ Tregiari 1969: 229-230. Tregiari states that there is little evidence of this stigma for the sons of freedmen who were from the lower economic strata.

⁸⁵ Kleijwegt 2006: 93.

⁸⁶ Tregiari 1969: 233.

achieve social mobility and recognition through the efforts and achievements of their children.

Roman Freedmen Panel Reliefs

While freedmen reliefs reflect the importance of legitimate marriage and family, they also provide insight into the status differentiation between freedmen and their freeborn children. Freedmen reliefs constitute one form of sculptural funerary commemoration, but the genre itself consists of two separate types: full-length representations and bust-length representations.⁸⁷ The full-length variety features two or three figures who are standing side by side, and the bust-length type features up to six figures positioned beside one another. The bust-length representations, which will now be referred to as panel reliefs, are single, horizontal, panels which often feature a simple inscription on the border. The figures that are represented in both types are dressed in civilian garb and are most often depicted in a frontal position. Freedmen reliefs were not freestanding monuments, but were attached to house tombs that lined major streets such as the Via Appia and the Via Labicana. Many of the reliefs were found with dowels, attachment holes, and traces of iron clamps, which indicates that these reliefs were attached to tomb buildings.⁸⁸

This genre features individualized portraiture and inscriptions, which were standard elements on funerary monuments that helped to ensure the preservation of the

⁸⁷ Although I categorize the reliefs into the subcategories of full-length representations and panel reliefs, the catalogues of Kleiner (1977) and Kockel (1993) further divide the evidence into eighteen categories and fifteen categories, respectively. Kleiner's catalogue organizes the reliefs by the number of figures presented and their gender, as well as by whether the relief is a full-length portrait or half-length. Kockel's catalogue primarily organizes the reliefs chronologically, but also by the material used, the number of figures presented as well as their age and gender, and the style type of the figures.

⁸⁸ Kleiner 1977: 7.

deceased's memory, and almost exclusively depict freedmen and their families. The panel relief variety is unique because it is a completely Roman invention and focuses on the individuals' 'life like' representations. The full-length type, by contrast, were directly influenced by the honorific statues of the Roman elite and free-standing Eastern Greek funerary *stelae*; however, as Koortbojian observes, they lack the narrative interactions, exaggerated proportions, and highly idealized representations associated with Hellenistic imagery.⁸⁹

Freedmen reliefs, much like other forms of funerary commemoration, were an avenue for self-promotion and the preservation of memory and status. The reliefs portray a variety of groups, including married couples, *colliberti*, and, perhaps most importantly for this study, parents and children. Freedmen reliefs were the first genre of funerary commemoration to depict young children under the age of fifteen. The children presented in the reliefs, primarily boys, are often freeborn sons and are depicted alongside their freedmen parents and they serve as a testament to the freedman family unit and the social mobility achieved by these families.⁹⁰ The importance of Roman citizenship, legal marriage, and family is presented on freedmen reliefs through the gestures, clothing, and positioning of the figures. Although they are often depicted in tunics or as nude busts, the two most significant attributes associated with freeborn Roman boys are the *toga praetexta* and the *bulla*. These two items, when present, are conspicuous and are featured

⁸⁹ Koortbojian 1996: 214-216.

⁹⁰ Kockel (1993) provides 20 examples of reliefs that feature depictions of young children, 15 of these examples feature young boys and three feature young girls (N. B. The relief of the Sertorii at Blundell Hall [M 2, Plate 111] contains a portrait of both a young boy and a young girl, and there are three examples that are poorly preserved and therefore the gender of the children cannot be determined).

primarily on panel reliefs. Therefore, while the full-length representations are an important category of evidence, this chapter will focus primarily on the panel relief type.

The most noteworthy gesture that is featured on freedmen reliefs is the *dextrarum iunctio*, the union of the right hands, which is clearly displayed on the Santacroce Relief (Figure 1). This gesture evolved from the *dexiosis*, the handshake motif, that appeared originally on Athenian funerary *stelae* and in mythological scenes on Greek pottery. The motif was also used by the Etruscans and was prominent on their funerary monuments, including ash chests and sarcophagi. However, what is particularly notable about the use of the motif in these two contexts is that it linked two individuals of the same sex.⁹¹ In the Roman context, the *dextrarum iunctio* linked two individuals of the opposite sex and usually signified marriage. The use of this gesture on freedmen reliefs was meant to indicate that the couple had a legitimate marriage as well as the desired qualities associated with a successful union, such as *concordia*, harmony between husband and wife, and *fides*, trust and loyalty.⁹² Zanker suggests that, in addition to being a symbol of marriage, it is possible that the *dextrarum iunctio* was a part of the marriage ritual.⁹³ Davies' alternative interpretation, which emphasizes the importance of the marital bond, states that the *dextrarum iunctio* symbolizes the death of one partner and the continued fidelity of the married couple after death.⁹⁴ Both interpretations, however, imply that the *dextrarum iunctio* was representative of a legitimate marriage and the bond shared between husband and wife.

⁹¹ Davies 1985: 627-632.

⁹² George 2005a: 44.

⁹³ Zanker 1975: 288.

⁹⁴ Davies 1985: 632.

The *togatus* and *pudicitia* gestures, which are a reference to the Roman citizenship obtained by freedmen, are presented through the clothing worn by adult freedmen and freedwomen; therefore, the clothing and gestures presented on the reliefs must be discussed together.⁹⁵ All adult men who are presented on freedmen reliefs, with few exceptions, wore the toga.⁹⁶ Since only Roman citizens were permitted to wear the toga, it served as an indicator of Roman citizenship and freed status on freedmen reliefs. The garment was often referred to as the *toga virilis*, the toga of manhood, or *toga pura*, the pure toga. The term *toga virilis* suggests that this toga was only worn by free Roman citizen males sixteen years of age and older; the term *toga pura*, on the other hand, could be a reference to the garment's natural off-white colour as well as the reality that only men of free status were allowed to wear it.⁹⁷ To further emphasize their status, freedmen are almost always depicted in a pose that is referred to as the *togatus*, which can be seen on the relief of the Furii (Figure 2). The figures who are depicted with this gesture, the second male figure on the left side of the panel and the male figure on the far right side of the panel, have their right arms bent and held in a sling that is draped over both their left and right shoulders. The *togatus* gesture in conjunction with the reserved facial expressions of the figures conveys a certain level of solemnity and dignity. The freedmen presented themselves in such a manner to prove that they were Roman citizens and deserved the rights and respect associated with their freed status.

⁹⁵ The terminology *togatus* gesture and *pudicitia* gesture are Kleiner's (1992: 40).

⁹⁶ There are a few extant examples that feature men dressed in military attire; see the Relief of the Gessii (Kockel 1993: J 1). The central figure in this relief is an elderly male, a freeborn Roman citizen, who wears a *cuirass* and has his mantle draped over his left shoulder. He is flanked by his freedwoman wife on his left and his togate son on his right.

⁹⁷ Dolansky 2008: 54.

Freedwomen did not wear the Roman toga; however, their clothing and gestures not only display their freed status, but also convey that they were legally married. The two garments that women wore on freedmen reliefs are the tunic and the *palla*, a large mantle worn over a woman's long tunic, which are both worn by the freedwoman Vecilia Hilara on the relief of L. Vibius (Figure 3). The representation of the freedwoman who veiled her head with her *palla*, a gesture of modesty referred to as *capite velato* in Latin, expressed the ideal values associated with the Roman *matrona*: fidelity and chastity.⁹⁸ The *vitta* was another sartorial item worn by freedwomen that helped to convey their newfound status. The *vitta* was a woollen hair band often worn beneath the *palla* and it symbolized the purity of the Roman *matrona*. This article can be seen on the central female figure identified as Furia, freedwoman of Gaia, on the relief of the Furii (Figure 2).

Freedwomen also employed the use of gesture in order to convey their status. In order to present themselves as conservative Roman *matronae* who valued their chastity and modesty, or *pudicitia* in Latin, freedwomen are often depicted holding their *pallae* as if to cover their faces and protect themselves from an unwanted gaze, a feature known as the *pudicitia* gesture. Vecilia Hilara (Figure 3) is clearly portrayed with this gesture: she has both of her arms bent and her left hand, which is placed close to her face, pulls at her *palla*. In addition, the only jewellery Hilara wears is her wedding ring, which is prominently displayed on her left hand. The freedwomen's garments and gestures depicted on this type of commemoration demonstrate the women's modesty and chastity,

⁹⁸ George 2001: 180.

while the prominent display of wedding rings symbolizes their fidelity. As former slaves who obtained their freedom, these women desired to portray themselves as dignified women who possessed all of the ideal characteristics of the Roman *matrona*. In addition, freedwomen were able to produce legitimate children who were recognized as full Roman citizens, which enabled them to emulate further Roman women.

When freedmen reliefs began to emerge as a popular form of commemoration, the monuments originally consisted of two specific groupings, married couples and adult *colliberti*. The relationship between a husband and wife is often easy to identify with the help of the *dextrarum iunctio* and identification is further simplified if the couple are the only two figures present in the relief. However, there are also examples that feature a married couple alongside *colliberti*.⁹⁹ The reliefs that contain groups of *colliberti* suggest that there is a relationship between the figures, for example, that they were related by blood or they served in the same household while enslaved. This second relationship created a strong bond between slaves who served in the same household which resulted in a pseudo-family, a relationship that was highly valued especially by slaves who were either separated from their family or had none. In the case of the Furii relief (Figure 2), the inscription suggests that the three women and one man in the relief served the Furii family, while the man on the far right side of the relief served the Sulpicii family. George suggests that, due to the physical similarities, the three women in the relief are sisters and

⁹⁹ An excellent example of a relief with a sole married couple is the Relief of the Aiedii (Kockel 1993: I 1, Plate 56). The relief of the Servilii from the Villa Wolkonsky (Kockel 1993: G 7, Plate 42) presents a married couple at the centre of the group which contains five adult figures and one small child figure.

that two of them, the central figure and the woman on her right, are paired with their husbands.¹⁰⁰

Although spouses and *colliberti* were the initial groups presented on freedmen reliefs, young children became more frequent during the Augustan period. The appearance of young children, mostly boys, on freedmen panel reliefs has been attributed by some scholars to the influence of Augustus and his promotion of family values. As he was concerned with the justification and promotion of his political authority, Augustus devoted much attention to social issues that were relevant to not only himself, but also to the Roman population. Stability and continuity were of great importance to him and were represented in his promotion of the family and children.¹⁰¹ The high valuation of children and the family was presented on the *Ara Pacis Augustae*, which was commissioned by the Senate in honour of Augustus' return from the pacification of Spain and Gaul.¹⁰² The *Ara Pacis* is of particular significance because it was the first state commissioned relief that featured young children. The southeast panel of the altar screen features Pax/Tellus with two infants in her lap and in the southwest panel, Aeneas and his adult son Ascanius prepare for sacrifice while two male youths are in attendance. Though these scenes feature young figures in a prominent way, it is important to note that they are not a part of the earthly realm and serve as a reference to the mythical foundation of Rome.

There is, however, a well preserved section of the processional frieze on the south side of the altar screen which depicts children who were members of the Imperial family

¹⁰⁰ George 2005a: 50-51. George also mentions that it is possible that the similar facial features were a trademark of the workshop which produced the relief.

¹⁰¹ Rawson 2003: 31.

¹⁰² Kleiner 1992: 90.

(Figure 4). There are two distinct family groups in this section of the frieze. The first group consists of Antonia the Younger, who turns to face her husband Drusus. The couple stands close together and Germanicus holds his mother's hand. The second group is composed of the veiled Antonia the Elder, her husband Lucius Domitius Ahenobarbus, and their two children.¹⁰³ Antonia places her hand on her son's shoulder as he pulls on Drusus' toga. The little boy and his older sister gaze at one another while their father looks on. The young children on the *Ara Pacis* served as a symbol of the promising future and the successful continuation of the Imperial family.¹⁰⁴ The interaction between parents and children on the *Ara Pacis* and the presence of children in the forefront of the frieze reflects the high valuation that was placed on children and the family as a result of Augustan social policy.

Kleiner's study on the friezes of the *Ara Pacis* and Augustan social policy investigates why women and children figure prominently on the processional friezes and explores the possible influence of the monument on funerary reliefs from the private sphere. She suggests that the presence of young children on the frieze and the promotion of the family influenced Roman freedmen to include them on their funerary commemoration. She observes that the family groups on the *Ara Pacis* are presented in a unified manner with both parents flanking their children and she suggests that this motif was adopted by freedmen and was used on both full-length and panel reliefs. Furthermore, Kleiner suggests that although there are panel reliefs that do not adhere to the precedent set by the *Ara Pacis*, the monuments are a testament to the sudden

¹⁰³ Kleiner 1992: 92.

¹⁰⁴ Zanker 1988: 122.

appearance of children on art commissioned during the reign of Augustus.¹⁰⁵ While there are examples of reliefs that feature this motif, for example, the Santacroce Relief and the Relief of L. Vibius, the appearance of children on funerary monuments cannot be considered ‘sudden’ and directly influenced by the prominence of children on the *Ara Pacis* since there were private commemorations which feature young children that predate the altar, such as the reliefs of the Servilii and Vettii families (Figures 5 and 6). Although the influence of the Augustan altar on freedmen reliefs is not as direct as Kleiner suggests, the institution of the family and their newfound stability was of great importance to this social group and is reflected in this genre.

The Santacroce relief (Figure 1), a marble panel which dates to approximately 20 BC, presents a husband and wife embraced in the *dextrarum iunctio* as the couple frames their young son. Although the *concordia* between them is clearly indicated by the *dextrarum iunctio*, it is further emphasized by the couple’s gazing upon one another. The husband is dressed in his *toga* while his wife wears her *tunic* and holds her *palla* in her left hand, which also displays her wedding ring that highlights their marital bond. The couple’s son is in the background of the panel, but he is placed between his parents, which suggests family unity between the three figures. The boy has childish facial features, which indicates his young age, and he wears a simple *tunic*. Kockel suggests that the child might have died prior to manumission, which is why he wears the *tunic* instead of the *toga praetexta* and the *bulla*. The inscription, which appears on the border of the relief and above the child, does not provide any information about the identity of the

¹⁰⁵ Kleiner 1993: 43-44.

individuals presented, but consists of the following: *honor* is written on the left side of the border, *fidei/ simulacrum* is inscribed at the top, *veritas* appears on the right side, and *amor* is written above the child's head. Kockel suggests that the inscription is a later addition that was added in the 15th century and that the monument was used as an allegorical representation of the family unit.¹⁰⁶ These terms represented values that were associated with the family, highlighting the faithfulness between the husband and wife as well as mutual honour and respect. The term *amor*, placed in the prominent position above the child's head, represented the love the parents had for their child and also the love between husband and wife. Although the inscription was most likely a later addition, the positioning of the figures and their gestures reveal the stability that the couple found through their legitimate marriage and family.

The marble relief of Lucius Vibius (Figure 3), which dates to the end of the 1st century BC, depicts Vibius as an older man appropriately dressed in a toga with his right hand bound in the *togatus* pose. His wife, Vecilia Hilara appears to be an older Roman *matrona* who is modestly dressed with her head veiled by her *palla*. As was mentioned earlier, Vecilia Hilara prominently displays her wedding ring on her left hand in the *pudicitia* gesture. Their son, Lucius Vibius Felicio Felix, is positioned in the background of the panel as a nude bust between his parents. Kleiner suggests that the child's bust is not a portrait of Felicio, but a representation of a sculpted image. She states that this type

¹⁰⁶ Kockel 1993: 125-126. Kockel does not provide further information on the inscription.

(Type D: Portrait Busts) was used specifically to depict deceased individuals, and compares this type to the ancestral portraits located in the atrium of the house.¹⁰⁷

Kockel presents a more probable interpretation which takes into account not only the imagery but also the epigraphic elements identifying the members of the Vibii family. The inscription, which is located beneath the relief, reads as follows:

*L(ucius) · Vibius · L(ucii) · f(ilius) · Tro(mentina tribu) | L(ucius) · Vibius · Felicio · Felix
// Vecilia · G(aiae) · l(iberta) · Hilara | Vibia · L(ucii) · l(iberta) · Prima.*¹⁰⁸

The inscription reveals that Lucius Vibius was a freeborn Roman who was a member of the Tromentina voting tribe and that his wife Vecilia Hilara was a freedwoman as is indicated by the reverse letter C, the abbreviation for the name Gaia which refers to the unspecified woman who manumitted her. The couple's two children, Lucius Vibius Felicio Felix and Vibia Prima, are mentioned below in a smaller inscription. Due to the lack of filiation, Kockel rightly suggests that Felicio was born while in slavery and died before his mother was manumitted.¹⁰⁹ It is important to note that although there are four names inscribed, there are only three figures in the relief panel. It is possible that the small child is a symbol that represents both of the couple's children and due to the high valuation that was placed on boys, it is logical to suggest that the couple chose to present their son as opposed to their daughter.

The positioning of the family members and the gestures on these reliefs reveal much about the freedman family unit; however, the individualized portraiture is another significant element that must be examined. Portraiture was an essential component of

¹⁰⁷ Kleiner 1977: 84-85.

¹⁰⁸ *CIL VI* 28774.

¹⁰⁹ Kockel 1993: 180.

funerary commemoration since it helped to preserve the memory of the deceased and in the context of freedmen reliefs it also helped to convey the legitimacy of their lineage. As former slaves these individuals did not have any respectable ancestry to speak of, unlike the freeborn members of society who would have their ancestry on display through their *imagines* and through their nomenclature. Therefore, their family lineage began after manumission and with their freeborn children.¹¹⁰ As a result, the portraits on panel reliefs served as a way for freedmen to not only commemorate their families, but also conveyed their status and position in society. It is clear from the Santacroce relief and the portraits featured on the panel of the Vibii family that realistic portraiture was not limited to the adults, but young children were also depicted with individualized characteristics.

In addition to their realistic portraiture, children were also differentiated from adults through their attire. Although they are often depicted in simple tunics or as nude busts, there are two conspicuous and significant sartorial items associated with children on freedmen reliefs: the *toga praetexta* and the *bulla*. These two items, which were symbols of free birth and free condition, were referred to as *insignia ingenuitatis et libertatis*.¹¹¹ The *toga praetexta*, which was worn by freeborn Roman boys and girls, was an off-white toga with a prominent purple border. The colour of the border is referred to as *purpura* by Roman authors; however, in reality the colour was more of a deep red than purple. According to Roman tradition, the *toga praetexta* was originally worn by the third king of Rome, Tullus Hostilius, and then by subsequent rulers.¹¹² Throughout the

¹¹⁰ Carroll 2006: 39.

¹¹¹ Sebesta 2005: 115.

¹¹² Dolansky 2008: 53.

Imperial Period, this type of toga was worn by the emperor and magistrates who were involved in the state religion. Other high level individuals involved with religious rites, such as the *pontifex maximus*, *flamines*, and augurs, wore praetextate robes. During sacrifice the Vestal Virgins wore a *suffibulum*, a short veil with a praetextate border, and an *infula*, a white woollen fillet with red and white ribbons.¹¹³ Evidently, the praetextate border on the garments of religious and high ranking officials was sacred and carried a sense of authority.

From the garment's origin in antiquity to its use by important religious functionaries, the *toga praetexta* carried a political and religious significance, but in the context of children the garment held a different meaning. The significance of the garment with respect to children is mentioned in literary sources. The garment makes a prominent appearance in a declamation that has been attributed to Quintilian, which addresses the issue of a slave who received the *toga praetexta*. In the second declamation, which discusses equity, the speaker concludes his arguments by swearing upon ‘that sacral quality itself of the *praetexta*, with which priests and magistrates are robed, and we make sacred and venerable the weakness of childhood’.¹¹⁴ It is clear that the Romans viewed the *toga praetexta* as a symbol of the purity of children. Freeborn children, due to their youth and inexperience, were morally weak and the *toga praetexta* served to protect their innocence.

¹¹³ Sebesta 2005: 116-117 and Dolansky 2008: 54.

¹¹⁴ [Quintilian] *Declamatio* 340. 13. The full line reads: ‘Ego vobis allego etiam ipsum sacrum praetextarum, quo sacerdotes velantur, quo magistratus, quo infirmitatem pueritiae sacram facimus ac venerabilem’. (Trans. F. Dolansky 2008).

The *toga praetexta* also protected children from *stuprum*, a violation of a Roman's *pudicitia*, or sexual modesty. This violation, which could only be committed against freeborn Romans, was considered a disgraceful crime that was met with severe punishment. While it was not forbidden for an adult Roman male to have intercourse with a male or female slave child, he was prohibited from engaging in any sexual activity with freeborn children who wore the *praetexta*. In addition, the *praetexta* placed restrictions on the behaviour of adults which ensured that the only acceptable conduct in the presence of a freeborn child was one of strict modesty and chastity.¹¹⁵ These firm regulations protected the child's innocence and religious purity.

In addition to the garment's protective attributes, the *toga praetexta* was also a sign of social aspiration. Freeborn boys who wore the *toga praetexta* were subject to the many expectations of their parents, especially freedmen. Due to the hindrances that affected their social mobility and political advancement, it was the hope of freedmen parents that their freeborn sons would succeed in their adult lives and climb the social and political ladder in ways that their parents had not. This garment indicated that these children were part of a social group that was not subject to limitations, legal or otherwise, and therefore differed greatly from their parents. This differentiation caused the freeborn sons of freedmen to be highly valued by their parents; moreover, their potential success in their adult life provided their parents with a sense of hope for the continuation and success of their family.

¹¹⁵ Sebesta 2005: 114-115.

The *bulla* was a golden locket that was worn by freeborn Roman boys. The locket was worn around the boy's neck from birth and received the name *bulla*, or bubble, due to its round shape.¹¹⁶ Palmer provides two possible origins for the amulet: one tradition attributes it to Romulus, who awarded the golden *bulla* and the *toga praetexta* to the son of the first Sabine woman who gave birth to a Roman's son. The second individual associated with the origins of the *bulla* is the Etruscan Tarquinius Priscus, the fifth king of Rome, who awarded the *bulla* to his son who killed an enemy in his *toga praetexta*.¹¹⁷ Throughout the Republic and Empire, the *bulla* was exclusive to freeborn Roman boys and, as a result, served as a symbol of free birth.¹¹⁸ Originally, only the sons of freeborn men were allowed to wear the *bulla*; however, by the mid second century BC, the freeborn sons of Roman freedmen were permitted to wear it as well.¹¹⁹ As with the *toga praetexta*, the *bulla*'s origins in antiquity and continued use throughout the Republican and Imperial periods reaffirms it as an established Roman tradition.

Roman literary sources, specifically Cicero's second speech against Verres and Suetonius' *Divus Julius*, provide insight into how the Romans valued the *bulla*. In his second oration against the corrupt governor of Sicily, Gaius Verres, Cicero describes the *bulla* as an *ornamentum* that is given to a boy by his father and he emphasizes that the locket is a sign and token of his happier fortune.¹²⁰ Evidently, the *bulla* not only signified free birth, but it also alluded to the privileged life of the freeborn Roman. Parents who

¹¹⁶ Palmer 1989: 1.

¹¹⁷ Palmer 1989: 15-16.

¹¹⁸ Though the *bulla* was worn exclusively by boys, girls also wore an apotropaic amulet, *lunula*, which was a moon-shaped pendant (Olson 2008: 144).

¹¹⁹ George 2005a: 43.

¹²⁰ Cicero *In Verrem* 2.1.58.152: 'quod ornamentum pueritiae pater dederat, indicium atque insigne fortunae'.

could afford to give their child a *bulla* must have had sufficient wealth; therefore, the *bulla* was also a symbol of a family's prosperity. Suetonius' account of Julius Caesar's funeral also reveals the high value that was placed on the locket. In addition to the legionary weapons, armour, and women's jewellery, *togae praetextae* and *bullae* were thrown onto Caesar's funeral pyre.¹²¹ It is clear from this account that *bullae* were so highly valued that they were deemed suitable offerings for the deceased Caesar.

In addition to its function as an *ornamentum ingenuitatis*, the *bulla* also had apotropaic and medical properties. As was emphasized in Chapter 1, Roman children were subject to high infant and child mortality rates: according to modern demographic research, approximately 30 percent of infants died under the age of one and 50 percent of children died before age ten. One of the primary factors that affected child and infant mortality rates was the Romans' inability to treat diseases effectively.¹²² Due to these demographic factors and the children's susceptibility to illness, freeborn boys wore the *bulla* from infancy until the day that they assumed their *toga virilis*. Although parents did consult doctors who prescribed medical remedies for childhood illnesses, these were often used in conjunction with the *bulla* and other amulets. The apotropaic *bullae* contained remedies, which were referred to as *remedia* or *praebia*; however, the precise details of these contents remain unknown.¹²³

These sartorial items served as a form of protection for the young Roman boy: the *toga praetexta* protected the child from moral corruption and the *bulla* provided

¹²¹ Suetonius *Divus Julius* 84.4.

¹²² See Chapter 1: The Role of Children in the Roman Family and in Roman Funerary Commemoration, pages 14-16.

¹²³ Palmer 1989: 1 and Bradley 2005: 89.

protection from illness. They were worn by the child until he reached approximately 15 or 16 years, the age at which boys began to show signs of physical maturity which indicated that he was ready to enter manhood and, coincidentally, when the child's life expectancy greatly increased.¹²⁴ When the parents believed that their son was ready, he set aside his *toga praetexta*, dedicated his *bulla* to the household *Lares*, and donned the *toga virilis*, the toga of manhood.¹²⁵

Such clear symbols of freeborn status were of particular significance to freedman families as they conveyed not only that they and their freeborn children were legitimate Roman citizens, but also that they were able to achieve social mobility and respect through their children. Due to the importance of the toga and the locket, it is understandable that when they were featured, they were presented in a conspicuous manner and instantly differentiated the freeborn son from his parents and other family members. There are two well-preserved panel reliefs which best depict the *toga praetexta* and the *bulla* of freeborn boys: the reliefs that commemorate the Servilii and Vettii families.

The Relief of the Servilii (Figure 5), which dates to approximately 30 to 20 BC, is perhaps the earliest example to feature a portrait of a young child.¹²⁶ The boy, whose big eyes, protruding ears, and round head indicate his young age, is depicted in a frontal pose and has a neutral facial expression. He holds the folds of his *toga praetexta* in his left hand and although this is not a full-length representation and there is no colour present, it

¹²⁴ Dolansky 2008: 49 and Bradley 2005: 90.

¹²⁵ There was no equivalent coming of age ceremony for freeborn girls. Rawson 2003: 145 states that the rite of passage to adulthood for young girls was marriage and that girls dedicated their childhood dolls to the *Lares* or Venus on the day before they were married.

¹²⁶ Rawson 1999: 211.

is reasonable to suggest that he is wearing a *toga praetexta* due to the fact that he also wears his *bulla*, which is prominently displayed.¹²⁷ His parents are also posed frontally with the same neutral expression. The young boy's father is dressed in his toga and has his right hand bound in the *togatus* gesture while his mother wears her tunic and is veiled by her *palla*, which she grasps with her left hand. The young boy is also completely separated from his parents by a pilaster that is topped with a decorative Corinthian capital. Although the three figures are well preserved, it appears that the right side of the relief has been damaged in a rather peculiar way: the woman remains intact, however the stone that was immediately beside her has been completely cut off. Kockel provides a possible suggestion as to what exactly was placed beside her: he states that there might have been another portrait on the right side of the panel that was also separated by a pilaster and Corinthian capital.¹²⁸

There is a well preserved inscription featured beneath each portrait.¹²⁹ The inscription below the boy's portrait reads as follows: *P(ublius) · Servilius · Q(uinti) · f(ilius) · | Globulus · f(ilius)*. The freeborn status of P. Servilius Globulus is reinforced by the presence of not only the *tria nomina* (*praenomen*, *nomen*, *cognomen*) but also by the presence of his filiation, which is indicated by the letter 'f.'. The inscription below his father's portrait reads: *Q(uintus) · Servilius · Q(uinti) · l(ibertus) · | Hilarus · pater*. Q. Servilius Hilarus' freed status is also indicated by his *tria nomina* and the presence of the

¹²⁷ Kleiner's 1977 catalogue of freedmen reliefs states that the young boys present in the reliefs of the Servili and the Vettii families are at least sixteen years old and are dressed in the *toga virilis* (Kleiner 1977: 157). This is an inaccurate interpretation of these two reliefs. Due to the presence of the *bulla* on both examples, as well as their childlike facial features, it is more probable that the children are wearing the *toga praetexta* as opposed to the *toga virilis* or even the tunic.

¹²⁸ Kockel 1993: 141.

¹²⁹ CIL VI 26410.

letter ‘l.’, which is the abbreviated form of *libertus*. Lastly, the inscription below the portrait of his mother reads: *Sempronia | C(aii) · l(iberta) · Eune · uxor*. The presence of the abbreviation ‘l.’ in Sempronia’s inscription indicates that she was also a freedwoman. Although this panel has a funerary context, the epigraphic elements do not reveal which members of the family were deceased. The inscriptions on freedmen reliefs do not have the characteristic *Dis Manibus* or *Hic Situs Est* phrases that were common on epitaphs, but some inscriptions do have the word *Vivit*, or its abbreviation ‘V.’, to indicate if a person was alive and the Greek letter ‘Θ’, which is the abbreviated form of the word *Θάvatoς*, was used to indicate if a person was deceased.

The inscription on this panel is unique because it emphasizes the familial relationship between the three figures. At the end of each of their names their role in the family is separated by an interpunct: Globulus is identified as the son, Hilarus is the father, and Eune has the role of the wife. The indication of the freed status of the parents is also worth noting. Hilarus was freed by a Roman named Quintus Servilius and his wife Eune was freed by her master Gaius Sempronius. This differing nomenclature suggests that the couple were not involved in a *contubernium* while they were enslaved. Lastly, the positioning of the child in a separate relief is also significant. Rawson rightly suggests that the separation of the figures indicates the status differentiation between the parents and their child, while it promotes his freed status and the family’s hope of social mobility.¹³⁰

¹³⁰ Rawson 2003: 31.

The relief of the Vettii (Figure 6) is a well preserved marble example which dates to approximately 20 BC. There are four figures depicted in the panel: a mother, a father, a young son, and an adult daughter. As is characteristic of this genre, all four figures are in a frontal position and have the same neutral facial expression. The young boy is noticeably shorter than the three adult figures and he also has quite childish facial features coupled with a juvenile hairstyle which suggests a very young age. He wears his *toga praetexta* and *bulla*, which is prominently displayed underneath his broken off right hand. His father wears the *toga virilis* and holds his right hand in the common *togatus* gesture. The gestures of his mother and older sister frame the panel: his mother on the far left side wears her tunic and grasps her *palla* in her right hand while her daughter, positioned at the far right side of the panel, grasps her *palla* in her left hand.

There is a legible inscription on the lower border of the panel which provides the identity of the figures in the relief. The inscription identifies the figures from the left to right and reads:

Antonia · P(ublia) · l(iberta) · Rufa // C(aius) · Vettius · G(aiae) · l(ibertus) · Nicephor // C(aius) · Vettius · C(aii) · f(ilius) · Secundus // Vettia · C(aii) · l(iberta) · Calybe.

The inscription also identifies which family members were alive and which ones were deceased. The letter ‘V’, the abbreviated form of *Vivit*, appears above the names C. Vettius Nicephor and Vettia Calybe, which indicates that the monument was set up to commemorate the deaths of Antonia Rufa and Vettius Secundus.

There are two features of this example that are particularly significant. The inscription reveals that the three adults in the relief are freedmen and the child is freeborn. Furthermore, it is possible that the wife of this *contubernium* was freed before her

husband and Kockel suggests that the ‘Gaia’ referred to in Vettius Nicephor’s inscription is his wife, Antonia Rufa. The inscription, as well as her teenage facial features, suggests that Vettia Calybe was born while her parents were still enslaved. Gaius Vettius Nicephor, upon receiving his freedom from his wife, bought and manumitted his daughter, which is suggested by her nomenclature. This demonstrates the strong familial bond that was formed while they were slaves involved in a *contubernium*. The members of the Vettii family managed to achieve some stability in slavery and were able to reunite and live as a freed family.

The other significant, and rather touching feature of this relief is the hand gesture of Vettius Secundus. The boy’s right arm is raised and held towards his chest in a manner that is similar to his father’s *togatus* gesture. Kockel suggests that it was the intention of the dedicatory to depict the child in a manner that emulated his father.¹³¹ Although this is a logical, albeit sentimental, interpretation, the child’s gesture also reveals the social aspirations of the family. As a freeborn Roman, Secundus was not socially or politically hindered like his parents or his sister, and had a more respected status in society. This *togatus* gesture coupled with the presence of his *bulla* and *toga praetexta* indicates the hopes that the Vettii family had for social advancement through their freeborn son.

Conclusion

Freedmen families, including the great number which began as *contubernia*, received legitimacy through attaining Roman citizenship and the rights to a legal marriage by manumission. Through their children, freedmen were able to obtain a level of social

¹³¹ Kockel 1993: 145.

mobility and legitimacy that they were unable to achieve themselves. Their high valuation of their children is demonstrated in their funerary commemorations. By depicting themselves in the dress of Roman citizenship and their children in the *insigniae ingenuitatis et libertatis*, freedmen were able to not only promote their social status but commemorated their family as well. Freedmen reliefs are significant because this genre was the first form of funerary commemoration to feature representations of children. This genre fell out of popularity at the end of the first century AD and was replaced by small scale funerary altars, which expanded the range of iconography associated with children.

CHAPTER 3

Funerary Altars

Introduction

Roman freedmen continued to express aspects of their identity through the funerary commemoration of their children throughout the imperial period. As panel reliefs declined in popularity at the end of the first century AD, a new form of commemoration, funerary altars, emerged in the mid-first century AD and ultimately replaced panel reliefs. These altars, which were located either inside or outside of the family's tomb, served as grave markers rather than sacrificial altars or receptacles for remains. Unlike panel reliefs, which displayed children together with their parents, other siblings, and *colliberti*, funerary altars were dedicated to specific individuals and often portray the deceased children alone, unaccompanied by their parents.¹³² Funerary altars which contained a portrait of the deceased displayed the image either on the top of the altar or in a niche on the front side. This genre of commemoration also feature more detailed inscriptions than panel reliefs, thus providing more information about the deceased than their name.

In the panel reliefs the status of young boys was conveyed through the conspicuous display of their *togae praetextae* and their *bullae*. While these iconographic elements do appear on funerary altars dedicated to children, they are much less prominent. Instead the iconography featured on funerary altars was more varied than on

¹³² Although this was the standard practice, there are extant examples that display parents and children together. The most notable example of this is the altar of Marcus Iunius Persus, Marcus Iunius Satyrus, Marcus Iunius Iustus, and Iunia Pia (Kleiner 1987: cat. no. 48, plate 29). The portrait above the inscription depicts Iustus together with his son, Satyrus, on his left and his daughter, Iunia Pia, on his right.

portrait reliefs, this expansion of imagery represents a notable shift in funerary iconography. Funerary altars depict children in a variety of ways, including portraying them as gods to showing them engaged in scenes of everyday life.

Another important distinction occurred with the introduction of this genre: funerary altars were not exclusive to Roman freedmen and their freeborn children, as there are extant examples of altars that were dedicated to young boys who were *vernae* and *equites* as well as adults who were members of the senatorial order and consuls. In her catalogue Kleiner examines 130 funerary altars, but her investigation is limited due to the fact that she focuses solely on altars that feature portraiture, the great majority of which display some indication that they were dedicated by freedmen. Boschung's more comprehensive catalogue, which was published in the same year as Kleiner's, is not limited to funerary altars with portraiture. He includes altars that feature ornamental embellishment, such as eagles, rosettes, and other decorative motifs in his work, which increased his range of evidence to 999 altars. This extensive amount of material led Boschung to conclude that this genre of funerary commemoration was not exclusive to one particular social stratum; however, it is evident that freedmen and their descendants comprise the majority of the dedicators of funerary altars with portraits.¹³³ There is another development that is equally important, which is the emergence of the commemoration of young girls. Kockel provided twenty examples of panel reliefs that

¹³³ Boschung 1987: 55 and Goette 1989: 162. In his conclusions Boschung provides the number of altars that were dedicated to members of the elite, political figures, and military officials. He states that five altars were dedicated to senators and ten commemorate members of consular families, including altars which commemorate Cn. Pompeius Magnus and L. Calpurnius Piso Frugi Licinianus. There are fourteen examples that were commissioned for Praetorians and twenty-two for auxiliary magistrates. Thirteen altars commemorate members of the equestrian order and six were dedicated to *equites singulares*.

contained depictions of children, fifteen of which featured boys and three that featured young girls.¹³⁴ On account of the underrepresentation of girls on panel reliefs, the increased presence of this distinct group on funerary altars is significant.

In this chapter I will examine funerary altars that commemorate young boys and girls, with a primary focus on examples that contain portraiture of the deceased. I have chosen nine well-preserved funerary altars from Kleiner's catalogue as case studies that best demonstrate the display of social status and the cultural identity of freedmen and their children through the portraiture and general presentation of the deceased, as well as the activities that the children are engaged in on the altars. I will begin my investigation with a discussion of the detailed epigraphy that appeared on these monuments. I will then delve into the sculptural elements present on funerary altars, with an examination of the individualized portraiture of boys and girls, followed by an analysis of the iconography associated with young children.

Epigraphic Features

A fundamental distinction in this new commemoration occurs in the epigraphy. The inscriptions that appeared on freedmen reliefs provided the names of the individuals who were depicted on the panel and, occasionally, whether they were alive or deceased, as indicated by the abbreviations *Θ(άντος)* and *v(ivit)*. There is a notable difference in the epigraphy on funerary altars: the epitaphs present not just the name of the deceased, but other important biographical information. For example, the altar dedicated to P. Albius Memor (Figure 7) provides the following inscription:

¹³⁴ See Chapter 2: Freedmen Reliefs, footnote 90.

*D(is) · M(anibus) | P(ublii) · Albi · P(ublii) · f(ilii) · Fab(ia tribu) · Memor | vix(it) · ann(is) · V · m(ensibus) · VI · d(iebus) · VI | P(ublius) · Albius · Threptus | et · Albia · Apollonia | parentes · filio · dulcissimo.*¹³⁵

The first epigraphic item that appears on funerary altars is the characteristic phrase *Dis Manibus*, more often in the abbreviation *DM*. This Latin invocation addresses the ‘spirits of the dead’, specifically the deceased individual whose name appears after it. This element, coupled with the accompanying portrait, made it clear exactly to whom the altar was dedicated. The altar commemorating the spirits of the dead *Memor* refers to him by his *tria nomina*, including his paternal filiation, and also mentions that he was a member of the *Fabia* voting tribe, both of which convey *Memor*’s free born status.

Although freedmen reliefs provided the name and some indication of whether or not an individual was deceased, funerary altars dedicated to children provide three additional epigraphic elements that differentiate the two types of commemoration. A predominant feature is the age of the child at death. Their age is usually broken down into the years, months, and days lived and is represented by either the Latin terms, or abbreviations of, *annis*, *mensibus*, and *diebus* followed by the appropriate number; for example, *Memor*’s epitaph states that he lived five years, six months, and six days. While the age of the child at death was included frequently on their altars, it is not as common on dedications to adults.¹³⁶ It seems likely that the specific age of the child was provided in order to convey the fact that their death was premature. Kleiner provides a more sentimental interpretation: she argues that the presence of the child’s age on the epitaph

¹³⁵ CIL VI 11346.

¹³⁶ Kleiner 1987 provides 10 examples of dedications to adults that provide the age of the deceased.

indicated the parents', or dedicatoe's, grief at the loss of their child.¹³⁷ Although it is possible that the feeling of loss is implied, it is more likely that the indication of age was meant to convey that the child died young.

The epitaphs on funerary altars frequently displayed the names of the dedicatoe, who were most often the deceased's parents. In this study, five of the eight altars examined are altars dedicated by two parents, two of the eight examples were dedicated by one parent, one altar was dedicated by a grandfather to his grandchild, and one example features no dedicatoe. Memor's epitaph, for example, clearly indicates that his parents, P. Albius Threptus and Albia Apollonia, were the ones responsible for its creation. It is likely that Threptus and Apollonia were a couple in an informal relationship from the same household, due to their shared *nomen*, and that Memor was born after the couple had been manumitted. It is clear that the dedicatoe's name was mentioned in order to establish who exactly erected the monument. It also served as a way for them to demonstrate a familial relationship with the deceased, if they were related, and, for those individuals who were not, it helped to establish a link between the dedicatoe and the dedicaatee.¹³⁸ The connection, familial or otherwise, between the two individuals is often clearly demonstrated: the child is identified as *filius* or *filia*, *nepos*, or *verna*, and the adult commemorators receive the title *parentes*; occasionally the more specific titles of *mater* and *pater* appear, or another relative, for example a grandfather (*avus*).

These bonds are further emphasized by the affectionate epithets that were attached to both the children and the dedicatoe. Memor's parents described their son as *dulcissimo*,

¹³⁷ Kleiner 1987: 46.

¹³⁸ McWilliam 2001: 85.

the Latin term for ‘sweetest’, which was a common epithet used to describe young children. This epithet appears to have been reserved for younger children, typically those aged five and younger, who supposedly demonstrated a sweet and playful personality, while the epithets *pientissimus*, ‘most devoted’, and *bene merens*, ‘well deserving’, were frequently used to describe children whose parents had already attached certain expectations to them, whether it was their potential careers, marriages, or the security of the children commemorating their parents.¹³⁹ The age distributions present in Nielsen’s study of the use of epithets in a sample of 3181 inscriptions found in *CIL VI* also indicates that the great majority of children who are described as *dulcissimus* or *dulcissima* are younger than the children who received the epithet of *pientissimus/piissimus* and *carissimus*, the Latin term for ‘most dear’.¹⁴⁰

On the surface these epithets demonstrate an affective relationship between the dedicator and the child. It is possible that when these adjectives were applied to young children they were meant to convey the unfulfilled expectations and hopes of the child’s parents since they were not at the age where they were expected to demonstrate *pietas* to their parents through their future support in old age and burial.¹⁴¹ Although these sentiments might be implied, it is expressed in a relatively formulaic manner and there are certain realities that must be considered. According to Nielsen’s extensive survey of *CIL VI*, *dulcissimus* is the second most common epithet used and appears in 262 inscriptions,

¹³⁹ Rawson 2003: 51 and Carroll 2006: 198-200.

¹⁴⁰ Nielsen 1999: 191-192, 198. The term *pientissimus/piissimus* was often applied to teenagers fifteen and older as opposed to younger children.

¹⁴¹ Nielsen 1999: 193, 198.

with 156 (60%) applied to a son or a daughter.¹⁴² The tendency to describe young children as *dulcissimus* is also reflected in the examples that were chosen for this chapter: four of the six children who are characterized by an epithet are assigned the adjective *dulcissimus*. While such frequency is indicative of both the established nature of the epithet, indicating societal norms, and the reality of premature death, these epithets also suggest an affectionate relationship between the dedicato and the child.

Portraiture and General Presentation

i) Boys

The portraiture that was displayed on the freedmen reliefs examined in Chapter 2 served as a way for freedmen to convey their status and to display their legitimate families. Although funerary altars with portraits tend to feature a depiction of the deceased instead of the entire family, they continued to reflect the status of both freedmen parents and their children. A reading of both the portraiture and the inscriptions together is essential to the understanding of these monuments, as both elements reveal much about the deceased child and the dedicato.

Funerary altars dedicated to children continued to portray them with realistic and individualized physical features. The altar dedicated to P. Albius Memor (Figure 7), for example, depicts the child in a manner similar to P. Servilius Globulus and C. Vettius Secundus, who were examined in the previous chapter.¹⁴³ In his bust-length portrait, Memor wears a large *bulla* in a prominent position around his neck and is clothed in his *toga praetexta*, the symbols of his freeborn status. His portrait, which is almost

¹⁴² Nielsen 1999: 193 and table 8.3 ‘Common Epithets’ on page 176.

¹⁴³ See Chapter 2: Freedmen Reliefs, pages 56-60 and Figures 5 and 6.

completely sculpted in the round, is rigidly frontal and his facial expression is noticeably solemn. The representation of the young boy on the lid, whose youthful appearance is accentuated by his big eyes and chubby cheeks, corresponds with the five-year-old boy described in the epitaph beneath it. The child's distinct haircut also contributes to the realism of the portrait, as it is fashioned after the traditional style of the emperor Trajan, a popular hairstyle adopted by men and boys during his rule.¹⁴⁴

Realistic portraiture was also used on monuments that did not depict the child in a manner similar to those seen on freedmen reliefs. The inscription on the front panel of the altar dedicated to the young *verna* L. Iulius Carus (Figure 8), for example, provides the following information:

*D(is) · M(anibus) | L(ucius) · Iulius · Thamyrus | L(ucio) · Iulio · Caro | verna · suo · bene | merenti · fecit · et · Iulia · Trophime | mater · vix(it) · an(nis) · III | mens(ibus) · VIII · die(bus) · X.*¹⁴⁵

His epitaph indicates that Carus did not reach his fourth birthday and that the dedicators responsible for the monument are identified as his mother, Iulia Trophime, and his former owner, Lucius Iulius Thamyrus, a relationship that is established by the term *verna* which appears after Carus' name. The portrait in the niche above the inscription panel depicts a reclining child whose facial features, primarily his chubby cheeks and protruding ears, reflects the three-year-old commemorated in the epitaph.

This trend to realist portraiture was not reserved for young children, who were classified as *infantia*, but was also a common motif on altars that were dedicated to boys who were over the age of seven, and who were in the transitional stage of pre-

¹⁴⁴ Kleiner 1987: 174 and Rawson 2003: 51.

¹⁴⁵ CIL VI 20304.

adolescence. An extant example of this is the altar dedicated to Gaius Petronius Ligur Virianus Postumus (Figure 9), whose inscription reads as follows:

D(is) · M(anibus) | C(aio) · Petronio · C(aii) · F(ilio) · Cam(ilia tribu) | Liguri · Viriano · Postumo | vix(it) · ann(is) · X · m(ensibus) · X · d(iebus) · XX | D(ecimus) · Valerius · Niceta | avos · nepoti · fecit.¹⁴⁶

Postumus' epitaph states that he died at the age of ten, which clearly indicates that he was no longer in the stage of *infantia*. Young boys who had not yet received their *toga virilis* and were seven or older were in the transitional period of *iuventas* or *adulescentia*, a period in which their morality was being developed but not yet fully controlled. In addition, boys in this age bracket had yet to display physical maturation, the onset of which coincided with the granting of the toga to sixteen-year-old males.¹⁴⁷ The monument dedicated to Postumus by his grandfather Decimus Valerius Niceta provides an accurate full-length portrait of the pre-adolescent boy. Although he still has a youthful appearance, the trademark chubby cheeks and stocky frame associated with representations of young children are noticeably absent, which indicates his slightly older age. The decision to depict young children with a portrait that corresponds with the age in their epitaph indicates that the dedicato wanted to express the fact that the child died prematurely and, as a result, the deceased is permanently memorialized as a child who had not yet reached adulthood.

There are extant examples of funerary altars that were dedicated to young children that feature a portrait of the child as an adult. This portraiture style was not seen on

¹⁴⁶ *CIL VI* 24011. Kleiner suggests that Postumus belonged to the Camilia tribe in Liguria, but, as Kajava notes, Ligur was one of his *cognomina* (Kajava 1988: 253).

¹⁴⁷ Harlow and Laurence 2002: 65, Dolansky 2008: 49.

freedmen reliefs, although the children in this genre have a calm solemnity that is parallel to that of the adults present in the reliefs.¹⁴⁸ This type of representation, which was unique to dedications to children, was used on altars that commemorated both young children and pre-adolescents. This type of portraiture was used on dedications for the young and infants in particular, as accurate depictions of very young children are often either Cupid or a *putto*. In addition, realistic depictions of human neonates and infants usually portray them as swaddled. A prime example of young children depicted in a prospective sense is the altar dedicated to Nico and the *verna* Eutyches (Figure 10). The epitaph identifying the two infant children states:

*D(is) · M(anibus) |
[Left Col.] Niconi · filio | dulcissimo | qui · v(ixit) · mens(ibus) · XI | diebus · VIII //
[Right Col.] Eutycheti | vernae | qui · vix(it) · an(nis) · I | mens(ibus) · V · dieb(us) · X //
Publicia · Glypte · fecit.*¹⁴⁹

According to their inscription, Nico, who is identified as Publicia Glypte's legitimate son, and Eutyches, who is identified as her *verna*, died in infancy at the age of eleven months and one year, respectively. However, the full-length portrait depicting the two together presents two figures that do not resemble the infants mentioned in the epitaph. The pair shares striking similarities, in that they both have chubby cheeks and large eyes as well as a similar Trajanic hairstyle.¹⁵⁰ Although it is possible that these distinct facial features are a trademark of a particular artisan, the decision to portray them in an almost identical manner indicates their close age range and could also suggest a possible blood

¹⁴⁸ Huskinson 2007: 331.

¹⁴⁹ CIL VI 22972.

¹⁵⁰ Kleiner 1987: 196.

relationship. Publicia Glypte, a freedwoman, gave birth to Nico after she was manumitted and Eutyches was born while she was still enslaved.

Kleiner and Rawson present alternative theories to explain their similar appearances. Kleiner suggests that, due to the low platforms that they are standing on, the two figures do not represent the children themselves, but statues of them. This argument is unconvincing as it is based exclusively on the presence of the platform beneath their feet. Rawson presents an alternative suggestion: she argues that Glypte raised the two infants as twins, having acquired Eutyches during her pregnancy. She supports this point with the claim that the Telephus imagery in the pediment of the altar was deliberately chosen to emphasize the foster relationship.¹⁵¹ Telephus, the mythological foundling, was the exposed son of Herakles who was suckled by a hind and found by shepherds. Rawson states that while the use of the *lupa Romana* would have alluded to the connection between the two children in a more direct way, the Telephus image effectively represents their relationship. She supports her argument with the fact that the *lupa Romana* imagery was used more often in state commissioned art, due to its connection with the origins of Rome. Furthermore, she observes that the imagery was also used by freedmen who wanted to display their newfound status and loyalty to Rome.¹⁵² This interpretation is plausible; however, it is not entirely convincing. The Telephus myth can only be associated with Eutyches, Glypte's *verna*, and it is odd that the dedicatory chose a symbol that excluded her legitimate child. Although it is impossible to determine the motivation behind this interesting choice of imagery, it is more likely that it was meant to

¹⁵¹ Kleiner 1987: 195-196, Rawson 2003a: 286-288, and Rawson 2010: 198-200.

¹⁵² Rawson 2003: 286-288.

complement the portrait of the children because of its allusions to maternal care, perhaps with a reference to surrogacy.

These two interpretations do not consider that, while they are complementing one another, the portraiture and the epitaph convey two separate messages. Nico and Eutyches appear to be almost identical, as they are the same height, have similar facial features, and wear the same hairstyle. It is likely that these particular features are a trademark of a particular artisan and were used to highlight their close age range, but the fact that both of the children are dressed in the same style of toga and are engaged in the same gesture suggests that their mother wanted to present them in this identical manner because she had equal aspirations for both of them. Despite the fact that the children are presented as equals in the portrait, the status differentiation between the two is evident in the epitaph, which clearly identifies Nico as the dedicator's *filius*, legitimate son, and Eutyches as her *verna*, child who was born in slavery. This altar is an excellent example of the apparent dichotomy present in this form of commemoration. The status of the two children is made explicit in the inscription, as it is given a prominent position after the child's name. This major differentiation between the two children, however, is undercut by the imagery. As a *verna* Eutyches did not have the same rights and opportunities that were granted to Nico, but the imagery chosen by Glypte demonstrates the equal valuation placed on both children. Evidently, the epigraphy and imagery present on these monuments, while related, convey different messages.

The altar dedicated to the young Q. Sulpicius Maximus by both of his parents is a more ornate example of the child as an adult motif (Figure 11). The commemorative

inscription, which is placed below the portrait niche, provides thoroughly detailed information about the dutiful child and his unfortunate parents:

Deis · Manibus · sacrum | Q(uinto) · Sulpicio · Q(uinti) · f(ilio) · Cla(udia tribu) · Maximo · domo · Roma · vix(it) · ann(is) · XI · m(ensibus) · V · d(iebus) · XII | hic · tertio · certaminis · lustro · inter | Graecos · poetas · duos · et · L | professus · favorem · quem · ob · teneram | aetatem · excitaverat | in · admirationem · ingenio · suo · perduxit · et · cum · honore · | discessit · versus | extemporales · eo · subiecti · sunt · ne · parent(es) · adfectib(us) · suis · | indulsisse · videant(ur) | Q · Sulpicio · Eugramus · et · Licinia · Ianuaria · parent(es) · infelicissim(i) · | f(ilio) · piissim(o) · fec(erunt) · et · sib(i) · P(o) · s(terisque).¹⁵³

Maximus' epitaph clearly indicates that the child's parents, Q. Sulpicius Eugramus and Licinia Ianuaria, dedicated the altar to their admirable eleven-year-old boy, but the portrait featured on the monument does not correspond to the *adulescens* mentioned in the inscription. Maximus is depicted as a full-grown adult, perhaps a young man in his early twenties, who lacks any childish facial features. The toga that the figure wears further enhances the prospective imagery. It is evident that Maximus was a freeborn Roman, due to the presence of paternal filiation in his nomenclature, and his young age indicates that Maximus could have worn the *bulla* and the *toga praetexta*. However, the *bulla* is noticeably absent from the portrait and it is uncertain whether Maximus wears the *toga praetexta* or the *toga virilis*. Kleiner presents a logical interpretation: it is possible that Eugramus and Ianuaria might have requested that their son be presented in the *toga virilis* in order to elevate his status; this is an acceptable suggestion since it complements Maximus' adult portrait.¹⁵⁴ It is evident that the prospective and idealized portraiture

¹⁵³ CIL VI 33976.

¹⁵⁴ Kleiner 1987: 164.

featured on funerary altars was used to convey the aspirations of the child's parents by presenting them as the respectable adult that they believed their child could have become.

ii) Girls

Young girls under the age of fifteen were not excluded from this form of commemoration and their presence alone in this genre is a significant development, as the presence of young boys on freedmen panel reliefs greatly outnumbered representations of girls. In addition, the iconography that was used to convey the social status of freedmen and their freeborn children was limited to garments and gestures that were associated with boys, adult men, and married women. The portraiture that is featured on funerary altars dedicated to young girls also served as a status indicator for the child and the dedicator while conveying the hopes that the parents had for the child's adult life.

Portraiture that depicted the child in a realistic manner that coincided with the age provided in their epitaph was also used on dedications to young girls. The altar commemorating Caetennia Pollitta (Figure 12), for example, provides a brief inscription beneath the girl's portrait, which reads as follows:

Dis · Manibus | Caetenniae · P(ublii) · f(iliae) · Pollittae | vixit · annis · X · et · mensib(us)sexs (sic).

Pollitta's epitaph clearly states that she died when she was ten-and-a-half years old, and the young girl depicted in the round niche above the inscription accurately represents the child described in the epitaph. The girl in the portrait lacks the trademark chubby cheeks and protruding ears associated with the portraiture of young children; she has an oval face and soft facial features, including almond-shaped eyes and a slender nose. It is likely that

the dedicator of this altar wanted to memorialize Pollitta's youthful appearance in order to convey to the viewer that her death was premature.

The inscription provides the child's age and the traditional phrase *Dis Manibus*, elements that were standard on dedications to children, but the name of the dedicator and affectionate adjectives are noticeably absent. Due to the lack of these two helpful epigraphic elements, it is difficult to determine the relationship between Pollitta and her dedicator, whether her parents dedicated the monument or another relative. However, it is evident that she was a freeborn Roman girl since filiation is present in her nomenclature, which indicates that her father's name was Publius Caetennius. Kleiner argues that there is a familial link between Pollitta and the Caetennii, a wealthy family with freedman origins, who erected a tomb in the Vatican cemetery.¹⁵⁵ The Tomb of the Caetennii contains four altars, three of which were used for funerary purposes, and were dedicated to members of the Caetennii family: M. Caetennius Antigonus, M. Caetennius Chilo, M. Caetennius Ganymedes, and M. Caetennius Chryseros.¹⁵⁶ While the exact relationship between Pollitta and these individuals remains unknown, it is possible that she is related to them through her paternal lineage, indicated by her father's *nomen*.

It was common for young girls to be represented with accurate portraiture on their funerary altars; however, it appears that this trend was more popular among dedications to girls who were approaching legal marrying age. Freeborn Roman girls did not have an equivalent to the traditional coming-of-age ceremony for boys, with the assumption of the

¹⁵⁵ Kleiner 1987: 185.

¹⁵⁶ Toynbee and Ward Perkins 1956: 44-46. The altar dedicated to M. Caetennius Antigonus and his *coniunx*, Tullia Secunda, does not feature the phrase *Dis Manibus* or any other invocation to the dead.

toga virilis, but the marriage ceremony was a notable rite of passage that clearly marked the transition to womanhood. From the reign of Augustus, the minimum legal age of marriage was twelve for girls and fourteen for boys, but individuals who disobeyed this law by marrying earlier were not severely punished. The minimum age requirement was similar to *leges imperfectae*, since the only limitation that hindered transgressors was that the legal consequences associated with marriage did not occur until the girl was twelve-years-old.¹⁵⁷

Although this was the age minimum for legitimate marriage, the actual age of girls at first marriage has been the subject of debate. Hopkins, who based his study on funerary inscriptions from freedmen in Rome, concluded that the majority of girls were married by the age of sixteen. Shaw's later study suggested that a broader range existed for girls' age at first marriage, with some girls marrying young and the majority marrying in their late teens; however, his study analyzed dedications from both parents and spouses. Saller, whose method was similar to Shaw's, expanded his range of evidence to include inscriptions commemorating males over the age of ten that included the age at death and highlighted the relationship between the deceased and the dedicator. From this evidence, Saller concluded that in the city of Rome the average age at marriage for girls ranged from late teens to early twenties.¹⁵⁸ Despite the fact that the opinions on the average age at first marriage differ, it is evident from not only the legal minimum age but also from the average ages suggested by Hopkins, Saller, and Shaw, that marriage was a significant transition from childhood to adulthood for girls. It was expected that freeborn Roman

¹⁵⁷ Hopkins 1965: 313.

¹⁵⁸ Hopkins 1965: 326, Saller 1997: 32, and Shaw 1987: 43.

girls would marry, and if a young girl died prior to their first marriage or before they reached the legal age of marriage, it is clear that the loss of a union would have had a significant impact on her parents. The child's parents would have lost the opportunity to establish a connection with another family of respectable social status and economic means, which would have thus hindered freedmen parents who attempted to achieve social advancement through the marriage of their children.

The prospective and idealized portraiture used on funerary altars that commemorated young boys was also featured on dedications to girls and the elaborate altar dedicated to Hateria Superba is an excellent example of this portrait style (Figure 13). Superba's portrait, which is placed in the middle of the front panel, divides her epitaph into two separate parts. Her inscription provides the following information:

*Diis · Manibus | Hateriae · Superbae quae | vixit · anno I · mensibus · VI · dieb(us) XXV | fecerum parentes · infelicissimi | filiae suae | Q(uintus) · Haterius · Ephebus · et · Iulia · Zosime sibi · et · suis
[on socle] Diis Manibus · locus · occupatus | in fronte · p(edibus) · VII · in · agro · p(edibus) · IIII.¹⁵⁹*

This inscription reveals that Superba was barely one-and-a-half years old when she died. The relationship between the deceased and the dedicators is clearly established by the inclusion of the term *parentes*, which is assigned to Q. Haterius Ephebus and Iulia Zosime, and the term *filiæ suae* is clearly used to describe Superba. The formulaic affectionate adjective is also not applied to the deceased child, but is used to describe her parents as being *infelicissimi*, most unhappy, instead. However, the full-length representation of Superba does not coincide with the age specified in the epitaph. Superba

¹⁵⁹ CIL VI 19159.

is not depicted as a full-grown adult woman, but she has a round head with chubby cheeks and large eyes, making her appear older than her one-and-a-half years, perhaps eight- or nine-years-old. Since it would have been unsuitable to depict her as a young woman on account of her age, Superba is portrayed instead as an older child dressed in her *toga praetexta*. Her portrait does not express the same aspiration as those of Nico, Eutyches, and Maximus; however, it is possible that Superba's parents wanted to commemorate her in this way because she did not experience childhood.

The general presentation of the deceased on the altars that have been examined thus far is noticeably minimalistic, with the prime focus being on the portraiture and activity, if any, that the deceased is engaged in. These examples contain decorative motifs in the form of rosettes, mythological references, wreaths, and garlands on the lids of the altar and surrounding the portrait niches. Supeba's altar is a unique example as there are decorative elements prominently displayed within her portrait niche. In the scene, which is framed by two torches, Superba stands between a dog and a bird, while two winged *putti* are placed on either side of her. The girl is also holding a bird close to her chest with her left hand and a bunch of grapes in her right hand. The presentation of the child accompanied by this imagery within her portrait niche is unique, but these images, which were also seen in decorative art commissioned in the Imperial period, were stock images that were appropriate to use in a funerary context.¹⁶⁰ The flying *putti* and the torches are conventional iconographic references to death and the afterlife, while the presence of the animals provides a calm and gentle environment that is appropriate for funerary art

¹⁶⁰ Nock 1946: 148, 150.

commemorating young children. The bunch of grapes is a traditional symbol of abundance, which could be indicative of the privilege and opportunities that her parents were able to provide for her. This iconography expresses the wealth and social status of Superba and her parents. Because of the lack of filiation in their nomenclature, it is possible that both Ephebus and Zosime were freedmen who had become wealthy and were able to afford such an elaborate monument for their daughter. Evidently, freedmen parents used the portraiture of their daughters to convey their status through the expression of their daughters' potential for marriage as well as the fortunate and privileged lives that they were able to provide for their children.

Activities Depicted on Funerary Altars

While portraiture continued to be used as a means of conveying the status of freedmen and their children, this genre also introduced a new method of status indication that did not appear on panel reliefs. The altar dedicated to P. Albius Memor, which dates to approximately AD 100, features the *bulla* and the *toga praetexta* associated with childhood, but this example is archaic and unique as the range of iconography became extensive with the introduction of this genre. Although a simple portrait was often featured on altars dedicated to children, this genre began to show them engaged in activities that were associated with public life, such as demonstrating their oratorical skills and intellectual capacity, reclining at a banquet, or participating in festivals. In addition, young children were also depicted either in the guise of different gods or with their respective attributes. Goette suggests that the imagery presented on these monuments was chosen by the dedicatory from a standard collection of images in order to

reflect the expectations that they had placed on their children.¹⁶¹ I agree with Goette's argument; however, I maintain that the expectations presented through this imagery also reflect the social status and cultural identity of the dedicato and the commemorated child.

i) Oratory and Education

The demonstration of oratorical skill was the mark of a well-educated child and these capabilities signified that the child was on his way to becoming a respected adult.¹⁶² This form of intellectual achievement and sign of a proper education were highly valued by parents of both elite and freedmen status, since it served as not only a method of ensuring their son's success in adult life, but was also a reflection of the parents' status in society. For younger children and infants, their potential for intellectual prowess, which was supposedly evident through their behaviour, was also highly valued.

The rhetorician Quintilian in the *prooemium* to Book VI of his *Institutio Oratoria* highlights the potential and skills for learning that his two young children possessed before their premature death. Throughout his lament, Quintilian describes how his five-year-old son loved him more than his nurses and his grandmother, who had a more prominent role in the rearing of the child. However, he places significant emphasis on the unnamed child's intellect: 'But how can I forget the charm of his face, the sweetness of his speech, his first flashes of promise, and his actual possession of a calm and, incredible though it may seem, a powerful mind'.¹⁶³ Although Quintilian does not provide specific instances of when his son demonstrated his capabilities, he clearly emphasizes that the

¹⁶¹ Goette 1989: 162.

¹⁶² Wiedemann 1989: 168.

¹⁶³ Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* 6. PR. 7: 'Sed dissimulare qui possum, quid ille gratiae in vultu, quid iucunditatis in sermone, quos ingenii igniculos, quam substantiam placidae et (quod scio vix posse credi) iam tum altae mentis ostenderit.' (Trans. H. E. Butler 1977 [Loeb]).

child had pleasant speech patterns and a calm and substantial intellect at such a young age which indicated his potential for excellence.

The grief and loss the rhetorician felt because of the subsequent death of his 9-year-old son, Quintilian, was equally painful, but the author provides more details about his older son's abilities. Quintilian mentions how well his son received instruction from both his father and his teachers, and that he already possessed the respectable Roman qualities of *probitas*, *pietas*, *humanitas*, and *liberalitas*. Most importantly, he explicitly states the following: 'He possessed every incidental advantage as well, a pleasing and resonant voice, a sweetness of speech, and a perfect correctness in pronouncing every letter both in Greek and Latin, as though either were his native tongue. But all these were but the promise of greater things.'¹⁶⁴ Once again, Quintilian highlights his son's oratorical abilities, but he also refers to his formal education through his knowledge of the correct pronunciation of Greek and Latin letters. At the end of his lament, Quintilian mentions that his son's intellect and skillful oratory led to the promise of holding political office through the adoption by a consul, and he further laments that his young son could have been a rival to his uncle, a praetor, in terms of his eloquence.¹⁶⁵ Although this writing reflects the grief Quintilian felt at the loss of his two sons, there is also a clear differentiation between the two children with respect to their intellectual capacity. In his description of his younger child's skill, on the one hand, the author is understandably vague since it is likely that, due to his young age, he was only able to demonstrate his

¹⁶⁴ Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* 6. PR. 11: 'Etiam illa fortuita aderant omnia, vocis iucunditas claritasque, oris suavitas et in utracunque lingua, tanquam ad eam demum natus esset, expressa proprietas omnium litterarum. Sed hae spes adhuc.' (Trans. H. E. Butler 1977 [Loeb]).

¹⁶⁵ Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* 6. PR. 13.

skill through his speech patterns; his older son, on the other hand, was able to obey his teachers and his father and display his knowledge of oratory and pronunciation.

The praise that Quintilian applies to the intellect of his young children is not unexpected since such characteristics were valued so highly by rhetoricians, however, rhetorical education was not exclusive to those of elite status, but was available to those who could afford it. Education was also viewed as an important means of socialization and social mobility, advantages that would have been highly valued by wealthy freedmen and their children.¹⁶⁶ The importance of education, intellectual capacity, and potential success in adult life is reflected in the funerary altars dedicated to the children of freedmen and the over-achieving child, whether formally educated or not, was often commemorated with a symbol of their ability. The altar of Q. Sulpicius Maximus (Figure 11) elaborately displays the child's academic achievement and his potential for a successful public life. In addition to his adult representation and *toga virilis*, the eleven-year-old Maximus holds a scroll in his left hand and, although his right hand is missing, his arm is extended before his chest, a common gesture used by Roman orators. The active gesture of Maximus' right hand and the placement of the scroll in his left emulate the gestures that were used by Roman politicians and outlined in oratory handbooks.¹⁶⁷

The Greek and Latin epigraphic elements on the monument are also a testament to his achievements. The Latin commemorative inscription beneath his portrait niche mentions that he participated in a competition with fifty-two Greek poets and won favour in the contest due to his young age, which resulted in honour and admiration of his skills.

¹⁶⁶ Rawson 2003: 150.

¹⁶⁷ Aldrete 1999: 45-48.

The competition that is referred to in his epitaph is the third Capitoline Festival, which was established by Domitian, in AD 94 and Maximus' poem is also provided in two columns surrounding his portrait, the last lines of his poem appear on the scroll in his left hand.¹⁶⁸ The Greek epigrams on the monument, which indicate that Maximus died due to excessive work, demonstrate the pressure that was brought on by the parents and the children themselves to succeed.¹⁶⁹ This desire for success and public recognition is a direct reflection of not only Maximus' intellect, but also of his parents' freedmen status. Evidently, Q. Sulpicius Eugramus and Licinia Ianuaria wanted to achieve social mobility through their freeborn son because, due to his status, he would have had the opportunity to pursue political office and receive the education that was necessary to begin this endeavour. It is clear that Eugramus and Ianuaria depicted their child as an adult, combined with the mention of his intellectual strengths at a young age, to present the successful, intellectual, young man that their son could have become.

The monument dedicated to the young infants Nico and Eutyches also presents them in the guise of Roman orators (Figure 10). In addition to their identical facial features and stature, the children are clothed in the *toga virilis* and both of them grasp their togas in their right hands and hold a scroll in their left hands. Although the oratorical imagery in this portrait is similar to Maximus' altar, the message conveyed through it by Publicia Glypte is slightly different. The inscription below the portrait indicates that Nico and Eutyches died in infancy at eleven months and one year, respectively. Due to their young ages, it is logical to suggest that neither of these children could have had the

¹⁶⁸ Rawson 1997: 80. For the full text of Maximus' poem, consult *IG XIV* 2012.

¹⁶⁹ Rawson 1999: 90.

education and intellectual achievements that Q. Sulpicius Maximus had, nor could they have displayed any talents or skills that were deemed valuable and indicative of intellectual capability.

In order to understand the rationale behind this imagery, the social status of the dedicating and the commemorated must be considered. The freedwoman Glypte evidently chose identical representations for both her legitimate son and her *verna* because she had hoped that they would both grow up to become well-educated Roman citizens. Since it was common for freedmen parents to express their status and their hope for social advancement through the opportunities they provided for their freeborn children, it is not unusual for Nico, who is clearly identified as the dedicating's son, to be depicted in this manner. The portrait of the *verna* Eutyches as an orator is unusual, but it reflects the equal valuation that was placed upon him and Nico. Although I maintain that Glypte gave birth to Eutyches while she was still enslaved, I agree with Rawson's suggestion that it was not unrealistic for Glypte to hope for Eutyches to one day be manumitted and obtain Roman citizenship.¹⁷⁰ Despite their different statuses, Publicia Glypte evidently hoped that both of her children would have had successful adult lives and would have achieved social advancement. The altars dedicated to Maximus, Nico, and Eutyches clearly demonstrate the ambition of freedmen parents and that education served as a form of social mobility and an indication of status.

Foster relationships between *domini* and *vernae* are also presented in this form of commemoration. As was mentioned in Chapter 2, *vernae* were a highly valued slave

¹⁷⁰ Rawson 2010: 198.

source in urban Rome and it was not uncommon for masters to raise these house-born slaves as their own children, especially if their freeborn children had died young. A bond that resembled the relationship between a parent and child might have existed between a *dominus* and his *verna*, but it was not legally possible for masters to adopt their *vernae* while they were still enslaved. Despite the fact that it was not illegal for a *dominus* to adopt his *verna* after they were manumitted, it was not common for young children to be adopted.¹⁷¹

ii) Banqueting

There is also evidence which proves that the bond between a *dominus* and a *verna* sometimes resulted in that of a surrogate relationship, and the altar dedicated to L. Iulius Carus is a prime example of this (Figure 8). The portrait of the child that is placed above the inscription accurately depicts the three-year-old mentioned in the epitaph, and features the trademark chubby cheeks and protruding ears associated with representations of younger children. Although banqueting was considered an activity associated with adulthood, Carus is seen reclining leisurely at a banquet. While the young boy lounges on a *kline*, which is indicated by the pillow that he rests his left arm on, he holds a bunch of grapes in his right hand. Scenes of banqueting were frequently used on both funerary and dedicatory reliefs from the Classical and Hellenistic periods. In a funerary context, this scene, which has been termed the *Totenmahl* or ‘death banquet’ scene, was common on

¹⁷¹ Rawson 2010: 215. Rawson states that it was possible that older *vernae* might have been adopted after they were manumitted, but, due to the complexities of the adoption process and the lack of motivation, she is rather skeptical of this.

funerary *stelae* that commemorated individual adult males.¹⁷² These scenes evoke the privileges of immortality that the deceased experienced in the afterlife, and also served as a sign of the exclusive aristocratic status of the deceased through the image's symposium setting as well as the social and intellectual significance associated with it.¹⁷³

The *Totenmahl* scene and the individuals commemorated through this imagery have been subject to much analysis and interpretation. It has been suggested that the image is either a representation of the deceased enjoying the food and drink of the banquet in the mortal realm, or that it symbolizes the abundance that the deceased hoped to experience in the afterlife. It is also possible that the image was meant to allude to the actual funerary ritual, specifically the offerings to the deceased and the banquet that was held at their tomb. Although these readings of the imagery are convincing, I agree with Dunbabin's suggestion that the ambivalence of the motif and its numerous meanings were chosen deliberately so that the viewer could interpret it based on their own status, cultural background, and belief system.¹⁷⁴

Despite the ambiguous nature of the motif, it is evident that the imagery of reclining among abundant food and drink alluded to the privilege and high status associated with banqueting. The young Carus is portrayed reclining in a manner similar to the *Totenmahl*, but instead of drinking wine, he holds a bunch of grapes. This image of Carus reclining at a banquet is evidently not a representation of an activity that occurred

¹⁷² To my knowledge, there are no extant examples from either of these periods that feature children reclining at a banquet. If children are present on the reliefs, they are usually depicted in a servile role, as an attendant, either holding a cup for the reclining individual or standing opposite them. See J. C. Dentzer R 210 and R 215, these two examples feature a small figure, who is most likely a slave child, attending to the reclining banqueter. See J. Fabricius H 142 for a prime example from the Hellenistic period.

¹⁷³ Dentzer 1982: 532.

¹⁷⁴ Dunbabin 2003: 108-109.

in his lifetime, since at formal banquets and dinner parties, children did not recline among adult diners, but sat on chairs at tables that were located away from the main banquet.¹⁷⁵ The combination of this unusual imagery and the epitaph reveals important information about the status of the child and the dedicator as well as the nature of their relationship.

The epitaph below the portrait niche indicates that Carus was the *verna* of Thamyrus, a freedman. While this status designation is made clear, the inscription also mentions that the child had the *tria nomina* and the same *nomen* as Thamyrus, Iulus. It is possible that Carus was born into Thamyrus' household and was then fostered by him. This suggestion is supported by not only the presence of the term *vernae*, but also by the presence of the term *mater* that is used to describe Iulia Trophime and the absence of the terms *pater* and *parentes*. However, Thamyrus could have also been Carus' actual father: in this case, the term *verna* is an appropriate title to attach to Carus, since he died while his mother was still enslaved.¹⁷⁶ The inclusion of the *tria nomina* suggests that if Thamyrus was his owner, he intended to manumit him. Alternatively, if Thamyrus were his actual father, then the *tria nomina* in this case could also indicate that he had the intention of freeing his son, instead of keeping him as a slave. The banqueting imagery appropriately reflects the status differentiation presented in the epitaph, since it is possible that this scene was chosen because it meant to convey that Carus is enjoying the bountiful

¹⁷⁵ Rawson 2003: 215.

¹⁷⁶ In his recent study on contractual slavery in the Roman economy, Silver (2011: 91) presents the argument that the term *verna*, when present on epigraphic material that was dedicated to imperial slaves, does not mean ‘house born slave’ but refers to the slave’s occupational status. However, both Silver and Weaver (1964: 137) mention that the use of the term *verna* is rare before the time of Hadrian. Weaver provides the five examples which include the term that have a pre-Hadrianic date (*CIL VI* 5822, 8823-4, 20042, 34005). On account of the date given for Carus’ altar (AD 100-110) and the absence of the abbreviations *Caes./Aug.* in his inscription, I maintain that Carus was not a *verna* of the imperial house.

rewards of the afterlife that he was not able to indulge in while he was enslaved. This affectionate sentiment could be implied in this imagery, but it is more likely that the banqueting scene alludes to the privileged lifestyle that Thamyrus was able to provide for Carus, whether or not he was his actual son, and thus reflects Thamyrus' accumulated wealth and higher status. Although it is clear that not all children of freedmen were freeborn, it is evident that their parents, natural or otherwise, managed to express their wealth and status in society, whether through the social advancement they would have achieved through their children, or, in this particular case, the lifestyle that they could have provided their child.

iii) Equestrian Activities

It appears that the great majority of the individuals who dedicated altars with portraits to children were of freedmen status, and the children who were commemorated were their freeborn sons or *vernae*. Although this was most often the case, there are also extant examples of dedications to children who were members of the equestrian order. The altar dedicated to the ten-year-old G. Petronius Ligur Virianus Postumus by his grandfather D. Valerius Niceta is a rather interesting example of an equestrian commemoration (Figure 9). The young Postumus is presented on horseback, and wears the ceremonial garments associated with Roman *equites*: the short *trabea* and an olive leaf crown complete with ribbons, which was awarded to individuals victorious in the Troy Game and also had funerary associations, both of which are appropriate in this context.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁷ Kleiner 1987: 188 and Rawson 2003: 322-323.

Postumus' traditional dress and the presence of his horse suggest that he was a participant in either the *transvectio equitum* or the Troy game, both of which were associated with the equestrian order. Kleiner argues that the child is a participant in the *transvectio equitum*, an annual parade that took place on 15 July that began outside of Rome and finished at the temple of Castor and Pollux within the city.¹⁷⁸ This procession was an honorific privilege and a sign of wealth and status, since it was exclusive to members of the equestrian order. It also had a particular significance for younger *equites*, as it proved to the public that they had been accepted into the order and were in prime physical condition. Furthermore, the *transvectio equitum* was a common motif that was used on funerary commemoration of individuals of the equestrian order who had not yet begun their careers.¹⁷⁹ Rawson offers an alternative interpretation and suggests that Postumus is a participant in the Troy Game, which was a traditional Roman display of high status youths engaged in military manoeuvres and served as an outlet for them to demonstrate their militaristic potential.¹⁸⁰

Although it is impossible to determine which event is represented, it is logical to suggest that horse riding and military manoeuvres would have appealed greatly to young boys. Other events of equestrian display whose participants were limited to adult males would have been popular among young *equites* as more of a spectator sport.¹⁸¹ In addition to appealing to young equestrians, it also signified the ideals and ambitions that the boy's family had for him in his adult life. Therefore it is likely that Niceta wanted to

¹⁷⁸ Wiseman 1970: 68 and Kleiner 1987: 188.

¹⁷⁹ Veyne 1960: 104, 107.

¹⁸⁰ Rawson 2003: 321-323.

¹⁸¹ Rawson 2003: 292.

commemorate his grandson in this manner in order to memorialize Postumus' participation in either the Troy Game or the *transvectio equitum*, since this was the only equestrian event that he had the opportunity to take part in. This altar clearly displays his grandson's freeborn status, which is indicated by his filiation and the mention of his membership in the Camilia voting tribe. The epitaph also presents Niceta's freedman status, which is indicated by the lack of filiation in his nomenclature and the absence of a voting tribe attached to his name. Although the members of the equestrian order were of high social status and were often from wealthy families, in the mid-first century AD the major requirement to join the order was free birth and, compared to the entry of their freeborn sons into the Senate, their presence in this social order was not met with contempt.¹⁸² Therefore, it is evident that Niceta wanted to commemorate his grandson in this manner so that he could demonstrate his pride in his family rising to equestrian status and that he was able to achieve social mobility through his descendants.

iv) *Goddesses*

The pursuit of political office and a career in the military were exclusive to men; as a result, the education of young, freeborn, Roman males involved the development of their oratorical skills and their participation in festivals that hosted military manoeuvres was essential. Therefore, the depictions of young boys engaged in such activities on their funerary altars are expected; furthermore, the related iconography remained exclusive to dedications commemorating young males. Girls of elite status received an education that was not limited to the domestic sphere, but helped them develop skills that were

¹⁸² Kleiner 1987: 70-71, Mouritsen 2011: 274.

necessary for careers in business and commercial life. Intellectual qualities were also considered a valuable asset for potential brides, in addition to her family's wealth, status, and her own moral character.¹⁸³ As was discussed in Chapter 1, Pliny reports to Aefulanus Marcellinus on the premature death of the young Minicia Marcella, whom he describes as an exceptional girl who was dedicated to her studies and restrained herself from play. Pliny laments that the loss of Marcella, who displayed such intellectual capability, was heightened by the fact that she was already engaged to a distinguished young man.¹⁸⁴ Although this particular example is set in an elite context, it is logical to suggest that freedmen would have also valued the education of their daughters since it not only displayed that they could afford to educate their daughter, but also contributed to the girl's potential to be a successful bride.

Allusions to the education of girls, however, are sparse on funerary altars with portraits. For example, the altar of Minicia Marcella, which features no portrait of the girl, contains a simple inscription and the decorative elements consist of an eagle flanked by two rosettes on the lid.¹⁸⁵ Although the iconography used on funerary altars with portraits dedicated to young girls appears to be limited compared to that used on dedications to boys, there is one motif that was predominant: the depiction of girls as goddesses or with attributes of goddesses. The tendency to depict women in this manner was a growing trend among freedwomen, since it served as a way to provide dignity for their family and because it demonstrated their adoption of Roman culture and their desire to be accepted

¹⁸³ Rawson 2003: 197, Pomeroy 1975: 171, and Tregiari 1991: 86.

¹⁸⁴ Pliny, *Letters* 5. 16. 1-6.

¹⁸⁵ The inscription, *CIL VI* 16631, reads as follows: *D(is) · M(anibus) | Miniciae | Marcellae | Fundani · f(iliae) | v(ixit) · a(nnis) · XII · m(ensibus) · XI · d(iebus) · VII.*

into Roman society.¹⁸⁶ This motif was evidently used on the funerary commemoration of their daughters, whether in a subtle or pronounced way.

At first glance, the portrait on the altar dedicated to Caetennia Pollitta (Figure 12) presents a young girl who is dressed up with an intricate hairstyle; however, upon further examination, there is a divine allusion present on her altar, albeit a subtle one. Pollitta has her mantle draped over her left shoulder while her tunic slips off her right one. This style of drapery is a reference to the goddess Venus and was not unique to the commemorations of girls, but originated with the so-called Venus Genetrix statue, which features the goddess herself exposing her left breast and shoulder. The motif was also popular among representations of *matronae*, such as the relief of a husband and wife from the Musei Vaticani, Museo Chiaramonti.¹⁸⁷ In a Roman context, unlike her sexually charged Greek counterpart, Venus was associated with not only beauty but also with marriage and healthy childbearing. Due to these allusions it is not surprising that married women wanted to associate themselves with the goddess. The extant statues that depict women as Venus present the woman's body in an idealized manner with full breasts and hips, which served as a symbol of female fertility. There is also a sense of devotion that corresponds with these depictions, since married women who gave birth to healthy children ultimately fulfilled their vows to their husbands.¹⁸⁸ Since depictions of women as Venus held such connotations, it is understandable why a young girl of freedmen descent was represented in this manner. As was mentioned previously, Pollitta died when she was

¹⁸⁶ D'Ambra 1996: 223.

¹⁸⁷ Kleiner 1981: 519-520, Plate XX. Although the slipping drapery motif appears on two depictions of Aphrodite on the Parthenon it is not common on other representations of the goddess in Greek art.

¹⁸⁸ D'Ambra 1996: 222.

10-years-old; therefore, it is possible that the slipping drapery attribute associated with Venus indicates that the girl died just before reaching the legal age of marriage and that the dedicator of the monument wanted to highlight Pollitta's youthful beauty and the potential she had to be a suitable bride.

While parents commemorated their daughters with attributes of Venus on account of her associations with marriage and fertility, young girls were also often depicted in the guise of the virgin goddess Diana in order to represent their *castitas*, or chastity.¹⁸⁹ The altar commemorating Aelia Procula (Figure 14) is an excellent example of this and the attributes of the goddess are more evident than those of Venus seen on the altar of Caetennia Pollitta. The monument features a portrait of Procula in a rounded niche that is flanked by her epitaph, which reads as follows:

*D(is) M(anibus)| sacrum | Deanae · et · | Memoriae | Aeliae | Proculae | P(ublius) · Aelius · Asclepiacus | Aug(usti) · lib(ertus) | et · Ulpia · Priscilla · filiae | dulcissimae · fecerunt.*¹⁹⁰

It is evident that this monument was dedicated to Procula by her parents, P. Aelius Asclepiacus and Ulpia Priscilla, and the relationship between the parents and their child is made clear by the use of the phrase *filiae dulcissimae*. Asclepiacus also uses Procula's epitaph to declare that he was a freedman of the emperor Hadrian, as the abbreviation for *Augusti libertus*, freedman of Augustus, is displayed in a conspicuous manner. The abbreviation, which is located in the eighth line of the inscription, is the only element

¹⁸⁹ Wrede 1981: 109. Wrede states that girls who were depicted in the guise of Diana range approximately from age five to fifteen.

¹⁹⁰ CIL VI 10958.

present in the middle of the line and the letters used are noticeably larger than the other words of the inscription.¹⁹¹

Aelia Procula's age is noticeably absent from the epitaph, which is a deviation from the standard epigraphic elements featured on funerary altars dedicated to children. Her age is not given, but the portrait of the child contains facial features that are associated with childhood, such as her chubby cheeks, round face, and nose, which suggests that Procula was approximately six or seven years old.¹⁹² The rest of Procula's figure, however, does not correspond to the portrait of the young girl, but resembles the fully developed body of the goddess Diana. In addition to the traditional attributes of a bow, quiver, and accompanying hound, Procula is presented as an Amazonian Diana, with her garment exposing her right breast. This motif originated with Amazons as well as the virgin goddess Artemis and was later featured on depictions of Roma, Virtus, and Diana.¹⁹³ The combination of an individualized portrait and the idealized body of a goddess is not a new tradition that was exclusive to young girls, but was also used on funerary statues that commemorated Roman *matronae*.¹⁹⁴ D'Ambra's recent study on the representations of daughters as Diana rightly concludes that girls who had not achieved marriage and motherhood, leaving their parents' expectations unfulfilled, were identified with the virgin goddess.¹⁹⁵ It is clear that daughters of Roman freedmen, as well as girls from other status groups, were expected to marry in order to help advance the social

¹⁹¹ Rawson 2003: 48.

¹⁹² Wrede 1981: 226 suggests that Procula was five years old, which is also a logical interpretation.

¹⁹³ D'Ambra 2008: 175. Other extant examples that feature Amazonian Diana is the dedicatory altar of Aebutia Amerina (Museo Nazionale Romano, Terme di Diocleziano) and the funerary altar of Aelia Tyche (Museo delle Navi). See D'Ambra 2008: 174 (Figure 3) and 176 (Figure 4).

¹⁹⁴ See the statues of Roman matrons depicted as Venus (Figures 92 and 93) in D'Ambra 1996: 220.

¹⁹⁵ D'Ambra 2008: 181.

standing of their parents. This expectation is often reflected in the altars dedicated to young girls, including the ones that present the deceased in the guise of Diana.

Although the imagery of Venus and Diana appears in civic and religious contexts, the tendency to associate young girls with these two goddesses on funerary altars, such as the two previously discussed, suggests that their use on funerary art was considered appropriate. The goddess Luna and her male counterpart Sol are also prominent in funerary art, since the motifs of the sun and moon were rather popular as designs in both funerary and secular art.¹⁹⁶ The altar commemorating Iulia Victorina (Figure 15) presents a bust-length portrait of the child with a distinct attribute of the goddess Luna on the front panel of the altar above her epitaph, which states:

*D(is) M(anibus) | Iuliae Victorinae | quae · vix(it) · ann(is) · X · mens(ibus) · V · | C(aius) · Iulius · Saturninus · et · | Lucilia · Procula · parentes | filiae · dulcissimae · fecerunt.*¹⁹⁷

The dedicators of the monument, C. Iulius Saturninus and Lucilia Procula, established their relationship with Victorina with the inclusion of the term *parentes*, attached to their names, and the word *filiae* indicates that Victorina was their daughter, who is also assigned the standard *dulcissima* epithet. Victorina's epitaph indicates that she lived ten years and five months and the portrait bust of the girl on the front of the altar is a realistic one: she has large eyes, a short haircut with her bangs covering her forehead, protruding ears, the drapery of her garment covers her chest, and she wears large, round earrings that are most likely pearls. Although Victorina is represented realistically, she is clearly

¹⁹⁶ Nock 1946: 150. Wrede 1981: 106 mentions that girls also appeared as Muses, Psyche, and Amazons before AD 150.

¹⁹⁷ CIL VI 20727.

identified with Luna because of her prominent crescent moon headdress, which extends into the acanthus border surrounding the portrait and the epitaph.

The funerary altars that have been examined throughout this chapter all feature a portrait and inscription on the front panel, the side which would have been facing the viewer. The altar of Iulia Victorina, in this case, is an unusual example since there is an additional portrait of an older woman who appears to be in her twenties on the back panel (Figure 16). The woman is presented in a manner that is similar to Victorina: she has large eyes, protruding ears, wears the same style of earrings, and her bust is also covered by the drapery of her garment. However, the woman has a more polished hairstyle, her hair is pulled back and does not cover her forehead. This corresponding portrait also presents the woman adorned with a solar crown, which complements Victorina's crescent headdress. It is evident that the two individuals being portrayed on this altar are somehow related and there are two differing interpretations of the unnamed woman's identity on the back of the monument and how exactly she is related to Victorina.

Cumont's interpretation of the altar focuses on the eschatological beliefs of the Romans. He suggests that both of the portraits on the altar depict Victorina at different stages in the afterlife: the front panel presents the young girl in the initial stage, when her soul was dwelling in the lunar realm, and the portrait on the back of the altar is a prospective image of Victorina in the final solar stage. Rawson provides a similar reading, which suggests that the altar contains astral symbolism. She concludes that the two headdresses and the younger and older portraits represent different phases of the girl's entrance into the heavens. Nock opposes the rationale behind these interpretations

and claims that while lunar imagery would have had such connotations in Roman Africa and Gaul, it is more likely that these symbols represent a divine association rather than allude to the location of the deceased in the afterlife.¹⁹⁸

Wrede suggests that Iulia Victorina is associated with Luna, which is supported by the crescent moon headdress, and that the older woman on the back panel of the altar, whose head is adorned with a solar crown, is Victorina's mother, Lucilia Procula, in the guise of Sol. He notes that, due to stylistic differences, the portrait of Victorina dates to the Flavian period and the portrait on the back of the altar is Trajanic. Wrede suggests that their association with Luna and Sol through their crowns is a reference to the belief of a continued existence of the dead and their apotheosis; however, only the prematurely deceased Victorina could be associated with the moon goddess and her mother had to be presented in the guise of a different divinity.¹⁹⁹ While I agree with Wrede's suggestion that the two portraits are references to Luna and Sol as opposed to different phases of the afterlife, I would argue that the Sol imagery was also used on the reverse of the altar as more of an aesthetic complement to Victorina's Luna attributes. The similarities of the portraits and the related divine associations suggest to me that the two individuals depicted are somehow connected to one another. The woman on the reverse of the altar is indeed related to Iulia Victorina, but due to the absence of an additional inscription and the fact that no reference is made to the reverse portrait in Victorina's epitaph, it is difficult to determine whether the additional portrait is of Victorina or Lucilia Procula.

¹⁹⁸ Cumont 1966: 244, Rawson 2003: 360, and Nock 1946: 142.

¹⁹⁹ Wrede 1981: 123-124, 264-265.

The altars dedicated to Caetennia Pollitta and Aelia Procula make a direct reference to the expectations that parents had for their young daughters, as Pollitta's identification with Venus and Procula's appearance as Diana suggest that both of these girls were expected to marry and provide social mobility for their parents. Although the juvenile portrait of Iulia Victorina in the guise of Luna does convey that the ten-year-old girl died prematurely, it does not make a clear reference to the parent's expectation of marriage like the portraits of girls as Venus and Diana. However, the identification of the deceased with immortal deities, including Luna, Venus, and Diana, suggests that these altars are examples of private apotheosis. This trend was seen predominantly on commemorations dedicated to women and children, although there are extant examples of the deification of adult males, and its frequent use among freedmen suggests that it was a demonstration of their accumulated wealth and status.²⁰⁰ These altars are also an indication of the freedmen's attempt to acquire a sense of dignity through their association with Roman gods as well as a reflection of their desire to assimilate themselves into Roman society.

Conclusion

The promotion of social status and the commemoration of the family unit that was displayed on panel reliefs continued to be an important element on funerary altars that freedmen dedicated to their children. However, there was a notable shift in the sculptural elements that transferred the focus from the family to the individual child. Although this genre was not exclusive to this social group, freedmen did erect altars and doing so

²⁰⁰ Wrede 1981: 159-160.

allowed them to convey their social and cultural identity in a more elaborate manner. While individualized portraiture remained significant on funerary altars, this sculptural component coupled with the extensive range of iconography and the accompanying detailed inscriptions helped to convey the status of freedmen parents and their children. These commemorations also served as a way for freedmen to display their acquired wealth as well as the social mobility that they were able to achieve by means of their descendants. The presentation of young boys engaged in activities associated with Roman public life not only provides insight into the life of the child, but it also represents their freedmen parents' ambitious hopes of social mobility and serves as a reflection of their wealth that enabled their children to take part in such activities. The presence of young girls on funerary altars indicates that the expression of status was no longer limited to the dress and portraiture of adults and young boys. The portraiture of young girls and their association with Roman divinities also conveyed the cultural identity of their parents, their social status, the opportunities for advancement, and connections that freedmen had through the marriages of their daughters. The popularity of this genre began to decline in the mid-second century AD when inhumation became a more common burial practice. This method of commemoration was ultimately replaced by sarcophagi, which continued to expand on the iconography established by funerary altars.

CONCLUSIONS

The responsibilities that were assigned to children and the expectations that were placed upon them by their parents reflect their important role within the family. Children were able to ensure the continuation of the family's *nomen* as well as protect its material assets. In addition, they had the obligation to demonstrate *pietas* towards their parents by caring for them in their advanced age and providing proper funerary commemoration for them at their death. Moreover, children were required to maintain the family's place in their respective social order, or to continue the family's involvement in their commercial endeavours or trade. These obligations characterized children as highly valued in social forms, but it is probable that childhood and infant death was a frequent occurrence for many families within the city of Rome. High mortality rates among young children and infants are reflected in the social conventions towards their deaths, which entailed adopting a calm demeanor and shortened mourning periods. It must be stated, however, that these were one form of expression and that different reactions co-existed. Funerary commemoration provides significant insight into the children represented and their valuation, but also sheds light on the cultural and social identity of their parents, or the dedicatory of the monument. Furthermore, this type of material evidence alludes to the affectionate relationship between parents and their children.

Freedmen panel reliefs were the first genre to feature depictions of young children. This type of sculptural commemoration placed great emphasis on the importance of the family, and the extant examples that feature representations of small children place them among their parents, adult siblings, and, in some cases, their parents'

colliberti. The positioning of the child indicates that he was a valued member of the family that set up the monument. While most examples depict children in this manner, there are some panels, such as the relief of the Servilii family, which separates the child completely from his parents. Although different, the child's role in the family is nevertheless expressed via the inscription below his portrait.

The composition of these reliefs reflects family unity, but children are differentiated from their parents on these monuments through their dress. The great majority of parents represented on panel reliefs were freedmen and the children who were born to them after manumission were freeborn Roman citizens. As a result, couples with freeborn children displayed their child's status and presented them wearing their *bulla*e and *togae praetextae*, which were *insigniae ingenuitatis et libertatis*. In addition to signifying their social status, these sartorial items indicate the high value placed on these children, since they served as protective items that helped safeguard them from immoral actions and disease. Furthermore, their inclusion implied that the child was now a part of a dignified, as well as exclusive, Roman tradition and that he came from a family that was able to afford these expensive garments. As for the expectations that were placed on the child, the *bulla* and the *toga praetexta* were signs of social aspirations. Freeborn children were not hindered by the social and legal restrictions inflicted on their freedmen parents, as they were able to pursue political office and social advancement that their parents could not. The child's membership in the family, his freeborn social status, involvement in established Roman traditions, and his ability to achieve social advancement for his parents are significant parts of the child's identity and are duly reflected in this genre.

Although all these facets were important parts of the child's life and reveal his position in the family and Roman society, they are also a testament to the achievement of his parents. While children are differentiated from their parents on these monuments, their *bullae* and *togae praetextae* are indicative of the fact that their freedmen parents had obtained the highest position in society possible for formally manumitted slaves. Furthermore, the dress of the parents (the men's *toga*, the women's *palla* and tunic) are a clear indication that they had 'made it' in Roman society, since they had achieved their freedom, acquired Roman citizenship, and gained admission into a more respectable social status. Although social status and mobility was a primary concern for these individuals, these monuments also allude to an acceptance and adoption of Roman values. It is clear that the family was the most valued social institution in Rome and that the existence of *contubernales* and informal family units suggests that it was highly coveted by slaves. Therefore, as freedmen these individuals were now able to create their own legitimate family protected by Roman law, thus beginning their own family lineage, and become a part of this sacred Roman institution.

Funerary altars, much like freedmen panel reliefs, continued to express aspects of both the child's and his parents' identity, but in a different way. Altars that were dedicated to young children did not place them among their family members, but portrayed them as individuals. The range of iconography also increased greatly, portraying children in a variety of ways, and young girls emerged in this form of commemoration after being underrepresented in panel reliefs. Boys and girls continued to be represented with realistic portraiture, but there are extant examples that depict the child

in a prospective sense. For example, the altar commemorating the 10-year-old Q. Sulpicius Maximus depicts the child as a full-grown adult demonstrating his oratorical skills. Depicting their sons and daughters in this manner helped parents to present their children as the respectable adults that they could have become had they not succumbed to a *mors immatura*.

The activities that the children are engaged in on funerary altars are equally revealing about their identity. Portraits of children as little orators and equestrians express the expectations that their parents had placed upon them. Since it was the child's duty to maintain his family's status and position in society, it is not surprising that sons are represented in this way. The iconography associated with little girls, primarily the attributes of the goddesses Venus and Diana, alludes to daughters' obligations to their parents as well. It was expected that these girls would marry a young man of respectable social status, thus contributing to her family's social mobility and advancement.

In addition to these sculptural elements, which convey the child's obligations and role in the family, the inscriptions on these monuments are equally significant. The child's age is given prominence, as is frequently mentioned, and helps to establish that the child had died prematurely. Moreover, in some cases, the child's social status is revealed in its nomenclature; for example, the presence of filiation in P. Albius Memor's epitaph as well as the name of his voting tribe indicates his freeborn status. Other examples attach the child's free or slave status at the end of his name, such as L. Iulius Carus, who was clearly identified as a *verna* in his inscription.

Although children were the primary focus on these monuments, the identity of the dedicators, namely the child's parents, was also made known. First and foremost, the relationship between the dedicator(s) and the child was almost always established in the inscription and was permanently commemorated; this was so whether the relationship to the deceased was based on parentage, kinship, or surrogacy (in the case of a *dominus*). Just as the dedicators were able to connect themselves to the children, so too were they able to convey their social status through the children's epitaphs. For example, on the altar of Aelia Procula her father, P. Aelius Asclepiacus, clearly indicates that he was a freedman of the emperor through the inclusion of *Aug(usti) · lib(ertus)* in the epitaph. The portraits of the children are also a testament to the parents', or dedicator's, wealth and social status. The activities that the children are engaged in suggest to the viewer that the dedicators of the monument were able to provide opportunities for the children that they themselves might not have had. Furthermore, depicting children as educated young men, banqueters, equestrians, and goddesses, all of which represent highly respected political, social, and religious aspects of Roman life, alludes to the dedicators' valuation of these institutions and signifies that they considered them part of their own culture.

While the elements that comprise the identity of children and their parents on the monuments can be discussed with some conviction, it is difficult to evaluate the degree of affection present on these commemorations. The positioning of young children among their family members in freedmen panel reliefs alludes to the valuation that was placed upon them by their family members. This could be interpreted as a demonstration of affection, but we must consider that all children who were depicted in this genre are

represented in this way. Therefore, it could also suggest that the family was adhering to stylistic conventions. On the other hand, there are also examples that show an affective bond between the parent and child; for example, the young G. Vettius Secundus mimicking his father's *togatus* gesture indicates not only the expectations that the parents had for the boy, but also the affection that his father had for him. As for funerary altars, the affectionate epithets that are used to describe the children might be indicative of the loving relationship between the child and the dedicato. Epithets such as *dulcissimus/dulcissima* were often applied to children, but the frequent use of these epithets has caused them to be considered formulaic. Although their inclusion suggests an adherence to epigraphic conventions, they also convey the expectations that the dedicato had placed upon the child and the affection that they had for them.

These factors make it difficult to determine exactly the degree of affection present on freedmen reliefs and funerary altars; however, the presence of children on these monuments at all implies that there was some form of affection demonstrated. In addition, the funerary commemorations of children express an unfulfilled hope. It is clear that the individuals who set up these monuments had invested in their children to further their social advancement and had high expectations for them, which went unfulfilled due to the reality of *mors immatura*. As a result, a great sense of loss is conveyed on these monuments that laments the unlived life of the child.

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IMAGE APPENDIX



Figure 1: Santacroce Relief

Provenance: Palazzo Santacroce (1465)

Date: c. 20 BC

Image Source: V. Kockel (1993), F 11 (Plate 37)

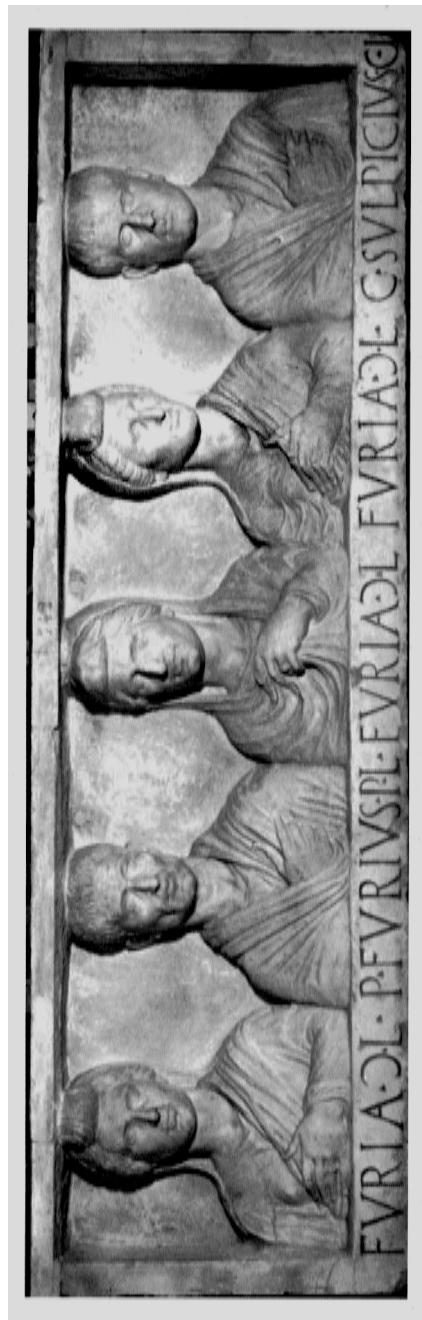


Figure 2: Relief of the Furii

Provenance: Villa Rondinini (1690), Capranica (1823)

Date: c. 30 BC

Image Source: M. George (2005), pg. 48



Figure 3: Relief of L. Vibius

Provenance: From Cesano, west of the Via Cassia, near Lake Bracciano

Date: Late Republican – Early Augustan (c. end of 1st century BC)

Image Source: V. Kockel (1993), L 7 (Plate 94)



Figure 4: *Ara Pacis Augustae*, Detail of South Processional Frieze

Provenance: Campus Martius (west side of the Via Flaminia)

Date: 13 – 9 BC

Image Source: K. Olson (2008), Fig. 6.2

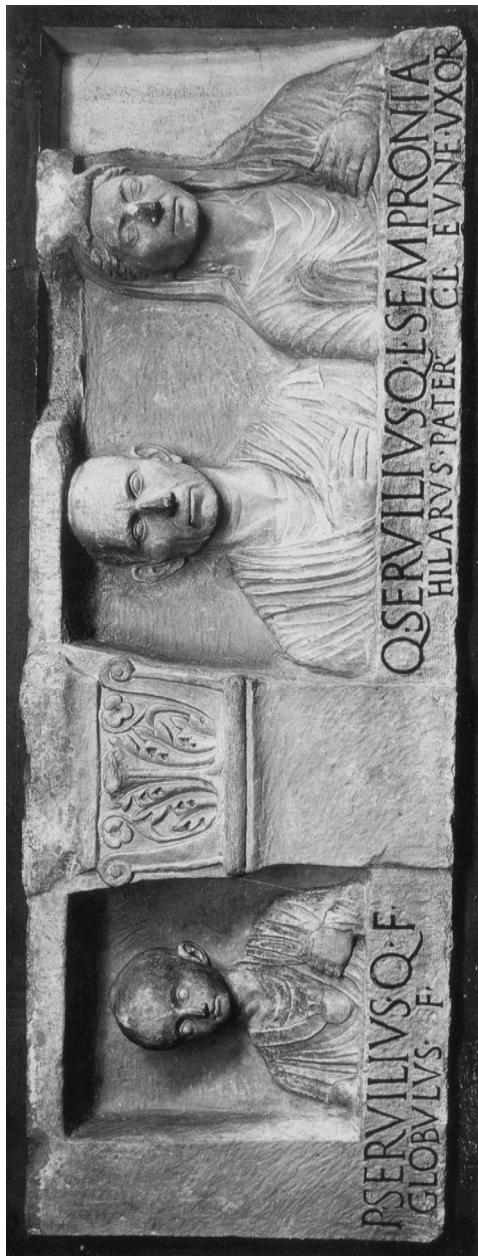


Figure 5: Relief of the Servilii

Provenance: Conservatorio dei Mendicanti – Via del Colosseo (18th Century), Lateran Museum (1963)

Date: c. 30 – 20 BC

Image Source: V. Kockel (1993), H 6 (Plate 51)



Figure 6: Relief of the Vettii

Provenance: Via Po (Found during the excavations for the construction of the house)

Date: c. 20 BC

Image Source: V. Kockel (1993), H 13 (Plate 56)

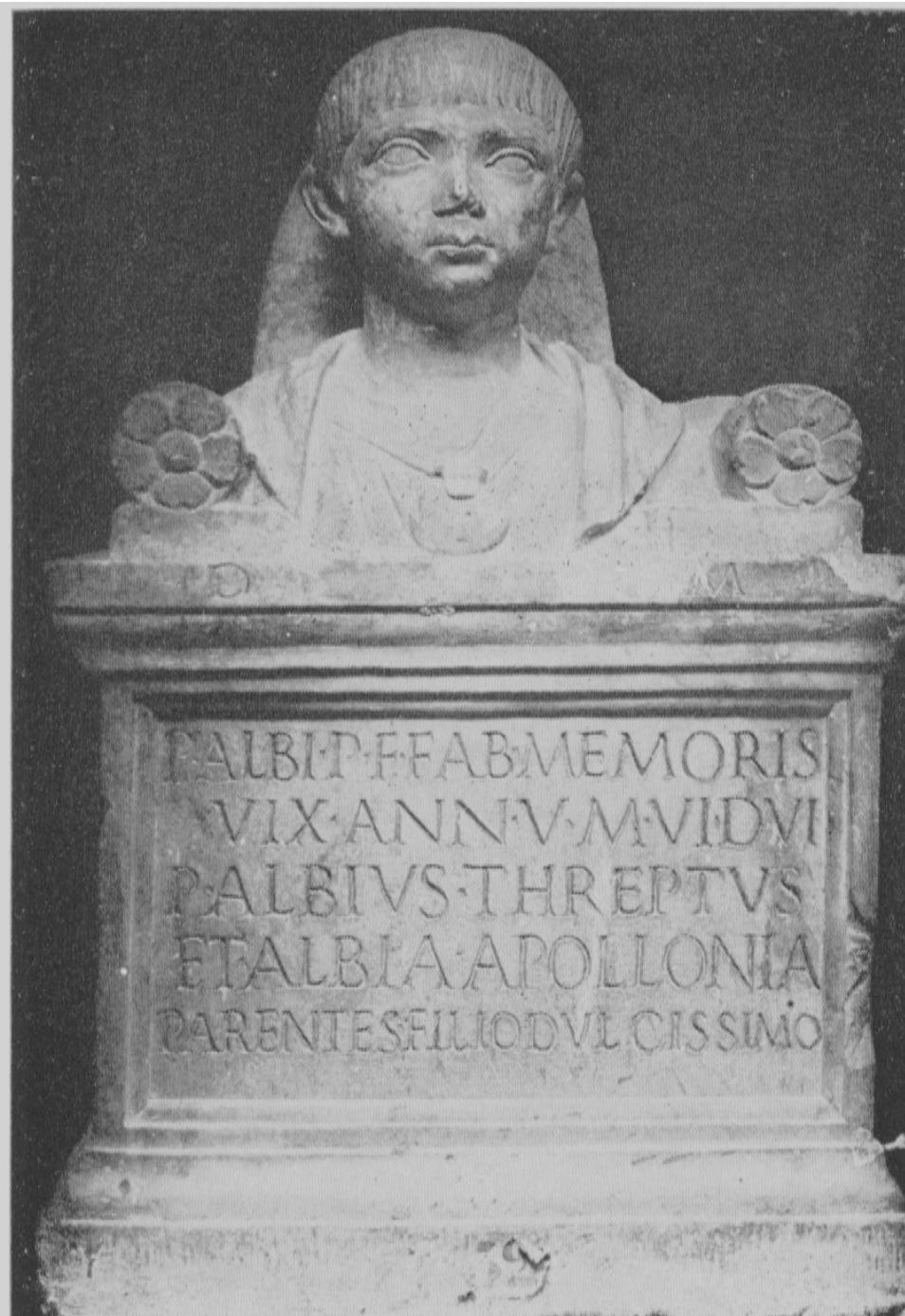


Figure 7: Altar of P. Albius Memor

Provenance: Formerly Albani Collection; later Musei Capitolini, Museo Capitolino, Stanza terrena a sinistra III

Date: c. AD 100

Image Source: D. E. E. Kleiner (1987), Cat. No. 51 (Plate 32)

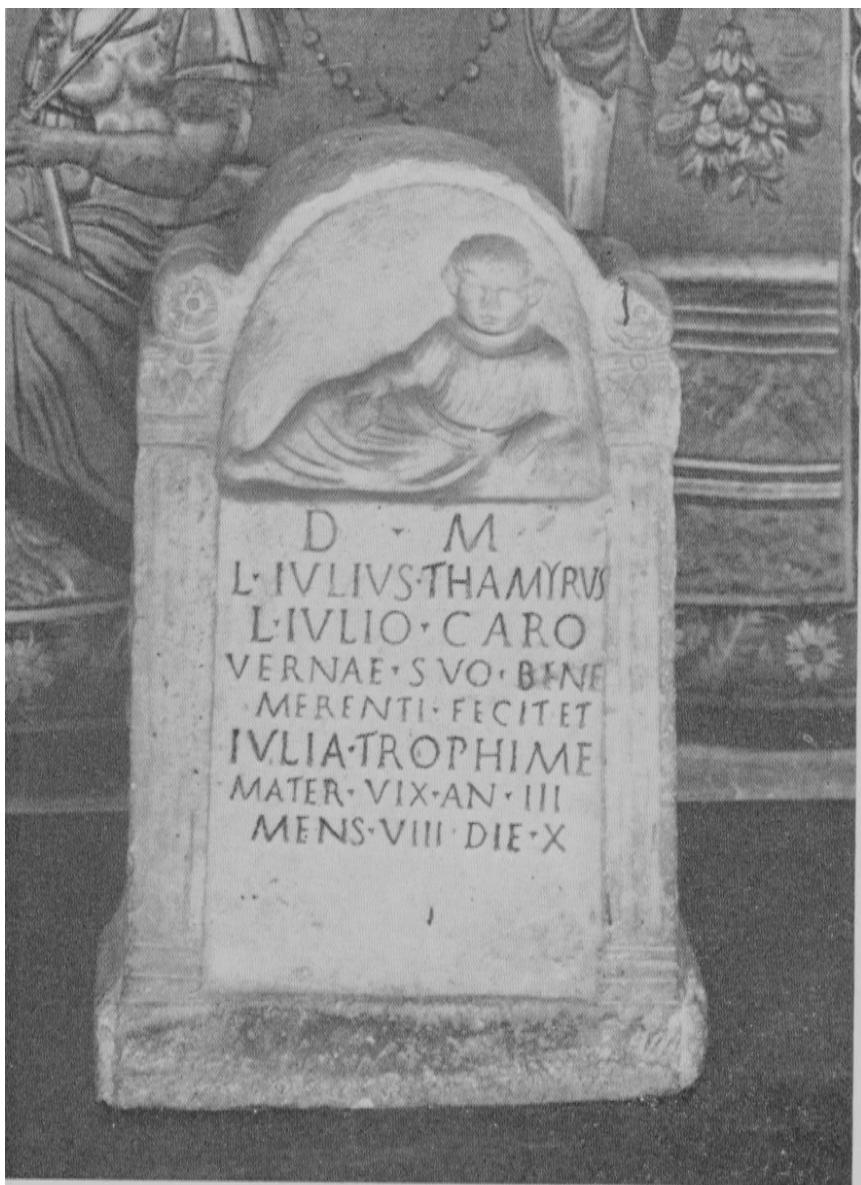


Figure 8: Altar of L. Iulius Carus

Provenance: Rome, Via Flaminia, Vigna del Poggio

Date: c. AD 100-110

Image Source: D. E. E. Kleiner (1987), Cat. No. 57 (Plate 36)



Figure 9: Altar of G. Petronius Virianus Postumus

Provenance: Rome, Albani Collection

Date: c. AD 100-110

Image Source: D. E. E. Kleiner (1987), Cat. No. 61 (Plate 37)



Figure 10: Altar of Nico and Eutyches

Provenance: Rome, ‘in horto Cancelleriae’

Date: c. AD 100-110

Image Source: D. E. E. Kleiner (1987), Cat. No. 68 (Plate 40)

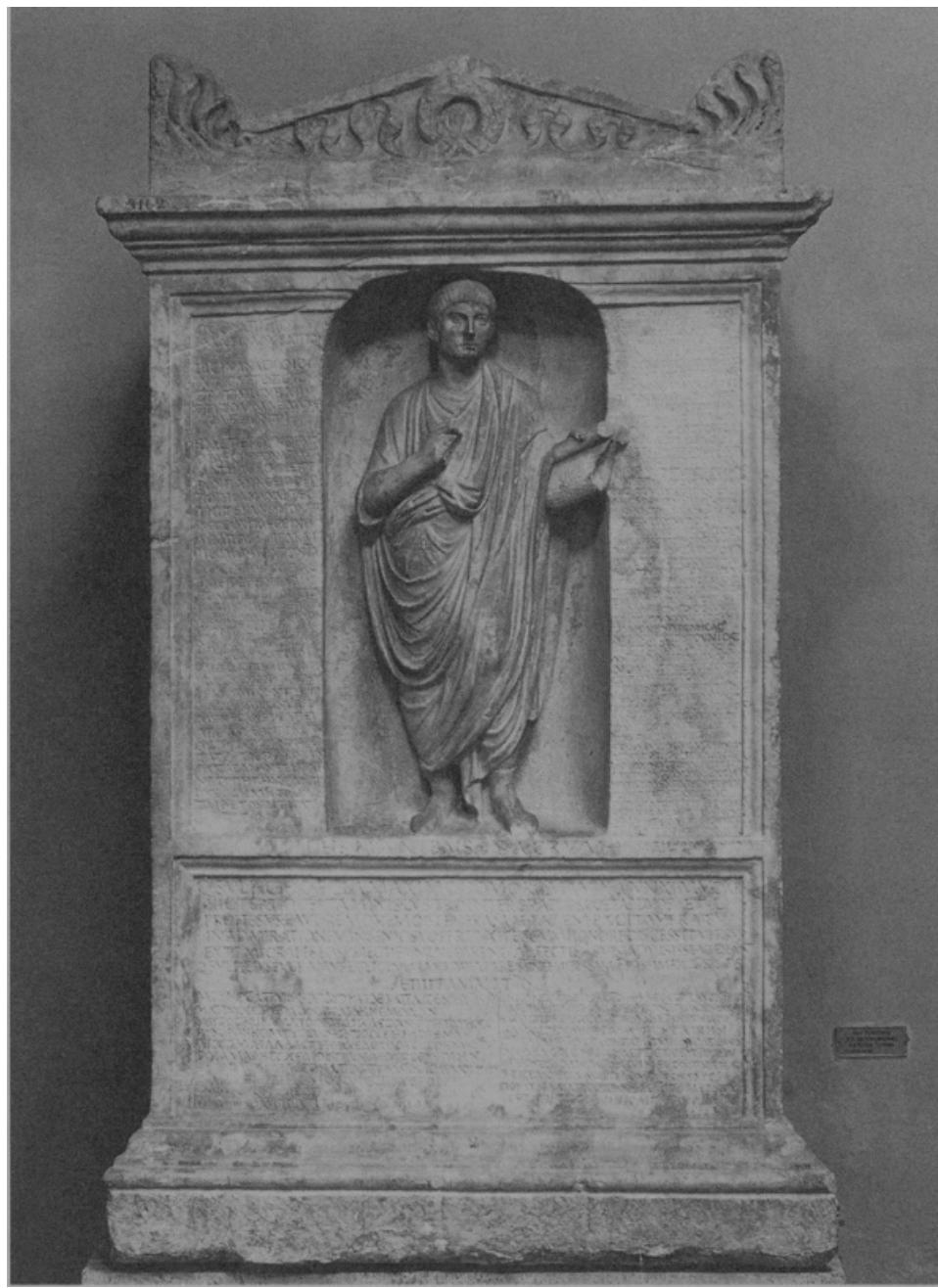


Figure 11: Altar of Q. Sulpicius Maximus

Provenance: Rome, Via Salaria

Date: c. AD 94-100

Image Source: D. E. E. Kleiner (1987), Cat. No. 45 (Plate 28)



Figure 12: Altar of Caetennia Pollitta

Provenance: Rome, found near the Baths of Caracalla

Date: c. AD 100-110

Image Source: D. E. E. Kleiner (1987), Cat. No. 59 (Plate 36)



Figure 13: Altar of Hateria Superba

Provenance: Rome, Via Flaminia, Vigna del Poggio

Date: c. AD 100-110

Image Source: D. E. E. Kleiner (1987), Cat. No. 58 (Plate 36)



Figure 14: Altar of Aelia Procula

Provenance: Rome, Via Appia near S. Sebastiano

Date: c. AD 140

Image Source: D. E. E. Kleiner (1987), Cat. No. 104 (Plate 60)



Figure 15: Altar of Iulia Victorina (Front Panel)

Provenance: Rome, Campanian Gardens near S. Giovanni in Laterano

Date: c. AD 60-70 (Kleiner), c. AD 70-90 (Wrede)

Image Source: D. E. E. Kleiner (1987), Cat. No. 15 (Plate 10)



Figure 16: Altar of Iulia Victorina (Back Panel)

Provenance: Rome, Campanian Gardens near S. Giovanni in Laterano

Date: c. AD 60-70 (Kleiner), c. AD 70-90 (Wrede)

Image Source: D. E. E. Kleiner (1987), Cat. No. 15 (Plate 10)