
Wax and Plaster Memories

*Children in Elite and non-Elite Strategies**

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Various strategies were adopted to preserve and honour familial memory in ancient Rome. Most famous are portraits of ancestors, *imagines maiorum*, depicting office holders, which marked aristocratic habits of the late Roman Republic. Literary and archaeological sources reveal a range of alternative *imagines* in non-elite circles of later periods which may refer to these prestige objects and express the importance of children, male and female, in the construction of familial identity.

1. WAX IMAGINES

Few topics have aroused more debate than the question of the physical appearance of the *imagines maiorum*. According to extant ancient sources, these portraits made in wax reproduced with a striking verism the facial features of ancestors. They were reserved for those who had held a curule office, and they were intimately

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associated with the concept of the *nobilitas* and *honos* of a senatorial family.¹

These portraits were either designated by the generic term *imagines*, used for all kinds of human representations, often with the addition of *maiorum*, or more simply as *cerae*, or *cerae vultus*.² They were usually kept in the atrium, the most public part of the house, in a wooden cabinet or *armarium* (*naos*), according to Polybius (6.53.4–5) and Pliny the Elder (*nat.* 35.4–7), our main sources on this custom. The cabinet was opened on occasions of rejoicing and celebration, such as public successes or marriage rituals which took place in the *domus*. The most famous and solemn public occasion of display was funerary. *Imagines* were carried (and most likely not worn, as we will see below) in the *pompa funebris* by actors in chariots who impersonated the ancestors of the deceased and resembled them ‘in stature and carriage’, reports Polybius (6.53.6); they wore the garb characterizing the function of each dead man, ‘purple if he was a censor, embroidered with gold if he had celebrated a triumph’, and were preceded by the *insignia* of their office, such as *fasces* or axes.

Preserving facial features was not associated with expectation of the soul’s survival, as was the case in Egyptian beliefs.³ The insistence on likeness was related to another form of survival in familial and collective memory. The portraits, like painted *stemmata* or genealogical charts, could be accompanied by *tituli*, most likely in the same formulaic style as epitaphs, which kept alive the *memoria* of an individual in its dimension of *exemplum*, inspiring imitation, as Catherine Baroin demonstrates in this book.⁴

At funerals, the *exemplum* was public: the parade of *imagines maiorum* ended at the *rostra*, where the actors were seated in a row; the *imagines* displayed the prestige of a *gens*, an ennobling view ‘for a young man who aspires to fame and virtue’ (Polybius 6.53.9–10). From existing Republican portraits, one assumes that *imagines maiorum* exhibited various individualizing facial features, such as

¹ The right to display *imagines, res privatae*, was not regulated by a *ius imaginum* which appears only in 16th-cent. sources; see Flower 1996: 53–9; Giuliani 2008.

² E.g. Sall. *Iug.* 4.6 (*cera*); Plin. *nat.* 35.4 (*cera vultus*); Mart. 7.44 (*vivida cera*); Iuv. 8.19 (*veteres cerae*). See also Daut 1975; Lahusen 1982; Flower 1996: 32–5.

³ See below, n. 91.

⁴ See Ch. 1.

ageing and asymmetries. A conventional set of physiognomical signs reflected moral qualities—*gravitas*, *severitas*, *fides*—expressing experience, political authority, and reliability.⁵

The materiality and function of wax portraits still raise many unsolved questions. Some are much debated: were *imagines* busts or masks, made on the living or on the dead? Some have hardly been raised at all: why was such a fragile and perishable material chosen, and not terracotta, marble, or metal? How were they produced? Were wax portraits in general restricted to men of power, or could they also represent children—or women? Did non-elite families too commemorate their lineage and own similar portraits with aristocratic connotations reflecting their ambitions? Was the lifelike aspect of wax portraits an ideal?

Funerary masks?

For a long time, wax *imagines* were believed to be funerary masks which influenced the verism of Republican portraiture. For some authors, a wax death mask was realized and displayed on the deceased; a duplicate made from the same mould was kept in the atrium and worn by actors at funerals.⁶ A. Boethius, F. Brommer, G. Lahusen, and others⁷ have demonstrated that wax *imagines* were not mortuary masks, and that realistic portraiture had other origins, Etrusco-Italic and Hellenistic Greek. No ancient sources mention portraits moulded after the dead, and *imagines maiorum* could be produced in the lifetime of the office holder, as in the case of Cn. Calpurnius Piso.⁸

⁵ Giuliani 1986. Cf. Corbeill 1996. Their production is associated with the development of public honorific portraiture in the late Republic and of clientela relationships; Tanner 2000: 18–50.

⁶ See e.g. Saglio 1887: 1019; Corbeaud 1900: 412–14; Zadoks-Josephus Jitta 1932: 11–21. Their views were probably influenced by the finds of gold mortuary masks, and the contemporary fashion for funerary masks of famous musicians.

⁷ Boethius 1942; Brommer 1953–4; Lahusen 1985 and 1995.

⁸ Flower 1996: 58 notes that the ban on Piso’s *imago* suggests that it already existed. See the *Senatus consultum de Cn. Pisone patre* on an inscription from Spain (10 Dec. CE 20); Eck 1993: 189–208; AE 1996, 885, l.76–82; Flower 1996: 330–1 (I 16); Badel 2005: 112–64.

The production technique is evoked by the elder Pliny (*nat.* 35.6). He uses the expression *expressi cera vultus* ('cast wax faces') which suggests that the portraits were made in wax cast from a mould, most probably in plaster. The formula occurs also in his description of the sculptor Lysistratus of Sicyon, brother of Lysippos, who developed a process to take the print of a face with plaster:

The first person who modelled a likeness (*imaginem*) in plaster of a human being from the living face itself, and established the method of pouring wax into this plaster mould (*expressit ceraque*) and then making final corrections on the wax cast, was Lysistratus of Sicyon [...]. Indeed he introduced the practice of giving likenesses (*similitudines reddere instituit*). (Plin. *nat.* 35.153)

This technique may be reconstructed by comparison with later periods. In the Renaissance it became very fashionable for the elite to offer ex-votos in the form of mannequins with individualized head and hands. The *Libro dell'Arte* (around 1390) of Cennino Cennini, a Florentine artist, describes how the craftsmen, *ceraiuoli*, should proceed.⁹ C. Cennini explains that the cast is made by pouring plaster on the face of the duly shaven and anointed client, having introduced pipes into the nostrils in order to allow him to breathe during the process (Fig. 5.1). Specific ingredients, such as soap or oil, were then rubbed into the mould so as to avoid the adherence of beeswax poured into the porous plaster.¹⁰

If Roman wax *imagines* were produced from plaster moulds, as the expression *expressi cera vultus* suggests, could they be free-standing masks? Moulds can produce hollow models as well as solid ones, half-busts; as wax is very elastic, in modern times hollow models were stabilized in order to avoid losing shape, either by stuffing them with rags or similar material, or by placing them on a supporting frame in wood or metal.¹¹ The silhouettes in the exedra shrine in the

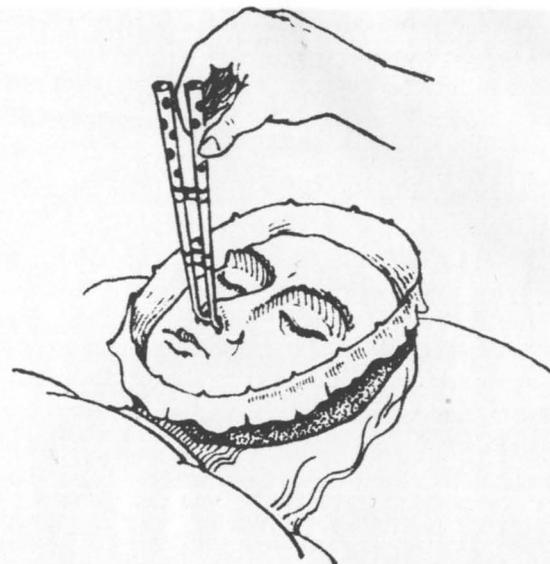


FIG. 5.1. Cennino Cennini, *Il libro dell'Arte*, chs. CLXXXII–CLXXXIII; after F. Brunello (ed.), Vicenza 1971: 200 (fig.)

House of the Menander in Pompeii (Fig. 5.2) may show the wooden core, much smaller than natural size, on which wax was applied to render anatomical volume, a technique also used by sculptors for wax prototypes of bronze works.¹² Less famous, the *lararium* in the House of Balbus has preserved three similar *imagines* which seem to have received a domestic cult and may be Campanian variants.¹³

It was also noted that *imagines* could not resemble masks worn by actors because of their undignified connotation; it would also have implied making holes for the eyes, the nostrils, and the mouth, which not only make the wax fragile, but suppress the features most characteristic of an individualized face.¹⁴ Pliny, moreover,

⁹ Cennini [1390] 1933. At the beginning of the 17th cent. the church of the Annunziata contained over 600 wax ex-voto mannequins. See von Schlosser 1910–11; Didi-Hubermann 1994.

¹⁰ Cennini [1390] 1933: chs. CLXXXI–CLXXXV; Gaborit and Ligot 1987: 65–8; Lehnherr and Schuster Cordone 2003: esp. 75–83.

¹¹ Cf. the techniques of the 18th-cent. ceroplastical workshop La Specola in Florence; Gaborit and Ligot 1987: 68–9.

¹² Maiuri 1933: 98–106, figs. 48–9, with the household *Lar*. On technique, Hesych. s.v. *Kanabios keros*, and *Kanabos*; Blümner 1879: 158.

¹³ Petersen 2006: 176–9, fig. 108. For a recent discussion of the material from Pompeii and Herculaneum, see Charles-Laforge 2007.

¹⁴ *Contra* e.g. Flower 1996: 2: 'they could be worn as real masks'; and 37: they 'must therefore be akin in a practical sense, to masks worn in a theatre'.



FIG. 5.2. House of the Menander, *in situ*; after Maiuri 1933: fig. 48

does not use the term *persona*, mask, but *vultus*, face, and the Greek term *prosōpon*, used by Polybius, can designate a face as well as a mask. Appian (*Ib.* 89) similarly uses the term *eikōn* to describe the portrait of Scipio Africanus kept in the Temple of Jupiter on the Capitol which was carried out to join other *imagines* in funeral

processions.¹⁵ According to Valerius Maximus (4.1.6), Scipio's *imago* was in triumphal dress, which cannot refer to a mask, but to a bust or a full effigy. A description by Diodorus of Lucius Aemilius Paullus' funeral in 160 BCE, alludes to the making of mannequins depicting the deceased himself, 'portrayed in figures (*eidōlopoiountai*) that are not only lifelike as to features but show their whole bodily appearance'.¹⁶

Various types of funerary *imagines* may have existed. Heinrich Drerup proposed identifying the procession of *imagines maiorum* as a parade of dressed mannequins (*Kleiderpuppen*) with wax heads and perhaps also wax hands and feet.¹⁷ The making of a wax mannequin is a tradition going back to Augustus and possibly earlier to Sulla and Caesar.¹⁸ At the funeral of Augustus, two images (*eikones*) in gold of the emperor were displayed, as well as a wax image in triumphal garb which was probably burned.¹⁹ This tradition underwent significant developments in imperial funerals,²⁰ but in the first century BCE, ancestors' portraits kept in the atrium probably did not differ significantly from other busts displayed in private, funerary, or public spaces, apart from their material, wax, which gave them a special connotation. A range of possible depictions of *imagines maiorum* as busts may be identified in sculpture and reliefs. The famous Barberini statue holds two life-size busts of ancestors similar to standard portraits in the round; the *togatus* might have carried the busts as did the actors on carts at the funeral parade, as Olof Vessberg first proposed.²¹

¹⁵ The bust portrait of Cato the Elder was brought from the Curia; App. *Ib.* 23. Cf. Hölscher 1978: esp. 326 n. 45.

¹⁶ Diod. 31.25.2. Cf. Plaut. *Amph.* 458–9 may refer to such mannequins.

¹⁷ Drerup 1980: 112.

¹⁸ At the death of the dictator, a large image (*eidōlom*) of Sulla was moulded in frankincense and cinnamon, perhaps mixed with wax, and burnt on his funerary pyre; Plut. *Sulla* 38.3; Bodel 1999: 272. On Caesar's wax mannequin, see below.

¹⁹ Cass. Dio 56.34.

²⁰ On later development of this tradition, cf. Bettini 2005: 191–202.

²¹ Vessberg 1941. See also Brommer 1953–4: 164; Lahusen 1985; Smith 1981: esp. 31–2. Ancient authors suggest that *imagines* could also be carried on litters (*feretra, lecti*) or on the funerary couch; Sil. 10.566–9; Serv. *Aen.* 6.681. See Badel 2005: 125–6.

The formula *expressi cera vultus* can also describe a portrait made after a generic mould, as for terracotta votives. The individualization of the portrait occurred on the cast. Pliny mentions that Lysistratus used to make 'final corrections' on the wax cast (Plin. *nat.* 35.153), and several authors describe the familiar gesture of the artist modelling the soft material with his thumbs. 'The beauty of wax is its power to yield to the fingers' skilful touch', says Pliny the Younger (*epist.* 7.9.11).²² Or a bronze portrait might have been moulded to obtain a wax one, as Luca Giuliani suggests.²³ Wax *imagines* could also be produced by other means, without a mould, as free-standing busts. They were easy to reproduce when, for example, a woman married and took with her the *imagines* of the famous members of her family.²⁴

The properties of wax

Little is known about the workshops of *kēroplastai* or *fictores*. Pliny says that wax *imagines* were not made by foreigners, implying that it was a local production. Apiculture scenes are depicted on the tombstone of Titus Paconius Caledus, a beekeeper, perhaps also a wax merchant; the monument shows bust portraits in profile which may be in wax from his own production.²⁵ The same craftsmen probably produced other wax objects, cast or not, such as cheap statuettes of gods,²⁶ or fake food, such as fruits or nuts, modest objects which possess the capacity to simulate life, a most appealing virtue to Roman taste, so fond of *trompe l'œil*.²⁷ Sculptors also used wax to

²² See also Iuv. 7.237–8: 'As a man moulds a face out of wax with his thumbs', and a similar statement in Stat. *Ach.* 1.332–4. On wax workshops, Blümner 1879: 151–63; Büll and Moser 1973.

²³ Giuliani 2008: 156 n. 48.

²⁴ Tac. *ann.* 2.27.3 on the atrium of Scribonius Libo filled with *imagines* on paternal and maternal sides. See also Cic. *Vatin.* 28.

²⁵ Vatican Museum; Helbig 1963: 154–5, no. 210; Schäfer 1989: 169, pl. 26, 3.

²⁶ Cf. the *lararium* of Juvenal (12.86–8) with 'little images of shining crumbling wax [...]'; Plin. *epist.* 7.9.11 (wax statuettes of Mars, Minerva, Venus, and Amor). See also e.g. Athen. 13.562c (wax statuette of Eros); Strab. 14.1.23 ('the wax statue of Penelope in the temple of Artemis in Ephesos').

²⁷ E.g. Plin. *nat.* 8.215 (nuts); *Priap.* 42.2.

make models; a small Hellenistic female wax head found in Alexandria may be a miniature trial piece.²⁸

'Of little monetary value',²⁹ wax was used in many ways and much appreciated because it could be endlessly melted and reused. The orator can recast thoughts 'in the greatest variety of forms, just as a sculptor will fashion a number of different images (*formae*) from the same piece of wax', says Quintilian (*inst.* 10.5.9).

Pliny's description of wax *imagines* underscores the fact that wax portraits belong to a special category of artefacts because they depict humans, not gods, members of the family, not foreigners, and contrast the simplicity of wax with the luxury of metal and marble. Pliny insists on their exceptionally lifelike appearance and their likeness as opposed to the contemporary fashion for idealized statues. More than a century earlier, Polybius also stressed that *imagines* are not simple mechanical productions, but complex artefacts 'reproducing with remarkable fidelity both the features and the complexion of the deceased' (6.53.5).

The nature of wax explains the mimetic power of the *imagines*. It is wax which made ancestors physically present. It has the special capacity to imitate the transparent carnation of human flesh and its secret inner life.³⁰ Authors often mention that wax portraits seem to be animated, 'alive and breathing'.³¹ Pigments were added to the wax *ad reddendas similitudines*, to achieve the expected realism.³² Various elements could increase the naturalism of the figure, such as hair and glass eyes. A remarkable example was found in 1852 in a funerary chamber in Cumae dating probably to the second century CE. Two beheaded adult bodies, male and female, were buried together, and life-size wax heads completed their missing ones. The female one disintegrated, but the male head was preserved, with glass eyes, traces of human hair, and a neck, showing that even in a funerary context a wax portrait aimed at providing the illusion of

²⁸ New York MMA; Büll 1959: 22 and 36, fig. 14.

²⁹ Colum. 9.16.1. Besides local production, which increased with the development of beekeeping by the end of the Republic, wax was imported from various countries, such as Spain, Corsica, Greece, and the Black Sea region.

³⁰ Didi-Hubermann 1999.

³¹ Pol. 6.53.

³² Plin. *nat.* 21.85.

life.³³ Analysis of the wax revealed that lead salts and palmitin or stearin had been added in order to increase the opacity and plasticity of the product.³⁴ The practice recalls the *funus imaginarium* prescribed by an inscription of a funerary college at Lanuvium under the reign of Hadrian stating that an effigy (in wax?) should substitute for the missing corpse of the deceased.³⁵

It is impossible to estimate the degree of verism achieved by the *kēroplastai* or *factores*. How relative the notion of similitude is may be illustrated by the description of the impressive funeral of Drusus in 23 CE, where, says Tacitus, one could see a procession of *imagines* showing legendary ancestors with imaginary portraits, including Aeneas, the Alban kings, and Romulus himself.³⁶ Most likely, the illusory effect of the material contributed to the lifelike aspect of the *imagines*.

The sheen of wax, however, did not last. Many authors mention the crumbling aspect of *imagines* in the atrium, 'a hall full of smoke-begrimed busts' (*atrium plenum fumosis imaginibus*).³⁷ Their blackened aspect, probably from braziers, may be alluded to in the mosaic pavement of the atrium of P. Paquius Proculus in Pompeii.³⁸ The motif depicts two silhouette busts, male and female, facing the *impluvium*, each before a now empty niche, which could evoke soiled ancestors' *imagines* (Figs. 5.3 (a) and (b)). Above the faceless male portrait a frontal colour bust appears, perhaps describing the real—and lost—aspect of the portrayed. A paradox thus emerges: the portraits which should exemplify the best possible verism were in

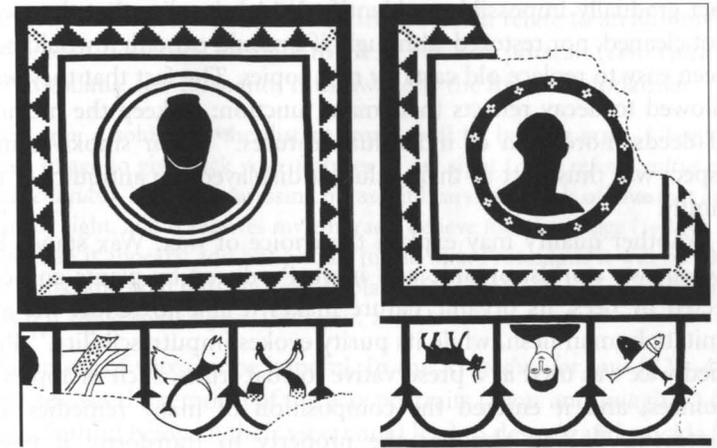


FIG. 5.3(a). Atrium of P. Paquius Proculus in Pompeii, *in situ*; line-drawing V.D.



FIG. 5.3(b). Detail; photo R. Tettamanti

³³ Von Schlosser 1910–11: fig. 1; Rieth 1973: 30, fig. 3; Drerup 1980: 93–4, pl. 49, 1 and fig. 2.

³⁴ Büll 1959: 904. Cf. Gaborit and Ligot 1987: 41–57.

³⁵ *CIL* 14.2112 = *ILS* 7212 (136 CE); Bodel 1999: 259–81, esp. 273. In the Renaissance, a similar find was reported by Pirro Ligorio in the foundations of the Bastione di Belvedere, quoted by Lanciani 1892: 273: 'There was also a skeleton, the skull of which was found between the legs, and in its place there was a mask or plaster cast of the head, reproducing most vividly the features of the dead man. The cast is now preserved in the Pope's wardrobe.'

³⁶ *Ann.* 4.9.2. Cf. the *stemma* of Galba, which included Jupiter on his paternal side, and Pasiphae on his maternal side; Suet. *Galba* 2.

³⁷ *Sen. epist.* 44.5.

³⁸ Spinazzola 1953: 312–13, figs. 350–1, 353–4; Ehrhardt 1998: atrium, 30–2, general view fig. 119, details figs. 121, 131, and 138. The female bust is characterized by a special hairstyle with a kind of *nodus*.

fact gradually impossible to identify. Which implies that they were not cleaned, nor restored, although, if a mould existed, it would have been easy to replace old casts by new copies. The fact that they were allowed to decay reflects their main function: to keep the memory of deeds more than of individual features.³⁹ Their smoke-stained aspect was thus part of their value. It displayed the antiquity of the family.⁴⁰

Another quality may explain the choice of wax. Wax stands between two worlds, organic and inert. Produced by plants and collected by bees, its organic nature makes it able to render life and imitate human flesh, while its purity evokes imputrescibility.⁴¹ Purified wax was used as a preservative to coat fruits, such as apples or quinces, and it entered the composition of many remedies and ointments.⁴² Wax also has the property to transform; it passes rapidly from one state to another, from solid to liquid, melting and disappearing in fire.⁴³ Its unusual materiality, between presence and non-existence, allowed wax to evoke the passage between life and death.⁴⁴ After the murder of Caesar a wax statue was erected above his bier, says Appian, who does not specify whether he was depicted dying, an illusion which wax could procure.⁴⁵ Wax can also suggest the reverse, the transformation from non-life to life as in the story of Pygmalion. Ovid compares with wax the texture of the ivory statue of the beloved maid growing soft to the touch, 'as Hymettian wax grows soft under the sun', becoming mysteriously human.⁴⁶

The power of illusion is associated with the capacity of wax to arouse strong emotional feelings, as in the exhibition of Caesar's

³⁹ Sall. *Iug.* 4.5–6. See C. Baroin, Ch. 1 in this volume.

⁴⁰ But a spoilt painted family chart with portraits is not enough to establish true nobility which is moral, as *Iuv.* 8.8–9 explains. On the possible reference to *imagines clipeatae*, Ehrhardt 1998: 31.

⁴¹ Cf. the similar preservative use and symbolism of honey; Borgeaud 2004.

⁴² Plin. *nat.* 15.64–5. On the complex succession of operations to purify wax, see *nat.* 21.83–4. Medical use: Plin. *nat.* 22.117, 30.70.

⁴³ On the regular use of wax in magic, see e.g. Hor. *epod.* 17.76; Büll and Moser 1973: 1361–3.

⁴⁴ Cf. Lehnher and Schuster Cordone 2003, on wax sculptures of dying saints.

⁴⁵ App. *civ.* 2.147.

⁴⁶ Ov. *met.* 10.284–6.

mannequin.⁴⁷ References to wax portraits often relate to an absent—not dead—individual brought to life.⁴⁸ The wax portrait (*cera vultus*) of Protesilaus, her husband, thus awakens the love of Laodamia:

While you, a soldier in the distant world, will be bearing arms, I keep a waxen image to give back your features to my sight (*quae referat vultus est mihi cera tuos*); it has the caressing phrase, it hears the words of love that are yours by right, and it receives my embrace. Believe me, the image (*imago*) is more than it appears; add but a voice to the wax, Protesilaus it will be. On this I look, and hold it to my heart in place of my real lord, and complain to it, as if it could speak again. (Ov. *epist.* 13.151–6)

This power of wax can be baneful. In the *Remedies for love* (723–4), Ovid advises the removal of the wax portraits (*cerae* and *imagines*) of the unfaithful beloved; their view could lead to despair and suicide.⁴⁹

Despite its mimetic capacity, however, wax sculpture was not regarded as an art, unlike bronze or marble portraits. The craftsmen who realized *imagines maiorum* are unknown, despite the fact that they made prestige objects and that great artists employed these techniques, such as Lysistratus who allegedly 'invented resemblance'. The efficacy of wax lies in its excessive likeness, but even the closest portraits are not qualified as masterpieces. The Ancients never use an aesthetic vocabulary to describe them, perhaps because wax, cheap, easy to work, but fragile and easy to melt, does not usually last.⁵⁰ In that respect, wax *imagines* can be compared with terracotta sculpture, and more specifically with votive heads which are likewise never described as works of art. Votive and wax portraits are both similarly made of a low-cost material, easily moulded or modified by addition, ablation, remodelling. Neither corpus evolves formally. The impact

⁴⁷ See App. *civ.* 2.147: 'The people could no longer bear the pitiful sight presented to them. They groaned, and, girding up their loins, they burned the senate-chamber where Caesar was slain, and ran hither and thither searching for the murderers [...].'

⁴⁸ See Mart. 7.44 on the *vivida cera* of Maximus Caesonius; see also Stat. *Ach.* 1.332–3; Diod. 31.25.2.

⁴⁹ Cf. the similar despair described in *Anth. Pal.* 12.183 about the wax figure of Heliodorus.

⁵⁰ Cheap versions of busts were also made of plaster (*gypsum*), such as those portraits of Chrysippus, Aristotle, or Pittacus owned by the ignorant people alluded to by *Iuv.* 2.4.

of the representation is not on the level of artistic achievement, but emotional, religious, and magical.

2. THE *IMAGINES* OF CHILDREN

We know that various forms of *imagines* were kept in the house, such as metal and stone busts, shield portraits, in painted *stemmata*, on a board or on the wall, depicting not only men but women⁵¹ and children.⁵² Wax portraits, in particular, were not restricted to adults, and *imagines* of children did exist. As Beryl Rawson demonstrated, individual representations of children developed by the end of the Republic. Their rise to gradual private and public visual prominence shows the growing concern for children in Roman society.⁵³

The achievements of children, even of those prematurely dead, were recorded. Their life had been short, but very intense. Flavius Hermes was thus only two, but so spirited that two years corresponded to sixteen.⁵⁴ Their *memoria* could also have at their level a dimension of *exemplum*. Deprived of the solemn *laudatio funebris* at the forum which could not be performed for a child, the parents had less formal eulogies at the grave and chose epitaphs as a means to praise and remember the untimely dead. They had no offices or major deeds to advertise, though some children were admitted as members of municipal magistratures at a very young age, such as N. Popidius

⁵¹ On female portraits in Pompeii, Dwyer 1982: 127–8 (bronze portrait in la casa del Citarista). See also the portraits from Avenches (*insula* 10) and a *villa* in Vallon, Fuchs 2008: figs. 1–2. On public statues of women, Flory 1993: 287–308; Flower 2002: 159–84.

⁵² Flower 1996: 40–6. Cf. the medallions with a boy and a girl in the house of Lucretius Fronto (V, 4, a); Clarke 1991: 159, figs. 81–2. See also the unusual bust portrait of the father surrounded by his naked children, a boy and a girl, on a mosaic from a wealthy *domus* in Ivailovgrad; Dunbabin 1999: 321, fig. 217.

⁵³ Rawson 1997a: esp. 74–9; Rawson 1997b; Rawson 2003.

⁵⁴ *CIL* 6.18086: *in bienno vixit quasi si vixisset sedecim annis*. On these *carmina*, see the forthcoming thesis of H. Lamotte, *Pratiques commémoratives et structure des familles à Rome: Etude des Carmina Latina epigraphica consacrés à des enfants défunts à la fin de la République et sous l'Empire* (University of Aix-Marseille).

Celsinus, who entered the town council of Pompeii at the age of six.⁵⁵ The family could record precocious intellectual accomplishments, such as the famous altar for Q. Sulpicius Maximus, the freeborn son of ex-slaves, Q. Sulpicius Eugrammus and Licinia Ianuaria, who lived eleven years, won a competition in Greek poetry, and is depicted as a promising orator (94 CE).⁵⁶ For slaves, professional skills may be advertised; the 12-year-old Pagus (*CIL* 6.9437) is thus remembered by his master and his parents as a jeweller expert in making necklaces and setting stones in gold, whereas Septentrio of Antipolis, of the same age (*CIL* 12.188), ‘danced for two days and pleased’.⁵⁷

Parents also ordered epitaphs describing their child’s lost potentials. Instead of past deeds, poems anticipate future successes. The memory of the little Marcianus, who died at seven, survives in the form of a schoolboy proudly exhibiting a *bullā*, token of his free birth. A long *carmen* mentions his growing talents ‘cut off by fate’: ‘How great would my promise have been, if my destiny had allowed!’⁵⁸ Anticipation is also present in the description of his funeral evoking those of important political figures. Many people attended the burial, suggesting survival in collective memory, beyond the family: ‘With what devotion and in what crowds did the whole Via Sacra come out, the huge crowd weeping and following my funeral procession.’ A neighbourhood ‘of all kinds and from all directions’ was present, and, adds the inscription, the day was called ‘a disaster’ (*dies feralis*).⁵⁹ Similarly, L. Caecilius Syrus was also only six, but, says his epitaph, he had a great crowd at his death (*frequentia maxima*) (*CIL* 6.13782). Most dedicators are former slaves who placed their pride and expectations of personal and social achievements in their children.

⁵⁵ *CIL* 10.846. For a list of young *decuriones* (4–12 years old), who were probably mostly observers, see Rawson 2003: 326 and n. 329. On the *laudatio* of those who die young, cf. the *laudatio* for the older Marcellus by Augustus, Horsfall 1989.

⁵⁶ *CIL* 6.33976; Rawson 1997b: 223, fig. 9.9; 2003: fig. 1.1, 17–22. See also the 7-year-old Magnilla who was ‘learned beyond her years’; *CIL* 6.21846; Rawson 2003: 47 and 206, fig. 1.10.

⁵⁷ Prosperi Valenti 1985: 78, no. 7; Bradley 1991a: 115 and ch. 5, with a list of child workers.

⁵⁸ *CIL* 6.7578. Trans. Rawson 1999; Rawson 2003: 159, fig. 5.1.

⁵⁹ Cf. Suet., *Caligula* 5–6, on the ‘disaster’ day at the death of Germanicus.

In elite circles, the most famous case is that of the son of M. Aquilius Regulus, a *delator* of ill repute, who had given his son in adoption for strategic reasons when the boy suddenly died. Pliny the Younger explains that:

He chose lately to mourn for his son; accordingly he mourns as nobody ever mourned before. He took it into his head that he would have statues (*statuas*) and busts (*imagines*) of him by the dozen; immediately all the artisans in Rome are set to work. In colours, wax, bronze, silver, gold, ivory, marble, the young Regulus is depicted again and again (*illum coloribus, illum cera, illum aere, illum argento, illum auro, ebore, marmore effingit*). (*epist.* 4.7)

The excessive mourning for the child reflects the political ambition of his father who used the obsequies for his personal promotion.⁶⁰ As a formal *laudatio* could not be pronounced from the *rostra*, he wrote a eulogy recounting his son's achievements, sent it outside Rome, and asked municipal corporations to read it publicly.⁶¹ Regulus also ordered a profusion of *imagines*, as if the multiplication of portraits could compensate for the absence of ancestors at the funeral of too young a son. The enumeration follows a scale of ranking from painting and wax to ivory and marble portraits. It may be noted that Regulus does not mention plaster portraits, probably because wax has aristocratic connotations, unlike stucco.⁶²

Children's funerary portraits, which started in the Julio-Claudian period, thus answered various needs; they played an important role in family strategies, in elite and non-elite families. The young deceased lived on in memory, not only on funerary monuments, but in domestic spaces.⁶³

Children's plaster moulds and portraits

If wax is very fragile and disintegrated, did plaster moulds, made on the living or on the dead, survive? No example from the Republican

⁶⁰ On conventional funeral rites for children, Rawson 2003: 336–63.

⁶¹ Rawson 2003: 332–3.

⁶² *CIL* 6.13782; Bodel 1999: 262.

⁶³ On funerary portraits of children, see Rawson 1997*b* and 2003.

period is known. In 1980, Heinrich Drerup published a series of plaster moulds found in funerary contexts.⁶⁴ The irony is that these moulds do not preserve the facial features of male and elderly members of the elite, but of children, mostly girls, from non-elite families. Of much later date (2nd–4th centuries), they served to produce cheap realistic busts in wax or plaster; they may derive from aristocratic practices, but do not prove the existence of mortuary masks in the Republican period, as he hoped to demonstrate.

Heinrich Drerup listed three moulds of children's faces which can today be supplemented by one more example. The most ancient dates to the end of the first century or beginning of the second century CE (70–115 according to palaeography). It was found in the stone sarcophagus of a girl uncovered in 1874 in Lyon/Lugdunum, with some funerary materials: bronze and ivory hair pins, the fragment of a box, and the plaster mould of the deceased. An inscribed stela gives her name, Claudia Victoria, and her age, ten years, one month and eleven days. The father's name is unknown, possibly because he was not allowed to marry, as a soldier, for example, and the girl bears the name of her mother. >

D(is) M(anibus) | et memoriae | Cl(audiae) Victoriae | quae vixit ann(os)
X | mens(es) I dies XI | Claudia Severi|na mater filiae | dulcissimae | et sibi
viva fecit | sub ascia dedi | cavit

To the departed spirit of Claudia Victoria who lived 10 years, 1 month and 11 days. Her mother Claudia Severina made this monument for her sweet daughter and for herself in her lifetime. It was dedicated *sub ascia* (*CIL* 13.2108)

The cast shows the face of the girl with a missing upper middle part, broken by the workers at the time of its discovery (Figs. 5.4(a) and (b)).⁶⁵ The tomb contained a few objects, bone pins and needles, as well as the bone bust of a soldier, not quite a doll, but a precious articulated object.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Drerup 1980.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* 1980: 89–90, pl. 43, 1–2; Coulon 2004: 162 (fig.).

⁶⁶ Allmer and Dissard 1885: no. 18, 32–7. On the bone soldier figurine, Béal 1983: 85–6, no. 95, pl. LXXI.



FIG. 5.4(a). Modern plaster cast (H. 18 cm); © Ch. Thioc, Musée gallo-romain de Lyon, Département du Rhône

Two other documents were found in 1943 in the tomb of C. Valerius Herma who owned the most important mausoleum of the Roman necropolis of Saint Peter in the Vatican.⁶⁷ The tomb, made of bricks, is composed of a large chamber and an annexe, with large arcosolia for sarcophagi surmounted by tall niches decorated with stucco reliefs or by rows of niches for cinerary urns. The mausoleum

⁶⁷ Mielsch 1975: 174–7; Mielsch and von Hesberg 1995: 143–208 (Mausoleum H); Feraudi-Gruénais 2001: 51–3 (K 18).



FIG. 5.4(b). Plaster mould; © J.-H. Degueule, Musée gallo-romain de Lyon, Département du Rhône

is dated to about 160 CE, or shortly after the reign of Marcus Aurelius, around 180 CE, and some associate the death of the family with the Antonine plague. Above the entrance an inscription states that:

C(aius) Valerius Herma fecit et
Flaviae T(iti) f(iliae) Olympiadi coniugi et
Valeriae Maximae filiae et C(aius) Valerio
Olympiano filio et suis libertis | libertabusque posterisq(ue) eorum

Valerius Herma made this tomb for himself, his wife Flavia Olympia, daughter of Titus, his daughter Valeria Maxima, and his son C. Valerius Olympianus, and for his freedmen, freedwomen and their descendants.⁶⁸

A fragment of the inscription for the daughter, Valeria Maxima, states that she lived twelve years.⁶⁹ Another inscription was made for the son, C. Valerius Olympianus who died at the age of four:

D(is) M(anibus)
C(aius) Valerio Olympiano qui vixit
annis [sic] IIII menses V dies XIII
C(aius) Valerius Herma pater

To the departed spirit of C. Valerius Olympianus who lived four years, five months, thirteen days, his father C. Valerius Herma (made this monument)

The *cognomen* Herma suggests a freedman, a very wealthy one as his mausoleum shows, patron of freedmen buried in the same place in niches with tabellae. A set of funerary plaster moulds were found which may relate to the children mentioned in the inscription or to other members of his *domus*, such as Valerius Herma's *alumni*, Caius Valerius Asiatus, who lived two years, eleven months, and three days, or Caius Appaienus Castus, another *alumnus* who lived eight years, ten months, and 28 days;⁷⁰ the finds were unfortunately not precisely recorded.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Eck 1986: 245–93, esp. 256–8.

⁶⁹ [Valeriae] G(ai) f(iliae) M[aximae] | [D(is)] [quae vix(it) an]nis XII m[enses] . . . | [m(anibus)] | [dies . . . G(aius) Valerius Herma pater]; Eck 1986: no. 11, 257–8, pl. XVII, 11.

⁷⁰ Eck 1986: no. 9, 255–6, pl. XVI, 9b, no. 13, 260–1, pl. XVII, 13.

⁷¹ Mielsch and von Hesberg 1995: 186: 'Leider sind bei keinem von ihnen die Fundumstände gesichert [. . .]. Die Totenmasken sind wohl aus einzelnen Bestattungen geborgen worden.'

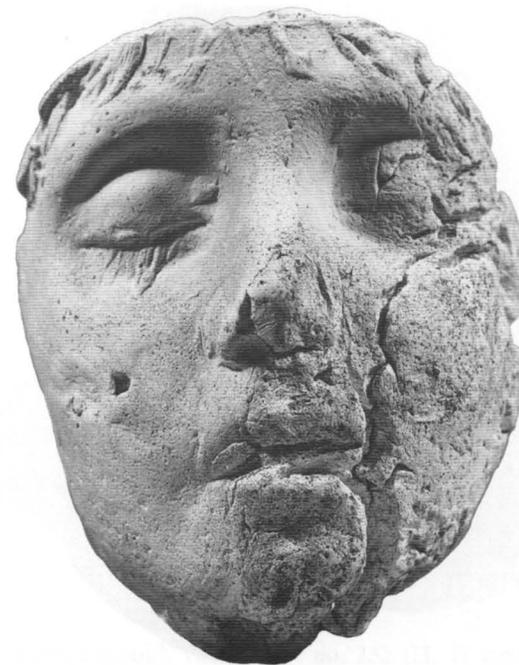


FIG. 5.5(a). Modern plaster cast; Vatican inv. no. 229 (H. 13.7 cm); after Mielsch and von Hesberg 1995: fig. 246

The face of the eldest child (Figs. 5.5(a) and (b)) is preserved in the form of a modern cast made after the original mould which no longer exists.⁷² The cast is very imperfect and irregular. The plaster was poured in two successive layers and contains air bubbles which indicate that the cast was done too quickly and carelessly. Cracks and tool marks show that the plaster positive was extracted with difficulty; the negative was most probably broken in the process.

⁷² Drerup 1980: 86, pl. 36 and 37.1; Mielsch and von Hesberg 1995: no. 10, 196–7, 199, figs. 246–7.



FIG. 5.5(b). Modern plaster cast; Vatican inv. no. 229 (H. 13.7 cm); after Mielsch and von Hesberg 1995: fig. 247

The second mould survives and shows the face of a small girl (Figs. 5.6(a) and (b)).⁷³ The asymmetrical position of the lips may indicate that she suffered from cleft lip, or was some device introduced between her lips? Her thick eyelashes are due to the layer of grease which protected them. The face was moulded in two parts, allowing an easier withdrawal. The same technique was used for a bearded male adult between 50 and 60 years old (Fig. 5.7), but only the left part of the mould is preserved.⁷⁴ Because of resemblances with the

⁷³ Drerup 1980: 85–6, pl. 34, 1–2; Mielsch and von Hesberg 1995: no. 12, 198, 201, figs. 251–3.

⁷⁴ Drerup 1980: 86–7, pl. 35; Mielsch and von Hesberg 1995: no. 11, 198, 200, figs. 248–50.



FIG. 5.6(a). Plaster mould; Vatican inv. no. 232 (H. 11 cm); photo DAI Rome Neg. 88.53

bearded marble portrait of a man found in the tomb, Drerup and others suggested an identification with Valerius Herma, possibly the children's father.⁷⁵

The latest document depicts the youngest child of the series, unknown to Drerup. It is the cast of a baby (Figs. 5.8(a) and (b)), a few months old, discovered in Paris in 1878 in a stone sarcophagus dating to the third or fourth century, which contained also a glass feeding-bottle.⁷⁶ It was first identified as an accidental cast, as though

⁷⁵ Drerup 1980; Mielsch and von Hesberg 1995: 186–90, 198, figs. 230–1 (marble portrait).

⁷⁶ Coulon 2004: 163 (fig.), 164–5.



FIG. 5.6(b). Modern plaster cast; after Mielsch and von Hesberg 1995: fig. 253

some plaster had fallen by chance on the face of the baby. Gérard Coulon, however, noted that the mark of a technical device is visible.⁷⁷ A round hole appears in the middle of the lips, as if a straw had

⁷⁷ De Lasteyrie 1878: 378: 'Par un hasard singulier et qui mérite d'être signalé, le lourd couvercle, en tombant sur le mortier liquide au moment de la tombe, a fait jaillir une certaine quantité de mortier jusque sur la figure du petit défunt; ce liquide en séchant a moulé les traits du pauvre enfant et nous les a conservé jusqu'à aujourd'hui, comme la boue qui a enseveli Pompéi a conservé les corps de quelques-unes des victimes du Vésuve.'



FIG. 5.7. Modern plaster cast; Vatican inv. no 294 (H. 21.5 cm); after Mielsch and von Hesberg 1995: fig. 250

been inserted in the mouth to allow breathing; the child was perhaps still alive when the print was taken.

From elite to non-elite *imagines*

Different influences may explain the use of these moulds, which could produce wax or plaster busts. All were made for children who belonged to non-elite families, which may not be a coincidence.



FIG. 5.8(a). Plaster mould (H. 10.5 cm × 9 cm); Paris, Musée Carnavalet AP 75; photo Museum

Freedmen families adopted in various ways aristocratic habits of commemoration. On funerary reliefs, freedmen are often depicted as busts, real or imaginary, in order to display personal achievement and respectability.⁷⁸ Unlike *imagines maiorum*, children and women may be shown. On the marble urn of Q. Anquirinnius Severus from Pisa, the father and his untimely dead son appear as free-standing busts (Fig. 5.9).⁷⁹ Husband and wife are also depicted. The reference to ancestral portraits may be explicit, as in the funerary monument

⁷⁸ D'Ambra 2002: 224–30.

⁷⁹ Schäfer 1989: 315–16, pl. 55, 1–2.



FIG. 5.8(b). Modern cast; Paris, Musée Carnavalet AP 75; photo Museum

of Lucius Antistius Sarculo and Antistia Plutia; the busts are designated as *imagines* in the inscription dedicated by the couple's freedmen, stressing the *honos* of the deceased. On a series of freedmen's funerary reliefs, profile busts with similar connotations are displayed in opened *armaria*.⁸⁰

Reliefs of the late Republican period display portraits of children with physiognomic features resembling those of the elite's portraits.

⁸⁰ See the relief in Copenhagen, National Museum 1187, dedicated to 'Aulus Aemilianus Aristomachus, freedman of Aulus, Aemilia Hilara, freedwoman of Aulus'; Zanker 1975: 310; Flower 1996: 7–8, pl. 1. On similar portraits on curule chairs, see Schäfer 1989: 167–75, who supports their interpretation as *imagines maiorum* and identifies imitations on freedmen's funerary reliefs.



FIG. 5.9. Pisa, wall of Campo Santo, *in situ*; marble urn of Q. Anquirinnius Severus; after Schäfer 1989: pl. 55.1

In a series of reliefs, the child only is shown in the form of a bust, as in the family of the Vibii (13 BCE – 5 CE) where the bust of L. Vibius Felicio Felix is placed between the parents (Fig. 5.10).⁸¹ Does it indicate that they owned precious objects, such as portraits,⁸² or is the meaning of the depiction at another level? The severe and dignified expression of the child reveals the parents' ambition who compensate for the absence of prestigious ancestors by valuing their descendants, placing their pride not in their anterior but in their future lineage. The child is a substitute for powerful patrician ancestors. Freeborn children, who may be still alive, become ancestors.

The moulds in the Vatican's necropolis may thus witness the appropriation of elite habits in non-elite families who ordered inexpensive plaster or wax portraits of children. They either belonged

⁸¹ *CIL* 6.28774; Zanker 1975: 294–5, fig. 29; D'Ambra 2002: 229, fig. 3. See also Zanker 1975: 294–5, fig. 24 (Vettii). See also the bust of a daughter (?) on the stela of P. Fabius Blandus in Florence; *CIL* 9.5390; Brommer 1953–4: 167, pl. 67, 1.

⁸² D'Ambra 2002: 226.



FIG. 5.10. Funerary relief of the Vibii, Vatican, Chiaramonti museum; photo DAI Rome Neg. 43.429

to the family of Valerius Herma or of his freedmen. The tomb's owner was himself a freedman with a special taste for self-representation. He multiplied various types of portraiture in the mausoleum: stucco standing portraits in niches,⁸³ marble reliefs and plaster busts of adults and children.⁸⁴ The presence of moulds for plaster or wax portraits in this context is thus not a surprise.

The moulds found in graves in Paris and Lyon raise further questions: why was the plaster negative deposited in the coffin? Was a single or a series of portraits cast after it, in wax or plaster? If the mould was sealed forever in the burial, no more reproduction was

⁸³ Mielsch and von Hesberg 1995: fig. 180 (Gaius Valerius Herma?), fig. 183 (Valeria Maxima?), fig. 185 (Flavia Olympias), figs. 187–8 (Gaius Valerius?).

⁸⁴ Mielsch and von Hesberg 1995: 186, figs. 230–1 (marble relief of Gaius Valerius Herma?); 190, figs. 232–3 (marble relief of Flavia Olympias?); 192–3, figs. 235–6 (stucco bust of Flavia Olympias?); 193–4, figs. 237–9 (miniature bust of Valeria Maxima?); and 196, figs. 243–5; fragments of other portraits.

then possible, but we have seen that ageing could add value to the portrait; it could be part of the *genre*, as for *imagines maiorum*.

We do not know if the Valerii moulds were deposited in urns or sarcophagi, as the circumstances of their discovery are unclear, but a stucco portrait of a boy with traces of gilding was also found in the mausoleum (Figs. 5.11(a) and (b)).⁸⁵ Drerup concluded that it was made after the funerary mould, but the two pieces do not belong to the same period. The complete gilding associated with an Isiac lock on the right side, and the general hairstyle point to the beginning of third century CE, a later date than the death of the Valerii.

Hoping for survival?

A contrasting example from the elite circle suggests alternative interpretations. In 1964 the mummified body of an 8-year-old girl was found inhumed in a very costly white marble sarcophagus decorated with hunting scenes. The sarcophagus, dating to the end of the second century (160–80 CE), was deposited in a space below the foundation blocks of a funerary monument. The wealth of the girl is displayed by her jewellery, gold earrings, a gold necklace with sapphires from Ceylon, and a large gold ring engraved with a winged Victory; her funerary equipment was completed by an ivory doll, an amber die, and toilet items including boxes which may have contained perfumes.⁸⁶ Her body was not eviscerated but embalmed with resin and wrapped in the Egyptian style. Her face appears to have been covered by a sort of mask that unfortunately disintegrated when the sarcophagus was opened (Figs. 5.12–5.13).⁸⁷ Anthropological researches have shown that lung disease, possibly tuberculosis asso-

⁸⁵ H. 26 cm. with the neck; Drerup 1980: 87, pl. 37, 2; Mielsch and von Hesberg 1995: no 6, 196, figs. 240–2.

⁸⁶ Bordenache Battaglia 1983: 112–22.

⁸⁷ Scamuzzi 1964: 264, fig. 5, 'L'esposizione alla luce e all'aria fece perdere alla "mummia di Grottarossa" il suo aspetto primitivo'; P. Catalano and I. A. Rapesi, Soprintendenza Archeologica di Roma, however, notified me that the picture by the famous photographer O. Restaldi (Fig. 5.12) was most probably touched up for the publication. I thank them both very much for this information and for providing Fig 5.13.



FIG. 5.11(a). Gilded plaster bust; Vatican (H. 26 cm); photo DAI Rome Neg. 88.48



FIG. 5.11(b). After Mielsch and von Hesberg 1995: fig. 241

ciated with anthracosis, caused the death of the girl. Alexandria was famous for its invigorating seaside climate, and the girl was long thought to have been unsuccessfully sent to Egypt to recover. Palynological analyses from the wrappings of the mummy seem to confirm that the mummification was carried out in Egypt, though the spinning style of the preserved silk and linen textiles could suggest that it



FIG. 5.12. Mummy of Grottarossa; after Scamuzzi 1964, fig. 5; photo O. Restaldi



FIG. 5.13. Mummy of Grottarossa; photo Soprintendenza Archeologica di Roma

took place in Rome.⁸⁸ Did the girl belong to the family of the Scipios who objected to incineration?⁸⁹ The winged Victory on the ring evokes the seal of the family, but is too common for drawing any conclusion.

The idealized face and the mummification of the Grottarossa girl belongs to Egyptian tradition,⁹⁰ for in Egyptian belief, the aim of preserving the body as well as the face was to preserve the soul and ensure a happy afterlife.⁹¹ Isiac religion was well established in second-century Italy.⁹² The plaster bust of a boy found in Valerius Herma's tomb (Figs. 5.11(a) and (b)) has an Isiac hairlock and gilding which reflect Egyptian ideas about immortality, symbolized by the incorruptibility of gold. Most probably, the child was thus placed under the protection of the goddess in the hereafter.⁹³ Changes in afterlife beliefs may explain a growing desire to keep the exact copy of the deceased's face, a demand which seems to appear at the same time as the practice of funerary moulding.

Examples of mortuary casts for making portraits may be found in the workshop of a sculptor in third-century Thysdrus (Tunisia), not yet fully published. Among fragments of plaster moulds and casts, a mould was found, taken on the face of a deceased man⁹⁴ with hairy features (beard, moustache), a sunken nose and left cheek which may due to a lethal trauma. The plaster bust of a woman, found in the same room, was perhaps made after a mould, but was left unfinished.⁹⁵

⁸⁸ Ascenzi, Bianco, and Nicoletti *et al.* 1996; Capasso 2000; Catalano *et al.* 2003.

⁸⁹ Plin. *nat.* 7.187; Cic. *leg.* 22.156.

⁹⁰ Grimm 1974; Aubert and Cortopassi 2004.

⁹¹ On the special care for the preservation of the head in Egyptian practices, see Dunand and Lichtenberg 1998: esp. 130; and Walker 2000. See also traditional ritual texts, Goyon 1972: esp. 54–7, 61, 65.

⁹² Malaise 1972.

⁹³ Goette 1989: 203–17, esp. 209. The Valerii mausoleum was built next to another one with Egyptianizing motifs; Mielsch and von Hesberg 1995, tomb Z, 225–33. Cf. von Gonzenbach 1957, who interpreted them as initiates to the Isiac cult.

⁹⁴ H. 29 cm. Drerup 1980: 91–2; Slim 1976: 79–92; 1996: 68–9; 2001: 207–8.

⁹⁵ H. 40 cm. Cf. the plaster funerary mask from Alexandria; Adriani 1970: esp. 108, pl. 35, 1–2. Drerup 1980: pl. 45, 1.2; Rieth 1973.

3. PRINTED MEMORIES

Whatever the explanation, wax and plaster portraits witness the desire to keep a faithful memory of the facial features of a child and of its real appearance. But was true likeness an ideal?

The making of a child's portrait may be part of mourning strategies. Regulus thus multiplies the portraits of his son. A portrait may help to alleviate the pain of the loss.⁹⁶ A negative reaction is expressed in the inscription where the father of a 9-year-old girl, Asiatica, complains because the features (*voltus*) of his *alumna* have forever disappeared, but hopes to be reunited in death and see her face again: 'My consolation will be that soon I shall see you.'⁹⁷ Similarly Statius evokes the pain endured at the sight of the face (*ora*) of a beloved young son destroyed by the flames of the pyre.⁹⁸

The consolation is, however, limited: the portrait does not speak⁹⁹ and likeness can hurt by providing too vivid a sense of loss. A poem attributed to Julianus regrets the skill of the painter who rendered too faithfully the deceased Theodote. A less expert artist would have offered forgetfulness to the grieving relatives.¹⁰⁰ Similarly, Lucan describes how the parents of twins suffer to see their surviving son who reminds them of his lost brother:

The wretched parents, no longer puzzled by the likeness, recognized the one survivor but found in him a source of unending sorrow; for he keeps their grief ever present and recalls his lost brother to their mourning hearts. (Lucan. 3.605–8)¹⁰¹

Seneca contrasts the reactions of Livia and Octavia at the death of their sons. Their sorrows are expressed in two divergent ways. Livia

⁹⁶ See also Luc. 3.605–8: *tenet ille dolorem and semper et amissum fratrem lugentibus offert.*

⁹⁷ *CIL* 11.3771. Trans. Hopkins 1983: 227; Bellemore and Rawson 1990: 1–19, esp. 8.

⁹⁸ *Silv.* 3.3.8–12.

⁹⁹ *Anth. Pal.* 7.602.

¹⁰⁰ *Anth. Pal.* 7.565.

¹⁰¹ Cf. the similar complaint in Ps.-Quintilian, *Declamationes XIX majores*, 8, *Gemini languentes*, ed. L. Håkanson, Stuttgart, 1982: 151; Dasen 2005: 260.

never ceased to proclaim the name of Drusus, and had him pictured everywhere in private and public places,¹⁰² whereas Octavia, at the death of Marcellus, turned away from the living:

Not a single portrait (*imago*) would she have of her darling son, not one mention of his name in her hearing; she hated all mothers [. . .] she spurned the poems that were written to glorify the memory of Marcellus and all other literary honours, and closed her ears to every form of consolation. (Sen. *To Marcia on Consolation* 3.2.4)

Idealization may have represented a comforting compromise. Post-humous portraits were voluntarily idealized. In art, as in epitaphs, often the figure of a Cupid substitutes for that of the child.¹⁰³ Suetonius tells us about a portrait of a son of Agrippina and Germanicus who died when he had reached boyhood, 'a charming child'. Livia dedicated a bust of the boy in the guise of Cupid in the temple of Venus on the Capitolium (*effigiem cupidinis*), and Augustus himself had another portrait placed in his bedroom (*cubiculum*) 'and used to kiss it fondly whenever he entered the room'.¹⁰⁴

In a more subtle way, Pliny the Younger invites Vestricius Spurinna to instruct him in writing a memorial for his deceased son. As a painter or a sculptor is directed when he makes a portrait, 'so I hope you will guide and inform my hand'. Retouching is not deceitful, on the contrary, it contributes to making an immortal picture.¹⁰⁵ Commemorative portraits, verbal, painted, or sculpted, thus conveyed a physiognomic likeness made of adjustments and conventions reflecting the family's expectations.¹⁰⁶ The verism of wax *imagines maiorum*, busts produced after the living and not masks made on the dead, was probably also an illusion.¹⁰⁷ It relied mainly on the

¹⁰² Sen. *To Marcia on Consolation* 3.3.

¹⁰³ Cf. *CIL* 6.18086, on Flavius Hermes compared with Cupidus. See also the 3-year-old L. Papirius Speratus depicted as a winged Cupid on *CIL* 6.23797; Stuveras 1969: 43, n. 3, fig. 89. On the ambiguities of portraits of the god (or of a real child?), Stuveras 1969: 175–81; see also e.g. Wrede 1981: cat. nos. 161, 217–18, 222, pls. 32–3 (funerary portraits of children as Hermes).

¹⁰⁴ *Cal.* 7. Cf. the marble portrait of a boy found in the temple of Venus at Cyrene; London, British Museum 1456; Rosenbaum 1960: 48–9, no. 26, pl. XXI.

¹⁰⁵ Plin. *epist.* 3.10.6. Cf. Fronto, *De nepote amisso* 6, 20–5 (see Ch. 1 above).

¹⁰⁶ On the spectators' perceptual categories, Gombrich 1972: 1–46.

¹⁰⁷ Bardou 1972; Leach 1990: esp. 22.

mimetic properties of wax, and on the rendering of characteristic physiognomical details, such as ageing or asymmetries. Their production was intimately linked with a specific social and political function, the display of prestige and power. They were meant to be inspiring models, and hence idealized in their own way.¹⁰⁸ Lack of verism should not be interpreted as a lack of skill, but as a choice, and making the choice of excessive likeness was not an obvious one.

Inexpensive children's wax or plaster portraits were part of the various types of *imagines* displayed in Roman households. In non-elite families, who appropriated aristocratic habits, they answered specific needs. They were the means for constructing the memory of families who invested their ambitions in their descendants and substituted their children for illustrious ancestors.

¹⁰⁸ Tanner 2000.