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**FABIA ACONIA PAULINA AND THE DEATH
OF PRAETEXTATUS – RHETORIC AND IDEALS
IN LATE ANTIQUITY (CIL VI 1779)***

MAIJASTINA KAHLOS

The purpose of this article is to study the funerary poem of Vettius Agorius Praetextatus and his wife Fabia Aconia Paulina in CIL VI 1779. I shall discuss questions connected with Praetextatus' death, the creation of the funerary poem, and particularly Paulina's role in its composition. This poem is especially interesting because it illustrates late Roman ideas of female virtue and the ideals of marriage and marital love. I shall end with a discussion of the women initiated into mystery cults by their husbands and of the choice of religious affiliation in Late Antiquity.

Vettius Agorius Praetextatus (310/320–384) often appears together with the well-known names of Q. Aurelius Symmachus and Nicomachus Flavianus. He has been considered the spiritual leader and the unifying force of the Roman pagan senators in the fourth century.¹ He seems to have made a strong impression on his contemporaries and the generations after him since most writers praise him. The letters Symmachus wrote to Praetextatus show respect for him; the historian Ammianus Marcellinus, who otherwise disapproves of the Roman senators and their morals, describes him as a senator of noble character and old-time dignity.² Macrobius' *Saturnalia*,

* I would like to thank Anne Helttula and Heikki Solin for reading and commenting on earlier drafts of this paper. I am also very grateful to Averil Cameron for encouraging me to write about this topic. Any remaining errors are entirely my responsibility.

¹ PLRE I, Praetextatus 1, 722–724. E.g. G. Boissier, *La fin du paganisme*, 2, Paris 1891, 265; H. Bloch, *A New Document of the Last Pagan Revival in the West, 393–394 A.D.*, *HThR* 38 (1945) 203–204, 217–219; R. Klein, *Symmachus*, Darmstadt 1971, 47–50. J. Matthews, *Western Aristocracies and Imperial Court A.D. 364–425*, Oxford 1990², 6 describes him as a characteristic – though outstanding – product of late Roman paganism.

² *Amm.* 22,7,6.

written a generation after Praetextatus, depicts him as the main character and the leading figure among the Roman pagan senators.³ Praetextatus is also known to have been devoted to literature and philosophy.⁴

In addition to literary sources there are also several inscriptions that give information about Praetextatus' political career and his religious activities. Praetextatus' *cursus honorum* is displayed in CIL VI 1777, 1778 and 1779. He was *quaestor candidatus*, *praetor urbanus*, *corrector Tusciae et Umbriae* and *consularis Lusitaniae* before 362.⁵ After the city prefecture in Rome in 367–368 Praetextatus was either five or seven times a legate of the senate.⁶ Under the reign of Valentinianus II, after the death of the emperor Gratian, he became *praefectus praetorio Illyrici, Italiae et Africae*.⁷ He was married to Fabia Aconia Paulina, the daughter of Aconius Catullinus Philomathius.⁸

AFTER THE DEATH OF PRAETEXTATUS

In 384 Praetextatus was appointed consul for the following year but he died before the New Year, perhaps in December 384.⁹ The whole city of

³ Of the date of Macrobius' *Saturnalia* see Alan Cameron, *The Date and Identity of Macrobius*, *JRS* 56 (1966) 25–38.

⁴ Paulina refers (CIL VI 1779, v. 8–12) to his literary activities within the circle of Symmachus. Praetextatus' own writings have perhaps not been preserved. He is known to have translated the paraphrases of Aristotle's *Prior* and *Posterior Analytics* written by Themistius from Greek into Latin. W. Ensslin believes that he also wrote the *Categoriae decem ex Aristotele decerptae* usually ascribed to Augustine. Ensslin, s.v. Praetextatus, *RE* XXII, 1579.

⁵ CIL VI 1777, 1778, 1779.

⁶ CIL VI 1779: *legatus a senatu missus V*; CIL VI 1777: *legato amplissimi ordinis septies et ad impetrandum reb(us) arduis semper opposito*.

⁷ CIL VI 1779. According to CIL VI 1777 and CIL VI 1778: *praefectus praetorio II Italiae et Illyrici*. J. Nistler, *Vettius Agorius Praetextatus*, *Klio* 10 (1910) 469 believes that Praetextatus was a pretorian prefect twice (in 383 and in 384).

⁸ *PLRE* I, 675, Paulina 4. *PLRE* I, 187–188, Catullinus 3: Fabius Aconius Catullinus Philomathius, *PPO* 341, *PVR* 324–325, *cos.* 349.

⁹ *Symm. rel.* 12,5. Barrow, *Prefect and Emperor*, Oxford 1973, 72 proposes December 384 as the date of his death. Praetextatus was still alive on the 9th of December 384 (*Cod. Iust.* 1,54,5), but dead by the 1st of January 385.

Rome mourned his death: *ad cuius interitum urbs universa commota est*.¹⁰ Symmachus relates that his death caused so great a sorrow that the people of Rome refrained from the usual pleasure of the theatre. Symmachus himself asked for release from the city prefecture, because he was so upset by his friend's death. His own words suggest that he sought consolation in private life: *Et ille quidem functus est lege naturae, nos vero socios animi sui vestrique iudicii tanto dolore confudit, ut otii remedium postulemus*.¹¹ The emperors granted Symmachus permission to erect statues to Praetextatus in the name of the senate. Inscriptions CIL VI 1778 and 1779a may have been made for the statues erected in the Forum Romanum.¹²

Because Praetextatus had been *pontifex Vestae* and a supporter of the Vestal virgins, he had probably paid most of the expenses of the cult. After his death the Vestal virgins and *sacerdotes virginum Vestalium* decided to erect a statue of their own to him. Symmachus opposed this project because he believed it to be against religious protocol. It is, he said, inappropriate for priestesses of sacred Vesta to pay such homage to men. It did not accord with tradition, because that honour was never given to Numa Pompilius or Metellus or any *pontifex maximus*.¹³ H. Bloch interprets this as a difference in spiritual outlook between the two currents in Roman paganism. Peter Brown regards Symmachus' opponents as the extremists of Symmachus' own party.¹⁴

Symmachus lost this dispute when the chief of the Vestals Coelia Concordia erected a statue in the name of all the Vestal virgins. Praetextatus' widow Paulina erected a statue of Coelia Concordia probably in her own house to thank her for this honour. The inscription engraved on the pedestal of the statue has been preserved (CIL VI 2145). In it Paulina states that Coelia Concordia had erected a statue to Praetextatus, to a man outstanding in every way and worthy to be honoured by the Vestal virgins and priests. Paulina's words and their tone could be understood as a polemic against Symmachus.

¹⁰ Hier. ep. 23.

¹¹ Symm. rel. 10,2.

¹² Symm. rel. 12,2. Ensslin, 1579 (CIL VI 1779a); Nistler, 472 (CIL VI 1778).

¹³ Symm. epist. 2,36.

¹⁴ H. Bloch, *The Pagan Revival in the West at the End of the Fourth Century, The Conflict between Paganism and Christianity in the Fourth Century*, Oxford 1963, 217–218, n. 6; P. Brown, *Aspects of the Christianization of the Roman Aristocracy*, JRS 51 (1961) 4.

THE COMPOSITION OF CIL VI 1779

The text of CIL VI 1779 (= CLE 111 = ILS 1259) is written on the four sides of a marble base upon which there may have been a statue of Praetextatus.¹⁵ The text contains Praetextatus' *cursus honorum*: priesthoods and magistracies (part a) and a funerary poem in iambic senarii (parts b, c and d). The poem is a double *laudatio*. In part d Paulina addresses her husband for the last time and praises his qualities and achievements. In parts b and c Praetextatus praises his wife Paulina. There is uncertainty about the correct order of the parts of the inscription.¹⁶ His *cursus honorum* is only mentioned briefly in the poem (l. 18–20), because it is regarded as *caduca ac parva*. Instead of the emphasis on worldly affairs, his intellectual activities get all the attention: literature, philosophy, and religion.

Was the inscription made immediately after Praetextatus' death or after Paulina's death? It is possible that some parts were written after Praetextatus had died and Paulina was still alive, and the rest of the inscription was engraved after her death. It is also probable that the whole inscription was engraved after they both had died.

How was the poem composed? Had the couple decided together to immortalize their marital love and fidelity and mutual ideals, or was it Paulina alone who composed the poem? Could their children have had it made, or some of Praetextatus' friends or supporters? The eulogy of Praetextatus could have been done by Paulina herself after Praetextatus' death and the parts concerning Paulina by her relatives after her death. It is also possible that both eulogies could have been composed by the same person.

Lambrechts supposes that the funerary poem is based on the funerary oration (*laudatio funebris*) delivered by Paulina at Praetextatus' funeral.¹⁷

¹⁵ CIL VI 1779 was found in Rome, was first published in 1750, and is now in the Capitoline Museum in Rome.

¹⁶ Boissier 264 has proposed the order c–d–b: Praetextatus speaks first, Paulina answers, the poem reaches its climax. The order c–b–d has been proposed by J. Cholodniak, *Carmina Sepulchralia Latina* 1897, n. 55. P. Lambrechts, *Op de grens van heidendom en christendom: het grafschrift van Vettius Agorius Praetextatus en Fabia Aconia Paulina, Mededelingen van de Koninklijke Vlaamse Academie voor Wetenschappen, Letteren en schone Kunsten van België, Klasse der Letteren, XVII,3, Brussel 1955, 11* regards the order b–c–d as the most logical, because it forms a dialogue between husband and wife: Paulina poses a question, Praetextatus answers.

¹⁷ Lambrechts 10, 12–14.

Jerome must have known Paulina's words because in his letter to Marcella concerning the death of a Christian woman, Lea, he refers to Praetextatus as *non palmatus consul, sed sacratus*, that is *consul designatus*. Praetextatus is the opposite of Lea, who is enjoying eternal happiness after her death. Like a triumphant general he had entered the Capitoline hill a few days earlier. Now he was dead, but he had not reached the heavenly palace as his miserable widow pretended, but was rather cast in disgusting darkness: *Nunc desolatus est, nudus, non in lacteo caeli palatio, ut uxor conmentitur infelix, sed in sordentibus tenebris continetur*.¹⁸

Jerome wrote his letter soon after Lea's death. It is evident from the context of the letter that Praetextatus had died only a little while before her (*ante paucos dies*). Jerome attacks the idea that Praetextatus had become immortal. It has been proposed that Praetextatus' epitaph must have been erected immediately after his death because Jerome had already seen it. Lambrechts has suggested that the *pauci dies* separated the death of Praetextatus from the moment when Jerome wrote his letter to Marcella. It is quite unlikely that the funerary inscription for Praetextatus could have been engraved in such a short time. It is more probable that Jerome heard the funerary speech delivered at the funeral. The ideas expressed in the *laudatio funebris* were inscribed on the epitaph; the poem in the funerary inscription was only a résumé of the speech.¹⁹

A *laudatio funebris* was an old Roman genre and an essential part of the Roman aristocratic funeral tradition. The *elogium* of an aristocrat had two phases. A *laudatio funebris* was delivered by a member of the family on the rostra on the day of the funeral, and its shortened verse form was inscribed on the tombstone. According to Suetonius, Augustus gave an oration at Drusus' funeral, composed a eulogy both in verse and in prose, and had it engraved on his tombstone.²⁰ The original eulogy could also be inscribed on the monument, as the so-called *laudatio Turiae* (CIL VI 1527) was. In an inscriptional *elogium* the *gens* of the deceased is introduced, as well as a person's political and administrative career, virtues, habits and

¹⁸ Hier. epist. 23,2–3; Lambrechts 9. Praetextatus is not mentioned by name, but there is no doubt about the identity of the consul designate, because Praetextatus was to be consul at the beginning of the next year (Saint Jérôme, Lettres II, ed. J. Labourt, Paris 1951, 8, n. 1).

¹⁹ Lambrechts 9–10, n. 5.

²⁰ Suet. Claud. 1,5.

cultural and intellectual activities. The eulogy ends with some pious wishes or consolation.²¹ The *laudatio funebris* was still in use in the fourth century.²² Lambrechts concludes from Lucianus' narrative on funerals (*De luctu*) that both men and women delivered funerary orations. If this was still the custom in Rome at the end of the fourth century it is not unlikely that Paulina delivered the *laudatio funebris*, and that Jerome reacted to her strong manifestation of pagan immortality.²³

Jerome's hostile words refer to the lines of the funerary poem in which Paulina mourns her husband. She comforts herself, saying that after her own death she will soon be his again:

*His nunc ademptis maesta coniunx maceror,
felix, maritum si superstitem mihi
divi dedissent, sed tamen felix, tua
quia sum fuique postque mortem mox ero.*

Paulina, who is *felix* in the funerary poem is emphatically an *uxor infelix* in Jerome's letter. Paulina's illusions of heavenly palaces mentioned by the church father are reminiscent of the words in the funerary poem: *cura soforum, porta quis caeli patet*.²⁴ Paulina and her deceased husband are also mentioned in Jerome's letter to Paula. Again, the widow has illusions of her husband being transferred to heaven: *Melior diaboli ancilla quam mea est. Illa infidelem maritum translatum fingit in caelum*. Letting Christ himself speak in this passage, Jerome contrasts the faith of the pagan Paulina with the despair of the Christian Paula, whose daughter Blesilla had recently

²¹ W. Kierdorf, *Laudatio funebris*, Meisenheim 1980, 59; Lambrechts 12–14.

²² M. Durry, *Éloge funèbre d'une matrone romaine*, Paris 1950, xxx–xxxii, lxxix. E.g. Ausonius composed a series of eulogies in commemoration of his relatives and colleagues, *Parentalia* and *Commemoratio professorum Burdigalensium*.

²³ Lambrechts 9–10, n. 5. Lucianus (*de luctu* 13) explains the custom in which the mother or the father throws herself or himself upon the dead child and expresses sorrow by speaking loud and clear. I would not interpret this passage as an actual *laudatio funebris* but simply as a lamentation for the dead. Elsewhere Lucianus (*de luctu* 23) mentions that some people deliver funeral orations at the monuments. Neither men nor women are specially indicated in this text.

²⁴ Cf. a similar expression in Mart. Cap. 1,97: *uti postridie omnis ille deorum senatus in palatia, quae in Galaxia Iovis arbitri habitationem potissimam faciunt*.

died.²⁵

Symmachus refers to Praetextatus' death in one of his relations to the imperial court. He praises Praetextatus' virtues and writes that the deceased man considered material pleasures transient: *gaudia corporis ut caduca calcavit*.²⁶ This expression could be an echo of Paulina's words *caduca ac parva* in the funerary poem.

LAUDATIO PAULINAE

The ideal of a Roman wife is presented in Paulina's *laudatio*. Her virtues listed in verse resemble those of earlier centuries. Chastity, purity both in mind and body and marital fidelity are emphasized: *veri et castitatis conscia, ... pudens, fidelis, pura mente et corpore ... fomes pudoris, castitatis vinculum, amorque purus et fides caelo sata. Castitas, pudor and fidelitas* are the qualities of a spouse, especially of a wife, often praised in Latin tomb inscriptions.²⁷

Paulina is presented not only as a perfect wife but also as a devoted mother, a caring sister and a modest daughter:

*pietate matris, coniugali gratia,
nexus sororis, filiae modestia.*

Pietas, devotion to family, husband, children, parents and relatives was a highly esteemed feminine value. A good, dutiful wife was a blessing to her

²⁵ Hier. epist. 39,3. L. Cracco Ruggini, *Il paganesimo romano tra religione e politica* (384–394): per una reinterpretazione del *Carmen contra paganos*, RAL 8, 23,1 (1979) 3–141; *La Donna e il sacro, tra paganesimo e cristianesimo*, Atti del II convegno nazionale di studi su la donna nel mondo antico, Torino 18–19–20 aprile 1988, Torino 1989, 274, n. 55) believes that the anonymous senator and his widow mentioned in the so-called *Carmen contra paganos* (v. 115–122) are Praetextatus and Paulina.

²⁶ Symm. rel. 12,2–4.

²⁷ Cf. CIL VI 11602 = ILS 8402: Anymone was i.a. *pudica* and *casta*. CIL VIII 11294 = ILS 8444: Postumia Matronilla was *pudica, univira* and *unicuba*. ILS 8394: Murdia was exalted for *modestia, probitas, pudicitia* and *fides*. CIL VI 9499 = CLE 959: Aurelia Philematio is praised for being *fido fida viro, casta* and *pudens*. *Castitas, continentia* and *pudicitia* were especial feminine virtues both in pagan and Christian society, but also qualities of a virtuous man. Ruggini, *La Donna*, 266; Galletier 123–124.

household, always busy and useful like Paulina *utilis penatibus*.²⁸

The so-called *Laudatio Turiae* (CIL VI 1527) is similar to our funerary poem. The husband mourns for the deceased wife to whom he has been married for over 40 years. He shows great gratitude to his wife for her loyalty and devotion to him. Her domestic virtues, such as *pudicitia*, *obsequium*, *comitas*, *facilitas*, *religio sine superstitione* are exalted. There is no religious element in this inscription, and the only reference to immortality is the veneration of her memory (*desiderem quod immortalitati ad memoriam consecratam tradidi*). In the end the husband hopes that the *manes* will let her lie in peace (*Te di manes tui ut quietam patiantur atque ita tueantur opto*).²⁹

TOGETHER IN THE AFTERLIFE

CIL VI 1779 mentions that the marriage of Praetextatus and Paulina lasted 40 years: *Hi coniuncti simul vixerunt annos XL*. Only the husband's death has separated the spouses, but after Paulina's death they will be united again. The couple seems to have had at least one child: *subolemque pulchram, si tuae similis, putant*.

The marriage of Praetextatus and Paulina is celebrated as a holy union created by the gods in heaven. The purity of their marital bed is emphasized:

²⁸ Cf. CIL VIII 11294 = ILS 8444: Postumia Matronilla is mentioned as *mater bona, avia piissima, laboriosa, efficax, vigilans, sollicita, totius industriae et fidei matrona*. CIL VI 1527, 31670, 37053: *reverentia in patrem, pietas in sororem, tuorum caritas, familiae pietas, lanificium*; CIL VI 11602 = ILS 8402: *lanifica, pia, domiseda*. ILS 8394: *lanificium, diligentia*. CIL I² 1007 = CIL VI 15346 = CLE 52 = ILS 8403: *domum servavit, lanam fecit*. *Lanificium*, making wool, was a traditional activity frequently mentioned in inscriptions. It is not mentioned in the case of Paulina but it still appears in Ausonius' praise of his mother (Aus. par. 2,4). D. Flach, Die sogenannte *Laudatio Turiae*, Darmstadt 1991, 38; Durry 39; E. Galletier, Étude sur la poésie funéraire d'après les inscriptions, Paris 1922, 224

²⁹ CIL VI 1527 = ILS 8393 is often called *Laudatio Turiae* because it had earlier been attributed to Q. Lucretius Vespillo (cos. 19 BC) in praise of his wife Turia. Durry shows that this identification is neither proven nor probable. Wistrand agrees with him. Durry Ivii–Ixii; E. Wistrand, The so-called *Laudatio Turiae*, Lund 1976, 9; R. Lattimore, Themes in Greek and Latin epitaphs, Illinois 1942, 278, n. 96; Lambrechts 53.

*munus deorum, qui maritalem torum
nectunt amicis et pudicis nexibus.*

The pure love of our couple manifested itself as loyalty produced in heaven (*amor(que) purus et fides caelo sata*). The husband could expect loyalty and honesty from his wife; they were joined in trust as friends: *et quanta amicis iungimur fiducia*. Praetextatus had entrusted the hidden secrets of his heart to Paulina: *arcana mentis cui reclusa credidi*. Peter Brown writes about the need of intimacy in the later Roman empire. Aristocratic men needed confidantes whom they could trust. Aristocratic women like Paulina were left by their husbands to manage their huge estates while their husbands were involved in political and cultural activities.³⁰ Paulina is praised for being a helpful and loving, adoring and devoted wife to her husband – *iuvans maritum, diligens, ornans, colens*. The purpose of the poem is to show that Paulina was tied closely and intensely to her husband in all his activities, religious as well as secular.

At the very end of CIL VI 1779 Paulina assures herself that she will be together with her husband in the afterlife. The idea that marital love lasts even after death is a frequent theme in Latin funerary inscriptions. Some epitaphs say that the married couple has been buried in the same grave, their mutual tomb being now their marital bed: *quos iungit tumulus, iunxerat ut thalamus*.³¹ In a dialogue between Atimetus and the deceased Homonoëa the surviving spouse laments the cruel fate of his wife, while she asks him to stop weeping because tears are useless:

*parce tuam, coniux, fletu quassare iuventam
fataque maerendo sollicitare mea!
nil prosunt lacrimae nec possunt fata moveri.*³²

³⁰ Brown, *The Body and Society*, 15.

³¹ CIL VI 25427 = CLE 1142. Cf. a Christian inscription ICUR II 4209 = CLE 1432: the spouse will be *thalami tumulique comis* after death. Other funerary poems of married couples: CLE 1559; CLE 1027.

³² CIL VI 12652 = CLE 995, from first century Rome. Cf. a dialogue between Aurelius Hermia and Aurelia Philematio from the first century BC: CIL VI 9499 = CLE 959. A dialogue in ancient Greek and Roman funerary poems is usually presented between a dead person and a surviving one. In our poem we have a rare dialogue between the two dead. Lambrechts 14.

Moving farewell words in tomb inscriptions and farewell scenes on reliefs do not imply any certainty or belief in immortality; on the contrary, pagan epitaphs contain usually bitter lamentations or gloomy scepticism.³³ The difference between the resignation in earlier Latin inscriptions and the happy longing for death in CIL VI 1779 is striking. We find the same joyous tone in Christian authors, e.g. in Jerome's writings.³⁴

The possibility of immortality in an afterlife is frequently denied in Latin epitaphs, often with the formula *non fui, fui, non sum, non curo*, but many funeral inscriptions clearly react against this Epicurean nihilism and play on the same words. Paulina's words *tua quia sum fuique postque mortem ero* could be interpreted as a manifestation of her belief in life after death, directed against this scepticism. Though Paulina mourns her separation from her husband she is optimistic; the word *maceror* is twice followed by *felix*.³⁵

INITIATION INTO THE MYSTERIES

Paulina had received her conviction of immortality from mystery cults, having taken part in Praetextatus' religious activities. In the funerary poem she tells how her husband had guided her to all the mysteries and thus freed her from death:

*tu me, marite, disciplinarum bono
puram ac pudicam sorte mortis eximens
in templa ducis ac famulam divis dicas;
te teste cunctis imbuor mysteriis.*

Praetextatus had prepared his wife for sacred rites:

*tu Dindymenes Atteosq(ue) antistitem
teletis honoras taureis consors pius;*

³³ Lattimore 249; Lambrechts 51, 53.

³⁴ E.g. Hier. ep. 23; ep. 39.

³⁵ E.g. CIL VI 13528 = CLE 1559: *Quod fueram non sum, sed rursus ero quod modo non sum*. Tertullian has the same play on words, apol. 48,6: *Qui non eras, factus es, cum iterum non eris, fies*. Lambrechts 50–52.

*Hecates ministram trina secreta edoces
Cererisque Graiae tu sacris dignam paras.*

CIL VI 1779 and CIL VI 1780 show that Paulina was initiated into the Eleusinian mysteries (*apud Eleusinam*), and the Lernean mysteries (*apud Laernam*) of Dionysus and Demeter, and into the cults of Hecate (*sacrata apud Eginam Hecatae; hierophantria*), Magna Mater (*tauroboliata*) and Isis (*isiaca*).

The words *te teste cunctis imbuor mysteriis* indicate that Praetextatus was a witness for Paulina before the gods. He had led her into their temples and dedicated her to the gods as their servant. He had taught her the secrets of the cults and prepared her to be worthy of divine rites (l. 24, 28–29). Praetextatus not only testified to her readiness and suitability for initiation, but was also the witness of the gods before Paulina. He witnessed that the gods had accepted her and the right moment had come.³⁶

The same aspect of witnessing is found in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, where Lucius urgently desires to be initiated into the mysteries of Isis. The request is refused because Lucius has not yet been "invited". The goddess will let her priest know when the time has come to initiate Lucius into her mysteries. The priest, as a double *testis*, speaks for Lucius in front of Isis.³⁷

A woman initiated by her husband also appears in an epitaph on a sarcophagus from Ravenna. C. Sosius Iulianus and his wife Tetratia Isias have a conversation for the last time. The wife thanks her husband for having initiated her into the mysteries and taught her to say the ritual words (ᾠοῖδιμα γρόμματα) to the goddess in the face of death. Like Paulina (l. 23), she has learned sacred secrets from her husband that save her from death. These passwords are ritual formulae that help the deceased on his way to the afterlife. The reliefs and signs on the sarcophagus belong to the cult of Isis. In the initiation scene the husband ritually opens the wife's eyes with balsam; they hold a book together in their hands.³⁸

³⁶ A.J. Festugière, *Initiée par l'époux*, MMAI 53 (1963) 136–138.

³⁷ *Apul. met.* 11,21: *Nec minus in dies mihi magis magisque accipiendorum sacrorum cupido gliscebatur, summisque precibus, primum sacerdotem saepissime conveneram petens ut me noctis sacratae tandem arcanis initiaret ... Nam et diem quo quisque possit initiari deae nutu demonstrari, et sacerdotem qui sacra debeat ministrare eiusdem providentia deligi ...*

³⁸ *Sylloge inscriptionum religionis Isiacae et Sarapiae*, coll. L. Vidman, Berlin 1969, n. 586. The inscription from the second century is written in Greek but in Latin letters. I

In his *Advice on Marriage* Plutarch had written that husbands should make their wives conform to their choice of gods as well as of friends. It was the duty of a good wife to worship only the gods of her husband and not to perform any foreign rites and superstitions.³⁹ He warned that if women were left to themselves they conceived strange ideas and low emotions; that is why the husband ought to be the philosophical mentor and the moral guide of his wife. As a result of his quiet authority the husband could expect appreciation and gratitude from his wife.⁴⁰ Paulina's words show appropriate respect for her husband:

*patriam, senatum coniugemq(ue) inluminas
probitate mentis, moribus, studiis simul,
virtutis apicem quis supremum nactus es.*

Because of her husband she is known and blessed throughout the world:

*Te propter omnis me beatam, me piam
celebrant, quod ipse me bonam, disseminas
totum per orbem: ignota noscor omnibus.*

Vidman refers to several inscriptions from the third and fourth centuries in which husbands initiate their wives into mystery cults. However, Brown regards the marriage of Praetextatus and Paulina, where Praetextatus took in hand the religious education of his wife, as an exception in the fourth century. Religious differences within an aristocratic family usually seem to have been either tolerated or ignored. In mixed

have followed the interpretation of the last two lines proposed by Festugière and accepted by Vidman. Vidman, *Sylloge*, 268; R. Egger was the first to understand the mystic meaning of the reliefs. Festugière 137–144; Egger, *Zwei oberitalienische Mystensarkophage*, *MDAI(R)* 4 (1951) 37, 51–53, 57–58; Vidman, *Isis und Sarapis bei den Griechen und Römern*, Berlin 1970, 130–137.

³⁹ Plut. *praec. con.* 19,140D: Ἰδίους οὐ δεῖ φίλους κτᾶσθαι τὴν γυναῖκα, κοινοῖς δὲ χρῆσθαι τοῖς τοῦ ἀνδρός. Οἱ δὲ θεοὶ φίλοι πρῶτοι καὶ μέγιστοι. Διὸ καὶ θεοὺς οὐς ὁ ἀνὴρ νομίζει σέβεσθαι τῇ γαμετῇ καὶ γινώσκειν μόνους προσήκει... Ruggini, *La donna*, 263, presumes that this passage is a warning of the dangers of Christianity. Plutarch composed his *Advice on Marriage* to a Greek couple, Pollianus and Eurydice ca. 100 AD.

⁴⁰ Plut. *praec. con.* 48,145E. Brown, *The Body and Society*, 13.

marriages between pagans and Christians particularly, the husband had to accept the religious conviction of his Christian wife. Plutarch's advice was not generally followed by the Roman aristocracy in the fourth century.⁴¹

THE RHETORIC OF CIL VI 1779

CIL VI 1779 presents the marriage of Praetextatus and Paulina as filled with harmony; for example, in the expression *iugi fideli simplici concordia*.. Kate Cooper calls this the rhetoric of conjugal unity. Aristocratic families publicized marital concord in order to assert the moral character of the husband.⁴² A man who was able to live in harmony with his legitimate wife could be supposed to harmonize polis, agora and friends.⁴³ The use of representations of conjugal relationships was a code for dealing with the problem of self-control.

The contradiction between Paulina's traditional female virtues described in the funerary laudation and her obviously active role in Late Roman society is striking. The rhetoric of conjugal unity explains why Paulina was depicted as an example of female modesty and piety. Here she was intended to represent her husband; her virtues carried implicit meanings about Praetextatus. She may have been a poetess and influential person in the private and religious spheres, but in public she had to be defined in relation to her husband.

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⁴¹ Vidman, *Isis und Sarapis*, 136–138; Brown, *Aspects* 6; M.R. Salzman, *Aristocratic women: conductors of Christianity in the fourth century*, *Helios* 16 (1989) 214. Brown has stated that the situation was even the reverse: aristocratic wives and mothers gradually influenced their husbands and children, converting them to Christianity. Salzman challenges this view, stating that the role of aristocratic women in the Christianization of the Roman aristocracy after Constantine has been greatly overemphasized.

⁴² K. Cooper, *Insinuations of Womanly Influence: An Aspect of the Christianization of the Roman Aristocracy*, *JRS* 82 (1992) 151. Cooper's article discusses the classical rhetoric of womanly influence in a man's private life in both a negative (a woman as a seductress) and a positive version (female family members persuade a man to hear the voice of reason). A wife was acting either on behalf of the common good or as a lurid temptress. The Roman male discourse about female power served as a rhetorical strategy within the competition for power among males themselves. Cooper 151–156, 163.

⁴³ *Plut. praec. con.* 43,144C; Brown, *The Body and Society*, 14; Cooper 153.