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THE REPRESENTATION OF YOUNG MALES IN 'FAYUM PORTRAITS'*

By DOMINIC MONTSERRAT

This article discusses the symbolism used on the mummy portraits of adolescent boys from Roman Egypt. The social implications of these symbols and representational modes are examined, with particular reference to their links with contemporary constructs of puberty, male sexuality and rebirth.

'PORTRAITS reflect social realities. Their imagery combines the conventions of behaviour and appearance appropriate to the members of a society at a particular time, as defined by categories of age, gender...social and civic status and class. The synthetic study of portraiture requires some sensitivity to the social implications of its representational modes, to the documentary value of art works as aspects of social history, and to the subtle interaction between social and artistic conventions.'¹

Richard Brilliant was talking about portraiture in general, but here I shall examine only one category within a well-defined corpus of portraits: that of the one thousand or so funerary images painted at different places all over Egypt between the early first and the fourth centuries A.D., conventionally (and rather misleadingly) referred to as 'Fayum portraits' or 'mummy portraits'. Recent scholarship on these paintings typically pays little attention to their social context or their status as products of the multi-cultural society of imperial Egypt: the debate has tended either to centre on art historical questions, such as dating and the possibility of isolating specific artists and schools, or on the function of the portraits within contemporary cultic and religious practice. For example, Klaus Parlasca's magisterial works² on the portraits discuss them without any reference to contemporary historical sources from Egypt, and a recent German dissertation on the subject,³ which proposes an extensive redating based on the hair-styles, says comparatively little about the social aspects of the paintings, in spite of the analysis of their 'kulturelle Bedeutung' implicit in the thesis title. Instead of looking at them *in vacuo*, an appreciation of the broader context in which the 'Fayum portraits' were created might help to answer some of the unresolved questions about their usage and iconography. Here I want to examine what one particular type of portrait, that of the adolescent male, might have to tell us about social constructs of puberty and masculinity in Roman Egypt, and what the appearance of such

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¹ R. Brilliant, *Portraiture* (Harvard, 1991), 11.

² K. Parlasca, *Mumienporträts und verwandte Denkmäler* (Wiesbaden, 1966), henceforward Parlasca (1966), and the three volumes of *Repertorio d'arte dell'Egitto greco-romano, Serie B*, 1: *Ritratti di mummie* (Palermo, 1969–80, with a fourth volume in press), henceforward Parlasca I–III.

³ B. E. Müller (now Borg), *Mumienporträts: Ihre Datierung und kulturelle Bedeutung im kaiserzeitlichen Ägypten* (PhD thesis, Göttingen, 1990).

iconography on a funerary portrait might imply. This is intended as a sort of test case for Brilliant's reflected 'social realities' and 'social implications of...representational modes' which might be applied usefully to other portrait types within the genre. What 'social realities,' if any, do these paintings actually reflect?

To represent their subjects, the artists of the 'Fayum portraits' used a narrow repertory of iconography and forms, within which there was comparatively little variation of type: child with youth-lock, young bejewelled woman, soldier with studded buckler, etc. These painters had an extremely limited amount of space to convey much important information about their subjects—only the extent of the head and shoulders, on a piece of wood roughly 15 × 30 cm. The painters' task was not merely to create a recognisable likeness of a person, but also to create a likeness that would define the position of the deceased within the familial ancestor-cult and ensure his vitality for rebirth and life in the next world. It seems likely that in the Roman period mummies could be kept on display for some time after death,⁴ and were visited on certain days as part of the cult of the dead.⁵ The departed continued to play a part in society: the Egyptians did not shut out their dead from the society of the living by rituals of exclusion, and so funerary portraits would need to express, among other things, the social role played by the deceased person in his lifetime. Hence it would have been necessary for the portraits to display an array of visual symbols immediately comprehensible to somebody looking at the painting on the mummy (perhaps several generations after death, when the deceased person had been forgotten as an individual) as it was stored upright in a funerary chapel. The decoration and symbolism employed in the chapel and on the mummy itself, of which the portrait likeness was only one element, worked together to provide the most appropriate and effective setting for the rebirth of their owner into the next world. Because 'the social body constrains the way the physical body is perceived',⁶ these symbols would primarily need to express sex, social status and age category. The latter was particularly important for males who had died at liminal stages in their lives: the pre-adolescent, 'untimely dead' (*ἄωρος*), and the adolescent, dead at the peak of his physical and sexual vigour 'just with his first beard, about to summon Love to his nuptial chamber' (*ἄρτι γενειάσκων... ἄρτι δ' ἔρωτας ἐς θαλάμους καλέων*).⁷

Therefore it is unsurprising that one of the most clearly differentiated portrait types is that of the adolescent⁸ male, post-pubertal and with a slight downy moustache, sometimes little more than 'peach fuzz',⁹ sometimes rather fuller (pl. XXII, 1 = Parlasca 1, no. 53).

⁴ Herodotus (II.86.7) and Polybius (I 93.10) both refer to bodies being stored upright in a special *οἶκημα*, perhaps a room in a funerary chapel. Other writers mention the Egyptian custom of keeping their dead alongside them: see, for instance, Xenophon of Ephesus, *Ephesiaca* V.1.9; Athanasius, *Vita Antonii* 24 (= *Patrologia Graeca* XXVI 968–9); Plutarch, *Moralia* 159b. Papyri, such as P. Fouad I 75 and P. Princ. III 166, also suggest that bodies were kept around to be viewed by the family. The archaeological data for the practice given by W. M. F. Petrie, *Hawara, Biahmu and Arsinoe* (London, 1889), 15 and idem, *Roman Portraits and Memphis* (iv) (London, 1911), 6–8 are not to be discounted.

⁵ See the bibliography given by D. Montserrat, *JEA* 78 (1992), 304 nn. 14–17.

⁶ M. Douglas, *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology* (London, 1973), 93.

⁷ *Anth. Pal.* VIII 122, 3–4.

⁸ In this article, the terms 'adolescence' and 'adolescent' are used purely in a physical sense to express bodily maturation, without any psychological implications. The most recent discussion of adolescence and its social meaning in the ancient world is by M. Kleijwegt, *Ancient Youth: The Ambiguity of Youth and the Absence of Adolescence in Graeco-Roman Society* (Amsterdam, 1991), esp. 51–73.

⁹ For the basic type, see Parlasca 1, nos. 51–4, 56, 59, 154, 158–63, 191. I am including the following portraits as a sub-corpus of portraits of adolescent boys: Parlasca 1, nos. 41, 50, 51, 53–7, 59, 64, 154–5,

About fifty such portraits in encaustic and tempera are known, though some damaged or heavily-restored paintings may also belong to the corpus. The subjects are usually clothed in plain white tunics (pl. XXII, 2 = Parlasca I, no. 59),¹⁰ but are sometimes shown bare-shouldered, perhaps implying total nudity (pl. XXII, 3 = Parlasca I, no. 163).¹¹ On their heads, they often wear leafy garlands, some of which are painted as part of the original portrait, others stencilled on in gold leaf after painting (pl. XXII, 4 = Parlasca I, no. 54).¹² These images constitute a group of portraits quite distinct from those showing males in the two age categories on either side of puberty: those which depict much younger, pre-adolescent boys (sometimes difficult to differentiate from females) wearing the lock of youth and other symbols of childhood,¹³ and those of older, fully adult males in their twenties who are frequently bearded. The ages of these juvenile, post-pubertal males seem to range from about fourteen to the very early twenties, with a slight predominance towards the upper age limit, and this has been confirmed by X-ray examination carried out on two mummies from Hawara equipped with portraits of moustached, garlanded young men. The body of a man now in the Manchester Museum (Inv. No. 1768 = Parlasca I, no. 160) was estimated to be aged about twenty,¹⁴ and Artemidorus, whose famous mummy is in the British Museum (EA 21810 = Parlasca I, no. 162) died when he was between nineteen and twenty-one.¹⁵ Not only on the mummy portraits, but also in the funerary epigrams from Roman Egypt composed to commemorate young males, is the deceased's state of hirsuteness used to express the stage in life he had reached. For example, the second century inscription of Sarapion¹⁶ says 'death's destructive destiny led the young Sarapion down to Hades, when he had just completed twenty-two years and was bearded for the first time, he who was charming and gentle to all men'. Sarapion's epitaph is particularly interesting, because his age is specified in relation to the extent of his facial hair. The term translated as 'bearded for the first time' (*ἀρτιγένειον*) certainly refers to a full beard rather than a small incipient moustache on the upper lip. If this inscription is to be taken literally, we may infer that a full beard was the sort of facial hair that a twenty-two-year-old man in Roman Egypt would have been expected to have. It is possible, therefore, that the portraits of young moustached men are idealisations of individuals who died at a specific time in their lives, when they were members of an important, socially-recognised age category.

In Roman Egypt, as in many cultures which practise infanticide, the mere fact of having being born into the society was not an immediate assurance of social membership of it; an individual had to be transferred from his unsocialised 'natural' state to culture by

157-8, 160-3, 166, 168, 172, 190; Parlasca II, nos. 287-8, 290-6, 324 (a 'shroud'), 352, 356, 470, 491, 495-6; Parlasca III, nos. 509, 540-3, 611-12.

¹⁰ E.g. Parlasca I, no. 162; Parlasca II, nos. 470, 491, 495-6; Parlasca III, nos. 540-3.

¹¹ E.g. Parlasca I, nos. 51, 56, 163.

¹² E.g. Parlasca I, nos. 154-5, 162.

¹³ E.g. Parlasca II, nos. 473-5; Parlasca III, nos. 621, 654-6, 658-65, 669-72.

¹⁴ A. R. David (ed.), *The Manchester Museum Mummy Project* (Manchester, 1980), 32.

¹⁵ W. R. Dawson and P. H. K. Gray, *Catalogue of Egyptian Antiquities in the British Museum*, I: *Mummies and Human Remains* (London, 1968), 35. Of course, there is sometimes very little correlation between the portrait and the mummy inside the wrappings: see D. L. Thompson, *Mummy Portraits in the J. Paul Getty Museum* (Malibu, 1982), 14-15 and n. 16.

¹⁶ Published in *Archiv für Papyrusforschung* 5 (1913), 166: τὸν δύο πληρώσαντα καὶ εἰκοσι πρόσθ' ἐνιαυτοὺς Σαραπίωνα νέον τε καὶ ἀρτιγένειον ἔοντα μοῖρ' ὁλοῇ θανάτοιο κατήγαγεν εἰς Αἴδαο μειλίχεον πάντ[εσσ]ι καὶ ἥπιον ἀνθρώποισι.

ceremonies of social inclusion. These typically include rituals of initiation at puberty, which can involve 'cultural work upon the body, and their effect is to transform the natural body into a social entity with rights and status.'¹⁷ For the teenaged sons of the Hellenised élite in provincial Egypt, these rituals revolved around a public status declaration, in effect an affirmation of their membership of the paternal kin-group. This public status declaration or 'scrutiny' (ἐπίκρισις or εἵσκρισις) confirmed the boy's lineage and his inclusion in one of several privileged groups eligible for fiscal and other privileges: the 'metropolitan twelve drachma class' (μητροπολίται δωδεκάδραχμοι), 'the gymnasium members' (οἱ ἀπὸ τοῦ γυμνασίου), or the ephebate (ἐφηβεία). Written declarations of ἐπίκρισις or εἵσκρισις were usually made in the year when the declarant reached the age of thirteen or fourteen, thus becoming liable to pay the full rate of capitation tax. They state that the boy 'has entered into the class of thirteen (or fourteen)-year-olds' (προσβάντος εἰς τρισκαιδεκαετείς/τεσσαρεσκαιδεκαετείς) in a given year.¹⁸ I have argued elsewhere¹⁹ that these status declarations signify more than a mere bureaucratic formality to gain tax relief, and that they were one component of an entire *rite de passage* system whose other elements could include 'cultural work upon the body' in the form of shearing off hair to mark transition, and also celebratory garlanding and banqueting. The *epicrisis* festivities could take place in important public buildings, such as the Capitolium, the traditional scene of Roman *rites de passage*.²⁰ Formal enumeration of the boy's ancestry may also have played a part. Some *epicrisis* declarations, such as P. Oxy. XVIII 2186, list forbears going back as far as seven generations, and these lists may well have been read out aloud at the time the document was drawn up or submitted. Reading out aloud would have served to underscore the boy's own name, (which characteristically followed that of a grandfather),²¹ and thus his standing and affiliation in the paternal kin-group, 'since having a name is an institutional mark of social membership.'²²

The exact function and organisation in Roman Egypt of the other élite group for adolescents, the ephebate, is still unclear, as is its relationship to the Athenian body of youths with the same name,²³ and to the other selected social groups. As P. Oxy. IV 705 tells us, some boys of the gymnasial class could be enrolled into it after a further examination of suitability. The length of a boy's ephebic service is uncertain, but was

¹⁷ B. S. Turner, *The Body and Society* (Oxford, 1984), 204.

¹⁸ The formulae vary, depending on the city where the declaration was made. For the status declaration in general, see C. A. Nelson, *Status Declarations in Roman Egypt* (Amsterdam, 1979); for the various documentary formulae, *ibid.* 13–22.

¹⁹ D. Montserrat, *BASP* 28 (1991), 45–7 and 49.

²⁰ Servius, commenting on Vergil *Eccl.* IV.49, suggests that *ad Capitolium ire* was equivalent in meaning to donning the *toga virilis* and relinquishing the *bulla*, that is, giving up the attributes of childhood at a formal induction. In an unpublished third-century dinner invitation from Oxyrhynchus, forthcoming in a volume of P. Oxy., the celebratory banquet following a boy's *epicrisis* is to be held in the Capitolium. P. Oxy. XVII 2147, an invitation to a feast celebrating the garlanding (στεψις) of a son in the gymnasium at Oxyrhynchus, may be connected with a *rite de passage* such as an *epicrisis*, though A. K. Bowman has suggested (P. Oxy. XLIV 3202 introd.) that the coronation here marks a gymnasiarch's accession to office.

²¹ For this practice, see D. Hobson, *BASP* 26 (1989), 167.

²² Turner, *op. cit.* 204–5.

²³ For the significance of entry into the Athenian ephebate as a *rite de passage*, see S. G. Cole, *ZPE* 55 (1985), 233–6. Nelson, *op. cit.* 47–59, analyses the documentary evidence for the enrolment of youths on the γραφή ἐφήβων. On the basis of epigraphic evidence from Greece, Kleijwegt, *op. cit.* 101, surmises that 'during the Hellenistic-Roman period the ephebeia was an aristocratic institution deploying activities which introduced the ephebes into the world of citizens (= adults)', which is what seems to have been the case in Roman Egypt.

probably about two years, and the age at which he was inducted apparently varied. Most of the boys seem to have been enrolled when they were about fourteen, the age that traditionally demarcated the onset of male puberty in antiquity,²⁴ though P. Tebt. II 316 ii, 17-18 suggests that boys could be registered as ephebes when they were as young as seven or even three years old. This papyrus may suggest that membership of the ephebate was an honorific rank, and required little active participation; alternatively, registering a boy as an ephebe at the age of three may have had the same sort of function as putting down an infant boy for admission to a public school in contemporary England. We do know that at Oxyrhynchus the members of the ephebate engaged in gymnastic or athletic contests established by Septimius Severus and Caracalla,²⁵ which recall the kind of military education received by the boys in the Attic ephebate. Whatever the duties of the ephebes may have been after their induction, the act of their joining must have had a similar significance to the official reception of boys into the metropolitan twelve-drachma and gymnasial classes. Both marked a specific stage in the maturation process of individual boys and prepared the participants for gender-specific roles and tasks of importance to their own status and to the civic life of their metropolis. Both centred around a formal public declaration of lineage as an affirmation of inclusion, because of the responsibilities and privileges carried by the adult male role. Its importance is demonstrated by the fact that even after their ephebic service had finished, young men who had been members still identified themselves in terms of their former status (P. Tebt. II 316 ii, 1-9). If all these are among the 'social realities' of reaching manhood in Roman Egypt, how are such categories of age and civic status reflected in the portraits that were painted of this élite group?

Moustaches

The mummy portraits of young males draw attention to the most obvious external sign of maturation in males—the growth of facial hair. In Graeco-Roman antiquity, the first growth of hair on the chin and upper lip was taken as an indication of incipient puberty: the observation of Shakespeare's Beatrice, 'he that hath a beard is more than a youth, and he that hath no beard is less than a man'²⁶ would have been entirely comprehensible. A youth's slight moustache was a strong erotic focus for both male and female *inamorati* in Greek love poetry and Alexandrian epigram, and praise of youths with 'their first down more golden than cassidony' (Theocritus II.78) was a well-used literary topos.²⁷ Numerous epigrams from the *Anthologia Palatina* celebrate the dedication of offerings of hair at puberty. For example, in *Anth. Pal.* IV 156 a boy named Charixenus offers his first shaven stubble to the nymphs of Amaranthus, and is compared to 'a foal who has shed his first downy coat' (ὥς ἵππος χνοῦν ἀποσεισάμενος). Other Greek epigrams express the hope that by offering up their first beards, the donors will escape going grey, and thus retain a youthful, virile appearance into maturity.²⁸ For the writers of homosexual love epigrams in the *Anthologia Palatina*, the growth of the first beard and other body hair was

²⁴ See E. Eyben, *Latomus* 31 (1972), 683 and 695-7, with references.

²⁵ See P. Oxy. IV 705, 45-21 and P. Oxy. IX 1202, 5-7.

²⁶ *Much Ado About Nothing*, II, i.

²⁷ See the discussion and references in F. Buffière, *La pédérastie dans la Grèce antique* (Paris, 1980), 609-16, esp. nn. 13-19.

²⁸ *Anth. Pal.* VI 198 and 242.

a standard topos, signifying the end of the boy's availability for non-reproductive sex and his entry into the world of reproductive heterosexual relations.²⁹

Roman perceptions of adolescent facial hair seem to have been rather different, however: its appearance still signified adulthood, but a stronger emphasis was placed on its removal (only by shaving, not by depilatories, which were considered effeminate). The *depositio barbae* sometimes formed part of a maturation ceremony associated with the formal assumption of the *toga virilis*, but the emperors who formally shaved off their first beards and made dedications of them seem to have been well past the age of puberty. Augustus was aged 23 (Cassius Dio 48, 34.3), and Nero was 21 when the occasion of his first shave was marked by an athletic competition watched by the Vestal Virgins, his shorn hair being placed 'in a gold box studded with pearls, dedicated to the Capitoline Jove' (Suetonius, *Nero* 12.4). Caligula, however, deposited his first beard at nineteen (Suetonius, *Caligula* 10) and Augustus' nephew Marcellus 'first shaved his golden beard, having returned from the western war ... his country's wish was to send him forth as a boy and take him back as a man.'³⁰ Marcellus was then about sixteen and had just completed a term as a military tribune in Spain: the association of first military service with manhood and shaving to mark transition is interesting.³¹ In portrait busts of the early third century AD, the youthful emperors Elagabalus and Alexander Severus both appear with wispy moustaches and/or immature beards.³² Both acceded when they were about fourteen years old, Elagabalus in 218 and Alexander in 222. It is interesting that Elagabalus is shown moustached, since the ancient sources place much emphasis on this hairlessness to stress his androgyny.³³ Exactly the same kind of moustaches that appear on the statues of these two young emperors appear in contemporary funerary portraits from Egypt.

Conversely, there do not seem to be any purely Egyptian attestations of the wearing of moustaches by adolescents, which is unsurprising given the traditional Egyptian emphasis on hairlessness as a manifestation of physical and spiritual cleanliness. Furthermore, it would have been very difficult to indicate precise age categories within the representational canons of dynastic Egyptian art. The depiction of adolescent facial hair, therefore, suggests that we are dealing with a milieu in which the dominant cultural influence is Greek rather than Roman. This does not mean, however, that hair lacked symbolic potency in Pharaonic Egypt, or that rituals surrounding its shearing and preservation were Hellenistic innovations. At least as early as the New Kingdom, hair appears in contexts strongly suggestive of life-crisis rites.³⁴ The showing of slight facial hair on the portrait of a young man, therefore, had a far wider symbolic value than might at first appear. It indicated that the deceased had died at a stage in his life when he was at his

²⁹ E.g. *Anth. Pal.* XII, 10, 12, 24-7, 30, 31, 35, 36, 191, 195, 220, 229; see also *Anth. Pal.* VIII 122, 3-4.

³⁰ *Anth. Pal.* VI 161: see also R. Syme, *The Augustan Aristocracy* (Oxford, 1986), 348.

³¹ The relationship between maturation and military service in the Roman empire is discussed by T. Wiedemann, *Adults and Children in the Roman Empire* (London, 1989), 113-18.

³² See, for example, the head of Alexander Severus in the Cairo Museum (JE 27480: pl. 220 in Z. Kiss, *Études sur le portrait impérial romain en Égypte* (Warsaw, 1984)) and the heads of Elagabalus and Alexander in the Museo Capitolino, Rome (illustrated respectively in S. Wood, *Roman Portrait Sculpture 217-260* (Leiden, 1986), pl. xi and in W. Schindler, *Römische Kaiser* (Vienna, 1986), pl. 70.

³³ See SHA, *Antoninus Elagabalus* V.5; Dio LXXX 14.2; Herodian V6.10.

³⁴ The range of symbolic uses to which hair could be put in the New Kingdom is well illustrated by finds from the tomb of Tutankhamun: see my article on the treatment of human hair in the tomb of Tutankhamun (*GM*, forthcoming).

optimum sexual vitality and attractiveness, at least according to Hellenistic perceptions. It also made a statement about the social standing of the dead man as a Graeco-Egyptian who followed some Greek traditions associated with hair and puberty. Showing the moustache would have been one of the visual elements which helped to both idealise and eroticise the dead man so that he could be reborn in a perfect and vital form, in just the same way that Pharaonic tomb paintings can show a quintessential image or *simulacrum* of the deceased surrounded by erotic references.³⁵

A variant set of symbols indicative of the connection between male physical vitality and bodily resurrection is found on the so-called 'tondo of the two brothers', found at Antinoöpolis and now in Cairo (pl. XXIII, 1 = Parlasca 1, no. 166). The two men, both lightly moustached, ungarlanded and fully clothed, are flanked by golden figures of two syncretistic gods both associated with death and renewal: Hermanubis on the viewer's right and Osirantinous on the left. Osirantinous is crowned and naked: as Hugo Meyer has suggested, his nudity is neither incidental nor erotic, but characteristic of the ephēbe that he had been in life, and perhaps has further associations of the renaissance of Hellenism and Hellenic culture in Egypt under Hadrian.³⁶ At the edge of the panel, by the pedestal of the Osirantinous statue, is the date 15 Pachon (early May). The younger-looking man on the viewer's left wears a white tunic, its right shoulder ornamented with a *gammadion* or swastika-like symbol composed of four Γ-shaped elements. This was later appropriated as a symbol of the trinity, the resurrection and of Christ himself,³⁷ but in pre-Christianity it also had phallic connotations,³⁸ making it an appropriate symbol for a context associated with death and rebirth. All in all, the Antinoöpolis tondo is an anomaly within the corpus of funerary portraits, and one wonders whether its unique format and array of symbols might commemorate something unusual about the two deceased men, such as the circumstances of death.³⁹

Naked torsos and garlands

There have been several interpretations of the naked torsos and garlands sported by certain male portrait subjects, whose ages vary. There are examples of fully-bearded mature males depicted with bare chests, such as the man in the Petrie Museum (UC 19610 = Parlasca 1, no. 211) and the complete mummy in Berlin (Äg. Inv.

³⁵ For a good summary of the function of erotic references and symbolism in Pharaonic tomb painting, see G. Robins, *DE* 11 (1988), 61–64.

³⁶ H. Meyer, *Antinoos: Die archäologischen Denkmäler unter Einbeziehung des numismatischen und epigraphischen Materials sowie der literarischen Nachrichten* (Munich, 1991), 255–8.

³⁷ On the *gammadion* in the portraits, see Müller, op. cit. 171–2, who concludes that it is merely an ornament; for its significance in Christian iconography, see A. Quacquarelli, *Vetera Christianorum* 18 (1981), 5–32 and 21 (1984), 5–25.

³⁸ M. Thorn, *Taboo No More: The Phallus in Fact, Fantasy and Fiction* (New York, 1990), 94.

³⁹ In the ancient world, the tondo seems to have been the format *par excellence* for portraits of the living, and the Antinoöpolis tondo probably did not start out as a funerary portrait as such, although it is supposed to have been found in a tomb and the gods depicted on it certainly suggest that its subjects are dead. One might speculate that Osirantinous appears on it not as a god of the dead or as a *deus loci*, but as tutelary deity of the 'blessed drowned'. The date on the portrait, 15 Pachon, does not correspond with any known Antinous festival, so it may refer to a date of death, as on a mummy label. Maybe both men were drowned on 15 Pachon and the portraits painted as a substitute for their bodies, which may never have been recovered. The tondo may then have been intended to hang in a house or a shrine to the family cult. The role of Antinous in the Egyptian cult of the drowned is interestingly discussed by J. Lindsay, *Men and Gods on the Roman Nile* (New York, 1968), 297–309.

11673 = Parlasca I, no. 204), but these men are never shown wreathed. Juxtaposed with nudity, the garland, with all its other connotations of athleticism and youthful vitality, would be inappropriate for an adult man. In her thesis,⁴⁰ Lorelei Corcoran argued convincingly that the nudity apparently indicated by the bare chest was consistent with the 'heroisation' of the deceased: in other words, the giving of divine/heroic attributes to the dead man in order to expedite the process of his rebirth. Parlasca had rejected the possibility that the nudity of males in this group of portraits could be an attempt at heroic idealisation,⁴¹ because he believed that the portraits were painted from life, which would preclude a posthumous deification. Corcoran was attempting to prove that the portraits had a commemorative cultic function, 'perhaps the initiation of the living individual into the [Isiac] cult and his resultant assimilation to the sun-god', and suggested that male nudity was 'an allusion to the rebirth which the individuals had experienced as a result of initiation into the Isiac cult.'⁴² I would suggest a different interpretation: that garlands in conjunction with nakedness could be another reference linking the deceased with the ephebate. In Greek literature of the Roman period garlands, along with the chlamys and petasus, are the ephebic symbols *par excellence*. Heliodorus, for instance, (*Aethiopica* 1.10) refers to them being worn by processions of ephebes, and both Plutarch (*Pelopidas* 33.5.2) and Polybius (*Hist.* 30.25.12) mention golden garlands as being part of ritual ephebic dress. Young garlanded ephebes were also the subjects of erotic elegies (e.g. *Anacreontea* 1.42, 3-5, *Ath. Pal.* XII 8). One is immediately reminded of the gilded wreaths added to some of the mummy portraits of young men (see pl. XXII, 1, 4). As part of her theory that 'the iconographic elements that decorate these mummies can be "read" in a logical and coherent sequence from bottom to top', Corcoran saw the garlands as having a closer connection with the crown of justification, 'the crowning touch to the visual statement that the deceased has become transformed and justified.'⁴³ I believe that this is too narrow an interpretation. Corcoran is undoubtedly right to say that 'the iconographic scheme of portrait mummies embodies traditional pharaonic concepts about the afterlife',⁴⁴ but what of the iconography of the portraits themselves? They incorporate elements alien to Pharaonic representational concepts, such as vestigial moustaches. Her hypothesis does not allow for the polyvalency of symbolism: a wreath on the head of a deceased boy in a portrait could quite conceivably have represented an ephebic garland, the Egyptian 'crown of justification', or the wreath of a symposiast enjoying his funerary repast all at the same time. Similarly, gold leafy garlands appear on other types of mummy portrait, including those of older, fully-mature men and young females, where they must have had different connotations. The iconographic scheme of the mummy has to be considered as an entity, not as disparate elements.

Comparable ideas of divinisation and heroisation are found on the carved niche decorations of tombs from Oxyrhynchus and Heracleopolis Magna, where male divinities appear representing the idealised characteristics of the male tomb owner. Men were not defined by marital status, as was the case with women, but by notions of manliness

⁴⁰ Lorelei H. Corcoran, *Portrait Mummies from Roman Egypt* (PhD thesis, Chicago, 1988), 165-6.

⁴¹ Parlasca (1966), 41.

⁴² Corcoran op. cit. 175 and 165-6.

⁴³ L. H. Corcoran, 'A Cult Function for the so-called Faiyum Mummy Portraits?', in J. H. Johnson (ed.), *Life in a Multi-Cultural Society: Egypt from Cambyes to Constantine and Beyond* (Chicago, 1992), 58.

⁴⁴ Corcoran, *ibid.*

(*εὐανδρία*), and thus Apollo, Dionysus and Heracles, the gods associated with the gymnasium, are the only ones who appear.⁴⁵ This idea finds some confirmation in contemporary Egyptian funerary inscriptions: for instance, the stela of the teenage Dioscorus describes him as a 'son of Greece, skilled in music, a youthful Heracles' ('Ελλάδος νιόν, τὸν σοφὸν ἐν Μούσαις καὶ νέον Ἡρακλέα).⁴⁶ The accompanying carving shows a well-developed, naked man praying with outstretched arms. The same iconographic reasoning might be applied to the bare-shouldered, gold-wreathed adolescents of the 'Fayum portraits', just as the attributes on Dioscorus' stela identify him with athletic young manhood generally, but more specifically with the gymnasium. Portraying the deceased with athletic or ephebic attributes would define him as a member of an élite social group at his physical peak, and thus in the best state to be reborn.

All this discussion of symbolism and élite groups prompts the question of whether the portraits of boys with the attributes of burgeoning manhood were actually prepared for high-status individuals. Which stratum of society in Roman Egypt employed artists to paint portraits of their deceased sons? This is not easy to establish with any certainty. Of course, the portrait was only one part of the whole funerary ensemble, which in its fullest form would have required the preservation of the body, enormous quantities of linen for the wrappings, a tomb, a funerary procession with hired mourners, sacrifices and a funerary banquet, among other things. As the accounts of Herodotus (II.87) and Diodorus Siculus (I.91) show, money determined the different standards of burial, and would presumably also have dictated the quality of the mummy portrait. SPP XXII 56, a third-century account of burial expenditure from Socnopaïou Nesos, suggests that the portrait was not a particularly expensive commodity: in this case, only half as much money (64 drachmas) was spent on the portrait as on linen for the wrappings (136 drachmas 24 obols), which represents nearly a third of the total cost of the funeral (440 drachmas 16 obols).⁴⁷ The greatest outlay on any single item of burial equipment was probably on the cloth for bandages, and the elaborate external wrappings, wound into layered lozenge patterns and adorned with gilded studs, would have been an effective way of showing off the family's purchasing power. Few people could have afforded to buy up to 380 metres of high-quality cloth to envelop a body and then pay for the labour of three or more skilled bandagers to wind it around the corpse. The lavishness of the wrappings might well have been a better indicator of the income of the family than the mummy portrait. Most of the portraits of young males are now separated from their wrappings, but the two that still preserve them (Artemidorus in the British Museum and no. 1768 in Manchester, both from Hawara) are evidently expensively-produced mummies, and the wrappings of the Manchester mummy are of particularly good-quality fine linen. The demotic texts from the Hawara embalmers' archive distinguish between *ἡρώγῃ*, 'fine linen (burial) raiment' of superior quality, usually provided by the family of the

⁴⁵ For an excellent analysis of the symbolism of male divinities, especially Heracles, on Egyptian tomb sculpture, see T. K. Thomas, *Niche Decorations from the Tombs of Byzantine Egypt: Visions of the Afterlife* (PhD thesis, Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, 1990) I, 242–52.

⁴⁶ SB I 3990 (late third-early fourth century AD).

⁴⁷ It is uncertain, however, exactly what the items of burial equipment in this text are. The word often thought to indicate a portrait, *πρόσωπον*, more usually means a mask: but in line 23 a *προσωπίδιον* is mentioned, costing 14 drachmas, and one wonders why one individual would require two similar items. Maybe SPP XXII 56 lists expenditure on a double funeral (cf P. Oxy. XII 1535), or *πρόσωπον* is a term for some other commodity, perhaps another fabric item: a 'cover'? For the cost of portraits in general, see Müller, *op. cit.* 184–91.

deceased, and *hbs*, 'mortuary raiment' in general, presumably of poorer quality.⁴⁸ It is unlikely that the same quality of linen was used further down in the bandaging,⁴⁹ but there can be no doubt that a considerable amount of time, labour and expenditure went into preparing the young man now in Manchester for eternity.

The symbolic triad of moustache, garland and bare chest to indicate post-pubescent males finds its converse in the range of attributes used by the portrait painters to denote pre-adolescent boys. These boys are invariably round-faced and childishly chubby, they never have any trace of facial hair, and they wear one or both of the youth-lock and a cylindrical amulet on a cord around the neck.⁵⁰ These signs reinforce the status of the sitter as pre-pubescent and sexually immature, and thus socially marginal: a potential but unrealised adult. The youth-lock or Horus-lock was worn by children of both sexes and ritually shorn off at puberty, perhaps at a ceremony called the *mallocouria* or 'cutting off of the tress'.⁵¹ The amulet is reminiscent of the protective *bullā* and other apotropaic charms worn by freeborn Roman boys till the onset of puberty,⁵² but may well have closer links with the amulets of 'oracular amuletic decrees' in hieratic.⁵³ These texts, dating from the late New Kingdom, contain extensive invocations to protect the child's body from every kind of magic, disease and malevolent being: 'we shall keep healthy her abdomen. We shall keep healthy her pudenda. We shall keep healthy her rectum'.⁵⁴ They are written on long strips of papyrus and were worn rolled up inside some kind of amuletic case⁵⁵ that was presumably relinquished at puberty, since the spells promise to 'provide everything that is good for her ... and a happy childhood' and only later to 'conceive male and female children'.⁵⁶ We do not know the exact nature of the amulets or amulet-cases shown on the mummy portraits of pre-pubescents, particularly whether they contained any protective texts, though a portrait in the National Museum, Dublin (inv. 1902:4 = Parlasca III, no. 621) shows a small boy wearing a cylindrical amulet with a now illegible inscription on it. If the Roman Period amulets did contain some kind of spell, their inclusion in the portraits of pre-pubescents may serve both to illustrate the immaturity of the deceased and to provide symbolic magical protection.

Conclusions

'Ego adulescens, ego ephebus, ego puer'⁵⁷ says Catullus of the life stages of Roman élite youths; and the 'Fayum portraits' place their subjects in precisely this taxonomy which is,

⁴⁸ E. A. E. Reymond, *Catalogue of Demotic Papyri in the Ashmolean Museum*, 1 (Oxford, 1973), 63-4.

⁴⁹ It was standard practice to recycle old linen for embalming purposes: see SPP XXII 56, 16, where the other wrappings are padded out with an old tunic.

⁵⁰ E.g. Parlasca III, nos. 621, 654 and 672. For instances of this type of pre-adolescent portrait, see note 13 above.

⁵¹ For the *μαλλοκούρια* see note 19 above. Müller op. cit. 193-201, interprets the *Jugendlock* as a purely religious symbol connected with devotion to the Isiac cult.

⁵² On the *bullā*, see Wiedemann, op. cit. 116.

⁵³ Corpus of texts by I. E. S. Edwards, *Hieratic Papyri in the British Museum, Fourth Series: Oracular Amuletic Decrees of the Late New Kingdom* (London, 1960).

⁵⁴ Edwards, op. cit. 9.

⁵⁵ For an interesting discussion of these cases generally, see J. J. and R. M. Janssen, in I. Gamer-Wallert and W. Helck (eds), *Gegengabe. Festschrift für Emma Brunner-Traut* (Tübingen, 1990), 161-4, with useful bibliography in nn. 23-36.

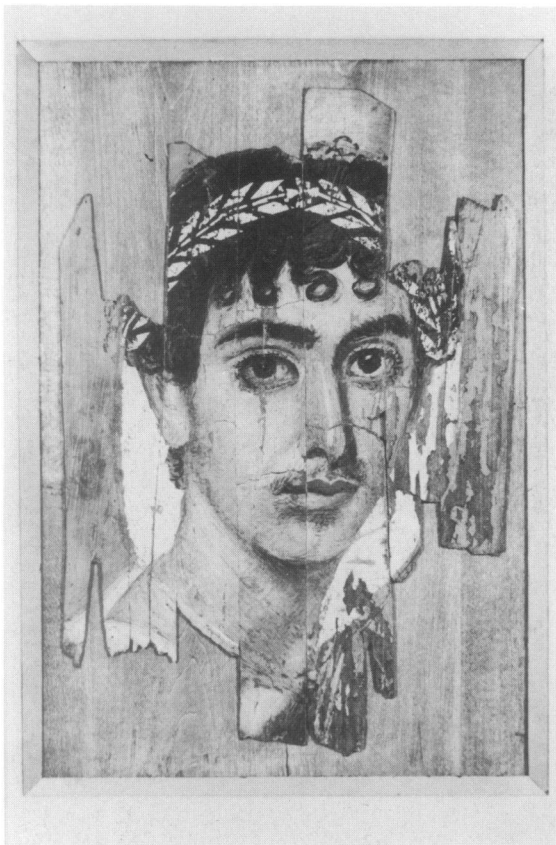
⁵⁶ Edwards, op. cit. 8 and 12.

⁵⁷ Catullus 63.63.

as Richard Brilliant says, 'defined by categories of age, gender...social and civic status and class.' The portraitists used a fixed repertory of symbols to indicate pre-pubescent males, adolescents up to the age of about twenty (of whom some may have been ephebes), and males over twenty. Thus, if the social milieu in which these portraits were created is taken into account, the attributes used in the portraits of young men may be seen as reflecting the system of age categories operating in Roman Egypt, the dynamics of moving between those categories, and the extent to which the categories were defined by both the body itself and social perceptions. Taken *in toto*, the three most common attributes of post-adolescents in the portraits—the slight moustaches, the wreaths and nakedness—would have been seen in Roman Egypt as strongly connotative of the thirteen/fourteen to twenty age category, the age when males were conceived as being at the apogee of their sexual desirability, and also the age at which élite youths underwent their formal social integration. These symbols would also have removed any ambiguity over the sexual status of the deceased. The moustache in particular represented these young boys unequivocally as post-pubescent males, and thus ready for fruitful, procreative sexual relations.

This article has deliberately refrained from addressing the vexed questions of whether 'Fayum portraits' had any function other than a funerary one, and whether or not they were painted from life.⁵⁷ In a sense, whether or not the young men actually wore moustaches is immaterial: this article has tried to prove that the social conventions of Roman Egypt rendered them an iconographic necessity on a funeral portrait. Depicting the deceased man thus would have helped in the process of ensuring that he survived after death to be reborn within the protective carapace of his mummy.

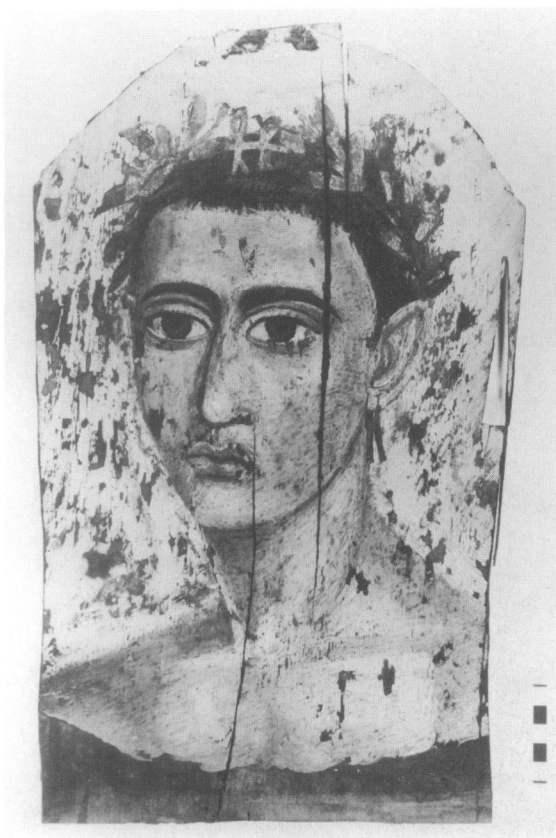
⁵⁸ A representative range of thought on these questions may be found in Parlasca (1966), 59–91, with older bibliography; Müller, *op. cit.* 152–7 and 192–232; Corcoran, 'A Cult Function', 59; D. L. Thompson, *op. cit.* 8–10, 14–15.



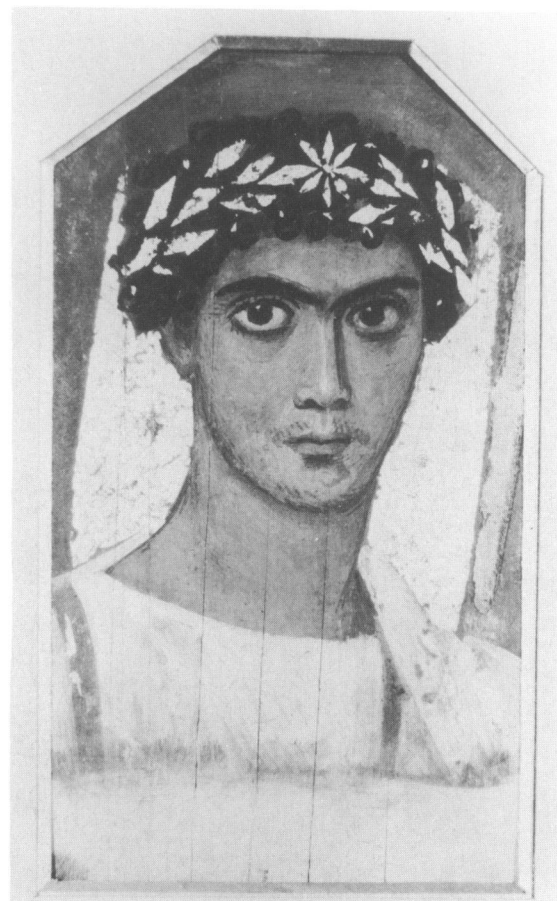
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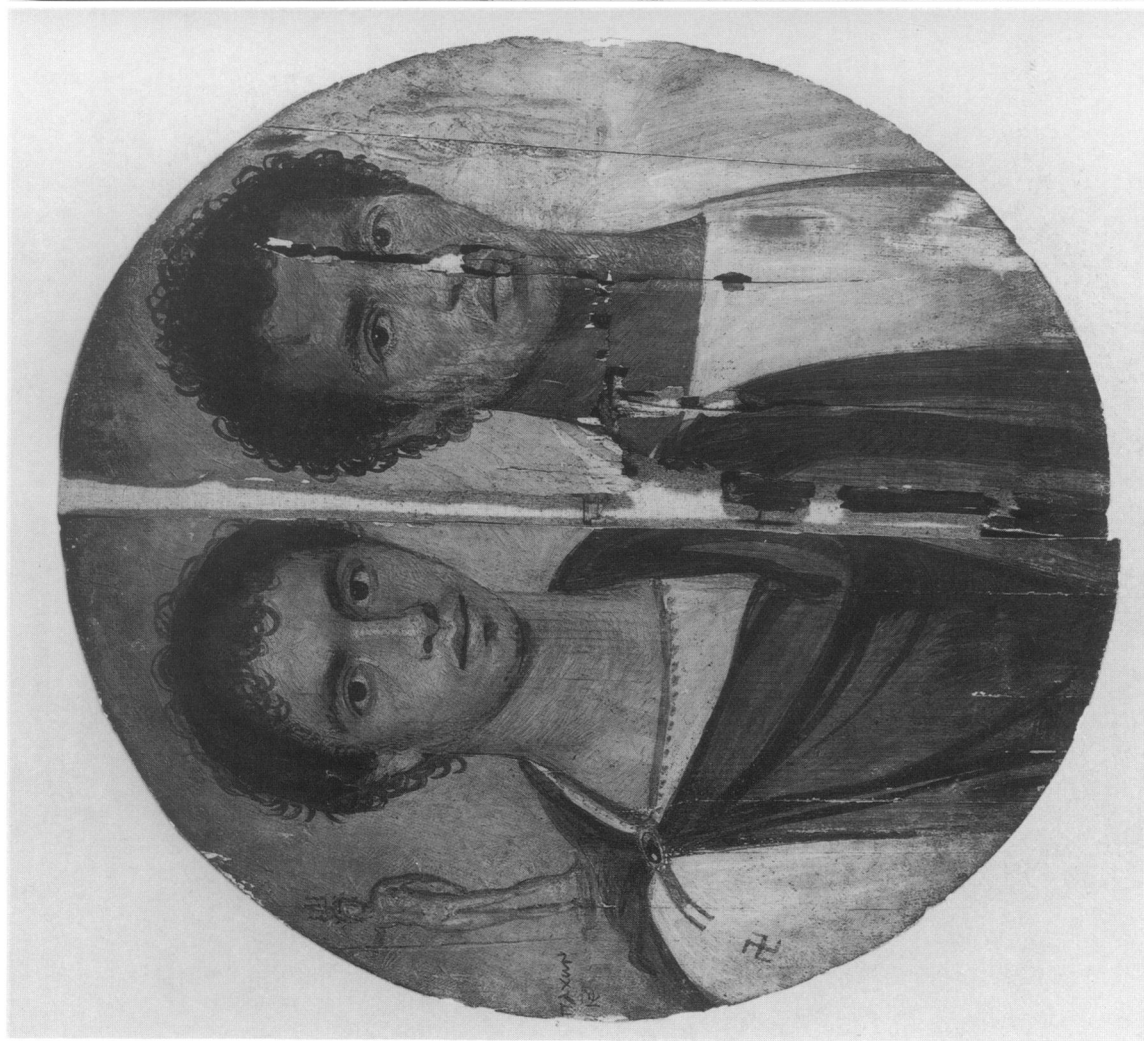
2. Cairo, Egyptian Museum, CG 33232



3. London, Petrie Museum, UC 19613

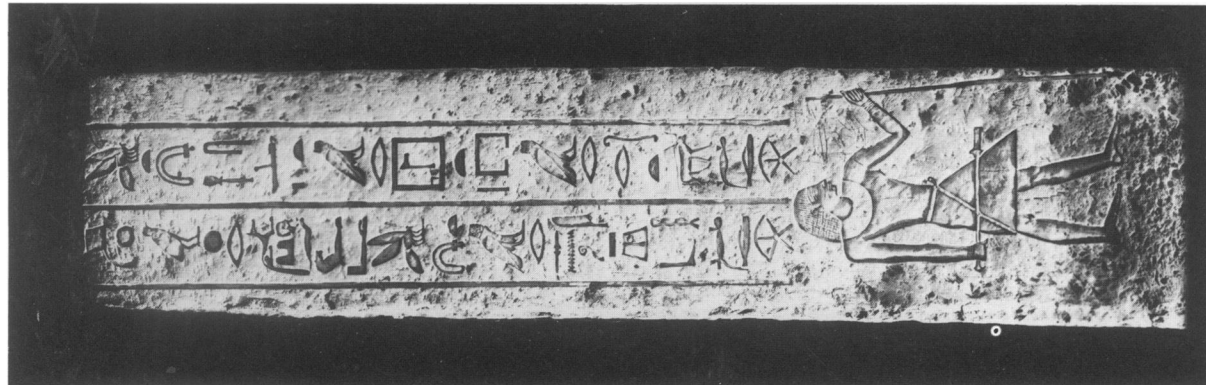


4. Moscow, Pushkin Museum, Inv. 5776

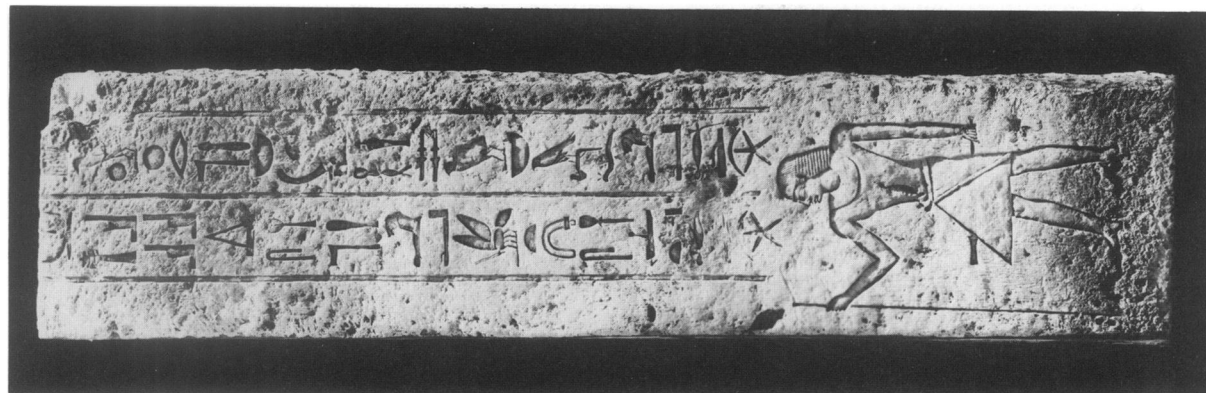


1. Cairo, Egyptian Museum, CG 33267

THE REPRESENTATION OF YOUNG MALES IN 'FAYUM PORTRAITS'
(pp. 215-25)



2. Left jamb



3. Right jamb

BLOCKS FROM THE TOMB OF SHED-ABED (pp. 243-8)