Mosaic Motherhood
Sheena Finnigan, University of Wisconsin- Madison
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CIL III. 2267 D(is) M(anibus). | Candidae coniugi bene me|renti ann(orum) p(lus) m(inus) XXX qu(a)e me|cum vixit ann(os) p(lus) m(inus) VII | qu(a)e est cruciata ut pari|ret diebus III et non pe|perit et est ita vita fu|nta. Iustus conser(vus) p(osuit).

To the Spirits of the Departed. For Candida, my most deserving wife, about 30 years old, who lived with me for about 7 years, who was tormented trying to give birth for nearly 4 days. She did not give birth and thus died. Iustus, her fellow slave, erected (sc. this memorial).

CIL VI. 41062, 31-33 Diffidens fecunditati tuae et do|lens orbitate mea, ne tenen[do in matrimonio] (32) te spem habendi liberos [dep]onerem atque eius causs[em infelix, de divertio] (33) elocuta es – vocuamque [do-]mum alterius fecunditati fe tradituram...

You were despairing of your fertility and pained over my childlessness. So that I would not, by keeping you in marriage, have to put aside any hope of having children and become unhappy on that account, you mentioned the word “divorce.” You would, you said, turn our house over to another woman’s fertility...

CIL VIII 20288 - CLE 1834 - ILCV 3436) D(is) M(anibus) s(acrum). Rusticeia Matrona v(ixit) a(nnos) XXV. causa meae mortis partus fatumque malignum set tu desine flere mihi kariss[ime coniux] [et] fil(ii) nostri serva com[munis amorem]. [- – ad caeli] transivit spir[itus astra][- – maritae][- –].

To the sacred shades. Rusticeia Matrona (the matron?) lived 25 years. The cause of my death was childbirth and a malignant fate. But you stop crying for me, most dear husband and guard the love our mutual son. – – my spirit has passed over to the stars in heaven – – wife.

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2 Image credits, clockwise from top left:
Mater Matuta, Capua 5th, 4th c. BC Collections of the Museo nazionale etrusco di Villa Giulia
[link to image]
Clay-baked uterus. Roman votive offering, Wellcome Collection. [link to image]; Terracotta Votive Statuette of a Swaddled Infant, Getty Museum [link to image];
Selected Bibliography

Allison, Penelope M. “Using the Material and written Sources: Turn of the Millennium Approaches to Roman Domestic Space” in the American Journal of Archaeology 105:2 (2001), 181-208.


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