

## Til Death Do Us Part: Attic Marble Lekythoi and Depictions of Unwed Youths

This paper aims to build off of previous studies of Attic marble *lekythoi* in order to determine their social significance in Classical Greece, especially as they relate to the conflation of marriage and death in Greek society. Although undoubtedly intrigued by the intersection of gender and grave *stelae*, most scholars who have authored an article, chapter or book on the subject have primarily concerned themselves with the identities of women depicted on grave *stelae* and the implications that some shapes of these grave monuments, such as the marble *loutrophoros*, have for the marital status of the deceased. Keuls (1985) and Rehm (1994) point to depictions of young women on funerary *stelae* as brides, while Kurtz and Boardman (1971) and Shapiro (1991) address the attitudes towards young people who died unwed. All of these studies acknowledge the significance of *loutrophoroi* as grave *stelae*, noting their connection to tombs of unmarried young women.

Many of the brief treatments of marble *loutrophoroi* discuss the use of white-ground *lekythoi* in funerary contexts, though relatively few mention marble *lekythoi*. In the late twentieth century, Schmaltz (1970) and Proukakis (1971) produced studies of marble *lekythoi*, examining the iconography and the problems with identifying the dead on these grave monuments, respectively. However, the social significance of the depictions of the dead on marble *lekythoi* has not been studied at length. In this paper, I consider the relationship of marble *lekythoi* to their white-ground counterparts and determine how depictions of the deceased on these monuments signify his or her marital status at the time of death. Finally, in light of these analyses, I use Classical Greek drama to reveal the overall cultural implications of the shape of the grave *stelae* and the iconography on them.

The Classical period was a time of increased nationalism and sense of duty, especially among Athenians. Like men, women had a duty to their city-state: to bear children as both new citizens and potential heirs to their individual estates. When women died young, they had failed to fulfill their duty. Anxiety about this duty - and the possibility of not fulfilling it - appears in the works of Classical period tragedians like Sophocles and Euripides, and is further reflected in the grave *stelae* of the same period, especially those *stelae* shapes which bear nuptial connotations. In light of this connection between marble *lekythoi* and Classical Greek drama, I conclude that the *lekythos* shape and the depiction of the deceased as youthful and unwed reflects the expectation, and failure, of Athenian young men and women to do their civic duty and establish an *oikos*.

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