PAUCA TAMEN MEMORANS:
A SELECTION OF LATE ANTIQUE EPITAPHS COMMEMORATING YOUNG
WOMEN

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In Partial Fulfillment
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Doctor of Philosophy

by
KRISTIN J. HARPER
Dr. Dennis Trout, Dissertation Supervisor
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The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the dissertation entitled

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A SELECTION OF LATE ANTIQUE EPITAPHS COMMEMORATING YOUNG
WOMEN

presented by Kristin Harper,

a candidate for the degree of doctor of philosophy,

and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

Professor Dennis Trout

Professor Raymond Marks

Professor Marcus Rautman

Professor Barbara Wallach

Professor Dennis Kelley

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AE	<i>L'Année épigraphique</i>
Brepolis	Brepolis Publishers, Library of Latin Texts Cross-Database Search tool: http://clt.brepolis.net.proxy.mul.missouri.edu/cds/pages/Search.aspx
CIL	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum</i> (1863-) volumes are often updated through supplements.
CLE	<i>Carmina Latina Epigraphica</i> . Vols. 1 and 2. Edited by F. Büecheler. Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1895-7. Vol. 3. edited by Büecheler and E. Lommatzsch. Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1926.
de Rossi 1 and 2.1	<i>Inscriptiones christianae urbis Romae septimo saeculo antiquiores</i> . Vol. 1. Edited by G. B. de Rossi, Rome 1857. Vol. 2, part 1. Edited by G. B. de Rossi, Rome 1888.
EAGLE	Electronic Archive of Greek and Latin Epigraphy http://www.edr-edr.it/index_it.html
ED	A. Ferrua. <i>Epigrammata damasiana</i> . Vatican City, 1942.
EDB	Epigraphic Database Bari http://www.edb.uniba.it/
EDCS	Epigraphik-Datenbank Clauss/Slaby http://db.edcs.eu.epigr/epi_en.php

- EDH Epigraphische-Datenbank
<http://www.uniheidelberg.de/institute/sonst/adw/edh>
- EDR Epigraphic Database Roma
http://www.edr-edr.it/edr_programmi/res_complex/comune.php?lang=end&ver=simp
- ICI* *Inscriptiones Christianae Italiae Septimo Saeculo Antiquiores (nova series)*. Currently a seventeen-volume collection of Christian inscriptions organized according to regions of Roman Italy (1985-2016).
- ICUR* *Inscriptiones christianae urbis Romae septimo saeculo antiquiores*. De Rossi produced vol 1, a chronological study (1861) and vol 2.1, about medieval syllogae (1888). These two volumes are referenced as above. The *nuova serie* continued to edit extra-mural inscriptions. A. Silvagni edited another vol. 1 in 1922 and the series continued until vol. 10 in 1992. It is this series that is designated with *ICUR*.
- Ihm* *Damasi Epigrammata, Anthologiae Latinae Supplementa*. Edited by M. Ihm. Vol. 1. Leipzig, 1895.
- ILCV* *Inscriptiones Latinae christianae veteres* Vols. 1-3, 1925-31. Edited by E. Diehl. Vol. 4 *Supplementum*. Edited by J. Moreau and H. I. Marrou, 1967.
- ILS* *Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae*. Edited by H. Dessau. Berlin: Weidmann, 1892-1916.

- Lewis and Short *A Latin Dictionary*. Edited by Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966.
- LCL/Loeb Loeb Classical Library
- OCT Oxford Classical Texts
- PHI The Packard Humanities Institute, Latin Texts Word and Concordance Search: <https://latin.packhum.org/search>
- PLRE 2* *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire. Vol. II A.D. 395-527*. Edited by Arnold Hugh Martin Jones, J. R. Martindale, J. Morris. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980.
- Trout *Damasus of Rome: The Epigraphic Poetry: Introduction, Texts, Translations and Commentary*. Edited by Dennis Trout. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.

NOTE ON FREQUENTLY CITED WORKS

Abbreviations of ancient texts and authors follow the guidelines from the fourth edition of the *Oxford Classical Dictionary (OCD)* edited by Simon Hornblower and Antony Spawforth, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). Frequently cited text and translations follow the editions below. Any modifications to translations are noted.

Claudian	<i>Claudian: Volume 2</i> . Edited by Maurice Platnauer. LCL. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1922.
Cicero	<i>Cicero: De Senectute, De Amicitia, De Divinatione</i> . Edited by William Armistead Falconer. LCL. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1923.
Damasus	<i>Damasus of Rome: The Epigraphic Poetry: Introduction, Texts, Translations, and Commentary</i> . Edited by Dennis Trout. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.
Jerome	<i>Select Letters of St. Jerome</i> . Edited by F.A. Wright. LCL. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1933.

<i>Consoling Heliodorus: A Commentary on Jerome, Letter 60</i> . Translated by J.H.D. Scourfield. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1993. |
| Ovid | <i>Ovid: Metamorphoses Books IX-XV</i> . Edited by Frank Justus Miller. LCL. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1916. |
| Paulinus of Nola | <i>Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum Latinorum, Volume 30</i> . Vienna: Hoelder-Pichler-Temsky, 1866. (text)

<i>The Poems of St. Paulinus of Nola</i> . Edited by P.G. Walsh. |

New York: Newman Press, 1975. (translation)

Propertius

Propertius: Elegies. Edited by G.P. Goold. LCL.

Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990.

Prudentius

Prudentius in Two Volumes. Edited by H.J. Thompson.

LCL. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1949.

Silius Italicus

Silius Italicus: Punica. Edited by J.D. Duff. LCL.

Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1934.

Sidonius

Sidonius: Poems and Letters. Edited by W.B. Anderson.

LCL. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1936.

Statius

Statius in Two Volumes. Edited by J.H. Mozley. LCL.

Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1928.

Valerius Flaccus

Valerius Flaccus: Argonautica. Edited by J.H. Mozley.

LCL. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1934.

Vergil

Virgil in Two Volumes. Edited by H.R. Fairclough. LCL.

Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1916 and 1918.

PAUCA TAMEN MEMORANS:
A SELECTION OF LATE ANTIQUE VERSE EPITAPHS COMMEMORATING
YOUNG WOMEN

Kristin Harper

Dr. Dennis Trout, Dissertation Supervisor

ABSTRACT

My dissertation examines a selection of fourth- and fifth-century inscribed Latin funerary poems commemorating young, Christian women in late antique Rome and Roman Italy. An in-depth analysis of fourteen verse epitaphs dedicated to young women reveals how funerary poetry creates an identity of deceased individuals while at the same time demonstrates religious beliefs of the time and offers insights into the role of women through powerful poetic means. Epigraphic commemoration of the dead was a persistent feature of the “epigraphic habit” in Roman Italy, one whose vitality indexes the shifting religious and moral sentiments of an age transitioning from a classical to a Christian system of values. The fourth century not only saw a poetic revival but also a surge in epigraphic production. The epitaphs of my collection expose the intricate interplay of late antique poetic and consolatory literary *topoi* employed by epitaph writers to aid in alleviating the grief of the bereaved.

My particular questions highlight issues of literary sensibility and biographical representation as well as religious and spiritual ideals. In these epitaphs, classical references to untimely death and astral immortality blend with Christianizing ethical codes and a revised sense of the afterlife drawn from Scriptural images. Close scrutiny of these cultural negotiations reveals the forces reshaping the social identities of non-elite women within their social and religious communities as well as in their own families. In

other words, not only do these epitaphs inform us about the social lives of these young women but they also illuminate the lived religion of the time. The reasons for addressing these questions and problems are several. The corpus of late antique funerary poetry, along with the social class that it commemorates, has been understudied by the scholarly community. These epitaphs may reveal how the bereaved honored and identified the female victims of untimely deaths while also demonstrating the importance of young women's roles in early Christian communities.

Chapter 1

Introduction: Recalling Only a Little

“Surprised by Joy”

*Surprised by joy — impatient as the Wind
I turned to share the transport — Oh! with whom
But Thee, long buried in the silent Tomb,
That spot which no vicissitude can find?
Love, faithful love, recalled thee to my mind —
But how could I forget thee? — Through what power,
Even for the least division of an hour,
Have I been so beguiled as to be blind
To my most grievous loss! — That thought’s return
Was the worst pang that sorrow ever bore,
Save one, one only, when I stood forlorn,
Knowing my heart’s best treasure was no more;
That neither present time, nor years unborn
Could to my sight that heavenly face restore.*

~ William Wordsworth

Through the detailed analysis of a collection of fourteen Latin verse epitaphs, my dissertation employs literary analysis in order to develop an understanding not only of the individuals commemorated, but also of the collective group to which they belong. The personal quality of epitaphs entices scholars with details of the emotional life not just of the individuals, but also of their loved ones who commissioned these texts. My analysis of epitaphs reveals how funerary poetry creates an identity of deceased individuals while at the same time demonstrates religious beliefs of the time and offers insights into the role of women through powerful poetic means. The collection presented here is composed of fourteen funerary poems dedicated to young, Christian women who range in age from five to nineteen. Their epitaphs display the proper way to venerate female victims of untimely deaths. Dating with one exception from the fourth and fifth centuries CE (363 CE to 442 CE), the funerary poems of these young women exhibit *topoi* of late

antique poetics and consolation literature. The metrical structures, poetic sensibilities, literary references, and formulaic phrases of the poems distinguish a commonality of expression for epitaphs of this kind that designates them as part of a collective identity.

I argue that this selection manifests the key aspects of late antique poetics and consolation literature in order to identify the expectations of these women while alleviating the grief of their loved ones. The individuals of this group are identified through their age at death, gender, virtues in life, and belief in a Christian afterlife. The writers of the inscriptions venerate these young women with certain poetic patterns and formulae because these women were important in their late antique communities. Despite the tragic deaths of these women, their lives (in the form of verse epitaphs) give hope of the afterlife to their loved ones left behind. In order to conduct such a study, it is necessary to frame the intricacies of background information. Such background information includes the difficulties and value of epigraphic study, the identities of young women and untimely deaths, the tensions between official and lived religion, the ritual continuity and discontinuity during late antiquity, and the new comparative perspectives of modern psychological studies with recent work on ancient emotions. The next section aims to address some of the prominent features concerning these subjects while also introducing the epitaphs of the collection which make up my study.

Parameters of the Study

The epitaphs of my collection, which serve as the basis of my case study, were selected according to specific criteria. Every verse epitaph below originates from Rome or Roman Italy (Urbino, Spoleto, and Milan) during the fourth and fifth centuries CE

(363 CE to 442 CE) with one outlier of the early sixth. The time and place constraints were imposed due to the nature of the project; without this limitation, the data would have been too extensive to cover here. The third criterion is the appearance of phrases, words, or personal stories that I found to be indicative of the styles in late antique poetics and the fourth-century epigraphic verse revival. I also selected poems based on their descriptions of the identities of the girls and young women commemorated, signaling their belonging in either a religious or familial community. Transitional periods in history, such as when a significant amount of Rome's population was converting to Christianity, often contain examples of identity-making and self-fashioning both to reaffirm group identities as well as to blend new community associations. The first epitaph I added to my collection was the poem dedicated to Pontia (12), discovered on the pages of the *ICI (Inscriptiones Christianae Italiae)*. I found her epitaph and elaborate sarcophagus to be a vivid example of the personal information a metrical epitaph could provide. The grief her husband expressed through classicizing verse created a poignant scene that stood out from other epitaphs in *ICI* 6; his sorrowful expression of their personal lives together illuminated the consolatory power that these poems also presented, considering the poems' tragic subjects. Like Pontia's epitaph, the poems in these next chapters demonstrate the power language has in consoling the bereaved and creating an identity for female victims of untimely deaths.

Epitaphs and Latin Epigraphy

The sheer size (and continued growth) of the corpora of Latin inscriptions makes working with these types of texts difficult. The primary source collection for Latin verse

epitaphs is the *Carmina Latina Epigraphica (CLE)*, an anthology of the poems selected from the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum (CIL)*. The *CLE*'s organization is based upon meters of the poems, which leaves out a variety of categorizations these verses could be divided into, such as: names, dates, themes, class, literary references, type of death, profession, find spot, physical attributes of the stone, etc. Vast supplements of the *CIL*, however valuable, create difficulties in the practical work of analysis of these texts.

L'Annee Epigraphique, like the *CIL*, lists all Latin inscriptions found through addition of supplemental texts and concordance lists to *CLE*, *CIL*, and other collections. An inscription originally published in one of these volumes could have a missing piece found, changing the interpretation of the entire text, but unless one reads all the supplements and the original corpus, this information might not be known. The *Inscriptiones christianae urbis Romae septimo saeculo antiquiores (ICUR)*, comments on the Christian inscriptions selected from the *CIL*; the *ICI (Inscriptiones Christianae Italiae)* collects inscriptions based upon location from regions of Italy, which allows for inclusion of inscriptions from outside of Rome proper, whereas other collections select inscriptions from Spain, Africa, and other Roman provinces. The difficulty with these collections is that there is neither one source for all the known Latin inscriptions nor a viable way to search through them efficiently. Find spots of these inscriptions also do not always indicate their original origin or use, and not all collections include visual depictions (drawings or photographs) of the stones. The scholars of epigraphy have made great strides in recent years to remedy these problems and streamline research of these invaluable texts through online databases, concordances, and searching tools. The EDR (Epigraphic Database Roma), EDB (Epigraphic Database Bari), EAGLE (Electronic

Archive of Greek and Latin Epigraphy), and the EDH (Epigraphische-Datenbank) are all online databases that offer an expansive searchable collection of inscriptions. Epigraphic scholars provide valuable information about the individuals and practices of ancient Rome. Work on public inscriptions reveal aspects of Roman government, military life, and lives of the elites, such as in articles by Christer Bruun, Michael Alexander Speidel, and Gregory Rowe.¹ The study of inscriptions on calendars, dedications, and tombs allow scholars to learn about ancient religion in a way that other textual evidence does not.² Without their work many other subfields within Classical Studies would be at a distinct disadvantage. The work done throughout my dissertation relies on the works and commentaries of earlier epigraphers, paleographers, and archaeologists.

Verse epitaphs and other inscriptions have been the focus of scholarly attention for some time. The study of inscribed epitaphs fills in the gaps of knowledge left by other (elite) texts from ancient Greece and Rome. The purpose of epigraphic study in general “is to clarify the meanings of epigraphs; to classify their uses according to their dating and cultural contexts and to study aspects of the writing, the writers, and their ‘consumers.’”³ While inscriptions provide invaluable and unique insights into Roman culture, the study of these inscriptions has been fraught with difficulties throughout its

¹ Christer Bruun, “Roman Government and Administration,” and “Senators and Equites: Prosopography,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Epigraphy*, edited by Christer Bruun and Jonathan Edmondson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012): 274-298 and 202-226; Michael Alexander Speidel, “The Roman Army,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Epigraphy*, edited by Christer Bruun and Jonathan Edmondson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012): 319-344; Gregory Rowe, “The Roman State: Laws, Lawmaking, and Legal Documents,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Epigraphy*, edited by Christer Bruun and Jonathan Edmondson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012): 299-318.

² For more on the importance of inscriptions in understanding Roman religion see Rudolf Haensch, “Inscriptions as Sources of Knowledge for Religions and Cults in the Roman World of Imperial Times,” in *A Companion to Roman Religion*, edited by Jorg Rupke (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2008): 176-187.

³ Gianvito Pio, Fabio Fumarola, Antonio E. Felle, Donato Malerba, and Michelangelo Ceci, “Discovering Novelty Patterns from the Ancient Christian Inscriptions of Rome,” *ACM Journal on Computing and Cultural Heritage* 7.4.22 (2014): 1.

lengthy scholarship. The total number of extant Latin inscriptions is over 400,000 (some scholars have even assumed that the number of found inscriptions rises by 1,000 every year).⁴ Of these 400,000 Latin inscriptions, only about 1% are in verse. The vast majority of those Latin verse inscriptions are epitaphs, of which a subset commemorates young women from varying time periods. A study such as this proves difficult in understanding the numerical data because of the nature of its changing and unknown size. The vast number of Latin inscriptions is emblematic of the ‘epigraphic habit’ of Roman culture that Ramsey MacMullen brought to academia’s attention in 1982.⁵ In doing so, MacMullen points out inscription writing as a trend that has ebbed and flowed throughout the course of Roman history. More important for the development of epigraphic scholarship, MacMullen’s article began to question the Romans’ impetus to inscribe. The work of Francisco Beltran Lloris builds upon MacMullen’s initial discussion of the Roman epigraphic habit. He argues that “the *humanissima ambitio*...drove people to leave behind a personal memorial for subsequent generations,” and states that human “desire for lasting commemoration led to the use of inscribed monuments as the instrument of choice and ... the practice spread across many sectors of society.”⁶ Lloris

⁴ See Manfred Schmidt, “Carmina Latina Epigraphica,” in *Oxford Handbook of Roman Epigraphy*, edited by Christer Bruun and Jonathan Edmondson, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 764; Dennis Trout, “Inscribing Identity: The Latin Epigraphic Habit in Late antiquity,” in *A Companion to Late Antiquity*, edited by Philip Rousseau (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2009), 173.

⁵ Ramsay MacMullen, “The Epigraphic Habit in the Roman Empire,” *The American Journal of Philology*, 103.3 (1982): 233-246. See also Francisco Beltran Lloris, “The ‘Epigraphic Habit’ in the Roman World,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Epigraphy*, edited by Christer Bruun and Jonathan Edmondson, 131-152, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), Geza Alföldy, “Augustus und die Inschriften: Tradition und Innovation: Die Geburt der imperialen Epigraphik,” *Gymnasium* 98 (1991): 289-324, and Werner Eck, “Tituli honorarii, curriculum vitae und Selbstdarstellung in der Hohen Kaiserzeit,” in *Acta Colloquii Epigraphici Latini: Helsingiae 3.-6 sept. 1991 habiti*, edited by Heikki Solin, Olli Salomies, and Uta-Maria Liertz, 211-37 (Helsinki: Societas Scientiarum Fennica, 1995).

⁶ Francisco Beltran Lloris, “The ‘Epigraphic Habit’ in the Roman World,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Epigraphy*, edited by Christer Bruun and Jonathan Edmondson, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 135-136.

describes an ‘epigraphic boom’ from Augustus onwards, with the height of production in the mid-second century CE and a decline in the third century on, until a slight resurgence in the fourth century.⁷ Concerning the impetus to inscribe in late antiquity Dennis Trout notes that, “whether personal or corporate, lay or clerical, late Latin inscriptions are similarly implicated in the identity politics of the late Roman and post-Roman worlds, and similarly contingent upon a host of social religious, and political factors that go far beyond the mere ability to write and inscribe.”⁸ Elizabeth Meyer also attempts to answer the question, left open by MacMullen, of why the epigraphic habit rose and fell over the course of time. Meyer notes an important distinction between Latin and Greek epitaphs which may indicate the popularity of this habit in Roman history. She states that, “a typical Roman funerary inscription does not simply name the deceased ... instead, the name of the person erecting the inscription, the commemorator is also added.”⁹ Meyer asserts that the role of the commemorator is important for inscribed commemoration, especially in the western provinces, as it fulfills duties these commemorators had as heirs to the deceased. An epitaph demonstrates that one’s status and identity as a citizen was valued enough in the provinces to be commemorated in stone, and that heirs were obligated to assert the citizenship of the deceased to formulate identity.¹⁰ While these questions concerning the Roman epigraphic habit may be continuously debated, it is through each study that scholars gain more knowledge, new perspectives, and insight into

⁷ Lloris, “The ‘Epigraphic Habit’ in the Roman World,” 140.

⁸ Trout, “Inscribing Identity,” 173.

⁹ Elizabeth A. Meyer, “Explaining the Epigraphic Habit in the Roman Empire: The Evidence of Epitaphs,” *The Journal of Roman Studies*, 80 (1990): 75.

¹⁰ Meyer, “Explaining the Epigraphic Habit in the Roman Empire,” 95.

Roman culture. My study aims to add to the discussion of epigraphic analysis and identity studies.

My particular set of verse epitaphs demonstrates how epigraphic texts employ poetic and linguistic formulae to commemorate Christians, females, and victims of sudden death. Survivors venerate such suddenly lost women not just with a burial marker, but also with elaborate verse epitaphs distinguishing the women from other victims of death. Funerary epitaphs have been among the main categories of epigraphic texts throughout Rome's history, but the majority are brief, prose epitaphs which mention minimal personal details. Of the 400,000 discovered ancient Latin inscriptions, only 1-2% are poetic texts.¹¹ Pope Damasus in particular brought the metrical inscription into the public sphere with his use of building inscriptions and his writing of martyrial *elogia* (366-384 CE). The resurgence in popularity of epigraphic texts in the fourth century, however, also coincided with a poetic revival during the same period. Traditions of classical Latin literature created a landscape of literature for poetic epitaphs as well as for contemporary, elite poets. Late antique Latin poetry as an elaborate mosaic of words has been analyzed by Michael Roberts in his foundational study *The Jeweled Style* (1989). Roberts' text began a trend in scholarship which developed into the study of the poetic nature of the Latin literary revival of late antiquity (More discussion of the poetic style of late antiquity will occur in Chapter 3: Poetic Sense and Sensibility.) The heart of the analysis of the fourteen epitaphs of my collection is found in the literary analysis of epigraphic texts. As

¹¹ Dennis Trout, "Damasus and the Christian Epigram in the West," in *A Companion to Ancient Epigram*, edited by Christer Henriksen (Hoboken: Wiley, 2019), 617. See Manfred Schmidt, "Carmina Latin Epigraphica," in *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Epigraphy*, edited by Christer Brunn and Jonathan Edmondson, 131-48, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015) and Dorothy Pikaus, *Répertoire des inscriptions latines versifiées de l'Afrique romaine (Ier-Vie siècles)*, Vol. 1: *Tripolitaine, Byzacène, Afrique Proconsulaire*, (Brussels: Epigraphica Bruxellensia, 1994).

such, these verse epitaphs are subject to the same sorts of questions as other textual analyses. Questions of authorship, literacy, and readership background this study, as the viewers and commemorators of these poems could have been from a wide-range of literary backgrounds themselves. John Bodel's chapter "Inscriptions and Literacy" in *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Epigraphy* (2014) concludes that there were most likely levels of literacy, and that perhaps most people attained a type of literacy which allowed them to read inscriptions, if not texts.¹² Most people would have been able to read or understand the abbreviations and words on inscriptions, due to their prevalence and linguistic formulae. Non-verse funerary epitaphs in particular build from a collection of formula through which people can identify their dedicatees.

Verse inscriptions are different from prose in respect to literacy. The study of my epitaphic collection turns to the discussion of an intellectual understanding of the text and interaction between reader and author that transcends prose inscriptions. Stephen Hinds in *Allusion and Intertext* (1998) and Aaron Peltarri in *The Space that Remains: Reading Latin Poetry in Late Antiquity* (2014) have conducted studies on the interplay between author, text, and reader. Hinds explains that the late antique author may create allusions within the text designed to trigger memories in the reader, yet creating intertextual resonances is a private experience between author, text, and the work of other poets.¹³ Somewhat differently, Peltarri explains how essential the reader is not to just receiving but also to creating the meaning of late antique literature, as "the poet writes for a reader

¹² For discussion on the depth of literacy in the ancient world, see W. V. Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989).

¹³ Stephen Hinds, *Allusion and Intertext: Dynamics of Appropriation in Roman Poetry*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 47-49.

who he expects will make sense out of the fragments of the text.”¹⁴ The reader of Peltarri is part of the creative process, whereas the reader of Hinds must (re)construct the author’s work.¹⁵ Inscriptions likewise have such intricate relationships between author, text, and reader. Furthermore, inscribed epitaphs differ from other literary texts in that typically they are bound to a specific place which the reader must visit in order to engage with the text. The reader can return to the same spot and relive the memory of the person immortalized there; the act of reading an inscription begins the opening of a dialogue between reader and the text, in which the memory of the dead often lingers. Late antique funerary epitaphs fit well into the analyses of elite literature that other scholars present because of their elaborate play with contemporary literary style and identity construction. The epitaphs of my collection serve as an example of the popularity and sophistication of verse epitaphs for venerating the deceased and comforting the bereaved.

Identification of Girls and Young Women

Scholars studying identity have begun to narrow the focuses on their studies to the specific ages and gender of those commemorated on stone. Identity studies have gained popularity in Classical Studies in recent years. Some primary scholars include B. Trigger¹⁶ and M. Johnson¹⁷ whose introductory texts reframed archaeological thinking regarding identities.¹⁸ My focus is on the venerators who chose to acknowledge the young age of the girls and women as a prominent part of the identity of the women they

¹⁴ Aaron Peltarri, *The Space that Remains: Reading Latin Poetry in Late Antiquity*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014): 8. For more information see especially *The Space that Remains*, 115-160.

¹⁵ Hinds, *Allusion and Intertext*, 49.

¹⁶ B. Trigger, *A History of Archaeological Thought*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

¹⁷ M. Johnson, *Archaeological Theory: An Introduction*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1999).

¹⁸ For more information, see Louise Revell, *Ways of Being Roman: Discourses of Identity in the Roman West*, (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2016).

commemorate. The women venerated in my collection are from a time period characterized by its transitional nature in both politics and religion. Late antiquity itself is characterized by change and transition,¹⁹ as both the political and religious organizations began shifting. In dealing with transitional areas, identity becomes even more important to those thrust among such social change.

The families of the women of my collection aimed to present the deceased's identities as young women, as their youth was an age of distinctive repute. The study of social identity in Roman culture has been considered by many scholars but few have looked at age as a defining identity. The relative neglect of the study of age as a social identity is not just characteristic of Classical Studies, but is also prevalent "within social sciences, where the adult was taken as the norm, the idea of the child unproblematicized, and the elderly ignored."²⁰ This neglect has been changing as the work on childhood and gerontology grows in academia.²¹ While some identities can have longevity through a person's lifetime, "age identities are by their very nature expected to change during a person's life."²² One person belongs to multiple age groups in his or her lifetime, and his or her identity will change depending on age.

There are two ways to approach the study of age and aging, 1) through understanding the 'life course,' or the movement through different age identities (sometimes also

¹⁹ Michael Roberts, *The Jeweled Style: Poetry and Poetics in Late Antiquity*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), 38.

²⁰ Louise Revell, *Ways of Being Roman: Discourses of Identity in the Roman West*, (Oxford and Philadelphia: Oxbow Books, 2016), 127.

²¹ Revell, *Ways of Being Roman*, 127. See also C. Jenks, *Childhood*, (London: Routledge, 1996), S. Arber and J. Ginn, "'Only connect': Gender Relations and Ageing," in *Connecting Gender and Ageing: A Sociological Approach*, edited by S. Arber and J. Ginn, 1-14, (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1995), J. Moore and E. Scott, *Invisible People and Processes: Writing Gender and Childhood into European Archaeology*, (London: Leicester University Press, 1997), and J. Sofaer Derevenski, ed., *Children and Material Culture*, (London: Routledge, 2000).

²² Revell, *Ways of Being Roman*, 128.

differentiated by gender) marked by transitions of societal rituals, and 2) through reconstructing age groupings within a cultural context from the behaviors and material culture associated with the different categories of age identity.²³ Age identities are often linked with gender, as when a person reaches a particular stage in the life course his or her gender determines what societal rituals and identities he or she will engage in going forward. Social context also determines when the stages in one's life course occurs. For example, the numerical age at which a person progresses from childhood to adulthood will differ based on the requirements of the adulthood within each society. Sometimes this transition to adulthood is marked by numerical age (age 18 or 21 in modern society for example), by a physiological transition (a menarche in a girl, or a boy's first shave, as in a Roman's assumption of the *toga virilis*), or by a social transition (entering college or into a marriage).²⁴ Tombstones and the epitaphs upon them provide a look into the ways in which the Romans recognized different life stages. 'Age-statements' and age-bias (some ages are represented more frequently than others)²⁵ on epitaphs might not be helpful to pinpoint the demographics of the population, but they do indicate what ages were commemorated more often. Commemorative patterns do not conform to what scholars know of the demographic reality.²⁶ Such attention to a specific age group (and

²³ Revell, *Ways of Being Roman*, 128. See also J. Sofaer Derevenski, "Rings of Life: The Role of Early Metalwork in Mediating the Gendered Life Course," *World Archaeology* 31.3 (2000): 389-406, M. Harlow and R. Laurence, *Growing Up and Growing Old in Ancient Rome*, (London: Routledge, 2002), and R. Gowland, "Aging in the Past: Examining Age Identity from Funerary Evidence," in *Social Archaeology of Funerary Remains*, edited by R. Gowland and C. Knusel, 143-154, (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2006).

²⁴ Revell, *Ways of Being Roman*, 128.

²⁵ Revell, 129. See also Keith Hopkins, "Graveyard for Historians," in *La mort, les mortes et l'au-delà dans le monde romain*, edited by F. Hinard, 113-26, (Caen: Center de publications de l'université de Caen, 1987).

²⁶ Brent Shaw, "The Cultural Meaning of Death: Age and Gender in the Roman Family," in *The Family in Italy: From Antiquity to Present*, edited by D. I. Kertzer and R. P. Saller, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991): 66-90.

perhaps gender) in commemoration would suggest a significance of that particular age-identity in society.

The authors of the epitaphs in my collection identify these girls and women as young (ages five to nineteen) by emphasizing the suddenness and prematurity of their deaths (with *acerba dies*, *arta dies*, *festina nimis*, etc.). Some have reached womanhood, as they have been married, and some even gave birth (though perhaps they did not survive this process). Others are still young enough to be considered children but venerated with virtues characteristic of women. How do they fit within the grander scheme of Roman epitaph age identities and demographics? While there are not many comprehensive studies of verse epitaphs commemorating young people, there are some which focus on selected areas and time periods. While only approximately 43,000 of 180,000 epitaphs record numerical age at death (20-30%),²⁷ epitaphs also include phrases and ‘age-statements’ that indicate that the deceased belonged to a certain age group to designate their living (and now immortalized) identity.²⁸ In analysis of three regions from central Italy (Samnium, Picenum, and Umbria), the mean age at death seems to be “generally between 20 to 30 years old for Rome and Italy,”²⁹ but “the peak in commemoration of age is for those who die between the ages of 15 and 30 years.”³⁰ From this same sample of epitaphs from areas in central Roman Italy, Louise Revell found that 83% of the total number of age-statements commemorated ages 15 to 30 years old, with a higher percentage for women (87.7%) than for men (80.7%).³¹ The study does not indicate the

²⁷ Keith Hopkins, “Graveyard for Historians,” in *La mort, les mortes et l’au-delà dans le monde romain*, edited by F. Hinard (Caen: Centre de publications de l’Université de Caen, 1987): 113-26.

²⁸ Revell, *Ways of Being Roman*, 129.

²⁹ Revell, *Ways of Being Roman*, 129.

³⁰ Revell, *Ways of Being Roman*, 130.

³¹ Revell, *Ways of Being Roman*, 130.

broad societal demographics, but rather the demographics of the subset of people commemorated epigraphically. The prominence of the age group of those from 15 to 30 years old indicates that this age at death had significance. As studies have gone outside of Roman Italy, the pattern of age commemoration differs, suggesting a different cultural belief about that particular life course. Findings from Baetica (a western province of the Roman empire) show that while there was still emphasis on those who died in their late teens to early 20s, that emphasis is less pronounced than in Rome (only 47.55% of the age-statements in *Conventus Cordubensis*, southern province of Baetica).³² In Baetica there is also a rise of inscriptions for men in their 50s. These contrasting findings reveal that in different areas attitudes toward life stages varied.³³

Funerary epitaphs of Rome and Roman Italy seem consistently to commemorate girls and young women over other age (e.g. middle aged) and gender identities (e.g. male). In Trout's analysis of verse epitaphs from San Agnese in Rome, females are commemorated twice as much as males, and at a younger age than men.³⁴ During the resurgence of the epigraphic habit, "fourth- and fifth-century epitaphs show an increased tendency for husbands to commemorate wives and for parents to commemorate children."³⁵ The rise in commemorating young women demonstrates a commemorative pattern which indicates the importance of the nuclear family as a social unit in late antiquity.³⁶ During late antiquity, the use of verse inscriptions was revived in popularity not just for funerary

³² Revell, *Ways of Being Roman*, 132.

³³ Revell, *Ways of Being Roman*, 132.

³⁴ Dennis Trout, "'Being Female': Verse Commemoration at the Coemeterium S. Agnetis (Via Nomentana)," in *Being Christian in Late Antiquity: A Festschrift for Gillian Clark*, edited by Carol Harrison, Caroline Humfress, and Isabella Sandwell, 215-34 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 219.

³⁵ Trout, "Being Female," 220.

³⁶ See B. Shaw, "Latin Funerary Epigraphy and Family Life in the Later Roman Empire," *Historia* 33 (1984): 457-97.

epitaphs, but for other forms of monumentalizing especially amongst the aristocracy.³⁷

The parallel dominance of commemorations to young women in late antiquity suggest the rising popularity of commemorating this group above other age identities.³⁸

Identification of Victims of Untimely Death

The commemoration of young women was part of a larger pattern in literary and epitaphic expression. Louise Revell and Stefanie Martin-Kilcher suggest “that death before the age of 30 years was commemorated as a life which had failed to meet its full potential: that the age of the deceased should be mentioned as more poignant because they had died as or just after they had crossed the transition into adulthood.”³⁹ While commemorators did not often venerate young children, infants, and neonates with epitaphs, they did honor young teenagers with such memorials.⁴⁰ In her extensive study of Roman death, Valerie Hope states “despite the high levels of [children’s] mortality, it was still felt to be against the order of nature for a child to predecease its parents. The loss of a child removed not just future hopes, but also, for some parents, economic security.”⁴¹ One line that was used often on Roman epitaphs of young children, therefore, summarized the frustrated hopes of bereaved parents: “Untimely death made the parent do for the son what the son should have done for his father.”⁴² The parents of these

³⁷ Trout, “Damasus and the Christian Epigram in the West,” 218.

³⁸ “The higher percentage of late ancient husband-to-wife dedications and parental commemorations of children, particularly evident at Rome...do signal clear changes over time in commemorative preferences.” Trout, “Being Female,” 220.

³⁹ Revell, *Ways of Being Roman*, 131.

⁴⁰ For more information on these see Maureen Carroll’s *Infancy and Earliest Childhood in the Roman World: ‘A Fragment of Time’* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018) which suggests that while there are not epitaphs in the same vein as those of older ages, age group of infants and neonates were still venerated, but in distinct ways.

⁴¹ Valerie M. Hope, *Roman Death: The Dying and the Dead in Ancient Rome*, (London: Continuum, 2009), 140.

⁴² Hope, *Roman Death*, 140.

untimely deaths were bereft not only of their children but also of their hopes for the filial duty expected from them.⁴³ The dashed hopes of these parents justifies and fortifies their grief. The epitaphs for children of such ages depicted them almost as young adults, demonstrating the potential adults that they would have otherwise become. The young women of my collection are part of this commemorative pattern. Analyzing the language used in their poetry reveals how poignantly the verses commemorated the tragic deaths of these women. Their commemorators identified them as young women who were never able to fulfill the hopes of their parents or their own dreams. Each individual woman of my collection is mourned and defined by the unfulfillment of her young life.

Individuality and the Tensions between Official and Lived Religion

Academic study of ancient Roman religion, like the study of Christianity, has centered on its role as a civic and public religion, with only the discussion of personal religion coming to the forefront in recent years. Jörg Rüpke's 2016 volume *On Roman Religion: Lived Religion and the Individual in Ancient Rome* turns his analysis of religion to the private realm of individuals. His work developed from the interpretation of lived religion by Michel de Certeau, who stated that lived religion is that of an individual's everyday action. Rüpke explains that within official religion, "the individual is not seen as somebody who simply acquires and reproduces established or normative ways of thinking or acting; instead, hegemonic as well as alternative options are evaluated, selected, and transformed for the individuals' purposes."⁴⁴ An active participation within

⁴³ Hope, *Roman Death*, 140.

⁴⁴ Jörg Rüpke, *On Roman Religion: Lived Religion and the Individual in Ancient Rome*, (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2016), 4.

the public religion is required by the individual, as he or she uses the tools of religious behavior passed down or presented to them for their own personal expression of the public religious framework. Lived religion reflects the fluidity and discursiveness of religious traditions in everyday life.⁴⁵ In the understanding of religion from an individualistic standpoint, “religion is to be reconstructed as everyday experiences, practices, expression and interactions; these in turn constantly redefine religion as practice, idea, and community.”⁴⁶ The epitaphs of my collection represent individuals cast in the landscape of early Christianity and navigating the waters of being Roman in a Christian world and being Christian in a Roman world. These Roman women’s identities cross multiple boundaries but remain unique.

In my dissertation, I focus on how Rüpke’s argument can be employed not just for ancient Roman traditional religion, but also for the early Roman Christians of late antiquity. He states that the lived religion of antiquity, “[served] individuals who employed religion as a resource for many a purpose, who tried to find their places in and beyond traditions, or who tried to define those very traditions for successful communication with the divine as well as with their unquestionably relevant human contemporaries.”⁴⁷ The individual makes up the collective group, and the collective group informs the individual of options with which to engage. For Christians, the afterlife provided a hopeful future to which they could turn for true alleviation from fear of death.

⁴⁵ “Lived ancient religion thus offers a framework within which we can address the whole range of religious practices and conceptions, not as sets of fixed rules or beliefs, but as a permanently changing field of individual actions, inceptive traditions, monumental examples, and incoherent assumptions. Lived ancient religion is as much about variation or even outright deviance as it is about the attempts and failures to establish or change rules and roles and to communicate these via public authorities or literary discourse.” Rüpke, *On Roman Religion*, 5.

⁴⁶ Rüpke, *On Roman Religion*, 4.

⁴⁷ Rüpke, *On Roman Religion*, 7.

In his *City of God*, Augustine explains that the “eternal blessedness” promised through Christ’s resurrection does not just imply an everlasting time period. This eternal life, “is the quality of relationship with Christ, the depth of love between God and God’s children, and an existence that begins at the moment of redemption (according to a Christological and not an anthropological chronology). It is independent of natural life, so that we will live even as we shall die (see John 5:24-29 and 6:68).”⁴⁸ The type of eternal and happy afterlife mentioned here can be reached through active work towards virtue, as “eternal life begins already in the here and now.”⁴⁹ In my selected epitaphs, there is a focus on the merits by which one will (or has) attain(ed) the heavens. Merits recorded on stone do not just remember the dead, but they also solidify the requirements in life to achieve eternal life *post mortem*. The collection of the epitaphs in this dissertation reveals how the community of late antique, young women influence the individuals discussed here, and how the venerators identify the women as unique persons belonging to and appropriating a greater religious scheme.

Identification as part of the feminine gender is another focal point in the epitaphs. The commemorated young women are venerated by virtues associated with Roman women found in many other epitaphs (*pudor, castas, dulcissima, fidelis*, etc.), but that also have ties to early Christianity. It is clear from the language that traditional feminine roles in Roman society continued to be upheld in late antique and early Christian Rome. Rodney Stark argues that women played a prominent role in determining how

⁴⁸ François Bovon, “The Soul’s Comeback: Immortality and Resurrection in Early Christianity,” *The Harvard Theological Review*, 103.4 (2010), 400.

⁴⁹ Bovon, “The Soul’s Comeback,” 400-401.

Christianity rose to its prominent state as a religion from a smaller existence.⁵⁰ He explains that classical authors and modern scholars alike, “recognized that Christianity was unusually appealing [to women] because within the Christian subculture women enjoyed far higher status than did women in the Greco-Roman world at large.”⁵¹ With more women converting to Christianity, there were more women in the early church who carved out positions and roles for themselves in lived religion. Women could have roles as deaconesses (usually widows) and consecrated virgins, and helped others to convert.⁵² In fact, Stark attributes the prominence of Christianity to the role women played in creating “secondary conversions” in the fourth and fifth centuries.⁵³ Because there were more women in the Christian community than men, Stark claims, they must have married outside of their faith out of necessity (especially high-class Roman women would have needed to marry in their class to keep status). Through an exogenous marriage, a woman could convert her husband after their marriage and raise their children as Christians, modeling for them not just official religion, but their personal practices. Whether or not Stark’s numbers are correct, his assertion that women played a prominent role in early Christianity is an important point and did aid in turning the lens of scholarship to the positions women had within their communities.

⁵⁰ Rodney Stark, “Reconstructing the Rise of Christianity: The Role of Women,” *Sociology of Religion* 56.3 (1995), 229. Reactions to Stark’s argument appear in *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 6.2 (1998). While he does attempt to look at Christianity using sociological techniques to see how the religion would have developed, he tends to make his mathematical assumptions using the higher estimates, rather than the lower or medium estimates. For more in-depth criticism and critique on his chapter please see Todd E. Klutz, “The Rhetoric of Science in *The Rise of Christianity*: A Response to Rodney Stark’s Sociological Account of Christianization,” *JECS* 6.2 (1998): 162-184, Keith Hopkins, “Christian Number and its Implications,” *JECS* 6.2 (1998): 185-226, and Elizabeth A. Castelli, “Gender, Theory, and The Rise of Christianity: A Response to Rodney Stark,” *JECS* 6.2 (1998): 227-257.

⁵¹ Stark, “Reconstructing the Rise of Christianity,” 231.

⁵² Stark, “Reconstructing the Rise of Christianity,” 235-240.

⁵³ Stark, *Reconstructing the Rise of Christianity*, 240.

Continuity and Discontinuity of Ritual Practices

For both pagan and Christian Romans, death did not necessarily mean the end of participating in Roman life. The way Romans deal with the dead in their religious rituals, laws, and private behaviors differ from the customs of contemporary civilizations. Not all ancient societies and civilizations remember their dead with inscribed memorials and rituals commemorating their ancestors. Valerie Hope's description of rituals dedicated to the dead in traditional Roman religion shows that "ideally there was to be a continuing relationship between the living and the dead. Epitaphs spoke to the living, acting as reminders of the common fate of man ... and tombs could encourage the living to stop, sit and read the epitaph or to tend their graves and remember."⁵⁴ With not just the physical presence of epitaphs, tombs, and ancestral masks, but also with the rituals dedicated to them, the dead remained a prominent and continuous part of the living community in Rome. Mario Eramo's work asserts that "we can reconstruct the symbolic presence of the dead in both public and private contexts as a reflection of the extent to which the dead were reintegrated into society and of how the deceased ancestors, in turn, integrated the newly deceased back into the family at his funeral."⁵⁵ This is true about the epitaphs and literature of early Christians as well.⁵⁶ Some rituals remained similar to

⁵⁴ Hope, *Roman Death*, 115.

⁵⁵ Mario Eramo, "Among the dead in ancient Rome," *Mortality* 6.1 (2001): 41.

⁵⁶ In fact, Eramo suggests that a further study of early Christian evidence "would yield fascinating examples of the extent to which ancient Roman customs influenced emerging Christian beliefs and rituals" (41). For more, see Ramsey MacMullen, *The Second Church: Popular Christianity A.D. 200-400. Writings from the Greco-Roman World Supplements 1* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009), Eric Rebillard, *The Care of the Dead in Late Antiquity*, translated by Elizabeth Trapnell Rawlings and Jeanine Routier-Pucci, (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2003), and Jeremiah Mutie, "Attitudes toward

those of pagan religion, and there persisted the same aspect of the dead continuing their role in the living community *post mortem*. In their continuation in rituals with the living, the dead were not prevented “from continuing to participate in Roman life and this reintegration of the dead into society appears in private and public contexts.”⁵⁷ The growth of the cult of the martyrs perpetuated a connection to dead, virtuous people (the saints) and those still living. Pilgrimage to the sites of martyr burials, shrines, or other places associated with their lives became a popular form for the connection between the living and the dead (it is even still practiced today). For those early Christians who were not martyrs, their loved ones could still connect with them after death. Origen, a third-century theologian, described how the living invoked the souls of the dead to join in with their common prayers.⁵⁸ Through Christian cult the dead remained involved in the affairs of the living, just like the dead of traditional Roman religion. In everyday prayer, deceased Christians were included as part of the living’s daily ritual. The Parentalia, a celebration where family and friends gathered at the tombs of the deceased and shared a meal, was celebrated among Roman pagans and early Christians alike.⁵⁹ Christians, however, also used this celebration to venerate the martyrs. In his *De spectaculis*, Tertullian, a third century Christian apologist, seems to suggest that Christians should not participate in the cult of the dead as it could be considered one of the forms of idolatry (bringing offerings to tombs). However, he “leaves the door wide open for the passive

Death in Greco-Roman and Early Christian Cultures,” *Pakistan Journal of Historical Studies* 2.2 (2017): 89-115.

⁵⁷ Erasmo, “Among the dead in ancient Rome,” 31.

⁵⁸ Origen *De oratione* 31, 5. Text and translation by Yvette Duval, *Auprès des saints corps et âme: l'inhumation "ad sanctos" dans la chrétienté d'Orient et d'Occident du IIIe au VIIe siècle*, (Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1988), 213: “ici, ce sont les âmes des morts qui prennent part à la prière commune particulièrement agréable à Dieu.”

⁵⁹ Eric Rebillard, *The Care of the Dead in Late Antiquity*, translated by Elizabeth Trapnell Rawlings and Jeanine Routier-Pucci, (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2003), 142.

attendance by Christians at funerary banquets, since taking part could be considered a family or social obligation.”⁶⁰ Christians of the third, fourth, and fifth centuries could have family members who were not of the same faith. The bishops Zeno and Gaudentius, however, openly asserted that participation in the meals for the dead were practices in pagan cult and “of a magical and superstitious nature.”⁶¹ While there were differences in opinion about the nature of whether Christians should participate in the cult of the dead (with its ‘pagan’ origins), Rebillard states that overall, “it does seem that Christians saw in the banquets of the *parentalia* merely an opportunity to share a meal and honor their dead.”⁶² In this way, participation in the *Parentalia* continued the connection between the living and the dead.

The *Parentalia* demonstrates continuity in ritual practice, and, while not all practices or beliefs remained the same, the act of continuing participation with the dead to console the living persisted. In the study of ancient consolation literature, scholars have found that, whether rhetorical or philosophical in their basis, consolatory texts are defined by their “soothing of the survivors and the celebration of the dead person.”⁶³ Not all philosophical ideas of the soul and afterlife are found in consolatory texts, as not all of them provide the comfort needed for the bereaved. For example, reincarnation is not found often in these writings because, “if life on earth is a reincarnation, and this in turn is the punishment of sins committed in a previous life, this would mean attributing such sins to the departed, since he was born in this world. But this would offend, rather than

⁶⁰ Rebillard, *The Care of the Dead in Late Antiquity*, 143-144. Tertullian *De spectaculis* 13.3-4.

⁶¹ Rebillard, *The Care of the Dead in Late Antiquity*, 145.

⁶² Rebillard, *The Care of the Dead in Late Antiquity*, 145.

⁶³ A. Setaioli, “The Fate of the Soul in Ancient ‘Consolations’ Rhetorical Handbooks and the Writers,” *Prometheus* 31 (2005), 260.

soothe, his surviving relatives.”⁶⁴ Other philosophical understandings of life and death are often used in such texts to comfort the bereaved by venerating the dead and remarking on their virtues in life. Unlike most consolatory texts, Plutarch’s consolation to his wife uses the idea of reincarnation in order to venerate their young daughter. Plutarch affirms his belief in the immortality allotted through the mystery cult of Dionysus, to which he belonged (*Cons. ad uxor.* 10, 611 DE). Plutarch says their young daughter is spared the reincarnation given “as a punishment for souls who have polluted themselves by a sinful life” because her young life did not provide her any time to stain her innocent soul.⁶⁵ Since she died so young, she remains innocent and pure for her eternal days. Plutarch aims to comfort his wife in the immortalization of his daughter in his letter and in the presentation of the belief that she will live forever. Seneca also uses the *topos* that those who die young did not have time to commit sins in their short lives (*ad Marciam* 23.1). While Seneca does not discuss reincarnation here, he tells Marcia that her son, like Plutarch’s daughter, stays sinless forever and already enjoys the permanent, happy afterlife (*ad Marciam* 26.7). For both Marcia’s son and Plutarch’s daughter, their sudden deaths at a young age present them as particularly virtuous individuals, not having the time to incur sins. Because of their sinlessness, these youths are rewarded with a blissful afterlife, not needing to suffer after death as others might. The texts which venerate them stand out from other consolatory texts to parallel their different deaths. As will be seen throughout my dissertation, the epitaphs of the collection are also distinguished by the ways in which they describe the deceased and comfort the bereaved. As victims of a

⁶⁴ Setaioli, “The Fate of the Soul in Ancient Consolations,” 260.

⁶⁵ Setaioli, “The Fate of the Soul in Ancient Consolations,” 261.

particularly tragic type of death, these people and their grieving loved ones are worthy of special attention, mention, and care.

Modern and Ancient Attitudes towards Grief and Mourning

Funerary poetry especially engages the curiosity of the modern scholar in respect to its expression of grief and mourning. Studies in modern grief and mourning can never illuminate what truly happened in the minds of the ancients but combined with new studies sensitive to the emotional and spiritual aspects of memorials and epitaphs they still reveal insights into the hearts and minds of an ancient griever. In order to attempt a study concerning the innerworkings of ancient Roman emotions, we must first recognize that time, place, and cultural norms severely separate their world from ours, no matter how similar they might seem. Recent studies on modern expressions of grief and mourning have influenced the studies on such emotions in the ancient world. Some of these modern theories by psychologists fall in line with ancient theories yet room for difference remains. David Konstan has observed that “to the extent that grief is a genuine emotion, in the richly cognitive sense in which ancient philosophers and a great many modern psychologists understand the word, it may well vary from one society to another, and assume different forms as it is modulated or inflected by cultural values and contexts.”⁶⁶ There seem to be some similarities between modern and late antique expressions of grief and ritualistic mortuary practices. Setting up stones as burial markers for example is generally considered to be “an expression of continuing care for the deceased and ... a way to offer comfort to the bereaved.”⁶⁷ The stone’s materiality serves

⁶⁶ Konstan, “Understanding Grief in Greece and Rome,” 8.

⁶⁷ Anna Petersson and Carola Wingren, “Designing a memorial place: Continuing care, passage landscapes and future memories,” *Mortality* 16 (2011), 55. See also J.-O. Aggedal, “En nödvändig i kistan – något om människors och kyrkans trostolkning i väntan på en större undersökning,” in *På spaning – från Svenska*

as a representation of the presence of the deceased continuing the link between the living and the dead.⁶⁸ Bereaved parents, a modern study by Riches and Dawson found, “gain a stigmatized status – becoming an object of pity, embarrassment, avoidance and possibly even blame.”⁶⁹ Modern parents who have lost a child must deal with a “search for meaning” induced by the sudden death, adjusting their own self-identity in the wake of their change in social status. They are shown to be “particularly vulnerable to loss of self-esteem, to feelings of intense despair and to disorientation.”⁷⁰ For bereaved parents of the modern time period, “language, whether verbal or non-verbal, provides both the emotional resources through which personal change is negotiated, and the intellectual resources through which fractured reality is repaired.”⁷¹ Riches and Dawson also concluded that women in modern societies are the “chief mourners,” whereas men tend not to express grief outwardly in the same ways.⁷² The letters of Plutarch and Jerome to women mourners describe the same assumption concerning women’s public expressions of mourning.

Other similarities between modern and some ancient Roman understandings of grief include the attitudes towards untimely deaths and comfort in visions of the afterlife. Modern understandings of untimely deaths stand opposed to natural deaths because “sudden and unexpected deaths present survivors with emotional and physical health

kyrkanus forskardagar 2005, 59-75, (Stockholm: Verbum Förlag, 2006), and R. Bachelor, *Sorrow and Solace: The Social World of the Cemetery*, (New York: Baywood Publishing Company, 2004).

⁶⁸ Petersson and Wingren, “Designing a Memorial Place,” 55. See also D. Francis, L. Kellaher, and G. Neophytou, *The Secret Cemetery*, (Oxford: Berg, 2005) and M. Gibson, “Melancholy Objects,” *Mortality* 9.4 (2004): 285-299.

⁶⁹ Gordon Riches and Pam Dawson, “Communities of Feeling: The Culture of Bereaved Parents,” *Mortality* 1.2 (1996), 144.

⁷⁰ Riches and Dawson, “Communities of Feeling,” 145.

⁷¹ Riches and Dawson, “Communities of Feeling,” 145.

⁷² Riches and Dawson, “Communities of Feeling,” 145.

problems which may remain evident over the long-term course of adjustment for parents and siblings.”⁷³ The parents in this collection of late antique epitaphs express the pain of the untimely deaths of their children. With lives cut short and hopes unfulfilled, these parents (and husbands in the case of young wives) might find comfort in the language carved upon the stones. Modern sentiments such as “It is nice to know I have a daughter amongst the angels to look after the rest of the family” seem to reflect the same image that many early Christians ones do.⁷⁴ In this modern example, a mother is comforted through her imagining her daughter in a happy afterlife, safe among the heavens. The descriptions of loved ones rising to heaven also appears in early Christian epitaphs to aid in alleviating the grief of the bereaved. The epitaphs of my collections are examples of these celestial images that claim that these young women dwell in the starry heavens, rather than having to await the final judgement day.

The Individual Girls and Women of the Collection

The collective group of young, Christian women, like any group, is comprised of individuals, and, the parameters, boundaries, and requirements of the group would not be known or understood without knowing these individuals. Epitaphs are not full biographies, as space upon stone is limited and epigraphic authors are selective on the biographical details they present. Through verse epitaphs we gain a glimpse into the personal lives of young women and girls of my collection that prose epitaphs cannot

⁷³ Stephen Handsley, ““But what about us?” The Residual Effects of Sudden Death on Self-Identity and Family Relationships,” *Mortality*, 6 (2001), 26.

⁷⁴ Riches and Dawson, “Communities of Feeling,” 156.

provide. Below I recall a few details of these women's personal lives recorded by the epitaph writers:

Marica (1), a young wife of nineteen, is mourned by her husband. He weeps at the loss of his wife, and therefore his life, he writes. With only a few lines, her epitaph evokes the pain that her husband feels at her death. Simplicia's epitaph (2) states that, at the age of fourteen, she had chosen to renounce suitors and children. She chose to consecrate herself to god, and through this life choice, her commemorator claims she has achieved the merits by which she is brought to heaven after her death. Because of her effectiveness at running their household Florentina's (3) husband appreciated and commemorated her. Florentina's faithfulness to her husband and her ability to manage their house effectively allowed him to be free to study and engage in civil service. When she dies, not just he but also their children and even the house itself mourn her passing. He sings a funeral lament to comfort himself, while at the same time the funeral song sweetly sends her on her way. The parents of young Iuliana (4) tell of their belief in her soul's ascension to Christ and the heavens. Her epitaph states that she was intended to become a consecrated virgin for a while, and that she was consecrated before her death. Due to her status as a consecrated virgin, her parents believe that she already sits at the right hand of Christ. The parents of Arcontia (5) and her brother, Remus, venerated them together. Arcontia was not yet married, although she was of marriageable age. While from Gaul, these young siblings (sixteen and eighteen) had names of Greek and Roman origin. Their commemorators blend the foreign and Roman identities together as they bury these victims of untimely deaths at the S. Agnese catacombs in Rome. Evodia (6), a young girl, consoles her parents in her own epitaph and describes a pleasant scene of her

eternal, youthful activities of dancing the chorus. Theodote (7) died when she only just five years old, suffering from a wound. Her mother laments her loss and consoles herself by mourning and trusting in a pleasant afterlife. Like Theodote, Rhode's (8) mother grieves for her in her funerary poem. Rhode's mother's life is nothing without her, as alone she finds no joy in life. She bids Rhode, her sweet one, goodbye, hoping for her everlasting and celestial rest. Acilia Babiana (9) was seventeen years old when she died. Her husband says that Acilia pursued him over any other man, something unusual enough for him to make special mention of it. He laments that they were married for only one year and three months and grieves the suddenness of her death. Lea (10) was nine years old and a consecrated virgin when she died. No relevant data is known about the woman of *meam amice* (11) except that her conversational epitaph addresses her friend.

Pontia's epitaph (12) is the first of the collection found outside of Rome (in Spoleto, Umbria). Her husband writes (or commissions) the epitaph to praise Pontia in two stanzas appearing on two separate panels of her sarcophagus (see Appendix A.12 for a visual image). While the first stanza praises Pontia with virtues typically associated with women, the second stanza is more personal and specific to Pontia. Pontia and her husband have been married less than ten years (placing her age most likely in her mid-twenties); She has followed him from Corsica to Trier. Pontia's father apparently wanted her to divorce her husband, but the epitaph claims she would rather commit suicide than leave her husband. Pontia's story demonstrates her devoted loyalty to her husband. Carice's (13) parents, Pictius Iber and Ianuaria, set up her epitaph in Urbino (another place in Umbria). Carice was only six years and eight months old when she returned to the earth. Although the image of her returning to the earth is a Roman traditional view of

death, her stone dates no earlier than the fourth century. Finally, Regina (14) married Albinus, and, after he died, she did not remarry and was always faithful to him. Her children, who seem to have been born after the death of Albinus, were his children and retained his noble name. She and her children did not last long, but they are buried together and share in the eternal joys of heaven, the epitaph says. As a young wife, perhaps she died from complications during childbirth, as childbirth was a commonly stated as a cause of death for women in epitaphs in the ancient world.⁷⁵ These few personal details of the young women presented here might not give much concrete information about their everyday lives, but the poetic verses commemorating them reveal the heart of who they were during life. These verses create a snapshot by which their loved ones and scholars can remember aspects of the women's virtues, expectations for their lives, and the women's (and their loved ones') individual beliefs about death.

Dissertation Organization

The following chapters aim to examine thoroughly the fourteen epitaphs through literary analysis, building upon the foundations of scholars of late antique epigraphy and identity studies. The next chapter, **Chapter 2: Fourteen Verse Epitaphs**, serves as an in-depth presentation of each inscription. Below I present the best textual edition, commentary, and my own translation. I include the date of each epitaph, its findspot or

⁷⁵ Childbirth was dangerous for both mother and child, one or both parties could die due to complications. Keith Hopkins claims that tombstones tend to commemorate women who died during childbirth, overexaggerating scholar's perception of the percentage of women who died in childbirth. Keith Hopkins, "Graveyard for Historians," *La Mort, les morts et au-delà dans le monde romain*, ed. François Hinard (Caen: Centre de Publications, 1987), 112. and Sarah Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves: Women in Classical Antiquity*, (New York: Shockten Books, 1995 and 1975), 169. To see more about ancient obstetrics please see Donald Todman, "Childbirth in ancient Rome: From Traditional Folklore to Obstetrics," *Anzjog* 47.2 (2007): 82-85.

original location, and if it is no longer extant, in which text it was preserved. The corpus and the presentation of it is the foundation upon which the rest of my dissertation is built. The third chapter, **Poetic Sense and Sensibility**, describes the literary prowess of these verse epitaphs as they interact with poetic constructions and literary devices of the late antique age. A discussion of the literary tradition and new styles of early Christian and late antique poetics sets the stage for the analysis of these epitaphs. **Chapter 4: Grief and Memory in Verse Epitaphs** deals with the epitaphs as consolatory texts. The emotive power of the epitaphs coincides with the linguistic formulae (*immatura poma, mersit acerba dies*) which recognizes these girls and women as victims of untimely death. The authors of the poems construct evocative scenes and use *pathos*-inducing language that console the bereaved parties and offer hope for the young women's eternal afterlives. The final chapter, **Conclusion: Knocking on Heaven's Door**, concludes that the girls and women of the fourteen verse epitaphs studied here all died without having fulfilled all that their lives were supposed to hold. They are therefore fashioned in these poems as victims of untimely death and as belonging to the age-identity of girls and young women. The women's parents, husbands, and society itself had expectations for them and the roles they were meant to fulfill. These girls and women seemed to have begun to fulfill these roles and engaged in virtues (which ultimately led them to their afterlives), but the deaths of the women are tragic and deserve special mourning because the women were not able to complete their tasks. Whether a consecrated virgin, wife, or mother, each of the women of my collection were meant to help serve Christ, their children, or their husbands in the religious and domestic sphere. These victims of untimely deaths are particularly tragic because they did not fulfill what they set out to do, or what was

expected of them. I argue that my collection serves as a survey in a subgenre of verse epitaphs in late antique poetics. These poems not only aim to console the bereaved and honor the dead, but they also engage with the late antique revival of (classical) Latin literature in order to develop a way in which to properly acknowledge these types of deaths.

Belonging

My study provides value as an in-depth examination of the epitaphs of fourteen individuals who have not been considered in such a way before. It illuminates the ways people venerated women in poetry, demonstrating women's importance in the community. These poems reveal the beliefs of the time period and insights into the role of women in society, as well as demonstrating the power of poetry in creating an important identity for young women who otherwise have no voice in history. The girls and young women of my collection were not prominent enough in late antique society to have made it into our textbooks, but the poems venerating them show the influence the women had on the lives they touched while alive. Though recalling only a few details of the individual women of my collection, the poetic epitaphs reveal the power of words to commemorate and console people of the fourth and fifth centuries CE. There is still more work to be done in order to understand the breath and expanse of the ways in which the people of late antiquity blurred the lines between the dichotomies of Christian and pagan, young and old, man and woman, elite and non-elite, Roman and non-Roman, but inscriptions are one critical source for exploring what the everyday lives of the women may have been like.

Chapter 2

Fourteen Verse Epitaphs: Texts, Translations, and Commentary

In the following catalog, the entry for each text includes a reference to the best critical edition, my own translation, parallels to Classical poetry and to other funerary epitaphs, and a commentary on dating, original location, physical appearance, and modern location. The reasons each has been chosen as exemplary will become evident in the course of the study, but a physical contextualization of each is required beforehand. I will begin in Rome and end with inscriptions from Milan, moving north. The Roman texts are organized in order of roads and cemeteries. For those texts which have a visual representation in photographic form, an Appendix number has been given that corresponds to Appendix A, where an image can be found.

1. Marcia's short epitaph

ICUR 7.17443 = *CLE* 663 = *ILCV* 4743 = *EDB* 18154

<http://www.edb.uniba.it/epigraph/18154>

Via Tiburtina; Catacomb of Cyriaca at San Lorenzo; 363 CE

Preserved only in an early modern copy: see de Rossi 1 (1861) 89.160

qui gemitu tristi lacrimis te deflet in oras
dulci coniugio quaeritur se luce relictum
.....[coni]una
sobria cas[ta].....

Marcia quae vixit annos XVIII et m(enses) X
dep(osita) kal(endas) sept(embres) Iuliano aug IIII et Sallustio

He who weeps for you with a sad groan and with tears hour by hour,
laments that he has lost his sweet wife, his life
.....wife
prudent and chaste

Marcia who lived nineteen years and ten months

was laid to rest on the kalends of September,
in the consulship of Julianus Augustus, for the fourth time, and Sallustius.

Parallels

Literary Attestations: 1. Horace, *Ars Poetica* 160, *colligit ac ponit temere et mutatur in horas.*; Vergil, *Eclogues* 10.73 *amor tantum mihi crescit in horas.*

Epitaphs: 4. CLE 1622 *anus religiose rite carne deuicta in sobria, fama casta.*

The inscription above, dedicated to a young woman named Marcia of nineteen years and ten months, remains solely as a drawing in the *ICUR*, but was originally found in the Catacombs of Cyriaca, underneath present-day San Lorenzo f.l.m. The verse selection is four lines of dactylic hexameter, though the third and fourth lines are largely lost. The subscription stands out from the verse epitaph and states Marcia's age at death and the date of her deposition, a typical occurrence on epitaphs, verse or prose.

The above translation assumes several spelling mistakes on part of the carver or author. In the first line *oras* could be a feminine plural form of *os*, *oris*, (rather than the normative *ora*), thus resulting in the translation: "He who weeps for you with a sad groan and with tears on his cheeks." On the other hand, *oras* could be an alternate spelling of *horas*, as the 'h' sometimes was dropped from spelling. This translation is reflected above as "every hour" or "hour by hour" following, for example, Horace's (*Ars Poetica* 160) or Vergil's (*Ecl.* 10.73) use of the idiom. In line two, *quaeritur* must be understood as *queritur*, because the 'e' needs to be short in order to fit the dactylic hexameter as well as to allow the meaning make sense, as "lament" instead of "seek." That line also includes an ablative of separation, *luce*, going with *relictum* and in apposition with *dulci coniugio*, poetically referring to the husband who has been separated from his young wife. Line three is mostly unreadable except for last three letters, *una*. These letters have been emendated by Diehl (*ILCV*) to be *unx*, and thus conjectured to have made up the

word *coniunx*. Diehl's emendation is widely accepted by other editors of this text and the translation reflects this understanding, while retaining the original copy of the stone's words.

2. An unmarried daughter, Simplicia

ICUR 7.18044 = AE 1987, 50 = AE 1980, 138 = Lebek 1987 = EDB30596 = EDH006489
<http://www.edb.uniba.it/epigraph/30596>
<https://edh-www.adw.uni-heidelberg.de/edh/inschrift/HD006489>
http://db.edcs.eu/epigr/edcs_id.php?s_sprache=en&p_edcs_id=EDCS-08900084

Via Tiburtina; Catacomb of Cyriaca at San Lorenzo; late-fourth century – early-fifth century CE

Appendix A.2; San Lorenzo f.l.m, Rome, Italy. *Vidi*

asperna(ta) procos subolem neglexit habere
 subiecit pedibus corporis insidias
 nam quater haec decies minus uno consule vix(it)
 quam festin(a) nimis mersit acerba dies
 mentis pro m(e)ritis animam rebocavit ad astra
 Simpli[ci]ae tantum membr[a] tenet tumulu[s]

Having spurned her suitors, she refused to have children,
 and she trampled underfoot threats of her body.
 She lived for one consul less than fourteen,
 she whom a bitter day submerged too hastily.
 She has recalled her spirit to the stars through the merits of her mind,
 this grave contains only the limbs of Simplicia.

Parallels

Literary Attestations: 4. Vergil, *Aeneid*, 6.429 and 11.28 *abstulit atra dies et funere mersit acerbo* 5. Vergil, *Aeneid*, 9.641-2 *macte nova virtute, puer: sit itur ad astra, / dis genite et geniture deos*; Vergil, *Eclogues* 5.50-1 *Daphninque tuum tollemus ad astra; / Daphnin ad astra feremus: amavit nos quoque Daphnis*; Seneca, *Hercules Furens* 276, *subitusque ad astra emerget; inveniet viam*; Seneca, *Hercules Furens* 437, *non est ad astra mollis e terris via.*; Ovid, *Amores*, 3.9.27 *Hunc quoque summa dies nigro submersit Averno.*; Prudentius, *Liber Cathemerinon*, 3.201-205 *ignea christus ad astra vocat.*; Prudentius, *Liber Cathemerinon*, 10.845-846 *Ac primum facili referuntur ad astra volatu / unde fluens anima structum vegetaverat Adam.*; Silius Italicus, *Punica*, 15.100 *me cinctus lauro producit ad astra Triumphus*;

Epitaphs: 2. *CLE* 608 = *CIL* 14.3333.2 *apstulit atra dies et aceruo funere mersit.*; *CLE* 682.7 *abstulit atra dies et aceruo funere mersit.*; *CLE* 732.4 *astulit atra dies et acerbo*

funere mersit.; CLE 813 *abstulit a luce atra dies et funere mersit aceruo.*; CLE 2001; 2002; Harper 5 = ICUR 8.20819 = CLE 1355.2 *quos uno Lachesis mersit acerba die.*; Harper 7 = ICUR 8.23066 = CLE 1401.2 *unius huic lustris uix fuit arta dies*; Harper 8 = ICUR 9.24125 = CLE 737.1 *O Rhode dulcis anima aceruo mihi funere rapta*; 5. CLE 669.2 *uitam dum casta Afrodite, / fecit ad astra uiam, Christi modo gaudet in aula.*; CLE 679.7 *dies uitae se[x, iuit ad astra]*; CLE 785.5 *iam angelic[a specie ferretur ad astra]*; CLE 688.2 *usum / hic carnis spoliū liquit a[d] astra uolans. / spreuit opes, dum quaerit.* CLE 692.3 *membra solo posuit, celi perexit ad astra*; CLE 778.6 *membra solo posuit, caeli perrexit ad astra*; CLE 696.6 *cum pia iubente deo anima migravit ad astra*; CLE 787.42 *insuper exilio decedis martyr ad astra / atque inter patriarchas*; CLE 904.6 *quem perimens rabidus misit ad astra furor.*; CLE 1141.14 *Clotho: infelix mater tollit ad astra manus*; CLE 1834.4 *meus ad caeli] transiuit spi[ritus ad astra]*; CLE 2098.2 *ast animam caelo iungit a[d] astra deus]*; CLE 2099.5 *te tua pro meretis uirtutis ad astra uehebat / intueratque alta debita fama.*

The stone was originally either laid into the pavement of the middle gate or of the atrium to the cloister (ICUR). The current location is still within the cloister of San Lorenzo, affixed to the north wall at the base of the stairwell. The entrance to the catacombs of Cyriaca is approximately eight feet from the placement of this stone. The poem is not carved on the stone in poetic lines, but the text runs continuously across the width of the stone, 59 x 67 cm, with letters approximately 4 cm in height. The carver has placed a small leaf, a hederā, after *habere*, *pedibus*, *insidias*, *vix(it)*, *nimis*, *dies*, *tantum*, and *tenet*. Although the stone offers *asperna* as the first word of this poem, several editors suggest understanding it as *aspernata*, as it would make the meter work. Perhaps it was a mistake by the stonecutter. Translation here reflects the use of *aspernata*. Line four, *mersit acerba dies*, harkens back to Vergil's *Aeneid* 6.429 and 11.28. In line five, *rebocauit* can be understood as *revocabit*, as b and v were switched or interchangeable, a common occurrence during this time period.

3. Florentina, the sweetest wife

ICUR 7.18806 = CLE 1429 = ILCV 417 = EDB 29485

<http://www.edb.uniba.it/epigraph/29485>

Via Tiburtina; Cemetery of Cyriaca at San Lorenzo; fourth century CE
Preserved in a medieval copy: Laureshamensis, de Rossi 2.1 (1888) 118.101

Florentina mihi quondam dulcissima coniunx
et toto penitus pectore fixa meo
te pudor et probitas caram fecere marito
conseruansque toros inuiolata fides
militiae studiis secura mente uacui
creueruntque mei te moderante lares
nunc tua deserti quaerunt solacia nati
ingemit et tristis te moriente domus
suscipe quapropter carmen feral Boniti
quod mihi luctificum est sed tibi dulce nimis

Florentina, once my dearest wife
and fixed deeply within my heart,
modesty and honesty made you precious to your husband
and your unviolated faith kept our marriage bed.
With an untroubled mind I was free for duties of the civil service
and under your guidance my household gods thrived.
Now your abandoned children seek your comforts
and with you dying the sad house groans.
Therefore, receive this funeral song of Bonitus,
which produces grief for me, but sweetness for you.

Parallels

Literary Attestations: 2. Cicero, *de Senectute*, 1.1-3 *O Tite, si quid ego adiuro curamve levasso / quae nunc te coquit et versat in pectore fixa, / ecquid erit praemi;* Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 6.227 *“ei mihi!” conclamat medioque in pectore fixa.*; Paulinus of Nola, *Carmina*, 21.646-8 *multa latent numero, memori tamen omnia nobis/ pectore fixa sedent, et plurima iam memorata, / plura etiam memoranda manent.*

The stone itself has been lost but was most likely in the catacombs of Cyriaca, as the medieval sylloge indicates. The poem is made up of ten lines, five elegiac couplets. With her aid in running the household, Florentina's husband, Bonitus, is carefree and therefore can turn his attention to the civil service and to his studies. Bonitus' appreciation of Florentina's efficient house management influences the definition of *uacui* here. Instead

of translating it as “empty,” its meaning serves well as “open” or “free.” By late antiquity, *militia* was understood not as just military service but as any civil service, as indicated in the above translation. I have taken *lares* of line six as a personification of the entire household. There is a parallel in lines six and eight, with *te moderante* and *te moriente*. The parallel structure in the grammar also parallels Florentina’s state when she was living to her state at death.

4. The consecrated virgin, Iuliana

ICUR 7.18944 = EDB 29790

<http://www.edb.uniba.it/epigraph/29790>

Via Tiburtina; Catacomb of Cyriaca at San Lorenzo; mid-fourth century - mid-fifth century CE

Preserved in a medieval copy: Turonensis, de Rossi 2.1 (1888) 63.7 and 92.61

qui studium tumulis rimati funera fertis
 istic nosse prius busta uerenda sat est
 linquunt namque suis animae uestigia membris
 et miscent meritum corpora mensque suum
 hic iacet a teneris Christo quae creuerat annis
 cui fuit in mundo nescia uita mori
 hanc dum corporei premeret uicinia leti
 sponsa diu nubit per sacra uela deo
 qua rear in Christi dextram te carius ire
 cui fas post thalamos non sit abesse deo
 hic nunc circumdat tumulus sua membra parentum
 ut reddat fructum corpus originibus
 Iuliana virgo ...

You who are searching out burials and desiring monuments,
 it is enough to know that there are venerated tombs here.
 For souls leave behind traces in their limbs,
 and bodies and minds intermingle their merit.
 Here lies one who, from her tender years, grew up in Christ,
 for whom on earth there was a life that knew not how to die.
 While the semblance of corporeal death was pressing upon her,
 betrothed for some time, she wed God through the sacred veil,
 by means of which let me believe that you will proceed dearly into the right hand of
 Christ,

you for whom it may not be permitted to be absent from God after the marriage.
 Now this tomb of your parents surrounds your limbs,
 so that your body may restore its fruit for your origins.
 Virgin Iuliana ...

Parallels

Epitaphs: 4. *CLE* 2099.3 *mens uidet astra, quies tumuli complectitur artus.* 12. *CLE* 1362.5 *astra fouent animam, corpus natura recepit.*

The above poem of elegiac couplets appeared in a medieval sylloge after the inscriptions from Via Nomentana and before the ones of Via Tiburtina, which suggests that its original location was in the Catacombs of Cyriaca. Line eight, *sponsa diu nubit per sacra uela deo*, indicates that she was consecrated a virgin in an official ceremony.⁷⁶ The last line, *Iuliana virgo*, is either the beginning of a final couplet, or a subscription. This is impossible to determine due to the fragmentary nature of the line and its location in a sylloge without an illustration. Since names were often written in the subscription, it makes sense that after the completed six elegiac couplets, this is the fragment of the subscription, with the age at death and date of deposition missing.

5. Arcontia and her brother, Remus

ICUR 8.20819 = *CLE* 1355 = *ILCV* 266 = *EDB* 9433
<http://www.edb.uniba.it/epigraph/9433>

Via Nomentana; Cemetery of Saint Agnes; 442 CE
 Preserved in an early modern copy: see de Rossi 1 (1861) 310.710

Epitafium Remo et Arcontiae qui natione Galla germani fratres
 adalti una die mortui et pariter tumulati sunt.

Haec tenet urna duos sexu sed dispare fratres
 quos uno Lachesis mersit acerba die
 ora puer dubiae signans lanugine vestis
 vix hiemes licuit cui geminasse novem

⁷⁶ The “sacred veil” a woman could have been married in is here used in word-play to signify a burial shroud. I disagree. Ferrua, *ICUR* 7, 259.

nec thalamis longinqua soror trieteride quinta
 taenareas crudo funere vidit aquas
 ille Remi latio fictum de sanguine nomen
 sed gallos claro germine traxit avos
 ast haec graiugenam resonans Arcontia linguam
 nomina virgineo non tulit apta choro

Depositi nonis novemb(res) consul(atu) Dioscori v c

An epitaph to Remus and Arcontia, who were siblings born in Gaul and raised together, died in one day and were buried together:

This urn holds two siblings but different in sex,
 they whom bitter Lachesis plunged down in one day.
 A boy, cheeks marked with down of uncertain covering
 to whom barely double nine winters were permitted,
 and a sister, of three five-year spans, not far from the marriage-bed
 (who) saw the Taenarean waters with an untimely death.
 That one has the name of Remus made from Latin blood,
 but he drew Gallic ancestors from illustrious origin.
 But this one, Arcontia, echoing a Grecian tongue,
 did not bear a name apt for the virgin chorus.

Laid to rest on the nones of November in the consulate of Dioscorus, *vir clarissimus*.

Parallels

Literary Attestations: 2. Vergil, *Aeneid*, 6.429 and 11.28 *abstulit atra dies et funere mersit acerbo*.; Ovid, *Amores*, 3.9.27 *Hunc quoque summa dies nigro submersit Averno*. 3. Vergil, *Aeneid*, 9.181, *ora puer prima signans intonsa iuventa*.; Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 13.754 *signarat teneras dubia lanugine malas*. 5. Vergil, *Aeneid* 9.181, *ora puer prima signans intonsa iuventa*. 6. Claudian *De Rapti Proserpinae* 1.1-2, *sidera Taenario caligantes que profundae*; Horace *Carmina* 1.34.10, *quo Styx et invisi horrida Taenari*; Lucan, *Pharsalia* 6.648-650, *non Taenareis sic faucibus aer / sedit iners, maestum mundi confine latentis / ac nostril*; Ovid *Fasti* 4.612, *'Taenaria recipi me quoque valle iube'*.; Ovid *Heroides* 8.72-73, *Reddita Mopsopia Taenaris urbe soror; / Taenaris Idaeo trans aequora ab hospite rapta*; Ovid, *Heroides* 13.45, *Aut te Taenariae faciem culpasse maritae*.; Ovid, *Heroides* 16.30, *Taenaris est classi terra petita meae*.; Ovid, *Heroides* 16.276, *Aut hic Taenaria contegar exul humo!*; Ovid, *Heroides* 17.6, *Excepit portu Taenaris ora suo*.; Ovid *Meta.* 2.247, *Mygdonius que Melas et Taenarius Eurotas*.; Ovid, *Meta.* 10.13, *ad Styga Taenaria est ausus descendere porta*; Ovid, *Meta.* 10.183, *tollere Taenarides orbem properabat, at illum*; Propertius *Carmina* 1.13.22, *Taenarius facili pressit amore deus*.; Propertius *Carmina* 3.2.11, *quod non Taenariis domus est mihi fulta columnis*.; Seneca the younger, *Phaedra*, 1201-2 *Pallidi fauces Averni vosque, Taenarei specus, / unda miseris grata Lethes vosque, torpentes lacus*.; Statius *Thebiad* 1.96, *Taenariae limen petit inremeabile portae*.; Statius *Thebiad* 1.355, *Iam Nemea, iam Taenariis contermina lucis*; Statius *Thebiad* 3.423, *Taenariumque cacumen Apollineas*

que Therapnas; Statius *Thebiad* 4.214, *Taenariis hic celsus equis, quam dispare coetu*; Statius *Thebiad* 6.508, *Taenarii currus et Thessalus axis et heros*; Statius *Thebiad* 7.588, *corripiunt; mox Taenarium, qui proximus, Idan*; Statius *Thebiad* 7.659, *Taenariam fulva mordebat iaspide pallam*; Valerius Flaccus, *Argonautica* 1.427 *illis Taenario pariter tremit ignea fuco*; Valerius Flaccus, *Argonautica* 5.512, *accipe, Taenarii chlamydem de sanguine aeni*; Valerius Flaccus, *Argonautica* 4.467, *Taenarias etiam fauces, alta ostia Ditis*; Vergil, *Georgics* 4.467 *Taenareas etiam fauces, alta ostia Ditis*.

Epitaphs: 2. CLE 608 = CIL 14.3333.2 *apstulit atra dies et aceruo funere mersit*; CLE 682.7 *abstulit atra dies et aceruo funere mersit*; CLE 732.4 *astulit atra dies et acerbo funere mersit*; CLE 813 *abstulit a luce atra dies et funere mersit aceruo*; CLE 2001; CLE 2002; Harper 2 = ICUR 7.18044.4 *quam festin[a] nimis mersit acerba dies*; Harper 7 = ICUR 8.23066 = CLE 1401.2 *unius huic lustru uix fuit arta dies*; Harper 8 = ICUR 9.24125 = CLE 737.1 *O Rhode dulcis anima aceruo mihi funere rapta*;

The superscription and the subscription show that this epitaph was dedicated to two siblings, a brother, Remus (age eighteen), and a sister, Arcontia (age fifteen).⁷⁷ Their parents dedicated this joint tomb to their children, utilizing one poem in elegiacs to venerate them both. Although much about their poem indicates Roman identifiers, their parents emphasize their Gallic heritage. The name Remus is clearly Roman, but the name Arcontia comes from the Greek word for ruler, ἄρχοντες, which was common at the time to describe men but not women since it had military connotations.⁷⁸ In line two of the prose superscription, *adalti* is *advlti*. In line two of the verse inscription, *uno* ought to be *una*, and match grammatically the gender of *acerba die*. Line four of the verse epitaph references *abstulit atra dies et funere mersit acerbo*, *Aeneid* 6.429 and 11.28. There is another Vergilian reference in line five with *ora puer...signans* (cf. *Aeneid* 9.181).

⁷⁷ See PLRE 2 "Arcontia" and Remus," based solely on this inscription which states that they were part of a noble Gallic family and died at Rome on the same day.

⁷⁸ F. Bucheler, *Carmina Latina Epigraphica*, Vol. 2, (Leipzig: Teubner, 1895-7), 636.

6. Epitaph of Evodia

ICUR 8.21015 = CLE 2018 = ILCV 3420A = EDB 10800

<http://www.edb.uniba.it/epigraph/10800>

Via Nomentana; Cemetery of Saint Agnes; late-fourth century
Appendix A.6; San Agnese f.l.m, Rome, Italy. *Vidi*

ne tristes lacrimas ne pectora tundite v[estra]
o pater et mater nam regna celestia tango
non tristis erebus non pallida mortis imag[o]
sed requies secura tenet ludoque choreas
inter felices animas et amoena piorum
praestat haec omnia Chr(istus) qae Euodiam decorant

Don't shed sorrowful tears nor beat your breasts,
father and mother, for I have reached the heavenly kingdom.
Neither the gloomy underworld nor the pale visage of death possess me,
but rather carefree rest keeps me and I dance the chorus
among blessed souls and the pleasing places of the saints.
All these things which honor Evodia, Christ bestows.

Parallels

Literary Attestations: 3. Vergil, *Aeneid*, 1.353-4 *Ipsa sed in somnis inhumati venit imago / coniugis, ora modis attollens pallida miris.*; Vergil, *Aeneid*, 2.369 *plurima mortis imago.*; Vergil, *Aeneid*, 4.644 *interfusa genas et pallida morte futura.* 5. Vergil, *Aeneid*, 5.733-35 *non me impia namque/ Tartara habent tristes umbrae, se amoena piorum / concilia Elysiumque colo.*; Valerius Flaccus, *Argonautica*, 1.841-5 *lucet via late/ igne dei, donec silvas et amoena piorum / deveniant campsque, ubi sol totumque per annum / durat aprica dies thiasique chorique virorum/ carminaque et quorum populis iam nulla cupido.*; Silius Italicus, *Punica*, 13.703-4 *his laeti rediere duces loca amoena piorum, prosequiterque oculis puer adveneratus euntes.*

Epitaphs: 2. Trout 7.3 = ICUR 2.6016 = CLE 671.1-3, *O semel atque iterum vero de nomine Felix / qui intemerata fide contempto principe mundi / confessus christum caelestia regna petisti.* Trout 47.3 = CLE 305 = Ihm 49 = ILCV 1985 = ED 47 = ICUR 10.26668.3 *te Protum retinet melior sibi regia caeli.* Trout 25.2 *sanctorum subito rapuit quos regia caeli;* CIL 14.2224b = ILCV 3421 = CLE 745.6 *in omnibus bona videns celestia regna;* ICUR 3.8729 = CLE 676 = ILCV 3424.1 *Palma celestia regna tenet.* 5. Trout 20.4-5 *Christumque per astra secuti / aetherios petiere sinus regnaque piorum;* Trout 25.5 *aetherias petiere domos regnaque piorum;* Trout 35.4 = Ihm 37 = ED 35 = ICUR 7.19932.4, *devotus Christo peteret cum regna piorum;* CLE 306 = Trout 39.8 *aeternam petiere domum regnaque piorum,* Trout 43.5 = Ihm 43 = ED 43 = ICUR 9.23753, *aetheriam petiere domum regnaque piorum.*

The poem, dedicated to a young daughter by her parents, is five lines of hexameter and addresses the commemorators themselves. This poem serves as an example of the conversational type, which will be discussed later. When recorded in the *ICUR*, a piece of the stone was missing, but it was later recovered. See P. Colafrancesco at EDB (2007).⁷⁹ In the last line, a chi-rho pictogram is used to stand in for the masculine nominative singular, *Christus*, and is thus the subject of *praestat*. Using the chi-rho as a word within the poem and not just as a Christian image on the stone was common practice, with carvers even adding an “o” or other such inflected ending in order to inform the reader of its case in the sentence. The last line’s *qae* should really be a *quae* and this is most likely a spelling mistake. The final line is also not in meter and could be a prose subscription. *Aeneid* 2.369 *plurima mortis imago* finds reference in *pallida mortis imago* from line 3.

7. Theodote, a young girl

ICUR 8.23066 = *CLE* 1401 = *ILCV* 3434 = EDB 35368

<http://www.edb.uniba.it/epigraph/35368>

Via Salaria Nova; Catacombs of S. Priscilla; sixth century CE

Preserved in a medieval copy: Centulensis and Laureshamensis, de Rossi 2.1 (1888) 90.50 and 100.16

Virginis hic tenerae lector miserere sepulcro
 unius huic lustris uix fuit arta dies
 o quam longinquae fuerat dignissima uitae
 heu cuius uiuit nunc sine fine dolor
 addamus meritis lacrimas tam mortis aceruae
 nam quae grata forent sunt modo flenda diu
 haec Theodote habuit nomen, quae gaudia matris
 perculit aeterno uulnere rapta cito
 sola tamen tanti restant solamina luctus
 quod tales animae protinus astra petunt
 vixit ann(os) IIII mens VII d(ies) XXV dep(osita) non(nes) sept(embres) ind...

⁷⁹ P. Colafrancesco, “Un caso fortunato: dall’integrazione alla ricomposizione di CE 2018,” *Inuigilata Lucernis* 29 (2007): 77-83.

Here, reader, have compassion for the grave of a young girl;
 Hers was a brief life of barely five years.
 O, how very worthy she was of a long life,
 Alas! Now grief for her lives without end!
 Let us add to her merits tears for so bitter a death,
 for the merits that would have been pleasing now must be lamented for a long time.
 This girl's name was Theodote, who destroyed the joys of her mother,
 carried off so quickly by an everlasting wound.
 yet the sole solace of such great mourning remains
 that such souls immediately seek out the stars.

She lived 4 years 7 months 25 days. She was laid to rest on the nones of September.

Parallels

Literary Attestations: 2. Vergil, *Aeneid*, 6.429 and 11.28 *abstulit atra dies et funere mersit acerbo*.; Ovid, *Amores*, 3.9.27 *Hunc quoque summa dies nigro submersit Averno*.; Ovid, *Ars Amatoria*, 1.417 *magna superstitio tibi sit natalis amicae, / quaque aliquid dandumst, illa sit atra dies*.; Statius, *Thebaid*, 3.635-7 *potui pariter nescire, quis armis / casus, ubi atra dies, quae fati exordia cunctis, / quae mihi*.; Statius, *Thebaid*, 8.375-6 *fatalem populis ultro poscentibus horam / admovet atra dies, Stygiisque emissa tenebris*.; Propertius, *Carmina* 2.1.45 *nos contra angusto versamus proelia lecto: qua pote quisque, in ea conterat arte diem*.; Propertius, *Carmina* 2.11.3-4, *omnia, crede mihi, tecum uno munera lecto / auferet extremi funeris atra dies*; Valerius Flaccus, *Argonautica*, 5.41-2, *aut socios rapit atra dies aut ipse relinquo / sontibus impulsus Furiis*. 10. Ovid, *Fasti*, 2.495 *hinc tonat, hinc missis abrumpitur ignibus aether: / fit fuga, rex patriis astra petebat equis*.

Epitaphs: 2. CLE 608 = CIL 14.3333.2 *apstulit atra dies et aceruo funere mersit*.; CLE 682.7 *abstulit atra dies et aceruo funere mersit*.; CLE 732.4 *astulit atra dies et acerbo funere mersit*.; CLE 813 *abstulit a luce atra dies et funere mersit aceruo*.; CLE 2001; CLE 2002; Harper 2 = ICUR 7.18044.4 *quam festin[a] nimis mersit acerba dies*.; Harper 5 = ICUR 8.20819 = CLE 1355.2 *quos uno Lachesis mersit acerba die*.; Harper 8 = ICUR 9.24125 = CLE 737.1 *O Rhode dulcis anima aceruo mihi funere rapta*; 10. CLE 1392.3 *gaudens du vita maneret. Sp(iritu)s astra petit, corpus in urna iacet*.; CLE 1378.6 *ictum/ sentit, ouans factis qui petit astra bonis/ his pollens titulis*. Trout 7.3 = ICUR 2.6016 = CLE 671.1-3, *O semel atque iterum vero de nomine Felix / qui intemerata fide contempto principe mundi / confessus christum caelestia regna petisti*.

An example of a conversational epitaph, this poem talks to the reader in five elegiac couplets, totaling ten lines. The second line references the expression *abstulit atra dies et funere mersit acerbo* from Vergil's *Aeneid* 6.429 and 11.28. *Lustrum* has several different possible translations, being the name of a type of sacrifice as well as period of five years.

I have chosen not to translate it as a sacrifice, seeing that this girl has only lived for four years, making a period of five years the most logical choice for the word's meaning here.

O and *heu* are indeclinable exclamations which convey emotion and make the meter easily fit. Otherwise, each line would have been one long vowel short. These small words establish a conversational tone and reinforce the dialogue embedded within this epitaph.

This is the only epitaph in the collection dating from the early sixth, not the fourth or fifth centuries. I felt it belonged in the collection because of its display of the formulae of untimely deaths and poetic skill in venerating a young woman.

8. The epitaph of sweet Rhode

ICUR 9.24125 = *CLE* 737 = *ILCV* 4749 = *EBD* 11232

<http://www.edb.uniba.it/epigraph/11232>

Via Salaria Nova; Cemetery between S. Felicitas and Via Anapo; fifth century CE
Preserved in a medieval copy: Centulensis and Laureshamensis, de Rossi 2.1 (1888)
84.31 and 87.31f, and 116.91

O Rhode dulcis anima aceruo mihi funere rapta
qui tantum properasti matris foedare senectam
senilemque aetatem tantos onerare dolores
te sine namque mihi nec lux uec uita iocunda est
quid primum tollerare queam tua dum singula quaero
cum uenit in mentem quod tuorum tu decus omnium esses
quid pudor castus quid s(an)c(t)a fides moresque benigni
ingeniumque doctrinaque tua et uerba sobria menti
prudens et innocua caelestia regna petisti
iam uale perpetuo dulcis et in pace quiesce

O Rhode, sweet soul, taken away from me by a bitter funeral
you who have so hastened to mar the old age of a mother
and to burden her old age with such great grief.
For, without you, neither light nor life is joyful for me.
How above all will I be able to bear up when I think over your special qualities,
when I recall that you were the glory of all your family?
What virtuous modesty, what holy faith and pleasing habits
and intelligence and your learning and your temperate words and judgement.
Prudent and innocent, you sought the heavenly kingdoms;

now goodbye, sweet one, and rest in everlasting peace.

Parallels

Literary Attestations: 1. Vergil, *Aeneid*, 6.429 and 11.28 *abstulit atra dies et funere mersit acerbo*.; Ovid, *Amores*, 3.9.27 *Hunc quoque summa dies nigro submersit Averno*. 9. Vergil, *Aeneid*, 3.115, *Cnosia regna petamus*; Vergil, *Aeneid*, 1.620, *nova regna petentem*; Martial 7.64.1-4 *qui tonsor fueras tota notissimus urbe / et post hoc donimae munere factus eques, / Sicanius urbes Aetnaeaeque rega petisti, / Cinname, cum fugeres tristia iura fori*. 10. Vergil *Aeneid*, 1.249 *Troia*; *nunc placida compostus pace quiescit*.

Epitaphs: 1. CLE 608 = CIL 14.3333.2 *apstulit atra dies et aceruo funere mersit*.; CLE 682.7 *abstulit atra dies et aceruo funere mersit*.; CLE 732.4 *astulit atra dies et acerbo funere mersit*.; CLE 813 *abstulit a luce atra dies et funere mersit aceruo*.; CLE 2001; CLE 2002; Harper 2 = ICUR 7.18044.4 *quam festin[a] nimis mersit acerba dies*.; Harper 5 = ICUR 8.20819 = CLE 1355.2 *quos uno Lachesis mersit acerba die*.; Harper 7 = ICUR 8.23066 = CLE 1401.2 *unius huic lustris uix fuit arta dies*; Harper 8 = ICUR 9.24125 = CLE 737.1 *O Rhode dulcis anima aceruo mihi funere rapta*; 9. Trout 7.3 = ICUR 2.6016 = CLE 671.1-3, *O semel atque iterum vero de nomine Felix / qui intemerata fide contempto principe mundi / confessus christum caelestia regna petisti*.

In line one, the *aceruo* should be understood as *acerbo*, as the v's were sometimes used in place of b's. Line nine, *caelestia regna petisti*, harkens to a Damasan line in his *elogium* for Felix and Adauctus. Here Damasus claims that Felix “confessed Christ and sought out the celestial realms[,]” and both he and his brother Adauctus became martyrs as a result.⁸⁰ *Regna caelestia* is one of the notable Latin expressions for heavenly ascension and/or resurrection, as noted by Trout in his index of Damasan texts.⁸¹ The notes given by Ferrua state that the inscription was found between the cemeteries of Santa Felicitas and Via Anapo, and found among the first of the Via Salaria. Rhode's mother perhaps dedicated it to her, as the mother (*matris*) is the one named in line two as grieving.

⁸⁰ Trout, 94.

⁸¹ Trout, 217.

9. Acilia Babiana, a great wife

ICUR 10.27296 = CLE 652

<http://www.edb.uniba.it/epigraph/15147>

Via Flaminia; Cemetery and basilica of San Valentino; 368 CE

Preserved in early modern excavation notes: Gatti (1888) 442 & 449.40

iustitiae facies pudor integer omnis honestas
 casta maritali semper deuincta pudore
 mortis onos tua perpetuis datur aula sepulcris
 ante meos talamos me dignum sola petisti
 contemptisque aliis me dicto iure secuta es
 cum te pura domus quaerit scit publica fama
 et probat omne bonum soli seruasse marito
 O durus raptor mors improba vix mihi ticum
 conubii gratas licuit coniungere taedas
 in pia praepropero uidi tua fata dolore

Fl(auius) Crescens Aciliae Babianae dulcissimae adque amantissimae coniugi bene
 merenti in pace quae vixit annos decem et septem et mensibus ~nouem diebus tredecim
 fecit cum marito annum et mens(es)~ III dep(osita) VIII kal(ends) mart(itas) Valentiniano
 et Valente Aug(ustis) iter(um) cons(ulibus)

A figure of justice, perfect modesty, all respectability,
 virtuous, always devoted to marital modesty,
 Your funeral hall, the honor of death, was given for your perpetual tomb.
 Before my marriage, you alone sought me as worthy,
 and disdaining all others, you complied with me in just oath
 and public knowledge knows that a pure house received you,
 and all goodness approves that you served your husband alone.
 Oh harsh robber, wicked death! Scarcely was it permitted for me
 to join the pleasing torches of marriage with you;
 when I witnessed your impious fate with sudden grief.

Flavius Crescens (gives this) in peace to Acilia Babiana, a sweetest and most loved wife,
 well deserving in peace, who lived 17 years, and 9 months and 13 days, she was with her
 husband for a year and 3 months, deposited 8 days before the kalends of March, in the
 year of the consuls Valentinianus and Valens Augusti, consuls for the second time.

Parallels

Literary Attestations: 3. Lucan, *Pharsalia* 9. 217, *mortis honos. Fremit interea discordia vulgi*; Statius, *Thebaid*, 12.417, *mortis honos, ignem miserae post ultima quaerunt.*; Valerius Flaccus, *Argonautica* 6.109, *inde etiam par mortis honos tumulisque recepti*. 7. Lucan, *Pharsalia* 8.111, *semper erit, tanti pignus servasse mariti*. 8. Vergil, *Aeneid* 2.356, *raptores atra in nebula, quos improba ventris*. 10. Martial, *Epigrammata* 6.63.7 *hicine deflebit vero tua fata dolore?*; Propertius, *Carmina* 1.17.19 *illic si qua*

meum sepelissent fata dolorem; Valerius Flaccus, Argonautica 7.8 ausa sibi paulum, medio sic fata dolore est; Vergil, Aeneid 1.386, passa Venus medio sic interfata dolore est.

A large, two-person (*bisomus*) marble sarcophagus measuring 56x198x96 cm holds the above epitaph. The height of the letters ranges from 1.5-4.7 cm. It was found within the basilica of San Valentino along the Via Flaminia, which was entirely cleaned out by Gatti when he excavated in 1888. It perhaps still exists inside the basilica, which is currently closed to both scholars and the public.

Her husband, Flavius Crescens, dedicated the poem to his young wife, Acilia Babiana. The lines are laid out on the stone continuously and do not reflect the metered lines of hexameters as displayed above. The carver has included hederæ at points throughout the poem embedded within the lines of text. The first one appears between *honestas* and *casta*, indicating that *honestas* is the end of the first line (hexameter) and that *casta* begins the following line. There is also one more at the end of *dolore*, which seems to indicate the end of the verse inscription and the beginning of the prose, which occurs on the next line. Line two's *perpetuis aula sepulcris* seems to refer to the cell or chamber of the tomb. In line three, *onos* is translated here as an alternative spelling of *honos*, as the 'h' was sometimes dropped. *Ticum* of line eight ought to be *tecum*, the spelling must be a mistake, perhaps by the stone carver.

10. Lea, a consecrated virgin

ICUR 10.27318 = AE 1975, 0115 = EDB 11288 = EDH14205 = Vatican L11 32370
<http://www.edb.uniba.it/epigraph/11288>
<https://edh-www.adw.uni-heidelberg.de/edh/inschrift/HD014205>

Via Flaminia; cemetery and basilica of Saint Valentine; 393 CE
 Appendix A.10; Museo Pio Cristiano, Musei Vaticani. *Vidi*

[...] E V A [...]

[Candida semper] Christo menti munita fideli
 [dum teneros a]nimos domino perparuola prestat
 [ipsa sacrat]a deo ornat quam gratia Christi
 [diuinum d]onum brebib(us) Lea pertulit annis
 [nam oblita] sui elegit praemia Christi

[vixit ann(os)] VIII mens(es) III dies XVII
 [Theodosio] Aug(usto) III et Eugenio Aug(usto) cons(ulibus)
 [deposita] VIII kal(endas) octob(res)

Ever pure, defended by a mind faithful to Christ,
 when, very little, she offered her tender spirit to the lord.
 She herself, consecrated to God, whom the grace of Christ adorns.
 Lea carried the divine gift through her brief years.
 For, forgetful of her own things, she chose the rewards of Christ.

She lived 9 years 4 months and 17 days
 she was laid to rest 8 days before the kalends of October in the year of the consuls
 Theodosius Augustus for the third time and Eugenius Augustus.

Parallels

Literary Attestations: 3. Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*, 16.283 *diuitiis inopem ditabit gratia Christi.*; Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*, 18.166 *hospite nobilitat Nolam, quam gratia Christi.*; Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*, 18.182, *quod crescent fide superundat gratia Christi.*; Paulinus of Noila, *Carmen*, 21.832 *Felicis merito diues tibi gratia Christi.*

Epitaphs: 5. Trout 1.12 = Ihm 2 = ED 1, *noscere promeruit possent quid praemia vitae*; Trout 15.2 *quis Damasus rector titulos post praemia reddit*; Trout 39.5 = Ihm 91 and 47 = ILCV 1957 = ED 39 = ICUR 9.24829 *sequitur si praemia christi.*

The marble tablet has writing on both sides, indicating multiple uses (*opistographa*).

The tablet measures 59 x 80 x 2.5cm and is dated to 393 CE. It was dug up in 1929 from the surroundings of the basilica of San Valentino and was placed on the farthest wall. It now stands in the Pio Cristiano of the Vatican Museums, closed to the public. The stone is now broken and incomplete, as visible in Appendix A.10, but emended by Ferrua in *ICUR*. There are several interpuncts embedded within the text, seeming to indicate abbreviations. One appears after *brebib* in line four, when editors have suggested it to be lengthened to *brebibus*. The other three interpuncts occur in the prose subscription after

the Roman numerals VIII, after *mens*, a shortened form of *menses*, after IIII and XVII, the numbers of months and days lived. At the end of this line, a larger *hederae* was also carved. At the center and bottom of the stone, a bird grasping a branch in its beak is carved, a typical symbol on tombstones. Line three's *gratia Christi* is a line ending found several times throughout Paulinus of Nola's writing, indicating that perhaps it was a typical line ending if not of the time, at least in his work. *Brebibus* of line four, mostly likely a carver's mistake, should be *brebis* or *brevis*, short, as the translation suggests. The phrase *elegit praemia Christi* of line five I posit is a reference to her status as a consecrated virgin. This seems like a viable conclusion due to the earlier lines of the poem. *Sacrata deo* of line three states her dedication to God with the same language as that of a gift. The phrase *praemia Christi* is typical diction for martyrs, who receive the rewards of Christ because of their sacrifice. See references in Damasus' epitaphs for martyrs noted above, in particular those dedicated to the apostle Paul, to Tarsicius in the cemetery of San Callisto, and to Felix and Philippus in the catacombs of Priscilla.⁸² In Lea's epitaph, *praemia Christi* refers to her sacrifice not of her life but of her virginity, which she dedicated to Christ. With these two phrases, her state as a consecrated virgin seems to be a likely conclusion.

11. *Meam amice*

CLE 1543 = EDCS 35200281= TM 619640

http://db.edcs.eu/epigr/edcs_id.php?s_sprache=en&p_edcs_id=EDCS-35200281
<https://www.trismegistos.org/text/619640>

Rome

Preserved in medieval copy: Anthologica Codex Parisinus Latinus 2832, de Rossi 2.1 (1888) 268.31

⁸² Trout 1, Trout 15, and Trout 39.

Meam amice ne doleas sortem
 moriendum fuit
 sic sunt hominum fata
 sicut in arbore poma
 immatura cadunt
 et matura leguntur

Friend, do not mourn my lot;
 it was necessary that I die.
 Thus the fates of humans
 are like fruits on a tree
 the unripe fall
 and the ripe ones are picked.

Parallels

Literary Attestations: 2-3. Anonymous, *Altercatio Hadriani Augusti et Epicteti Philosophi*, number 33, *Hadrian: Quid est homo? Epictetes: Homo similis: Poma ut in arboribus pendentia corpora nostra; / Aut matura cadunt, aut cito acerba ruunt.*; Ovid, *Ars Amatoria* 2.605, *O bene, quod frustra captatis arbore pomis.*; Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 4.331, *hic color aprica pendentibus arbore pomis.*; Ovid *Metamorphoses* 5.536, *puniceum curva decerpserat arbore pomum*; Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 11.113, *aurea messis erat; demptum tenet arbore pomum.*; Vergil, *Eclogues* 1.37 *cui pendere sua patereris in arbore poma.*; Vergil, *Eclogues* 7.54 *strata iacent passim sua quaeque sub arbore poma.* 3. Propertius, *Carmina* 4.11.15-18, *Damnatae noctes et vos, vada lenta, paludes, /Et quaecumque meos implicat unda pedes, / Immatura licet, tamen huc non noxia veni: /Det Pater hic umbrae mollia iura meae.*; Vergil, *Dirae* 17, *immatura cadant ramis pendentia mala.*

Epitaphs: 1-3. *CIL* 6.7574 = *CLE* 1490, *quod modo mala in arbore pendunt sic corpora nostra / aut matura cadunt aut cito acerua ruunt.*; *CIL* 11.7024 = *CLE* 1542.7-8, *nolite no[s dolere paren]tes moriendum fuit/ pro[pe]rav[i]t aeta(s) Fatus hoc voluit meus/ sic quomodo mala in arbore pendent si(c) corpora nostra / aut matura cadunt aut cit(o) acerba [r]uunt.*; *CIL* 12.533b = *CLE* 465b.20-21, *[re]s hominum sic sunt ut cit[rea] poma / [aut matur]a cadunt, aut [immatura] leguntur.*; *CIL* 2, 7.567 = *CLEHisp* 25 = *CLEBetica* = *AE* 2002, 139 *noli do/[lere mate]r moriendum fuit sic / [ut sunt pom]a sic et corpora nostra / [aut matu]ra cadunt aut nimis / [acerba r]uunt.*

The epitaph is preserved solely as a textual copy; the original stone is lost to time.

While short and sweet, this epitaph contains a couplet that is used in only a selected set of epitaphs and in one late antique text in particular. The couplet it contains seems to fit elegiac meter, but the rest of its lines do not. Bucheler designates it in the *CLE* as a

polymetric verse epitaph. The use of the formulaic phrase *moriendum fuit sic sunt hominum fata sicut in arbore poma immatura cadunt et matura leguntur* appears in several other epitaphs dedicated to young women. More discussion upon this text and the importance of this couplet occurs in chapter four, section “*Immatura Poma.*” Not much can be said for the stone itself, besides its supposed location in Rome. De Rossi edited the Parisian text in de Rossi 2.1 (1888) 268.3. De Rossi 2.1 reproduced the medieval syllogae and is often the only way many epitaphs and ancient inscriptions were preserved because pilgrims often wrote down what was inscribed upon the stones. Despite the lack of detail, the epitaph seems to indicate a discussion between the deceased and her friend. All the epitaphs that contain this couplet venerate women, and so I have made an educated guess that this would have done the same. From the meaning presented through the expression, she would have been young as well, but her age is unknown.

12. Pontia’s epitaph

ICI 6.41 = *CLE* 1846 = *CIL* 11.4631 = *ILCV* 4812 = AE 2013, 00444
<http://www.museoducato.beniculturali.it/en/index.php/room-1>

Carsulae, Umbria; Church of San Giovenale in Macerino; late fourth century CE
 Appendix A.11; Museo Nazionale del Ducato di Spoleto, Spoleto, Italy. *Vidi*

Pontia sidereis aspirans uultibus olim
 hic iacet aetherio semine lapsa fuit
 omnes honos omnis cesit tibi gratia formae
 mens quoque cum uultus digna nitore fuit
 tradita uirgo toris decimum non pertulit annu(m)
 coniugii infelix unica prole perit
 quantus amor mentis probitas quam grata marito
 quam casti mores quantus et ipse pudor
 nil tibi quod foedum uitium nec moribus ullum
 dum satis obsequeris famula dicta uiri

denique te memet fatis odioque grauatum
 dum sequeris uidit Corsica cum lacrimis

tu Treuiros pergens cursu subuecta rotarum
 coniugis heu cultrix dura satis pateris
 te pater infestus genero cum tollere uellet
 temptasti laqueum si faceret genitor
 Cedite iam ueterum laudes omnesque maritae
 tempora nulla dabunt talia quae faciat
 Uir tuus ingenti gemitu fletuque rigatus
 hos feci uersus pauca tamen memorans

Pontia, once aspiring towards the celestial faces,
 lies here: she having fallen from a heavenly seed.
 Every honor, every grace of beauty gave way before you,
 Since your mind as well was worthy of the splendor of your countenance.
 The maiden had not yet completed ten years of being entrusted to her marriage bed,
 she, unfortunate, died with one child.
 How much love! How pleasing the honesty of her mind is to her husband!
 How virtuous! How great her sense of modesty itself!
 Because you have nothing detestable in you, nor anything detestable in your habits,
 When you, having been called the handmaid of your husband, have obeyed him
 enough.

And then, Corsica saw you in tears,
 when you were accompanying me, burdened with calamity and hatred,
 You, proceeding on the road to Trier brought by the turning of the wheels,
 a nurturer of your husband, you suffered enough difficult things.
 Your hostile father, when he wished to remove you from his son-in-law,
 you said that would hang yourself if he did.
 Yield now, praises of the ancients and all you wives,
 No age will see someone like you, for whom your husband builds this.
 I, your husband, weeping with a great groan and tears,
 made these verses but remembering only a few things.

Parallels

Literary Attestations: 1. Statius, *Achilleis* 1.809, *quas tibi sidereis divarum vultibus aequas*. 2. Vergil, *Aeneid* 7.281, *semine ab aethero*. 3. Lucan, *Pharsalia* 2.19, *omnis honos, nullos comitata est purpura fasces*.; Martial, *Epigrammata* 8.8.4 *purpura te felix, te colat omnis honos*.; Ovid, *Fasti* 5.18, *sidera cedebant: par erat omnis honos*.; Statius, *Achilleis* 1.78 *omnis honos illic, illic ingentia certant*; Statius, *Silvae* 1.2.233-4 *omnis honos, cuncti veniunt ad limina fasces, /omnis plebeio teritur praetexta tumultu?*; Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 7.44, *non ea nobilitas animo est, ea gratia formae*.; Statius, *Silvae* 3.4.66, *carperet et pulchrae fuscaret gratia formae*.; Statius, *Thebaid* 6.622-3, *Parthenopaeus humo vultum que oculos que madentes / obruit, accessit lacrimarum gratia formae*. 5. Lucan, *Pharsalia* 2.329, *quondam virgo toris melioris iuncta mariti*, 6. Statius, *Punica* 4.785, *interea tibi prima domus atque unica proles*. 7. Statius, *Silvae* 5.3.248, *quantus amor recti! rursus que, ubi dulce remitti*.; Statius, *Thebaid* 3.705 *quantus amor castae misero nupsisse marito*.; Propertius, *Carmina* 2.2.13, *Cedite iam*,

divae, quas pastor viderat olim/Idaeis tunicas ponere verticibus; Propertius, Carmina 2.34.65-6, Cedite romani scriptores, cedite Grai! / Nescio quid maius nascitur Iliade. 19. Vergil, Aenei, 6. 699, sic memorans largo fletu simul ora rigabat.

Found in the church of San Giovenale in Macerino (Acquasparta, TR, Italy), the above fragments remain intact, with the exception of the middle image being mostly lost. The front of a Greek marble sarcophagus, broken into two fragments remains: the left panel measures 45x71x65 cm and the right 45x79 cm. The two side zones each have *tabulae ansatae* with ten lines of text. A hederia appears at the end of the tenth line in the first stanza, within the border of the *tabula ansata*. There also exists an odd spacing at the end of line six, with an abnormally large space between *pe* and *rit* of the word *perit*. The space seems to occur due to the confined and crunched lettering of the handwriting of that line. The handwriting seems to be consistent throughout, but it is clear to see that some letters were often squished together in order to fit every word onto its metrical line. The lines of the first stanza almost all hit the border-line but do not run onto or over it. The second stanza, however, on the right-hand side panel seems to be more evenly cramped, and as a result, have approximately the length of 2-4 letters of open space before the border.

On the left panel, the *tabulae ansatae* is framed and bordered by a figure on its left side. The figure is clothed in a full-covering cloak, has a diadem, and is backed by a fold of drapery. Beneath the figure and distinctly set apart from the text in the *tabulae ansatae*, the letters *-niam* can be made out. The right panel is likewise framed and has a figure to its right. The figure is also fully clothed and wearing a diadem, but it is not backed by drapery. Below the figure, the words *hic legit autores mu* are preserved. The incomplete prose below these figures suggests that it is not the end of the front of the sarcophagus,

and that there is the possibility that more figures were on it. Both of these fragments are missing the connecting piece, a circular bordered figure. The left fragment retains part of the border of the circle (*clipeus*), a capital Alpha, and what seems to be the top part of the Chi of a Chi-Rho symbol. The right fragment contains the lower register of the circular border, five fingers holding an open book, and an Omega.

The text within the two *tabulae ansatae* makes up a twenty-lined poetic epitaph dedicated to Pontia. The meter of the poem is elegiac couplet, of which the second lines of the couplets are indented and set off from the margins of the first lines. The meter is correct throughout the poem except for *unica* in line 6 and *famula* in line 10.

The phrase *sidereis...uultibus* of line one may also be translated as ‘the saints,’ as it is common for the starry vestiges to refer to the saints, as metaphorically they are the faces shining from heaven. In line six, the phrase *unica prole, prole* must be translated as ‘child.’ What may be argued is that this child might be the cause of her death, as childbirth was still at this time one of the most common causes of death for women. Another interpretation is that Pontia left behind only one child from her marriage when she died. The difference that the understanding of *prole* makes in the translation is not very significant. It could indicate something more about Pontia’s biography and the nature of her death, however.

The right fragment’s *tabulae ansatae* contains another ten lines, and unlike the previous stanza, the last line is not finished with a carved leaf. There are no issues with the meter in the second stanza or with the grammatical constructions, with one exception. In line sixteen, since *temtasti* is irregular, it ought to be *temptasti*, perhaps a mistake by the stonecutter. What can be determined concretely from the second stanza is that

Pontia's husband either wrote himself or commissioned someone to write these verses to his wife from his point of view, and he also commissioned the carving of this sarcophagus (lines 18-20). Likewise, these lines demonstrate that Pontia followed her husband from Corsica to Trier (lines 11-14).

13. The acrostic epitaph of Carice

ICI 6.118 = AE 1967, 113 = AE 1975, 368 = AE 1999, 602

La chiesetta Della Madonna di Loreto, Umbria; Urbino; fifth century CE
Appendix A.13; Museo lapidario di Urbino, Italy.

Cara mihi genita, mea Carice hi(c) pius infas
annis uixi[t] sex totidemque et mensibus octo
reddita bis ternis post hos aptata diebus
infernus pia sancta tenet sapientia sedes
contraque maestorum quae mersa est uota parentu(m)
e[r]igitur titulo lector i scripta repone
Pictius Ib(e)r et Ianuaria fil(iae)

My dear daughter, my Carice, this pious child.
She lived for six years - and just so many - and eight months,
After these, suitable, she was given back in six days.
Her wisdom, pious and sacred, holds the lower domain,
and against the prayers of her sad parents she has been buried.
She is raised up by this stone. Go, reader, repeat the things written (here)!

Pictius Iber and Ianuaria to their daughter

Parallels

Literary Attestations: 4. Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 3.504 *tum quoque se, postquam est inferna sede receptus*; Silius Italicus, *Punica*, 12.234-5 *ceu subita ante oculos Pauli emersisset imago / sedibus infernis amissaque posceret arma*. Pseudo Quintilian, *Declamationes 19 maiores*, 6.11.121.24, *cum ad infernas sedes anima migravit*.

Epitaphs: 4. CLE 434.11 *fata habuisssem./ hunc modo ad infernas sedes Acheruntis ad undas/ taetraque*; CLE 501.3 *miserando funere rapto Ditis ad infernas sedes lucosque piorum, quem docta*. CLE 1551g.1 *Iunonis sedes infernae cernite cuncti*. 5. CLE 1552a.3 *mergat et Elysiis mortalia corpora terris*.

The acrostic poem (CARICE) is inscribed on a limestone stele of 77 x 45 x 9 cm, with letters ranging in height from 3cm to 1.5 cm. A frame limits the epigraphic field. The

stele was once located near the church of Madonna di Loreto which was owned by the noble, Curizo Corboli who donated it to the Lapidary Museum of Urbino in 1756. From this place, the stele was moved to a warehouse and described again by Binazzi in 1988. Binazzi, the editor of *ICI* volume 6, dates it to the fifth century. The editors of a supplement of *AE* (1967, 113) also conclude that this stone is from the fourth- to fifth-centuries, due to the quality of the handwriting and the use of an acrostic.⁸³

The poem consists of six hexameters and demonstrates a dialogue between mother and reader. Carice is a Greek name formed by Caria, not the Latin adjective *carus*, *a*, *um*. The editor of *ICI* 6 suggests that Pictius' name is unattested.⁸⁴ *Pius infas*, the editor notes, is most likely used instead of *pia* for metric necessities. The use of *reddita* (line 3) was a common pagan concept that in death people return a debt to nature. *Infernas sedes* of line 4 is also a pagan concept and is a metonymy for the underworld or Hades frequently found in poetry, used in several other epitaphs. *Sapientia* is used as an abstraction for the concrete *sapiens puella*, more accurately it could be translated as "the wise girl holds the lower domain." *Scripta repone* of the last line is an unusual expression, perhaps meant to stand in for *inscripta repone*, which would be well-suited as a farewell phrase.⁸⁵

14. Mother Regina's epitaph

ICI 9.14 = *CLE* 783 = *ILCV* 3427 = *CIL* 5.7640 = *AE* 1960, 328 = *AE* 2000, 585

Liguria/Regio IX, N. Pagno; Polentia

caelestes animae damnant quae crimina vitae
terrenas metuunt labes sub iudice Crist[o]
corporeo laetae gaudent se carcere solui

⁸³ See also H. Krummrey, "Das Gabgedicht für Carice im Museum von Urbino," *Klio* 48 (1967): 107-57 and G. Mannella, "Note all'iscrizione di Carice," *Epigraphica* 35 (1973): 119-27.

⁸⁴ Binazzi, *ICI* 6, 180.

⁸⁵ Binazzi, *ICI* 6, 180.

sic Regina potens meritis [post] vincula saeculi
 aeternam repetit se[dem] nil noxia morti
 haec talamis Albine tuis ser[ui][t]que fedelis
 uirgineas casto seruauit pecture taed[as]
 coniugii nom[en quae de]dicnata secundi
 haec damnum natura tuum, quod inuida natos
 non tribuis uotis matris sub mente benigna
 adfectu superare uolens nos iamque uocauit
 Albini claro generatam sanguine prolem
 exosum nomen, nil magnis moribus [au]f[ers]
 nam ueras be[---]o[---] pectore matri[s]

Heavenly spirits, which condemn the crimes of life,
 fear earthly stains under Christ the judge;
 Happy, they rejoice that they have been freed from the prison of the body.
 Thus Regina, powerful in respect to merits, after she was released from the chains of the world,
 sought again an eternal home, not at all harmed by death.
 She, faithful, Albinus, served your marriage bed
 and preserved her virginal torches in a chaste heart,
 she who disdained the name of a second marriage.
 Because you, Nature, being envious do not
 grant children to a mother's prayers,
 she, wishing to overcome your harm in affection through a kind heart,
 forthwith summoned us, offspring born from the noble blood of Albinus.
 Detestable name, taking away nothing from her great merits
 for there are true things in the heart of a blessed mother.

Parallels

Literary Attestations: 1. Vergil, *Aeneid* 1.11 *tantaene animis caelestibus irae*; Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 15.846 *passa recentem animam caelestibus intulit astris*.; Nemesianus, *Eclogue sive Bucolica*, 1.39 *Nam si sublimes animae caelestia templa*.; Ausonius, *Epitaphia heroum qui bello Troico interfuerunt*, 27.9 *pro facinus! Tantaene animis caelestibus irae*; Statius, *Thebiad*, 8.22 *dux Erebi populus poscebat crimina vitae*.; Paulinus of Nola 31.423 *nam mihi pro meritis actae per crimina vitae*.; Ausonius, *De 12 caesaribus tetrasticha* 6.27 *nomina quot pietas, tot habet quoque crimina vitae*.; Claudian, *Carmen Paschale*, 32.4-5 *mente pater tantique dedit consortia regni, / in pia qui nostrae domuisti crimina vitae*.; Ennodius, *Carmina*, 2.1.9 *Occidit, heu, iuuenis, qui tersit crimina vitae*. 2. Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen* 16.185 *Ipse tibi referet sub iudice prandia Christo*.; Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen* 18.147 *Sed tamen et roseam Pater addidit indice Christo*. 3. Prudentius, *Peristephanon* 13.63 *eripe coporeo de carcere vinculisque mundi*.

Epitaphs: 1. CLE 611.4 *caelestis anima. Mundus me sumpsit et astra, / corpus habet tellus et saxum nomen*.; CIL 11.3963 = CLE 591 *Terrenum corpus caelestis spiritus in me: quo repente suam sedem nunc uiuimus illic*. CLE 908.9 *hic quicumque uolent*

probrosae crimina uitae. 2. *CIL* 5.6723 = *CLE* 704 *omnes terrenas uicit labes*. *CIL* 10.1370 = *CLE* 684.6 *sic et tutus erit iuuenis sub iudice Christo*. 3-4. *CLE* 679 = *ICUR* 1.1453 *corporis exutus uinclis*. 3-5. *CIL* 11.2839 = *CLE* 743.3-4 = *ICI* 1,13.3-4 *corporeos nexus linquens et uincu[la uitae] / aeternas sedes meruit complecti pi[orum]*. 4. *CIL* 13.2396 = *ILCV* 1071 *potens meritis* 5. *CLE* 301 = *ICUR* 8.20752.7 *nomen enim Christi celebrator sedibus istis*; *CLE* 1014.1-2 *non optata tibi coniunx monimenta locauit / ultima in aeternis sedibus ut maneant*; *CLE* 1589.4 *qui post anoos tandem aeterna sede receptus silet*; *CLE* 1605.2 *hic tenet aeterna, sedem*.

The poem is inscribed on a slab of white Luna marble, made up of two large fragments. The right fragment is 72 x 77 cm, and the center fragment is 129 x 74 cm. The letters are 4 cm in height, and are mostly worn down due to foot traffic, as it was placed on the ground. It was brought to Pagno when the church was built and first placed in front of the main altar, but the original locus is not known. It remained in the church at Pagno until the middle of the seventeenth century, when there were restorations carried about between 1664 and 1741, at which point it can be assumed that the stone was broken into three pieces (one of which was subsequently lost). In 1856, Manuel di San Giovanni affixed it to the right wall of the second chapel of the current left aisle of the church, where it remains today. The lacunae are restored from early modern transcriptions.

The epitaph consists of fourteen hexametric verses, with correct metrics. There are several spelling errors that occur throughout the poem. Line six's *talamis* should be taken as *thalamis*, meaning bedroom, chamber, or marriage, as the *h* is often dropped in such words. Other spelling adjustments include, *nil* placed for *nihil* in line ten, *fedelis* ought to be *fidelis* in line twelve, *pecture* incorrectly instead of *pectore*, and *dedicnata* should be replaced with *dedignata* of line sixteen. *Coniugii* (from *coniugium*) is often used in epitaphs instead of *coniugis* from the nominative *coniux*, especially in early Christian epigraphic use.⁸⁶ *Exosum nomen* of line twenty-five is a metonymy in place of *mors*

⁸⁶ Moreau and Marrou, *ILCV Supplementum*, 500.

(death) and is part of a type of phraseology inherited from the pagan poetic context, according to Mennella and Coccoluto.⁸⁷ As for phrases, two are of note. The editors suggest that the expression *sub iudice Christo* of line two is to be understood in the sense *e Christi iudicio* (as the translation above represents), or *quia sic uult Christus*.⁸⁸ Further, the phrasing *aeternam repetit sedem nil noxia meriti* in line 5 is a common expression in the early Christian poetic lexicon, as can be seen in other epitaphs such as *CLE* 301, *CLE* 1014, and *CLE* 1589, which reference Hades and the Underworld by using this phrase. Both demonstrate interaction or phrasing similar to that in other verse epitaphs.

The names of Albinus and Regina both seem to be common in the Christian community. The editors Mennella and Coccoluto suggest Begina instead of Regina for the name of the epitaph's recipient, because Regina is a common Christian name and can be seen frequently in the *Indices* of *ILCV* (135-136). The name Albinus appears in the indices of the *ILCV* p. 7 and in *ICI* 7.13. The editors suggest Albinus is a *vir clarissimus* since the poem describes him as *claro sanguine*.⁸⁹ Those of the senatorial class were often marked with the adjective *clarissimus/a* or by the abbreviation *v c.* Mennella and Coccoluto argue that the use of *claro sanguine* means Albinus was from a remarkable family, perhaps the family of *Ceionius Rufus Albini*, who flourished between the fourth and fifth centuries CE and had some land-based interest in the area near Regina's findspot. The name Regina appears in the *PLRE* 2, which states that she died childless and as Albinus' wife.⁹⁰ There does not seem to be any other indication that either

⁸⁷ Mennella and Coccoluto, *ICI* 9, 41.

⁸⁸ Mennella and Coccoluto, *ICI* 9, 41.

⁸⁹ Mennella and Coccoluto, *ICI* 9, 41.

⁹⁰ *PLRE* 2, 937.

Albiinus or Regina belonged to a senatorial family besides the in-text *claro...sanguine* of line twelve.

Regarding Regina and her role as a wife, the *ICI* editors suggest lines seventeen through twenty-four must be understood in a certain way. They state that “Regina, with her affection towards her consort, wanted to overcome the envy and malice of Nature; this, however, did not allow her to live on earth with the children born to Albinus, but after her death, called them to heaven; since the children speak in first person (*nos iamque uovauit*), one must suppose that the dedication simulated their dialogue with the mother, with whom they had been buried.”⁹¹ The translation above reflects the editors’ note, understanding that the dialogue addresses Nature directly, a personified force who was jealous of Regina and therefore caused her death. Albinus died before Regina, who refused to remarry after his death and called her children his (line twelve).

⁹¹ Mannella and Coccoluto, *ICI* 9, 41. The translation of Italian is my own.

Chapter Three

Poetic Sense and Sensibility

The purpose of this chapter is twofold: to illustrate the distinctive formulae and *topoi* used in verse epitaphs to venerate young, Christian women, and to contextualize my corpus within a greater scheme. The chapter will concentrate on poetic aspects commonly used to grieve for and honor women of this community. The poetic sensibility of the epitaphs reflects the literary tradition of Rome and the styles typical of late antiquity. The literary and poetic aspects of the epitaphs reveal that more than just historical dates and social history can be gleaned from them. In fact, Trout explains the breadth of verse epitaphs with: “Their literary textures encourage close reading; their poignant expressions of sorrow and joy provoke sympathy; they are plaintive and triumphal, brash and seductive – and above all they offer tantalizing glimpses of life stories seldom on display in the terser and more formulaic prose epitaphs of the age.”⁹² The role of the epitaphs as evocations of grief and consolation is discussed in Chapter Four: Grief and Memory in Verse Epitaphs. The focus of the current chapter lies in the layering nature of artistic skill and literary construction of the epitaphs. The epitaphs of my collection serve as examples of the development of epigraphic genre within the late antique period.

First, I will consider the aspects of late antique poetics, its authors, and the primary characteristics that make up its aesthetic. The salon literature of the day reveals the literary context of which the poems of the catalog are a subgenre. Within this section, Damasus, a fourth-century pope and poet, and his development not only of *elogia* but

⁹² Trout, “*Fecit Ad Astram Viam*,” 4.

also of his building project of martyrs' shrines directly surround and embody the genre of funerary poetry in late antiquity. In the second section, meter and its use in my corpus of epitaphs is examined briefly. An in-depth look at the poetic sensibilities of several of the poems follows, focusing on word play and poetic structures found within the corpus. In sum, by contextualizing my collection of epitaphs through literary and stylistic analysis, we are able to understand the range and scope of these epitaphs and appreciate the interplay between literary tradition and artistic skill that characterizes them. Together the literary components reveal how the authors of these epitaphs evoke an intricate aesthetic that grew alongside and influenced the changing social dynamics of the fourth and fifth centuries.

Late Antique Poetics

The epitaphs of my collection contain themes from late antique poetics and consolation literature. The tragedy of untimely death necessitates emotive poetry in order to honor the dead and console the bereaved. To understand the verse epitaphs of sudden death, it is important to look at sources of influence both past and contemporary. The poetry of late antiquity is not a completely new departure from its origins, “but the continuation and intensification of trends already evident in Latin poetry.”⁹³ In fact, Roberts argues that the “true forerunners” of the late antique style are the poets of the first century CE.⁹⁴ As an intensification of selected stylistic aspects of the past, the visual and literary art of late antiquity “shared features [such] as a penchant for miniaturization, the elevation of episodic elaboration over narrative flow, a marked delight in word play

⁹³ Roberts, *The Jeweled Style*, 61.

⁹⁴ Roberts, *The Jeweled Style*, 61.

and lexical sophistication, and the hermeneutical premium set on inter-textual allusion.”⁹⁵

These aspects became defining characteristics of the period. Different scholars concentrate on various aspects of the literary age but consistently reference three major trends: 1) variation and repetition, 2) elaborate description, and 3) intertextual reference and allusion. Literature adapted as did society, but this permutation continued from its embedded foundations, creating a new, almost hybrid identity and aesthetic.

The following analysis of late antique poetics will examine the evolution of the themes and genres of early Christian poetry. First, a general discussion of early Christian poetic style and themes reinforces the argument of continuity and expansion of Latin literature during this period. Next, I will explain how the variety and repetition of words, and allusion and classical references creates visual descriptions in verse. Examples from the major authors of the time period, including Ausonius, Claudian, Damasus, Paulinus of Nola, Proba, and Prudentius demonstrate the use of the literary characteristics in a Christian setting. The section concludes with an analysis of Damasus and his direct influence on the genre of verse epitaphs. The selected measures provide a framework within which to analyze the stylistic attributes of the epitaphs of my catalog.

Themes and genres characteristic of late antique literature

Late antique poetry borrows from classical poetry as well as from Christian themes, creating a new hybrid identity reflecting people’s own struggle with the development of a new self-identification. With the adoption of Christianity as the state religion in the late fourth century, Romans needed to refashion their idea of literature and poetry, as that

⁹⁵ Trout, 17.

literature focused on what were now ‘pagan’ themes, stories, and messages. As a result, a revival in Latin literature sprang forth. This early Christian and late Latin poetry contains not only formal and stylistic elements from the classical age of Latin poetry, but it also introduces new subjects and forms. New forms and subjects include theology and Christian doctrine, anti-pagan and anti-heretical polemic didactic poetry, and hagiographys. Other hybrid or updated forms include moral advice poems, biblical epics, hymns, pastoral poetry, personal lyric, autobiographical poetry, epigrams, and consolation poetry.⁹⁶ These subjects and themes allowed authors to provide spiritual as well as literal meanings to their audiences. Imaginatively rich and picture-painting poems (as hymns or building dedication epigrams) accompanied the frescoes and mosaics of the churches, basilicas, and catacombs. The earliest examples of Christian poetry appear as imitations of Hebrew psalms and Semitic abecedarian poetry.⁹⁷ Poetry in the form of the psalms of the Old Testament was available even before this and sung during the liturgy.⁹⁸ Some of these early hymns, composed often in different ancient meters, were written for several settings but mostly for festivals celebrating aspects of God or achievements of the saints.⁹⁹ Such hymns are found amongst the works of Hilary of Poitiers, Ambrose, Prudentius, Sedulius, Ennodius, and Venantius Fortunatus. Biblical epics are lengthy poems comprised of hexameters and are more than just a summary of the Bible in epic

⁹⁶ Carolinne White, *Early Christian Latin Poets*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 4.

⁹⁷ Abecedarian poetry is that which each stanza or section begins with a letter in an alphabetical sequence. One of the most famous examples comes to us as Psalm 119. This might have been a predecessor of the Christianization of the use of acrostic poetry, particularly in funerary epitaphs. Some examples of the abecedarian form in early Christian poetry are in Augustine’s *Psalm against the Donatists*, Sedulius’ hymn *A solis ortus cardine*, and the two fragmentary hymns of Hilary of Poitiers. For more information, please see White, *Early Christian Poets*, 5.

⁹⁸ Tertullian, *A Treatise on the Soul*, 9. White, *Early Christian Poets*, 5-6.

⁹⁹ For more on late antique hymns see Brian P. Dunkle, *Enchantment and Creed in the Hymns of Ambrose of Milan*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

form.¹⁰⁰ Often, they focus on the relationship between God and humankind, especially creation and salvation.¹⁰¹ Trout explains the elaborate classicizing and inventive style of biblical epic in late antiquity:

If late antique epicists echo and borrow from their classical predecessors, often adopting their ideology of imperial destiny as well as their rhetorical and literary principles, their works also reveal an accentuated taste for miniaturization and description, a preference for episodic structure at the expense of narrative flow, and a delight in sophisticated verbal patterning that yields dense textures of repetition and variation.¹⁰²

Two examples of biblical epic include Faltonia Proba's *cento* which focuses on themes from the Old and New Testaments and Juvenecus' epics on the life of Christ.¹⁰³ The genre of poetic hagiography, poems focusing on the lives of the saints and martyrs, is prominent among the works of Ambrose and Prudentius.¹⁰⁴ Paulinus of Nola's annual composition on the feast-day of St. Felix venerates Felix with bejeweled verse stories of

¹⁰⁰ Dennis Trout, "Latin Christian Epics of Late Antiquity," in *A Companion to Ancient Epic* edited by John Miles Foley, (Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 2005), 550.

¹⁰¹ Trout "Late Christian Epics," 552, explains Christian poets' use of epic for their purposes with, "Epic, which had served to vocalize other versions of Roman identity, imperial destiny, and cosmic order, was the sole poetic form suitable for expressing the grand historical, ideological, and theological claims at the core of Christian thought."

¹⁰² Trout, "Latin Christian Epics," 551. Trout also explains the connection between Late antique epics and their classical predecessors and the transformation of those connections to fit their new Christian program. The *gesta* of the "heroes" are commemorated, but these heroes are now Christ, the apostles, and the saints. The authors still employ literary conventions such as direct speech, epithets, and epic diction in order to bring epic *gravitas* to the Christian stage. Trout, "Latin Christian Epics," 551.

¹⁰³ Juvenecus' *Evangeliorum libri quattuor* is considered to be the "fountainhead" of biblical epic of this time, with other texts following in his use of the classical epic heritage and late Latin poetics, especially the episodic nature of epic themes. Trout, "Latin Christian Epics," 552. Prudentius' *Cathemerinon* discusses God's creation of humans and the fall of Adam and Eve (*Cathemerion*, 3.96-150). White, *Early Christian Poets*, 12-13.

¹⁰⁴ For more see Trout, "Latin Christian Epics," 554-7; Michael Roberts, "Rome Personified, Rome Epitomized: Representations of Rome in the Poetry of the Early Fifth Century," *The American Journal of Philology* 122.4 (2001), 533-565; Timothy David Barnes, *Early Christian Hagiography and Roman History*, Mohr Siebeck, 2010. For more on Ambrose see Brian Dunkle, *Enchantment and Creed in the Hymns of Ambrose of Milan*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

his life.¹⁰⁵ Damasus' inscribed poems at shrines of saints in Rome likewise develop martyr narratives, often alongside visual representations. Paulinus of Perigueux in the fifth century and Venantius Fortunatus in the sixth both wrote long verse accounts of St. Martin of Tours' life.¹⁰⁶ The devotion to saints, their relics, and their feast days developed extensively in the fourth century. This type of ritual and veneration became increasingly popular, along with pilgrimage. Such poetic verses of veneration influenced epitaph writers of the late antique literary era.

Early Christian poets were not writing to create a body of liturgical literature in the vernacular, nor were they creating works to replace the pagan authors of education and tradition. Instead, as White suggests, "the purpose of early Christian Latin poetry [stemmed] from the desire of Christians who happened to be more or less well versed in classical literature to communicate the truth of the Christian message, to argue against pagan and heretical views and to praise God outside the liturgical context."¹⁰⁷ One belief of the fourth century is that while eloquence and artistic style were not necessary to express the message of Christianity, those things could and did make the message more accessible and palatable to a wider audience.¹⁰⁸ Christian poets used the forms of classical Latin poetry to convey the Christian message in a pleasing way, blending the traditions handed down to them in Roman education, in Old Testament psalms, and in other forms of Hebrew poetry. Unlike Damasus whose work could have been seen by

¹⁰⁵ For more on Paulinus of Nola see Marc Mastrangelo, *The Roman Self in Late Antiquity: Prudentius and the Poetics of the Soul*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), Michael Roberts, "Rhetoric and the 'Natalica' of Paulinus of Nola," *Quaderni Urbinati di Cultura Classica* 95.2 (2010): 55-69, and Dennis Trout, *Paulinus of Nola. Life, Letters, and Poems*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

¹⁰⁶ See Michael Roberts, "Light, Color and Visual Illusion in the Poetry of Venantius Fortunatus," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 65/66 (2011-12): 113-120 and Michael Roberts, "Venantius Fortunatus's Life of Saint Martin," *Traditio* 57 (2002): 129-187.

¹⁰⁷ White, *Early Christian Poets*, 6.

¹⁰⁸ White, *Early Christian Poets*, 7.

anyone who walked by it, Prudentius, Juvenecus, and Proba most likely wrote for an elite audience and were only read in such literary circles.¹⁰⁹ Paulinus most likely wrote his *Natalicia* for a mixed audience.¹¹⁰ The poetry of the latter half of the fourth century became important in the lives of “ordinary Christians,” as it was used in “liturgy (the hymns of Ambrose) and education (Gregory of Nazianzus) and it was read aloud to pilgrims in Nola (Paulinus).”¹¹¹ More than just the literate elite were exposed to the literature of the fourth century. Much of the poetry of late antiquity “combined traditional high-brow aesthetics with a clear message in order to reach a mixed audience of educated people of the elite and non-educated people of the lower social standing. It was evidently in the church’s interest to attract both groups.”¹¹² The revival of Latin literature flowered during late antiquity due to the variety read of early Christian literature and the traditions upon which it originated. In a changing religious climate, fourth century literature proposed a way in which to engage with the past and the present simultaneously, as poetry blended Roman identity with a new Christian one.

A blending of old and new terms, themes, genres, and vibrant word-pictures surrounded readers and listeners alike. Encompassed by new genres and themes, the authors of late antique epitaphs also recognized a development of new identities and groups of belonging. They used aspects of contemporary poetry, consolation literature, and traditional epitaphic formulae in the development of the early Christian society in Rome. The epitaphs composed during this time solidified the deceased’s membership in

¹⁰⁹ Roald Dijkstra, “The Apostles as Instruments of Social Engagement,” *Literature and Society in the Fourth Century AD: Performing Paideia, Constructing the Present, Presenting the Self*, edited by Lieve Van Hoof and Peter Van Nuffelen, 180-200, (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2014), 182.

¹¹⁰ Dijkstra, “Apostles as Instruments,” 182.

¹¹¹ Dijkstra, “Apostles as Instruments,” 180.

¹¹² Dijkstra, “Apostles as Instruments,” 183.

the new developing group of early Christians by way of phrases and *topoi*. The epitaphs also used the intellectual and visual aspects that the authors of ‘high literature’ were creating as part of the late antiquity style. Authors of epitaphs in my collection assume and create a relationship between themselves, the deceased, and the readers of the epitaphs. Variation and repetition, ornate descriptions, and allusion and intertextuality develop as techniques to express these new themes in hybrid genres and contexts.

Three Stylistic Characteristics of Late Antique Poetics

Variation and Repetition

The way that authors were able to use variation and repetition in their descriptive works arose from manipulating words as the building blocks of language. Words themselves stand out as foundational units by which authors can build elaborate scenes with multiple layers of learned meaning. Authors of late antique poetry viewed words “as possessing a physical presence of their own, distinct from any considerations of sense or syntax.”¹¹³ Authors continuously reused words to create elaborate or new foundational constructions and formulae.¹¹⁴ Words themselves contain more power than just the meaning they convey, since “while the sounds of words, made up of letters and syllables, may fade away, the meaning they convey remains, both in the speaker’s and in the hearer’s mind.”¹¹⁵ Classical rhetoric served as the predecessor of the *variatio* of late

¹¹³ Roberts, *The Jeweled Style*, 58.

¹¹⁴ Roberts, *The Jeweled Style*, 58.

¹¹⁵ Isabella Gualandri, “Words Pregnant with Meaning: The Power of Single Words in Late Latin Literature,” in *The Poetics of Late Latin Literature*, edited by Jás Elsner and Jesús Hernández Lobato (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 125.

antiquity, as Cicero and Quintilian used structures like *leptologia* (a subtle type of speaking and detailed description) to “produce regularity of structure, and regularity in turn directs attention to the differences within the repeated units (cola and commata) that qualify similarity.”¹¹⁶ Once regularity was established, stylistic variation could stand out from the surrounding language. Variety and repetition of words, phrases, scenes, and even references created unique structures in late antique literature, what Cicero and others called *flos* and *color*.¹¹⁷ The manipulation and placement of words reflects the creativity of the author, not just the meaning that the author wishes to convey on the literal level. Miniaturization and the episodic nature popular in this poetry allowed for variation and repetition to play out on a larger scale, manipulating similar and contrasting units, just as if they were words or phrases.¹¹⁸ Roberts expresses this phenomenon succinctly with: “The placing and ordering of words within the text fragmented by *leptologia* was a matter of *variatio*.”¹¹⁹ Even the patterning of the sounds of the words aided in developing variation and beauty in literature, as unusual patterns of sounds “are

¹¹⁶ Roberts, *The Jeweled Style*, 44.

¹¹⁷ Gualandri, “Words Pregnant with Meaning,” 129. Roberts discusses how Cicero and Quintilian talk about style in oratory and rhetoric, praising variety. In *Fin.* 2.3.10, Cicero states that *varietas* is a Latin word properly used of diversity of color, but by transference of many other kinds of diversity: a varied poem, a varied speech, varied character, varied fortune. Cicero describes *color* as “rhetorical embellishment,” similar to that of pigmented color of paintings or the rhetorical style of the sophists. Roberts states that Cicero uses *flos* five times in his rhetorical treatises in conjunction with variety and color. These are a way to adorn one’s writing and provide “small-scale variation.” Quintilian, on the other hand, avoids using *flos* to describe this flowered style. He and Cicero agree that such ornamentation of one’s prose should be limited in rhetoric. Roberts, *The Jeweled Style*, 47-8. Gualandri explains that in the analysis of texts based on meaning and on sharing similar words, as Ambrose and Augustine did with scripture, “intensify the pleasure of listening to words and enhance their sweetness (*dulcedo, suauitas*), a quality Cicero had prescribed as crucial in epideictic eloquence and which for Christian authors came to be of fundamental importance in the project of presenting Christian truth in a way that can move souls.” Gualandri, “Words Pregnant with Meaning,” 133.

¹¹⁸ Roberts states that “Late antiquity preferred juxtaposition and contrast to logical interrelationship; contiguity no longer required continuity.” Roberts, *The Jeweled Style*, 56.

¹¹⁹ Roberts, *The Jeweled Style*, 64.

like lights which brighten a text[.]”¹²⁰ The poet’s skill came forth from setting words, these “little jewels,” together in phrases, and patterns of phrases set in episodes.

Metaphor, repetition, variation, *flos*, *color*, and other word-dominant literary devices became more popular in the fourth century than they were in the first century CE.¹²¹ Especially when viewed with the art of the time, there are correlations with literature, as Roberts notes with:

In mosaics, we are told, this liberation of the individual stone and its investment with light and color is achieved by (1) enlarging the size of the individual tesserae, (2) setting them less closely together, and (3) setting them at angles to catch and reflect the light. The analogy here with literature is not exact, but the poet too must use various stylistic devices to isolate the independent unit.¹²²

Roberts describes the late antique reader and poet as having a distinct eye for patterning and an appreciation for expressions of brilliance and color.¹²³ Both the construction and placement of verbal phrases indicate the literary skill of the poet manipulating them.¹²⁴ With a purposeful structure, the meter, diction, and word placement of a poem become just as important as the described scenes in deciphering meaning. It is via the use of words that an author is able to create an aesthetically pleasing pattern of both repetition and variation.

One major difference between classical literature and that of late antiquity is that in the latter aforementioned stylistic aspects did not appear in lengthy, epic-like text, but

¹²⁰ Gualandri, “Words Pregnant with Meaning,” 135-6.

¹²¹ Roberts, *The Jeweled Style*, 49.

¹²² Roberts, *The Jeweled Style*, 72.

¹²³ Roberts, *The Jeweled Style*, 51.

¹²⁴ Gualandri, “Words Pregnant with Meaning,” 140.

instead in episodes, with focus on parts rather than a whole. The fifth-century bishop and diplomat Sidonius also composed poetry which exemplified the use of classical literary motifs during late antiquity.¹²⁵ Sidonius' poem dedicated to his brother, Magnus Felix, provides an example of variation and repetition in his use not only of words, but also of phrases and segmentation. In his *Ad Felicem*, Sidonius opens each episode with the same word, *non*, and with the same rhetorical device, a *praeteritio*. The author employs a *praeteritio* by stating that he or she will not discuss an event, and through this omission instead actually draws attention to the event omitted. Pregnant with rhetorical devices, the segment of Sidonius here uses minimal detail in order to conjure more details in the mind of his audience. In saying that he is not going to speak about something *hic* (here), Sidonius presents a *praeteritio* to introduce the variety of episodes. While *non* is the first word of the line in each new episode, the verbs which form each *praeteritio* are different. He begins his series of episodes with (38): *non hic Cecropois leges triumphus* "you shall not read here of the Athenian triumphs." He employs the same opening strategy fourteen more times, introducing each unique episode with such uses of *praeteritio* as *non...dicam, non hic...loquar, non hic...retexam, non hic...narro, non hic...spectes, non...hic putes legendum, and non tu hic nunc legeris.*¹²⁶ Sidonius repeatedly tells his

¹²⁵ For more on Sidonius' poetry see Johannes A. van Waarden and Gavin Kelly, eds. *New Approaches to Sidonius Apollinaris*, (Leuven: Peeters, 2013); Joseph Grzywaczewski and Daniel K. Knox, "Glory, Decay and Hope: Goddess Roma in Sidonius Apollinari's Panegyrics," in *Pagans and Christians in the Late Roman Empire: New Evidence, New Approaches (4th-8th centuries)*, edited by Marianne Saghy and Edward M. Schoolman (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2017), 203-216; Tim Denecker, "Language Attitudes and Social Connotations in Jerome and Sidonius Apollinaris," *Vigiliae Christianae* 69.4 (2015), 393-421.

¹²⁶ Sidonius *Ad Felicem* 9, 65-66, 76, 106, 130-3, 211, 230-1, and 289. The other instances not listed in this line here include line 50, where he states, *non prolem Garamantici Tonatis*, "I will not relate how the offspring of the Garamantian Thunder-god[;]" line 94, *non hic Herculis excolam labores...* "I shall not here embellish the labors of Hercules[;]" line 117 *nec...erit tibi legendus*, "nor shall you have read of the Phrygian shepherd[;]" line 168 – 9 *non...canto*; line 181 *non....verendam* "I shall not trumpet forth[;]" and line 259 *non...hic tibi legetur* "here you shall read no..."

audience that he will not retell or narrate, nor will the reader observe, read, or learn of these stories. In this way, he uses variation of diction to introduce different episodes while also employing repetition with the words *non* and *hic*, and with the multiple uses of *praeteritio*. These strategies allow Sidonius to bring the scenes to his reader's mind for comparison reasons without detailing them at length.¹²⁷ The repetitive pattern also gives his readers a structure through which to understand his use of these episodes, as stories by which to compare himself and his contemporary authors with classical texts and the stories by which they are inspired. In one of these episodes, Sidonius implements asyndeton as another way to construct a scene differently. As a literary device defined by its lack of conjunctions and linking words, asyndeton often invokes a sense of haste. Sidonius shortens the description of Hercules' labors with (9.95-100): "To whom the sow, stag, lion, Giant, Amazon, host, bull, Eryx, birds, Lycus, thief, Nessus, Libyan, peaks, apples, maiden, snake, Oete, Thracian horses, Spanish cattle, wrestling river, three-formed dog, and burden of the heaven gave the heavens."¹²⁸ With the use of asyndeton, Sidonius uses words to reference and abbreviate scenes that in other works could have been the subject of lengthy lines themselves. The reader is expected to know that the apples refer to Hercules' labor to travel to Atlas, carry the heavens on his own back, and gain the apples of the Hesperides. Like the rhetorical strategy of *praeteritio*, Sidonius' clipped reference to Hercules' labors does not spend time in description, but instead the omission of detail draws attention to the well-known scenes, requiring the reader to supply details themselves. The variety of words and lack of conjunction allows

¹²⁷ For more on this passage see Gualandri, "Words Pregnant with Meaning," 140-2.

¹²⁸ Sidonius 9.95-100: *cui sus, cerva, leo, Gigas, Amazon, / hospes, taurus, Eryx, aves, Lycus, fur, / Nessus, Libs, iuga, poma, virgo, serpens, / Oete, Thraces equi, boves Hiberiae, / luctator fluvius, canis triformis/ portatusque polus polum dederunt*. Translation by Roberts, *The Jeweled Style*, 60.

for the development of a pithy and abbreviated description typical of this style. By seeming to disregard the descriptive scenes, the author instead calls attention to it. Within the same section of his poem, Sidonius employs an alternating use of variation and repetition of words to introduce different episodes and rhetorical strategies for the purpose of praising his brother.

Descriptio

The application of visual images in late antique poetry also coalesces in Roberts' term "jeweled style." In conjunction with the visual art of the time period, the literature of the age engaged in similar trends. Like the popular mosaics still extant in Ravenna and elsewhere, the poetry of late antiquity would put pieces together, rearranging phrases and words in order to develop a tapestry of descriptive word-pictures. The traditional techniques of *ecphrasis* and *descriptio* created a vividness that engaged the visual imagination of the late antique reader.¹²⁹ Roberts states that, "catalogs and enumerations, ecphrases, and ethopoeiae are all characteristic of the first-century epic, as they are of the poetry of late antiquity[.]"¹³⁰ demonstrating the continuity between the Latin literary tradition. Images of flowers also became intermingled and metaphorically referred to, reflecting the brilliance that *color* also exemplified in elaborate description. Late antique poets not only wrote with intricate descriptions, but they also critiqued and praised past authors based upon their ability to write similarly jeweled scenes. Sidonius describes Horaces' *Odes* as "blossoming with many-colored verbal flowers" and Statius' *Silvae* as

¹²⁹ Roberts, *The Jeweled Style*, 38-9. For more information on Paulinus of Nola's use of such bejeweled verses, see Dennis Trout, *Paulinus of Nola: Life, Letters, and Poems*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 181-86.

¹³⁰ Roberts, *The Jeweled Style*, 61.

“jeweled meadows.”¹³¹ The style of *vernans floribus* became necessary in a work of literature for it to be considered a work worthy of reading. The resurgence of classical Latin literary motifs finds its home in the literary revival of late antiquity.

Claudian, a late fourth-century poet who traveled from Alexandria to Rome, supported the revival of classical Latin literary motifs through the descriptive scenes in his poetry.¹³² In the second book of *De consulatu Stilichonis*, Claudian creates an elaborate description of the cave of Time that illuminates the effectiveness and prominence of *descriptio* in late antique poetry. When Sol visits the cave of Time, Claudian actualizes the striking scene in lines 424 and following:

Far away, all unknown, beyond the range of mortal minds, scarce to be
approached by the gods, is a cavern of immense age, hoary mother of the years,
her vast breast at once the cradle and the tomb of time. A serpent surrounds this
cave, engulfing everything with slow but all-devouring jaws; never cease the glint
of his scales. His mouth devours the back-bending tail as with silent movement he
traces his own beginning.¹³³

¹³¹ Roberts, *The Jeweled Style*, 50-51.

¹³² For an in-depth look at Claudian's poetry via the methodology of Michael Robert's in *The Jeweled Style*, see Clare Coombe, *Claudian the Poet*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018). For more on Claudian's poetry, see Catherine Ware, *Claudian and the Roman Epic Tradition*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Katherine Wasdin, "Honorius Triumphant: Poetry and Politics in Claudian's Wedding Poems," *Classical Philology*, 109.1 (2014), 48-65; Lukas J. Dorfbauer, "Claudian und Prudentius: Verbale Parallelen und Datierungsfragen," *Hermes* 140 (2012), 45-70; Peder G. Christiansen and David Christiansen, "Claudian: The Last Great Pagan Poet," *L'Antiquité Classique* 78 (2009), 133-144; Stephen Wheeler, "More Roman than the Romans of Rome: Virgilian (Self-) Fashioning in Claudian's Panegyric for the Consuls Olybrius and Probinus," in *Texts and Culture in Late Antiquity: Inheritance, Authority, and Change*, edited by J.H.D. Scourfield, (Swansea: Classical Press of Wales, 2007), 97-134; Bret Mulligan, "An Allusion to Ovid in Claudian's *Carmina Minora* 22.56," *Classical Philology* 100.3 (2005), 277-280; C.E. Gruzelier, "Claudian: Court Poet as Artist," *Ramus* 19.1 (1990) 89-108.

¹³³ Translation by Alan Cameron, "Claudian," in *Latin Literature of the Fourth Century*, edited by J. W. Binns, (London and Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974), 152. For more information on this passage, see Clare Coombe, "The Universe Ready to be Destabilized," in *Claudian the Poet*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 84-89.

Claudian continues painting the picture of Nature and old man Time who sit at the threshold of the cave, making laws and fixing stars in the sky. The image that Claudian paints purely with words draws the reader into his imagination, which is “made accessivle to the audience only through the prophetic power of the poet.”¹³⁴ The serpent surrounding the cave, making an endless circle, is reminiscent of the cyclical and endless nature of Time itself. Nature and Time are anthropomorphized and are described as the primary agents defining the world around Claudian’s readers. Although a fantasy, Claudian’s cave of Time brings these unbounded forces to life.¹³⁵ Through his use of words, Claudian conjures a visual image in his reader’s mind’s eye. Claudian’s *descriptio* exhibits the inventive aesthetic of late antique poetry and the power that words have on those who read them.

Intertextual reference and allusion

As seen in the jeweled style of the age, authors often borrowed from their predecessors to create new and enticing visual scenes, but they also used such references to formulate relationships between these texts. Like the Hellenistic poet Callimachus and his learned, literary descendants, the authors of late antiquity reveal their erudition by fashioning allusions and intertextual relationships to classical texts.¹³⁶ Through citation or allusion (in the ‘alluding text’ or ‘target text’) to another text (often called the ‘model

¹³⁴ Clare Coombe, *Claudian the Poet* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 84.

¹³⁵ Coombe further explains the depths of the cave with, “The description of the cave as *mater* gives it a primitive generative quality, possibly reminiscent of Terra or Natura in other poems; the use of *squalida* to describe the mother-cave probably refers, using a later Latin meaning, to its gloom, but nonetheless retains connotations of filth which again suggest earthy, primordial qualities.” *Claudian the Poet*, 85.

¹³⁶ For an in-depth explanation on the differences between intertextuality and allusion (and their roles in classical and late Latin poetry) see Helen Kaufmann, “Intertextuality in Late Latin Poetry,” in *The Poetics of Late Latin Literature*, edited by Jás Elsner and Jesús Hernández Lobato (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 149-175.

text' or 'source text'),¹³⁷ the “poet portrays himself as a kind of scholar,” and he or she figures “allusion as a scholarly activity, which often encodes a statement of alignment with the academic-poetic traditions of Callimachus and the Alexandrian library.”¹³⁸ These allusions can be made through the forms of quotation, echo, reference, reminiscence, or transformation.¹³⁹ Hinds’ explanation of the scholarly intent of the Roman poet aligns also with the style of poetry popular during late antiquity. During the Latin literary revival, late antique poets alluded to other poetry in the Latin literary tradition in order to display their scholarly pursuit. It was is not just an act of a purposeful author, however, but also a pursuit of an intelligent reader. One caveat to this understanding of allusion is that there is the “*unknowability* of the poet’s intention,”¹⁴⁰ but an allusion still exists because it is “in practice, something (re)constructed *by the reader* at the point of reception.”¹⁴¹ While on the one hand, “the poet’s dialogue with the work of other poets can be a very private, self-reflective and solipsistic kind of dialogue,”¹⁴² the poetry itself is open to the reader, thus suggesting that an author of an alluding text writes towards the perceptive reader capable and willing to (re)construct. Requiring a reader to engage a step beyond recognizing an allusion, an intertextual relationship between texts develops when an allusion in a ‘target text’ influences the reader’s understanding of the original ‘source text’ to the extent which now neither text can be

¹³⁷ Hinds describes the quoted text as ‘the model text’ and the one quoting as the ‘alluding text,’ verses Lowell Edmunds who calls the quoted text the “source text” while the text in which the quotation or allusion occurs is the ‘target text.’ Hinds, *Allusion and Intertext*, 101, and Lowell Edmunds, *Intertextuality and the Reading of Roman Poetry* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 137.

¹³⁸ Stephen Hinds, *Allusion and Intertext: Dynamics of Appropriation in Roman Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 2.

¹³⁹ Edmunds, *Intertextuality and the Reading of Roman Poetry*, 134.

¹⁴⁰ Hinds, *Allusion and Intertext*, 48.

¹⁴¹ Hinds, *Allusion and Intertext*, 10.

¹⁴² Hinds, *Allusion and Intertext*, 49.

read without the other. An intertextual relationship might even include a subversion of the model text's main point, resulting in a renewed interpretation of the model text based on the alluding text's reference. Allusion, therefore, can influence and reinterpret a text if an intertextual relationship develops.

The genre of the Vergilian cento, made popular in late antiquity, demonstrates allusion on a grand scale and relies upon a reader's knowledge of Vergil. The genre of the cento developed and was popularized in late antiquity as a form of allusion dependent on an author's quotation (and a reader's knowledge) of Vergil's *Aeneid*. The Vergilian cento blends scholarly references as a "playful reworking of Virgilian poetry [that]...cannot belong in any simple way to a high genre."¹⁴³ A learned author required a learned reader, and vice versa. The Latin word *cento*, like the Greek κέντρον, means a "patchwork rag," and after the third century CE it was used to specify a poem composed from the fragments of another poem.¹⁴⁴ Constituent parts were arranged and assembled like a mosaic into an independent work. The cento differed from other poems because the formal constraints of a cento are limited (even copied wholesale) to Vergil's texts.¹⁴⁵ First seen at the end of the second century, centos flourished in the fourth and beginning of the fifth century CE.¹⁴⁶ Due to widespread respect for and knowledge of Vergil's work, these centos could be appreciated by a variety of people because their audiences were "capable

¹⁴³ Scott McGill, *Virgil Recomposed: The Mythological and Secular Centos in Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 8.

¹⁴⁴ Peltari, *The Space That Remains*, 96.

¹⁴⁵ McGill, *Virgil Recomposed*, 9.

¹⁴⁶ Peltari, *The Space That Remains*, 96. The earliest known Latin cento is Hosidius Geta's *Medea*, from the end of the second or beginning of the third century. When Tertullian describes this cento (*de praescr. Haer.* 39.3-5), he states that it is a relatively new form of poetry: *vides hodie ex Virgilio fabulam in totum aliam componi* (Peltari, *The Space That Remains*, 96). Of course, this type of poetry was only made possible by the prominence of Vergil's respect and wide-spread use in education.

of understanding their sophisticated interaction with the text of Vergil.”¹⁴⁷ When Ausonius, a fourth-century poet and teacher of rhetoric, wrote his own cento, the *Cento Nuptialis*, he accompanied it with a letter to the rhetor Axius Paulus (but with the expectation of its wider circulation).¹⁴⁸ Ausonius’ letter informs his readers that he purposefully composed his cento in a specific way, even proscribing the proper length of citations for other centos to follow.¹⁴⁹ Ausonius’ letter implies his hope that his cento will be read by active readers.¹⁵⁰ It is not purely about entertainment here; the cento forces readers to think back to their knowledge of Vergil’s poetry and to other places within the cento itself. In late Latin literature, centos “serve[d] as valuable witnesses to Virgil’s reception in antiquity and beyond, and [...]they bear upon larger issues in Latin literature and in literary studies as a whole, particularly those related to intertextuality and allusion.”¹⁵¹ The Vergilian cento gives one the opportunity to read something as both an individual work and as a form of reception.¹⁵²

Without the constraints of the cento, late antique authors found other ways to create allusions to and intertextual relationships with classical literature. The fourth-century Roman senator and poet Paulinus, for example, mimics the *Aeneid*’s memorial of Anchises’ death day by stating his own desire to celebrate the death day of Saint Felix.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁷ Pelttari, *The Space That Remains*, 98.

¹⁴⁸ McGill, *Virgil Recomposed*, 1.

¹⁴⁹ McGill, *Virgil Recomposed*, 4.

¹⁵⁰ Pelttari, *The Space That Remains*, 98. For a discussion of the three different layers of understanding and reading a cento, Pelttari, *The Space That Remains*, 98.

¹⁵¹ McGill, *Virgil Recomposed*, 1.

¹⁵² Pelttari, *The Space that Remains*, 73.

¹⁵³ This type of praise poem and annual observation of the anniversary of someone’s death found precedents in classical poetry, see W.H.C. Frend. “The Two Worlds of Paulinus of Nola,” in *Latin Literature of the Fourth Century*, edited by J.W. Binns. (London and Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974), 122. For more information on Paulinus and wordchoice/wordplay see Isabella Gualandri, “Words Pregnant with Meaning: The Power of Single Words in Late Latin Literature,” in *The Poetics of Late Latin Literature*, edited by Jás Elsner and Jesús Hernández Lobato. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 130-136. For more information on Paulinus’ poetic development in the vein of Latin literary tradition, from

In Vergil's scene, Aeneas expresses a wish to observe the anniversary of his father's death (5.46-50). Paulinus expresses a similar desire to remember the dead with (*carm.* 27. 148-152):

salve, cara **dies**, **salve**, mihi lux mea, **salve**,
 semper festa mihi; sed in hoc mihi clarior **anno**
 orta refulsisti, quia cum Felicis **honore**
 Nicetam revehis, sanctorum ut amore duorum
 binum **habeam** natalem hodie, quo **corpore** sumpti
 martyris excessum celebrans et corpore prompti

Greetings to you, day so welcomed! Greetings, light of mine! For me you are always a festive day, but this year the brightness of your rising has been more splendid still, because you bring new honor to Felix, you bring back Nicetas to me; and so I celebrate twin birthdays today out of affection for two saintly men. I commemorate the physical death of our martyr.

The above lines parallel in sentiment and phrasing Aeneas' desire to venerate the day of his deceased father (*Aen.* 5.46-50):

annuus exactis completur mensibus orbis,
 ex quo reliquias divinique **ossa** parentis
 condidimus terra **maestasque** sacravimus aras.

Vergil, Horace, Terrance, and Sallust etc. through Ausonius, see Dennis Trout, *Paulinus of Nola: Life, Letters, and Poems*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 28-33, 181; R. P. H. Green "Paulinus of Nola and the Diction of Christian Latin Poetry," *Latomus* 32 (1973): 79-85 and *The Poetry of Paulinus of Nola: A Study of his Latinity*. (Brussels: Latomus, 1971). For more information on Paulinus' use of other classical poets, such as Ovid, see Ian Fielding, "Ovid Recalled in the Poetic Correspondence of Ausonius and Paulinus of Nola," in *Transformations of Ovid in Late Antiquity*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 22-51.

iamque **dies**, nisi fallor, adest, quem **semper acerbum**,
semper honoratum -sic di voluistis **habebo**.

The circling of the **year** completes its months
 since we entombed in earth the **bones** of my godlike father
 and we consecrated **sorrowful** altars.

And unless I err, that anniversary is here, the **day** I shall always keep
 in **grief and honor** (so you gods have willed).

Paulinus alludes to Vergil's work by mirroring the idea of praise for one's heroes after their death. The repetition of *semper* in Vergil is mimicked by Paulinus' repetition of *salve*. They both keep these days with *honor* and venerate their physical bodies in the earth (*corpore* and *ossa*). The scenes themselves display the same desire to observe the anniversary of an honored person's death. In imitating Aeneas' speech, Paulinus also demonstrates the role of venerating not just heroes or saints, but all those who people thought worthy of honor and veneration. Paulinus does not quote Vergil, as the centos do, but instead uses similarities in words and scenes to create a new understanding through intertextual relationship. Paulinus sets himself up as Aeneas, and Felix as Anchises. Paulinus, however, celebrates the day optimistically, as a birthday, rather than as sorrowful and bitter (*maestas* and *acerbum*), as Aeneas does. Aeneas shall mourn the day of his father's passing, forever a bitter day to him. Paulinus inverts the Vergilian scene while at the same depending upon it. As a Christian, and a saint, Felix's death day signals the birth of his afterlife and his return to Christ. Felix's "rising" alludes to his soul's ascension to heaven and is therefore a day of celebration for Paulinus. Due to this

allusion, both texts are read differently, Paulinus' as an inversion of Vergil's mournful tale, and Vergil's as the opposite of Christian optimism.

What arose from the conjunction of these three poetic devices, variation and repetition, visual imagery (*ekphrasis* and *descriptio*), and allusion and intertextuality, was a uniquely ornate and intellectual literary style, one that crossed the bounds of verse and prose. The poetics of late antiquity permits the epitaphs of the time period to concentrate on more than the story of a life. The epitaphs that intermingle with the literary style of the time build upon these techniques and incorporate them into the parallels between visual images on stone and in writing. The epitaphs of my collection demonstrate the intricate play between literary reference, wordplay, and descriptive images. The learned reader is valued not only by the high literature of this age, but also by the poets of these epitaphs. We will now turn to how the specific poets of my corpus employ the building blocks of words to create connections between literary predecessors, funerary themes, and internal cohesion. In looking at the metrics, poetic sensibility, literary references, and formulaic phrases of the epitaphs individually, a distinctive commonality between the types of epitaphs emerge to form a collective identity.

Damasus: The Bridge between Poetics and Material Culture

Pope Damasus (c. 366-384 CE) was integral to the development of the blending of Roman and Christian tradition in a genre of poetry that added physicality to a new hybrid identity. Damasus' *elogia* for the Roman martyrs allowed for a resolution between the two worlds and traditions of Rome and Christianity. The Latin literary tradition blended with the aesthetics of biblical literature and the themes of early Christianity. Damasus

used the work and styles of major contemporary authors, his classical predecessors, and Juvenius and Optatianus Porfyrius to develop his own poetic style.¹⁵⁴ His works had a prominent place among the images in shrines and as influential texts for both Prudentius and Paulinus of Nola in particular.¹⁵⁵ As inscriptions, his works employed both the visual aspects around them as well as the Latin literary tradition. Damasus' *elogia* covered the new memorials he erected in honor of the martyrs and the saints as well as the existing catacombs beneath. Damasus' poetry mimicked, influenced, and developed alongside the social changes within Roman self-identification. Trout sums up this shared development of an alternative hybrid identity with: "Damasus's poetic vision of early Christian Rome, echoing Virgil, fashioning virtuous heroes, and promoting new celestial guardians, would operate as the base camp for exploring new modes of Roman self-understanding."¹⁵⁶ By the mid-fifth century, the era of building expansion of the fourth century was over, but pilgrims continued to come to Rome to record these inscriptions and to visit shrines and bring home relics of the saints.

Educated readers were the ideal audience for most late antique poetry, and Damasus' audience is no different. Although his texts were available to anyone who traveled to their location and had the ability to read, in order to fully comprehend the layers of his poetry, one needed to be cognizant of classical poets' works and the Latin literary tradition and late antique aesthetics. The following examples show Damasus' use of the three distinctive themes of late antique poetics. He employs "repetition of phrases across

¹⁵⁴ Trout, *Damasus of Rome*, 17.

¹⁵⁵ Trout, *Damasus of Rome*, 17.

¹⁵⁶ Dennis Trout, "Damasus and the Invention of Early Christian Rome," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 33, 3 (2003), 519.

the corpus[,]" specifically *regnaque piorum* and *regia caeli*.¹⁵⁷ These phrases in particular also appear in other epitaphs not written by Damasus. In Chapter 4 below, the focus will turn to the epitaphs of Evodia (6), Rhode (8), and Pontia (12) and their repetition of the two Damasan expressions, *regnaque piorum* and *regia caeli*. In addition to repeating certain phrases throughout his works, he also adds slight variations to typical lines, giving the reader a surprise or unexpected twist. The line *contempto principe mundi* appears as a line ending three times, but is changed in a fourth to be *superato principe mundi*.¹⁵⁸ Although some have critiqued Damasus as monotonous in his repetition of phrases, they fail to recognize not only the variation in which these lines and phrases are embedded, but also the nature of repetition as a popular poetic style of the time period.¹⁵⁹ Epigram's short length necessitates "ellipsis, shrewd word choice, and sharply pointed metaphors[,]" in order to evoke images, feelings, and learned style.¹⁶⁰ Damasus' repetition and variation allows him to do so in a limited space. The epitaphic genre likewise must use whatever skills it can to develop erudite ideas and artistic images in a concise way. Repetition of phrases and word construction provides for a development of these learned aesthetics.

Damasus continues to bring popular trends into his artistic works with his tendency for description and allusion to Latin literature. His work focuses on venerating the saints, heroes of the Church, but does not shy away from employing the tools of poets from an

¹⁵⁷ Trout, 24. *Regnaque piorum* is found in four epigrams, Trout 20.5, 25.5, 39.8, and 43.5. *Regia caeli* is used as a line ending in five different instances, Trout 11.11, 16.3, 25.2, 39.4, and 47.3.

¹⁵⁸ *Contempto principe mundi* ends the lines 7.2, 31.2, and 39.7, whereas *superato principe mundi* ends 43.4. Trout, 24.

¹⁵⁹ For more information about such critics, please see Trout, 24-25. In Trout's work, he aims to express the ways in which Damasus' variety appeared not in the phrases themselves, but in how they were used throughout his corpus and visual aids he built.

¹⁶⁰ Trout, 17.

earlier age. Stories of saints and martyrs often included tales of torture, and Damasus vividly describes these scenes in his poems for Eutychius and Paul. In San Sebastiano, Damasus inscribed the scenes of Eutychius' martyrdom. Within these verses Damasus evoked a scene in the minds of his readers by a vivid description, listing the torments Eutychius underwent. Damasus writes the following (lines 4-8):¹⁶¹

carceris inluviem sequitur nova poena per artus
 testarum fragmenta parant ne somnus adiret
 bis seni transiere dies alimenta negantur
 mittitur in barathrum sanctus lavat omnia sanguis
 vulnera quae intulerat mortis metuenda potestas

A new punishment for every limb is added to the prison's filth:
 They lay out fragments of pottery to forestall sleep;
 twice six days passed, food is denied;
 he is thrown into a deep dungeon; holy blood bathes every
 wound which the dreadful power of death inflicted.

Damasus does not linger on what Eutychius feels at his inflicted pains, but instead paints a picture in his readers' minds. The reader pictures him or herself in Eutychius' shoes and imagines his final days before he was found and venerated. Even in his non-epigraphic poems, Damasus creates a heightened sense of literary prowess in his veneration to his dedicatees. In his poem to the Apostle Paul, Damasus uses asyndeton to create an intricate *descriptio* of Paul's torture. Damasus writes, "Lashes, chains, hunger, stones,

¹⁶¹ CLE 307 = Ihm 27 = ILCV 1993 = ED 21 = ICUR 5.13274 = Trout 21.

and the frenzy of wild beasts, prison's filth, rods, torture, shackles, shipwreck, tears, the serpent's dreadful poisons - the marks of Christ on his body, he feared not to bear."¹⁶²

Like the abbreviated list of Hercule's tasks in Sidonius' work, Damasus likewise references all of the tortures that Eutychius underwent without lingering on every scene. The reader imagines the brutal scenes of Eutychius, while the text continues to move forward. Variation in construction goes hand-in-hand with scene building and heightened emotion. The learned nature of allusion to previous and famous texts also brings to the reader's mind other instances of heightened emotion.

While Damasus' corpus itself does contain repetition and variation of lines, the primary learned structure of allusion links Damasus' *elogia* to the tradition around him. Damasus' epitaph for Eutychius evokes lines from Vergil, Ovid, Silius Italicus, and Petronius, but the use of one word reveals the multi-layered image embedded through one simple reference. The use of the word *barathrum*, a classical description of the underworld, is particularly heavy but an otherwise unusual noun. Lewis and Short describe this noun as a poetic one, not typically found in prose. *Barathrum* appears twice in Vergil's *Aeneid* (3.421 and 8.245). Here Eutychius is thrown down into this deep dungeon where he is tortured before his death, whereas in Vergil the word describes the deep whirlpool of Charybdis and the chasm of the infernal regions. *Barathrum* recalls the realm of monsters and dark turmoil. The reader imagines Eutychius in a pit opening to the infernal realms and his torturers the monsters who tormented Odysseus, Aeneas, and Alcides. Without even a lengthy reference or copied phrase, one word is enough to draw an allusion to the depths of the world and of the Latin literary tradition. *Barathrum* is not

¹⁶² Lines 19-22, Ihm 2 = ED 1 = Trout 1.

typical in many other works, finding its home in only fourteen poetic uses ranging from Plautus, Catullus, and Vergil to Martial and Valerius Flaccus.¹⁶³ There are many other allusions that Damasus makes to his literary predecessors, particularly Vergil and Ovid. To discuss them all here would be redundant and lengthy.

What is important about Damasus use of classical allusions, is that he not only alludes to his predecessors, but he also often subverts or adapts their messages for the Christian ideas of the day. The poem venerating the saints Stephen and Tarsicius echoes Vergil just as it also challenges him. Vergil praises Octavian in *Georgics* 3 for adding territory to the Roman Empire by stating that Egypt and Asia have been vanquished and “**trophies** torn with twice-triumphant hand **from empires** both on ocean’s either shore (*ex hoste tropoaea*).”¹⁶⁴ Damasus alludes to the Vergilian scene when he celebrates Stephen’s similar collection of trophies from the enemy with *ex hoste tropaeum*.¹⁶⁵ Damasus continues the embedded allusion to Vergil with his description of a persecuting Roman mob as ““mad dogs (*canibus rabidis*),’ redeploy[ing] words Vergil had used to characterize the hounds of Iulus, driven to madness by the Fury Allecto (*Aeneid* 7.493-94).”¹⁶⁶ The allusion deepens with the copying of *mala sana* from Vergil’s and Ovid’s description of Dido (*Aeneid* 4.8 and *Ars Amatoria* 2.7). Damasus takes a material trophy and applies it to Stephen’s capturing of an immaterial trophy, the sacraments of Christ. He equates Dido’s subverting of Aeneas’ destiny, begging for the rites of Ceres to be

¹⁶³ Lewis and Short, 221. Occurrences of *barathrum* as an abyss, chasm, deep pit, Lower World, infernal regions, deep dungeon, etc.: Plautus, *Rudens* 2.7.12, *Curculio* 1.2.29, *Bacchae* 1.2.41; Lucretius *De rerum natura* 3.966, 6.606; Catullus, *Carmina*, 68.108, 68.117, 95.5; Horace, *Satire*, 2.3.166, *Epistles*, 1.15, 31; Vergil, *Aeneid*, 3.421, 8.245; Valerius Flaccus, *Argonautica*, 2.86; Vitruvius *De architectura* 10.22.11; Silius Italicus, *Punica* 9.497; Martial, *Epigrams*, 1.88.4, 3.81.1.

¹⁶⁴ Vergil, *Georgics*, 3.32-33 *et duo rapta manu diverso ex hoste tropoaea / bisque triumphatas utroque ab litore gentes*.

¹⁶⁵ Line 4, Ihm 14 = ED 15 = *ICUR* 4.11078 = Trout 15.

¹⁶⁶ Trout, “The Invention of Early Christian Rome,” 521.

revealed, with that of the mad gang demanding that Tarsicius give the bones of Stephen to them. In this embedded and multi-pronged allusion, Damasus includes multiple references in a mere nine lines. The prowess of Octavian is evoked in Stephen's perseverance against the Jewish people stoning him, while mad Dido is presented in the anti-Christian mad dogs provoking Tarsicius. Tarsicius, like Aeneas, perseveres and the sacraments of Christ are preserved, just like the mysteries of Eleusis.¹⁶⁷ Damasus constructs his Vergilian echo to invoke the power of classical images for his own elaborate description. The words that once fit into the classical and pagan context are now employed for Christian epitaphs and basilica decorations. The power of the allusion is formulated for a new world by which the Roman and the Christian come together, solidifying a new hybrid identity in verse and image.

Like Damasus' epigrams, the epitaphs of my collection display the past and present to inform the future. The epitaphs of my corpus employ themes of the Latin literary tradition, new trends in late antique poetics, and the prowess of the epigrams of Damasus. Many of the poems of my collection only exist today in the medieval syllogae written down by pilgrims. Damasus reinvigorated not just the genre of inscribed poetry but also the primacy of Rome in a Christian world, and the 'correct' Church doctrine. Damasus made this epitaphic, epigrammatic, inscribed poetic genre one of interest for pilgrims, who were people who otherwise would not have been its main audience. Epitaphs would have been seen by the family members of the deceased, their descendants, and those who were passing by for funerals or veneration of their own dead, such as in the Parentalia festival. Pilgrims made their way to Rome during and after the erection of these literary

¹⁶⁷ This presentation and discussion are from Trout's analysis in "The Invention of Early Christian Rome," 521-22.

monuments due to the expansion and development of the cult of the saints and the popularity of relics. Damasus' *elogia* developed alongside the poetry of my collection and the poetic sensibilities of late antiquity, and without him my corpus of epitaphs cannot be understood. While other contemporary poets influence the epitaphs analyzed here, it is Damasus' work that most clearly resembles and aligns with these epitaphic texts.

Meter

Meter, while not the only factor, differentiates verse epitaphs from non-verse ones. Aspects of the metrics appearing in my catalog suggest the popular trends that occur in epitaphic poetry. Although the style of late antique prose "is permitted the license of poetry, poetry lays claim to the compositional categories of epideictic."¹⁶⁸ While late antique prose has aspects of the poetic field, there still exists a difference between poetry and prose, particularly within epitaphs. Prose epitaphs of the elite primarily consist of lists of accomplishments and normally include such details as virtues, lineage, name, age, and date of deposition. Prose funerary inscriptions tend to lack the flourishes for which poetic epitaphs are known, and meter is another primary distinguisher between poetry and prose inscription.¹⁶⁹ In order to fit the limited space of a funerary marker, inscribed verse epitaphs tend to be short and epigram-like. Some, of course, can be quite long, with one of the longest verse epitaphs at 110 lines (*CLE* 1552 = *CIL* 8.212-3), but they tend to run much shorter. The poems of my corpus range in line length from four to twenty lines

¹⁶⁸ Roberts, *The Jeweled Style*, 63.

¹⁶⁹ Of course, there exists very poetic prose in prose inscriptions, even quoted and copied lines from verse, however, this factor enables scholars to distinguish the two so that we may study them in (somewhat) artificial sections.

of poetic verse. Brevity requires the poet to condense information and embellishments within a limited space. In a restricted area, these verses do not leave out artistic flourishes but instead release them from the “muddy river” and formulate them in a concise “little stream,” à la Callimachus, *Hymn to Apollo*.¹⁷⁰ That is to say, the short epitaphs not only of my collection, but also of the genre of Latin funerary poetry do not forgo erudite craftsmanship in their brevity. Meter is one such category of analysis when reviewing aesthetics of funerary epitaphs. The analysis of the metrics of my specific catalog serves as a representation of the greater collection of verse epitaphs commemorating young women of late antiquity.

Late antique poets use the meters of their predecessors just as frequently as they borrow from their themes and genres. Quantitative meters such as dactylic hexameter and elegiac couplet are the primary borrowings, but others were selected for use in late antique poetics as well. The length of each syllable and the specific placement and variety of long and short syllables determined the patterns of quantitative meters of ancient Greek and Latin poetry.¹⁷¹ Rhythmic poetry based upon word accent, stress, and emphasis did not become popular until later Latin poetry. A syllable could be either long or short, depending on a vowel’s ‘nature’ in a word, the combinations of consonants that proceeded or followed it, or a vowel’s combination with another, creating diphthongs. These syllables were placed to create specific metrical feet, dactyls (long-short-short) and spondees (long-long) being the primary feet for dactylic hexameter and elegiac

¹⁷⁰ Callimachus turned away from writing lengthy, traditional epic for short and erudite epigrams. His metaphor of the small stream and muddy river stand in for finely crafted “thin” verses and long-winded action poems, respectively. The metaphor I refer to here comes from Callimachus’ *Hymn to Apollo* lines 105-112.

¹⁷¹ White, *Early Christian Poets*, 169

distichs.¹⁷² Examples of classical meters used by late antique poets included: asclepiads used first in Latin by Horace in classical Latin poetry and then by Prudentius in his preface to *Contra Symmachum* and Endelechius in his *Eclogue*;¹⁷³ iambic trimeter, or iambic senarius, selected by Horace to be alternated with iambic dimeters in his first ten *Epodes*, was then favored by Paulinus of Nola in his tenth poem, and also by Prudentius in the ninth poem of his *Peristephanon*;¹⁷⁴ and sapphic meter, one of the Aeolian meters used by Horace in his *Odes*¹⁷⁵ and Catullus¹⁷⁶ found its use in Paulinus of Nola in poem 17 and in Prudentius's fourth poem of his *Peristephanon*.¹⁷⁷

Authors of salon literature had the option to use a plethora of different types of meters, but the meters of epitaphs tend to be limited to a select few. In the early Republic, people wrote verse epitaphs in Saturnians.¹⁷⁸ The Scipio epitaphs, a collection of epitaphs found

¹⁷² Iambs (short-long) and trochees (long-short) were other building-blocks with which one could create the other popular meters such as iambic trimeter, Sapphics, and trochaic tetrameter, White, *Early Christian Poets*, 169-71.

¹⁷³ The opening line of his *Eclogue* reads: *Paulus, praeco Dei, qui fera genitum*. This meter comprises three long syllables, two short, two long, two short, one dactyl. Drawn to render long and short syllables expressed as such: - - - u u - - u u - - u u. White, *Early Christian Poets*, 169.

¹⁷⁴ Iambs (a foot of one short syllable followed by one long syllable) are the basis for both Iambic trimeter and dimeter. Iambic trimeter consists of twelve syllables alternating short and long, making up three iambic metra. Iambic dimeter is only two iambic metra. Paulinus of Nola's tenth poem, lines 19-20: *Ego te per omne quod datum mortalibus / et destinatum saeculum est*, is in alternating trimeter and dimeter form. An example of iambic dimeter is the stanzas of Ambrose's hymns, one such oft-used line being *Deus creator omnium*. White, *Early Christian Poets*, 169.

¹⁷⁵ Horace, *Carm.* 1.22.

¹⁷⁶ Ovid, *Carm.* 11 and 51.

¹⁷⁷ The Sapphic meter, based upon that used by the Greek poet Sappho, form a four-lined stanza, made by three eleven-syllable (hendecasyllabic) lines and one five-syllable (often an adonius line, a dactyl and a trochee or spondee) line. Prudentius' poem 4 opens with the Sapphic stanza: *Bis novem noster populus sub uno / martyrum servat cineres sepulchro, / Caesaraugustam vocitamus urbem, / res cui tanta est.*; and trochaic tetrameter catalectic was often used in Roman drama and marching songs, as a fifteen-syllable line of alternating long and shorts (trochees) and adapted in Venantius Fortunatus' hymn 2.2 (*Pange, lingua, gloriosi proelium certaminis*) and in Prudentius' first poem in his *Peristephanon* (opening line as such: *Scripta sunt caelo durorum martyrum vocabula*). The rhythmic verse used by Augustine in his Psalm against the Donatists closely resembles this type of meter. White, *Early Christian Poets*, 171.

¹⁷⁸ For a basic discussion on this meter as used in epitaphs, see E. Courtney, *Musa Lapidaria: A Selection of Latin Verse Inscriptions*, (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 28-30. Some examples of epitaphs which use this meter are *CLE* 2 = *CIL* 1.364 = *CIL* 11.3078, 7483 = *ILS* 3083 = *ILLRP* 192 dating from 241 BCE (Courtney, *Musa Lapidaria*, 204ff) and *CLE* 4 = *CIL* 1.1531 = *CIL* 10.5708 = *ILS* 3411 = *ILLRP* 136 dating from c. 150 BCE to name a couple.

in an early tomb (c. 240 B.C. – c. 130 B.C.) dedicated to the aristocratic family of the Corneli, are mostly written in Saturnians.¹⁷⁹ After this time, Saturnians are never seen and dactylic hexameter, elegiac distich, and iambics become the primary meters of epitaphs. Titus Caesius Lysimachus erected a poetic inscription of four lines of dactylic hexameter for himself and his wife, Marcana Vera (*CLE* 439 = *CIL* 11.6565).¹⁸⁰ Titus employs dactylic hexameter to deepen his epitaph's literary skill in conjunction with echoes of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and an acrostic form. An epitaph from Rome, *CLE* 1549 = *CIL* 6.25063, employs nine elegiac couplets to commemorate a young wife (twenty-two at death) and son (aged twelve) buried together.¹⁸¹ One famous epitaph of late antiquity written in iambics belongs to Praetextatus, who died in 384 (*CLE* 111 = *CIL* 6.1779 = *ILS* 1259).¹⁸²

The two most popular forms of meter, both in classical poetry and in late Latin poetry, are dactylic hexameter and elegiac couplet and they appear frequently in verse epitaphs. Dactylic hexameter, used classically in epic, didactic, and faux-epic (Ovid's *Metamorphoses*) poetry, appears in late antiquity in verse epitaphs and other forms of Christian poetry. One example of its use in early Christian poetry is in Biblical epic, such as Claudius Marius Victorius' *Alethia*.¹⁸³ A poet might employ dactylic hexameter to draw attention to the gravity and seriousness of their subject matter, elevating it to the realm of epic. Seven poems of my collection are written in dactylic hexameter: Evodia (6), Rhode (8), Acilia Babiana (9), Lea (10), Carice (13), Regina (14). The seventh,

¹⁷⁹ Courtney, *Musa Lapidaria*, 216. *CLE* 6 = *CIL* 6.1286-7 = *ILS* 2-3 = Courtney 9 is one such epitaph in Saturnian meter, dedicated to L. Cornelius Scipio, consul in 259 B.C.

¹⁸⁰ Inscription 175. Courtney, *Musa Lapidaria*, 164-5 and 373-4. Empire, year unknown.

¹⁸¹ Inscription 187. Courtney, *Musa Lapidaria*, 177 and 387.

¹⁸² Inscription 32. Courtney, *Musa Lapidaria*, 56-61 and 252-3.

¹⁸³ Claudius Marius Victorius, *Alethia* 2.42 in the opening of Adam's prayer: *omnipotens auctor mundi rerumque creator*

Marcia's (1) epitaph, is fragmentary and only contains a few whole lines, but from what is remaining, it seems to be in dactylic hexameter. Likewise, elegiac couplet figures in late antique poetry, as with Venantius Fortunatus' poem on Easter (3.9).¹⁸⁴ As is clear from the use of classical meters, late antique poetry serves as a continuation of the poetics of previous times. The epitaphs of late antiquity, although perhaps more subject to the whims of pronunciation, follow similarly. The use of elegiac distichs combines with other elements such as grief and personal emotion, to further connect funerary verse epitaphs with the genre of elegiac poetry. Six of the fourteen epitaphs of this collection are in elegiac couplets: Simplicia (2), Florentina (3), Iuliana (4), Arcontia (5), Theodote (7), Pontia (12). *Meam amice* (11) is written in polymetrics but incorporates a hexametrical line found in a select group of epitaphs.¹⁸⁵ In using this meter, these poets perpetuate the continuation of a link between verse epitaphs and classical literary tradition.

One problem with studying the meter of late antique poetry can be with the author's continuous replacement of quantities of the vowels. The regulated patterns and replacements of classical poetry sometimes fall by the wayside. As Courtney points out, there is at times the "sheer inability to count six feet in a hexameter" and "even in poems with correct prosody, such things as the formation of line-ends may not be executed with classical refinement."¹⁸⁶ The changing of a quality arises from pronunciation differences and developments in late Latin metrics. Courtney states that *h* became recognized as a consonant,¹⁸⁷ *qu* became a double consonant, and the short vowel before a mute and a

¹⁸⁴ The opening couplet is as such: *Tempora florifero rutilant distincta sereno / et maiore poli lumine porta patet.*

¹⁸⁵ For more on the hexametrical line referred to here, see section 'Unripe fruit: *meam amice* and other young girls' in Chapter 4.

¹⁸⁶ Courtney, *Musa Lapidaria*, 22.

¹⁸⁷ Courtney states that this is not because of a change in pronunciation, because the *h* actually tended to be removed from pronunciation, as in other Romance languages. *Musa Lapidaria*, 22.

liquid consonant was lengthened. Hiatus and metrical beat lengthening as well as shortening final vowels with caesura and dieresis are some of the other ways in which epitaph writers used meter differently from the standard classical poets. The case with most epitaphs, late antique or not, “is that the meter may simply be suspended to incorporate such potentially intractable items as proper names...official titles...and arithmetical sums.”¹⁸⁸ Prosody and other spelling differences may also diverge from classical meter. The “incorrect” meter that is sometimes displayed by my collection of epitaphs is a good example of how epitaph authors did not always abide by the “rules.” The non-conforming nature is seen in salon literature as well. The following is a short discussion of the specifics of these “problems” in the meter of the poems in my catalog.

The first line of Carice’s epitaph is extremely problematic. The rest of the poem is in dactylic hexameter, but this first line in particular does not fit this structure without compromising its grammatical meanings and the pronunciation of words, such as *mihi*, *mea*, and *genita*. The editor of *ICI* 6, Binazzi, suggests taking the last *a* of *gentia* as a long vowel and lengthening the final *e* of the name *Carice* in a hiatus with *hic*. In doing so, however, the meter of this line is still problematic and ends up containing seven feet instead of six. Binazzi states that *pius infas* was used instead of *pia*, the feminine form and thus the correct one to modify *infas*, a feminine noun, in order for the meter to work.¹⁸⁹ Nevertheless the metrics of the line remain problematic. The rest of Carice’s epitaph conforms to the metrical schema of dactylic hexameter, demonstrating that the poet both adhered to and deviated from metrical rules. Carice’s epitaph is at the same time both a demonstration of the negligence of metrical forms and also development of

¹⁸⁸ Courtney, *Musa Lapidaria*, 23.

¹⁸⁹ Binazzi, *ICI* 6, 180.

distinctly poetic aesthetics, with attention to acrostics, literary allusions, and conversational consolation themes.¹⁹⁰ It is strange that the remaining lines adhere to the proscribed and accepted metrical rules of dactylic hexameter, while the first line throws those rules back in the face of all who know them. Perhaps Pictius Iber and his wife Ianuaria decided that it was more important to present the acrostic poem and first line as-is than to re-write it to fit the meter of the rest of the poem.

The epitaph of Pontia (12) contains two full stanzas of elegiac couplets. Despite its intricate poetic style, there are two distinct points in the first stanza at which the meter is incorrect, by classical standards. *Unica* in line six and *famula* of line ten are two instances at which the meter does not quite fit. *Unica* is a feminine ablative singular adjective modifying the feminine ablative singular noun, *prole*, taken together as “one child or offspring.” As such, the final *a* of *unica* needs to be long, as is the nature of the feminine ablative singular ending. In order to fit the pentameter line, however, *unica* must not be composed of long-short-long syllables, but instead the long-short-short of a dactylic foot. In order to fit the meter, the final *a* must be assumed short although it is to be taken as a long vowel in order to fit the grammar and correct meaning of the line. Line ten, *dum satis obsequeris famula dicta viri*, at first glance seems to fit the pentameter needed for the second line of the elegiac couplet. This necessitates *famula* to form a dactyl by itself. The first *a* would be long, and the *u* and second *a* short. However, in classical Latin the first *a* should, in fact, be pronounced as a short *a*. The vowel change (short to long) occurs for the meter to fit the pentameter of the line. While the change in

¹⁹⁰ Gualandri, “Words Pregnant with Meaning,” 144-6. Acrostics were some of the most popular forms of word manipulation and wordplay. Their use not only harkens to late antique poetics, but also to an older history (Sumerian, Egyptian, Hebraic, Phoenician, and Greek, Gualandri, 144).

famula might have been a result of change in pronunciation, it could also have been an error or neglect on the part of the author in order to make the term “handmaiden” fit the line. Either way, Pontia’s husband seems determined to have *famula* fit at this place in the line and therefore willingly adjusts the length of the vowel, and the word’s pronunciation. Besides pronunciation differences, Pontia’s epitaph also includes two alternative spellings, that of *cesit* in line three and *temptasti* in line sixteen. *Cesit* of line three, the perfect third person singular, ought by classical standards to be *cessit* with a double *s*. It is most likely that the second *s* was removed purely for space and abbreviation. The first half of the stone was particularly crowded with letters, slightly more so than the *tabulae ansatae* of the second stanza. The third line in particular is crowded, and the carver almost ran out of room on the line (see Appendix A.12). It was typical for inscription carvers to leave out letters, to carve them attached to another letter (a ligature), or to place them above or below the proceeding letter. It would not have been uncommon practice to abbreviate a word in this way, especially if the stone had limited space. In line sixteen, *temptasti* comes from the verb *tempto*, *temptare* which has an alternative spelling of *tento*, *tentare*. The occasion for the removal of the *p* likely comes from a misunderstanding of which version of the verb the poet was using, or the acknowledgement that a shortened form would not change the meaning and would fit better on the stone. Like *cesit* mentioned above, neither the meaning nor the meter of the word changes with the removal of the letter *s*. Instead, both adjusted spellings are examples of the limitations of carving in stone and the possible carving adjustments that are made in the process.

Several of the epitaphs of my catalog demonstrate meter variants typical of salon and classical literature. In Regina's (14) epitaph, the author uses the spelling of *saeculi* in line 4 rather than the typical spelling, *saeculi*. The alternative spelling does not often occur in prose but cutting the *u* out from the word allows it to fit a metered poetic line more effectively. As the final word in the line, *saeculi* fit better as a word of two syllables rather than three (*saeculi*). The alternative spelling is not a creation of Regina's authors, as other authors have made the emendation. The Lewis and Short dictionary points out that the poetic use is not popular in later authors, but is prevalent in the poetry of Lucretius.¹⁹¹ In his *De rerum natura*, Lucretius often employs *saeculum* without the first *u*. Some examples of Lucretius' use of this poetic spelling include *nec toties possent generatim saecula referre naturam parentum* (1.597), and *ut propagando possint procudere saecula* (5.850). Like Regina's epitaph, Lucretius' work is written in dactylic hexameter, and in each of these instances, the removal of the *u* from the middle of *saeculum* allows for the word to fit within the line while still being able to fit the meter. The *saeculi* of Regina's epitaph is the final spondee of a line, as also occurs at Lucretius 5.850. While the other occurrences of *saecula* in Lucretius vary in their use within the line of verse, the removal of the *u* allows for it to be used as either a spondee or as part of a dactyl. With the *u* in place, it would never be able to exist as a compact spondee all by itself. While not used in prose or in late poetry, the alternative spelling allows both Lucretius and Regina's venerators more flexibility in their verses.

¹⁹¹ Lewis and Short, 1613.

Poetic Sensibility

Verse epitaphs allow for the use of descriptive language, word play, and poetic constructions embedded within a funerary marker. Because these epitaphs are in verse, their authors use flourishes in order to evoke emotion, to comfort those mourning, and to praise the dead. Epitaphs tend to employ the strategy of epigrammatists, often including type-phrases and formulae, inter-textual allusions and references, and concise word-choice. The epitaphs of my corpus represent an incorporation of the major three *topoi* of late antique poetry and Damasan *elogia* in order to commemorate everyday Christian women. The following section will focus on the ways in which the physical structuring of words and phrases influence the overall late antique aesthetic of my collection of epitaphs.

Wordplay:

The epitaphs of Acilia Babiana, Pontia, Florentina, and Carice

Wordplay exhibits one method by which an epitaph writer engages with the poetic constructions of variation and repetition. Constructions such as anaphora and chiasmus appear in my collection and demonstrate the care poets have for the placement of their words within lines and stanzas. Anaphora structures a text through the repetitive use of a word or phrase. Chiasmus likewise plays with the repetition of words, grammatical constructions, or concepts, but instead reverses the order or placement of these units. In chiasmus, repetition is turned into variation through a reordering or restructuring of smaller units. Parallel structures and purposeful word location indicate educated and thoughtful creation by the authors of poems.

The epitaphs of Acilia Babiana and Pontia both use the late antique poetic style of variation and repetition through playing with word position. The seventh line in Acilia Babiana's epitaph (9) employs a chiasmus structure to play with the word order. In line eight, the poet writes *o durus raptor mors improba* (Oh harsh robber, wicked death!) and purposefully places the words in a chiasmus formation. The author organizes the words according to their part of speech. Here the order of words is adjective-noun-noun-adjective. The chiasmus unifies the units of adjectives and their nouns together. The adjective-noun unit is sectioned off from the rest of the line as a vocative calling to death. In personifying death, the poet can have something to rail against in anger at the death of his beloved. These structures employ variation to highlight aspects of Acilia Babiana's virtue and her husband's grief.

Like Acilia Babiana's poet, the author of Pontia's epitaph (12) employs wordplay to focus on the virtues she embodied. In lines 7 and 8, Pontia's husband writes several emphatic exclamations pronouncing her virtues: *quantus amor mentis probitas quam grata marito / quam casti mores quantus et ipse pudor* (how much love! How pleasing the honesty of her mind is to her husband! How virtuous! How great her sense of modesty itself!). He lists her virtues, punctuated by the repetitive sound of *qu* with *quantus* and *quam*. The use of anaphora creates an auditory effect and draws the reader's attention to the words between the sounds. Within these same lines, the author employs asyndeton. The lack of conjunctions develops a list, implying that her virtues continue well beyond the page. The absence of conjunctions shortens the sentence and focuses the reader on the sentence's meaning. Here her husband emphasizes her virtues and places them to the forefront of the verses. The entire couplet is dedicated to listing and

promoting Pontia's qualities and the author perhaps hyperbolizes the amount of honor and grace that she contains. With hyperbole, her husband continues to promote her virtues and by doing so, also promotes his own, for marrying her. By using poetic constructions such as repetition, allusion, and anaphora, her husband not only praises Pontia and solidifies her virtues for posterity, but he also puts forth his own literary prowess.

Florentina's (3) epitaph contains variant words in a repetitive contraction (lines six and eight). The end of line six, *te moderante lares*, parallels the end of line eight with *te moriente domus*. The two ablative absolutes reflect the status of Florentina's household at two different points, the first, when she was alive, the other, after she has died. While Florentina was alive, the household thrived *te moderante* (under her guidance). *Lares* stands in for the household as a whole and is paralleled with *domus* in both its meaning and its placement at the end of both lines. The whole house groans in her absence with her having died (*te moriente*). The complementary and contrasting aspect of the two lines focuses on the transition of Florentina and her family. As Florentina has transitioned from life to death, her family and household have undergone a change as well. What was once a well-organized, vivacious household is now in mourning for the woman who had kept it thriving. Bonitus, her husband and presumed author of the poem, constructs another mirroring instance with the last couplet. The funeral song for Florentina produces sadness for him, *luctificum*, but sweetness, *dulcis*, for her.¹⁹² The echoing patterns of language in

¹⁹²The adjective *luctificum* is not very popular but is primarily used in poetry (Cic. *Tusc.* 2,10.25, Verg. *Aen.* 7.324, Sil. *Pun.* 6.557, and Val. Fl. 3.292). Its use as an adverb, *luctificum*, appears in Val. Fl. 3.348, *luctificum clangente tuba*. The noun, *luctus*, *us m.*, does appear frequently in literature in contrast to its adjectival forms, *luctificus*, *a, um* and *luctificiabilis*, *e*. The two adjectival forms developed from the same noun differ in meaning, as *luctificus* describes a noun which "causes sorrow" whereas *luctificiabilis* indicates something merely "sorrowful." Here Florentina's husband focuses on the fact that the song in

both sections exemplify the transition from life to death that parallels his developed grief and her eternal peace. The word structure plays an integral part as a visual representation of a concept of mirrored, yet different, statuses both of Florentina and her family. The parallel structure acts as a visual image and a signaling tool. Bonitus evokes a sense of loss at the death of his wife in using the poetic constructions and aesthetics of the time.

Another type of word construction popular in the poetry of late antiquity was the acrostic. An acrostic allows for a word, name, or phrase to be emphasized as the first letter of each poetic line. The unique visual stresses an important person or concept within the physical structure of the poem. For epitaphs, acrostic poems often listed the name of the dedicatee and sometimes the commemorator. The parents of Carice (13) place her name as the beginning word of her epitaph, and as the acrostic. The second line even places *annis* at the beginning for the ‘a’ in her name, and so on. Other examples of acrostics for women include the epitaphs of Bassa¹⁹³ and Theodora Afrodite.¹⁹⁴

Gaudentius, Bassa’s husband, applies the visual image of the acrostic to say, *Bassae suae Gaudentius* (Gaudentius to his own Bassa). With the acrostic, the poem emphasizes to whom it belongs and by whom it was created. Another husband, Evagrius, dedicates a poem with acrostic to his young wife, Theodora Afrodite. The acrostic here reads, *Afrodite, H F*. The *H* and *F* stand for *honesta femina*.¹⁹⁵ Again, the acrostic is used for more than just listing the deceased’s name as it also asserts her virtue. Acrostics enable

honor of her funeral actively causes him sorrow, acknowledging his grief at her absence, while it is the source of joy for her as she goes to her eternal rest. Lewis and Short, 1081.

¹⁹³ *ICUR* 5.14076. For more information on the specific epitaph, see Dennis Trout “Borrowed Verse and Broken Narrative: Agency, Identity, and the (Bethesda) Sarcophagus of Bassa,” in *Life, Death and Representation: Some New Work on Roman Sarcophagi*, ed. J. Elsner and J. Huskinson (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 2010), 337-58.

¹⁹⁴ *ICUR* 8.20799 = *CLE* 699. See Trout “*Fecit ad astram viam*,” 1-25.

¹⁹⁵ Trout, “*Fecit Ad astra Viam*,” 5.

poets to fashion a physical aspect that informs the reader of names, virtues, and even authorial signatures. All three of these acrostic epitaphs demonstrate artistic patterning and purposeful aesthetic construction.

Descriptio: The epitaph of Evodia

The descriptive language of place and of feeling in Evodia's (6) epitaph illuminates the poem's literary style as well as its consoling affect. The world of the deceased is separated from the realm of the bereaved by a thin veil. The poets of the epitaphs of my collection employ similar styles and constructions to evoke the descriptions of these realms in their reader's minds. The realm of description finds itself not in the torture scenes of martyrs and early saints, but in the *locus piorum* (place of the pious) for the epitaphs of early Christians. The poet of Evodia's epitaph brings the reader into the pleasant heavens and consoles her parents with the knowledge of the afterlife. Evodia as speaker illuminates the *regna celestia* (celestial kingdom) for her parents, stating that (lines 3-5):

non tristis erebus non pallida mortis imag[o]

sed requies secura tenet ludoque choreas

inter felices animas et **amoena piorum**

neither the gloomy underworld nor the pale visage of death possess me,

but rather carefree rest keeps me and I dance the chorus

among blessed souls and **the pleasing places of the saints**.

Her description moves from herself to the world in which she now dwells. Evodia highlights that she is no longer the sick young girl whom her parents placed in the ground, as she has shrugged off her pale visage. The place is not the shady underworld anticipated by Romans of the traditional religion, *tristis Erebus*, but is described as free from care and restful. The blessed souls and saint surround her as she plays games and dances the chorus. The new *locus amoenus* is the *locus piorum*.

Intertextuality and Allusion:

The epitaphs of Pontia, Theodote, Simplicia, and Arcontia

As the salon literature of the day reveals, allusions and intertextual references remained a prominent aspect in late antique poetry, of which epitaphs were one subgenre. Pontia's epitaph is highly literary in its development of allusions to elite Augustan poetry, particularly the poems of Propertius and Vergil. While Ovid was the prominent Augustan elegist quoted by late antique poets, Propertius found renown in late antiquity on several occasions.¹⁹⁶ One such instance of direct quotation of Propertius was written by Lactantius, an early fourth-century poet, who quoted Propertius (4.1.11-14) in his *Institutiones Divinae* (2.6.14). Augustan elegy provided amatory themes and elegiac

¹⁹⁶ Ancient grammarians, who were doing early manuscript work as well commenting on corruptions in the text, cited several passages of Propertius. See J. L. Butrica, *The Manuscript Tradition of Propertius*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 19-32. Shackleton Bailey's work of 1952 created a catalogue of late antique Propertian parallels, containing especially Christian writers from the age, D. R. Shackleton Bailey, "Echoes of Propertius," *Mnemosyne* 5 (1952): 307-333. Sidonius Apollinaris of Gaul during the fifth-century reminds his readers of Catullus, Propertius and Tibullus, when he states that being married does not mean that one need give up the liberal arts. He presents the example of Corinna finishing the poetic lines of Ovid, and also signals to the reader the examples of Cynthia with Propertius and Delia helping Tibullus (Sidonius Apollinaris, *Ep.* 2.10.6). James Uden analyzes several late antique poems written by Ausonius, Orientius, Paulinus, and Maximianus which make allusions to themes (*militia amoris*) and quote phrases from the elegies of both Ovid and Propertius: James Uden, "Love Elegies of Late Antiquity," in *A Companion to Roman Love Elegy*, edited by Barara K. Gold, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2012), 459.

meter to Christian poets as they developed ‘late antique love elegy’ in which they “[set] human erotic situations against a rhetoric of impossible, divine paradox.”¹⁹⁷ Since Propertius’ poetry provided fodder for early Christian poetry, his text likely would have been available to Pontia’s husband as well. For example, the placement and use of the imperative *cedite* in Pontia’s epitaph alludes to Propertius’ poetry with the following couplet (lines 17-18):

Cedite iam ueterum laudes omnesque maritae
tempora nulla dabunt talia...

Yield now, praises of the ancients and all you wives,
no age will see someone like you...

Propertius employs the same form of the verb in the same placement of the line in two cases of his poetry. Both instances are ways in which Propertius constructs praise.

Propertius writes (2.2.13-14 and 2.34.65-66):

Cedite iam, divae, quas pastor viderat olim
Idaeis tunicas ponere verticibus!

Yield now, goddesses, whom the shepherd, long ago, saw
take off their clothes on the peaks of Ida.¹⁹⁸

and

Cedite romani scriptores, **cedite** Grai!
Nescio quid maius nascitur Iliade.

Yield, you Roman writers, **yield**, you Greeks!

¹⁹⁷ Uden, “Love Elegies of Late Antiquity,” 460.

¹⁹⁸ The translations of Propertius are my own.

I know that something greater than the *Iliad* is about to be born.

Cedite as imperative orders multiple people to either “yield” or “make way” for something better. Both the placement and the use of the imperative are rare; nowhere else in the extant classical Latin corpus does *cedite* appear at the beginning of a line except in the two lines of Propertius.¹⁹⁹ It appears twice as the first word of a poetic verse in late antique poetry (Prudent. *C. Symm* 2.467, and Naucellius, *Carmen* 48, Epigrammata Bobiensia).²⁰⁰ While Prudentius’ use of *cedite* as the first word in a line does not seem to be a Propertian allusion, its use in *Carmen* 48 does.²⁰¹ Like the poems of Propertius and that commemorating Pontia, Naucellius’ poem begins with *cedite*. Naucellius tells personified female bathhouses (Baiae and Bauli) and aqueducts (Claudia, Virgo, and Clemens) to yield before the baths of Nonius Atticus, just as the goddesses of Propertius’

¹⁹⁹ According to a search conducted on the Online Brepolis Publishers Database (2016), a collaboration between Brepolis Publishers (Turnhout) and the Centre Traditio Litterarum Occidentalium (CTLO), founded by the Université catholique de Louvain at Louvain-la-Neuve. I conducted a search across both databases (Library of Latin Texts A and B), limiting my search chronologically to the entire corpus of Latin Literature from classical antiquity to the second century CE and Latin literature from Tertullian to the death of the Venerable Bede (c. 200 CE to 735). In this search, *cedite* appears as the first word only in the Propertian texts mention and in an epigram from the codex Bobiensis (epigram 48, *in balneas Attici*). I also conducted a search on the Packard Humanities Institute Classical Latin Texts (PHI Latin Texts) online word search and concordance database which yielded similar results. For more information on *in balneas Attici*, please see *Zetemata* by Wolfgang Speyer (Munich: Oscar Book), 1959), 38-42. PHI Search: <https://latin.packhum.org/search?q=cedite>+ Brepolis Publishers Online Database Search: <http://clt.brepolis.net.proxy.mul.missouri.edu/cds/pages/Results.aspx?qry=d79e3cb2-1da5-45b1-9efd-87f16b4580cf&per=0>

²⁰⁰ Prudentius does not seem to be quoting Propertius in his particular use of *cedite*, however, he does allude to Propertius within other instances of the second book of *cont. Symm*. (His description of Actium in *C. Symm*. 2.530 is sourced from Propertius’ own poetic description in 3.11.44). Michael Brown, *Prudentius’ Contra Symmachum, Book II: Introduction, Translation and Commentary. A Thesis*. (Newcastle: Newcastle University Press, 2003), 211.

²⁰¹ The Epigrammata Bobiensia is a collection of 71 poems from c. 400 CE. Nonius Atticus was consul in 397 CE (*Epigrammata Bobiensia: Volume Secondo*, edited by F. Munari and A. Campana, Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1955, 107). The first four lines of the epigram clearly harken to Propertius’ use of *cedite* with: *Cedite deliciae Baiarum, cedite Bauli, /cedat et aestivis Claudia frigoribus /tu que, paludigenis perlucida Virgo fluentis, /nec se Clementis gloria tollat Aquae!*

poem must yield to his lover.²⁰² Since the Epigrammata Bobiensia (c. 400 CE) was written at a similar time as Pontia's epitaph (late fourth-century), its echo of Propertius via *cedite* is further evidence that Pontia's husband intended a Propertian echo.

Because the placement and use of *cedite* as presented in the Propertian instances are rare, its appearance in Pontia's epitaph denotes and mimics the two Propertian scenes of praise. In *Carmen* 2.2.13, Propertius tells the goddesses judged by Paris to make way for the woman with whom Propertius has fallen in love. The elegy serves to praise his beloved. By telling the goddesses to 'make way' for his new love, he replaces the quintessential beautiful goddesses of mythology (Aphrodite, Hera, and Athena) with his mortal beloved. Propertius praises his lover as even more beautiful than the Olympian goddesses. At *Carmem* 2.34.65, Propertius states that all other authors, Roman and Greek, must move aside as he writes a poem greater than even the *Iliad*. Both scenes place *cedite* up front to signal the image of making way for something new. Propertius employs the imperative structure to praise his lover and his own poetry. In the same way that Propertius orders the goddesses to yield, Pontia's husband also tells other wives to make way for his wife and his funerary poem to her. Pontia's husband and Propertius are alike in their ordering of other women aside for their own lovers to take the place of honor. Pontia, he argues, is the new standard by which all others should be compared. When the knowing reader sees *cedite* employed in the same way, he or she recognizes the same use in Propertius.²⁰³ Pontia's husband seems cognizant of Augustan poetry and

²⁰² Wolfgang Speyer, *Zetemata*, (Munchen: Oscar Book, 1959): 38-42 and Wolfgang Speyer, "Epigrammata Bobiensia," in: *Der Neue Pauly: Enzyklopädie der Antike, Band 3*, edited by von Hubert Cancik, and Helmuth Schneider (Stuttgart: Verlag J. B. Metzler, 1997).

²⁰³ For a discussion on the 'knowing reader,' see Joseph Pucci, *The Full-Knowing Reader: Allusion and the Power of the Reader in the Western Literary Tradition*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

played with allusions to other poets. In a purposeful echo of Propertius, her husband not only demonstrates Pontia's virtue, but also his skill in late antique poetic style.

Late antique poetic style persists throughout Pontia's epitaph as her husband alludes to Vergil's *Aeneid*, one of the quintessential texts of Augustan literature. He praises his wife by using an expression found in Vergil's description of Aeneas' horses. Line two of Pontia's epitaph describes her, *hic iacet aetherio semine lapsa fuit* (she lies here having fallen from a heavenly seed). The phrase *aetherio semine* echoes Vergil's *semine ab aetherio* (from heavenly seed: *Aen.* 7.281). In the *Aeneid*, the phrase describes two horses Aeneas picks out from the three hundred that Latinus presents as gifts to the Trojans. The two horses Aeneas chooses for his chariot come from "heavenly stock" because they were bred from Circe's sire. The use of the expression *semine aetherio*, although slightly reordered in Pontia's epitaph, recalls the same idea of heavenly genealogy. The celestial origins of the horses and Pontia give them both a mystical and other-worldly association. Pontia's husband brings to the reader's mind a noble, rich, and heavenly image to which he links his wife. Pontia then is as a woman bedecked in gold and nobility based purely on her ancestry and family. Even further, the heavenly association that he makes with *aetherio semine* hints at a religious belief in her heavenly origins. After her death, Pontia will rise to heaven and be (re)united with Christ.

Pontia's husband continues his repurposing of Vergilian scenes through intertextual references in the final elegiac couplet. He explains his grief and his poetic composition with (lines 19-20):

Uir tuus ingenti **gemitu fletuque rigatus**
 hos feci uersus pauca tamen **memorans**

I, your husband, **weeping with a great groan and tears,**

made these verses but **remembering** only a few things.

The words *gemitu fletuque rigatus...memorans* recall Vergil's *sic memorans largo fletu simul ora rigabat* (so remembering, he spoke, both his eyes were weeping with abundant tears: *Aen.* 6.699).²⁰⁴ Vergil's scene occurs when Aeneas first speaks with the shade of his father, Anchises, in the Underworld. Anchises is described as *effusaeque genis lacrimae* (shedding tears on his face: *Aen.* 6.686), sharing in the sadness that Aeneas also demonstrates. Clearly an emotional moment, the reunion after death attests to the great love that each had for the other. The powerful scene is mimicked in Pontia's epitaph, allowing her husband to highlight similar features in his intimate relationship with his deceased wife. Pontia's husband persuades the reader to remember the scene between Aeneas and Anchises, but to recognize the differences between the two reunions. In utilizing the language from Vergil's scene (*fletu, rigatus/rigabat, memorans*), the husband recalls the grief and stirring emotion felt by Aeneas at the sight of his father's shade. The purposeful Vergilian echo of Pontia's epitaph leads the reader to apply the same *pathos* to Pontia's epitaph.

Similar to Paulinus of Nola's inversion of Vergil in his desire to celebrate Felix's death day optimistically (as Aeneas desired to celebrate Anchises' with grief and sorrow), Pontia's husband reworks Vergil's scene in a Christian realm and creates an intertextual relationship. The conclusion to Vergil's reunion scene is bittersweet. After Aeneas remembers and weeps (*memorans* and *fletu...ora rigabat*), he attempts to embrace his father three times, but to no avail as Anchises' shade slips through his arms each time.

²⁰⁴ The translations of Vergil in this section are my own.

Aeneas remembers and sees his father, but he is not able to hold him like he could in life. Pontia's husband, after he weeps (*gemitu fletuque rigatus*), remembers (*memorans*) his wife by writing and setting up a monument to her, but it is only a little that he recalls, *pauca tamen memorans*. His verses cannot express everything that she was in life, but they tell of his hope in their eternal reunion in the Christian heaven. Aeneas' hope is futile, as his reunion with his father is limited to speaking together for a short while. In contrast, after the final judgment day and bodily resurrection, Pontia and her husband will be able to embrace in the way Aeneas and Anchises never could. The intertextual reference celebrates the triumph of this couple and hope in their future reunion, while at the same time pitying Aeneas' inability to ever share in the same future happiness. Both scenes bring the pain of grief to the reader's mind, but only Pontia's turns his or her grief into hope. The echoes and relationships to classical texts that her husband creates not only cement Pontia's status as a virtuous woman long beyond her death, but also demonstrate how the optimistic view of Christianity allows for her husband to hope for his own eternal life and reunion with his wife.

Just like Pontia's epitaph, the epitaphs commemorating Theodote (7), Simplicia (2), and Acrontia (5) echo Vergil to employ the late antique poetic style and to put forth a vivid memory of the deceased. The epitaphs of Theodote (7) and Simplicia (2) quote from Vergil in order to identify their recipients as victims of untimely deaths and to subvert the Vergilian notion of a bitter underworld. Acrontia's (5) epitaph, however, alludes to Vergil but does not engage with it intertextually in the same way. The line *abstulit atra dies et funere mersit acerbo* (a dark day carried him off and buried him with a bitter funeral) from Vergil's *Aeneid* (6.429 and 11.28) is referenced with a variation of

the expression in the epitaphs of Simplicia, Theodote, and Arcontia. Vergil employs the expression twice throughout his epic; both times indicate the death of those who have died young. The first appearance of the line describes the infant souls in limbo, unable to cross the river, as seen through the eyes of Aeneas walking through the Underworld. The second occurs when Aeneas honors the Trojans' deceased comrades, and especially tells of Pallas' sorrowful death. Both scenes in Vergil are linked together because of the use of the same expression. The tragedy of the infants' untimely deaths is paralleled in Pallas' death as well. Vergil's reader is persuaded to remember the earlier instance of the expression and recognize that Pallas' fate leads him to the same place in Vergil's Underworld. The epitaphs commemorating Simplicia, Theodote, and Arcontia revisit the scenes described by Vergil's expression through allusion. Vergil's description claims that a dark day has taken these young children to their death too soon.

As Simplicia, Theodote, and Arcontia are alike in their status as female victims of untimely death, their poems differ from each other in that Arcontia's (5) lacks the optimism of the other two (see below). Arcontia's text echoes Vergil with *mersit acerba dies* and the adjective *Taenareas*. The Vergilian allusion establishes the author's literary knowledge and reader's participation. The continued classical echoes, however, depict a pessimistic view of the afterlife that contrasts with the heavenly ascension of Simplicia and Theodote. Arcontia's epitaph describes both her and her brother as victims of untimely death with (line 3): *quos uno Lachesis mersit acerba die* (whom bitter Lachesis plunged down in one day). The reader may recall the tragic scenes of *Aeneid* 6.429 and 11.28 while reading the fate of Arcontia and her brother Remus.²⁰⁵ In contrast to the

²⁰⁵ *PRLE* 2, 135 and 939.

heavenly ascension of Simplicia and Theodote, Remus and Arcontia have been taken down to the Taenarean waters by Lachesis, a mythological figure who determines the length of one's life. Arcontia is described as the one who saw the Taenarean waters with an untimely death (*Taenareas crudo funere vidit aquas*: line 7), just like the infant souls in Vergil's literary limbo. The adjective itself is used in classical and late antique literature, and while the most appearances occur in Ovid and Statius, the three scenes below demonstrate its use to indicate the darkness of the Underworld in other classical literature.²⁰⁶ Arcontia's author seems to purposefully place the adjective here in order to portray the same image of a dark and pitiable Underworld that the other instances describe. In Seneca's *Hippolytus*, Theseus illustrates the place where Phaedra has gone after her suicide as "the jaws of wan Avernus, the Taenarean caves, the waves of Lethe, welcome to the wretched, the sluggish pools, hide you in my impious self, plunge deep and bury me in unending woes."²⁰⁷ Seneca evokes darkness, drowning, and sorrow. Just like the infants' souls in the *Aeneid*, Phaedra is stuck eternally on the shores of the river Styx, never to enter the Underworld. Vergil also uses the same adjective with *Taenarias etiam fauces, alta ostia Ditis* (*Georgics* 4.467). Here Vergil describes how Orpheus entered the jaws of Taenarus and the gates of Dis with fear in search of his wife, Eurydice, a mythological victim of untimely death. Again, the image invoked in the reader's mind is one of a pessimistic afterlife. The third use of Taenarean occurs in Lucan's *Pharsalia* when he recalls Vergil's description of the Underworld through the

²⁰⁶ According to a search I conducted using the PHI word search and Brepolis. Other uses of the adjective, while not extensive, include Claudian, *De Rapti Proserpinae* 1.1-2; Horace, *Carmina* 1.34.10; Lucan, *Pharsalia* 6.648; Ovid, *Fasti* 4.612; Ovid, *Heroides* 8.72-73, 13.45, 16.30, 16.276, and 17.6; Ovid, *Meta.* 2.247, 10.13, and 10.183; Propertius, *Carmina* 1.13.22 and 3.2.11; Statius, *Thebaid* 1.96, 1.355, 3.423, 4.214, 6.508, 7.588, and 7.659; Valerius Flaccus, *Argonautica* 1.427, 5.512, and 4.467.

²⁰⁷ Seneca the Younger, *Hippolytus* 1201-1203. Adapted translation from Frank Justus Miller, *Seneca in Ten Volumes: VIII Tragedies*, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1917), 417.

witch Erectho's rituals of necromancy at the gates to Dis: *non Taenareis sic faucibus aet / sedit iners, maestum mundi confine latentis / ac nostri* (Even in Taenarus' gorge the air is less stagnant; here was the gloomy border of the unseen world and ours: 6.648-650).

Each classical instance of the adjective Taenarean describes a gloomy and dark view of the Underworld. In employing the adjective in Arcontia's epitaph, the author does not merely echo Vergil to participate in late antique poetic style, but rather infers a sorrowful view of Arcontia's and her brother's untimely deaths and the tragedy of their gloomy afterlives.

The Vergilian echo inherent in *mersit acerba dies* reminds the reader of other victims of untimely deaths, but in the cases of Theodote and Simplicia, an optimistic view also inverts the image in the reader's mind with an intertextual relationship. Theodote's and Simplicia's readers are encouraged to imagine the sorrow of Pallas and the infants in limbo but also the hope of the eternal happiness of Theodote and Simplicia that their epitaphs imply (see Chapter 4, Untimely Deaths for more information on the consolatory aspect of this phrase). Simplicia's epitaph states (lines 3-5):

nam quater haec decies minus uno consule vix(it)

quam festin[a] nimis **mersit acerba dies**

mentis pro m[e]ritis animam rebocauit ad astra

She lived for one consul less than fourteen,

she whom a bitter day submerged too hastily.

She has recalled her spirit to the stars through the merits of her mind.

Simplicia's epitaph refers to the Vergilian expression with the words *mersit acerba dies*, and in doing so focuses on the bitterness of the day of her death. Due to the shortness of her life, the focus turns to her identity as a victim of untimely death. Like Pallas and the infants in limbo, Simplicia's death is bitter and sad. The reader envisions the souls locked out in limbo and the grief of Pallas' father, Evander. In the next line, however, the reader's mind is persuaded to turn towards the optimism of the Christian afterlife. After her bitter day of death (*mersit acerba dies*), her soul (*animam*) has been recalled to the stars (*animam rebocavit ad astra*) because of the virtues she gained in life (*mentis pro meritis*). Vergil's scenes of pitiable children and grieving parents is inverted to demonstrate the power of Christian virtue. The allusion to Vergil in Theodote's epitaph, while subtler, identifies her as a victim of untimely death but also echoes Simplicia's hope in the Christian afterlife with (lines 2 and 5):

unius huic lustris uix fuit **arta dies**...

addamus **meritis** lacrimas tam **mortis aceruae**

Hers **was a brief life** of barely five years. ...

Let us add to her **merits** tears worthy for **so bitter a death**,

Theodote's short life (*arta dies*) and bitter death (*mortis aceruae*) echo Vergil's expression of untimely deaths. The author of Theodote's epitaph focuses on the tragedy of her death (she died of a wound), and the shortness of her life (she only lived for four years and eight months). The shortness of her life and suddenness of her death identify her as a victim of untimely death, a person who will never fulfill the goals of her life, like the infants in limbo and Pallas. Theodote, like Simplicia, has a happier ending, as her

merits (*meritis*) in life allow her to reach heaven, as her epitaph states: *tales animae protinus astra petunt* (such souls immediately seek out the stars: line 10). Because she is a virtuous soul, Theodote achieves the rewards of the Christian afterlife. Readers of the two epitaphs here remember Vergil's text, but now a new reading of Vergil's text appears. Unlike the infant souls in limbo and the young Pallas in Vergil's *Aeneid*, Simplicia and Theodote will reach a happier existence in the heavenly realm. As Aeneas passes the infant souls in limbo, readers remember that Simplicia and Theodote are spared the same fate. When Pallas is cut down too soon in battle by Turnus, the readers of these epitaphs also imagine the young women's sudden deaths and their ability to rise to the stars. The grief for both sets of young deaths might initially be similar, but Pallas becomes a shade in the Underworld, whereas these young women go to a starry heaven. Through allusion to Vergil, the optimistic epitaphs subvert the Vergilian scenes and remind the reader that these tragic deaths need not be so sorrowful, as there is hope in the life eternal.

The allusions and intertextual relationships throughout the epitaphs of my collection remind scholars of the dynamic literary culture of the fourth and fifth centuries CE. The classicizing allusions pull on language from Latin literary tradition for new purposes and create a landscape through which epitaph authors could venerate the deceased and solidify their identity in Rome's literary field. Such allusions bind these epitaphs together through similarity of style and of lineage and identify them as a genre of late antique poetry. Knowing readers are intrigued by finding allusions and learning how they might subvert or interact with the texts they reference, encouraging a curious and learned readership to appreciate the literary tour-de-force these often-unknown epitaph writers

engaged in. My collection serves to illuminate how late antique epitaphs look forward towards a new Christian world while looking backwards to the Roman world as its foundation. Through the unity of Christian and Augustan language, the epitaphs of late antiquity become one way to measure the self-awareness of women and their family's self-fashioned identity in a new and transitioning world.

Conclusion: Genre of Epitaph Poetry

Throughout this chapter, epitaphs have demonstrated their involvement not only in late antique poetic aesthetics, but also in those of earlier Latin literature as well. The authors of the epitaphs of my collection are cognizant of the literary trends and references that have influenced the aesthetics around their work. Contemporaries and predecessors influenced their choices in word variation and repetition, description, and allusion and intertextuality. Within this chapter, the use of meter, contemporary poetic trends, and previous epigrammatic style reveals the unique style of verse epitaphs in the wake of Damasus and his *elogia*. By aligning one's deceased family members with the poetic structure of Damasus' *elogia* and early Christian poetry, the bereaved family members put forth a distinct identity which parallels the new hybridity of the early Roman Christians. The invention of early Christian Rome would not have permeated so widely or solidified so strongly without the support of the literature. Epitaphs demonstrate how the non-salon poets could embody the aesthetics of the time and hand over a new identity not just to saints, but also to everyday Christians. In the following chapter the literary background of funerary epitaphs allows for an in-depth study of the emotive power of these verses. Specific links to late antique poetic construction will give way to thematic and

theological reinterpretations, reuse, and even subversive views on classical and even contemporary works. Diving further into the poetics of these epitaphs allows for a discussion of the cognizant work and active participation that these authors, the bereaved, and perhaps the deceased themselves had in a genre often overlooked by those studying elite and salon literature. Epitaphs have always served scholars as sources of historical and social information, but they also provide a wealth of knowledge not only for the lives of individuals, but also in the creation of a new age, new ideologies, identities, reception, and reinterpretation. All in all, it is the power of continuity and change that has allowed for Latin literature and Roman culture to be preserved in the new Christian age. The epitaphs of my corpus are testaments to such developments in a changing world.

Chapter Four

Grief and Memory in Verse Epitaphs

Writing and reading consolation literature have the power to change people's emotional states. Words have the "power to move and motivate" because, "if material-symbolic objects can serve as a focus of a society's emotional identity, so too can language, itself a symbol system that both enables us to articulate how we feel and shapes how we feel."²⁰⁸ Language's emotive power is furthered by the specific *pathos* of consolation literature. Consolatory literature develops both in form and in content to fulfill the purpose of alleviating grief. The verse epitaphs of my collection embody aspects of the form and twofold purpose of consolatory literature. In form, consolation literature primarily contains elements of philosophy and rhetoric.²⁰⁹ The two primary objectives of consolation literature include honoring those who have died by creating a lasting identity for them and comforting the loved ones who have buried them. The verse epitaphs of my collection, whether they employ formulaic phrases, classical allusions, or hopeful sentiments, work within the genre of consolation to change the reader's emotional state. The acts of writing, reading, and remembering act as emotional aids to grieve, mourn, and heal. In the chapter ahead, I uncover the ways in which selected verse epitaphs of late antiquity console the bereaved through utilizing of three *topoi* of consolation literature. Five distinct sections analyze the emotive power of funerary

²⁰⁸ Stephen Barton, "Eschatology and the Emotions in Early Christianity," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 130.3 (2011): 577.

²⁰⁹ Philosophy and rhetoric are most often noted as the original influences on consolation literature, and it is under these genres' umbrella that consolation finds a home. See J.H.D. Scourfield, *Consoling Heliodorus: A Commentary on Jerome, Letter 60*, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1993), 16.

verses. Section one introduces the history of consolation literature in the Latin literary tradition. Section two explains how the poets of my collection remember the dead through means of conversational epitaphs. The third section explores how two formulaic phrases, *immatura poma* and *mersit acerba dies*, represent untimely deaths. Section four recalls ideas of the body on earth that strengthen the connection to a loved one after death. The final section explains the use of astral imagery's role in solidifying the hope of eternal life. All sections demonstrate how the verse epitaphs use consolatory literature's form and purpose to move and motivate their readers.

Comfort and Mourning in Consolation Literature

The genre of consolation literature developed in Greece beginning with the lost work of Crantor (c. 300 BCE) but was influenced by different literary genres.²¹⁰ Philosophers wrote treatises on grief and prescribed their tenets as medicine for those grieving; poets wrote consolations, personal grieving poems, or elegies in verse; public speeches appeared at funerals to venerate the dead; letters were written and sent to individuals or collective groups to alleviate the pain of misfortune. While the topic of grief appears in other genres, the primary purpose of consolation literature is to console someone who is grieving. The forms of consolation literature consist of philosophical treatises, funeral

²¹⁰ For a fuller discussion of the genre of consolation literature, see such works as: Beata Agrell, "Consolation of Literature as Rhetorical Tradition: Issues and Examples," *Lir-Journal*, 4.15 (2016): 10-35; Han Baltussen (ed.), *Greek and Roman Consolations: Eight Studies of a Tradition and its Afterlife*, (Swansea: Classical Press of Wales, 2013); S. Knuutila, *Emotions in Ancient and Medieval Philosophy*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004); David Konstan, *The Emotions of the Ancient Greeks: Studies in Aristotle and Classic Literature* (Toronto: university of Toronto Press, 2006); Donovan J. Ochs, *Consolatory Rhetoric: Grief, Symbol, and Ritual in the Greco-Roman Era*, (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1993); J.H.D. Scourfield, *Consoling Heliodorus: A commentary on Jerome, Letter 60*. (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1993); M.S. Stroebe, S. Wolfgang, and R. O. Hansson (editors), *Handbook of Bereavement: Theory, Research, and Intervention* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

orations, personal and public letters, and epigrams and other verses.²¹¹ The main *topoi* of the genre of Latin consolation literature include presenting guidelines for mourning, lessening the perceived misfortune, and venerating the deceased's virtues. The *topoi* aid in the emotional comfort of the bereaved by honoring the memory of the dead.

Consolatory texts are a form of intellectual literature, but this fact does not lessen their emotive power or prove them insincere. While scholars can only surmise as to what or how grief felt like to the ancients, nevertheless, "[b]ereavement was a great source of artistic inspiration and words and images inspired by grief still pull at the heartstrings, encouraging us to empathize with their creators."²¹² Consolatory texts might push a philosophical agenda but they also recall the memory of the dead and stir the emotions of the living. The following section illustrates how the three selected *topoi* mentioned were used by both classical and late antique literary authors and formulated the foundation of the genres of which my epitaph collection is a part.

Guidelines to mourning

While the primary purpose of consolation literature is to comfort the bereaved, a secondary purpose is to push forth an author's own philosophical belief. Authors of consolation literature acknowledge the pain of grief, but also present socially acceptable

²¹¹ The genre of consolation literature includes a corpus spanning many years and locations throughout the Greco-Roman world. Some of the best-known works (both pagan and Christian) include: Cicero *ad familiares* 4.5, 5.16, 5.18, *ad Atticus* 12.10, 15.1, 12.14, *ad Brutus* 1.9, *Consolatio ad se* (nonextant) and *Tusculanae Disputationes*; Psuedo-Ovidian *Consolatio ad Liviam*; Ov. *Pont.* 4.11; Catullus *Carmina* 101; Statius *Silvae* 5.1, 2.1, 2.4, 2.6, 3.3, 5.3, 5.5; Seneca *ad Marciam*, *ad Helviam matrem*, *ad Polybius*; Plutarch *De exilio* and *Consolatio ad uxorem*; pseudo-Plutarch *Consolatio ad Apollonium*; Tertullian *De patientia* 9; Cyprian *De mortalitate*; Basil *Ep.* 139, 140, 238, 247, 256, 257; Gregory of Nazianus *Orationes* 7, 8, 18, 43; Paulinus of Nola *Carmina* 31, *Ep.* 13; Augustine *Ep.* 92, 259, 263, *Sermones* 172, 173; Sulpicius Severus *Ep.* 2; Ambrose *Ep.* 15, 39, *De bono mortis*; Jerome *Ep.* 23, 29, 60, 66, 75, 77, 79, 108, 118, and 127. The above list is merely a selection of texts, it was gathered from Scourfield, *Consoling Heliodorus*, 15- 27.

²¹² Valerie Hope, *Death in Ancient Rome: A Sourcebook*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 172.

guidelines for mourning based upon their philosophical system. L. J. D. Scourfield has observed that the Christian writer Jerome composed at least ten consolatory letters (*Ep.* 23, 29, 60, 66, 75, 77, 79, 108, 118 and 127). In one consolation letter (*ep.* 39), Jerome reprimands Paula for her excessive displays of grief over the death of her young daughter. *Ep.* 60 is more appropriately a consolation text because it reveals Jerome's beliefs behind his criticisms of Paula's weeping.²¹³ Jerome believes that by changing their mindset, mourning people can accept eternal life and restrain their expressions of sorrow to alleviate their grief.

In *Ep.* 60, Jerome attempts to guide Heliodorus' mourning over the death of their young, mutual friend, Nepotianus, in three ways: 1) by describing Christ's destruction of death and creation of the afterlife, 2) by recalling Nepotianus' memory and personal virtues, and 3) by explaining the origin of grief. Consolatory words can only help someone so much. Jerome argues that mourning for the dead should be mitigated by considering the advantages of a Christian's death. Nepotianus gains rewards now that he lives with Christ. Because Nepotianus died young, he has escaped from future ills and avoids suffering on earth.²¹⁴ Jerome explains to Heliodorus that Nepotianus should not be mourned as he lives eternally with Christ. Jerome employs the structure of a funerary speech to honor Nepotianus' virtues and to solidify his memory in Heliodorus' mind. Jerome's prescription for Heliodorus is to cease weeping and focus on Nepotianus' presence within his memory: "though we cannot have him in the flesh, let us keep him in our memory, and though we cannot speak with him, let us never cease to speak about

²¹³ Scourfield, *Consoling Heliodorus*, 28.

²¹⁴ Scourfield, *Consoling Heliodorus*, 32.

him.”²¹⁵ Jerome encourages a cessation from mourning and a turn towards reminiscence. Jerome also explains grief as a personal or even selfish emotion. Jerome observes (*ep.* 60.7) that grief only deepens because “we cannot bear our longing at [Nepotianus’] absence, and it is not his situation that we mourn, but ours. The happier he is, the deeper the grief we feel, because we do not share in his prosperity.”²¹⁶ The pain of grief comes from looking inward and focusing on the absence of a loved one rather than on their existence in heaven. People grieve not for the deceased but for themselves. The solution, Jerome concludes, lies in limiting mourning. People should rejoice in the death of their loved ones as it is the beginning of their new (after)life. Heliodorus can limit his mourning and comfort himself through believing in Christ, remembering Nepotianus, and acknowledging the personal origin of his grief.

Lessening perceived misfortune

Some four centuries earlier than Jerome, Cicero had noted in his *Tusculan Disputations* (3.76) that there are two ways to comfort someone in a written consolation. The first of these, curbing excessive displays of grief, Jerome had incorporated into his letter to Heliodorus. The second was to use rhetoric to convince recipients that the source of their distress was of less concern than they perceived. The fragments left from Cicero’s *Consolatio ad se* reveal that its primary goal was to diminish Cicero’s grief at the death of his daughter. He wrote to Atticus: “For the consolation I have sought in writing, I am not discontented with my measure of success. It has made me show my

²¹⁵ Jerome, *ep.* 60, 19.3. *quem corpore non valemus, recordatione teneamus, et cum quo loqui non valemus, recordatione teneamus, et cum quo loqui non possumus, de eo numquam loqui desinamus.*

²¹⁶ Jerome, *ep.* 60, 7.1-2. *Sed desiderium absentiae eius ferre non possumus, non illius sed nostrum vicem dolentes. Quanto ille felicius, tanto non amplius in dolore, quod tali caremus bono.*

grief less; but the grief itself I could not lessen, nor would I, if I could.”²¹⁷ After his own personal battle with grief (described in his letters *Att.* 12.14; 12.15; 12.18; 12.28, *Fam.* 12.23; 14.1, and others, and in his *Consolatio ad se*), Cicero wrote the *Tusculan Disputations* to help others.²¹⁸ Donovan Ochs describes Cicero’s blend of philosophy and rhetoric to move others towards mitigating their pain with the following:

Intense personal grief at the loss of a loved one would be an emotional state requiring language designed to ease, lighten, and mitigate. While philosophy could provide reasoned analyses about grief, rhetoric provided a method for making such analyses operate in practical instances.²¹⁹

Cicero’s words have the power to move and motivate his readers as well as himself. Through the act of writing, Cicero seeks to comfort himself and develop a way to soothe others. At the same time, he immortalizes his daughter and hopes for her eternal afterlife.

In his *Consolatio ad se*, Cicero lessens his grief and public mourning by asserting that his daughter, Tullia, achieved a starry apotheosis. Of all Cicero’s writing, the text written for his comfort is the only one in which “the immortality of the soul is stated with no reservation. This is largely due, of course, to the human factor: the bereaved father can only be soothed by envisaging his departed daughter as eternally blissful[.]”²²⁰ Other Ciceronian texts propose or accept the immortality of the soul (the dream of Scipio from Cicero’s *de Republica*, for example), but only fragment 22 of the *Consolatio ad se* asserts

²¹⁷ *Att.* 12.28. Translation by Han Baltussen, “Cicero’s *Consolatio Ad Se*: Character, Purpose and Impact of a Curious Treatise,” in *Greek and Roman Consolations: Eight Studies of a Tradition and its Afterlife*, edited by H. Baltussen, (Swansea: The Classical Press of Wales, 2013), 68.

²¹⁸ Cicero’s *Tusculan Disputations* “does not inform us sufficiently about Cicero’s personal reaction to grief, but rather about his considered views about grief.” Baltussen. “Cicero’s *Consolatio Ad Se*,” 68.

²¹⁹ Donovan J. Ochs, *Consolatory Rhetoric: Grief, Symbol, and Ritual in the Greco-Roman Era*, (Columbia, University of South Carolina Press, 1993), 113.

²²⁰ Aldo Setaioli, “The Fate of the Soul in Ancient ‘Consolations’ Rhetorical Handbooks and the Writers,” *Prometheus* 31 (2005), 259.

the soul attains either punishment or reward after death. His hope that Tullia is rewarded with a happy afterlife aids his alleviation from pain. Cicero explains that others have ascended to the heavens, Castor and Pollux, Hercules, and the daughter of Cadmus. His daughter, an ordinary young girl compared to mythological and historical heroes, deserves the same reward after death. In his text, Cicero directs his immortalizing words to Tullia: “we see that several men and women are among the gods...I shall make you the best and most learned of all [women], placed in the company of the approving immortal gods and shall consecrate you in the opinion of all mortals.”²²¹ Once Cicero asserts his daughter’s immortal life, he can be comforted in her soul’s pleasant and eternal existence. His words have the power to console Cicero by immortalizing his memory of his daughter in text. The epitaphs of my collection work similarly because they provide the landscape for authors to immortalize the deceased in text, to assert the soul’s eternal life, and to provide hope for those left behind.

Veneration of virtues and memory-making

Remembering the dead and their virtues remains one of the primary purposes of consolation literature. Consolation literature contains rhetorical strategies, philosophical beliefs, and social proscriptions, but it is “the exhortations, the praise of the deceased, and the good memories” that ultimately define the genre.²²² Remembering the dead supports the bereaved in diminishing their pain and curbing their public displays of mourning. The late first-century CE Greek writer, Plutarch, demonstrates in his *Consolatio ad uxorem* the

²²¹ See Baltussen, “Cicero’s *Consolatio Ad Se*,” 74-5.

²²² Han Baltussen, “Personal Grief and Public Mourning in Plutarch’s ‘Consolation to His Wife,’” *The American Journal of Philology* 130 (2009): 81.

power that veneration and reminiscence has in consoling the bereaved and lessening the pain of misfortune. Plutarch's treatise moves "from emphatic support to assuaging thoughts, to praise for virtue in contrast with vice, to philosophical framing of a positive outlook."²²³ While his progression follows several consolatory themes, the passage about the memory of his daughter demonstrates the power words have in recalling an image of a person. Plutarch's reminiscence, like that which Jerome prescribed to Heliodorus, honors the dead and brings comfort to the living.

Plutarch (608C) depicts an image of his daughter by highlighting her virtues and the feelings her virtues induced in others. He writes to his wife that their daughter's "response to affection and her generosity both gave pleasure and enabled us to perceive the human kindness in her nature."²²⁴ The vivid description, similar to an *ekphrasis*, creates a tribute to their child that his wife can reread to aid her grieving process.²²⁵ As a private letter-turned-public, the text shows how consolatory texts can immortalize a person's memory of a deceased loved one in writing, as Cicero did for his daughter. Textual immortality solidifies a vision of the dead that the bereaved may reread whenever they need. A memory could fade but the text is there to reinvigorate it. Veneration of virtues, whether in a funerary speech, a letter, or on an epitaph, preserves a positive memory of the dead. The words provide an outlet for the grieving party to reminiscence and reconnect with their deceased loved ones. If their memories ever begin to fade, the bereaved just need to (re)read.

²²³ Baltussen, "Personal Grief and Public Mourning in Plutarch's 'Consolation to His Wife,'" 80.

²²⁴ Plutarch, *Consolatio ad uxorem*, 608c. Translation by Donald Andrew Russell, *Plutarch*, (London: Duckworth, 1973), cited by Baltussen, "Personal Grief and Public Mourning," 84.

²²⁵ Baltussen, "Personal Grief and Public Mourning," 83-4.

The poems of my collection each contain aspects of the three *topoi* selected from elite consolation literature. Conversational epitaphs create a memory of the deceased that rises from the stone. Descriptions of untimely deaths acknowledge the pain and suffering of a life cut short but memorialize the young victims on stone. Other poems, the third group to be considered below, focus on the immortality of the soul and the connection to their loved ones still alive on earth. The final group of epitaphs I will discuss aim to alleviate and minimize the pain of those left behind, as the deceased have reached a pleasant, eternal afterlife.

Conversations with the Dead

A common provider of comfort, the conversational funerary epitaph served multiple classes of people dating as far back in the Roman epigraphic habit as the Republican period and continuing in popularity into late antiquity. An early Republican inscription dedicated to a woman named Claudia, is written in this speaking-stone style, as it opens with, “Stranger, what I have to say is brief, halt and read it. This is the unlovely tomb of a lovely woman.”²²⁶ In an imperial epitaph, the deceased herself, Geminia Agathe, speaks to the reader with, “I shall disclose that I lived for only five years, seven months and twenty-two days. While I lived I played games, and everyone always loved me.”²²⁷ As seen in these examples, the conversational epitaph not only had continual and persistent

²²⁶ Courtney, *Musa Lapidaria*, 214. Inscription 17 = *CLE* 52 = *CIL* 1.1211 = 6.15345 = *ILS* 8403 = *ILLRP* 973. The use of the first person also indicated the “speaking-stone” or conversational epitaph style. This opens a dialogue between the traveler and the stone itself, bridging the gap between living and the dead. The personified stone calls the traveler with *hospes resiste*, a common phrase of address in this style of epitaphs, possibly with its origins in the Greek habit of using ξένος.

²²⁷ Courtney, *Musa Lapidaria*, 166-7 and 377-8. Inscription 179 = *CLE* 562 = *CIL* 6.19007. While this young girl did not write the poem herself, the epitaph speaks as if in her own voice and creates a vivid memory of her life in the minds of the reader.

use throughout the epigraphic habit of the Roman people, but it also created a rich interaction between stone, memory, and the bereaved and to the passeryby. The memory of the deceased comes to the forefront of the reader's mind as he or she places him or herself in an imagined conversation. Like Plutarch's *Consolatio ad uxorem*, a conversation epitaph preserves a memory in text, therefore making the deceased alive in the act of reading. Recording a dialogue on stone allows the grieving party to relive the memory-inducing phenomenon multiple times and is thus a valuable style for epitaph writers to employ.

The poetic speaker of conversational epitaphs tends to be either the personified stone or the deceased speaking beyond the grave. They call out to a wanderer, passer-by, stranger (with *viator*, *hospes*, *quisquis es*), or a family member. Some typical phrases often beseech the *viator* to stop and read the epitaph. The phrase "let the earth rest lightly on one's bones" is a common closing before the passer-by is bid farewell.²²⁸ One of the oldest Latin examples (c.180 BC) is *CLE* 53 which states *rogat ut resistas, hospes, te hic tacitus lapis*.²²⁹ The epitaph asks the stranger to pause and read the stone belonging to Olius (Aulus) Granius. The personified stone acknowledges that it is silent but tells of the one whose bones are buried beneath. The connection developed in a dialogue urges the

²²⁸ An example from the Greek of this tradition comes from Herodotus, when, in book 7, he talks about the monument at the battlefield of Thermopylae, which asks the reader to stop and think about the ones who died there.

²²⁹ There is a plethora of epitaphs like *CLE* 53 which simply address the reader to stop and read and do not do much more with their verses. In *CLE* 465a, the epitaph asks (*quaeso*) the *viator* to stop at the grave of Sextus Iulus Felicissimus by halting their step. *CLE* 1327, in the opening elegaic couplet, asks: *qui properas, quaeso, tarda viator iter, / ut paucis discas cum genus exitium*. It goes on, in beautiful language to tell the origin place of P. Sittius Optatus, and closes with an imperative line, *dicere ne pigeat: P. Sitti Optati molliter ossa cubent*. This type of dialogue with travelers engages them and entreats them. *CLE* 1279 does not open with the "call" to the traveler that is so typical as opening lines, but instead closes with them, when it beseeches the wanderer with, *sparge, precor, flores supra mea busta viator: / fauisti uiuo forsitam ipse mihi*. Sometimes these types of epitaphs ask for something like flowers or libations, but oftentimes, they are meant to be read by someone passing by.

reader to continue their participation with the dead. The dialogue suggests that a loved one lives beyond the grave, whether in Elysium or in heaven. In his work on the Latin language, Varro connected the word *monumentum* with that of *admonere*, intrinsically linking together monuments and the act of remembering.²³⁰ In this way, even those epitaphs and funerary monuments which do not depict a fictitious dialogue, are still engaging in one. The epitaphs ask to be read, and whosoever stops and looks at the stone, has already agreed to enter a conversation with them. The deceased commemorated in poems could be unknown to the passers-by, but in the reading of the poetic epitaph, a connection between them may develop. The interaction with the poem can further fashion the identity of the deceased, which is intrinsically created by the author. Through reminiscence and the possibility of conversations after death, such epitaphs aim to alleviate the mourning of survivors. The only fully-conversational epitaphs in my collection are those of Evodia (6), Theodote (7), and Rhode (8), but the epitaphs of Acilia Babiana (9), Florentina (3) and Iuliana (6) contain similar elements. The epitaphs of Evodia, Theodote, and Rhode, because of their conversational nature as well as other poetic constructions evoke empathy from those who knew them as well as from the strangers passing by.

Evodia speaks beyond the grave

Evodia (6) speaks directly to her parents from beyond the grave in her six-line epitaph. With a negative command and an imperative, she urges them not to weep or beat their breasts at their loss (lines 1-2):

²³⁰ Varro, *De Lingua Latina*, 6.49. Paula Rose, *A Commentary on Augustine's De cura pro mortuis gerenda: Rhetoric in Practice*, (Brill: Leiden, 2013), 197.

ne tristes lacrimas ne pectora **tundite** v[estra]
 o **pater et mater** nam regna celestia tango

Don't shed sorrowful tears nor **beat** your breasts,
father and mother, for I have reached the heavenly kingdom.

By directly addressing her *pater* and *mater*, Evodia's voice speaks through the poem and consoles her parents. The verbs employed by the author imply that Evodia is present and capable of agency. She is the subject of present tense active verbs which imply that she currently and continuously dwells safely in heaven. Her death and mortality are not described negatively. In conversation she describes a joyful and pleasant afterlife. She is not in the gloomy underworld nor is she a pale shade. Instead she is kept safe in her carefree rest (*requies secure*). Happily, she dances the chorus among the saints and other blessed souls. The author of her epitaph employs a conversational framework to posit a moving epitaph. It consoles not just her parents but any reader of her poem. Evodia's voice is not a ghostly whisper in a darkened catacomb but a vivacious and commanding voice, urging her parents to leave their sorrow behind. The vision of a loved one, protected and happy, surrounded by others like her, gives hope to those walking by and reading.

Hey, you! Theodote's speaking stone

Theodote's (7) epitaph employs a conversational style like Evodia's but with a change in poetic speaker. Instead of Theodote speaking directly to her parents as Evodia does, the stone speaks to the reader. In engaging the passer-by, the epitaph not only remembers

Theodote but also honors her family and uplifts them in contemporary memory. The entire poem focuses on the idea that the reader is encouraged and even implored to view Theodote sympathetically. Along with the use of *lector* (reader), the epitaph engages the reader with exclamations, imperatives, and jussive subjunctives. The reader connects with Theodote's life by way of her epitaph. The author commands the *lector* to have compassion with the imperative (*miserere*) in line 1. The poem urges the reader to stop and empathize with the young girl lying buried beneath. Then, with an exclamation, the author asserts that Theodote was worthy of a long life but now grief for her death is eternal (lines 1-6):

Virginis hic tenerae **lector** miserere sepulcro
 unius huic lustris uix fuit arta dies
 o quam longinquae fuerat dignissima uitae
 heu cuius uiuit nunc sine fine dolor
addamus meritis lacrimas tam mortis aceruae
 nam quae grata forent sunt modo flenda diu

Here, **reader**, have compassion for the grave of a young girl;

Hers was a brief life of barely five years.

O, how very worthy she was of a long life,

Alas! Now grief for her lives without end!

Let us add tears worthy for so bitter a death to her merits

for the merits that would have been pleasing now must be lamented for a long time.

The jussive subjunctive (*addamus*) in line 5 actively joins the reader to the author.

Together they must grieve for Theodote. Using literary and rhetorical techniques, the author of Theodote's epitaph draws the reader into the story of her death and therefore her life. It is only after the author has issued an imperative, an exclamation, and a jussive subjunctive (another type of command) that the author then tells the reader specifics of Theodote's life. Lines seven through ten reveal who she was, how she died, and where her soul is headed. The first six lines aim to engage and earn the sympathy of an outside reader. Perhaps her parents, in composing this epitaph, may not feel lonely if they believe that other people might sympathize with their grief at their daughter's sudden death.

Sweet Rhode

In Rhode's epitaph (8), the author directly speaks to the deceased. The author begins and ends the poem with a direct address to Rhode, identifying her as sweet (*dulcis*). In line 1, *dulcis anima* identifies Rhode who has been taken away from the poetic speaker by bitter death. Lines 2-3 suggest that her mother is the one commissioning or writing the funerary poem, as Rhode is described as:

qui tantum properasti matris foedare senectam

senilemque aetatem tantos onerare dolores

you who have hastened to mar the old age of a mother

and to burden old age with such great grief.

The poem continues to be directed to Rhode herself. The author evokes pathos when she tells Rhode that “without you, neither light nor life is joyful for me” (*te sine namque mihi*

nec lux uec uita iocunda est: 4). Her mother cannot endure without her. Like Plutarch's wife (*cons. ad uxor.*) and Jerome's Paula (*ep.* 39), Rhode's mother's grief is overwhelming. The epitaph serves as a testament to the care her mother felt during life and now the grief at Rhode's sudden death. As Cicero wrote out his feelings in *Consolatio ad se*, Rhode's mother also pours her heart out onto the stone. Women often set up funerary monuments to their loved ones as "according to ancient Roman ideals, men should be unmoved by personal loss, while women were allowed much greater license."²³¹ Lines seven and eight discuss Rhode's virtues and create a solid memory that her mother can reread to reminisce. The final two lines return to the hopeful sentiment of the rest of the poem. The final couplet states that Rhode now seeks the heavenly kingdom. The poem ends with direct address again. In contrast to the opening line which stated that Rhode was taken away from the speaker, the final line bids her farewell and wishes her everlasting peace with, "now goodbye, sweet one, and rest in everlasting peace" (*iam uale perpetuo dulcis et in pace quiesce*: 10).

As if through the progression of grief and mourning Rhode's mother now accepts her daughter's fate and rejoices in her eternal afterlife. Her grief is alleviated through her hope in her daughter's heavenly ascension. The parallel structure of the direct address in the first and last lines demonstrates a purposeful framework by which to present her mother's emotional journey. Readers of Rhode's epitaph are privy to an intimate conversation and personal mourning. The scene evokes pathos, sympathy, and a pathway through grief. The conversational epitaphs of my collection demonstrate how the *topoi* of "speaking-stones" create a fictional description of intimate conversations between the

²³¹ Keith Hopkins, *Death and Renewal: Sociological Studies in Roman History*, volume 2, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), 218. See his work pages 217-226 for more information.

living and the dead that aids the reader in continuing a connection with the deceased after their death.

Untimely Deaths

Like conversational epitaphs, funerary poems devoted to victims of untimely deaths solidify the memory of the deceased in stone, but they also identify the deceased based upon age at death. Offering perhaps a pessimistic view, the epitaphs of untimely deaths typically focus on the unfulfilled potential of a life cut short. The fact that the girls and women in my collection died young is highlighted in their verse epitaphs, making their age a primary distinguishing factor. Two different phrases show up as formulae for indicating a victim of sudden death. The two formulae allow the authors to acknowledge the grief of untimely deaths and present it in a socially acceptable way. One formula appears as the metaphor of unripe fruit, often indicated by the expressions *immatura poma*, *poma sic et corpora nostra aut matura cadunt aut nimis acerba ruunt*, or a variant of either. Another formula alludes to the Vergilian line (*Aen.* 6.429 and 11.28) *abstulit atra dies et funere mersit acerbo*, or some variation thereof. Both imply that the deceased died before reaching full maturity. These formulaic expressions elicit empathy from others as they signal sympathy for the bereaved (and the deceased) suffering from the tragedy of a life cut short.

A collection of Latin *mors immatura* (untimely death) epitaphs has been commented on by Stefanie Martin-Kilcher from an archaeological standpoint. She recognizes four different groups who could be venerated through the image of *mors immatura*, or as those

who had died *ante suum diem* (before their time).²³² This collection includes “1) infants who died before, during or shortly after birth, 2) Children and juveniles and, in many cultures, unmarried or childless adults. 3) Women who died in childbirth ... 4) People who died in special or horrible circumstances – the ‘bad death.’”²³³ Through the phrases of *immatura poma* and *mersit acerba dies* (and their variants), authors of my collection interact with the literary tradition to describe young women from Martin-Kilcher’s groups 2 and 3. The following sections describe two distinct, but connected, images which became formulaic poetic expressions for untimely deaths throughout their use in Latin literature and the consolatory genre. First, I will discuss the two phrases and their use in Latin literature. In the second section, I turn to selected epitaphs which use *immatura poma*, or a variant of it, beginning with *meam amice* (11). The third section demonstrates how the epitaphs of Simplicia (2), Arcontia (5), and Theodote (7) employ *mersit acerba dies*, a variation of Vergil’s line. These formulae draw attention to the particular tragedy and sorrow at the premature death of the individual girls and women of my collection.

Immatura poma in literature

The phrase *immatura poma*, when written in verse epitaphs, denotes the idea of untimely death, but finds its origin from similar metaphors in literature. Someone who has died young is metaphorically referred to as *immatura poma* because they are just like a fruit which has not had the time to ripen, therefore falling prematurely from the tree. As a literary metaphor, *immatura* (or *acerba*) *poma* (or *mala*) is not unfamiliar to the poetic

²³² Martin-Kilcher, “Mors Immatura in the Roman World,” 63.

²³³ Martin-Kilcher, “Mors Immatura in the Roman World,” 63.

world in elite Latin literature. Poets such as Horace (*Epod.* 16, *Carm.* 2), Ovid (*Met.* 15), and Propertius (4.11) employ this image to discuss the prime of life, sexuality, and the Elysian Fields. In prose, Cicero (*Sen.* 71) conjures the same metaphor of bitter fruit to describe the death of young people. The poetic image blurs from poetry into prose not just in this occasion, but in others as well, indicating an overarching theme to describe untimely deaths. The poets of verse epitaphs, specifically, use this phrase in two ways. On the surface, poets tap into the literary tradition of the metaphor, harkening to its earlier association with the prime of life, therefore placing their poetry in a poetic tradition. Secondly, the poets employ the image in order to create a distinct formulaic description which venerates young people who have died. The epitaph of *meam amice* (14), considered below, for example nicely reveals the twofold literary dexterity of the phrase *immatura poma* and demonstrates its use as a formulaic structure in late antique verse epitaphs.

The literary tradition of the metaphor of ripe and unripe fruit naturally is associated with autumn and the natural cycle of the seasons, which also may serve as a simile for humans' life course. Descriptions of harvest time and a bucolic setting further the metaphor of the ripe fruit for maturity and prosperity. There are two distinct understandings of autumn and its metaphorical usage in Latin poetry: early autumn, *autumnus adultus*, and late autumn, *autumnus praeceps*.²³⁴ *Autumnus praeceps* could be considered almost interchangeable with the understanding of winter (*hiemes*). When authors write *autumnus praeceps*, they involve images of the withering of leaves, coldness, and the inert lack of growth.²³⁵ *Autumnus adultus*, however, is vivacious and bursting

²³⁴ Keith Preston, "Aspects of Autumn in Roman Poetry," *Classical Philology* 13.3 (1918), 273.

²³⁵ In the same vein as English poetry's metaphor of winter as death and darkness.

forth like plump fruits themselves. Although poets such as Vergil and Ovid describe the season of Saturn's Golden Age as perpetual spring, Horace describes the Elysian Fields as being in eternal autumn.²³⁶ In *Epod.* 16.44-47, Horace explains that the Islands of the Blest are continuously fruitful, with vines bearing clusters of ripe grapes.²³⁷ Without the need for agricultural work, the earth is bursting with a mature harvest. The ideal afterlife is one in which no work is required to reap the benefits of a full harvest. In Horace's imagery, the maturity of the fruit is associated with an amicable afterlife, not the cold, barren winter. Once someone achieved the prime of his or her life, it was a more appropriate time for death, not too young, not too old.

Ovid serves as another classical poet whose verse focuses on the portrayal of autumn as the prime of life. In book fifteen of the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid describes the year's seasons as an imitation of a human's lifetime. The images Ovid creates in his scene again confirm the association of *maturus* with adulthood; *immaturus* is therefore associated with a lack of reaching a mature age identity. Early spring is considered childhood, and summer is the strength of a young man.²³⁸ Autumn, though, is when "the first flush of youth is gone, but ripe and mellow (*maturus mitisque*), midway in time between youth

²³⁶ Preston, "Aspects of Autumn," 273-274.

²³⁷ Horace, *Epodes* 16.44-47: *reddit ubi cererem tellus inarata quotannis / et inputata floret usque vinea, / germinat et numquam fallentis termes olivae / suamque pulla ficus ornat arborem, / mella cava manant ex ilice, montibus altis,*

²³⁸ Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 15.199-208. Thomas Cole describes the metaphor of man's ages for the season's of the year with: "The year (199ff.) is first "devoid of strength" (*roboris expers*) and "in its springtime just like the time of childhood" (*pueri simillima aevo/ vere novo*), then *robustior* – a "strong youth" (*valens iuvenis*) – once summer comes. Autumn follows – "a period of maturity between youth and age" (*matures...inter iuvenemque senemque*) – and finally winter, white-haired and decrepit (*senilis* and *alba capillos*). In similar fashion the succeeding passage (214ff.) speaks of life's middle years and then old age as succeeding the "strong, swift span of youth" (*valens veloxque...spatium iuventae*), which itself follows on the period in which man is "weak-kneed as yet and feeble" (*sine viribus et nondum poplite firmo*)." Thomas Cole, *Ovidius Mythistoricus: Legendary Time in the Metamorphoses*, (Bern: Peter Lang, 2008), 91-93.

and age (*inter iuvenemque senemque*), with sprinkled grey showing on temples.”²³⁹

Autumn as the mature age is the opposite of *immatura poma*. Winter is the season of old age, and the time at which the body starts to decay.²⁴⁰ From Ovid’s description, the prime of one’s life occurs when one is ‘ripe.’²⁴¹ It is most appropriate for one to die having reached this age, rather than prematurely in the ‘spring’ of one’s life, or as a result of the decrepit nature of one’s ‘winter.’ Here the season of autumn is again characterized by fullness, maturity, and fulfillment of potential, all things that are associated with adulthood.

Just as Ovid employs *maturus* to signal adulthood, Horace uses the metaphor of unripe fruit (*immitis uvae*) to indicate youth and desirability at an age before adulthood. In his *Carm.* 2.5, Horace uses the description of a cow in order to discuss a young girl and the rise of her sexual maturity. Horace describes Lalage originally as a young heifer, who has not yet felt the weight of either the yoke or the bull. Horace’s metaphor implies that Lalage is too young to complete work or to fulfill a bull’s sexual desires. As the poem continues, Horace’s poetic persona also desires Lalage. The metaphor of the unripe fruit reveals her youth, but also her future potential. Horace writes, “Dismiss your desire for the unripe grape (*immitis uvae*): soon autumn (*autumnus*), dappled in its purple coloring,

²³⁹ Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 15. 209-211: excipit autumnus, posito fervor iuventae / maturus mitisque inter iuvenemque senemque / temperie medius, sparsus quoque tempora canis.

²⁴⁰ Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 15.212-13: inde senilis hiems tremuo venit horrida passu, / aut spoliata suos, aut quos habet, alba capillos.

²⁴¹ Cole states that youth as Ovid discusses how spring serves as the year’s strength, as “this is the season when heat is at its fieriest (207-208), it “subsides and disappears in autumn, where the fires of youth are cooled.” He mentions in a footnote, that “the pessimistic perspective of Ovid’s Ages of Man requires that the strength and vigor of summer and autumn be presented as a brief interval (225-26) between the helplessness of youth (221-24) and the helplessness of old age (227-36).” Cole, *Ovidius Mythistoricus*, 92. The autumn, the prime of a human’s life, is brief, but is at the core the most physically powerful that a human will be. This fits the metaphor that the summer and autumn are the strongest that the year will be as well.

will mark out for you dark clusters of fruit (*purpureo varius colore*).”²⁴² In the spring of her life, Lalage is still too young to be considered an object of sexual desire, but once she reaches the autumn of her life, she will be ripe for the picking. The image of the bitter and unripe fruit, Elizabeth Sutherland has noted, conveys “a tantalizing promise of imminent juiciness and edibility. Because Lalage’s youthfulness is a focus of the ode, her comparison to the unripe fruit implies that if she is not seized at the moment of ripeness she will no longer be desirable.”²⁴³ The poem employs the image of mature fruit in the same way as others in the Latin poetic tradition do, representing fullness and adulthood. Lalage’s age currently, however, is not that of a mature woman, but of a young girl, and it is too soon for her to be considered desirable.

Sappho similarly portrays a bride as an apple which reddens on the branch of the tree, reaching her peak ripeness and potential.²⁴⁴ The bride of Sappho’s apple fragment is unattainable, and the apple-pickers are not able to reach the bride-apple as it ripens on the branch. Ripe, mature, and just out of reach, the bride-apple is at the peak of her desirability and in the adult stage of her life course. Horace and Sappho both illustrate women as fruit in their poems to indicate unattainability, creating a heightened desire for these women. When women are young, they have potential to grow and ripen, a potential not yet realized. The authors use the image of what the fruit will grow into, plump clusters of fruit and ripe apples, in order to deepen the lover’s desire for them. The fullness, maturity, and fulfillment of expectations that the women will achieve when they

²⁴² Translation by Elizabeth Sutherland, “Vision and Desire in Horace *Carmina* 2” in *Gendered Dynamics in Latin Love Poetry*, edited by Ronnie Ancona, Ellen Greene, Joseph Paxton, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 114. Horace, *Carmina* 2.5.9-12: *tolle cupidinem/immitis uvae: iam tibi lividos/ distinguet autumnus racemos/ purpureo varius colore.*

²⁴³ Sutherland “Vision and Desire in Horace *Carmina* 2,” 124.

²⁴⁴ Sappho’s apple poem fragment 105a LP, translated by Carson 1986.26, cited in Sutherland, “Vision and Desire in Horace *Carmina* 2,” 123-4.

mature is what the husband desires, and is therefore when he wishes to attain them, not before. In contrast, the image of unripe fruit and the word *immatura* continue to signal the complete opposite.

Propertius describes a victim of untimely death not with the image of unripe fruit, but with that of a shared adjective, *immatura*. Propertius discusses Cornelia and her untimely death in a fictional epitaph (4.11.15-18). AS if in a real epitaph, Propertius has Cornelia console her husband, Pallus, at the event of her early death with the conversational structure. In lines 15 and following, Cornelia says,

Damnatae noctes et vos, vada lenta, paludes,
 et quaecumque meos implicat unda pedes,
immatura licet, tamen huc non noxia veni:
 nec precor huic umbrae mollia iura meae.

O cursed with darkness, of both waters, sluggish shallows,
 and whatever sedge entangles my feet,
 although here **before my time**, I come not as one guilty;
 nor do I seek softer justice for this my shade.

Immatura here refers to the idea that Cornelia died as a young woman, sudden and too soon. The metaphor blends a traditional Roman view with Hellenistic Greek ideas.²⁴⁵ Cornelia stressed her status as *non noxia*, which is perhaps homage to the earlier idea that a person would be locked out from Hades and stuck in limbo if he or she was a criminal

²⁴⁵ Johanna Ter Vrugt-Lentz, "Roman Conceptions of After-Life," *Mors Immatura*, (Groningen: Wolters, 1960), 72.

or had offended the gods in some way.²⁴⁶ Vergil's depiction of the Underworld differs, however, because a person who died prematurely could also be locked in limbo, just as the infant shades Aeneas sees (*Aen.* 6.429). Cornelia insists that she is guiltless, and therefore, if she is denied access to Hades, it is because of her status as a *mors immatura*, like those infants stuck in limbo.

Premature death as exemplified through the metaphor of bitter fruit occurs in prose as well as in poetry, although not as frequently. In *De senectute*, Cicero speaks as Cato the Elder, giving advice about old age and preparation for death. Cicero states that the fruit of old age, *fructus...senectutis*, is the memory of the good things one has previously acquired (chapter 71).²⁴⁷ Here fruit represents the blessings of old age. He compares death at old age with the death of the young and states that when the young die, their death is like a flame that has been snuffed out without its own will or force.²⁴⁸ He continues and explains that when the young die they are just like "apples (*poma*) when they are green (*cruda*) are with difficulty plucked from the tree, but when ripe (*matura*) and mellow (*cocta*) fall of themselves, so, with the young, death comes as a result of force, while with the old it is the result of ripeness (*maturitas*)."²⁴⁹ It is difficult, unnatural even, for green, unripe fruits (*poma...cruda*) to rush down from the trees. Without writing *immatura poma*, Cicero denotes the same sentiment of the poetic metaphor. Cicero's passage signifies how a young person's death is contrary to nature. When youths and unripe apples die, their growth and maturing is incomplete, their

²⁴⁶ Ter Vrugt-Lentz, "Roman Conceptions," 70-72.

²⁴⁷ Cicero, *Sen.*, 71: *fructus autem senectutis est, ut saepe dixi, ante partorum bonorum memoria et copia.*

²⁴⁸ Cicero, *Sen.* 71: *itaque adulescentes mihi mori sic videntur, ut cum aquae multitudine flammae vis opprimitur, senes autem sic, ut cum sua sponte, nulla adhibita vi, consumptus ignis exstinguitur.*

²⁴⁹ Cicero, *Sen.* 71: *et quasi poma ex arboribus, cruda si sunt, vix evelluntur, si matura et cocta, decidunt, sic vitam adulescentibus vis aufert, senibus maturitas.*

potential unfulfilled. Young and sudden death is grievous and worthy of mourning. Each of the examples of the metaphor of unripe fruit discussed above reveals the literary foundation of the formulaic expression *immatura poma* to indicate untimely deaths in verse epitaphs.

Mersit acerba dies in literature

Like the metaphor of unripe fruit, the formulaic expression *mersit acerba dies* signals the distinct sadness of a youth's life cut short. *Mersit acerba dies* and its variants arise from two instances of Vergil's *Aeneid* (6.429 and 11.28) before its formulaic development, making this phrase not only an indicator of untimely deaths, but also an allusion to classical Latin literary tradition. While the expression first appears in Vergil's *Aeneid* to describe victims of untimely deaths, the formula is echoed in Propertius and Valerius Flaccus in order to signal the tragedy of *mors immatura*. Through the expression's use in Augustan and Flavian literature, it became an expression employed to identify a victim of untimely death in verse epitaphs throughout the Roman period.

The expression *abstulit atra dies et funere mersit acerbo* occurs twice verbatim in Vergil's epic (6.249 and 11.28) and indicates sudden death in both appearances. In *Aeneid* 6.429, Vergil describes the area of limbo dedicated to children and their early deaths.²⁵⁰ On Aeneas' descent to the Underworld, the Sybil leads him past the cries of babies' souls. They are not able to dwell in either Tartarus or Elysium but must remain separate on the other side of the river Styx. Vergil's narrative claims that a dark day has

²⁵⁰ Vergil, *Aen.* 6.426-430. *Continuo audita voces, vagitus et ingens, / infantumque animae flentes in limine primo, / quos dulcis vitae exsortes et ab ubere raptos / abstulit atra dies et funere mersit acerbo; / hos iuxta falso damnati crimine mortis.*

taken them to their bitter death. The shades of infants, of victims of untimely deaths, of the falsely accused, of suicides, of those who died in battle, and of victims of a cruel love are locked together on one side of the river.²⁵¹ The souls that dwell here suffered the worst sorts of unhappy deaths. Book 6 has importance as a mythological description of the afterlife, from which other poets modeled their own.²⁵² In the second occurrence of the line (11.28), Aeneas talks about the untimely death of Evander's son (Pallas) whose fate is the same as the infant souls, *abstulit atra dies et funere mersit acerbo*.²⁵³ The death of Pallas ultimately leads to the final battle between Aeneas and Turnus, and the end of Vergil's epic. Vergil's line focuses on the sadness of a life cut short. Evander's expectations and hopes for his son go unfulfilled. Aeneas' words, like those of epitaphs that employ the formulaic expression, attempt to console Evander by recognizing the pain of his grief.

Borrowings from the Vergilian line appear in several other Latin poems to signal untimely deaths. Propertius borrows a similar expression, *atra dies*, to announce a fictitious eulogy of an untimely death. Propertius speaks to a woman (probably Cynthia) from the point of view of the passer-by of her grave (2.11.1-6). It takes the conversational epitaph and turns it around, talking to the deceased about how the reader of her epitaph might view her. The short epigram does not praise the woman but turns a typical epitaph style on its head and refuses to acknowledge her virtues, as they have died with her. Propertius still employs the Vergilian expression in order to mark her death out as an

²⁵¹ John William Zarker, "A Vergilian Verse in the 'Carmina Latina Epigraphica,'" *The Classical Journal* 57.3, 114.

²⁵² Zarker, "A Vergilian Verse," 114.

²⁵³ Vergil, *Aeneid* 11.24-28. "Ite," ait, "egregias animas, quae sanguine nobis/hanc patriam peperere suo, decorate supremis/muneribus, maestamque Evandri primus ad urbem/mittatur Pallas, quem non virtutis egentem/abstulit atra dies et funere mersit acerbo."

untimely one. Her *funeris atra dies* takes away all her gifts along with her body.

Propertius develops the expression as an indicator of a victim of untimely death in order to construct an unusual elegy. Whether or not a knowing reader would recognize the Vergilian echo, the expression itself indicates the pain of a life cut short, even if Propertius's poetic persona refuses to feel the pain.

Valerius Flaccus, like Propertius, borrows the same expression, *atra dies*, to echo Vergil's description of untimely death and invoke *pathos* (*Argo*. 5.41). In the *Argonautica*, Jason looks landward from the sea and sees two pyres burning the bodies of his young comrades. He mourns them with, "either a day of doom carries off (*rapit atra dies*) my friends or driven on by guilty Furies I myself abandon (*relinquo*) them."²⁵⁴ Idmon and Tiphys died suddenly from a disease. The Argonauts have lost two young men prematurely and from a bitter fate. In borrowing the diction *atra dies* from Vergil, Valerius Flaccus continues to create a work which builds upon predecessors in his literary tradition. He reminds his readers of Vergil's image of the youths locked in limbo forever. The death of the young Argonauts is a cause for mourning. Jason's speech, a eulogy itself, questions whether it is a day of doom which has taken his friends, or bitter Furies that have removed him from them. While the *Argonautica* might not be considered part of the consolation literary genre, the scene still contains consolatory elements. Both Valerius Flaccus and Propertius borrow Vergil's verse to indicate victims of untimely deaths in their fictional eulogies. Like the works of Cicero, Jerome, and Plutarch, the texts above elicit empathy and mourning from their readers in the acknowledgement of bitterness due to these young deaths.

²⁵⁴ Valerius Flaccus, *Argonautica*, 5.41-42.

Along with literary texts, funerary epitaphs also employ the expression *mersit acerba dies* as a popular way to designate the deceased's identity as a victim of untimely death. John William Zarker conducted a study of over 2450 verse epitaphs to find that at least eighty-one employ versions of *mersit acerba dies* to announce the unfortunate status of the one buried beneath.²⁵⁵ Some of the more popular variations of the expression are *funus acerbum*, *dies acerba*, *mors acerba*, and *fatum acerbum*.²⁵⁶ The phrase's popularity in verse epitaphs removes it from the context of Vergil's story and turns it into a formulaic phrase. Zarker expresses the possible reason for the popularity of the expression in epitaphic verse: "the greatness of Vergil and the authority of *Aeneid* 6, continued inscriptional and religious conservatism, and the desire of persons to find solace in a commonplace describing a commonly occurring but deeply personal experience."²⁵⁷ The full Vergilian line (*abstulit atra dies et funere mersit acerbo*, 6.429 and 11.28) appears verbatim in *CLE* 682, 732, 813, 2002, 2001, and 608. Many other epitaphs such as those of Simplicia (2), Arcontia (5) and Theodote (7) employ variations of the expression to indicate the deceased's status and urge empathy from the reader. Of the eighty-one instances analyzed by Zarker, forty-seven give a definitive age for the deceased. While the forty-seven have an age range from thirty days to forty-five years,²⁵⁸ the majority of epitaphs record ages from childhood to mid-twenties. Of the forty-seven inscriptions, fifty-two persons have their ages listed. Of those fifty-two, thirty-five of the uses venerate people ages 0-19, while only five are above thirty.²⁵⁹ Age does seem to be

²⁵⁵ Zarker, "A Vergilian Verse," 113.

²⁵⁶ Zarker, "A Vergilian Verse," 112.

²⁵⁷ Zarker, "A Vergilian Verse," 114.

²⁵⁸ Zarker, "A Vergilian Verse," 113.

²⁵⁹ While in his main article, Zarker states that the ages range from thirty days to forty-five years, his appendix reveals the breakdown of data which implies that forty-five is an outlier of the collection. He states, "The analysis of the inscription by ages is as follows: up to 9 years, 17; 10-19 years, 18; 20-29 years,

one of the defining factors in the use of *mersit acerba dies* in epitaphs and while the use of the expression is not strictly bound to the young it is more frequent for those who died in or before their twenties. The authors of verse epitaphs have transformed Vergil's words into a formula in epitaphic verse usually to signal victims of untimely deaths, or at least those who have died without fulfilling their potential. The expression allows the authors to focus on the feelings of sorrow and grief that comes with the death of a life cut short.

Unripe fruit: meam amice and other young girls

The author of the *meam amice* (11) epitaph employs the metaphor of *immatura poma* to signal the deceased as a woman who died young. The following collection of epitaphs discussed below form a cohesive group of young women, victims of untimely deaths described via *immatura poma*. Because they did not die at a ripe, old age, Cicero would believe that their deaths did not abide by the natural order of life; however, the venerators of these women attempted to grieve for them by stating that their deaths were also a normal part of nature. In viewing these women's deaths as a natural part of life, the venerators aim to lessen the pain of the bereaved's grief. Although the phrase *immatura poma* is not common among verse epitaphs, it does appear in several epitaphs dedicated specifically to young women. There are five examples of verse epitaphs along with *meam amice*'s epitaph, *CLE* 1490, *CIL* 7.567, *CLE* 1542, and *CLE* 465, which employ the formulaic expression in order to identify women as victims of untimely death.

12; and one each of 32, 36, 38, 40, and 45 years. This totals 52 citations since five of the 47 stating ages give two persons, *e.g.* brother and sister or mother and daughter." Zarker, "A Vergilian Verse," 115. I believe that a more detailed analysis of his findings would benefit the study of this formulaic expression.

The epitaph of *meam amice* (11) consoles her loved ones while also solidifying her identity as eternally young. The young woman of *meam amice* deserves such poetic veneration because of the tragedy of her short life. Because of the grief that her death must have brought, the woman of *meam amice* serves as poetic speaker in her own epitaph and gives comfort to her grieving friend. She tells her friend (lines 1-6),

Meam amice ne doleas sortem

moriendum fuit

sic sunt hominum fata

sicut in arbore **poma**

immatura cadunt

et matura leguntur

Friend, do not mourn my lot;

it was necessary that I die.

Thus the fates of humans

are like **fruits** on a tree:

the unripe fall

and the ripe ones are picked.

Although an age is not explicitly stated, the association to a life cut short is clear in her epitaph. As a poetic speaker, she asserts that her death is in accordance with the only two possible ways to die, either young or mature. The above epitaph differs slightly from the sentiment of Cicero (*Sen.* 71), in which a youth's death runs counter to nature. The extreme difference in time of *meam amice*'s epitaph and Cicero's text demonstrates that the metaphor of unripe fruit for untimely death has remained throughout Latin literature, but with a slight change of association. Cicero's description of untimely death empathizes with the bereaved and reaffirms that it was an unnatural way for the young to die,

engaging the bereaved in their anger, perhaps, at the death of a young loved one. In the *meam amice* epitaph, however, the deceased states that her death was necessary, with *moriendum fuit*, as is the fate of all humans. There are only two ways to die, either when one is young (*poma immatura cadunt*), or when one is old (*matura leguntur*). She does not make judgments about whether one is more natural than the other. Her epitaph strives to lessen the misfortune of her death, embodying one *topos* of the consolatory genre. While the verses of the epitaph identify the woman of *meam amice* as a victim of untimely death, they also urge those mourning to reconsider her death as a lesser misfortune. Not all the uses of the formulaic expression *immatura poma* exercise such attempts to demonstrate the *topos* of lessening misfortune as *meam amice*. They do, however, still all connect the victims of untimely death with the natural world.

The formulaic expression of unripe fruit occurs in several epitaphs as a variant of the couplet *sic corpora nostra aut matura cadunt aut cito acerba ruunt*, which finds textual resonance from an obscure text the *Altercatio Hadriani Augusti et Epicteti Philosophi*. This late antique philosophical text questions the nature of man, and, like *meam amice*'s epitaph, states that untimely death is just one of the two possible options. In the question-and-answer dialogue of *Altercatio Hadriani Augusti et Epicteti Philosophi*, the expression appears as part of the question-and-answer form of inquiry 33:

Hadrian: Quid est homo?

Epictetes: Pomo similis: **Poma** ut in arboribus pendentia corpora nostra;
aut matura cadunt, aut cito acerba ruunt.

Hadrian: What is man?

Epictetes: (Man is) similar to fruit: fruits that are just like our bodies hanging

down in trees; either they fall down mature, or bitter, they rush down quickly.

Epictetes employs the simile of ripe and unripe fruit and death at old and young age.

Lloyd William Daly and Walther Suchier assert Epictetes' answer is "derived from what was at one time plainly an elegiac distich."²⁶⁰ The elegiac couplet they mention appears as an epitaph dating to the end of the second century at Aquae Sextiae, (*CIL* 12.533b.13-14):²⁶¹

[re?]s hominum sic sunt et **cit[rea] poma:**

[aut matur]a cadunt, aut [immatura] leguntur.

Such are the things of humans and citrus fruits:

either they fall down ripe or the unripe are plucked.

The couplet occurs on the second of three incised sides of a funerary marker. It appears within a lengthy conversational epitaph dedicated to nineteen-year-old Sextus Iulius Felicissimus by his foster-parents, Sextus Iulius Felix and Felicitas. Like *meam amice* and the *Altercatio Hadriani*, the pain of Sextus' death is lessened by the poet's words. His death is just one of the options of death for humans. The focus in the epitaphs of not just *meam amice* and Sextus, but of the other women presented here, lies on identifying these people as victims of untimely deaths. The following three victims of untimely deaths are still venerated and identified in a formulaic and proper way, but the formulae also naturally fit the consolatory genre's *topos* of lessening perceived misfortune.

²⁶⁰ Lloyd William Daly and Walther Suchier, *Altercatio Hadrianai Augusti et Epicteti Philosophi*, (Urbana: The University of Illinois Press, 1939), 88.

²⁶¹ Daly and Suchier, *Altercatio Hadrianai*, 74.

An epitaph for Domatius Tiras' daughter (*CLE* 1490 = *CIL* 6.7574) comes from Rome in the second century CE and employs the formulaic expression similar to *meam amice's* (11) *immatura poma*.

[- - -]RA[- - -]IA is quo modo

mala in arbore pendunt,

sic corpora nostra

aut matura cadunt aut

cito acerva ruunt.

Domatius Tira

filiae dulcissimae.

in which way

apples hang (down) in a tree

so too do our bodies;

either they fall down mature or

bitter rush down quickly.

Domatius Tiras (sets this up)

for his sweetest daughter.

Here the fruits (*poma*) have been replaced with apples (*mala*). Domatius Tiras' use of *cito* reveals the suddenness of her death, like an unripe (*acerba* rather than *immatura*) fruit falls from a tree. The adjective *acerba* (bitter) often appears in both formulaic expressions of untimely death (*immatura poma* and *mersit acerba dies*), as it serves to either describe the immaturity of a fruit not ready to fall, or the pain of the death of a

young person; however, the use of *acerba* in the formulaic metaphor of unripe fruit also recalls an association to young, unmarried women. When *immatura* is not used to indicate immature fruit, it is often replaced with *acerba* (for example, see *CIL* 7.567 and *CLE* 1542 discussed below). The first listing of its definition in Lewis and Short even states that it indicates ‘unripe’ when associated with fruit, as with Lucretius 2.472 and Cicero *Sen.* 53.²⁶² In being ‘unripe’ or ‘bitter,’ a fruit has therefore not reached its maturity. Linguistic use of the adjective follows this logic, as Lewis and Short state that “since the harshness of fruit is always a sign of immaturity, so Varro, Cicero, Pliny, et al. use *acerbus* as a syn[onym] for *crudus*, *immaturus*, *unripe*, *crude*.”²⁶³ The idiom *virgo acerba* also comes from a similar line of reasoning. The idiom states that a woman is not yet marriageable (Varro ap. Non. 247,15),²⁶⁴ as opposed to a *virgo matura*, or that she is premature (as in Ovid, *Fast.* 4.647).²⁶⁵ The employment of *acerba* rather than *immatura* in the metaphor of unripe fruit, while it still elicits a seasonal association, also asserts a particular linguistic association to female victims of untimely deaths, rather than male ones. Domatius Tiras’s daughter is venerated as an untimely death case, and Domatius himself is to be comforted by the proposition that her death was a natural one.

The formulaic phrase of unripe fruit signals to the reader that the one venerated was identified as a victim of untimely death, typically a female victim. The following two verse epitaphs demonstrate how the couplet of *meam amice*’s epitaph lessens the pain

²⁶² Lucretius 2.472: unde est Neptuni corpus acerbum; Cicero *Sen.* 53: a qua oriens uva se ostendit, quae et cuo terrae et calore solis augescens primo est peracerba gustatu.

²⁶³ Lewis and Short, 21. They list Ovid *Am.* 2, 14, Cicero *Prov. Cons.* 14 as some examples of this.

²⁶⁴ Another citation, “Var. *Men.* Fr. 11 Astbury (*apud* Non. 372I = 247M): ... *virgo de convivio abducatur ideo quod maiores nostril virginis acerbae auris veneriis vocabulis inbui noluerunt*” found in Matthew B. Roller, *Dining Posture in Ancient Rome: Bodies, Values, and Status*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 160.

²⁶⁵ Lewis and Short, 21: et pecus ante diem partus edebat acerbos

that these women's loved ones must be experiencing. An epitaph from second-century Spain is dedicated to a nineteen-year-old girl (*CIL* 7.567):

[D(is) M(anibus)] s(acrum)
 [- - -] an(norum) XVIII
 [- - - h(ic)] s(ita?) e(st) s(it) t(ibi) t(erra) l(evis).
 [doleas tu qu]i stas et releges titu-
 [lum monu]menti mei qu(a)e XVIII anno
 [iam finito] dulcissimae matris meae
 [gaudium e]xcidi animo. et noli do-
 [lere mate]r: (?) **moriendum fuit sic**
[ut sunt pom]a sic et corpora nostra
[aut matu]ra cadunt aut nimis
[acerba r]uunt.

to the sacred souls of the dead

(she lived) nineteen years

(She) rests here, may the earth rest lightly on you.

Let you grieve who stand and read the words of my monument

I who, having now finished eighteen years,

removed joy from the heart of my sweetest mother

and don't grieve, mother! I had to die

just as fruit is, so too are our bodies

(which) either mature, fall down or

too bitter, rush down.

Not only does the epitaph commemorating the young girl demonstrate the conversational trope, but it also uses the image of bitter fruit to reinforce her identity as a victim of untimely death. In doing so, its poetic formula indicates a cry for the comfort of the bereaved. In *CLE* 1542=*CIL* 11.7024 from Luca, a six-year-old girl, Nymphes, talks with her parents (lines 7-12):

Nolite no[s dolere, paren]tes, **moriendum fui[t]**,

Pro[pe]ra[vi]t aeta[s], Fatus hoc voluit meus.

Sic quomodo mala in arbore pendunt, si(c) corpora nostra:

Aut matura cadunt aut cit(o) acerba [r]uunt.

Te, lapis, optestor, leviter super ossa [re]sidas,

Ni tenerae aetati tu velis esse gravis.

Don't grieve for us, parents, I had to die,

my lifetime went quickly, my Fate determined this.

Just as apples fall from a tree, so too do our bodies:

either ripe, they fall, or unripe they rush down quickly.

Let me bear witness, that you, stone, cover my bones lightly,

and do not wish to be heavy to a tender aged girl.

Like other poems in the section above, the epitaph also is a conversational one. The author does not indicate her exact age at death, but says she died “a tender aged girl.” It falls into several poetic categories, indicating the author’s deliberate and purposeful use of the idea behind the *immatura poma* image.

There is one prose epitaph which uses the phrase *immatura poma*, dedicated to a woman called Adtica (Attica) Lea (*ICI* 12.57 = *AE* 1982, 409) from the late fourth century CE near Milan. This prose epitaph uses the formulaic phrase in a way that both harkens to its use in the poetic epitaphs presented above, but also subverts the meanings.

Adtice Leae, que ante tenpus sicut
 arbor deruit, **immatura poma**
 reliquid, quorum [n]ec eloquentia<m>
 potuit cognosc[e]re: sic **subito**
 nature redit [de]bitum

To Adtica Lea, who before her time was just like
 a tree falling down, **an unripe fruit**
 left behind, of which things she has not been able to know eloquence: So suddenly
 she returned her debt to nature;

In the epitaph, Adtica Lea is like a tree that has fallen. The author chose the poetry-based phrase of *immatura poma* even within a prose epitaph. Adtica Lea is in fact not the one who is immature poma, but her children whom she leaves behind. Through the employment of the phrase, her commemorator links her young, now motherless children, and Adtica Lea's own unfulfilled purpose as a mother to the poetic image of sudden and sorrowful death.

The *immatura poma* metaphor imbues the epitaphs with the sentiment that an untimely death is just one of the two ways that someone can die. *Meam amice*'s epitaph and these others demonstrate not just the continuation of a metaphor of un-readiness or

untimely death, but perhaps also a change in opinion of the nature of mourning untimely death in Christianity. In order to comfort the bereaved, these poems do not sympathize with the anger at the reversal of nature. Instead, they state that there are truly only two ways to die, either from a ripe old age, or prematurely. The expression comforts those left behind because it tells them not to mourn what nature and, for early Christians, God has proscribed.

The harsh days of Simplicia, Arcontia, and Theodote

The epitaphs of Simplicia (2), Arcontia (5), and Theodote (7) illuminate another form of consolation in epitaphs via their use of the formulaic *mersit acerba dies*. Simplicia's (2) epitaph, along with its various other poetic characteristics, contains within it the Vergilian reference. In line four, the phrase *mersit acerba dies* references the images of the *Aeneid*'s untimely deaths (lines 3-4):

nam quater haec decies minus uno consule vix(it)
quam **festin(a) nimis mersit acerba dies**

She lived for one consul less than fourteen,
she whom **a bitter day submerged too hastily.**

The author employs the words *festina nimis* (too hastily) to focus on the suddenness of her death, making it seem all the more tragic. As an unmarried daughter, Simplicia lived for only thirteen years (*nam quater haec decies minus uno consule vixit*). Although she was young, she would have been of marriageable age. She chose to remain unwed and to pursue a chaste life (lines 1-2):

asperna(ta) procos subolem neglexit habere
 subiecit pedibus corporis insidias

Having spurned her suitors, she refused to have children,
 and she trampled underfoot threats of her body.

Her potential to continue to serve God in life as a virtuous virgin is cut short, like the potential of Pallas in Vergil's text (*Aen.* 11.28). The poet emphasizes the tragedy of her death as her potential was cut short through the formulaic phrase.

The parents of Arcontia (5) and her brother, Remus, honor their memory via the same reference to Vergil's line on untimely death. The poet venerates both siblings as victims of untimely death with (lines 1-2):

Haec tenet urna duos sexu sed dispare fratres
 quos uno Lachesis **mersit acerba die**

This urn holds two siblings but different in sex,
 they whom bitter Lachesis **plunged down in one day.**

These siblings have been taken down by Lachesis, who was the second of the three mythological fates. It was the role of Lachesis to determine the length (of the thread) of someone's life. Remus and Arcontia were not given a long thread, as he lived for eighteen years and she lived only fifteen.²⁶⁶ The author ties together the echo to Vergil and the appearance of Lachesis to link the poem to Roman tradition and to link the siblings to an image of a pitiable death.

²⁶⁶ *PLRE* 2, 135 and 939.

In Theodote's epitaph (7), her 'harsh day' of death, as to be expected from the phrase used in the epitaphs of Simplicia and Acrontia, is turned into a 'short day.' With the use of *arta* instead of *atra* or *acerba*, the author of Theodote's epitaph highlights the brevity of her life, rather than the bitterness of her death (lines 1-2 and 3-4):

Virginis hic tenerae lector miserere sepulcro
 unius huic lustris uix **fuit arta die** ...
 addamus meritis lacrimas tam mortis aceruae
 nam quae grata forent sunt modo flenda diu

Here, reader, have compassion for the grave of a young girl;

Hers was a brief life of barely five years. ...

Let us add to her merits tears **for so bitter a death,**

for the merits that would have been pleasing now must be
 lamented for a long time.

The adjective *acerba*, which is found in so many other uses of the formulaic expression, still finds a place in her epitaph (line 5) and continues the connection to Vergil. As a conversational epitaph, the poem reaches out to the reader and seeks for their compassion. The poet's use of the Vergilian echo reminds the reader of the scenes in Vergil and places Theodote among the infants in limbo and the sorrowful death of Pallas. Due to the vast usage of the formulaic *mersit acerba dies*, a method by which to describe victims of untimely death develops, both expressions, *immatura poma* and *mersit acerba dies*, focuses on the bitterness of sudden death. As Simplicia's and Arcontia's epitaphs have shown, Vergil's line can be used to demonstrate the suddenness and the darkness of

an untimely death victim. Theodote's epitaph focuses on the shortness of her life and poses a way in which her parents might find some solace at her loss.

Ashes to Ashes: The Body on Earth After Death

Like the consolation literature of such authors as Cicero, Jerome, and Plutarch, epitaphs support specific philosophical and theological beliefs about the soul and the body after death. The role of the body after death is not typically discussed as fully as the soul, however, the question of what happens to the body is not an unimportant or ignored issue. For example, Iuliana's epitaph, discussed below, expresses a popular opinion about the body's connection to the earth after death. While the actual beliefs of the author of Iuliana's epitaph cannot be known, he or she employs phrases which suggest a knowledge of ideas (dogmatic or personal) of the body's role after death. The belief in the soul's immortality gave hope to the living that a pleasing afterlife awaited them after their toil, but the body on earth comforted the living through an extended connection after death. In consolation literature, like Jerome's *ep.* 60, a description of the deceased when they were alive connects the bereaved to their deceased loved ones through active remembrance. Other consolation literature aims to describe an almost physical connection to the grieving party with that of the body or tomb of the deceased. The physical connection is best exemplified during late antiquity through the development of martyr cults, martyria, and the use of relics. While inscribed funerary epitaphs are not the physical body of the deceased, they do often occupy the same space. The tomb or stone often makes an appearance in the poetic verses and is part of the link to those physically present at the tomb, the living and the dead together. By imagining a physical closeness

and recalling the physical presence of the dead, the bereaved may be consoled through memory of, and deepened connection to, their deceased loved ones.

The bodily traces of Iuliana's soul

Iuliana's epitaph (4) makes the unusual claim that her immortal soul imbued her limbs with virtue, a popular opinion which explains how memorials and physical remains gain power (*virtus*) from the souls that they housed in life.²⁶⁷ The first several lines of Iuliana's epitaph link her earthly grave to the spiritual realm through the power her soul had on her physical body. The idea that the soul imbues the body with its virtues in life does not seem to originate in the dogmatic texts of contemporary Christian intellectuals, but rather from popular opinion. Yvette Duval's analysis of *ad sanctos* burials and the texts surrounding them argues that the *l'opinion populaire* (that the dead body keeps traces of the soul) determined the modes of the funerary practice of early Christian communities.²⁶⁸ The virtues of Iuliana's soul (during life) infused her physical body with some of the same power after death (*virtus*), and her parents therefore erected a verse epitaph venerating her virtues, keeping her beautified corpse safe. Although her epitaph recalls a similar occurrence as that of the power that martyr's bodies contain, her epitaph

²⁶⁷ "Ils ont été physiquement, matériellement *modelés* durant la vie par l'esprit qui les animait et dont ils gardent l'empreinte (*vestigia*).” Yvette Duval, *Auprès des saints corps et âme: l'inhumation "ad sanctos" dans la chrétienté d'Orient et d'Occident du IIIe au VIIe siècle* (Paris: Études augustinienes, 1988), 217.

²⁶⁸ "L'opinion populaire" croit que le corps mort garde traces d'âme. Et c'est cette croyance, informulée mais certaine, qui détermine les formes, les modes, et surtout les excès de ces sépultures près des saints, de cette pratique funéraire qui a dominé la vie des communautés chrétiennes." Duval, *Auprès des saints corps et âme*, 203.

differs in its expression of such an event.²⁶⁹ The author of Iuliana's epitaph explains the occurrence with (lines 1-4):

qui studium tumulis rimati funera fertis
 istic nosse prius **busta uerenda** sat est
 linquunt namque **suis animae uestigia membris**
 et **miscent meritum corpora mensque suum**

You who are searching out burials and carrying a desire for monuments,
 it is enough to know first that there are **venerated tombs** here
 for **souls leave behind traces in their limbs**
and bodies and minds intermingle their merit.

The author states that the immortal soul can leave traces of itself (*linquunt . . . animae vestigia*) in the body (*membris*)²⁷⁰ and therefore also in the venerated tombs (*busta uerenda*). Due to the mixing (*miscent*) of the body and mind together, a person's virtue (*meritum*) allows the body to "remain 'impressed' with the soul."²⁷¹ It is through the soul leaving behind aspects of itself that the body has power and the tomb becomes a place of veneration. While Iuliana's soul has risen to heaven, her body (*membra*), infused with the traces of her virtuous soul, "guard[s] the bodies of the faithful" just as the relics and tombs of the martyrs do.²⁷²

²⁶⁹ Duval observes that Iuliana's epitaph is the clearest expression of the idea that a soul gives power to a corpse, and that this form comes from a mixing of the body and soul together (in life). Duval, *Auprès des saints corps et âme*, 219.

²⁷⁰ *Membris* here is understood to stand in for the body, not just her limbs, as in the classical formula *membra tenet tumulus*. Duval, *Auprès des saints corps et âme*, 219.

²⁷¹ "C'est donc bien après qu'elle l'ait quitté, après la mort, que le corps resterait 'imprimé' d'âme, 'informé' par elle (aux deux sens du mot)." Duval, *Auprès des saints corps et âme*, 220.

²⁷² "Ces traces de leur ame que gardent les corps des fideles." Duval, *Auprès des saints corps et âme*, 219.

Not only were the burial sites of saints popular pilgrimage destinations during late antiquity, they were also desirable burial locations for other Christians. These *ad sanctos* sites were made more enticing to wealthy early Christians by inscribed *elogia* such as those of Damasus, and the rise in popularity of saints' relics and pilgrimage treks.²⁷³ Some believed that being buried literally among the holy ones (the saints) would grant them a deeper connection to the sacred afterlife and perhaps Christ himself. Alison Cooley describes this phenomenon with: "as well as venerating the martyrs themselves, the new custom arose of burial near the tombs of martyrs (*ad sanctos*), since it was popularly believed that proximity to a martyr's remains would facilitate communication with the martyr, who might then intercede on someone's behalf in the afterlife."²⁷⁴ People believed that the tombs and relics of saints contained *virtus* and that, if by praying at these physical places, the saints might intercede for them.²⁷⁵ Duval states that in the *l'opinion populaire* corpses were believed to have been modeled after the state of the person's soul: a virtuous soul beautified the corpse or even made it sweet-smelling, whereas a sinning soul befouled the body and gave it a stinking odor.²⁷⁶ Relics, like tombs, were imbued with the sanctity and *virtus* of the martyrs which could be seen physically with beautification, incorruptibility, or sweet odors; both relics and tombs, as

²⁷³ "[T]he right to be buried in a particular place took on an especial importance with the rise of the cult of the martyrs towards the end of the fourth century, notably as Pope Damasus promoted the importance of martyr cults at Rome from 366, seeking out the bodies of martyrs, and then commissioning hagiographic verse epigrams to be elegantly engraved by Furius Dionysius Filocalus in their honour, which were set up next to these relics." Alison Cooley, *The Cambridge Manual of Roman Epigraphy*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 236.

²⁷⁴ Cooley, *The Cambridge Manual of Roman Epigraphy*, 236.

²⁷⁵ Duval, *Auprès des saints corps et âme*, 221.

²⁷⁶ The modeling of the body by the soul can also be seen in some hagiographies. Duval presents Hilaire d'Arles' description of St. Honoratus to support the opinion of modeling of the body by the soul. Hilaire d'Arles writes that, "Ayant toujours vécu de la vie de l'esprit, son corps une fois mort demeure plein de grâce; car son visage que tous avaient plaisir à contempler conservait intacte la beauté de ses traits." *Vita Honorati*, SC. 235, ed. M.D. Valentin (1977), 162-3, cited in Duval, *Auprès des saints corps et âme*, 218.

having a physical connection to the holy, were sought out as conductors of prayer and intercession. Early Christians believed that, if their prayers to the martyrs at their burial sites, the saints could hear them in heaven and intercede for them directly at Christ's right hand. Augustine attempted to dispel the belief in sacred power at the burial site, writing the text *De cura pro mortuis gerenda* in response to Bishop Paulinus of Nola (18.22).²⁷⁷ Augustine argued that it did not matter where one was buried, and that the only benefit of an *ad sanctos* burial would perhaps be to encourage more prayer.²⁷⁸ Despite Augustine's attempts, people still clamored to be buried near these holy saints, even paying for the right. Eventually, c.500 CE in Rome, people were granted an *ad sanctos* burial spot in return for ecclesiastical service.²⁷⁹ Damasus, other bishops, and the Roman laws themselves condemned the maltreatment of the graves, supporting the claim that the location of the body after death deserved respect.²⁸⁰ While grave robbing had been illegal in Roman law, the laws against disturbing a grave in late antiquity considered an attack on a grave to be an attack on the person buried there, not just upon their property or goods.²⁸¹ While the soul does not remain in the tomb, the body imbued with its soul's *virtus* does and is therefore worthy of veneration and respect.

Iuliana's epitaph claims that her virtue as a consecrated virgin in life provides her body the *virtus* required for intricate veneration. Her venerators seem to believe that her

²⁷⁷ The popular opinion that Augustine rallies against was also considered (by him) to oppose the teachings of the Scriptures. Duval, *Auprès des saints corps et âme*, 212.

²⁷⁸ Cooley, *The Cambridge Manual of Roman Epigraphy*, 238.

²⁷⁹ Cooley, *The Cambridge Manual of Roman Epigraphy*, 238.

²⁸⁰ Duval, *Auprès des saints corps et âme*, 212. Novel 23 of Valentinian III (March 13, 447) presents both Christian religious and Roman legal reasons for the severity of the punishments owed to tomb violators. Rebillard concludes that the need for such laws indicates that the clergy were disturbing tombs and cadavers of the martyrs to obtain relics. This supports the argument that people had the belief in the power of the physical relics of saints. For information on more specific laws, see Rebillard, *The Care of the Dead in Late Antiquity*, 66.

²⁸¹ Duval, *Auprès des saints corps et âme*, 212.

tomb is an *ad sanctos* burial itself, without her having been named a saint. Her virtues in life are what allow her body to contain any sort of radiant power, as the power is not the body itself, but in residual traces of her soul. While line three indicates that traces of her soul left an impression on her limbs now located in her tomb, the rest of her epitaph expands upon her virtues and her soul's future ascent to the heavenly kingdom (lines 5-10):

hic iacet a teneris **Christo** quae **creuerat** annis

cui fuit in mundo nescia uita mori

hanc dum corporei premeret uicinia leti

sponsa diu nubit per sacra uela deo

qua rear **in Christi dextram** te carius ire

cui fas post thalamos non sit abesse deo

Here lies one who, from her tender years, **grew up in Christ,**

for whom on earth there was a life that knew not how to die.

While the semblance of corporeal death was pressing upon her,

betrothed for some time, she wed God through the sacred veil,

by means of which let me believe that you dearly will proceed **into the right hand of Christ,**

you for whom it may not be permitted to be absent from God after marriage.

Her parents wish to believe that Iuliana will go to the right hand of Christ, due to the merits she achieved in her short life. Having grown up in Christ (*Christo...creuerat*), Iuliana became a consecrated virgin by her own choice. According to the laws of the

Theodosian code, Iuliana's "parents could not even consecrate a daughter to lifelong virginity before she reached the age of reason, so that she might preserve fully her ability to consent to marriage."²⁸² The phrase *nubit per sacra vela deo* implies that Iuliana committed herself to God as a consecrated virgin. The sacred veil and the verb *nubit* stand as references to the consecration ceremony since the ritual of virginal consecration in the fourth century "took the form of a *velatio* or bestowal of a veil on the consecrated virgin in a ceremony modeled after a Roman betrothal."²⁸³ In the ceremony, a young woman dedicated herself to virginity through a marriage to Christ. Because of her lifestyle choice, Iuliana has gained merits that her commemorators believe are enough to send her to heaven. As a bride of Christ, Iuliana is signaled out in the Christian community. Some church fathers considered the status of a virgin "superior to the ordinary lay person."²⁸⁴ Her choice to become a consecrated virgin denotes her soul's virtue.

The last couplet of Iuliana's epitaph apparently mentions the origins of her soul, perhaps asserting belief in the soul's preexistence to the body. The final couplet appears as such (lines 11-12):

hic nunc circumdat tumulus sua membra parentum

ut reddat fructum corpus originibus

²⁸² Mathew Kuefler, "The Marriage Revolution in Late Antiquity: The Theodosian Code and Later Roman Marriage Law," *Journal of Family History* 32.4 (2007), 350.

²⁸³ David Hunter, "Sacred Space, Virginal Consecration and Symbolic Power: A Liturgical Innovation and Its Implications in Late Ancient Christianity," in *Spaces in Late Antiquity: Cultural, Theological and Archaeological Perspectives* edited by Juliette Day, Raimo Hakola, Maijastina Kahlos and Ulla Tervahauta (London and New York: Routledge Publishing, 2016), 90. Hunter also translates a section of Ambrose's *Exhortatio virginitatis* (c. 393) which states that "consecrated virgins are receiving the veil" Hunter, "Sacred Space," 91. This further supports the claim that the way Iuliana is described as marrying Christ with the sacred veil is a typical way in which consecrated virgins were denoted.

²⁸⁴ Hunter, "Sacred Space, Virginal Consecration and Symbolic Power," 104.

Now this tomb of your parents surrounds your limbs,

so that **your body might return fruit for its origins.**

According to Duval, the final couplet states that Iuliana's body (*corpus*) now has the power to intercede for her parents.²⁸⁵ The idea of her power of intercession on behalf of her parents seems to correspond to Ambrose's own belief on the power of virgins: "You have heard, o parents, in what virtues you ought to raise and with what discipline you ought to instruct your daughters, so that you may have ones by whose merits your own sins may be forgiven. A virgin is a gift of God, a protection for her family, a priesthood of chastity."²⁸⁶ Duval believes that due to her status as a consecrated virgin, Iuliana's sanctified body is available to her parents as a direct line to Christ. The language of the couplet, however, suggests that her soul has returned not to help her parents, but to its origins (*originibus*) in heaven. Duval's analysis only works if *originibus* is translated as "for her parents." Instead, the combination of *reddat* and *originibus* may assert that the writer of Iuliana's epitaph believed in the existence of the soul prior to the creation of the body. One concept debated among late antique theologians was the perishability axiom, a hold-over from Plato and Aristotle, stating that, "whatever comes into existence in time must also perish in time."²⁸⁷ Since a human soul does not perish, it must not have been created in time, but before time. A fourth-century theologian, Basil of Caesarea

²⁸⁵ "Mais ce qui est ici remarquable, c'est que les v. 11 et 12 évoquent non les prières que la fille pourrait adresser à Dieu en faveur de ses parents, mais bien le pouvoir de son corps (*sua membra*, v. 11, *corpus* v. 12) agissant sur la tombe (*tumulus*) qui renferme la chair des parents." Duval, *Auprès des saints corps et âme*, 221.

²⁸⁶ Ambrose, *Virg.* 1.7.32. Translation by Boniface Ramsey, *Ambrose*, (London: Routledge, 1997), 82.

²⁸⁷ Dirk Krausmüller, "Faith and Reason in Late Antiquity: The Perishability Axiom and its impact on Christian Views about the Origin and Nature of the Soul," in *The Afterlife of the Platonic Soul: Reflections of Platonic Psychology in the Monotheistic Religions*, edited by Maha El-Kaisy and John Dillon (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 47.

developed a Christian cosmology in his *Homilies on the Hexameron* which restated the perishability axiom by concluding that the material world is perishable and the immaterial is not.²⁸⁸ Basil does not discuss the souls of human beings in his treatise, Dirk Krausmüller however explains that some readers of Basil understood that “since Basil creates a close link between creation in time and materiality ... souls must also have been created before the visible world and this must have pre-existed the coming-to-be of their bodies.”²⁸⁹ The belief that “the immaterial souls must pre-exist their bodies and must have come into being before the creation of the visible world” is stated directly by another theologian, Nemesius, the bishop of Emesa, in his fourth-century treatise *De natura hominis*.²⁹⁰ With these treatises in mind, the phrasing of Iuliana’s epitaph might begin to make sense. Iuliana’s immortal soul does not just travel to the right hand of Christ (*in Christi dextram te carius ire*) but is in fact returned (*reddat*) to heaven and the realm of immateriality. Prudentius writes one theological idea of the soul’s life after death as returning to the heavens: *Ac primum facili referuntur ad astra volatu/ unde fluens anima structum vegetaverat Adam* (And first they pass again with easy flight to the heavens from whence flowed the soul that quickened Adam when he was created: *Hamartigenia* 845-6). Prudentius’ verse indicates that there might have been belief in the soul’s returning to its origin, heaven and therefore God, afterdeath.²⁹¹ While other theologians of the time did not agree with the soul’s preexistence to the body (Cyril of

²⁸⁸ “What has begun in time must indeed also come to an end in time” (τὰ ἀπὸ χρόνου ἀρξάμενα πάντα ἀνάγκη καὶ ἐν χρόνῳ συντελεσθῆναι), Basil of Caesarea, *Homiliae in Hexaemeron*, 1.3, text and translation from Krausmüller, “Faith and Reason in Late Antiquity,” 48.

²⁸⁹ Krausmüller, “Faith and Reason in Late Antiquity,” 48.

²⁹⁰ Krausmüller, “Faith and Reason in Late Antiquity,” 50.

²⁹¹ For more discussion see Chapter 4, section “Starry-eyed poetry: Vergil, Damasus, and Prudentius.”

Alexandria, Gregory of Nyssa, and Eunomius, bishop of Cyzicus, to name a few),²⁹² it is possible that the writer of Iuliana's epitaph believed that her soul was returning to a place where it once belonged.

Although Iuliana was not a saint herself, her epitaph implies that her body contains the *virtus* (from the traces of her soul) necessary to return to heaven and perhaps contained similarities with the *ad sanctos* burials. Her epitaph purports that her body remains imbued with traces of her soul at the location of her burial, while her soul has ascended to heaven. Readers of her epitaph may be consoled in imagining Iuliana enjoying the rewards of the Christian afterlife and hoping for the same fate for themselves. They can have hope that their limbs may also be marked by the *virtus* their soul can leave if they are virtuous in life. In returning to Iuliana's tomb, a physical place on earth, her loved ones can stay connected to her both in her physical proximity and in remembering her. By visiting and praying at her tomb, they can alleviate the pain of their grief while at the same time hoping to achieve the same virtuous existence that she has already attained in heaven. While Iuliana's epitaph reveals a popular belief about the soul's lingering power on the body and the earthly realm, the next section discusses the soul's connection to the heavens. Both images provide comfort to the bereaved parties by reminding them of their loved one's virtuous deeds in life and imagine them enjoying the rewards eternal in heaven. Through memory of the deceased, the bereaved continued their connection to their loved ones after death and hoped for a reunion together in heaven.

²⁹² Krausmüller, "Faith and Reason in Late Antiquity," 48-52. This does not mean that these theologians do not believe in the soul's immortality, they do, it just means that they are inferring the human's souls immortality from different sources than the logic of Plato's and Aristotle's perishability axiom.

Ad Astra: The Soul in Heaven

To lessen the pain of misfortune, with one *topos* of consolation literature, writers of verse epitaphs gave hope to the bereaved by implying that their dead loved ones enjoyed a pleasant afterlife. Epitaph writers use celestial images to signal the pleasant rewards of an afterlife to comfort the bereaved. The image of the soul's ascension to a celestial realm allows the bereaved to envision their loved ones happy in death. The description of a starry heaven and the soul's eternal (and rewarded) afterlife finds roots in ancient traditions. For example, in his *Consolatio ad se*, Cicero found comfort in allotting his daughter a starry apotheosis. Roman poetry also contained images of apotheosis of heroes and emperors, and thus the poetic framework of epitaphs is a natural successor for the Roman Christian's ascent to heaven.²⁹³ The verse epitaphs of the early Christians (and of my collection) often employ the vision of rising to the stars as a metaphor for and description of a pleasant afterlife. Such celestial images evoke a sense of optimism because they describe a reward after death. Epitaphs of my collection imply that virtue during one's life is a primary reason for one's place among the stars after death.²⁹⁴ The epitaphs of my collection describe women who were not heroes or saints, but ordinary

²⁹³ Ovid's accounts of the apotheosis of Romulus (in *Met.* 14.805-28 and *Fasti* 2.481-512), for more information on these scenes, see Anne Gosling, "Sending up the Founder: Ovid and the Apotheosis of Romulus," *Acta Classica* 45, (2002): 51-69; Lucan's description of the apotheosis of Nero, *Bellum Civile* 1.45-63 (cum statione peracta/ astra petes serus), models a lot from Seneca's description of Hercules' apotheosis in *Hercules Oetaeus* (1645 volutus petentis astra, non ignes erat) for more description please see Lynette Thompson, "Lucan's Apotheosis of Nero," *Classical Philology* 59.3 (1964):147-153; The apotheosis is described in Manilius *Astronomica* 1.373-385 ("the rule of the sky awaits" him in 4.552) and in Ver. *Geo.* 1.24-42, among others, for more information see Paul Rehak, *Imperium and Cosmos: Augustus and the Northern Campus Martius*, edited by John G Younger, (Madison University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 70-71 and Katharina Volk, *Manilius and His Intellectual Background*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 169. In Horace *Carm.* 3.3.9, "Augustus is named as a future god among the heroes, the latter include Pollux, Hercules, and Romulus," see Hans-Christian Gunther (ed.), *Brill's Companion to Horace*, (Brill: Leiden and Boston, 2013), 366.

²⁹⁴ It is through virtue that man could reach the stars, as Vergil states, *Aen.* 9.641, *macte nova virtute, puer: sic itur ad astra.*

Christians; like the heroes and saints before them, these young women achieved a pleasant afterlife through their merits. The following section is divided into two main categories. The first describes examples of starry images in both classical and late antique poetics. In the second part, specific epitaphs of my collection describe how Christian women transport their souls to the stars. While the literary passages paint pictures of starry heaven, it is the verse epitaphs that truly exhibit how the image of a pleasant afterlife moves people to leave behind their pain and take up hope.

Starry-eyed poetry: Vergil, Damasus, and Prudentius

Images of the stars signal to the reader a pleasant afterlife because of the continuous use of such pictures throughout the Latin literary tradition. Through the transition from classical to late antique literature, celestial imagery in poetry serves as a “vivid measure of the gravitational pull still exercised by a starry realm once reserved for demi-gods and heroes but more recently made available to the martyrs and [the] ambitious faithful[.]”²⁹⁵ Celestial imagery is used as a description of the rewards of a pleasant afterlife beginning in classical ideology.²⁹⁶ While expressions of starry skies implies that a soul has achieved eternal rewards, they also are an indication of “the idea of separation of body and soul, which ... seems to represent a real strand of pagan thought worked into the Christian doctrine.”²⁹⁷ People are venerated based upon their merits, and it is by virtues displayed in life that poets claim the ascension of their dedicatees after death.²⁹⁸ Like a consolatory

²⁹⁵ Trout, *Fecit ad astra viam*, 18.

²⁹⁶ Richard Lattimore, *Themes in Greek and Latin Epitaphs*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1942), 312.

²⁹⁷ Lattimore, *Themes*, 312.

²⁹⁸ Lattimore suggests several examples here, CE 696, 6 (between Aquae Sextiae and Marseilles) which uses *ad Astra*; CE 691,6 (Narbo); CE 701,1-5 (near Milan, 523 CE); and CE 1345, 5-6 (Rome, 392 CE), among others.

text, images of the Christian heaven and souls dwelling happily in it comfort those left behind on earth and bring them hope for their own future life.

The classical Latin use of the phrase *ad astra* varies from appearances in Christian epitaphs. In late antique epitaphs, the idea of pursuing, seeking, and joining the stars represents the attainment of immortality or rewarded life after death. The metaphor of reaching the stars indicates heavenly ascension in classical literature, but that is not its primary use. Vergil's *Aeneid* does indicate the rewards of a pleasant afterlife with Apollo's identification of Ascanius (9.641): *macte nova virtute, puer: sic itur ad astra* (A blessing on [your] young valor, boy: so man [goes to] the stars!). Other appearances of *ad astra* in poetry, do not refer to immortality, but they often signify immense height, loud sounds, or wide-spread fame. For example, out of the nine instances of *ad astra* used in Silius Italicus' *Punica*, four of them indicate an immense height,²⁹⁹ one indicates loud noises,³⁰⁰ and three describe how high and far fame will go.³⁰¹ *Ad astra* is used in classical poetry to indicate rewards after death only in conjunction with the virtues people contained in life. Early Christian epitaphs reflect the same idea that only through merits in life can one attain immortality after death.

As the premier writer of martyrial *elogia*, Damasus provides authors with phrases by which to describe heaven and the methods to get there. Damasus describes heaven with *aeternam domum* (eternal kingdom) or *regna piorum* (kingdom of the pious). The travels that saints or martyrs take to get to heaven include the phrase *per astra* or variations of

²⁹⁹ The height of a pyre, Sil *Pun.* 2.599; the height of mountains Sil. *Pun.* 4.744; the height of a pile of armor Sil. *Pun.* 10.548; the height of the fires from a volcano Sil. *Pun.* 17.592.

³⁰⁰ Sil., *Punica*, 6.252.

³⁰¹ The Roman people's fame Sil. *Pun.* 3.163; Excellence (of Vespasian) Sil. *Pun.* 3.594; Discipline is the glory that raises Romans' fame Sil. *Pun.* 7.93.

the verb *peto* (to seek). Seeking the stars is an artistic way for Damasus to say that people are actively pursuing the merits by which to reach Christ's right hand. In his *elogium* for Felix and Adauctus (Trout 7), Damasus uses the same phrase as the author of Rhode's epitaph (see Sweet Rhode below). Of Felix, Damasus states *confessus christum caelestia regna petisti*.³⁰² The same three words (*caelestia regna petisti*) that end this line appear in Rhode's penultimate line. While the meter of the expression fits well as a line ending, the phrase also indicates a scene of eternal bliss. As Trout discusses in his commentary on the *elogium* to Felix and Adauctus, *peto* is the preferred verb for instances of seeking heavenly ascension.³⁰³ Damasus also employs the verb *peto* in his *elogium* of Peter and Paul (Trout 20)³⁰⁴ in the syncopated perfect form (*petiere*). Peter and Paul have "reached the heavenly asylum and the realms of the righteous" (*aetherios petiere sinus regnaque piorum*). Peter and Paul also engage on their own missionary journey, "beginning in the East (*Oriens*), leading through Rome, and concluding in the starry heavens" with *per astra*.³⁰⁵ The *elogia* of Felicissimus and Agapitus (25.5), Felix and Philippus (39.8) and the sixty-two martyrs (43.5) all contain similar expression as the *elogium* of Peter and Paul. The phrase appears with slight variations, such as the replacement of *sinus* with *domum*.³⁰⁶ All of the martyrs are described as seeking out an ethereal home in the stars. Soon after Damasus began to write such celestial scenes, "these forms of expression would leak from the tombs of martyrs to the epitaphs of contemporary Christians who

³⁰² CLE 671 – Ihm 7 = ICUR 2 (1935) 6016 = ILCV 1982 = ED 7.

³⁰³ Trout, *Damasus*, 94.

³⁰⁴ CLE 306 = Ihm 26 = ILCV 951 = ED 20 = ICUR 5 (1971) 13273.

³⁰⁵ Trout, *Invention of Early Christian Rome*, 523.

³⁰⁶ Felicissimus and Ageptus (Ihm 23 = ED 25 = ICUR 5 (1971) 13872); Felix and Phillipus (Ihm 91 (ll.1-5) and 47 (ll.6-10) = ILCV 1957 (ll.1-5) = ED 39 = ICUR 9 (1985) 24829); Sixty-two Martyrs (Ihm 43 = ED 43 = ICUR 9 (1985) 23753).

were prepared to relate their own merits and to imagine their own astral immortality.”³⁰⁷

Along with the epitaphs of Simplicia (2), Rhode (8), and Theodote (7), other verse epitaphs contain similar usages of *peto* and *astra* (*CLE* 306, 1378, 1392, 1425, 2078, 2193, 782, 1392, 1401). The belief that loved ones have achieved eternal life in the stars can provide comfort and lessen the pain of grief. The words employed by Damasus to signal the starry kingdoms imply the deceased’s heavenly ascension. In using similar phrases, the epitaph writers evoke the same images of a pleasant afterlife.

Prudentius, a poet contemporary with Damasus, employs language to evoke images of a celestial heaven when he discusses Christ and his followers. There are four instances of the phrase *ad astra* in Prudentius’ poetry, each indicating the heavenly realm of the soul’s afterlife. In his *Liber Cathemerinon* 3, Prudentius tells the story of man’s fall in the Garden of Eden and his consequent redemption at Christ’s hand. Because of Christ, other souls and bodies likewise rise from the grave – here described in mythological terms with ‘Phaelegethon’ – and reach the stars (3.191-205):

Viscera mortua quin etiam
post obitum reparare datur,
eque suis iterum tumulis
prisca renascitur effigies
pulvereo coeunte situ.

Credo equidem, neque vana fides,
corpora vivere more animae:
nam modo corporeum memini

³⁰⁷ Trout, 62.

de Phlegethonte gradu facili

ad superos remeasse Deum.

Spes eadem mea membra manet,

quae redolentia funereo

iussa quiescere sarcophago

dux parili redivivus humo

ignea Christus ad astra vocat.

Yea, it is even granted to restore the dead flesh after its decease, and once again from its tomb the old form is reborn, when the [moldering] dust comes together. I indeed believe (and my faith is not vain) that bodies live as does the soul; for now I [think] it was in bodily form that **God returned** from Phlegethoni **with easy step to heaven**. The same hope awaits my members, which, though they are bidden to rest scented with spices in the tomb of death, **Christ my leader, who rose from the like earth, calls to the glowing stars.**

Prudentius explains Christ's ascension as a return *ad astra*. The scene implies an idea of bodily resurrection after death, but not before the final judgement day. Prudentius' poem fortifies the image of stars being reachable or attainable for those who lived virtuously in life.

In Prudentius' hymn on the burial of the dead, *Liber Cathemerinon* 10, the phrase *ad astra* appears twice in reference to the soul's starry ascension. His use again reaffirms the vision of eternal rewards implied and presented in the celestial expression. Prudentius states that just as the body is received into the earth, so too is the soul received into the

upper air.³⁰⁸ In his discussion of death and how all things of God's creation must die, he makes several differing claims about the nature of the body and the soul. At first he states that the body must return to the earth and the soul to heaven; later, he attests at 10.29-32 that, "should the fire, remembering its origin, reject the numbing contagion, it carries with it the flesh with which it has sojourned, and it takes it, too, home to the stars (*reportat ad astra*)."³⁰⁹ The stars make up the ethereal plane in which souls reside, but from which the bodies are locked out until the final judgement day. Prudentius discusses the body's desire to be with the soul and that they will eventually be reunited again, in the starry heavens. The theological idea that bodies do not ascend until judgement day differs from the idea on many epitaphs which state that the deceased's soul already dwells in the stars. Since the purpose of epitaphs is to comfort, the idea that the dead do not need to wait for the end time to dwell in a pleasant afterlife brings hope to the living. Prudentius' work describes heaven as a theological idea in a poetic way, whereas the epitaphs aim to describe heaven to comfort the living.

In his poem *Hamartigenia*, Prudentius again explains the theological ideas of the pathway of souls and the different afterlives that one could have. He states that those which are pure fly easily to the stars, with 845-6: *Ac primum facili referuntur ad astra volatu/ unde fluens anima structum vegetaverat Adam* ("And first they pass again with easy flight to the heavens from whence flowed the soul that quickened Adam when he was created.") Every use of *ad astra* in Prudentius' verse signals the heavenly realm of a soul's afterlife in conjunction with a verb of motion. The verb of motion indicates that

³⁰⁸ Prudentius, *Liber Cathemerinon* 10.11-12 *humus excipit arida corpus;/ animae rapit aura liquorem.*

³⁰⁹ Prudentius, *Liber Cathemerinon* 10.29-32, *si generis memor ignis/ contagia pigra recuset, / vehit hospita viscera se cum / partierque reportat ad astra.*

change or action is needed in order to move to a new heavenly location. The soul must be called (*vocat*, *Cathemerinon* Hymn 3.205), taken (*reportat*, *Cathemerinon* Hymn 10.30), go (*itur*, *Cathemerinon* Hymn 10.90), or fly (*referunur...volatu*, *Hamartigenia* 845) to the stars. Some sort of action accompanies the soul's ascent, whether purely of its own accord, as the last two indicate, or as the result of a beckoning, as in the first two. The necessity of action is mirrored in the verse epitaphs of the time, with a verb of motion often describing the pursuit of rising to the heavens.

Epitaphs, especially early Christian poetic ones, employ celestial images with such words as *astra*, *caelestia regna*, or *regna/amoena piorum*, to reassure the living that their dead loved ones are enjoying the rewards of eternal life.³¹⁰ These different phrases serve as poetic depictions and describers for heaven and the afterlife promised by Christianity. Poets use such expressions to indicate afterlife and propose that the people they venerate actively seek, reach, and pursue the starry places. The following sections will discuss the epitaphs which indicate a *seeking* of the stars, such as in Simplicia's (2), Rhode's (8), and Theodote's (7) poems, and then the *reaching* or attainment of the places of the pious, such as in Evodia's (6) and Pontia's (12) epitaphs.

Seeking the stars: Simplicia, Rhode, and Theodote

Seeking and reaching the stars distinguishes five women of my collection as residents of heaven. The epitaph for Simplicia (2) blends a limited personal biography with heavenly aspirations. Fourteen-year-old Simplicia spurned her suitors, which implies her commitment to virginity. The poet focuses on her life choice as a virtue she maintained in

³¹⁰ Stars are mentioned in *CLE* 740, 769, 787, 904, 1347, 1363, 1378, 1407, 1412, 1425, 1434, 1445, 1732, 2097, and 2132.

life. Her spirit has returned to the stars because of the merits of her mind and body. The final couplet of her epitaph acclaims her spirit's ascension to the stars (lines 5-6):

mentis pro m[e]ritis **animam rebocauit ad astra**

Simpli[ci]ae tantum membr[a] tenet tumulu[s]

She has **recalled her spirit to the stars** through the merits of her mind,

this grave contains only the limbs of Simplicia.

Like ancient heroes and Christian saints, her soul is rewarded after death for her choices in life. Simplicia is recalled to the stars before the final judgement day with the verb *rebocauit* (recalled). Iuliana's epitaph suggests that her spirit may have originated in the stars and then was recalled to heaven at her death. Like Prudentius' vision of Christ in *Liber Cathemerinon* hymn 3, Simplicia returns to the stars via an active verb (*rebocauit*). Her poem also signals the importance of a good virtuous life to regain entry into the celestial kingdoms. In life, Simplicia required constant action to maintain her virtues in life, as indicated by the verbs of the first couplet. Prudentius' employed verbs of motion to indicate a sense of agency and movement towards the stars, and Simplicia's venerator similarly placed her as the active agent. The first couplet states that, "having spurned her suitors, she refused to have children, and she trampled underfoot threats of her body." Simplicia had the power to affect her soul's ascension after death. The epitaph works to comfort her family on two accounts. On the one hand, they know that Simplicia's soul enjoys the rewards of heaven with Christ amongst the stars. On the other hand, they are reassured that they can actively pursue those same heavenly rewards after death through

leading a virtuous life. They are perhaps uplifted by envisioning Simplicia as happy and by hoping that they will join her one day.

Rhode's epitaph (8), like the *elogia* of Damasus, describes a young woman going to the heavenly kingdoms because she actively sought them out through her chastity and innocence in life. Like Simplicia, Rhode reaches the stars before the last judgement because of her virtue. The final four lines of her epitaph solidify in the reader's minds a virtuous image of her. The poet asserts that Rhode actively sought out a life worthy of eternal rewards with (lines 7-10):

quid pudor castus quid s(an)c(t)a fides moresque benigni
ingeniumque doctrinaque tua et uerba sobria menti
prudens et innocua caelestia regna petisti
iam uale perpetuo dulcis et in pace quiesce

What virtuous modesty, what holy faith and pleasing habits
and intelligence and your learning and your temperate words and judgement.

Prudent and innocent, you sought the heavenly kingdoms;
now goodbye, sweet one, and rest in everlasting peace.

The starry image implies that her virtues allow her to enjoy the rewards of the afterlife before the last judgement day. As a perfect verb, *petisti* suggests that she has already sought the heavenly kingdoms; the act has been completed and fulfilled. *Petisti* indicates that Rhode paved her way to a virtuous life and that she now (before the last judgement) exists in heaven. The author of her epitaph employs *peto* in the same way that Damasus applies it in his poetry on the martyr ascent to the stars. The *elogium* to Felix and

Adauctus (Trout 7, discussed above) uses the same *petisti* of the completed past tense action. The perfect tense denotes that the stars have already been pursued and thus, have already been attained. The Damasan line, *aeternam petiere domum regnaque piorum*, repeats the hope for the deceased and comfort to the bereaved. The martyrs that Damasus venerates already possess the stars; there is no need to wait for judgement day. Rhode and other deceased young women are heralded as achieving the same fate despite their lack of martyrdom or sainthood. The tragedy of their young deaths and the virtue they had in life seems to provide them the honor of the stars.

Theodote's epitaph (7), like Rhode's epitaph and Damasus' *elogia*, also signals a heavenly ascent of the soul with *peto*. Her epitaph begins by asking the reader to have compassion for the five-year-old girl but ends with the solace of her soul reaching the stars. Theodote's epitaph differs from Rhode's because she is not described as the active agent. The poet implies that Theodote will reach the stars (lines 9-10)

sola tamen tanti restant solamina luctus

quod tales **animae protinus astra petunt**

yet the sole solace of such great mourning remains

that such **souls immediately seek out the stars.**

Her parents are reassured that souls just like Theodote's shall immediately (*protinus*) reach the heavens, alleviating the grief from her death. The ritual of mourning is considered a solace for the bereaved, of which epitaph writing and reading is a part. *Peto* alludes to such celestial images, as it spans more than just a literary theme, and even provides insight into a theological belief. "Seeking" informs the reader that a person

actively pursuing virtue can reach the starry heavens after death but before the last judgement. They are not passively pulled or dragged up or down, but instead control their fate, striving to a pleasant existence.

Reaching the realm of the pious: Evodia and Pontia

Evodia's (6) poem speaks to her beloved parents on earth of her new and present residence in heaven. Through the poem, Evodia consoles her parents: *o pater et mater nam regna celestia tango*. Evodia exclaims in first person that she touches (*tango*) the heavenly kingdoms. Evodia has no need of Simplicia's *rebocavit*, Theodote's *petunt*, or Rhode's *petisti*, for she does not seek or is recalled; her soul already dwells in the heavens. Bassa, a young wife venerated in *ICUR* 5.14076, is similarly commemorated by her husband. In her epitaph, Bassa already dwells in heaven (lines 1-4):³¹¹

Bassa caret membris vivens per saecula Xpo

aeterias secuta domos ac **regna piorum**

solvere corporeos meruit pulcerrima nodos;

Stelliger accepit polus hanc et sidera caeli

Bassa is free of her limbs, living through the ages in Christ.

Pursuing an ethereal home and the kingdoms of the pious,

most beautiful, she deserved to loose the knots of the flesh.

star-bearing heaven and the stars of the sky have received her

³¹¹ Text and translation from Dennis Trout, "Borrowed Verse and Broken Narrative: Agency, Identity, and the (Bethesda) Sarcophagus of Bassa," in *Life, Death and Representation: Some New Work on Roman Sarcophagi*, edited by Jaś Elsner and Janet Huskinson (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 2010): 336-337.

While Bassa actively pursued the heavens and the saints (*piorum*), her husband now explicitly states that the stars have received Bassa into their fold (*accepit*). Evodia, likewise, touches the stars, with the present active verb, *tango*. Neither Bassa nor Evodia is locked out of heaven, awaiting judgement, their souls are saved. The bereaved who commission the epitaphs suggest that these women, although neither martyrs nor saints, already dwell in eternal rest with Christ. The authors make big claims by suggesting this, as entering the gates of heaven prior to the second coming was a privilege only saints were given by the church. Knowing that one's loved ones were in the desired afterlife would give the bereaved hope that their young women are at peace.

Evodia continues her description of the afterlife with lighthearted images. Her first-person narrative connects the reader to her image through the conversational structure. The poem presents images that Evodia's parents can imagine when they remember her and envision her happy in death. She reassures them that (lines 3-6),

non tristis erebus non pallida mortia imag[o]
 sed requies secura tenet **ludoque choreas**
 inter felices animas et **amoena piorum**
 praestat haec omnia Chr(istus) qae Euodiam decorant

neither the gloomy underworld nor the pale image of death possess me,
 but rather carefree rest keeps me and **I dance the chorus**
 among blessed souls and **the pleasing places of the saints**
 all these things which honor Evodia, Christ bestows.

Evodia does not live in the gloomy underworld of Roman traditional religion, but rather in the pleasant rewards provided by Christ. She does not look like a pale shade, instead she rests carefree. Instead of imaging her as a sick little girl, her parents use her voice to describe a jubilant existence among the saints. They solidify the memory of Evodia as joyful and alive. She dances the chorus among other blessed souls who have reached the *regna celestia* and stand among the pleasing places of the saints. With the phrase *amoena piorum*, Evodia's epitaph molds a classical phrase of a Roman traditional afterlife, where the military heroes dwell, into a phrase for a Christian afterlife, a dwelling for their virtuous saints. With the phrase *felices animas et amoena piorum*, Evodia speaks of the saints and others who already occupy heaven. Reference to the saints is referred to in Damasus' poetry with the phrase *amoena piorum*, a classical phrase for the Elysian Fields. One of the more famous alternatives to *amoena piorum* is *regna piorum*, used by Damasus in *CLE* 306 = Trout 20³¹² and many other epigraphic poets of his time. *Amoena piorum* is used three times in classical poetry, all as a poetic line ending and within a catabasis scene. Anchises describes the different sections of the Underworld to Aeneas with *non me impia namque/ Tartara habent tristes umbrae, se amoena piorum / concilia Elysiumque colo* (For impious Tartarus, with its gloomy shades, holds me not, but I dwell in Elysium amid the sweet assemblies of the blest: *Aen.* 5.733-735). Perhaps not specifically Elysium, the *amoena piorum* is the place where heroes do dwell. Valerius Flaccus mirrors this phrasing when he describes the travels of the soul of Aeson after his death with: *lucet via late/ igne dei, donec silvas et amoena piorum / deveniant camposque, ubi sol totumque per annum / durat aprica dies thiasique chorique viorum/*

³¹² Ihm 26 = *ILCV* 951 = *ED* 20 = *ICUR* 5.13273

carminaque et quorum populis iam nulla cupido (Afar the path gleams with the light of the god, until they come to the woods and the pleasant dwellings of the sanctified and the meads where all the year sun and sunlit days endure, where are revels and dancing and singing, and such things as nations have no desire of now: Val. Flac. 1.841-6). Valerius Flaccus, known for borrowing from both Vergil and Apollidorus to create his text, uses this specific phrase to bring the reader's mind to Vergil's canonical description of the underworld. A third use of the phrase comes from Silius Italicus' *Punica* with the catabasis of Scipio. Having heard the stories of the bravery of his uncle and comrades who faced Hannibal and Hasdrubal in Spain, Scipio watches them return to *loca amoena piorum*.³¹³ Through Scipio's look at the afterlife, Silius Italicus perpetuates the employment of a phrase to continue indicating the realm of the afterlife. The three catabasis scenes describe the place meant for the virtuous souls as *amoena piorum*. The pleasing places of the pious are filled not just with the apotheosized heroes of Roman history, but now also with the martyrs and saints and with everyday Christians like the women of my collection.

Pontia's (11) epitaph not only employs language that describes her afterlife among the stars but is also strengthened by other Christian associations on her sarcophagus. The *clippus* carved on her sarcophagus holds not only the remnants of a chi-rho but also an alpha and omega. The figure holding a book open with one hand inside the *clippus* might be Pontia herself. Alongside the visual images, Pontia's venerator chose specific wording that places her life in aspiration towards the sky. Her epitaph opens with: *Pontia sidereis aspirans vultibus olim* 'Pontia once aspiring towards the heavenly faces.' Her husband,

³¹³ Silius Italicus, *Pun.*, 13.703-4.

the author and venerator, emphasizes Pontia's active aspiration towards the stars and the saints' eternal dwelling. The astronomical language is not exclusive to her. Like Evodia's epitaph above, the *sideresis vultibus* acts like the phrase *amoena piorum*. The starry faces more specifically indicate the saints. Pontia's husband does not go as far as to say that Pontia has already been received into heaven, as these other poems state of their dedicatees, but he does say that she is heading there.

Conclusion: Consolatory Epitaphs

Words, as cultural objects, have the "power to move and motivate" on a societal scale, for "[d]eath is, after all, an inescapable part of the human condition, as is our awareness of our mortality and how we undertake to deal with it."³¹⁴ Epitaphs, like other forms of consolatory literature, deal with grief by alleviating the pain of it through beautiful verse. Authors of consolation literature often use these situations of loss to ask philosophical and theological questions about grief, death, and socially acceptable modes of mourning. Christianity changes the way the afterlife is discussed, as on the one hand authority figures acknowledge the natural urge to grieve, while on the other they remind people that they should rejoice for their loved one's rewards in eternal life. Grief, as a reaction to loss, is a raw, human emotion, and mourning is the act of making it visible to others, often in a socially acceptable way.³¹⁵ Dialogue-epitaphs as well as other *pathos*-inducing poems to the dead serve as ways in which the bereaved can grieve and ease the mourning of their loss. The death of a young, virtuous woman was a tragic affair and required

³¹⁴ Baltussen, "Personal Grief and Public Mourning," 70.

³¹⁵ See Valerie Hope, *Death in Ancient Rome: A Sourcebook*, London and New York: Routledge, 2007, 172-3.

particularly poignant epitaphs by which to remember them. Such pathos-inducing scenes and descriptors include those demonstrated above: conversational epitaphs where the memory of the deceased lives on, the phrases *immatura poma* and *mersit acerba dies* to signal the plight and sorrow of youths entombed before the prime of life, depictions of connections to the dead on earth, and scenes of ascension to the stars. These phrases and images both console the bereaved and demonstrate to others the pain of early and sudden death. Each poem discussed here invokes emotions because of associations with a fruitful literary background of consolation literature. The epitaphs of my corpus reveal aspects of the literary traditions and social expectations of late antiquity, the thoughts about death and dying, and the opinions of intellectual literature and status. At the same time, they discuss themes universal to humanity, the love of a beloved daughter or wife, the hope for a pleasant afterlife, and the giving one's loved ones an honorable memorial as testament to their memory. Offering consolation to those afflicted by grief is "an act naturally human."³¹⁶

³¹⁶ Scourfield, *Consoling Heliodorus*, 15.

Conclusion

Knocking on Heaven's Door

*Vita enim mortuorum in memoria vivorum est posita.
The life of the dead is placed in the memory of the living.
~ Marcus Tullius Cicero*

*To live in hearts we leave behind is not to die.
~ Thomas Campbell*

Latin epitaphs contain a certain seductive quality since they provide insight into the emotional world of the cultures that we study. The epitaphs presented in my collection reveal the tragedy of the untimely deaths of young, Christian girls and women in late antique Rome and Roman Italy. At the same time, these emotive poems bring to light the hope people had in the eternal bliss of the Christian afterlife. By means of the virtues attained during their lives, the people honored are considered to access the stars. Through their identification as part of a community, individual women were remembered and immortalized in the hearts of their loved ones, easing the grief of the bereaved long after death. The style of late antique poetics and the *topoi* of consolation literature blend together in these verse epitaphs, revealing a belief in the power of language to alleviate grief. The deceased find a home in these epitaphs which in turn comfort their loved ones left behind. The nature of these young women's deaths is perceived as tragic and as such requires specific poetic language to care properly for the deceased and the bereaved alike.

The verses analyzed in my case study reveal the elaborate interplay between past and future not only in their literary aspects, but also their social and religious dimensions. These evocative poems look both forwards and backwards on multiple levels. Their authors employ classical Latin literature through the lens of late antique poetics, forging

bonds between the past and contemporary Roman literary tradition. As epitaphs memorialize the young women, the commemorators look to the past at a life which has ended but also towards the future at the birth of eternal life. The poetry commemorating young women expresses the expectations of their parents and husbands and recognizes that these expectations will never be fulfilled. At the same time, the poems embody a new-found sense of hope and turn a tragic death into a new, shared future in the celestial heavens.

While we have drawn lines to distinguish between age, gender, and religious identities, it should also be acknowledged that these boundaries are fluid. Christians and pagans still interacted in everyday society, and their communities were most likely not so divided. We do not know which aspect of their identities these women would have highlighted on their own, but we can sense the expectations that their parents, husbands, families, and community had for them. These expectations aid us in delineating the groups with which they are identified. While my analysis has focused upon formulae and collective ways that venerated women, each poem both interacts with and deviates from the formula presented in order to commemorate an individual woman. In this way, while the individual aids in understanding the collective group, the uniqueness of an individual epitaph also reveals the variety within the community.

Throughout my dissertation, we have looked at the literary prowess of the epitaph writers and the virtuous merits of their subject matter. These poets used the skills of contemporary authors through employing aspects of late antique poetics (variation and repetition, description and picture-painting words, and allusion and intertextuality), but they also built upon the foundation of their literary predecessors. These verses interact

with the *topoi* of consolation literature (presenting guidelines for mourning, lessening perceived misfortune, and venerating virtues and creating memories of the deceased) presented to them through a deep legacy of consolatory orations, letters, and treatises. As some allusions were reminiscent of classical authors (*mersit acerba dies* and *immatura poma*), other phrases of celestial images alluded to (and even created their own) descriptions of heaven. Diction and phrases of the celestial images reimagine life after death as something to hope for in the future while at the same time evoking the classical and late antique authors and all the intellectual currency that those connections imply. The skills of the poets demonstrate a memorial that consoles the bereaved, develops an identity of the deceased, and solidifies an imagine of the afterlife that all can strive towards. By inscribing a literary image of these women on stone, their commemorators worked in their present to alleviate their grief and aimed towards the future to immortalize the beloved women.

In this dissertation, I have brought attention back to fourteen women who are not often remembered. While these funerary poems only recollect a few details and memories of those whom they commemorate, they reveal a great deal more about the people who loved them and the community to which they belonged. Recalling only a few things, these verses illuminate the emotive power of words in consoling the bereaved and solidifying an eternal memory of an individual. Virtues and merits in life pave the stairway to heaven. All fourteen verse epitaphs look away from life on earth and towards a pleasant afterlife. Poetic analysis and close reading make it easy to forget that the women presented in the poetic texts were individuals who surely had dreams for the

future, but that early death left them unfulfilled. These women are identified by their youth, their virtue, their femininity, and their impact on the loved ones they left behind.

APPENDIX A

A.2

Simplicia, *ICUR* 7.18044 = *AE* 1987, 50 = *AE* 1980, 138 = Lebek 1987 = EDB30596 = EDH006489

Photograph taken by author, 7/2018. San Lorenzo FLM, Rome, Italy.

A.6

Evodia, *ICUR* 8.21015 = *CLE* 2018 = *ILCV* 3420A = EDB 10800

Photograph taken by author, 7/2018. San Agnese FLM, Rome, Italy.

A.10

Lea, *ICUR* 10.27318 = AE 1975, 0115 = EDB 11288 = EDH14205 = Vatican L11 32370
 Photograph taken by author, 7/2018. Musei Vaticani, Museo Pio Cristiano.

A.12

Pontia, *ICI* 6.41 = *CLE* 1846 = *CIL* 11.4631 = *ILCV* 4812 = AE 2013, 00444
 Photograph taken by author, 6/2016. Spoleto, Italy.

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VITA

Kristin Harper comes from the small town of Berkley, Massachusetts. She had no idea that her young fascination with the old cemeteries of New England would one day lead her to study not just the ancient world, far from the shores of the Atlantic, but also to those catacombs which perhaps influenced the impetus of New Englanders to be remembered on stone. She attended Saint Anselm College for her B.A. (double majors in Classics and Liberal Studies of the Great Books, 2013), and moved across the country for her M.A. in Classical Languages (2016) and her Ph.D. in Classical Studies (2019) at the University of Missouri-Columbia. She has done archaeological fieldwork in Orvieto, Italy and has studied Latin Epigraphy at the American Academy at Rome. In her free time, she enjoys hiking, kayaking, reading, acro yoga, and making pottery. She hopes to continue to pursue the work she has set out here.