

An Interpretation of the Frescoes of the Hypogeum of the Aurelii in Rome.

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Volume One of Two.

Text, Tables and Bibliography.

Thesis submitted for the degree of PhD

Declaration of Authorship.

**An Interpretation of the Frescoes of the
Hypogeum of the Aurelii in Rome.**

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I, John William Bradley, hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the works of others, this is always clearly stated.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Abstract.

This thesis looks at the frescoes in a single monument of the third century AD in Rome known as the Hypogeum of the Aurelii. The images contained within these frescoes are varied and highly unusual in the canon of Roman art. As a consequence they have attracted a considerable amount of interest in the century since their discovery. Many of the theories submitted to explain these images do not provide, however, a satisfactory or holistic explanation. Indeed, upon close examination what has been 'seen' by some scholars has proved not to exist and evidence put forward in support of their theories has at times been selective and anachronistic.

Recent restoration of the hypogeum of the Aurelii provides an opportunity to review the evidence and posit a comprehensive interpretation of all the images in the monument. In the process of unravelling the mystery of this tomb I have taken a multi-disciplinary approach exploring many aspects of Roman life other than the religious or funerary spheres that have been the main constituency of previous work. The consequent interpretation put forward here serves, not only as an object lesson in the importance and utility of, 'going back to basics' but also examines the evidence in the context of their known social status i.e. they were freedmen. The result is a better understanding of the tomb's commissioners which shall inform future discussion on social organisation, including the role of women, the exercise of manumission, dining practice and linguistics in addition to funerary habits in the decades prior to the official recognition of Christianity less than a century later.

Acknowledgements.

I wish, first and foremost, to thank the staff of the Classics department of Royal Holloway, academic and administrative, for their help and assistance over the years which has made my task so much easier than it might otherwise have been. In particular, I wish to thank my supervisor, Dr Zena Kamash, who in addition to providing many suggestions and support understood my sense of humour, a rare quality. Professors Boris Rankov, Jonathan Powell and Amanda Claridge also supplied prompt and erudite comment on my queries, epigraphic, linguistic and art historical respectively, thereby ensuring I avoided pitfalls into which I might otherwise have fallen. Thanks are also due to Dr Liz Gloyn for pointing me in the direction of recent scholarship on women in antiquity and Dr Richard Hawley for commenting on those sections that concern the role of women. The lonely task of producing a PhD has been greatly eased by my fellow post-graduates among whom I particularly wish to thank Emma Ramsey, Jenny Winter and Matthew Johncock all of whose knowledge of ancient languages far exceeds my own. My thanks are equally due to the administrators of the Helen Shackleton Fund whose generosity greatly offset the costs of the trips I have made to Rome during the writing of this thesis.

Beyond Royal Holloway, I wish to acknowledge the unfailing assistance of staff at the Joint Libraries of the Roman and Hellenic Societies and the Warburg Institute in London. Further afield I thank Dr Ursula Rothe for suggestions on the subject of clothing and Prof. Elżbieta Jastrzębowska whose ideas on the meaning of the 'manumission scene' closely matched my own: the opportunity to discuss the frescoes over dinner in Rome was a pleasure intellectual and personal. A number of Italian academics have helped in making available photographs or artefacts in particular Dott.ssa Barbara Mazzei of the Pontificia Commissione di Archeologia Sacra and Dott.sse Elena Pezzini and Francesca Spatafora of the Museo Antonio Salinas, Palermo. Thanks are due Prof. Paolo Liverani of the University of Florence for bringing certain modern publications to my notice. I wish to thank all those at the British School in Rome for their assistance in gaining access to various sites including

the Hypogeum of the Aurelii itself. The library and community provide a welcome harbour to put into after a long day's trail around the Eternal City.

Finally, I wish to extend a special thanks to Dr Eileen Rubery for her encouragement and a shared interest in the topic of late antique art. Without the assistance and suggestions of all these individuals and others unnamed this thesis and its author would have been much the poorer.

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List of Abbreviations.

AA =	<i>Archäologischer Anzeiger</i> , Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Berlin.
ASR =	Robert, C. 1897-99, <i>Die Antiken Sarkophag-Reliefs</i> . Berlin.
AE =	<i>L'Année Epigraphique</i> . 1888- . Presses Universitaires de France.
BNP =	Brill's Neu Pauly = Cancik, H. and Schneider, H. 1996-2003, <i>Der Neue Pauly: Enzyklopädie der Antike</i> . Stuttgart.
CDC 2000 =	<i>2000 CDC Growth Charts for the United States: Methods and Development</i> . Vital and Health Statistics, Series 11, Number 246, May 2002.
CIL =	Mommsen, T. 1863- . <i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum</i> . Berlin
EDCS =	Epigraphischen Databank Clauss-Slaby.
EDR =	Epigraphic Database Roma.
EEC =	Di Bernardino A. (ed.) 1992, <i>Encyclopedia of the Early Church</i> (trans. A. Walford). New York, NY.
ICUR =	De Rossi, G. B. (ed.) 1857-61, <i>Inscriptiones Christianae urbis Romae septimo saeculo antiquiores</i> . Rome.
IG =	Kirschhoff, A. (ed.) 1873- , <i>Inscriptiones Graecae</i> . Berlin.
ILCV =	Diehl, E. (ed.) 1961-67, <i>Inscriptiones Latinae Christianae veteres</i> . Berlin.
ILS =	Dessau, H. (ed.) 1962, <i>Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae</i> . Berlin.
LIMC =	<i>Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae</i> (1981- 1999). Zurich and Munich.
LTUR =	Steinby, E. M. (ed.), 1993-2000, <i>Lexicon Topigraphicum Urbis Romae</i> . 6 vols. Rome.
MNR =	Museo Nazionale, Roma.
MNR Epigrafica =	Friggeri, R., Granino Cecere, M. G. and Gregori, G. L. (eds) 2012, <i>Terme di Diocleziano, la collezione epigrafica</i> . Milan.
MNR Le Sculture =	Giuliano A. (ed.) 1979-1995, <i>Museo Nazionale Romano, Le Sculture</i> . 12 vols. Rome.
PCAS =	Pontificia Commissione di Archeologia Sacra.
PIR ² =	Groag, E., Stein, A. et al., (eds) 1933-2009, <i>Prosopographia Imperii Romani Saeculi I, II, III</i> . 2 nd edition. Berlin.
RIC =	Mattingly et al. (eds) 1923-1981, <i>The Roman Imperial Coinage</i> . 9 vols. London.
TV II =	Bowman, A. K and Thomas, J. D. 1994, <i>The Vindolanda Writing Tablets</i> (Tabulae Vindolandenses II), London.

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Aelian <i>NA</i> =	Aelian. <i>On the Characteristics of Animals</i> . Translation A. F. Scholfield. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA. 3 vols. 1971.
Aesop <i>Fab.</i> =	Babrius and Phaedrus. Translation B. E. Perry. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA. 1984.
Amm. Marc. =	Ammianus Marcellinus. Translation J. C. Rolfe. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA. 3 vols. 1971.
App. <i>BC</i> =	Appian. <i>Roman History</i> . Vol. 3-4. Translation H. White. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA. 4 vols. 1964.
App. <i>Mithr.</i> =	Appian. <i>Roman History</i> . Vol. 2. Translation H. White. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA. 4 vols. 1964.
Apuleius <i>Met.</i> =	Apuleius. <i>Metamorphoses</i> . Translation J. Arthur Hanson. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA. 1989.
Aulus Gellius =	Aulus Gellius. <i>The Attic Nights</i> . Translation J. C. Rolfe. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA. 3 vols. 1952.
Ausonius <i>Parentalia</i> =	Ausonius. Translation Hugh G. Evelyn White. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA. 1919.
Babrius <i>Fab.</i> =	Babrius and Phaedrus. Translation B. E. Perry. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA. 1984.
Cic. <i>Cat.</i> =	Cicero. <i>In Catilinam I-IV; Pro Murena; Pro Sulla; Pro Flacco</i> . Translation C. MacDonald. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA. 1977.
Cic. <i>De Divinatione</i> =	Cicero. <i>De Senectute, de Amicitia, de divinatione</i> . Translation William Armistead Falconer. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA. 1959.
Cic. <i>De Off.</i> =	Cicero. <i>De Officiis</i> . Translation Walter Miller. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA. 1951.
Cic. <i>De Orat.</i> =	Cicero. <i>De Oratore</i> . Translation E. W. Sutton. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA. 2 vols. 1959.
Cic. <i>Mur.</i> =	Cicero. <i>In Catilinam I-IV; Pro Murena; Pro Sulla; Pro Flacco</i> . Translation C. MacDonald. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA. 1977.

- Cic. Phil.* = Cicero. *Philippics*. Translation D. R. Shackleton Bailey, revised by J. T. Ramsey and G. Manuwald. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA. 2 vols. 2009.
- Cic. Sull.* = Cicero. *In Catilinam I-IV; Pro Murena; Pro Sulla; Pro Flacco*. Translation C. MacDonald. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA. 1977.
- Cic. Verr.* = Cicero. *The Verrine Orations*. Translation L. H. G. Greenwood. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA. 2 vols. 1935.
- Clement of Alexandria = Roberts, A. and Donaldson, J. (eds), 1971, *The Ante Nicene Fathers: translations of the writings of the Fathers down to AD 325, Hermas et al.* Vol. 2, Fathers of the Second Century. Grand Rapids, MI.
- Cypr. Epist.* = Cyprian of Carthage. *Sancti Cyriani Episcopi Epistularium*. Pars III, 2. G. F. Diercks (ed.). Brepols Turnholt Corpus Christianorum Series Latina III C. 1996.
- Damasus Epig. Dam.* = Ferrua, A. 1942, *Epigrammata Damasiana*. Vatican City.
- Dig.* = Mommsen, T. and Krueger, P. (eds), 1985, *The Digest of Justinian*. English Translation A. Watson. Philadelphia.
- Dio Cassius = Dio Cassius, *Roman History*. Translation E. Cary. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA. 9 vols. 1927.
- Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Ant. Rom.* = Dionysius of Halicarnassus. *The Roman Antiquities*. Translation Earnest Cary. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA. 7 vols. 1940.
- Eus. HE* = Eusebius. *The Ecclesiastical History*. Translation J. E. L. Oulton. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA. 2 vols. 1953.
- Festus L* = Festus. *De verborum significatione quae supersunt cum Pauli epitome*. W. M. Lindsay (ed.). Teubner. Hildesheim. 1965.
- Front. Aq.* = Frontinus, *The Stratagems, The Aqueducts of Rome*. Translation C. E. Bennett. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA. 1925.

Fulg. <i>Ex. Virg. Cont.</i>	Fulgentius, <i>Opera: accedunt Fabii Claudii Gordiani Fulgentii de aetatibus mundi et hominis et S. Fulgentii episcopi super Thebaiden</i> . R. Helm (ed.). Teubner. Stuttgart. 1970.
Gaius <i>Inst.</i> =	Poste, E. and Whittuck, E. A. 1904, 4 th edition, 'Gai Institutiones' or <i>Institutes of Roman Law, Gaius the Jurist</i> . Oxford.
Herodian =	Herodian. Translation C. R. Whittaker. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA. 2 vols. 1970.
Hes. <i>Theog.</i> =	Hesiod. <i>Theogony, Works and Days, Testimonia</i> . Translation and edited Glenn W. Most. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA. 2006.
Hipp. <i>Philosoph.</i> =	Hippolytus. <i>Philosophumena</i> . Translation F. Legge. Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge. 1921.
Homer <i>Ody.</i> =	Homer. <i>The Odyssey</i> . Translation A. T. Murray, revised George E. Dimock. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA. 1995.
Homer <i>Iliad</i> =	Homer. <i>The Iliad</i> . Translation A. T. Murray. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA. 2 vols. 1946.
Horace <i>Carm.</i> =	Horace. <i>The Odes and Epodes</i> . Translation C. E. Bennett. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA. 1960.
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Mart. <i>Epig.</i> =	Martial, <i>Epigrams</i> . Translation D. R. Shackleton Bailey. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA. 3 vols. 1993.
Origen <i>contra Celsum</i> =	Chadwick, H. 1965, Origen: 'Contra Celsum' translated with an Introduction and Notes. Cambridge.
Ovid <i>Met.</i> =	Ovid. <i>Metamorphoses</i> . Translation Frank Justus Miller, second edition revised G. P. Goold. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA. 2 vols. 1984.
Ovid <i>Fasti</i> =	<i>Ovid's Fasti</i> . Translation J. G. Frazer. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA. 1959.
Pausanias =	Pausanias. <i>Description of Greece</i> . Translation W. H. S. Jones. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA. 4 vols. 1961.
Pers. =	Juvenal and Persius. Translation G. G. Ramsay. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA. 1979.
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Philostratus the Younger <i>Imagines</i> =	Philostratus, the Elder, the Younger. <i>Imagines</i> . Translation Arthur Fairbanks. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA. 1979.
Plato <i>Protag.</i> =	Plato. <i>Laches, Protagoras, Meno, Euthydemus</i> . Translation W. R. M. Lamb. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA. 1952.
Plautus <i>Mil. Glor.</i> =	Plautus. Translation P. Nixon. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA. 5 vols. 1966.
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Tert. <i>De Spect.</i> =	Tertullian, <i>Apology</i> and <i>De Spectaculis</i> . Translation Gerald H. Rendall. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA. 1977.
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Val. Max. =	Valerius Maximus, <i>Memorable Doings and Sayings</i> . Translation D. R. Shackleton Bailey. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA. 2 vols. 2000.
Varro <i>de vita pop. Rom.</i> =	Varro. 'De Vita Populi Romani', <i>Fonti, Esegese, Edizione, Critica dei Frammenti</i> . B. Riposati. Milan. 1939.
Varro <i>Rust.</i> =	Varro in Marcus Porcius Cato, <i>On Agriculture</i> ; Marcus Terentius Varro, <i>On Agriculture</i> . Translation William Davis Hooper, revised Harrison Boyd Ash. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA. 1979.
Vergilius Vaticanus	de Wit, J. 1959, <i>Die Miniaturen des Vergilius Vaticanus</i> . Amsterdam.
Virg. <i>Aen.</i> =	Virgil. <i>The Aeneid</i> . Translation H. Rushton Fairclough. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA. 2 vols. 1918.
Vitruvius <i>De Arch.</i> =	Vitruvius. <i>On Architecture</i> . Translation F. Granger. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA. 2 vols. 1970.

Terminologies, Images and Translations Used.

Different authors have labelled various constituent parts of the structure in various ways that have tended to cloud rather than clarify descriptions. I shall attempt to avoid further complicating the process of cross-referencing between authors by maintaining the labelling of the constituent parts in accordance with the terminology used by the original excavator Goffredo Bendinelli in his final excavation report of 1922. Bendinelli's '*Cubiculo superiore*' will be referred to as the upper chamber, his '*Cubiculo inferiore A*' will be referred to as *cubiculum A*, '*Vestibolo con arcosoli*' as the vestibule and '*Cubiculo inferior B*' will be referred to as *cubiculum B*.¹

Similarly, with the architectural form I shall use the term 'hypogeum' for the structure as a whole, a description adopted by Bendinelli in the original notice of the excavation and used by most commentators up to the present day.² The use of the term hypogeum in this instance is more a term of convenience rather than one of strict accuracy in contrast to *LTUR*'s description as '*Sepulcrum*'³ or Poe's '*Monumentum*'.⁴ Poe has highlighted that, strictly speaking, the term hypogeum ought to be reserved for a structure that is wholly subterranean, which the Hypogeum of the Aurelii never was. Nevertheless I believe her reservation of the term hypogeum for those elements wholly below ground and the use of the term mausoleum for the structure as a whole introduces ambiguity when reading different sources and making consequent cross-references. I have used Poe's system of identifying different landings and stairways which make up the multiple levels within the hypogeum.

As with the use of the term 'hypogeum' the identification 'of the Aurelii' is one of convenience deriving from the mosaic floor inscription in *cubiculum A*. There is no evidence that other parts of the hypogeum were used by others of the same

¹ Bendinelli 1922: 112.

² *Inter alia* Bendinelli 1920. Jastrzębowska 2013.

³ *LTUR* vol. IV: 276-7 s.v. '*Sepulcrum: Aurelii*'.

⁴ Poe 2007: 4.

name yet their name is used for the hypogeum as a whole, a convention that I intend to continue, though, as shall become evident, that is not to advocate that the hypogeum was a familial tomb.

Today, despite the efforts of modern conservators, the frescoes have lost much of their colour since their discovery, particularly in the blue/green part of the spectrum. To mitigate this effect illustrations from a variety of sources are used. A number of post-restoration photographs have been purchased from the Pontificia Commissione di Archeologica Sacra which provide the best record of the hypogeum in its present state. Regrettably, cost has prevented a wider use of this resource. A comprehensive photographic record has been published in Fabrizio Bisconti 2011, though these are not always ideal they nonetheless have brought the monument to a wider audience.⁵ Given these limitations, the aquatints of C. Tabanelli, published in Josef Wilpert's 1924 monograph, remain an invaluable resource. Comparison of the near 100 year old aquatints and modern records confirms the accuracy of Tabanelli's work which provides an excellent record of the frescoes shortly after discovery. Unfortunately, the black and white photographs published in Bendinelli's report do not add to the pictorial record of this part of the hypogeum though in a few instances O. Ferretti's coloured plates included in Bendinelli's report complement Tabanelli/Wilpert's publication. All illustrations and diagrams referred to in the text are compiled in volume two.

Translations of modern languages have been given where I have considered it useful to do so, such translations are my own. Ancient languages are from the Loeb edition referred to unless otherwise noted. I have not translated epigraphs due to the large number of epigraphs cited which would inevitably result in much repetition. Epigraphic evidence, however, has been quoted comprehensively in the footnotes using the guidelines set out by Hans Krummrey and Silvio Panciera in 1980 with the

⁵ Colour rendition is, in a number of cases, inaccurate and the overall quality of some of the photographs, unfortunately, not as high as the unpublished photographs. Where possible I have corrected colour rendition to more closely match reality. A comparison of figs 85a and b illustrates this point.

exception that editorial correction of error follows the convention of Epigraphic Database Clauss-Slaby (e.g. f<e=f>cit for FFCIT).

Chapter 1. Introduction.

1.1 Object, Aims and Scope of Study.

In the autumn of 1919 the Società Trasporti Automobilistici arranged for the construction of an underground car park on the corner of the Viale Manzoni and Via Luzzatti in the Esquiline Hill district of Rome (Figure 1). During excavation workers broke into a hitherto undiscovered underground chamber decorated with a series of frescoes that quickly attracted scholarly attention. Initial notification of the discovery was made by Bendinelli in the *Notizie degli Scavi* of 1920 with further notifications in English the same year by Thomas Ashby and Bendinelli himself the following year.⁶ Excavation was briefly suspended at the end of 1920 and arrangements were made for the removal of an existing modern building whose removal allowed a complete excavation of the site.⁷

The chamber discovered was *cubiculum* A of the hypogeum of the Aurelii situated in Regio V of the city of Rome, approximately 750m south-east of the Esquiline gate. It did not lie on one of the main arteries of Rome, but approximately 30m south of the Via Labicana that leads to the Porta Maggiore where the Via Praenestina branches off.⁸ The hypogeum's construction can be securely dated to c. AD 220-240 on archaeological and stylistic grounds⁹ and the present study has found nothing within the corpus of wall painting in Rome that would suggest a different date. At some time during the third quarter of the third century a programme of expansion was begun (Figure 2). The expansion was, however,

⁶ Bendinelli 1920: 123-41. Ashby 1920: 85. Bendinelli 1921a: 169-72.

⁷ For a description of the events around the discovery of the hypogeum and the history of its acquisition and stewardship by the Pontificia Commissione di Archeologia Sacra, see Giuliani 2011: 31-50.

⁸ Bendinelli 1922: 299.

⁹ Bendinelli 1922: 510 believed the likely date to be AD 200-220 based on brick stamps found in the vicinity. Wirth 1934: 86 suggested a date of AD 240 while Himmelmann 1975: 9 thought a slightly earlier date of AD 220 as did Jastrębowska 1981: 37-8. The latter considered the Villa Piccola beneath S. Sebastiano to be c. AD 240 and given the similarities between that and the hypogeum of the Aurelii (see especially Chapter 6, section 6.1.4) the author believes that the hypogeum of the Aurelii is likely to date to the same time or slightly earlier.

abortive, having stopped, before completion, upon the construction of the Aurelian Wall (c. AD 270). This is now mostly demolished or made inaccessible during consolidation work. There was little in the way of decoration in the extended area, what there was is recorded in Bendinelli.¹⁰

In the third century AD, before the construction of the Aurelian Wall, the area between the Nymphaeum of Alexander Severus and the Porta Maggiore was a mixture of tombs and aristocratic *horti*.¹¹ Some of the tombs were substantial and of considerable age such as the Sepulcrum Arruntii, and Statilii.¹² The area was still being used for burials in the late second century as confirmed by the discovery of a fine marble sarcophagus¹³ found on the corner of the Via Giolitti and Via Porta Maggiore and into the third century as suggested by a grave dated by a coin of Otacilia Severa.¹⁴ The hypogeum of the Aurelii forms part of this landscape and the frescoes form an important bridge between classical and late antique art and understanding them will provide new insights into Rome in the first half of the third century.

This thesis does not attempt to provide a history of the hypogeum beyond the execution of the original decorative scheme other than where later developments affected (always to the detriment) that scheme, but rather addresses a series of issues that require review/investigation to further our understanding of this important site:

- Do previous and existing theories of the frescoes' meaning stand scrutiny?
- Is the current reading of the mosaic inscription of *cubiculum A* sound?
- Can one interpret the frescoes individually and/or collectively?

¹⁰ Bendinelli 1922: 412-20, figs 56-9.

¹¹ The *horti Pallantini* and *Liciniani* covered most of this area with the pavilion of Minerva Medica (built c. AD 300) approximately 350m to the north. For a brief description of this area in the imperial era prior to the construction of the Aurelian walls see Coates-Stephens 2004: 75-7.

¹² Brizio 1876. The frescoes are now preserved in the MNR Palazzo Massimo.

¹³ Depicting the death of Creusa, MNR Terme, 75248. Musso in *MNR Le Sculture* 1/8*, VI, 8: 279-83.

¹⁴ Coates-Stephens 2004: 77.

- Were the frescoes commissioned by the same client/s and, if so, was the common factor that brought these people together religious or not?
- Having interpreted the frescoes in the context of Roman society in the third century AD how does this information shed light on the commissioners of the tomb?
- What are the broader implications of a more holistic interpretation of the frescoes?

In answering these questions this monograph presents a new interpretation of the images preserved in the hypogeum of the Aurelii. I shall demonstrate that previous theories have placed too much emphasis on a supposed religious inspiration for the work and have not paid sufficient attention to the tradition of freedman commemoration. By looking at the frescoes in a religious rather than a *libertus* context, erroneous conclusions have been drawn. Rather than a familial or religious community, the tomb was constructed by a *collegium*. Such a conclusion has been suggested before,¹⁵ however, I shall argue that the basis of such a *collegium* was as a group of bureaucrats or scribes linked to one another by virtue of their profession rather than religious affiliation. Furthermore, the enigmatic nature of the decoration of the hypogeum is a direct consequence of the avoidance of specific cultic symbolism arising, in all probability, through a desire to avoid religious offence. In the course of the investigation the position of women and children in such a profession has been brought to light. The prominence of women in *collegia* has been questioned recently.¹⁶ The prevalence of women in all *cubicula*, but especially *cubicula* A and B, however, demonstrates that women could play a greater role in organisations that did not require physical strength than has been previously suspected. An identification of the child's grave, not with the *virgo* Aurelia Prima but with one of the male dedicatees opens up insight into the role of children in professional *collegia*.

¹⁵ Most recently Poe 2007: 108-123; Giovagnoli 2011: 231.

¹⁶ Hemelrijk 2015.

I do not expect everything in this thesis to remain unchallenged; some of the images contained within the hypogeum of the Aurelii are unique in the corpus of ancient Roman art and so will, perhaps, ever elude a definitive understanding. Such difficulties, of course, ought not to prohibit the attempt. Nevertheless, I trust that the readings of individual scenes is coherent with the tomb as a whole.

1.2 Chapter Outline and Order of Thesis.

Previous scholarship, where such work has surveyed the whole tomb, has suffered from the undue influence of the 'Adam and Eve' image of the upper chamber and the 'shepherd' in *cubiculum A*. In large part this is due to the former being the first image a visitor encounters upon entering the hypogeum and the latter was the first image brought to light on the hypogeum's discovery.

Difficulties in this approach arise from the upper chamber's fragmentary state. The 'Adam and Eve' image has informed discussion of the more complete paintings of *cubicula A* and *B* resulting in a great deal of conjecture to make the well-preserved paintings fit an ideology based upon the most ruined. This study, in contrast, discusses 'Adam and Eve' only after the near intact paintings of the lower *cubicula* have been discussed and a scenario proposed that not only conforms with what we know of contemporary Roman funerary practice, but is also consistent with interpretations put for the whole monument. Similarly, the 'shepherd', which gained such interest in early scholarship, is given no precedence over other, more prominent decorative details in *cubiculum A*. The 'shepherd' is an interesting image, but not significant to the overall interpretation of the paintings.

Further difficulties have arisen when individual images or single rooms have been discussed with little (or no) reference to other areas of the hypogeum. Scholars have not investigated in any depth the similarities that occur between *cubicula*. This study pays far more attention to these similarities which aid interpretation and confirms that the three surviving chambers were all commissioned by the same clientele and carried out contemporaneously or near contemporaneously. In order to facilitate this approach after the detailed description of the lower *cubicula*

discussion and interpretation shall proceed on a thematic, rather than room-by-room basis. After the interpretation of the lower *cubicula* attention will turn to the upper chamber's fragmentary decoration. With this in mind this monograph will proceed as follows:

- Chapter 1. An introduction which includes methodology and a summary of previous scholarship.
- Chapter 2. An architectural description of the tomb and its immediate vicinity.
- Chapter 3. An examination of the mosaic floor inscription in *cubiculum A*.
- Chapter 4. The floor inscription explicitly confirms the Aurelii's freedman status, therefore I briefly discuss funerary art among *liberti* from the 1st C. BC to the beginning of the 3rd C. AD.
- Chapter 5. A comprehensive description of the decorative motifs and schemes of the lower *cubicula*.
- Chapter 6. An examination of the differing motifs that are depicted in the red-green linear areas of the lower *cubicula*.
- Chapter 7. A discussion of the central medallion in *cubiculum B* and its interpretation as a scene of manumission.
- Chapter 8. An examination of the recurrence of groups of eleven and twelve figures in the lower *cubicula* i.e. the two Processions and banqueting scene in *cubiculum A* and the *arcosolium* decoration in *cubiculum B*.

Attention will then concentrate on the remaining large-scale scenes in *cubiculum A*.

- Chapter 9. The so-called 'Homeric Scene' and the role women with an excursus on portraiture in Roman funerary art.

- Chapter 10 An examination of children in Roman art and how an understanding of ancient attitudes towards children informs the 'shepherd', *Adventus* and donkey scenes.
- Chapter 11. An analysis of the rear wall of *cubiculum* A and the sidewalls of the upper chamber and how they illustrate the professional lives of the Aurelii.
- Chapter 12 will look at the rear wall of the upper chamber - the so-called 'Adam and Eve' and 'Creator' images. A new interpretation will be given drawing on the work of Nikolaus Himmelmann and Helga Kaiser-Minn that not only reconciles the difficulties of their findings, but also tackles the perceived inconsistencies between this and contemporary funerary art.
- Chapter 13. Conclusions and discussion of the wider implications.

1.3 Architectural and Artistic Context.

Because of its position within the Aurelian wall the hypogeum of the Aurelii never developed into a full-scale catacomb. That it would have done so had it been placed a few hundred metres further along the via Labicana is clear from the incomplete, and comparatively unordered, extensions that were being undertaken when the new city wall put an end to further development. Had the wall not been built there is little doubt that the hypogeum of the Aurelii would have become subsumed into a broader catacomb system in the same manner as the hypogeum of the Flavii became incorporated into the catacomb of Domitilla and the area of Lucina incorporated several individual hypogea into the catacomb system that became part of S. Callisto.¹⁷

Not only did the city wall's construction limit the monument's physical development it also arrested its artistic development. Pre-Christian decoration was

¹⁷ For the early development of the catacomb of Domitilla see Reekmans 1964; for the area of Lucina in the catacomb of S. Callisto see Pergola 1979. For the early development of catacombs, see Brandenburg 1984, Focchi Nicolai et al. 2009: 13-36 and most recently Borg 2013: 59-121.

generally adapted or simply covered over when the burial site passed into Christian use as in the case of the hypogeum of Ampliatus.¹⁸ The artistic style of the hypogeum of the Aurelii however is, outside of the megalographic scenes, firmly in the tradition of Roman wall painting which arose during the late Antonine period out of the earlier Fourth style of painting that was itself first seen in the mid-1st century AD.¹⁹ The architectural forms seen in the Fourth style became progressively more slender as horizontal and vertical columns were replaced by patterns of red and green (occasionally blue) lines. In addition to the horizontal and vertical divisions, the fields and panels formed as a consequence were embellished with curved swags of vegetation.

In those areas of the hypogeum of the Aurelii which use the red-green lines (*cubiculum* B, vestibule and *cubiculum* A vault) the closest comparanda are:

- (1) The so-called Villa Piccola beneath S. Sebastiano and
- (2) The *cubiculum* of the Good Shepherd in the catacomb of Domitilla.

The first, near the third milestone of the Via Appia, is dated to c. AD 240 (Figure 3).²⁰ The term 'villa', however, is a misnomer as the building is not domestic, but closely associated with adjacent tombs though not used as a burial place itself.²¹ The decoration displays what Joyce describes as a "*horror vacui*".²² Each of the principal panels, at its centre, has detailed human, animal or vegetal motifs. Around these panels the space between panels and the broader fields created by other red lines are filled with short green lines that are sometimes connected to, sometimes separate from the red line framework.

The second comparandum, in the wholly funerary context of the catacomb of Domitilla, is dated a little earlier to AD 200-240 (Figure 4).²³ Here, as in the Villa

¹⁸ Testini 1978.

¹⁹ For a detailed discussion of the emergence and evolution of red-green linear style see: Joyce 1981 chapter 1 especially 40-6; Mielsch 2001: 107-21.

²⁰ Jastrzębowska 1981: 36-9. Fiocchi Nicolai et al. 2009: 90, fig. 99.

²¹ Jastrzębowska 1981: 100, abb. 1.

²² Joyce 1981: 44.

²³ Pergola 1979: 332-4. Fiocchi Nicolai et al. 2009: 22-3, 91-2, figs 17, 100-1

Piccola, a primary framework of red lines provides panels, some of which are filled by 'floating' figures and others by secondary green lines. The use of green lines as secondary to the primary divisions formed by red lines will inform the interpretation of the so-called "Homeric Scene" in *cubiculum A* (Chapter 9, section 9.2).

Thus the hypogeum of the Aurelii decoration in the vestibule and *cubiculum B* is, by virtue of its similarities in the basic layout of its decorative scheme, contemporary to the *cubiculum* of the Good Shepherd and the Villa Piccola i.e. dateable to the first half of the third century. This is compatible with the archaeological evidence discovered by Bendinelli who found a number of tile stamps (in the fill of the hypogeum) the latest of which was dated to the reign of Septimius Severus (193-211 AD) and an adjacent burial also dated to the Severan era.²⁴

The hypogeum of the Aurelii stands on the threshold of two significant changes in ancient Roman burial practice: (1) the requirement for greater levels of organisation than had previously been the case²⁵ and (2) the advent of Christianity which, while adapting and modifying certain pre-existing motifs, nonetheless profoundly changed the iconography of Roman tombs.

1.4 Methodology.

Much of the scholarship on the hypogeum of the Aurelii has been based upon a conviction that the paintings represented some form of Christian belief. Consequently, discussion has revolved around material that post-dates the paintings. This study has sought to address this difficulty by drawing upon material that is, wherever possible, contemporary or pre-dates the hypogeum. Where later material, especially Christian material, is used it is done so with caution given the changes (and continuities) that occurred in artistic representation in the century and a half after the hypogeum's construction brought about by the triumph of Christianity. Where commentators have avoided perceived Christian connections interpretation has been based on élite representation. This is mistaken as the one secure fact that we

²⁴ Bendinelli 1922: 300 and 432.

²⁵ Borg 2013: 119.

do know about the Aurelii is that they were not members of the social *élite*, but *liberti* and I therefore, as mentioned above, discuss the tradition of freedman commemoration before turning to the hypogeum of the Aurelii itself.

Extensive use is made of epigraphic evidence and material that relates to pre-Christian commemorative funerary practice. Epigraphic research has been greatly enhanced in recent years by the construction of on-line epigraphic databases. The two most commonly referred to are the Epigraphic Database Clauss-Slaby (EDCS) and the Epigraphic Database Roma (EDR). They both have their strengths and weaknesses. The former is more comprehensive, but the latter possesses more detailed information e.g. the current whereabouts of a particular inscription and more extensive bibliography. Such tools allow rapid searches for comparanda and finding further information. Yet useful though they are they are less useful when investigating 'unknown unknowns'. For that the impressive scholarship of previous generations has not been made redundant. The author carried out an exhaustive search through the many fascicules of *CIL VI* which threw up many useful leads that may otherwise have gone undiscovered.

Early Christian and Homeric texts used in support of previous theories have been re-read in context to test whether they may be relied upon to throw light on the meaning of the paintings and ultimately those depicted within them. In many instances the alleged 'proof' is revealed to be less than convincing.

It has been the author's intention to address all the images within the hypogeum's three *cubicula* and vestibule. Some scholarship has concentrated on individual images without taking the wider context, architectural and artistic, into consideration. Not all these results have been satisfactory with some contributions repeating errors that could have been avoided with a closer consideration of the overall decorative schema of the tomb. This thesis seeks to provide an interpretation which avoids internal contradictions in order to provide a comprehensive understanding of the commissioners of the monument and their place in Roman society.

1.5 Summary of Previous Scholarship.

Since the discovery of the hypogeum of the Aurelii there have been numerous attempts at interpretation. This brief description follows the five 'schools' of opinion on the meaning of the frescoes and the belief systems of those who commissioned them. They are:

- Orthodox Christian.²⁶
- Gnostics and heretics.
- Non-Christian or pagan beliefs.
- Syncretic art.
- Non-religious interpretations.

1.5.1 Orthodox Christian.

An interpretation of the monument, as one erected by orthodox Christians, was first proposed by Bendinelli who undertook the excavation.²⁷ This interpretation was prompted by various individual scenes considered Christian and that influenced the exegesis of the whole monument's decorative scheme.

The first part of the monument to be excavated was *cubiculum* A where, on the left hand wall close to the entrance, in the upper register of decoration, the image of a long-haired and bearded, yet youthful, figure was found. The figure, sitting on a hillside reading a scroll and surrounded by various animals brought to Bendinelli's mind images of Christ,²⁸ in particular, at the suggestion of Orazio Marucchi,²⁹ the concept of Christ as Good Shepherd mentioned by the early third century epitaph of

²⁶ Strictly speaking the terms 'orthodox' and 'orthodoxy' when applied to Christian belief are anachronistic in the pre-Nicene period, however, for ease of reference they are used here to denote belief that would in due course become orthodox. Similarly the term 'heretic' is used here anachronistically for those beliefs that subsequently would not become part of orthodox faith.

²⁷ Bendinelli 1922: 476.

²⁸ Bendinelli 1922: 344-5.

²⁹ Marucchi 1921a: 45. Bendinelli 1922: 440.

Abercius.³⁰ A lack of settled Christian iconography at the time of the monument's construction was thought to be the reason that the figure was not the clean-shaven image of Christ more common in Christian iconography of the fourth and fifth centuries.³¹

Excavation progressed to the upper chamber where two fragmentary scenes were found on the rear wall. The first, on the left, of two figures, a snake and a tree was read by Bendinelli as part of a scene of the creation of Adam and Eve and the Fall from Grace.³² Bendinelli thought the second scene, on the right, resembled early images of God creating mankind:³³ a Creation scene that formed a pendant to that of the Fall from Grace. To complement these images from the Old Testament the seated figures on the sidewalls were interpreted as prophets or apostles reading scripture.³⁴

In the vestibule to the third chamber, *cubiculum* B, a figure dressed in tunic and *pallium* was found apparently pointing to a green Latin cross (Figure 5).³⁵ This was not interpreted by Bendinelli, but was made much of by Wilpert and the Gnostic 'school', as discussed further below.

Within *cubiculum* A the Large Procession of eleven palliate figures initially led Bendinelli to construe these as the twelve apostles, one having been lost when the portal (leading to the incomplete hypogeum extension) was cut into the rear wall.³⁶ However, by the time of his monograph in 1922 further investigation had revealed that the doorway had destroyed a pre-existing *arcosolium*, rather than a twelfth

³⁰ Considered to be the earliest Christian inscription dated c. 216. Mitchell 2008: 303.

³¹ Bendinelli 1922: 441, fn 2.

³² Bendinelli 1922: 436-7.

³³ Bendinelli 1922: 437-8.

³⁴ Bendinelli 1922: 434 why Bendinelli should state that, "*oggi visibili in numero di cinque*" is unclear as there are only four with no suggestion (or space) for a fifth figure.

³⁵ Bendinelli 1922: 320 and 434.

³⁶ Bendinelli 1920: 131.

figure, and there had only ever been eleven figures:³⁷ a point emphasised by Thomas Ashby.³⁸

This misunderstanding of the number of figures in the Large Procession (despite Bendinelli's retraction in his definitive monograph) coloured the opinion of many subsequent commentators. Mary Swindler³⁹ followed the opinions of, "*alcuni studiosi*" in 1929 and despite drawing attention to Paul Styger's warning⁴⁰ against reading symbolism into places where it does not exist described the Large Procession as apostles yet accepted that there had only ever been eleven. Despite the uncanonical number Ernest Nash,⁴¹ in 1962, also described them as apostles and repeated the canard that one had been destroyed by the construction of the door to the tomb's extension. Wladimiro Dorigo,⁴² in 1971, rejected the idea of the figures being historical on the grounds of the, "most reliable philological evidence" which, unfortunately, he did not quote. More recently, this apostolic reading has been repeated by Filippo Coarelli⁴³ and Alexia Petsalis-Diomidis.⁴⁴

The Christian interpretation coloured the reading of other frescoes in the same *cubiculum* such as the *adventus* scene above the Large Procession. This has been read as an *adventus* based upon contemporary imperial iconography that in turn influenced the entry into either the earthly Jerusalem by Christ⁴⁵ or the celestial city by the deceased:⁴⁶ the former informed by the image of a donkey within the city, the latter by the urban imagery on the rear wall and their supposed similarities with

³⁷ Bendinelli 1922: 320, 322-3 discusses the possibility of a twelfth figure to the right of the *arcosolium* below the 'Homeric' scene but rejects the idea on the grounds that there would be insufficient space and the loss of all trace of such a twelfth figure when all the others are well preserved is highly unlikely. Bendinelli 1922: 434 records, without reference to his original opinion, and with a hint of disapproval that, "*nonchè la serie di undici figure virili, che già da alcuni studiosi furono senza molte esitazioni identificate con gli Apostoli.*" ["as well as the series of eleven male figures, that some scholars have, without much hesitation identified as apostles."]

³⁸ Ashby 1923-4: 107.

³⁹ Swindler 1929: 401-2.

⁴⁰ Styger 1927: 11.

⁴¹ Nash 1962: 317.

⁴² Dorigo 1971: 105.

⁴³ Coarelli 2007: 200.

⁴⁴ Petsalis-Diomidis 2007: 278.

⁴⁵ Swindler 1929: 402. Kantorowicz 1944: 215.

⁴⁶ Borda 1958: 317. Grabar 1966: 108, fig. 106. Colli 1983: 123, 147.

descriptions in the Book of Revelations.⁴⁷ Thus to the proponents of an orthodox Christian interpretation the decorative scheme of *cubiculum* A presented a, "coherent" programme: Good Shepherd, welcome to heavenly Jerusalem after death and divine judgement.⁴⁸

Although Bendinelli posited a Christian interpretation of the monument he recognised that many elements of the decoration remained unexplained and acknowledged that there were colleagues who considered this, "*scabrosa e controversa materia*"⁴⁹ was due to the monument's possible use by heretics. The enigmatic nature of the paintings was evidence, according to Ashby,⁵⁰ of attempts to "camouflage" the Christian graves from hostile pagans though this particular idea did not find favour with scholars other than Rodolfo Lanciani.⁵¹

1.5.2 Gnostics and Heretics.

In 1924 Wilpert, an ordained priest who had already produced a *magnum opus* of catacomb wall paintings in 1903, issued an influential publication that contained the finest colour reproductions of the frescoes by C. Tabanelli. Wilpert's attempt to interpret the tomb's decoration highlighted the perceived incongruities and led him to a comprehensive, and enduring, interpretation based upon Gnostic belief.

The upper chamber's rear wall fresco⁵² was interpreted according to Gnostic philosophy as it had developed in the second century AD and known (in Wilpert's time) exclusively through writings later approved for their orthodoxy:⁵³ primarily Irenaeus (late 2nd century), Hippolytus (first half 3rd century) and Clement of Alexandria (c. 150-215). According to these early Christian writers Gnostics believed that Man had been created by an emanation of the Pleroma or Divine Spirit known

⁴⁷ Colli 1983: 123, 147.

⁴⁸ Coarelli 2007: 201.

⁴⁹ Bendinelli 1922: 435.

⁵⁰ Ashby 1922-3: 100.

⁵¹ Lanciani 1922: 54.

⁵² Wilpert 1924: 8-17

⁵³ The Nag Hammadi discoveries in Egypt, 1945 subsequently opened up further fields of study on Gnosticism outside the scope of this thesis. For a review of Gnostic studies post-Nag Hammadi see Filoramo 1990.

as the Demiurge Ialdabaoth.⁵⁴ This less than perfect Being was identified by Wilpert as the figure on the right side of the rear wall. The serpent on the left side of the wall associated the monument with a sect known as the Ophite Naassenes as they held serpents in great esteem: the serpent was the means by which *gnosis* was received (Irenaeus *Adv. Haer.* 1, 30).⁵⁵

In *cubiculum A* the *adventus* scene was associated with the arrival of the second century Epiphanes, son of the Gnostic prophet Carpocrates, into Same on the island of Cephalonia.⁵⁶ This *adventus* was explained by Wilpert as symbolising a form of apotheosis in the Carpocratian belief system.⁵⁷ However, Epiphanes is known only⁵⁸ from the writings of Clement of Alexandria (*Stromata* III, 2, 5-9) who does not mention such an incident. Wilpert was another of Bendinelli's, "*alcuni studiosi*" who interpreted the 'Large Procession' as the apostles without commenting on the fact that there were only eleven.⁵⁹ The central medallion on the ceiling of *cubiculum B* was construed, by Wilpert,⁶⁰ as a Gnostic divine triad: the central figure of Sophia, the first woman with the first and second man from whom Christ is descended. The four figures with wands (*virgae*) set around the medallion were representations of the Gnostic Christ alternating with peacocks, symbols of consecration.⁶¹ Other images of figures with *virgae* were construed as symbolic of magic related to the followers of the early Gnostic divines Menander and Simon Magus⁶² (Irenaeus *Adv. Haer.* 1.23.1-5). The depiction of women called to Wilpert's mind⁶³ the imparting of Gnostic wisdom through the agency of Mariamne (Hipp. *Philosop.* 5.7 and 10.5, not 10.7 as Wilpert's footnote). Despite the somewhat complex arguments put forward by Wilpert, in the years immediately following the idea that the builders of the

⁵⁴ Wilpert 1924: 9-10.

⁵⁵ Wilpert 1924: 10. Doresse 1960: 92.

⁵⁶ Wilpert 1924: 36-9.

⁵⁷ Wilpert 1924: 39-42.

⁵⁸ *EEC*: 145, A. Monaci Castagno 1992, s.v. 'Carpocrates'.

⁵⁹ Wilpert 1924: 26. Wilpert 1924: 24 also identifies the twelve male figures in the *arcosolium* in *cubiculum B*'s rear wall to be apostles.

⁶⁰ Wilpert 1924: 19-20.

⁶¹ Wilpert 1924: 20.

⁶² Wilpert 1924: 18. *EEC*: 553, A. Monaci Castagno 1992, s.v. 'Menander'; 780, E. Peretto 1992, s.v. 'Simon Magus - Simonians'.

⁶³ Wilpert 1924: 10, fn 40.

monument were a sect of Gnostics was generally accepted as a means of reconciling the various non-orthodox elements of the paintings.

As briefly noted above (section 1.5.1) one 'proof' of a Christian origin for the hypogeum of the Aurelii was a Latin cross on the right hand wall of the vestibule that Wilpert claimed to have been the first to recognise.⁶⁴ He first associates the cross with the Gnostic aeon *Oros* in accordance with Valentinian theology then states that that is not the purpose of the cross in this instance, but that it is a symbol that the monument was exclusively used by Christians. In Wilpert's words a "*trait d'union*" between the two subterranean *cubicula*, though precisely how this was meant to be understood remained unclear.

Michael Rostovtzeff⁶⁵ followed Wilpert's Gnostic interpretation stating that the frescoes, "certainly reflect the sacred books of one of the Gnostic sects" and reiterated the theory that the 'Adam and Eve' images in the upper chamber were key to the Christian, if heretical, philosophy of the Aurelii. Attempts to understand the meaning of the paintings concentrated on what particular form of Gnostic or heretical Christianity was being exhibited. Carlo Cecchelli, in 1928⁶⁶ and in 1944⁶⁷ in his review of supposedly heretical monuments in Rome, noted the absence of any cross in Christian iconography prior to the fourth century yet nevertheless used its presence in the hypogeum of the Aurelii in support of a heretical Christian, in this

⁶⁴ Wilpert 1924: 2, "... mostrava niente meno che una croce della forma così detta latina, dipinta in color verde e un po' sbiadita, perciò rimasta da tutti inosservata. Quando fui sicuro del fatto mio, dissi: 'Qui c'è la croce!' La scoperta della croce destò presso i miei compagni il più vivo interesse. 'Questo è forte!', esclamò il dott. Bendinelli, avvicinandosi alla pittura." ["It displayed nothing less than a cross of the so-called Latin type, painted in green and a little abraded, for which reason it had remained unobserved by everyone. When I was sure of my facts I said, 'It is a cross!' The discovery of the cross awoke a lively interest in my companions. 'This is amazing', exclaimed dott. Bendinelli, approaching the picture."] The incident is not recorded by Bendinelli in his description of this part of the hypogeum Bendinelli 1922: 380.

⁶⁵ Rostovtzeff 1927: 150.

⁶⁶ Cecchelli 1928: 59-60.

⁶⁷ Cecchelli 1944: 86-7.

case Montanist,⁶⁸ interpretation; a view supported by Paulo Mingazzini⁶⁹ who listed nine reasons - none of which are very different to views considered orthodox.⁷⁰ Nevertheless, the idea was repeated by Maurizio Borda who saw allusions to the biblical Book of the Revelations in the *forum* and *hortus conclusus* scenes painted on the rear wall of *cubiculum A*.⁷¹

The Valentinians⁷² mentioned by Wilpert were first suggested by Marucchi⁷³ and Felice Grossi Gondi⁷⁴ in 1921. Their ideas arose by considering the *arcosolia* decoration in *cubiculum B* and the banqueting scene in *cubiculum A*. As each of these images contained twelve figures and, as the number twelve was said to be important to the Valentinian sect (Irenaeus *Adv. Haer.* 1.1.2 and 1.18.4), known to have been in Rome,⁷⁵ then this was considered proof for a Valentinian connection. This idea had developed earlier in 1903-4 when Marucchi⁷⁶ had discussed another image showing twelve diners in a recently discovered tomb called Cava della Rossa on the Via Latina near the Villa Lazzaroni.

In the post-war period Jerome Carcopino in 1956⁷⁷ and Marcel Chicoteau in 1976⁷⁸ took up the purely Gnostic reading. Carcopino's contribution was the second part of a three-part discussion on the evidence of Pythagorean philosophy in the city of Rome and its evolution during the imperial period. The hypogeum of the Aurelii was dealt with in five chapters in arguments that Jocelyn Toynbee described as more

⁶⁸ Followers of a mid-second century prophet, Montanus, from Phrygia they were orthodox in many of their views and attracted the support of Tertullian at the beginning of the third century AD. See *EEC*: 570-1, B. Aland 1992, s.v. 'Montanus – Montanism'.

⁶⁹ Mingazzini 1942/3: 365-6. Although taking a Montanist reading Mingazzini nonetheless considered the *adventus* scene to represent a real life event.

⁷⁰ E.g. no. 8: the Montanists held the apostles in high regard hence the apostles of the Large Procession.

⁷¹ Borda 1958: 318-19.

⁷² A Gnostic sect that arrived in Rome from Egypt c. 140. See *EEC*: 860-1, C. Gianotto 1992, s.v. 'Valentinus the Gnostic'.

⁷³ Marucchi 1921a: 47.

⁷⁴ Grossi-Gondi 1921: 126-34.

⁷⁵ On the subject of Valentinians in Rome see Guarducci 1973.

⁷⁶ Marucchi 1903: 284 citing Irenaeus *Adv. Haer.* 1.13 (the author could not find any reference to dining groups of twelve in Marucchi's cited passage)

⁷⁷ Carcopino 1956: 85-221.

⁷⁸ Chicoteau 1976.

satisfying than previous theories, but at times, "not a little weak".⁷⁹ Chicoteau's concise and influential study under the title: '*Glanures au Viale Manzoni*' explained all the paintings in the hypogeum of the Aurelii in purely Gnostic terms. As with Carcopino the work received mixed reviews primarily due to the lack of attention to the physical evidence⁸⁰ and Chicoteau made no attempt to see the monument in the context of other earlier or contemporary tombs.

Despite criticisms of both Carcopino and Chicoteau and the rise of alternative theories the Gnostic 'school' continued to attract supporters. In 1960 Jean Doresse⁸¹ considered the *mandorla* formed by the red/green curved lines in the vestibule and *cubiculum* B evidence of the Naassenes' veneration for the almond (Hipp. *Philosoph.* 5.9) while James Stevenson,⁸² also drew on Hippolytus (Hipp. *Philosoph.* 7.1), to connect the so-called 'Homeric Scene' in *cubiculum* A with Naassenes yet suggested another sect, the Monarchians,⁸³ as the commissioners of the monument. Contra these ideas Paul Corby Finney's 1980 work on Gnostic art saw no connection between the hypogeum of the Aurelii's decoration and Gnosticism.⁸⁴ The Gnostic theories of Wilpert, Carcopino and Chicoteau were repeated by William Frend⁸⁵ and Alastair Logan⁸⁶ in 1996 and 2006 respectively. The prevalence of the Gnostic interpretation is exemplified by the hypogeum of the Aurelii's use as an exemplar of Gnostic symbolism in the Oxford Encyclopedia of the Early Church.⁸⁷

1.5.3 Non-Christian or Pagan Beliefs.

For more than half a century there was little dispute about the fundamental exegesis of the paintings of the hypogeum of the Aurelii - they were Christian. Arguments there were about what particular form (orthodox, heretical, Gnostic) which varied in

⁷⁹ Toynbee 1957: 265.

⁸⁰ Wild 1980: 296. Poe 2007: 96, fn 3.

⁸¹ Doresse 1960: 92.

⁸² Stevenson 1978:114.

⁸³ *EEC*: 566, M. Simonetti, 1992, s.v. Monarchians.

⁸⁴ Finney 1980: 442-7.

⁸⁵ Frend 1996: 210.

⁸⁶ Logan 2006: 92-115.

⁸⁷ *EEC*: 612, C. Gianotto 1992, s.v. Ophites-Naassenes.

influence or complexity, but no radical reappraisal of the paintings was forthcoming until the publication of Himmelmann's article in 1975.

Himmelmann fundamentally undermined the twin pillars upon which the Christian/Gnostic interpretation had been based: (1) the 'Adam & Eve/Creator' paintings of the upper chamber and (2) the figure pointing to the Latin cross in the vestibule.⁸⁸ The first criticism was that the so-called Adam and Eve iconography was simply inconsistent with Christian representation of the story of Genesis i.e. the tree and serpent were to one side of the two figures and not between them. Furthermore, the lack of shame features argued against the Christian story of creation. In place of the story of Genesis Himmelmann thought the image was more redolent of Hercules in the Garden of the Hesperides.⁸⁹ An alternative reading for the right side of the upper chamber's rear wall, Prometheus creating the first humans, was considered, but rejected by Himmelmann because the hypogeum of the Aurelii portrait was inconsistent with known images of Prometheus.⁹⁰ Himmelmann argued that the 'creator' figure was the deceased in the apparel of a philosopher; a habit that would become increasingly popular in the later third and early fourth centuries.⁹¹ The presence of figures wearing tunic and *pallium* elsewhere in the monument led Himmelmann to conclude that the whole inspiration and meaning of the tomb's decoration was philosophical.⁹² These figures were comparable to sarcophagi philosopher images popular in the late third/early fourth centuries and recalled, "*philosophischen' Wundertäter*" such as Apollonius of Tyana (a philosopher who lived in the late first/early second century AD).⁹³

Himmelmann further demonstrated that the second pillar of a Christian/Gnostic interpretation, the Latin cross whose discovery had so excited Wilpert was, in fact, an accident of preservation.⁹⁴ The 'cross' was no more than the

⁸⁸ Himmelmann 1975: 10-11.

⁸⁹ Himmelmann 1975: 12.

⁹⁰ Himmelmann 1975: 13.

⁹¹ Himmelmann 1975: 14-16.

⁹² A theory taken up most recently in Urbano 2016.

⁹³ Himmelmann 1975: 18.

⁹⁴ Himmelmann 1975: 24.

remnants of a garland and had no iconographic significance:⁹⁵ an analysis subsequently accepted by those most closely associated with the recent restorations and able to examine the fresco in minute detail.⁹⁶

Kaiser-Minn,⁹⁷ in her 1981 study of Creation myth as depicted in third and fourth century art, also rejected the Christian reading, but included the hypogeum of the Aurelii's Creation Scene in her corpus of Promethean imagery. The image of Prometheus and the palliate figures on the adjacent walls had, she argued, parallels with the Promethean sarcophagus found at Trinquetaille, Arles that has the Promethean creation on the long face of the sarcophagus but images of philosophers on each of the two short sides.⁹⁸ Iconographic inconsistencies, such as the Prometheus figure's short hair and clean-shaven appearance, Kaiser-Minn explained as idiosyncrasies of the Severan era.⁹⁹

1.5.4 Syncretic Art.

Following Himmelmann's article there was a line of thought that saw the frescoes as the product of an artistic syncretism: the proto-Christian builders of the tomb drawing upon classical art and culture to produce an eclectic series of pictures that fitted neither the classical nor later Christian canon. Bisconti's 1985 article was the first to suggest that the decoration represented a, "*sincretismo privato*";¹⁰⁰ a synthesis of multiple philosophical and artistic trends that were developing during the third century. In this idea Bisconti cited such places as the hypogea of Via Dino Compagni (Via Latina), Via Livenza etc. as examples of the mixture of Christian and pagan imagery. Bisconti returned to the subject on many occasions¹⁰¹ warning that convoluted theories risked losing sight of the context in which the hypogeum of the

⁹⁵ A similar 'cross' hanging from an extant garland may be seen in the entrance (north) wall of *cubiculum* B in Bisconti 2011a: tav. 57.

⁹⁶ Bisconti 1985: 892. Bisconti 2004b: 37. Pergola 2011: 110.

⁹⁷ Kaiser-Minn 1981: 86-9.

⁹⁸ Baratte and Metzger 1985: 117.

⁹⁹ Kaiser-Minn 1981: 88.

¹⁰⁰ Bisconti 1985: 898.

¹⁰¹ Bisconti 1989: 1314-17; 1994: 62-6; 1996: 4-11; 2004b: 13-38; 2006: 85-8; 2010: 25-52.

Aurelii frescoes were created.¹⁰² Recently Bisconti considers a more overtly Christian inspiration especially for the rear wall of the upper chamber and the 'Creation Scene' with parallels being drawn with the fourth century 'Dogmatic' sarcophagus.¹⁰³ Alison Crystal Poe, in her unpublished 2007 PhD dissertation, believed that no interpretation of the religious meaning of the upper chamber paintings was possible due to their fragmentary condition.¹⁰⁴ Nevertheless she argued that the builders of the monument were, "favourably disposed" towards Christianity.¹⁰⁵ Poe saw significant Christian iconographic influence in the urban landscapes depicted in *cubiculum A*¹⁰⁶ despite the observation, "In surviving Christian art, heaven *is* pictured as a city, but only beginning in the late fourth or early fifth century"¹⁰⁷ and, "Perhaps, finally, the Aurelii simply absorbed the *general* view of the afterlife as a city from Christian belief."¹⁰⁸ A conclusion in marked contrast to the research published by Klauser in the 1950s and 1960s¹⁰⁹ and Schumacher¹¹⁰ that proves that Christian art arose out of the influence of pre-existing pagan art not vice versa. Unlike Bisconti,¹¹¹ who considered the monument to be the property of a particular family, Poe saw the eclectic decoration as evidence of a Christian presence, and that the Aurelii were members of a domestic *collegium*, some of whom were Christians.¹¹²

1.5.5 Non-Religious Interpretations.

The non-Christian reading of Himmelmann and Kaiser-Minn of the upper chamber was not immediately taken up by scholars, but in the 21st century two scholars returned to the secular possibilities of the lower *cubicula*. Gian Luca Grassigli

¹⁰² Bisconti 1994: 63.

¹⁰³ Bisconti 2004b: 35-6. Dogmatic sarcophagus, dated to the first half of the fourth century: Vat. Mus. Pio Cristiano, 31427 (ex. 104) see Bovini/Brandenburg 1967: 41, no. 43. Bisconti 2011b: 44-5.

¹⁰⁴ Poe 2007: 185.

¹⁰⁵ Poe 2007: 195.

¹⁰⁶ Poe 2007: 193-5.

¹⁰⁷ Poe 2007: 191.

¹⁰⁸ Poe 2007: 194.

¹⁰⁹ In a series of articles published in *JbAC* between 1958 and 1967. See especially 1958, 1960 and 1967 on the iconography of the Good Shepherd.

¹¹⁰ Schumacher 1978: 495-505.

¹¹¹ Bisconti 1985: 898.

¹¹² Poe 2007: 117-20, 195.

proposed the first at a convention in 2001.¹¹³ He stated that it was a mistake to view the series of frescoes in *cubiculum* A in terms of religious affiliation, but rather that it ought to be seen within the context of other Roman funerary art. In particular the representation of *otium* among the élite which extended to their funerary decoration. This theory was an extension of his ideas of the *dominus in villam sucessus*, the reign of villa life and the habit of autorepresentation in Late Antiquity discussed in an article of 2000¹¹⁴ and finally articulated in his book printed in 2011.¹¹⁵ The fundamental decorative motif was the display of the status of the *dominus* exalted in a style descending from the ideals portrayed in the first century tomb of C. Vestorius Priscus in Pompeii and leading to the depictions of Trebius Iustus in fourth century Rome.¹¹⁶ Grassigli placed the *cubiculum* A series of shepherd, *adventus*, *forum*, *hortus conclusus* and banquet all as portraying an idealised everyday life.¹¹⁷

The second secular interpretation, and most recent publication on the hypogeum, was by Elżbieta Jastrzębowska whose article primarily focussed on the central medallion of the vault in *cubiculum* B.¹¹⁸ She drew attention to the status of the occupants as *liberti* and concluded that the medallion scene represented the act of manumission carried out on one of the deceased and that consequently images such as the *adventus* ought to be seen in the same light without recourse to spiritual symbolism.

After nearly a hundred years of speculation and research there is no generally accepted explanation, comprehensive or otherwise, of the frescoes of the hypogeum of the Aurelii. The initial Gnostic ideas of Wilpert, despite criticism by Himmelmann, Finney, Bisconti and Grassigli, continue to be repeated viz. Logan. Bisconti's earlier views of some form of syncretism have evolved in the light of recent restoration towards a more orthodox Christian explanation repeated by Coarelli. Very little work

¹¹³ Grassigli 2002: 405-18.

¹¹⁴ Grassigli 2000: 199-226.

¹¹⁵ Grassigli 2011: 75-84.

¹¹⁶ Grassigli 2011: 83.

¹¹⁷ Grassigli 2011: 77.

¹¹⁸ Jastrzębowska 2013: 53-64.

has been done on the frescoes of *cubiculum* B (*pace* Jastrzębowska) and no one has explained why the figures of the Large Procession are barefoot. The identity of the Aurelii themselves remains enigmatic: Grassigli¹¹⁹ sees them as a family of freedmen whereas Poe¹²⁰ and Giovagnoli¹²¹ consider them members of a type of *collegium*.

¹¹⁹ Grassigli 2011: 82.

¹²⁰ Poe 2007: 108-23.

¹²¹ Giovagnoli 2011: 231.

Chapter 2. Architectural Description.

The hypogeum, as it was originally constructed, consisted of three rooms. Two rooms were subterranean and almost intact except for a small area damaged during the aforementioned construction works. Above one of the rooms was an upper chamber which had formed the foundation of a small *casetta* which was demolished to allow excavation. Bendinelli's detailed excavation report was published in 1922 under the care of the Reale Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei.¹²² All three rooms, or *cubicula*, and the vestibule between one of the *cubicula* and the sole staircase were richly decorated on walls, within *arcosolia* and ceilings. The upper chamber, though badly preserved compared to those on the lower level, nevertheless had clearly been equally well decorated when commissioned.

Excavation revealed a brick-faced funerary monument measuring approximately 11.7m north-south and 6.95m east-west.¹²³ The hypogeum was positioned in the south-east corner of a courtyard measuring 13.7m north-south and 13.0m east-west (figure 6) paved with irregular tufa blocks. The eastern and southern walls of the courtyard represent a continuation of the walls of the hypogeum and they are therefore clearly associated with each other. This conclusion is reinforced by the fact that a *lucernium* stepped out from the north face of the hypogeum into the courtyard providing light for the chamber beneath (figure 7).¹²⁴ Different styles of construction of the courtyard walls¹²⁵ make it highly unlikely that they were part of the original scheme, but as courtyard and hypogeum have the same footprint they may have had the same owner with the courtyard built after the hypogeum ceased to be a burial site. The northern and eastern walls of the courtyard respect the northern limit of *cubiculum* B below almost exactly suggesting that the courtyard may have represented some form of consolidation of property boundaries following

¹²² Bendinelli, 1922: 289-520.

¹²³ The actual orientation is 30° east of true north, but the terms north, south etc. shall be used for ease of reference.

¹²⁴ Bendinelli 1922: fig. 3.

¹²⁵ Bendinelli 1922: 295-6.

the cessation of the extension works (figure 8).¹²⁶ There were several entrances on the western wall of the courtyard one of which was accidental (figure 6), two were of a modest nature and the one close to the north wall preserved the base of a column and travertine threshold presenting a monumental aspect and indicating that the courtyard was significant.¹²⁷ A further, well proportioned, 2.2m wide entrance was placed in the north wall immediately opposite the *lucernium* mentioned above.¹²⁸ After the cessation of burials the courtyard may have been connected with the continuation of funerary cult practice.¹²⁹ There was no direct access between courtyard and hypogeum nor evidence of access to an upper storey from the courtyard though the possibility remains that an upper storey may have been reached by ladder from the courtyard.¹³⁰ Whatever the access to any putative upper storey, the ground floor entrance was on the eastern side, i.e. on the other side of the tomb from the courtyard.

A podium survived approximately 2.25m above the ancient ground level.¹³¹ Above this was a cornice that comprised a step 0.3m high set back 0.15m from the face of the podium and above that a cyma reversa cornice 0.15m high. Midway along the south wall at the level of the cornice was the mouth of a *lucernium* that allowed light into the lower areas of the hypogeum (figure 9).¹³² The wall above the cornice was preserved to a height of only 0.8m at the most.

Upon entering the hypogeum from the entrance set in the eastern wall (figure 10) there is a small landing (lan1) followed by three steps (s1) that lead down to a landing 2.6m long (lan2) from which access was gained to the upper chamber

¹²⁶ Bisconti 2011a: tav. 2b.

¹²⁷ Bendinelli 1922: 297.

¹²⁸ Bendinelli 1922: 298.

¹²⁹ Poe 2007: 19 suggests this possibility and that the courtyard may, "represent part of a larger, non-funerary complex inserted within the then-derelict cemetery." This latter suggestion seems to me the less likely given the co-incidence of boundary around the north and east wall.

¹³⁰ Such extra-mural access was the case in the tomb of Caecilia Metella and a tomb outside the Porta Asinaria recorded by Bartoli 1697: tavv. 53-4.

¹³¹ Bendinelli 1922: 292

¹³² Bendinelli 1922: fig. 1.

(on the left) and a small room (on the right).¹³³ The entrance to the small room to the right (north) of lan2 is down a further staircase (s5) of three steps. This room was approximately 3.2m long (east-west) and 1.0m wide (north-south). Most of this room was destroyed during the construction of the underground car park and the consolidation of the site. Today little beyond s5 remains. There was no decoration within the room beyond some red linear partitioning on a white ground.¹³⁴ Two *formae* burial slots were placed in the middle of this room and there may have been a further two burials perpendicular to these at either end of them. These *formae* were original as were two further *formae* in the floor of lan2.

2.1 Upper Chamber.

On the left of lan2 is the entrance to the upper chamber. This semi-subterranean room is rectangular, measuring internally 2.65m wide by 3.50m long, with brick-faced concrete walls (figure 11).¹³⁵ The entrance wall (north) is 0.8m thick with a doorway 1.2m wide. The other (i.e. external) walls are much thicker: the right hand (west) wall is 1.9m thick, the left hand (east) wall 2.2m thick and the rear (south) wall 1.65m thick which could have supported a structure of considerable height, perhaps in excess of 5.4m.¹³⁶ Within the thickness of each of these three walls is a recess 0.75m deep and the full width of the walls, each finished with tiles to form a shelf approximately 1.2m above the floor on three sides. The entrance, set 0.5m above the floor, had steps which housed a *lucernium* (once covered with a grill) providing light and air to *cubiculum* B below. Consolidation work has filled in this opening and the steps are no longer extant. The original walls survive only a few centimetres above the shelf level but their thickness and corner piers suggest the room had a concrete vault (the narrower, standing walls visible in figure 11 belong to the modern building that re-used the chamber as a foundation). Six *formae* were contained within the

¹³³ Poe 2007 gives an exhaustive description of the architectural layout of the hypogeum complete with measurements, both derived from Bendinelli's plans and elevations and on site measurement. Thus she adequately complements Bendinelli 1922. The following description is not meant to duplicate that work, but to provide an understanding of the setting for the frescoes which is the principal subject of this thesis.

¹³⁴ Poe 2007: 23.

¹³⁵ Bendinelli 1922: 300.

¹³⁶ Poe 2007: 14 suggests the overall height of the monument may have been 5.4m based upon similar examples in Isola Sacra and beneath the Vatican.

floor (only one was still intact at the time of excavation). The two sidewalls (east and west) each contain a shallow arch (*arcosolium*) beneath which are two further *formae*. The plaster between shelf and top of *formae* is substantially complete.

The rear wall has no *arcosolium* beneath the shelf, because one of the *lucernia* to *cubiculum* B (mentioned above in the description of the external structure) rises up through the south wall at an oblique angle (figure 12).¹³⁷ A later *loculus* was cut into the foot of the wall resulting in damage to the plasterwork.¹³⁸ In addition to the plaster loss caused by the *loculus*' insertion most of the plaster has been lost between the *loculus* and the shelf above leaving two areas either side of the *loculus* where plaster has been preserved albeit not without further loss.¹³⁹

All vertical surfaces and the undersides of the *arcosolia* were originally plastered and painted in fresco. Today, despite the efforts of the modern conservators, much of the colour in these frescoes has been lost since their discovery particularly in the blue/green part of the spectrum. The entrance wall was decorated with painted panels imitating a veneer of brecciated Numidian yellow marble, one on either side of the door each with a painted border of green 'porphyry'. The other three walls were filled with figurative scenes in the surviving areas below the shelf on the other three walls.¹⁴⁰ From lan2 a series of short flights of stairs and half landings (s2-4, lan3-4) lead to a landing (lan5) that provides access, left and right, to *cubiculum* A and B respectively (figures 10 and 13).

2.2 Cubiculum A.

Turning left on landing (lan5) seven steps (s8) extend approximately 1m into a vaulted, roughly rectangular, chamber 4.93m wide and 4.43m long orientated approximately north-south (figure 13).¹⁴¹ The right rear (north-east) corner has a re-entrant 1.05m wide and 1.25m long. The principal barrel vault spans between east

¹³⁷ See Bendinelli 1922: tav. 1 reproduced in Bisconti 2011a: tav. 4a.

¹³⁸ Bendinelli 1922: 310, fig. 11. Wilpert 1924: tav. 1. Bisconti 2011a: tav. 10.

¹³⁹ Bendinelli 1922: 310-13. Compare Bendinelli 1922: fig. 5 with Bisconti 2011a: tav. 10.

¹⁴⁰ Bisconti 2011a: tav. 6.

¹⁴¹ Bendinelli 1922: 315.

(right) and west (left) walls springing 2.1m above floor level and rising to a maximum height of 3.5m. Another, secondary, vault spans the niche within the right hand wall formed by the re-entrant corner at right angles to the first.¹⁴² The room was originally plastered throughout and the plasterwork is largely intact except for the following areas:

- The entrance wall (south) and a small adjacent part of the left (west) wall were severely damaged when the hypogeum was first discovered and little remains of the plaster on that side.¹⁴³
- The rear (north) wall was badly damaged in antiquity by a brick portal built to extend the tomb deeper and further to the north.¹⁴⁴ This extension work had evidently been interrupted not long after it had commenced because moulded brickwork was found lying in the room waiting to be used: these were used after the hypogeum's discovery to reconstruct the two brick piers seen today.¹⁴⁵
- In the west wall an unfinished *arcosolium* has been cut into the plaster work destroying part of the lower register frieze.¹⁴⁶
- Two small, possibly children's, *loculi* have been inserted into the dado: one underneath the unfinished *arcosolium*, the other in the rear wall to the left of the brick portal.
- Parts of the vault plaster have fallen away, but most missing details may be inferred with confidence from that remaining.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴² Bisconti 2011a: tav. 34.

¹⁴³ Giuliani 2011: fig.1. Bisconti 2011a: tav. 25a.

¹⁴⁴ Bisconti 2011a: tav. 29. There is no evidence for when the extension was built, but given the unfinished nature of the work it is likely to have been in the early 270s, work being interrupted by the construction of Rome's city wall by Aurelian.

¹⁴⁵ Giuliani 2011: 32, fig. 2. Bendinelli 1922: 318: fig. 14.

¹⁴⁶ Bendinelli 1922: 321, fig. 24. Bisconti 2011a: tav. 25b.

¹⁴⁷ Sabatini 2011: 255, fig. 4.

The floor of the *cubiculum* was originally paved in black and white mosaic throughout.¹⁴⁸ However, the insertion of *fossae* and two chest graves (one in the right hand niche, the other at right angles to it along the entrance wall) destroyed much of this with the exception of an inscription set out in black and white tesserae in a mosaic panel measuring 2.7m x 1.75m.¹⁴⁹ The mosaic panel has no decoration other than the inscription and a toothed border in black tesserae (each tooth consisting of four tesserae) with the teeth pointing outwards. The mosaic panel fills the space between the bottom of the stairs (s8) and the brick portal. A detailed discussion of the inscription will follow, (Chapter 3) but for now, we may simply note that the mosaic reads:

AVRELIO ONESIMO
AVRELIO PAPIRIO
AVRELIAE PRIME VIRG
AVRELIVS FELICISSIMVS
FRATRIS ET COLIBERT B M F¹⁵⁰

Two original *arcosolia* are extant. The first is on the west wall 0.7m from the entrance wall and measures 1.2m long, 0.35m deep and 1.15m high.¹⁵¹ The trench within it measures 1.2m long and 0.3m wide, thus it would have accommodated a child of no more than nine years of age.¹⁵² The other original, extant *arcosolium* is within the right hand (east) niche formed by the re-entrant wall roughly opposite the west *arcosolium*. This *arcosolium* is much larger being 2.05m long, 0.4m deep and 1.05m high. The trench within is likewise 2.05m long and 0.4m wide: at some point it had been deepened to accept a further body.¹⁵³ This second *arcosolium* therefore was sufficient for a tall, though slim, adult.¹⁵⁴ A third, adult-sized (1.8m long)

¹⁴⁸ Bendinelli 1922: 320.

¹⁴⁹ Bendinelli 1922: fig. 15. Bisconti 2011a: tavv. 29 and 41.

¹⁵⁰ *ICUR* n.s. 6.15391 = *AE* 1924, 0099 = *ILCV*, 766 = *AE* 1956, 0235 = *EDR072917*.

¹⁵¹ Sabatini 2011: fig. 5.

¹⁵² Bendinelli 1922: 316-17. Poe 2007: 42-3, fn 128. A female or male under 1.2m in height would be between five and nine years of age see Koepke and Baton 2005: table 2, fig. 3 and CDC 2000 Growth: table figs 11 and 12.

¹⁵³ Bendinelli 1922: 316 fn 1.

¹⁵⁴ Poe 2007: 44.

arcosolium was destroyed by the insertion of the portal in the rear wall.¹⁵⁵ The chamber thus originally held three bodies tallying with the number of dedicatees in the inscription: two adults buried in the rear and right hand walls and one child on the left hand wall. The room was lit by a *lucernium* positioned roughly in the centre of the principal vault which opened out in the paved courtyard directly above the *cubiculum*.

Leaving *cubiculum* A and returning to lan5 (figure 14) one continues down a short flight of stairs (s6) into a small room labelled by Bendinelli as the vestibule. No decoration to the stairwell is mentioned in Bendinelli's report and until recently none was known except for a simple red plaster dado. Recent restoration, however, has brought to light decorative details. On the right hand side of s6 is a 'sacro-idyllic' scene (figure 15) together with trees and what may be a circular building.¹⁵⁶ Autopsy of the stairwells (18th October 2012) shows there were other, indistinct, areas of decoration within the red dado, unfortunately nothing could be identified other than possible tree-like vegetation on the right hand wall of s2 and the wall of lan5.

2.3 Vestibule and *Cubiculum* B.

The vestibule measures 1.6m long by 2.95m wide though its floor area is constrained by burials within the floor that form part of the *arcosolia* on each side (figure 16).¹⁵⁷ The whole of each lateral wall is occupied by an *arcosolium*. The width of burial space within each *arcosolium* is increased beyond the line of the front and back walls of the vestibule by niches, on two levels, at each end so that each burial place is 2m long i.e. ample space for the burial of adults.¹⁵⁸ The lower of two original levels within

¹⁵⁵ Not mentioned in Bendinelli's 1920 report of the discovery, the presence of the *arcosolium* was confirmed by later investigation (Bendinelli 1922: 317). Although the *arcosolium* is no longer visible due to consolidation work the red line edging is visible to the bottom left of Bisconti 2011a: tav. 33 (figure 70b).

¹⁵⁶ Bisconti 2011a: tav. 43. This detail was first reported in Bisconti 2004b: 25, fig. 7.

¹⁵⁷ Bendinelli 1922: fig. 34. Bisconti 2011a: tav. 45.

¹⁵⁸ Bisconti 2011a: tavv. 3a and 52.

each *arcosolium* extends below the ground level of the vestibule.¹⁵⁹ The lower level on the left hand side is no longer visible due to modern consolidation work.¹⁶⁰

A lip between the upper and lower level provided a support for a substantial tile shelf to span the entire *arcosolium* (figure 17).¹⁶¹ Sometime after the initial construction the upper level was further divided horizontally by an additional tile shelf, more noticeable on the west wall than the east, which also spanned the entire *arcosolium*.¹⁶² Remains of this shelf are still evident in the west *arcosolium*. Also at some point in the hypogeum's history the floor was lowered further within each *arcosolium* increasing the number of burial spaces to five in the west and six in the east.¹⁶³

Above the *arcosolium* arch, on each side, there is an expanse of wall surface reaching a barrel vault which spans the whole room.¹⁶⁴ The maximum height of the vestibule is 2.6m.

Opposite the entrance into the vestibule is the entrance into *cubiculum* B, which one enters via a short flight of five steps (figure 14, s7). The final two steps belong to the later phase when the hypogeum was extended in a southerly direction. In the process, the floor of the *cubiculum* was lowered by approximately 0.50m.¹⁶⁵ This lowering of the floor exposed the brickwork of the walls below the original floor level and destroyed the original tile flooring, traces of which survive at the bottom of the plasterwork.¹⁶⁶

Cubiculum B is 4.02m long and 3.32m wide with re-entrant corners that form corner pilasters 'supporting' a barrel vault on the same axis as that in the vestibule

¹⁵⁹ Bisconti 2011a: tav. 51.

¹⁶⁰ Bisconti 2011a: tav. 46.

¹⁶¹ Bisconti 2011a: tav. 52.

¹⁶² Bisconti 2011a: tavn. 52 and 54.

¹⁶³ Bendinelli 1922: 375. This subsequent expansion is not included in Bendinelli's section cited above figure 16).

¹⁶⁴ Bisconti 2011a: tavn. 46 and 51.

¹⁶⁵ Bendinelli 1922: 424-5, fig. 60. Bisconti 2011a: tavn. 4 and 68.

¹⁶⁶ Bisconti 2011a: tav. 61.

and with the top of the vaulting on the same level (figure 12).¹⁶⁷ Thus staircase s7 creates a higher ceiling in the *cubiculum* (3.7m) than in the vestibule.¹⁶⁸ The *cubiculum* is similar in size to the upper chamber directly above it and has two light wells: one above staircase s7, the other in the corner formed by the rear wall and barrel vault.

There is a high degree of symmetry in the layout of *cubiculum* B. The side and end walls each have two *arcosolia*, set one above the other, all 1.9m long, 0.45m deep, those on the upper level 1.15m high, those on the lower level 0.82m high.¹⁶⁹ The base of each upper *arcosolia* is deepened by a shelf that juts out into the room by a few centimetres. It stretches across the whole wall from one pilaster to the other. Although no sarcophagi were found the shelves are deep enough to allow them. The *arcosolia* are not as deep as those in the upper chamber (i.e. 0.73m), but they are as deep (i.e. 0.45m) as those in late 2nd/early 3rd C. tomb Z (Tomb of the 'Egyptians') in the Vatican necropolis which were able to accommodate both marble and terracotta sarcophagi (figures 18a-b) suggesting that a similar arrangement appertained here.¹⁷⁰ Poe mentions evidence of a double burial space in the lower rear wall *arcosolium*, however, there is no mention of that in Bendinelli's section or description of the excavation - with a depth of 0.45m the presence of a double burial appears unlikely and modern consolidation work makes it impossible to confirm one way or the other.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁷ Bendinelli 1922: 388.

¹⁶⁸ Bendinelli 1922: tav. 1. Bisconti 2011a: tav. 4a.

¹⁶⁹ Bendinelli 1922: 389. Bisconti 2011a: tavv. 62 (left), 68 (rear), 73 (right).

¹⁷⁰ Toynbee and Ward-Perkins 1956: 51-5, fig. 7, pl. 7.

¹⁷¹ Poe 2007: 68 refers to an excavation photograph that shows this feature, but the photograph reproduced is of too poor a quality to be of assistance. In comparison Ferrua 1971: 49, fig. 10 shows the cross-section of an *arcosolium* in the catacomb of Vibia with double burial; in this instance the depth is approximately one metre. Bendinelli 1922: 388-9, tav. I.

Chapter 3. Inscription: Who were the Aurelii?

The inscription is singularly important in the understanding of the hypogeum decorative scheme in that it defines those who are buried within and the relationship between them. It is worthwhile, therefore, to examine closely to see if the traditional reading of the inscription stands scrutiny.

As noted above the diplomatic text of the mosaic (figure 19) reads:

AVRELIO ONESIMO
AVRELIO PAPIRIO
AVRELIAE PRIME VIRG
AVRELIVS FELICISSIMVS
FRATRIS ET COLIBERT B M F

Since Bendinelli's original excavation report the tomb's inscription has been expanded to read:¹⁷²

Aurelio Onesimo
Aurelio Papirio
Aureliae Prim<a>e virg(ini)
Aurelius Felicissimus
fratri(bu)s et co(l)libert(is) b(ene) m(erentibus) f(ecit)¹⁷³

which may be translated as:

'Aurelius Felicissimus made (this tomb) for (his) well deserving brothers and fellow-freedmen: Aurelius Onesimus, Aurelius Papirius and Aurelia Prima, virgin.'

(Trans. author)

This examination will discuss the inscription in the context of epigraphic evidence from elsewhere primarily, but not exclusively, from the city of Rome. It will

¹⁷² Bendinelli 1922: 320 and 425-6. Ferrua 1975: 85. Himmelmann 1975: 9. Bisconti 1985: 890. Poe 2007: 40. Giovagnoli 2011: 229.

¹⁷³ Note the inclusion of Aurelia Prima among the *fratres* is an example of the male denomination taking precedence in the identification of mixed gender groups: for examples see Modestinus *Dig.* 2, 14, 35 and Paulus *Dig.* 10, 2, 38.

not only question various theories that have been put forward concerning the Aurelii, but will illuminate further their lives.

3.1 The Nomina and Cognomina.

There are four individuals named in the inscription all with a common *nomen*. The first two *cognomina*, Onesimus and Felicissimus were common names given to slaves and maintained by freedmen. The dedicatees are rendered in the dative case, the third individual being written Prime in lieu of the more accurate Primae. As with the two males, Prima is a popular name among the servile population and was also used for freeborn girls. The error in writing Prime instead of Primae is a characteristic of the evolution of sounds between *-ae* and *-e* characteristic of Late Latin. Primae has evolved into Prime a phenomenon seen in other epigraphic material such as a mid to late second century AD altar dedicated to another Aurelia Prima.¹⁷⁴ The last name to mention, Papirius, is far less widespread, but is a *nomen* that is known among the high class freeborn from the early republic if not before.¹⁷⁵ It was still known in the Antonine period and beyond at all levels of society.¹⁷⁶ In the case of Aurelius Papirius his name represents the use of a *nomen* as a *cognomen*.¹⁷⁷ Despite its highborn origins Papirius was evidently used as a slave name for the Aurelius Papirius of our inscription.¹⁷⁸

The *nomen* Aurelius/ -a, at the time of the tomb's construction and dedication, was common among the Roman population. In the early third century AD there are two principal reasons why an individual would have taken the name Aurelius. Every emperor from the accession of Marcus Aurelius in AD 161 (i.e. approximately 70 years before the estimated construction of the hypogeum of the

¹⁷⁴ *CIL* VI, 3574 = EDR030615. D(is) M(anibus) | Aur(eliae) Prim(a)e | b(ene) m(erenti) M(arcus) Aur(elius) | Maximus, mil(es) |⁵ et Aur(elius) Mu | cianus, fra | ter <h>uius | bene merenti |¹⁰ fecerunt. MNR Terme, 29380. Friggeri in *MNR Le Sculture 1/7**: 203-4, nr VII,3. For a general discussion on the decline of the diphthong *-ae* see Adams 2013: 71-89.

¹⁷⁵ Lucius Papirius Mugillanus, censor 443 BC (Livy 4.7-8), Manlius Papirius was, according to Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Ant. Rom.* 5.1.4 made *rex sacrorum* in 509 BC.

¹⁷⁶ In addition to our *libertus* Aurelius Papirius note also a servant, probably a *scriba*, of Q. Lutatius Catulus by the name of Papirius, Val. Max. 6.5.1. Purcell 2001: 648.

¹⁷⁷ Kajanto 1963: 20, fn 1.

¹⁷⁸ Solin 1996: 1. 19.

Aurelii) had taken the name Aurelius. An Aurelius/ -a therefore may have been freed from the imperial house, or be descended from an imperial *libertus*. It has been suggested that the Aurelii were so-named following the Antonine Constitution of AD 212.¹⁷⁹ Borg considered this impossible as, being freedmen, they would have taken their *gentilicium* from their former owner,¹⁸⁰ but that does not preclude being freed by different Aurelii in the decades following the Antonine Constitution when Aurelii would have been very common. In his 1963 study of early Christian inscriptions Kajanto notes that in the early fourth century, i.e. a century after our Aurelii, the *nomen* Aurelius remained the most popular; nearly three times as popular as the next in frequency i.e. Flavius, a *nomen* whose principal source in that period would have been the contemporary imperial house of Constantine.¹⁸¹

3.2 The *Virgo Aurelia Prima*.

In addition to *nomen* and *cognomen* the female has the epithet *virg...* which, being in the dative singular to agree with *Aureliae Prime*, may be securely expanded to *virgini*. The term *virgo* has been read as signifying a young girl, but it is worth exploring whether this was always the case or whether it was also used for a woman of marriageable age, but not yet married. Many girls were married at a young age such as the fourteen-year-old freeborn *Opinia Neptilla*, described by her parents as a *virgo*, who died shortly before being married.¹⁸² Shaw's 1987 article highlights, however, that although among the upper-classes very young brides may not have been unusual, at a lower level of society young women were more likely to wed in their late teens.¹⁸³ Examples of women of this age, yet described as *virgines*, exist in the tomb of the 17-year-old *Epaphra* who, on her death was commemorated by her

¹⁷⁹ De Maria 2011: 226.

¹⁸⁰ Borg 2013: 113.

¹⁸¹ Kajanto 1963: 16 notes that out of a sample of 1,738 *nomina* 411 were Aurelius and 149 Flavius. No other *nomen* in the sample has more than a hundred examples.

¹⁸² *CIL* III, 2875 = EDCS-28400127: *Opiniae M(arci) f(iliae) Neptillae | annor(um) XIII virg(ini) desp(eratae) | prope diem nuptiar(um) def(unctae) | M(arcus) Op[er]n[i]us Rufus et |⁵ Gellia Neptillae parentes.*

¹⁸³ Shaw 1987: 43. See also Mander 2013: 5 with bibliography

father¹⁸⁴ and the 18-year-old Petronia Chrysogonis.¹⁸⁵ One young woman, a *lectrix* (reader) named Dercetos Aurelia, was described as a *virgo* when she died in her twentieth year.¹⁸⁶

Literature also provides instances of grown women who are nevertheless described as *virgines*. Livy (Livy 26.50.1) describes a captive woman as "*adulta virgo*" who is betrothed to a Spanish nobleman and returned to him, unmolested, by P. Cornelius Scipio.¹⁸⁷ There are also occasional references to married women as *virgines*, such as the possibly Christian Eudorus Deuteria who is referred to as such by her husband and whose memorial tablet was found during renovation work to S. Pancrazio near the Aurelian gate in Rome,¹⁸⁸ or the certainly pagan Gemella who was similarly described by her husband on her memorial from Poreč (Parentium) in modern Slovenia.¹⁸⁹ These last examples are rare and may not apply to the Aurelii given the lack of reference to a *coniunx* in their inscription. This rarity of *adulta virgines* may in large part be due to 1) the general high rate of mortality among children and 2) the high rate of natal or perinatal death among young, married women. Having survived to puberty a young female is unlikely to be at a high risk of early death until she faced the hazards of marriage and childbirth. In short Aurelia Prima need not have been a young child and could well have been in her late teens or even early twenties, large enough to be buried in the adult sized *arcosolium* on the right side of *cubiculum* A mentioned in the architectural description (Chapter 2, section 2.2) yet still be described as a *virgo*. This is important to bear in mind when we proceed to interpret the frescoes in *cubiculum* A.

¹⁸⁴ *CIL* VI, 9342: Epaphrae disp(ensator) | Tariani | Anesis filia virgo | vixit a(nnis) XVII.

¹⁸⁵ *CIL* VI, 24032 = EDR102064: Dis Manibus | Petroniae Chryso | gones quae vixit ann(is) | XVIII, m(ensibus) III, diebus |⁵ XVIII, haec virgo | o<b=v>it.

¹⁸⁶ *CIL* VI, 33473 = *CLE* 1882 = *ILS* 7771 = EDR152970 = EDCS-23900587: Derceto Aureliae | virginis | lectrix | ann(um) vicens<i=u>mum |⁵ exsicens | misera occidi || Sabina C(aii) l(iberta) | Helena | vixit annos XVI. Rüpke 2005: 554, kat 792a rules out the possibility of Dercetos Aurelia being a Vestal.

¹⁸⁷ The same phrase, *adulta virgo*, is used by Horace *Carm.* 3.2.8, Seneca *Phoen.* 575, Tacitus *Hist.* 3.33 and Amm. Marc. 14,6,11 for a mature, but unmarried, woman cf Amm. Marc. 16,7,10.

¹⁸⁸ *AE* 1940, 0090 = *Epigraphica* 1: 147-8, nr 9 = EDCS-15700175: Eudorus Deut[eriae] | coniugi virg[iniae] | meae que [obit an] | norum XX [...] | quae mecum [fecit] | annos XI d [...].

¹⁸⁹ *AE* 1972, 0189 = EDR075306 = EDCS-09700137: D(is) M(anibus) | Gemellae coni(ugi) | incomparibil(i) | q(uae) vix(it) virg(ini) |⁵ an(nis) [.XIX m(ensibus) VIII d(iebus) X | [...] o [...]. Šonje 1968: 433-4, fig. 1.

3.3 Fratres and Colliberti.

The first four lines of the inscription consequently present few difficulties. The fifth line contains a number of abbreviations that deserve closer examination. The letter combination *B M* represents the common valedictory explanation for the erection of the memorial i.e. *Bene Merent-i/-ibus* = 'well deserving' and is found on thousands of funerary inscriptions across the Empire. The letter *F* is also frequently found and expanded to *fecit* or *fecerunt* depending upon how many individuals were responsible for the erection of the memorial. That leaves two substantives, both abbreviated, in apposition with each other *frater* and *colibertus*, the second more accurately *collibertus* or *conlibertus*.

As noted above (section 3.1) the usual expansion of *fratris* by commentators is *fratribus* i.e. the dative plural, a reading adopted by Bendinelli and continued to the present day.¹⁹⁰ *Fratris* as a genitive singular evidently makes no sense in this context yet there is, however, no substantiation for reading *fratris* as an abbreviation for *fratribus*.¹⁹¹ A search for *fratribus* in more than 70,000 epigraphs listed in Epigraphic Database Roma identified 116 instances where the term *fratribus* is used at least once.¹⁹² *Fratribus* is abbreviated infrequently, but when it is the abbreviations are: *fratrib(us)*,¹⁹³ *frat(ribus)*¹⁹⁴ or *fr(atribus)*.¹⁹⁵ The only instance of the use of *fratris* as an abbreviation for *fratribus* in the EDR corpus is for the hypogeum of the Aurelii mosaic inscription. In the light of the absence of comparanda, the interpretation of *fratris* as an abbreviation of the dative plural of *fratres* is open to question. A consideration of the morphology of Latin vowels might

¹⁹⁰ Cf fn 172.

¹⁹¹ The author's thanks are extended to Prof. Jonathan G. F. Powell who first queried the traditional reading of the word *fratris*.

¹⁹² Search undertaken 3rd September 2015 of 70,964 inscriptions.

¹⁹³ E.g. *CIL* VI, 2084=EDR029388, *CIL* VI, 12098 = EDR121724 (Cap. Mus., Epigraphic Gallery, NCE 2965).

¹⁹⁴ E.g. *AE* 1973, 0173 = EDR079279.

¹⁹⁵ E.g. *CIL* V, 6632 = EDR115231. A very long inscription (*CIL* XI, 1147 = EDR130843) now preserved in the MAN Parma (no inv. nr) uses the word in full and all of these abbreviations, but no other.

result in a nuanced understanding of the inscription that in turn will aid the interpretation of other aspects of the hypogeum.

During the Imperial period the vowel sounds of Latin underwent an evolution which altered the length of individual vowels. As well as blurring the distinction between *-ae* and *-e*, distinctions between the long *e* and short *i* also became increasingly blurred.¹⁹⁶ This led to misspellings and confusion between the use of *e* for *i* and vice versa. Clackson and Horrocks particularly note that a long *e* in the final syllable is spelt with an *i* as early as the first century.¹⁹⁷ This observation is derived from the late fifth century grammarian Pompeius, who in turn drew on the third century work of Terentianus Maurus,¹⁹⁸ and speaks of the similarity between the long *e* and short *i*, “*quotienscumque e longam volumus proferri, vicina sit ad i litteram*” (Pompeius, Keil, v, 102).¹⁹⁹ Thus *minus* might be written *menus* or *minsis* for *menses* (figure 20).²⁰⁰ The Greek ε might be transliterated to *i* as in the personal name Philumina for Φιλουμένη as seen in the early Augustan tomb of the Caesonii still *in situ* in the Via Statilia, Rome.²⁰¹ In the case of third declension nominative plurals the long *-es* evolved into a short *i*, a development that would be combined with the eventual loss of the final *s* and hence the evolution of the Latin *-es* ending into the Italian *-i* ending for masculine plurals.²⁰² Confusion between *i* and *e*, long and short vowels exercised grammarians in the later imperial periods, and such confusion dates back much earlier as seen in the tablets of Vindolanda dating to the first years of the second century AD.²⁰³ While much of the epigraphic evidence for the vowel change does not appear before the fifth century that is more likely to reflect the care

¹⁹⁶ Adams 2013: 38-43.

¹⁹⁷ Clackson and Horrocks 2007: 273, “In accented syllables short and long vowels are generally distinguished. However, in unaccented, and particularly final syllables, an expected long *e* is spelt with *i* and an expected short *i* is spelt with an *e* not infrequently ...”.

¹⁹⁸ The date for Terentianus Maurus is uncertain, but is in the range of AD 150 – 350, Beck 1993: 10.

¹⁹⁹ Allen 1978: 48-9.

²⁰⁰ Note these examples are given by Allen, but without further reference, however, see *CIL* VI, 9592 = EDR115534. MAR Antonio Salinas, 322. Bivona 1970: 265, nr 360, tav. CLXXIII dated to the mid fourth century AD.

²⁰¹ *Epigraphica* 38: 20 = EDR000717. ((theta nigrum)) A. Caesonius A. f. Col(lina), Paetus | A. Caesonius A. l. | Philemo | Telgennia P. l. Philumina v(ivit).

²⁰² Politzer 1951: 1-5.

²⁰³ Adams 2013: 55-6.

and attention of the stonecutter in reproducing 'proper' Latin rather a reflection of vulgate speech.

A further confusion is caused in the later second and into the third centuries with the use of rustic capitals where the horizontal strokes of the 'E' almost disappear giving the appearance of an 'I'. Such an example is found in the epitaph to Cornelia Glycon.²⁰⁴ The editors of both the *Corpus* and *Carmina Latina Epigraphica* have recorded line 9 as: *Castorea fratris sub imagine quos generavit* (v 9), but close inspection of the modern photograph shows the supposed 'i' to have (very short) horizontal strokes; an ambiguity that has led to it being mis-recorded. The use of short horizontals in mosaic would have been more difficult or considered superfluous in mosaic, especially where space was restricted such as the last line in the Aurelii inscription.

Finally there is, nevertheless, in the epigraphic corpus an example of *fratris* as a nominative plural in a fragmentary inscription from Rome, possibly of second century AD date:²⁰⁵

MIL COH I URB
PHOENICI
PIÏSSIMI FRATRIS

The word *Phoenici* may be a proper name indicative of an African²⁰⁶ or Syrian origin in which case the name is in the dative i.e. Phoenices is the individual being commemorated. The superlative adjective, *piissimi* cannot be in the dative and agree with *Phoenici*, but a genitive singular agreeing with *fratris* would not make sense ('to/for Phoenices of the most dutiful brother'). This difficulty disappears, however, when *fratris* is read as a nominative plural with the same morphology as in the

²⁰⁴ CIL VI, 19055 = CLE 0495 = *Suppllt Imagines - Roma* 01, 0903 = EDR121839. Cap. Mus. NCE 797.

²⁰⁵ EDR006579. Pietrangeli 1940: 180, nr 11: mil(itis) coh(ortis) I urb(anae) [((centuria))?] | Phoenici [---] | piissimi fratris [---]. Note the lacunae on the right hand side of the inscription are indicated in the Epigraphic Database Roma entry, but are not indicated on Pietrangeli's BCAR report. Cap. Mus. Ex Galleria Lapidaria, 5578.

²⁰⁶ Freis 1967: 65.

hypogeum of the Aurelii inscription. The missing final line or lines of the inscription would have contained the verb, most probably *fecerunt*, resulting in a translation of:

'The most dutiful brothers of the
First Urban Cohort (made this) for
Phoenices.'

(Trans. author)

As we shall see below the use of the term *fratres* among military personnel was not uncommon: it appears therefore that this inscription has been set up by members of the First Urban Cohort to commemorate one of their number. Genuine instances of *i* in place of *e* are less frequent than *e* in place of *i*, yet they do occur, whereas, outside of the hypogeum of the Aurelii mosaic inscription, there is no example of *fratris* for *fratribus*. The lack of comparanda for *fratris* as a dative plural makes that highly suspect and a more realistic alternative is as a nominative plural exhibiting an unusual, but not unknown example of vowel morphology in Latin.

Consequently, the hypogeum of the Aurelii inscription is not to the 'brothers', but has been made on behalf of a group of individuals who style themselves as the 'brothers' and 'fellow-freedmen' of Aurelius Felicissimus, the principal dedicator of the inscription, and the three deceased.

In light of the above, I propose a revised reading of the inscription:

Aurelio Onesimo
Aurelio Papirio
Aureliae Prim<a>e virg(ini)
Aurelius Felicissimus
Fratr<e=i>s et co(n)libert(i) b(ene) m(erentibus) f(ecerunt)

which may be translated as:

'Aurelius Felicissimus, brothers and fellow-freedmen made (this tomb)
for the well-deserving Aurelius Onesimus, Aurelius Papirius and Aurelia
Prima, virgin.'

(Trans. author)

The consequences of this change are significant for it widens the scope of those involved in the commissioning of the inscription from a single individual

(Aurelius Felicissimus) to a much larger group who collectively were involved in the commemoration of the deceased. This group may, or may not, have been blood-siblings, but they evidently referred to each other as *fratres*. We must therefore examine the diverse meanings of this term in Roman society to ascertain the most likely meaning in this instance. As the idea of the hypogeum of the Aurelii being a family tomb is the most prevalent, I shall examine this possibility first.²⁰⁷

3.4 A Family of Aurelii?

In addition to the principal mosaic inscription two further inscriptions were found within the *cubiculum*: one a short commemoration of a young girl called Aurelia Myrsina²⁰⁸ and a badly preserved graffito that mentions someone who may have been called Aurelius Epaphroditus.²⁰⁹ There is no indication that they were connected with the original occupants of the tomb though the fact that there are further Aurelii has led to the conclusion that they are all members of the same family.²¹⁰

Even without the proposed new reading of the inscription there are strong arguments against the familial hypothesis. First, arguments in favour of the Aurelii being blood relations belonging to a single *familia* on the grounds of a common *nomen* should be treated with caution. I noted previously (section 3.1) that after the Antonine Constitution of AD 212 the *nomen* Aurelius became, by far, the most popular name in the empire and in Rome in particular. How far this popularity had spread is illustrated by an inscription for a *collegium fabrorum* in Classe, near Ravenna.²¹¹ This inscription is particularly useful because it was used, then re-used,

²⁰⁷ Grassigli 2011: 82. Bisconti 2011a: 18.

²⁰⁸ *ICUR* n.s. 6.15932. Aureliae Myrsin[ae filiae] | dulcissimae qua<e=i> vi[xit ann(is)] | V mens(ibus) VI dieb(us) XI | Aurel(ius) Martinus et Iunia Ly[de paren] |⁵ tes fecerunt.

²⁰⁹ *ICUR* n.s. 6.15933. Reconstructed by Carcopino 1956: 96-7 as Re[m]meus Celerinus | kal(endis) Iunis refrigerum | [in he]roum hon[re]m | A[urel(ii)] Epafro[diti]. It should be noted, however, that the A in line four from which the word Aurelii is deduced was not recorded in Bendinelli 1922: 369 nor illustrated by him. It was neither illustrated by Wilpert 1924 or Bisconti 2011, nor identified post-restoration by Galvao-Sobrinho 2012: 138. The author could discern very little of the graffito during a visit in October 2012 and lacking any further evidence the question as to whether Epaphroditus was an Aurelius must remain 'unproven'.

²¹⁰ Bendinelli 1922: 320 and 425-6. Ferrua 1975: 85. Himmelmann 1975: 9.

²¹¹ *AE* 1977, 0265 A and B = *Epigraphica* 39,1: 27-40 = EDR076797.

by the same organisation representing two populations of the same class and structure in the same place approximately a century apart. The original late second/early third century inscription was re-used at the end of the third century on the reverse.²¹² Both inscriptions are in reasonable condition with a large number of names listed, the proportion of Aurelii rising from 7.5% in the earlier inscription to 22% in the later.²¹³ This prevalence of the *nomen* Aurelius was a factor that ultimately led to the decline of the *nomen* in the same way that the lack of variety in *praenomina* had led to their decline.²¹⁴ The probability of the Aurelii belonging to the same *familia*, while not impossible, is certainly unproven because of the ubiquity of the *nomen* Aurelius/ -a.

We know that the Aurelii were freedmen, therefore one ought to consider how this might be compatible with the possibility of the Aurelii being blood-relatives. They may have been *vernae*, born into slavery and subsequently freed, but as there is no differentiation between a *libertus* originally captured and sold into slavery and one born into servitude it is impossible to tell one way or the other.

As will be discussed elsewhere (Chapter 10, section 10.1) manumission could come at a surprisingly early age which would increase the chances of sibling survival for *liberti*. One inscription from the first century AD illustrates the case of two freed brothers commemorated together, who died at the ages of eleven and five: an example of two siblings who survived slavery.²¹⁵ They were probably blood relatives for a number of reasons: (1) they took the same *praenomen* and *nomen* denoting manumission from the same *patronus*, (2) their youth makes it unlikely that they would have made close bonds outside of the *familia* and (3) the word *fratres* is used in the nominative rather than the dative plural suggesting an objective description of

²¹² The earlier date is based on palaeographic grounds (Donati 1977: 32), but the later has a consular date of between 287 and 304 (Donati 1977: 34).

²¹³ Side A: five out of 65 names were Aurelii. Side B: 21 out of 94 were Aurelii. The latter proportion of Aurelii matching Kajanto's general conclusions cf fn 181.

²¹⁴ Kajanto 1963: 17.

²¹⁵ *CIL* VI, 22291 = EDR120208: C. Matius L(uci) <et> ♂ (*mulieris*) l(ibertus) Auxetus v(ixit) a(nnis) XI | C. Matius L(uci) <et> ♂ (*mulieris*) l(ibertus) Bucolus v(ixit) a(nnis) V | fratres. Cap. Mus., NCE 2224

the two children, not a subjective description of the relationship between dedicator and dedicatees.

Another inscription uses endearing terminology that is absent from the hypogeum of the Aurelii inscription. Such terms suggest a genuine sibling memorial erected by Antonia Asia for her 'dearest brother' who died at the age of 23.²¹⁶ The brother is identified as an imperial freedman and her own name suggests that Antonia Asia was also freed. If they were blood siblings they appear to have been freed from two separate branches of the imperial family and then re-united after manumission. Connections also appear between two, less exalted, *familiae* following manumission.²¹⁷ Here the dedicator, C. Annus Helenus has a surviving sister, Euphrosyne, freed from a separate *familia* (the Iulii). Helenus married a *liberta* from his own *familia* (Annia Stacte) who in turn had a surviving, freed, brother (Euphronius). These examples are, however, rare and each commemorates only single sibling relationships. Only two instances suggest multiple siblings might survive long enough to be freed. In the first instance the fragmentary nature of the inscription records multiple *fratres*, but does not allow us to know how many siblings (if they are blood-siblings) survived.²¹⁸ A second example is a dedication by a woman, Calpurnia Hecale, making a dedication to her patron and two brothers.²¹⁹ Although Ferrua (in the *ICUR* commentary of the hypogeum of the Aurelii inscription), reading *fratris* as *fratribus*, argued that there was nothing surprising in a surviving sibling wishing to commemorate the premature decease of three brothers and sisters there

²¹⁶ *CIL* VI, 9047 = EDCS-18900955. Ti(berio) Cl(audio) Augustor(orum) l(iberto) et | structori Domnioni | Antonia Asia fratri | carissimo bene merenti |⁵ vix(it) an(nis) XXIII m(ensibus) II d(iebus) X fecit | et sibi libertis libertabus | posterisq(ue) eorum. The form *augustorum* suggests joint ownership within the Julio-Claudian family, probably Agrippina the Younger and Nero. The inscription thus dates to the mid-first century AD. For a discussion on this point see Weaver 1964: 188-92.

²¹⁷ *CIL* VI, 34405 = EDCS-23900619 C(aius) Annus C(aii) l(ibertus) Helenus sibi et | Anniae Stacte uxori suae et | C(aio) Annio C(aii) l(iberto) Euphroni fratri eius et | Iuliae Euphrosyne sorori suae |⁵ se vivo fecit.

²¹⁸ *CIL* VI, 24943 = EDCS-13801195: [...] | v(ixit) a(nnos) LX | primigenius | cognatus | isdem lib(ertus) | patrono suo | b(ene) m(erenti) fecit | et sibi et suis et | fratres et collibe(rti) | b(ene) m(erenti) fecer(unt) pat(rono).

²¹⁹ *CIL* VI, 9546 = EDCS-19200259: L(ucio) Calpurnio Nicaei f(ilio) Cor(nelia) Antiocho | margaritario de sacra via | L(ucio) Calpurnio L(ucii) l(iberto) Rufo | L(ucio) Calpurnio L(ucii) l(iberto) Stratoni |⁵ Calpurnia L(ucii) l(iberta) (H)e<c=g>ale patrono suo | et fratribus suis et sibi fecit.

is no recorded case of as many as four true siblings surviving long enough to be freed as in the hypogeum of the Aurelii.

Not only is multiple sibling commemoration unusual among slaves and freedmen there are examples of 'brotherly' inscriptions that do not require a blood relationship. One inscription, from a second century AD sarcophagus, records the profession of the deceased in a *tabula ansata* and the dedicator refers to the deceased as *frater* and *conlibertus*.²²⁰ Again, the repetition of *praenomen* and *nomen* suggests that they were manumitted by the same patron, which raises the possibility of a blood relationship. The Greek element of the inscription, however, indicates that this is not so. The fragmentary inscription refers to *ἐταίρων*, i.e. companions rather than relatives.²²¹ The use of the word *conlibertus* reinforces the ties between dedicator and dedicatee as one of equality that would be lacking in a patron-client relationship. The conclusion is that the reference to *frater* was made to indicate a close bond rather than a familial one and the mention of the trade of the deceased, *machinator* (engineer), indicates that this bond potentially arose through their occupation. Another use of *frater* and *conlibertus* occurs in a pair of freedmen linked to the imperial household though the relationship is unclear as the dedicator (and *conlibertus*) omitted any libertination.²²²

Such close affinity could also appear between owner and ex-slave as in the case of the freeborn Ti. Claudius Florentinus commemorated by his, "*libertus et frater*" Narcissus.²²³ Although no occupation is mentioned Narcissus is hardly likely

²²⁰ *CIL* VI, 9533 = *CIL* VI, 33810 = *AE* 1991, 0075 = *IG* XIV, 1497 = EDCS-19200246: D(is) M(anibus) | C(aio) Baebio Mu| saeo, machinatori | C(aius) Baebius Symbiotes |⁵ fratri et conliberto | merentissimo || - οὐνομα Μούσαις πιστοτάτης φιλήης | ἐν βροτοῖς ἴνεκε | μοῦνος [---] ἐ[ς] ἐ[?]ώναν οὐ χάριν ἀέναον | ἔχει μνήμην ἐν φιλότητί τε ἐταίρων. Sammlung der Winckelmann-Gesellschaft, Stendal, WG-PK-5. Schmidt and Krummrey 1988: 31-6. On the equivalence of collegii and *hetaireiari* see *Dig.* 47.22.4: "Gaius libro quarto ad legem duodecim tabularum: sodales sunt qui eiusdem collegii sunt, quam Graeci *hetaireiari* vocant".

²²¹ Liddell and Scott 1964: 320.

²²² *CIL* VI, 8886 = EDR125928: Dis Manibus | Quartionis | Decumi aug(usti) lib(erti) | Euphemiani |⁵ a manu | Fidelis conlibertus | fratri bene | merenti | in fronte pedes duo |¹⁰ in agro pedes duo. Vat. Mus. Galleria Lapidario, 25.17 = 7526.

²²³ *CIL* VI, 15068 = EDCS-16100116: D(is) M(anibus) | Ti(berio) Claudi | Florentini | Narcissus |⁵ lib(ertus) et | frater | b(ene) m(erenti) f(ecit).

to have been the real brother of Florentinus, and his slave.²²⁴ More ambiguous cases exist where one *frater* is described as freed while the other has a single name suggesting that they have yet to gain their freedom.²²⁵ In these examples it is uncertain whether they were both from the same *familia*, were blood relatives or whether there was another reason for the use of the word *frater*. In each case freedman and slave address each other as brother.

Given the large number of slaves that were manumitted and the propensity for *liberti* to commemorate themselves and their families there is a noticeable lack of sibling commemoration among them. This follows a trend noted by Saller and Shaw in their 1984 study i.e. the incidence of sibling memorialisation, outside a military context, is rare.²²⁶ In their study of civilian memorials in Rome only 5% were set up by *fratres*.²²⁷ Among members of the *familia Caesaris* the percentage of sibling commemoration is a little higher at 7%, but is still considerably less than either conjugal commemoration or other nuclear family commemoration.²²⁸

3.5 A Cultic Connection?

There has been the suggestion that the term *fratres* might refer to some form of cult.²²⁹ In addition to the well-known Arval Brothers such terms were used in cultic associations as shown by an altar inscription found in Rome dedicated to the Gods of the Hills.²³⁰ The theory that the *fratres* were associated with a religious brotherhood was thought to be reinforced by the designation of Aurelia Prima as a *virgo*. There is no doubt that some cults had young, unmarried girls as acolytes, the most famous

²²⁴ If Narcissus were another's *libertus* one might expect this to be recorded.

²²⁵ *CIL* VI, 5432 = EDCS-18900406: Ti(berius) Iulius | Hermogenis l(ibertus) | eidem frater | Hebro and *CIL* VI, 27357 = EDCS-14801311: D(is) M(anibus) | Theopaedi | fecit | Euphenges |⁵ Aug(usti) lib(ertus) | fratri | bene | merenti.

²²⁶ Saller and Shaw 1984: 139-42.

²²⁷ Saller and Shaw 1984: tables 20 and 21 (military stationed in Rome) and table 4 (Rome lower orders).

²²⁸ Saller and Shaw 1984: table 17 (*familia Caesaris*: Rome).

²²⁹ Ceccheli 1944: 79-80. Carcopino 1956: 88-90.

²³⁰ *CIL* VI, 377 = *ILS* 3051 = EDCS-1780057: Aram Iovi Fulge | ratoris ex pr(a)ecep | to deorum mon | tensium Val(erius) Cres |⁵ centio pater deoru(m) | omnium et Aur(elius) ex | [s]uperantius sacerdos | Silvani cv<m=n> fratribus | et sororibu(s) dedica | verunt. For a brief history of this inscription see Palmer 1976: 43-4.

one being the Vestal Virgins, and this purity was later emulated by Christians who considered virginity to be an important Christian virtue. Ferrua argued against the cultic interpretation, believing that the term *collibertis* would be inappropriate for a mystical association favoured by Cecchelli and Carcopino.²³¹ More importantly, as will become evident when the various decorative motifs are discussed in Chapter 6, there is no evidence within the decoration of the tomb to suggest that the Aurelii were connected with any particular cult. Quite the contrary in fact. As others have noted, the decoration has no cultic symbolism such as might be expected if Aurelia Prima were some form of priestess or acolyte to a cult.²³² I shall return to the significance of Aurelia Prima's presence among the *fratres* below.

3.6 Other Meanings of *Frater*.

Outside of a familial or religious context there is another sphere of human relationship that bears a closer resemblance to the world of the Aurelii and that is the realm of associations.

In contrast to the low rate of sibling commemoration found in civilian tombs Saller and Shaw found that there were a greater number of 'sibling' commemorations in military contexts. In Rome 12-15% of soldiers' memorials were set up by *fratres*, i.e. 2½ - 3 times as many found among civilians. In part this was probably due to a lack of parents, wives or children to remember the deceased. Yet in many cases these dedications are not by blood-relations, but rather 'brothers-in-arms'.²³³ This use of the term *frater* is evident in writing tablets from Vindolanda where the term is frequently employed in personal correspondence. The garrison commander at the beginning of the second century AD, Flavius Cerialis, prefect of the *cohors VIII*

²³¹ Ferrua 1975: 85.

²³² A point also noted by Poe 2007: 114. In a search of the Epigraphic Database Roma (14/7/15) 42 females are described as *sacerdotes* of a variety of cults yet not one is described as *virgo*. Nor is there any symbol of cult in the hypogeum of the Aurelii such as seen on the tomb of the Rabirii on the Via Appia (*CIL* VI, 2246 = *ILS* 4404 = EDR103440; MNR Palazzo Massimo, 196633) where the relief of the priestess of Isis, Usia Prima, is accompanied by an Isaic *sistrum*.

²³³ E.g. *CIL* VI, 3346 = EDCS-19600182: D(is) M(anibus) | M(arco) Ulpio Ner(vae) | Quinto Glevi | mil(iti) fr(umentario) leg(ionis) VI v(ictoris) |⁵ Calidius | Quietus collega | fratri observato | piissimo b(ene) m(erenti) f(aciendum) c(uravit).

Batavorum, received a number of letters that address him as *frater*. A personal letter requesting a favour from another officer of similar rank perhaps unsurprisingly refers to him as *frater*.²³⁴ More surprisingly, other letters address Cerialis as *dominus* and *frater* suggesting that the writer was of subordinate rank, but nonetheless still entitled to describe him as 'brother'.²³⁵ One petition from Clodius Super, possibly a centurion, goes as far as calling Cerialis *frater carissimus* as well as *dominus*.²³⁶ Such correspondence was between members of the officer 'class', but similar terminology is used among more humble persons in the military milieu at Vindolanda. In a letter between two individuals, probably civilians associated with the fort, after a matter of fact delivery note for goods, the writer addressed his correspondent as *frater*.²³⁷ The prosaic nature of the communication does not suggest anything more than a friendly business relationship. Finally, the term is used between two slaves, Candidus and Genialis, while discussing the forthcoming Saturnalia.²³⁸ It is clear from the Vindolanda evidence that among the military the term was widespread at various social levels. Equally significant is that *frater* was not used between individuals of wildly disparate social status: the use of the term indicates a degree of social parity between addresser and addressee.²³⁹

Away from the frontier *frater* is also used for those within the military realm, but who were not themselves soldiers. In Rome, as with Candidus and Gemialis in Vindolanda, *CIL VI*, 8531 records two servile individuals, at least one of whom was part of the imperial household, who addressed each other as *frater et collega*.²⁴⁰ Their parity of status reinforces Adams' conclusions in respect of the Vindolanda corpus as does their recording of their positions as *conlegae*. An inscription recording

²³⁴ *TV II* 233 = inv. 87.514. The writer of this letter was an individual named Brocchus. He and Cerialis were evidently close as indicated by other correspondence including that between their wives who also corresponded and referred to each other as *soror* - *TV II* 291 = inv. 85.057.

²³⁵ *TV II* 252 = inv. 85.017.

²³⁶ *TV II* 255 = inv. 85.033.

²³⁷ *TV II* 309 = inv. 85.051, "*bene valeas frater*".

²³⁸ *TV II* 301 = inv. 87.748.

²³⁹ Adams 1995: 119.

²⁴⁰ *CIL VI*, 8531 = EDR029230 = EDCS-18300784: D(is) M(anibus) | Fructo, Aug(usti) n(ostri) adiut(ori) tabul(ariorum) a rat(ionibus) m(armorum) f(isci) c(astrensis) | qui vixit annis | XXI diebus XVII |⁵<F=E>ortunatus, fra | ter et co<I=n>lega | fecit. MNR Terme, 29323. Dated to the second half of the first, first half of the second century AD.

two slaves at an imperial slave-training establishment refers to them as *fratres de paedagogio*.²⁴¹ The term *fratres* is used in relation to the *paedagogium*, not each other. Whether Hyblaeus and Ismenus attended the *paedagogium* at the time of the inscription as fellow pupils or were 'old boys' of the establishment the inscription reveals that *frater* was used among members of civil associations as well as military.

An inscription, dated to the third century AD on archaeological as well as palaeographic grounds, refers to the slave Nestor whose memorial was set up by his *frater* Restutus and an unspecified *collegium*.²⁴² A similar collegial *frater* is suggested by the late 2nd century AD memorial of Publius Aelius Epictetus erected by his *frater* Trofimus (whose single name suggests servile status), Epictetus' wife, Epimelia, and his *sodales*.²⁴³ In this last inscription it is possible that Trofimus was an unfreed blood-sibling to Epictetus, the term 'dearest' might suggest that, but equally well they could be *fratres* by virtue of belonging to the same *sodalitas* who are clearly important enough to both deceased and bereaved to warrant mention in the epitaph. Whatever the precise relationship between Epictetus and Trofimus, the memorial was contributed to by the *sodalitas* to which Epictetus belonged.

An important inscription for this discussion dates from the reign of Vespasian. Written beneath a now much damaged relief of at least two young, freeborn male citizens (identifiable by the *bullae* around their necks) (figures 21a-b). The inscription refers to the *decuria* of a *collegium* with the intriguing letters *FR* placed in a separate column between two lists of individuals.²⁴⁴

²⁴¹ *CIL* VI, 8967 = EDCS-18900034: Hyblaeus et Ismenus | [fr]atres de paedagog(io) rami Ti(berii) Caesaris. MNR Antiquario, 72389. Gordon 1958-65: 57-8, nr 46. For a discussion on this point see Mohler 1940: esp. 270-5.

²⁴² *CIL* VI, 34026 = EDR 119868 = EDCS-24100370: D(is) M(anibus) | Nestori fratri, qui vi | <x=s>it annis XXII, me<n>sibus | VI, diebus XV. Restu |⁵ tus frater et collegiu<m=s> | bene merenti fecerunt. *CIL* VI Supp. Imag. 1:1550. Cap. Mus. Epigraphic Gallery, NCE 720. Velestino 2015: 53, fig. 35. Note the author has amended the diplomatic text from *collegius* to *collegium*. If the stonecutter had meant *collega* referring to Restutus himself then the verb would have been in the singular rather than the plural. The error is in mistaking the neuter second declension *collegium* for a masculine noun.

²⁴³ *CIL* VI, 10681 = EDR104115 = EDCS-17200407: D(is) M(anibus) | P(ublio) Aelio Epi | cteto fratri | carissimo fe |⁵ cerunt Trofi | mus et Epimelia | co<n>iunx eius | cum sodalibus | bene meren |¹⁰ ti.

²⁴⁴ *CIL* VI, 10350 = EDR121978. Louvre, Ma 1652. Stenhouse 2002: 114, nr 57.

There is a possibility that it might stand for *frumentarius*, but this interpretation seems unlikely. *Frumentarii* were concerned with the proper provision of the corn supply in two principal areas (1) those associated with the military, in which case the unit to which they are attached or are responsible for is almost invariably stated²⁴⁵ or (2) being in receipt of or concerned with the public *annona* in which case the word *frumentum* is written out in full or abbreviated to *FP*.²⁴⁶ There is no suggestion that either is the case where the Aurelii are concerned therefore the solution must lie elsewhere.

Stenhouse in his description of *CIL VI*, 10350 in the Paper Museum of Cassiano dal Pozzo reads *FR* as *fratres* and applying solely to the first two lines in column one. This reading is based upon two factors: (1) the *FR* is adjacent to two *collegae*, T. Satellius Eutyclus and T. Satellius Lascivus, with the same *praenomen* and *nomen*, (2) a separate inscription records two sons of T. Satellius Eutyclus and Suavettia Lacesis (figures 22a-b) with the same names as the Titi Satelii in *CIL VI*, 10350.²⁴⁷ Thus the Titi Satelii of *CIL VI*, 10350 may well have been siblings, yet the author knows of no other instance where blood-*fratres* are identified on a collegial listing such as this. An analysis of seven sizeable *alba collegiorum* shows that the word *fratres*, abbreviated or not, was not used in such a context.²⁴⁸ There are a number of instances where *pater* or *filius* are used as additional identifiers to avoid ambiguity;²⁴⁹ *frater*, however, is not used even when there is a possibility of the individuals being blood-relations. In the *album* of the *ordo corporatorum lenunculariorum tabulariorum auxiliariorum Ostiensium* there are a number of Auli Herenuleii whose

²⁴⁵ EDR 101021: D(is) M(anibus) | T(itus) Gossius Ver[us] | fr(umentarius) leg(ionis) XIII ge[m(inae)] | vixit an(nis) XXXX[---?] | ⁵ militavit an(nis) | |XXV Masclus li[b(ertus)] | p(atrono) b(ene) m(erenti) f(ecit). Cap. Mus. NCE 3057. Mancini 1914: 425, nr 7. See also fn 233.

²⁴⁶ E.g. *CIL XIV*, 4505 = EDR072012: | ⁵ L(ucius) Critonius L(uci) f(ilius) Trophimus f(rumentum) p(opulum) a(ccepit) ...

²⁴⁷ i.e. the younger Titi Satelii were named after their father and paternal uncle. *AE* 2001, 0433 = EDR001386. Antiquario, NCE 4817 (a) + NCE 5695 (b). The precise relationship between *CIL VI*, 10350 and *AE* 2001, 0433 is unclear. The fragmentary nature of *AE* 2001, 0433, especially the first line, exacerbates the problem.

²⁴⁸ *CIL XIV*, 250-2 = EDCS-05700249-51 from Ostia, *CIL VI*, 1060 = EDCS-17600398 and *CIL VI*, 10300 = EDCS-17700507 from Rome, *CIL XI*, 1355 = EDCS-5320028 = EDR129455 and 129457 from Luna and *AE* 1977, 0265 a and b provide lists of several hundred names.

²⁴⁹ E.g. Sextus Sextilius Iulianus *pater* and Sextus Sextilius *filius* in *CIL XIV*, 251.

cognomina suggest a servile origin and whose *nomina* are unusual enough to make a link between them likely: A. Herenuleius Philetianus and A. Herenuleius Vettianus appear in both *CIL* XIV, 250 and 251, (in the latter next to each other) yet there is no relationship indicated.²⁵⁰ The conclusion is that *frater*, unlike *pater* and *filius*, is not used as a differential. In the case of *CIL* VI, 10350 there are no other Titi Satelli other than Eutyches and Lascivus so there would be no ambiguity and it is not evident what separating them as ‘brothers’ would achieve, particularly among such a small group of individuals. The positioning of the FR is unusual in that it forms a middle column with the membership names either side. The names of the two Titi Satelli are slightly shortened to accommodate the FR, but so too are the names to the right, Herma Fonteius and Appuleius Ampliatus. The FR is also larger than the surrounding names which suggests it is more than a simple identifier for two of the individuals on the list. Rather than referring to the first two names on the list it is equally, if not more, probable that the abbreviation FR applies to all ten names (with the addition of the two *curatores*) who were collectively known as *fratres*.

Unlike the examples of the use of *frater* from the Vindolanda tablets discussed above which demonstrated that the term used there was between individuals of equal, or near equal, social status, the social status of the individuals identified in *CIL* VI, 10350 is varied. Among those listed are at least one *liberta* (Besia lucunda), one imperial slave (Asiaticus) and possibly one private slave (Herma). It is also worth noting that a third of those listed are women and that there are a total of twelve names, a number which, as we shall see later, is of importance in the study of the hypogeum of the Aurelii frescoes (Chapter 8, section 8.2).

In the inscription *CIL* VI, 10350 therefore, we appear to have confirmation of an example of the use of the word *frater* for a fellow member of a *collegium*. The number of instances is not great. In large part this is due to the nature of the evidence which relies on funereal inscriptions and only a small proportion of those can be linked to *collegia*. A person might belong to a *collegium* yet still be buried by their spouse, children or parents rather than their *collegae* or *sodales*. Within the

²⁵⁰ These two individuals also appear on two fragments of lists i.e. *CIL* XIV, 4567-8 = EDR111077-8.

collegium there is no reason why such a fictive familial term as *frater* could not be used as it certainly was in military contexts. The use of fictive relationships is the subject of Harland's 2005 article on their prevalence in associations in the Greek-speaking parts of the Roman Empire.²⁵¹ The article argues that inscriptional evidence for references to fellow members of a *collegium* as 'brothers' is rare because it is the language of personal communication rather than monumental commemoration.²⁵² Harland's work concentrates on the Eastern half of the Empire and thus has the luxury of Egyptian papyri to draw on where official letters are addressed to 'brothers' suggesting a close professional relationship.²⁵³ However, as borne out by the Vindolanda evidence, a similar tradition exists in the West.

The greater quantity of inscriptions written in Greek (in the East and West) that use the term Ἀδελφοί in comparison to those that use *frater* as a fictive sibling reference argues for an Eastern origin to this habit, but despite Harland's geographical restriction he also identifies fictive sibling references in the Latin West including their use in the context of a *collegium* near Turin.²⁵⁴ Although *CIL* VI, 10350 is not mentioned in Harland's article it nevertheless confirms the use of *frater* among *collegia* members which in turn reinforces the likelihood that those named in the mosaic inscription of the hypogeum of the Aurelii were not in fact part of a *familia* or blood-related, but were closely associated with each other as part of a *collegium*.

3.7 Discussion

The interpretation of the mosaic inscription, despite its brevity, opens a rich vein of speculation on the precise nature of the relationships between the individuals commemorated.

A cultic connection is the least likely. If the Aurelii were a group of religious or mystic *fratres*, such as is known from the evidence of the 'brothers and sisters'

²⁵¹ Harland 2005: 491-513.

²⁵² Harland 2005: 512.

²⁵³ Harland 2003: 30-3. Harland 2005: 502.

²⁵⁴ Harland 2005: 509, fn 57. *CIL* V, 7487 = EDR010433: fabri | fratres. Bömer 1981: 177, drawing on Liebenam 1890 (1964): 185 cites other possible collegiate *frater* inscriptions in Italy (*CIL* VI, 9148, 10681, 21812, and 37885 i.e. EDR133991, 104115, 106325, and 121069).

dedicated to the 'Gods of the Hills' mentioned above (section 3.5), and that relationship was important enough to record it, one would expect to find some evidence of cult in the pictorial decoration in *cubiculum A* and elsewhere. This, as we shall see, is not the case however, and the identification of Aurelia Prima as a *virgo* does not require a cultic interpretation. None of the literary examples cited above (section 3.2) relate to a *virgo* connected with religious practice. The term *virgo* is used in Christian contexts when applied to mature women to signify particular devotion to Christianity, but as discussed, among non-Christians it signified nothing more than an unmarried female, usually a child, but not necessarily so.

The idea of a familial connection (section 3.4), with all four Aurelii siblings having survived slavery, is based solely on the co-incidence of names. Yet Aurelius is an extremely common name at this time. With no other evidence and such a small sample there is not enough evidence to claim that the tomb was erected by one sibling to commemorate three deceased siblings. The Latin of the inscription is not clear-cut. There is no comparandum for *fratris* as an abbreviation for *fratribus*, but there is evidence that noun endings were evolving which leads to the conclusion that reading the term *fratris* as a late nominative plural is more likely and the named individuals are part of a larger community.

The term *frater*, we have seen in section 3.6, can be used in many instances where close relationships have been formed between individuals including *collegia*. Such *collegia* contained a range of social groups, but *liberti* were a predominant part of their make-up. The use of *frater* between *collegae* demonstrates an equality within the *collegium*, despite formal social differences, that would be absent outside. I shall discuss later whether or not such a *collegium* was based upon *familia* or profession, but, the possibility that Aurelia Prima was a young, but mature, woman need not preclude her membership of a professional *collegium*. Girls and young women could and did have professions at, to modern eyes, a remarkably tender age; a point that shall be discussed later in Chapter 10. By her late teens or even early twenties, a woman might remain unmarried, but accomplished in a profession.

Having examined the inscription of these *liberti* I shall now review the tradition of funerary art associated with them so that observations on the pictorial art within the hypogeum of the Aurelii can be placed within that context.

Chapter 4. The Depiction of Self in the Funerary Art of *Liberti*.

During the Late Republic funerary monuments of freedmen placed an emphasis upon two aspects of the freedman's place within society, (1) their attainment of citizenship, signified by the wearing of the toga and (2) the attainment of a legitimate family recognised as such in law. To celebrate these achievements the *libertus* of the first century BC had himself, his wife and his children duly attired in the dress of the citizen in commemorative plaques that were often set into the external walls of the sepulchre along with an inscription advertising those within the tomb, or at least the tomb's principal inhabitants, to the outside world. The best example still *in situ* is seen in the tombs of the Via Caeli montana on the corner of the modern Via S. Croce in Gerusalemme and Via Statilia in Rome (figures 23a-b).²⁵⁵ The husband and adult son are shown wearing togas and the wife is depicted with *palla* drawn over her head in the manner of a *matrona*.

These portrayals of citizenship and family developed quickly into a form which displayed the occupations of the deceased. The earliest extant example is the relief of the Gavii dated to c. 40 BC now in the cloister of S. Giovanni in Laterano.²⁵⁶ In this example the names of those commemorated, C. Cavius Dardanus, his brother, Salvius, wife and son are depicted in the same frontal 'window frame' manner as those in the Via Caeli montana with the additional information that the two brothers were *fabrei tignuares*.²⁵⁷ There is no indication of the brothers' occupation within the sculptural relief outside of the inscription, but this early, almost incidental, reference to their occupation develops in other reliefs into an artistic embellishment of commemorative reliefs. The Licinii relief (figure 24), now in the British Museum, dates from the late Augustan period and shows two freedmen with no apparent

²⁵⁵ Colini 1943: 268-79. Toynbee 1971: 43-4.

²⁵⁶ *CIL* VI, 9411. Kleiner 1977: 242, nr 82. George 2006: 20, fig. 1.

²⁵⁷ Dardanus, his son Rufus and wife Asia are all described as '*vivit*' i.e. they were alive at the time of the commemoration which in all probability was erected at the time of the brother Salvius' decease.

blood connection, but the busts are framed by symbols of work.²⁵⁸ Above the busts are tools associated with metalworking whereas on the right are tools associated with woodworking. To the left of the busts is the depiction of *fasces* possibly indicating that the figure on the left, Philonicus, was a *sevir Augustalis*.²⁵⁹ The long rod behind the *fasces* may be a *festuca vindicta* indicating the conferment of liberty redolent, as we shall see, of the imagery in *cubiculum* B (Chapter 7, section 7.3.3).²⁶⁰

The relief of the Licinii illustrates two new, distinct aspects of freedmen autorepresentation. First, the illustration together of the two men suggests a bond forged through the medium of work and/or co-libertinage in addition to, or in lieu of, any familial ties they may have had. Second, if one were a member of the *sevirate* the equivalent, or greater prominence, given to occupational representation is evidence that skilled work was something to be equally proud of. The commemoration of work in these reliefs exhibits an attitude towards manual, yet skilled, labour in marked contrast to that of Cicero (*de Off.* 1.150-151) who considered such occupation *sordidus*. One ought not to accept such an elitist view as being shared by those parts of society whose lot it was to carry out 'menial' trades.

The habit of representing the deceased and their families in this 'window frame' manner, displaying the attainment of citizenship through their attire, becomes less popular during the first century AD, but the habit of representing occupations continues well into the Christian era.²⁶¹ The habit evolved into the dual commemoration of both *libertus* and *patronus*. A fine example of this is a grave stele from Ravenna dating to the first half of the first century AD, now in the Ravenna

²⁵⁸ *CIL* XIV, 2721/2722: P(ublius) Licinius P(ublil) l(ibertus) | Philonicu[s] | | P(ublius) Licinius P(ublil) l(ibertus) | Demetrius patrono | fecit. British Museum, 1954, 12-14,1. The inscription is ambiguous as to whom the relief was dedicated. Demetrius may have been the freedman of Philonicus, who was himself a freedman. It has also been suggested that they are father and son for a fuller discussion see Manning 1965; Zanker 1975; Kleiner 1977: 196, nr 3; Zimmer 1982: 191, kat. 128; Kockel 1993: 187, taf. 101a, kat. L17.

²⁵⁹ A position maintained by Zimmer 1982: 191, fn 277 on the grounds of less ambiguous examples.

²⁶⁰ Manning 1965: 26 proposed that *fasces* and rod are emblematic of the action of *manumissio vindicta* which seems the most probable meaning. This is one among a number of suggestions made by Zanker (Zanker 1975: 299).

²⁶¹ For a comprehensive catalogue of occupational inscriptions and images in the catacombs of Rome see Bisconti 2000.

National Museum (figure 25).²⁶² The stele was set up by freeborn Publius Longidienus, while he was alive, for himself, his wife Stacte, who was herself Longidienus' former slave, and his freedmen, Rufio and Piladespotus who defrayed the cost.²⁶³ The son of Longidienus (also called Publius) is commemorated on a plaque within the image of boat building.²⁶⁴ We have here an example of both freeborn and freed unequivocally advertising their place in their society as craftsmen. There is no suggestion that the *familia Longidieni* considered their banausic trade to be *sordidus*.

Another example of patron and freedman sharing in the 'honours' of their profession is seen in the late first century AD altar of L. Cornelius Atimetus now in the Galleria Lapidario in the Vatican Museums (figures 26a-b).²⁶⁵ Here, there is no mention of a wife or son, but two men are depicted: the freeborn L. Cornelius Atimetus and his freedman L. Cornelius Epaphra. On one side of the altar the two men are shown metalworking at a forge, dressed for heavy, dirty labour; on the other side they can be seen, one wearing a toga, the other a tunic, proudly displaying their finished wares: knives, cleavers etc. It is probably the freeborn Atimetus wearing a toga in the shop scene and wielding the hammer in the manufacturing scene, but both individuals are given equal prominence and are of near equal height. This is similar to the commemoration of the Licinii: it is their occupation that brings them together. Their common interest, their occupation, overrides differences in legal

²⁶² MN Ravenna, 7. Zimmer 1982: 143-4, kat. 62. Iannucci and Martini 1993: 24.

²⁶³ *CIL* XI, 139 = *ILS* 7725 = *AE* 1972, 185: P(ublius) Longidienus P(ublius) F(ilius) Cam(ilia tribu) | faber navalis se vivo constit | uit et Longidienae P(ublili) l(ibertae) Stactini | | P(ublius) Longidienus P(ublili) l(ibertus) Rufio | P(ublius) Longidienus P(ublili) l(ibertus) Piladespotus | inpensam patrono dederunt | | P(ublius) Longidienus P(ublili) F(ilius) ad onus | properat.

²⁶⁴ The younger Publius Longidienus is described as 'hurries to (or up) the works': whether that refers to the construction of the stele, that he was an ardent shipwright or whether he worked as a foreman at the shipyards is ambiguous. If the figure working with an adze in the picture is the son of the patron one would have expected the figure to be more prominent. For a discussion on the works being carried out see Casson 1963.

²⁶⁵ Vat. Mus. Galleria Lapidario, 9277 (between walls 41 and 43). *CIL* VI, 16166 = EDCS-12001062: L(ucius) Cornelius | Atimetus | sibi et L(ucio) Cornelio | Epaphrae lib(erto) |⁵ bene merenti | ceterisq(ue) libertis | lib(ertabus) posterisque | eorum. Zimmer 1982: 180-1, kat. 114. Boschung 1987: 114, tav. 57, kat. 968.

status. The hierarchy evident among the *familia Longidieni*, with freedmen depicted in the row below their patrons, is much less obvious.

These examples of artisanal work would all qualify as *sordidus* to the likes of Cicero, but while such occupations form a large part of the corpus those who pursued a career that Cicero would have approved of also commemorated their careers. In the courtyard of the Terme museum in Rome is an Augustan inscription which commemorates a *medicus oculusarius* D. Colius Arsaces, freedman of Decimus (figure 27).²⁶⁶ Although there is no relief or pictorial element extant the quality of the stone and carving suggests a high quality memorial, which also commemorates his wife and other freedmen, all of whom are named as having the same patron. A somewhat later tomb, dated to the reign of Hadrian or Antoninus Pius, at Isola Sacra records a married couple. The wife Scribonia Attice made the monument for herself, her husband M. Ulpius Amerimnus and her mother Scribonia Callityche. Scribonia Attice is depicted as a midwife and, in what appears to be a family practice, her husband is depicted as a doctor.²⁶⁷ The deceased's name, Ulpius, suggests an ancestor freed in the reign of Trajan. The lack of libertination suggests that they were free born, but of freed stock probably only first or second generation. Alternatively, they may not have recorded their libertination.²⁶⁸ The terracotta reliefs that decorate the outside of the tomb portray Attice and Amerimnus carrying out their respective professions of midwife and doctor in the same manner as those whose trades Cicero would have considered *sordidus*.²⁶⁹

²⁶⁶ MNR Terme, 113198. *Epigraphica* 34 (1972): 20, nr 27 = EDR000030. The inscription, unfortunately, is badly positioned, despite its evident quality, upside down facing towards and close to the wall of the Diocletian baths. For other instances of medical practitioners recorded in catacombs, including reliefs of medical equipment see Bisconti 2000: 114-19 (especially fig. 57) and catalogue section XV 234-7.

²⁶⁷ Thylander 1952: A222. Calza 1940: 248-51, 367.

²⁶⁸ During the course of the first and second centuries AD libertination became less frequent making it more difficult to correlate occupation with status. In some cases the status of the commemorated can be inferred e.g. *CIL* XIV, 393 = EDR143568: P(ublius) Nonius Zethus Aug(ustalis) | fecit sibi et | Noniae Hilarae conlibertae | Noniae P(ublilii) l(ibertae) Pelagiae coniugi | P(ublius) Nonius Heraclio. Vat. Mus. Chiaramonti, 1343. P. Nonius Zethus chose not to add his libertination, but the reference to Nonia Hilara as *conliberta* shows his status. For decline in libertination see Taylor 1961: 113-33 esp. 120-2.

²⁶⁹ Calza 1931: 534-6.

In a similar manner in the first half of the second century Titus Statilius Aper was commemorated with his profession as surveyor or engineer clearly identified. At his feet is a *cippus* holding documents and various instruments, delineated on the sides of his funerary altar, are evidence of the profession mentioned in his funerary inscription.²⁷⁰ Statilius Aper was clearly of free birth and his father, T. Statilius Proculus, recorded his own profession in the memorial to his son. The father had achieved the rank of *accensus velatus*.²⁷¹ Statilius Proculus was probably freeborn, but his rank was not reserved solely for the *ingenui*. An inscription from Ficulea, outside Rome records a *libertus*, M. Consius Cerinthus, who had likewise attained the rank of *accensus velatus* assisting the emperor Claudius and later Nero in the carrying out of religious festivals.²⁷² Nor did he achieve this honour as an imperial freedman, his name signifies his patron was outside the imperial family, but as one considered worthy of attending both emperors in their celebration of rites on the Alban Mount. Despite his inauspicious start in life Consius Cerinthus had risen to a place close to the emperors and was of considerable wealth as the inscriptional evidence states that he funded road repairs.²⁷³

One particularly successful individual, L. Marius Doryphorus, like Consius Cerinthus, records a career during the late second century AD that included a number of different apparitorial positions and eventually was personally rewarded by the emperor Commodus.²⁷⁴

²⁷⁰ *CIL* VI, 1975 = *ILS* 7737 = *CLE* 441 = EDR032796.

²⁷¹ An administrative post which had its origins in the military sphere, but by the early empire was purely a civilian post associated with the personal staff of an individual office holder, rather than governmental or civic bureaucracy. Purcell 1983: 165-6.

²⁷² *CIL* XIV, 4012 = *ILS* 5387 = *AE* 1994, 0364 = EDR150066. Vat. Mus. Lapidario Profano ex Lateranense, sett. E, 25422. Di Stefano Manzella 1994: 275.

²⁷³ Purcell 1983: 165 suggests that this may have been one of the responsibilities of the post of *accensus velatus*.

²⁷⁴ *CIL* VI, 1847 = *ILS* 1899. [L(ucius)] Marius L(ucii) l(ibertus) Doryphorus annulos aureos | consecutus a divo Commodo, scrib(a) aedilic(ius) et | tribunic(ius), scrib(a) libr(arius) aedil(ium) curul(ium), praeco co(n)s(ularis) | [pra]ec(o) quaestorius, sacerdot(al)is, viator augurum |⁵ [lic]or curiati(us) Laurens Lavinus | fecit sibi et | [...]ae Asclepiodote coniugi item libertis | libertibusque posterisque eorum Purcell 1983: 172, nr15.

4.1 Discussion.

Celebrations of occupation, while never wholly removing social distinction, did serve to ameliorate social disparity. The degree of commemoration depended on a number of factors, not least the financial resources available, and the predilection for doing so was found at all levels of society. Nevertheless, Sandra Rae Joshel's work shows that slaves and freedmen were more likely to record their professions on their epitaphs than their freeborn neighbours.²⁷⁵ Furthermore, if *liberti* such as M. Consius Cerinthus rose to positions of influence, in roles that were more usually held by the freeborn, there is no reason why they would not wish to have such success recorded in their funerary decoration. Indeed, their motivation to do so would likely be all the greater than that of their less successful *colliberti*. The case of the *accensi velati* exemplified by T. Statilius Proculus and M. Consius Cerinthus and medical professionals such as D. Colius Arsaces and Scribonia Attice, make it clear that the commemoration of one's trade or profession in funerary inscriptions, stele and altars was not restricted to banal activities.

In her study of occupations recorded in funerary inscriptions Joshel identified 306 inscriptions that were connected with administration i.e. 21% of the total, divided into three groups: financial agents, administrators and secretaries/clerks/copyists.²⁷⁶ This is a high proportion given the comparatively low percentage of administrators that one might expect to find in a pre-industrial society. It is only marginally behind the two highest of Joshel's groupings of occupations: manufacture (331 inscriptions) and domestic service (321 inscriptions). With this statistical evidence and the various examples cited above we may now summarise the following:

1. All members of society had a desire to commemorate their lives, their assimilation into a community and achievements and to that extent

²⁷⁵ Joshel 1992: 47, table 2.4.

²⁷⁶ Joshel 1992: 69, table 3.1. Note this figure excludes members of the imperial bureaucracy which Joshel omitted, Joshel 1992: 16.

liberti were not so very different from the freeborn.²⁷⁷ Denied, however, the opportunity to hold public office outside the *seviri Augustales* freedmen had a greater propensity to record their professions than their *ingenui* neighbours.²⁷⁸ In many instances, especially when they did not have a legitimate family, occupation was one of the principal defining features of the *libertus*, so much so that they were commemorated alongside their *colliberti* and on occasions treated as near equals by their patrons.

2. The majority of occupations were of a humble nature requiring physical work of varying degrees of expertise. There were, nevertheless, other occupations that were considered by the élite as being of higher status, which also received recognition in funerary memorials.
3. Higher status professions in administration are almost as well represented as manufacture or domestic service, despite the fact that the non-administrative professions would have been far more populous.

²⁷⁷ Petersen 2006: 228-30.

²⁷⁸ Petersen 2006: 69 questions the definition of 'freedman art' by highlighting the correspondence between the Pompeiian tombs of the freeborn C. Vestorius Priscus and the freed C. Munatius Faustus. Nevertheless, Priscus highlights a public career, albeit at a junior level, whereas Faustus commemorates his mercantile career. A further comparison (Petersen 2006: 118-19) is made between the more successful C. Cartilius Poplicola (*ingenuus*) from Ostia and M. Vergilius Eurysaces (*libertus*) from the city of Rome, but again Poplicola demonstrates his achievement of public office in contrast with Eurysaces' profession as a (very rich) baker.

Chapter 5. Description of the Lower *cubicula*.

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter we will examine the frescoes of *cubiculum A*, vestibule and *cubiculum B*. The latter two rooms are linked, not only by their position in the monument as a whole (figure 12), but also by the similarities in their decorative schemes. Although vestibule and *cubiculum B* are physically separated from *cubiculum A* by the access stairwell stylistic connections between all these rooms are more evident if they are described together. The decoration will be described in detail showing how the decoration, especially in the vestibule and *cubiculum B*, is distributed on the walls and vaulted ceilings in a manner that is broadly symmetrical.

5.2 Decoration of Vestibule.

5.2.1 Basic Scheme.

Both walls and ceilings have a plain white plaster background, against which red outlines mark the corners of the room and frame the *arcosolia* and portal to *cubiculum B*. Lines, usually red but occasionally green, divide the white background on walls and ceiling into a variety of fields. These fields may be left plain, contain simple lines or have decorative motifs. On occasion fields contain panels formed of red or green lines in which are set further decorative motifs. The panels may be connected to each other and the red corner outlining with green lines, some straight, others curved. In addition to the green and red lines, there are a number of curved swags of green foliage with red flowers. A schematic layout of the motifs in vestibule and *cubiculum B* is set out in figure 28.

5.2.2 Wall Decoration.

The entrance (north) wall of the vestibule (figure 29) is decorated with the basic scheme on either side of the entrance that, together with the staircase, reaches full

height from floor to ceiling.²⁷⁹ Either side of the entrance a single horizontal red line divides the wall at a height of approximately 1.6m above floor level. Each field thus created contains a quadrilateral panel: the upper one trapezoidal, connected to the edges of the wall by short green lines; the lower one with curved shorter sides is connected to the top of the upper field by a short green line. On the east side the upper panel contains the image of a goat or ram facing towards the left i.e. towards the entrance.²⁸⁰ The lower panel contains the image of a male figure dressed in white tunic, with red/brown *clavi* and white *pallium* facing towards the right. The *pallium* falls over the figure's left shoulder reaching to approximately the level of the tunic's hem, it wraps around the figure's back under the right arm and the end is then draped over the figure's left forearm.²⁸¹ Bendinelli does not record the figure holding anything. A swag of foliage crosses the panel. The west side of the entrance is a repeat of the imagery on the east; the goat or ram may face towards the entrance, though this is uncertain due to the poor state of preservation.²⁸²

The west (right) wall of the vestibule above the *arcosolium* has three fields delineated by vertical red lines (figure 17). Within the central field further red lines make a panel occupying most of the field.²⁸³ This panel is connected to the edge of the vault and the red lines of the outer fields by short green lines. The outer two fields have no decorative motif within them except a single short, vertical, straight green line. The central panel contains a male figure wearing tunic and *pallium* facing forward, turning to the left with his right arm raised towards the small, green, Latin cross mentioned in Chapter 1 (figure 5).²⁸⁴ A single swag of foliage cuts off the top right hand corner of the central panel. The *arcosolium*, as noted above (see Chapter 1, section 2.3), is divided into an upper and lower level by a tile shelf. The upper level

²⁷⁹ Bendinelli 1922: 378. Bisconti 2011a: tav. 45.

²⁸⁰ Terms such as left or right are used from the viewer's perspective.

²⁸¹ All the male figures subsequently described in the vestibule and *cubiculum* B, unless noted otherwise, have tunics with red/brown *clavi* and wear their *pallia* in the same manner.

²⁸² The entrance wall of the vestibule was not recorded in Wilpert's 1924 publication. Bendinelli's photograph, Bendinelli 1922: fig. 33, is insufficiently clear though his line drawing, fig. 34 shows it facing towards the entrance mirroring the one to the right of the entrance.

²⁸³ Bisconti 2011a: tav. 51.

²⁸⁴ Bendinelli 1922: 380.

is decorated with a series of red and green lines but no other decorative motif. The lower level is similarly divided by red and green lines, but in this instance a decorative motif has been added of two flying birds either side, and facing, a vase of flowers. The niches, on either side and on each level are decorated with red spots resembling flowers.²⁸⁵ Paul Corby Finney compared these niches to niches in tombs E, I, O and T of the Vatican necropolis used for cinerary urns.²⁸⁶ However, this is unlikely as there is no evidence of cremation burials here or elsewhere in the hypogeum and it was normal practice for cinerary urns to be easily visible to visitors coming to make their oblations etc. (figure 30).²⁸⁷

The soffit of the *arcosolium* is richly decorated with red and green lines this time predominately curved. The soffit is divided into three fields by two curved red lines (figure 31).²⁸⁸ A mandorla, also created by red lines, is within the central field. All these red lines are dentillated with pairs of 'teeth'.²⁸⁹ Outside the mandorla, but still within the central field, are green lines further dividing the panel and within these smaller divisions there are bunches of red flowers and green foliage. Within the mandorla a sea-monster (*ketos*) faces left. In each of the two outer fields a figure stands on a lily-like flower with a cornucopia on each side. The figure on the right holds a *rotulus* and the figure on the left side holds a slender rod that looks slightly curved.²⁹⁰ The gender of the figures is unclear. Bendinelli described them as both being female, which is likely in the case of the one on the right as the long tunic reaches to the floor and appears waisted below a bodice. The gender of the figure on the left, due to its poor state of preservation, is less certain.²⁹¹

²⁸⁵ Bisconti 2011a: tav. 52.

²⁸⁶ Finney 1980: 443, fn 15.

²⁸⁷ Poe 2007: 64 rejects Finney's suggestion on the grounds that, "Roman cremation niches are invariably drilled with holes for urns".

²⁸⁸ Bendinelli 1922: 373-4, fig. 35; Wilpert 1924: tav. VI, b and c; Bisconti 2011a: tav. 53.

²⁸⁹ The term mandorla is here used to describe two overlapping curved lines to create an almond shape.

²⁹⁰ In the line drawing Bendinelli 1922: fig. 35 it looks straight.

²⁹¹ A female holding a *rotulus* is not unusual as exemplified in an early fourth century AD sarcophagus now in the MNR Terme, 407, (Musso in *MNR Le Sculture* I/2, II, 31: 128-31). Another woman holds a *rotulus* in a sarcophagus from the first half of the third century, now in the Ny Carlsberg Glyptothek, 2302 (Østergaard 1996: 122, nr 52). Stine Birk identifies almost as many

The rear (south) wall of the vestibule (figure 32) is almost a mirror image of the entrance wall opposite.²⁹² Each side of the portal that leads to *cubiculum* B has two fields, one above the other, separated by a horizontal red line at the level of the portal's soffit. Within each lower field is a rectangular panel marked out by straight red lines with a centrally positioned figure in tunic and *pallium*. Within each upper field is a trapezoidal panel connected to the top and side edges of the field by green lines. Within each of these is a leaping animal, described by Bendinelli as rams, facing towards the portal. Due to the lower height of the entrance into *cubiculum* B there is an area of wall above the portal for decoration. This area is divided into three fields, two narrow outer fields and one broader central field. The outer two each have a single vertical green line. The central field has a panel enclosing a figure dressed in tunic and *pallium* pictured frontally but turning towards the left. All three human figures (i.e. that above the portal and the two either side) have their right hands raised. Preservation is poor, but none appear to be holding *rotuli* or rods nor are any mentioned by Bendinelli.

Within the rear wall is the portal into *cubiculum* B. The east side of the portal has a panel (1.10m high) delineated by a red line basically quadrilateral with a notch extending above the line of the upper side (figure 33).²⁹³ From this notch hang two swags of green foliage with red flowers that reach to the edge of the jamb; that on the right returns to the red line of the panel. Within the panel is a male figure dressed in tunic and *pallium*. The figure is frontal, but his head is turned slightly to his right i.e. towards the interior of the vestibule, his right hand raised holding a straight narrow rod approximately the same length as the figure's arm.²⁹⁴ The figure stands upon a floral stand similar to that in the vault of the *arcosolium*, but more elaborate. From the base of the floral stand springs sinuous vegetative decoration. The west side of the portal (figure 34) is almost identical to that opposite with two exceptions:

learned women as learned men on sarcophagi (Birk 2013: 86, graph 4). As there is no comparandum for a female holding a rod I have taken that figure to be male.

²⁹² Bendinelli 1922: 377, tav. 15; Bisconti 2011a: tav. 47.

²⁹³ Bendinelli 1922: 386-7, fig. 42; Wilpert 1924: tav. X, c; Bisconti 2011a: tav. 48.

²⁹⁴ The rod is more visible in Tabanelli's aquatint in Wilpert 1924 than in the modern photograph in Bisconti 2011a.

the notch on the upper side of the panel reaches down into the panel (the space created by this and green lines above contains a floral motif) and the figure, turned towards the right turns his head to the left *contrapposto* towards the interior of *cubiculum* B.²⁹⁵ In his right hand, in place of the rod, a *rotulus* is held downwards.

The soffit of the portal (figure 35) is symmetrically divided into three fields: two outer semi-circular ones (0.45m dia.) and a central field almost filled by a medallion.²⁹⁶ All are delineated with dentillated red lines, those of the semi-circles with pairs of 'teeth' and the medallion with 'i's. The medallion is connected to the semi-circles with short green lines; two on either side. The semi-circles are connected to each other with curved swags of foliage with red flowers. The semi-circles each contain the same motif though the one on the right is in a poorer state of preservation. The motif consists of two birds standing on columns either side of a two-handled vase that also stands on a column.²⁹⁷ Between the columns is a blue/green ground upon which are scattered red petals or flowers. The medallion contains a clean-shaven, male figure with tunic and *pallium*. The figure turns to his left, the head partially turned back towards the viewer. Unlike the other male figures his hand is not raised, neither does he hold *rotulus* or rod.

The east wall of the vestibule (figure 36) above the *arcosolium* has a pattern of red and green lines similar to that on the west wall, but with some differences.²⁹⁸ The two outer fields are each divided by a saltire cross, each with a diamond-shaped central boss, and two parallel, horizontal lines all in red (described by Bendinelli as a *transenna*). Swags of foliage cut off the upper corners of the panel set within the central field and extend to the saltire crosses and return to the panel in a symmetrical manner. The Latin cross seen in the west wall is absent. Two curved, green lines connect the central panel with the vault. Within the central panel is a male figure wearing tunic and *pallium* in the same pose as that on the west wall i.e. facing the viewer and turning to the left with his right arm raised. This figure is much better

²⁹⁵ Bendinelli 1922: 387; Wilpert 1924: tav. X, b; Bisconti 2011a: tav. 50.

²⁹⁶ Bendinelli 1922: 384-6, fig. 41; Wilpert 1924: tav. VI (right, centre); Bisconti 2011a: tav. 49.

²⁹⁷ The type of vase is unusual in having a shape most closely resembling a Hellenistic *lebes gamikos* form, but the reason for the shape is unknown.

²⁹⁸ Bendinelli 1922: 378-9, fig. 37; Bisconti 2011a: tav. 46.

preserved than the one opposite. The short green lines in the outer fields on the west wall are repeated in the lower section of the outer fields on the east wall. The additional, upper field created by the saltire crosses are each filled by a vase with a pair of small 'ears' or handles seated on a slender tripod. The back wall of the *arcosolium*, which is not as well preserved as that on the west wall of the vestibule, was decorated with simple red lines in the upper and lower levels. There is no decorative motif corresponding to the birds and vase seen on the right wall. The niches are decorated with red spots resembling flowers as in the *arcosolium* niches opposite. There is no decoration extant on the soffit of the *arcosolium*.

5.2.3 Vault Decoration.

The barrel-vaulted ceiling of the vestibule also has a pattern of red and green lines but with marked differences (figure 37).²⁹⁹ Whereas the walls are decorated with predominantly straight lines those on the ceilings are almost exclusively curved. The principal shape described by these lines is a mandorla that spans approximately $\frac{2}{3}$ rd of the vault. The apices of this mandorla are cut off by dentillated red lines each forming a fan shape. The dentillation consists of evenly spaced 'i's. The apices themselves are delineated with green lines and the remainder of the mandorla in red lines. Within the main body of the mandorla there is a central circle (0.55m dia.) marked out by a dentillated red line.³⁰⁰ The dentillations are the same, evenly spaced, 'i's that mark out the apices. A further four, small mandorlas connect the circle and large mandorla, which in turn are connected to each other by swags of green foliage with red flowers parallel with the central dentillated circle. Further swags of foliage and plain green lines make yet more connections with the red lines of the principal mandorla.

The four pendentives are cut off by red lines dentillated with pairs of 'teeth' to form a fan shape. A straight red line connects the pendentives in pairs along the short axis of the vault. Foliage swags run concentric to each dentillated line and between them are further swags, not of foliage but narrow, twin parallel green lines.

²⁹⁹ Bendinelli 1922: 381-4, figs 39 and 40; Wilpert 1924: tav. XI; Bisconti 2011a: tav. 44.

³⁰⁰ Bendinelli 1922: 381.

The principal mandorla is connected to the edges of the vault by short green or red lines. Two green lines above the entrance portal would have formed a medallion had they not been reduced by the principal mandorla and damage.

There are four figures depicted in the vault decoration. The central circle has a male figure dressed in tunic and *pallium*; in this case the pose is somewhat frontal, with head is turned slightly to the left. The medallion above the entrance portal contains another figure dressed in tunic and *pallium*. The top half of the figure is badly abraded though Wilpert's monochrome plate (figure 38) suggests its right arm raised in the same manner as the others. Within each apex of the principal mandorla is a figure standing upon a stylised flower that appears to emanate from each point of the apex. Each wears a tunic that reaches to the ground and some form of mantel (figures 39a-b). These figures were described by Bendinelli as female and while Wilpert's monochrome record shows no veil or particularly long hair the length of the tunic strongly suggests that Bendinelli was correct. Elsewhere, where preservation allows the gender of the figures to be more evident, females always wear garments that reach to the ground whereas male tunics are calf length. The form of mantle is draped in the same manner as the *pallia* of the male figures, which may suggest that the figures are male, yet it is a female *palla* though not, in these instances, drawn up as a veil; a funerary altar from the early second century AD demonstrates that such drapery could equally be worn in this fashion (figure 40).³⁰¹ Each figure has a different pose: one on the left hand apex holds its right hand up; the other figure, in the right hand apex, holds its right hand down and appears to hold a *rotulus* in the same manner as the female figure mentioned in the right hand *arcosolium* discussed earlier (section 5.2.2). Bendinelli's interpretation, that the figures represented *Spes*, because of a flower that he saw being held up by them, is less certain.³⁰² Such a detail cannot be confirmed in either Wilpert's record or the modern photograph. Images of *Spes* from Severan coinage shows the goddess not only holding a flower, but also grasping her tunic or *calasis*, which appears to flutter

³⁰¹ Vat. Mus. Galleria dei Candelabri, 2671. Spinola 2004: 255-6. On female dress, see Olson 2008a: 10-57.

³⁰² Bendinelli 1922: 382, fig. 40.

behind her, with her left hand (figures 41a-b).³⁰³ This detail is missing, accordingly I believe Bendinelli's interpretation is mistaken.

Within each of the fans of the pendentives a bird stands upon a branch holding an object in its long beak. Floral decoration, in addition to the swags already mentioned, is seen in the small mandorlas and some of the fields formed from the various red or green lines.

5.3 Decoration of *Cubiculum* B.

5.3.1 Basic Scheme.

The basic scheme of decoration is similar to that in the vestibule. Red or green lines divide the white plastered walls and vaulted ceiling into a variety of fields and panels that contain individual decorative motifs. The larger size of the *cubiculum* allows a greater variety of subjects, which will be discussed in detail below. Some lines are dentillated; these lines, as with the vestibule, (with one exception) are always red. The areas of wall above the *arcosolia* are sub-divided in a manner similar to the left and right hand walls of the vestibule, however, whereas the vestibule's panels were delineated with red lines those of the *cubiculum* are green.

5.3.2 Entrance (North) Wall.

Facing back towards the vestibule, the entrance (north) wall (figure 42) is divided into three by two vertical red lines that extend up from the jambs of the portal creating a central field 1.1m wide that runs up to and into the lightwell.³⁰⁴ There is no decorative motif in this central field. Either side of the portal the wall is divided into five fields (top, upper, middle, lower and bottom) by four lines from top to bottom: green curved line, red straight, red curved, red curved. Each side is decorated in the same manner: the small top field is empty except for a short green line that rises from the horizontal green curved line, but does not bisect the field; the upper field is much

³⁰³ The *calasis* being a fuller garment allowing it to be 'fluttered' like this. For a demonstration of the difference between *tunica* and *calasis* see Scholz 1992: 95.

³⁰⁴ Bendinelli 1922: 407-8, tav. XVI, Bisconti 2011a: tav. 61.

larger and has a swag of foliage with red flowers cutting off the upper corner closest to the portal. Adjacent to this, as if dropping from the horizontal green curved line, is a vertical festoon of green foliage with red flowers, each ending in a small Latin cross (figure 43).³⁰⁵ Centrally placed within the field is a horned quadruped, described by Bendinelli as a ram, which springs towards the portal. The middle field is a narrow one approximately half way up the wall and has no decorative feature except for a short, horizontal green line. The lower field is another large field that contains a single motif i.e. a vase with two handles that is filled with fruit or flowers. The bottom field, like that half way up, has no motif other than a short, horizontal green line.

5.3.3 Northern Pilasters.

The two pilasters either side of the entrance (north) wall are decorated identically (figure 42).³⁰⁶ Both faces of each pilaster are divided into five fields by four lines at heights that approximate to the horizontal lines dividing the entrance wall. In the case of the pilasters all the lines are straight and keep the same coloration as the entrance wall i.e. (from top to bottom) green, red, red, and red. The two faces facing each other either side of the entrance (figures 44a-b) are decorated as follows.

The top small field has a pair of dolphins facing towards the inside of the *cubiculum*. Each has a curved, lunate tail and swept back fin rising from the head. Each pair of dolphins carries a ribbon between them in their mouths. They do not have any indication of sea and each pair is 'swimming' towards the centre of the *cubiculum*.

Each upper field contains, centrally placed, a male, bearded figure dressed in tunic and *pallium*. Each grasps a long, curved rod in the left hand while the right arm is raised and holds an object which may be a *rotulus*.³⁰⁷ Each figure wears sandals with straps that criss-cross as high as the mid-calf. There is no landscape setting to the figure other than a greenish base giving the suggestion of the ground upon which

³⁰⁵ Bisconti 2011a: tav. 57 bottom left.

³⁰⁶ Bisconti 2011a: tavv. 48 (left side), 50 (right side).

³⁰⁷ The figure is described as such by Bendinelli 1922: 408 and though the image has degraded there is no reason to doubt the description.

the figure stands. Each figure faces frontally with bodies turned slightly towards the entrance, but heads turned slightly towards the inside of the *cubiculum*. The small middle field contains a single green short stripe as on the entrance wall, but in this case aligned vertically.

Each lower field contains, centrally placed, a long beaked bird with wings swept back as if in flight, but appears to be standing (or settling?) on a branch or twig. The bottom small fields have a single, green, vertical line (now much abraded).

The two faces of the pilasters facing towards the inside of the *cubiculum* (figure 42) have a top field that is made triangular by the slope of the vault; there is no decoration.³⁰⁸ The upper fields each contain a vase filled with flowers or fruit similar to, but slightly smaller than, those on the entrance wall described above (section 5.3.2). The middle field has a short, green horizontal line. The lower fields each have a bird with its wings stretched back in flight. These birds have shorter beaks and do not have any branch or twig. There is no decoration in the bottom field.

5.3.4 East (Left) Wall.

On either side of the vertical edge of the upper *arcosolium* (figure 45) a roughly square field is defined by a, now much abraded, horizontal red line. Within each field is a quincunx of blue/grey blobs (that on the right is now wholly eroded by water ingress). The wall above and around the arc of the *arcosolium* is divided into three fields by two vertical red lines. Within each field is a panel formed by green lines. The bottom right hand corner of the left hand panel is 'cut into' by the arch of the *arcosolium*. The central panel is approximately square described by three straight green lines at the sides and top with the base of the square formed by the arch of the *arcosolium*. Within the right hand field the panel is incomplete and is formed of only two lines that connect the *arcosolium* with the edge of the vault. The pendentive of the vault on this side is much lower than on the left constraining the panel. Both left and right hand fields are crossed by swags of green foliage and red flowers stretching from the vault to the vertical red lines. The panels in these side fields have,

³⁰⁸ Bisconti 2011a: tav. 61.

at the centre of each, a quadruped (described by Bendinelli as a doe) springing towards the centre of the wall. There is no indication of ground or other landscape. The central panel has a well-preserved image of a clean-shaven male with short hair dressed in tunic and *pallium* (figure 46).³⁰⁹ In this instance the right hand is held downwards and does not hold anything. The good state of preservation allows one to note that the tunic reaches to the elbow and has a red/brown stripe halfway between elbow and shoulder. The figure is shown frontally, the body turned slightly to the right and the head to the left. The left hand, in addition to the *pallium*, grasps a long, thin, slightly curved rod. The length of the rod is a little over half the height of the individual i.e. in real life it would be approximately 1m in length. The figure is shod with sandals with straps that criss-cross as far as the hem of the tunic i.e. half way between knee and ankle. The ground is depicted by a brief green/blue wash of colour at the figure's feet upon which an indication of a shadow has been added in red/brown.

The sides and soffit of the upper *arcosolium* are divided and sub-divided by a complex set of red and green lines (figure 47). The right hand side has a poorly preserved vase and flowers set within a field marked out by a crooked red line that arches round the vase in a shape reminiscent of the *arcosolium* itself.³¹⁰ The plaster is broken at the point where side and soffit of the *arcosolium* meet and above this break is a panel formed of green curved lines. Within this panel is another figure dressed in tunic and *pallium*, the feet and ground are lost due to plaster loss. The figure is preserved well enough to see that the right arm is held down while the left hand clasps both *pallium* and a long, thin rod. The top of this field is delineated by a curved dentillated red line, the 'teeth' pointing upwards. Above is a symmetrically arranged set of blue/grey blobs that form a quincunx framed by green lines. This separates the field with the figure from a field formed in the centre of the soffit by two curved, dentillated red lines, the 'teeth' pointing towards the centre. The field is filled by a mandorla formed of two curved green lines (that have painted over similar

³⁰⁹ Bisconti 2011a: tav. 63.

³¹⁰ Bisconti 2011a: tav. 66.

red lines). Within the mandorla is a nude, male figure (figure 48).³¹¹ There is no suggestion of ground or landscape. The figure's left leg is in advance of its right as if stepping forward, the weight of the body being shifted onto the left leg. The figure's face is indistinct but is *contrapposto* to the body. The arms are stretched out; the (figure's) left being slightly bent. The figure holds a long blue/grey length of material which undulates behind the body. The left side of the *arcosolium* soffit is a mirror-image of the right.³¹² The poor state of preservation does not allow a detailed description of the vase or the (presumably) male figure dressed in tunic and *pallium*. The green lines that frame the blue/grey quincunx on this side of the soffit have been painted over a similarly shaped red line.

The back of the *arcosolium* has a very different form of decoration (figure 47).³¹³ In contrast to the multiple red and green lines that divide and subdivide the *arcosolium*'s soffit the back presents a single decorative space. The lower section, corresponding to the vertical walls of the *arcosolium*, has no decoration and is separated from the arched area by a long gash in the plaster. The arched area contains a row of twelve figures. For ease of reference, the figures are numbered from left to right 1-12. They are poorly preserved and the bodies below the thighs are generally lost to the gash in the plaster, but enough survives to make a number of observations. The figures are alternately female and male; commencing with a female on the left and ending with a male on the right. The men appear clothed as those single figures noted on the walls i.e. tunic with *clavi* and *pallium*. None appear to hold anything such as rod or *rotulus*. The female figures are dressed in long reddish robes and are veiled. The figures appear to interact with each other turning their heads towards their neighbours. It is difficult to be certain whether or not the figures are holding their hands in the manner of married couples.³¹⁴ Not all of the figures are looking towards their 'partners'. The male figure number four is not looking towards

³¹¹ Bisconti 2011a: tav. 65.

³¹² Bisconti 2011a: tav. 64

³¹³ Bisconti 2011a: tav. 67.

³¹⁴ As Bendinelli believed. Bendinelli 1922: 401.

his female 'wife', on the left, but looks right towards a different female who returns his gaze.

5.3.5 Southern Pilasters.

The decoration of the southern pilasters either side of the rear wall (figure 49) is near identical to those either side of the entrance wall with the following exceptions. The middle, lower and bottom fields of the faces facing each other (figures 50a-b) are combined into one field that has a rectangular panel made of red lines. This panel is connected to the edges of the field by short green lines. The male figures are in the same positions, but with differences in attitude.³¹⁵ That on the east (left) wall is dressed in tunic and *pallium* and holds in his right hand a long, thin rod. The figure on the west (right) wall is dressed the same, but holds a *rotulus* in lieu of a rod in his right hand with his right arm pointed down. The side facing into the *cubiculum* of the west (right) pilaster has vertical green lines in the middle and bottom fields that divide that field; on the east (left) pilaster horizontal lines. The bird and the vase motifs are identical to those on the northern pilasters.

5.3.6 Rear (South) Wall.

The wall above and around the *arcosolium* (figure 49) is divided into fields and panels nearly identical to those on the east although some details are lost on the upper left hand area due to water ingress caused by the proximity of the light well. Variations are: whereas the quadrupeds on the east wall have no horns and may be deer, those on the rear wall are rams or goats matching the animals on the entrance wall (the animal on the left side is today badly eroded, but has been shown in Wilpert as a ram/goat and described as such by Bendinelli).³¹⁶ The central figure turns slightly to the left holding up his right hand. Bendinelli does not mention what, if anything, is held in the figure's hand because of damage caused by water ingress.³¹⁷ I believe,

³¹⁵ Best seen in Wilpert 1924: tavv. VIII and IX.

³¹⁶ Bendinelli 1922: 403.

³¹⁷ Bendinelli 1922: 404.

however, that the figure probably held a rod on account of the similarity of pose with others in the *cubiculum* i.e. those with *rotuli* usually hold their right arms down.

The soffit of the upper *arcosolium* shows notable differences to that on the east wall. While the vertical walls have the same vases of flowers, above these are reclining figures (figures 51a-b).³¹⁸ That on the left shows a semi-recumbent nude figure with short hair resting on its right hand and facing towards the back wall of the *arcosolium*.³¹⁹ The left arm is slightly raised and the left hand is holding a blue/grey wrap of material which passes underneath the figure's posterior and covers its right leg. The nudity and short hair suggest that the figure is male. Around the head is a series of red dots which probably represent a wreath.³²⁰ The corresponding figure on the right is almost certainly female and is also in a semi-reclining pose supporting herself on her left hand. The body is pointed towards the back wall of the *arcosolium*, but the figure has turned her head away and towards the inside of the *cubiculum*. She has short hair and is dressed in a long, sleeveless tunic reaching to her feet. The tunic is waisted immediately beneath the bodice. Her right hand reaches up to touch her head that appears to be crowned by a wreath, better preserved than on her male counterpart, and what may be a ribbon that is apparent between head and right arm. Both figures lie upon a ground with no detail except a trace of shadow. Curved green lines separate these motifs from mandorlas painted with red lines within which are quincunxes of blue/grey blobs as seen elsewhere, but here better preserved to show additional smaller blobs of the same colour.³²¹

Between the two mandorlas is a green dentillated medallion (the only instance of a green line with dentillations) that has been painted over a red circle. Within this medallion is a male figure wearing a tunic with red-brown *clavi* and

³¹⁸ Bisconti 2011a: tavv. 69 and 71.

³¹⁹ Wilpert 1924: tav. V upper left.

³²⁰ Such wreaths, formed of individual roses on a circlet, are shown being made, and worn, in the *cubiculum* of the Musicians and Actors (45), Villa Romana del Casale, Piazza Armerina. Carandini, Ricci and de Vos 1982: plate XLII.

³²¹ Bisconti 2011a: tav. 70.

pallium.³²² The face is indistinct, but may be bearded. The right hand clasps a *rotulus* that the figure holds downwards. The left hand grasps the *pallium*, but nothing else.

The lunette of the *arcosolium* (figure 52) is decorated with twelve male figures the feet of whom have been destroyed by a break in the plaster that runs between the points where the arch or the *arcosolium* springs from the vertical sidewall.³²³ Again, for ease of reference the figures are numbered from left to right 1-12. All the figures wear tunic with *clavi* and *pallium*. All, except figures nine and eleven, hold their *pallia* in their left hands as in all previous examples; the exceptions have the *pallium* thrown over their left shoulders and are also exceptional in being behind and slightly obscured by other figures. It is possible that this overlapping was necessary to ensure all the figures were included within the 'frame' of the *arcosolium*. This may also explain why the only figure that is slightly smaller than the others is that on the extreme right (nr 12) who reaches to the shoulder of his companion due to the arch of the *arcosolium*. Figure two's tunic is made of yellow cloth rather than white. Figures two, four and six hold *rotuli*. Figure number ten holds a round object. All the figures are generally facing forward with bodies twisted slightly to the right or left, but all look out towards the viewer; right arms raised in a number of different positions. All figures have short hair and most figures are clean-shaven, though figures one and four appear bearded.

5.3.7 West (Right) Wall.

The decorative details of the west wall (figure 53) show significant differences to those on the east wall. The blue/grey blobs next to the vertical sides of the upper *arcosolium* are the same, but the motifs around the arch of the *arcosolium* are different. The wall is divided into three fields by two vertical red lines. In contrast to the east wall, the top of this wall is almost completely horizontal due to the way the vault meets it. The result is to constrict the amount of space available for decoration between the top of the *arcosolium* and the vault. There is no figurative detail in the central field though there is a panel created by two vertical straight green lines joined

³²² Bisconti 2011a: tav. 70.

³²³ Bisconti 2011a: tav. 72.

by a curved upper line that runs parallel to the top of the *arcosolium*. Two vegetative swags with red flowers drop from the vault to the top of the *arcosolium*.

The panels either side of the upper *arcosolium* are different to the matching panels on the opposite east wall or the rear wall. In lieu of the quadrupeds on those walls, the corresponding panels on the right hand wall each has a figure that gestures towards the centre of the wall: the figure on the right with the right hand, the figure on the left with the left (figures 54a-b). The figure on the left, turned in three-quarter view towards the centre, wears a long cream-coloured tunic with *clavi* that reaches to the floor.³²⁴ Sleeves reach to the elbow and have stripes on the upper arm in the same manner as on the sleeves of the male figure in figure 46. There are matching *clavi* and stripes on the facing of the collar and hem of the tunic. Degradation of the plaster around the lower face make it uncertain whether or not the figure is female, but the ankle length tunic and the presence of two bands that run across the body suggesting a bodice makes it probable that the figure is indeed female.³²⁵ The figure appears to wear a red/brown turban on her head.³²⁶ The figure is not carrying anything. The ground is suggested by a blue/green wash with a prominent shadow.

The figure on the right mirrors the attitude of that on the left. The shape of the figure makes it more obviously female and she wears a long red tunic that reaches to the ground. In this case the tunic lacks *clavi* and stripes on the hem. The image is degraded and much detail has been lost, but sufficient remains to show the figure has short hair rather than the full turban of the sister image on the left.

The decoration of the *arcosolium*'s soffit is near identical to that of the east upper *arcosolium*. The nude figure in the central mandorla (less well preserved than that of the east *arcosolium*) holds a blue/grey piece of material in a similar manner, though the attitude of the body is slightly different.³²⁷ The figure on the right, clothed

³²⁴ Bisconti 2011a: tav. 74.

³²⁵ Bendinelli 1922: 396.

³²⁶ Olson 2008a: 53 citing Ulpian *Dig.* 34.2.23.2, states that wearing turbans (*mitrae*) was restricted to females though they appear to have been worn by men in conjunction with Bacchic worship (Prop. 3.17.30; 4.2.31).

³²⁷ Bisconti 2011a: tav. 76.

in tunic and *pallium*, grasps his *pallium* in the left hand and holds his right hand out grasping a slender rod.³²⁸ The figure is turned towards the centre of the *cubiculum*. No footwear is visible and the ground is suggested by a blue/grey wash with shadow. The figure on the left is the better preserved and more unusual (figure 55).³²⁹ This figure certainly has footwear and is dressed in tunic and *pallium*. The artist has altered the right hand from holding a *rotulus* down to holding a rod up (or vice versa). Because the original arrangement is still visible the result gives the illusion of the arm bifurcating at the elbow. The better preservation allows one to note that the figure is clean-shaven with short hair.

The lunette of the upper *arcosolium* (figure 56a) is a near repetition of the opposite, left *arcosolium*. It has a total of twelve figures, both men and women. Unlike the left *arcosolium*, however, there is less consistency in the distribution. Fortunately, a better state of preservation means that the gender of the figures is more obvious than those opposite. There are a total of seven women and five men with a gap between the eighth and ninth figures (figure 56b) with an outline that suggests there may have been an additional figure, subsequently removed.³³⁰ The peculiarities within this group of figures have implications for the understanding of the decorative scheme which shall be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 8.

5.3.8 Lower Arcosolia.

Each of the lower *arcosolia* is decorated in a near identical manner. Although there has been loss of plaster the interiors of the *arcosolia* appear to have been fully plastered with white plaster and no decoration with one exception. The sole exception is in the centre of the soffit of the rear lower *arcosolium*; within a dentillated medallion, is the head of a clean-shaven figure that wears what appears to be some form of turban (figure 57).³³¹ Bendinelli describes this figure as masculine yet there are no obvious male characteristics. The similarity of the headdress with

³²⁸ Bisconti 2011a: tav. 77.

³²⁹ Bendinelli 1922: 398-9, fig. 48. Bisconti 2011a: tav. 75.

³³⁰ Bendinelli 1922: 397-8. Note Bendinelli mistakenly recorded six men and six women in this *arcosolium*. This discolouration suggestive of a 'lost' thirteenth figure only became apparent after restoration.

³³¹ Bendinelli 1922: 406, fig. 54. Wilpert 1924: tav. VII (lower).

that worn by the female figure in figure 54a suggests that this too is female. The walls surrounding the lower *arcosolia* have green lines that create small panels at the foot of the walls (most notable in figures 45 and 49). Above these and below the shelves, a pair of non-displaying peacocks face each other either side of a vase filled with fruit or flowers (e.g. figure 53). The fresco on the east wall is in a poorer condition and the vase is no longer visible though traces were recorded by Wilpert.³³² The peacocks perch on an elaborate decoration of vegetative scrolls most clearly shown on the better-preserved west wall.³³³

5.3.9 Vault Decoration. Basic Scheme.

The barrel vault of *cubiculum* B (figure 58) is on the same axis as that in the vestibule i.e. it runs north-south.³³⁴ Irregularities in the construction mean that the pendentives of the vault on the east side come down the wall further than on the west wall. Two light wells intrude upon the decoration: one above the entrance wall, the other above the south (rear) wall. Both light wells are finished with white plaster with red lines on the internal corners, but no other decoration.

The vault's surface is divided up by a series of red and green lines in a similar manner to the walls. In this case the principal pattern is a series of three concentric circles. The red, central circle forms a medallion, 0.97m in diameter, with a background of pink plaster and is elaborated with alternating 'ω' and 'i' patterns on the outside edge of the circle.³³⁵ The diameter of the outer circle is such that it almost touches the left and right walls but, due to the *cubiculum* not being square in plan, falls short of the entrance and rear walls. At each point where the outer circle approaches the wall the line splits into three: one continues to form the circle in green, one, in red, forms a lunette by describing a near semicircle that rejoins the outer circle and the third is a short green line that connects the lunette to the wall. The red line, of outer circle and lunettes, is dentillated with square 'teeth' uniformly marked around the circle and pointed inwards. The middle circle, 2.2m in diameter,

³³² Wilpert 1924: tav. VIII. Bisconti 2011a: tav. 62.

³³³ Wilpert 1924: tav. IX. Bisconti 2011a: tav. 73.

³³⁴ Bendinelli 1922: 390-4, tav. XIV. Wilpert 1924: tav. III. Bisconti 2011a: tav. 55.

³³⁵ Bisconti 2011a: tav. 56.

formed of a green line, is described within the space between the lunettes and the medallion. Where this green line comes closest to a lunette it changes direction marking a straight line as far as the central medallion, runs in lieu, or over, the medallion's dentillations to return to the same lunette and then continue as part of the middle circle until it reaches the next lunette where the process is repeated. All the fields described by these red and green lines have decorative motifs within them except for the lunettes above the entrance and rear walls i.e. around the light wells and the field marked out by green lines underneath all four lunettes.

5.3.10 Decorative Detail of Vault.

The decorative motifs within each field are distributed in a symmetrical manner across the vault. In the fields formed between pilasters and the outer circle a pair of pigeon-like birds sit on vegetative scrolls facing each other (figure 59). On the two pendentives adjacent to the entrance (north) wall the scrolls emanate from a rectangular red/brown block, above (but not on) which is a vase of flowers of the same shape as those seen on the pilasters. The birds and scrolls are repeated in each corner, but in the south-east (left-rear) corner the vase has been cut short by the curve of the outer circle. In the south-west (right-rear) corner the vase and rectangle are completely missing.

Within each of the four fields described by the lunettes and the middle and outer circles there are pairs of sea creatures (figure 59). One creature is a hippocampus with the head and forelegs of a horse and a long, narrowing, sinuous body that twists and corkscrews towards a two-pronged forked tail. Adjacent to the hippocampus, (once on its right side, three times on its left) is another similar sized creature with forelegs, body and tail as the hippocampus. Like that in the vestibule, right hand *arcosolium* (section 5.2.3) however, the neck is long, narrow and sinuous and the small head, turned towards the hippocampus, appears to have its mouth wide open.

In the quadrants formed between the green, middle line and the central medallion stand four male figures each standing upon a platform in the shape of a

stylised flower from the base of which spring two similar, trumpet-like flowers.³³⁶ The figures are dressed as those on the walls in tunic and *pallium* holding a rod with the end of the *pallium* in the left hand and *rotulus* in the right. In two opposing images the *rotulus* is held downwards, a third's *rotulus* is raised. The upper part of the fourth figure has been destroyed by an ancient intrusion into the *cubiculum* from above: to maintain symmetry the figure probably had the *rotulus* raised. Between these quadrants are four roughly rectangular fields each filled with a frontally-depicted peacock displaying and standing on a stylised flower similar to those for the male figures, but approximately twice as high.³³⁷

The two lunettes not interrupted by light wells each have a reclining figure. In the west (right) lunette is a male figure (figure 60a), a close match to that in the rear upper *arcosolium* soffit (Section 5.3.6, figure 51a).³³⁸ Pose, drapery of material and dots around the head are identical. The only difference is that the vault lunette's figure's head is turned to look over his right shoulder, whereas the soffit figure looks forward. The female figure in the left (east) lunette (figure 60b) has a pose that is the mirror image of the female figure in the soffit of the rear upper *arcosolium* (section 5.3.6, figure 51b) i.e. she is leaning on her right rather than her left hand, touching her head with her left.³³⁹ Her dress is also similar to the rear *arcosolium* figure i.e. a long tunic waisted at the bodice. The vault image's better state of preservation (compared to that in the rear upper *arcosolium*) reveals that sleeves reach to the elbows and she is sitting on some form of wrap that comes up and over her right thigh. Hair is again short and there is a row of dots above her head representing a wreath. Ground is indicated by a blue/grey wash with slight shadow in red/brown.

The central medallion contains three figures: two males standing either side of a female (figure 61).³⁴⁰ The woman wears a white *palla* drawn over her head on

³³⁶ Bendinelli 1922: 391-2. Bisconti 2011a: tav. 58.

³³⁷ Bendinelli 1922: 391. Bisconti 2011a: tav. 59.

³³⁸ Bisconti 2011a: tav. 60b. Bisconti 2011a: tav. 69.

³³⁹ Bisconti 2011a: tav. 60a.

³⁴⁰ Bendinelli 1922: 390-1. Bisconti 2011a: tav. 56.

top of a full-length white tunic with red/brown *clavi*. The right arm is held against the body and the right hand drawn up towards the breast in the manner of the Large Herculaneum Woman.³⁴¹ Unlike the Large Herculaneum Woman, however, the mantle does not completely envelope the body as the *clavi* are visible in the lower part of her body and the mantle is pulled up and held in the left hand the same way the men hold their *pallia*. She is shown frontally with her gaze to her right and slightly down. The figure on the right is a mature bearded man with short, grey hair wearing tunic and *pallium* held in the left hand as the other figures. In his right hand is a narrow rod held at an angle towards the other two figures and finishing over the female figure's head. The body is turned slightly toward the centre with the weight of the figure on his right foot. The footwear is clearly depicted as sandals laced at least as high as the hem of the man's tunic. He looks towards the viewer. The third figure, standing on the left, is dressed in the same manner, his right arm held downwards holding a *rotulus*. He turns his body and leans slightly towards the centre. Although less distinct, his grey hair and beard give the impression of an older man than the other. All three figures stand on a blue/green ground with a trace of shadow but no landscape or context.

5.4 Cubiculum A.

5.4.1 Vault. Basic Scheme.

The vault decoration consists of four main areas comprising broadly rectangular 'compartments': three in the principal vault and one in the secondary vault over the right hand niche (figure 62a).³⁴² The 'compartments' of the principal vault stretch from east to west, that furthest from the entrance connecting the motifs in the apsidal fields on the left and the right Upper Registers. Within these compartments fields are formed by red lines (some simply dentillated others having more elaborate forms of embellishment) and sub-divided by green lines (figure 62b). No green lines

³⁴¹ Trimble 2011: 19, fig. 1.1.

³⁴² Bendinelli 1922: 336-42, figs 21-2. Wilpert 1924: tav. XIX.

are dentillated though some take the form of swags of vegetation made up of green leaves and red flowers.³⁴³

5.4.2 First 'Compartment' (adjacent to Entrance Wall).

A central dentillated medallion, immediately above the entrance staircase, circumscribes a 'Good Shepherd' image that has its head towards the centre of the room/*lucernium* (figure 63).³⁴⁴ The figure wears a calf-length white tunic with red/brown clavi, the figure's right knee is slightly bent and he looks towards the left. There is no background other than the suggestion of a blue/green ground and shadow. The figure holds the animal, described by Bendinelli as a ram, with both hands, the head of the animal is to the viewer's right.³⁴⁵ The medallion is, in turn, circumscribed by a circle of blue/green and red vegetation. Hanging from this vegetative circle were (probably) four motifs (only one of which is extant) connected by narrow lines. Bendinelli does not mention them and the remaining motif is indistinct in his figure, but visible in Wilpert's aquatint though difficult to identify.³⁴⁶ On either side of the medallion and cutting into the vegetative circle is a box described by green lines and 'supported' by a three branched candelabrum, the middle branch being blue, the two outer being red.³⁴⁷ The green box has a simple handle like decoration on either side and is connected to the central medallion by a plain red line. Within the box there are two mask-like features (described by Bendinelli as *oscilla*) in three-quarter view and facing away from each other (figure 64).³⁴⁸ Bendinelli described them as being a woman and a bearded man, but this is no longer certain. The candelabrum rests on an outer red dentillated circle whose diameter is much greater than the width of the compartment. The dentillations of this circle and the central medallion are made up of a simple 'i' motif.

A green quadrilateral lies between the outer dentillated circle and the dentillated border of the 'shepherd' scene and within this quadrilateral is a floral

³⁴³ Bisconti 2011a: tav. 24b.

³⁴⁴ Bisconti 2011a: tav. 18a.

³⁴⁵ Bendinelli 1922: 336, fig. 20.

³⁴⁶ Bendinelli 1922: fig. 20 and Wilpert 1924: tav. XIX.

³⁴⁷ Bisconti 2011a: tav. 17.

³⁴⁸ Bendinelli 1922: 338.

motif in the form of a quincunx. Springing from this quadrilateral are two slender vegetative swags similar to the circle described above and bending to meet the corner of the 'shepherd' scene apse. Above these swags, within each of the fields created by the various lines and swags is a bird in flight. Although only the section of the first field between central medallion and 'shepherd' scene is complete, enough of the other side remains (stretching to the right hand niche cross vault) to show that the decoration was very likely symmetrical.

5.4.3 Second 'Compartment'.

The presence of the *lucernium* prevents total symmetry across the central part of the vault. Instead, the Second Compartment is sub-divided into two parts. The first, centred on the *lucernium* is badly damaged by plaster loss, but again sufficient remains to make a symmetrical decorative scheme highly likely.³⁴⁹ The near square field described around the *lucernium* has at each corner a quadrant marked out in red, (only two of which have survived complete). Within each of these is a palliate figure standing on a candelabrum or stylised flower: only the figure in the right hand surviving quadrant can be described. It has a similar pose to many of the male figures with tunic and *pallium* in *cubiculum* B, it has a *rotulus*, but no rod is visible. On each side of the *lucernium*, between the quadrants is a simple green line trapezoid (of which only two survive). The trapezoid on the west (left) side contained a floral motif now badly abraded. That closest to the rear (north) wall, also badly abraded, has no motif.

The second part is centred on a square frame, rather than a medallion, which contains a 'Good Shepherd' figure similar to that seen in the central medallion of the First Compartment.³⁵⁰ The figure wears the same calf-length tunic with *clavi* carrying a ram (or sheep) on his shoulders. Unlike the First Compartment figure this one is holding a slender *pedum* approximately half the figure's height in his left hand. He stands with no background context other than a simple blue/green ground and the

³⁴⁹ Bendinelli 1922: 341-2.

³⁵⁰ Bendinelli 1922: 339-40.

suggestion of a shadow. Springing from each of the four corners of the square frame is an isosceles triangle (with re-entrant point) delineated by a simple green line.³⁵¹ Within each of these 'triangles' is a frontal displaying peacock standing on a single candelabrum with floral decoration (figure 65). Between each of these 'triangles' is a box with simple handles similar to the green box of the first field, but in red (figure 66). Within each box are two blobs of colour which Bendinelli presumed to be *oscilla* in the same manner as before, but even after restoration the identity of these motifs is unclear. The whole scheme is circumscribed by a plain red circle whose diameter is only a little short of the overall square compartment. In the spandrels are large ornate vases with floral embellishments and handles.

5.4.4 Third 'Compartment'.

The final compartment of the principal vault spanning the *cubiculum* and adjacent to the rear wall has suffered much less plaster loss and is similar to the first compartment. It is centred upon a medallion containing a 'Good Shepherd', head towards the centre of the room/*lucernium*.³⁵² The figure stands as a mirror image to that in the Second Compartment with the body turned to the left with the head *contrapposto* and the *pedum* held in the right hand.³⁵³ The dentillations in the circumscribing red medallion are more elaborate than the corresponding circle in the First Compartment and consists of alternating dotted 'o' and 'w' motifs. An outer circle of blue/green and red vegetation, with green boxes containing the mask-like features and 'suspended' motifs together with the further red, dentillated circle (with simple 'i' motifs) is a repeat of the First Compartment.

Between the outer dentillated circle and a floral swag concentric with the apsidal, dentillated border of the banquet are two quadrilaterals marked out by straight green lines and the red lines defining the Compartment and the outer dentillated circle. Each contains a decorative motif described by Bendinelli as a vase of stylised flowers, but it is not clear in either the post-restoration photographs or

³⁵¹ Bisconti 2011a: tav. 16.

³⁵² Bisconti 2011a: tav. 18b.

³⁵³ Bendinelli 1922: 349.

Wilpert's aquatints what these motifs represent. Between the two quadrilaterals is a much clearer motif consisting of a vase of flowers from which a slender floral support drops to the border of the banquet. Above the floral swag are two birds in flight similar to those in the First Compartment. A better state of preservation allows one to see that the whole decorative scheme is repeated on the other side of the central medallion reaching down to the apsidal dentillated border of the *adventus* scene.³⁵⁴

5.4.5 Right Hand Niche Vault.

As noted above (section 5.4.1) the right hand niche has its own vault whose axis is at 90° to the principal vault. Despite plaster loss there is sufficient to reconstruct the original design with confidence. The main decorative feature is a mandorla picked out in red lines (with no dentillation) which almost fills the vault.³⁵⁵ The apices of the mandorla are connected to the edge of the vault by straight green lines. Within the mandorla each apex is cut by a curved red line (also with no dentillation). In each fan-shaped field thus created a male figure, dressed in *pallium* and tunic, stands on a vegetative stand in the form of a flower. Each holds in his left hand a *rotulus* and in the raised right hand a slender rod.³⁵⁶ In the centre of the mandorla a square frame is delineated by a plain red line enclosing a 'Good Shepherd' figure dressed in short tunic with feet towards the wall and head towards the centre of the room, the figure's left hand is raised, but other details are lost through plaster loss or abrasion. Between the square frame and the apices are quadrilaterals delineated by plain green lines. Within each quadrilateral is a stylised quincunx flower. Each quadrilateral is connected by a floral swag which forms a circle around the central frame. In each of the larger, outer fields formed by these swags a bird is depicted in flight.

The corners of the vault are each cut by a curved red line. Two survive and in only one does the plaster survive sufficiently well to show that originally there was

³⁵⁴ Bisconti 2011a: tav. 35.

³⁵⁵ Bendinelli 1922: 342-3, fig. 23. Sabatini 2011: fig. 4. Bisconti 2011a: tav. 37b

³⁵⁶ These details are not clear in the published photographs/aquatints, but are described as such by Bendinelli. Given the pose of the figures (which is clear) there is no reason to doubt Bendinelli's description.

some form of quadruped. Between the fans thus described and the mandorla is a concentric swag of red/green foliage and trailing vegetal decoration.

5.4.6 Discussion.

The decorative scheme of *cubiculum A*'s vault shows marked similarities with that in *cubiculum B* and the vestibule. The use of concentric circles (some red and having dentillation), swags of vegetation and mandorla are the same as we have seen in sections 5.2 and 5.3 as are the motifs such as peacocks, birds etc. Significantly, the figures in tunic and *pallium*, so uncommon outside the hypogeum of the Aurelii, are also found here. The figures dressed in tunic and *pallium* around the *lucernium* were probably in pairs, one with *rotulus*, and the other with a rod in the same manner as the pair in the mandorla apices in the right hand niche. The similarities are too close, and unusual outside the hypogeum of the Aurelii, to argue for anything other than that the two subterranean *cubicula* were built and decorated at the same time for the same clientele.

Having discussed those areas of the lower *cubicula* which are characterised by a red-green decorative schema I shall now describe the 'megalographia' of *cubiculum A* which constitute the wall decoration.

5.4.7 Wall. Basic Scheme

The background to the decoration is white plaster with internal and external corners formed by the walls and vaults outlined in plain red lines. The walls are further divided by red lines into a number of registers (figure 67). An undecorated dado 0.4m high forms the base of each wall.³⁵⁷ Above this, running around all four walls at a constant height and continuing through the right hand niche, is a register (henceforth referred to as the Lower Register) 1.52-1.60m high³⁵⁸ undivided vertically by red lines except at the corners and by two curved lines above the left (original) *arcosolium*.³⁵⁹

³⁵⁷ Bendinelli 1922: 322.

³⁵⁸ Bendinelli 1922: 322.

³⁵⁹ Sabatini 2011: fig. 5. Bisconti 2011a: tav. 34.

The Upper Register is made up of a variety of fields.³⁶⁰ Running clockwise: the west (left) wall comprises two apsidal fields (each 0.7m long, that on the left 0.7m high that on the right 0.6m high³⁶¹) either side of a horizontal, rectangular field 0.32m high and 2m long that together stretch the entire length of the wall.³⁶² The left hand apsidal field (i.e. closest to the entrance wall) is separated from the remainder of the register by a plain vertical red line.³⁶³ The upper boundary forming this apsidal shape is a semi-circular red, dentillated line; the dentillations taking the form of a series of 'i' shapes. The rectangular field and right hand apse form a single picture. The upper red line of this apse is also dentillated: this time with pairs of simple teeth.³⁶⁴

The lunette formed on the north (rear) wall by the principal barrel vault consists of a single field.³⁶⁵ The lower central part of the image has been destroyed by the tympanum of the portal to the hypogeum's abortive extension.

The east (right) wall's Upper Register has an apsidal field which mirrors that opposite being a similar size with an upper red line dentillated with pairs of simple teeth.³⁶⁶ Unlike its opposite number it is separated from the rectangular field to its right by a vertical red line. This rectangular field, approximately 0.5m in height and 1.35m in length, continues around the corner of the niche formed by the re-entrant wall stopping at the back of the niche.³⁶⁷ Despite a vertical red line marking the corner of the niche the rectangular field contains a single decorative scheme.

The Upper Register of the right hand niche comprises the whole of the lunette formed by the curve of the secondary barrel vault.³⁶⁸ Here the pictorial scheme is sub-divided horizontally into a Middle and Upper Register by an uneven green line

³⁶⁰ Bendinelli 1922: 343-54.

³⁶¹ Bendinelli 1922 does not give the size of these fields. I have calculated on the given size of the rectangular field and modern photographs not available to Poe (Poe 2007: 50) who extrapolated from Bendinelli 1922: tav. 1 and arrived at a figure of 1m in height.

³⁶² Bendinelli 1922: 346.

³⁶³ Wilpert 1924: tav. 12. Bisconti 2011a: tav. 19.

³⁶⁴ Bisconti 2011a: tav. 24b.

³⁶⁵ Bendinelli 1922: 354-9. Bisconti 2011a: tav. 29.

³⁶⁶ Bendinelli 1922: 359-60, fig. 29, tav. XII; Wilpert 1924: tav. XVII; Bisconti 2011a: tav. 35.

³⁶⁷ Bisconti 2011a: tavv. 36 and 37a.

³⁶⁸ Bisconti 2011a: tav. 34.

that stretches from the left (at approximately the height of the Upper Register on the re-entrant wall) almost the whole width until shortly before it meets the entrance wall where it drops at an angle of approximately 60°. With the exception of this subdivision in the right hand niche all registers are separated by a plain red line. The left hand side of the lunette was subject to the ingress of water which created a dark area with features that were not visible until the latest restoration methods were employed.³⁶⁹

The decorative schemes are indicated on figure 67 by the names that they are generally known in existing literature. Both Lower and Upper Registers continue around onto the entrance (south) wall of which little remains due to plaster loss.

5.4.8 Lower Register.

The Lower Register contains a series of figures referred to collectively as the Large Procession. This comprises eleven male figures each a little over 1m in height: five on the west (left) wall;³⁷⁰ three on the north (rear) wall (two to the left, one to the right of the inserted portal);³⁷¹ one on the east (right) wall³⁷² and two within the right hand niche (one on the re-entrant corner, one on the wall to the left of the *arcosolium*).³⁷³ All the figures are dressed in tunics (with red/brown *clavi*) that reach to below the knee and *pallium*. All are barefoot and stand on green grounds without other landscape context. Detailed description will proceed clockwise.

5.4.8.1 West (Left) Wall.

The west (left) wall (figure 68) has five figures the first of which is damaged on the left because of plaster loss occasioned by the hypogeum's discovery (figure 69a).³⁷⁴ The loss of plaster means that the right arm of the figure is no longer visible; but the remainder of the figure is faint, but well preserved.³⁷⁵ The figure, described by

³⁶⁹ Bendinelli 1922: 366.

³⁷⁰ Bendinelli 1922: fig. 24. Sabatini 2011: fig. 5.

³⁷¹ Bisconti 2011a: tav. 29.

³⁷² Bisconti 2011a: tav. 34.

³⁷³ Wilpert 1924: tav. XV.

³⁷⁴ Bendinelli 1922: 324, figs 16 and 17. Sabatini 2011: fig. 5.

³⁷⁵ Bendinelli 1922: 325 believes the right arm to be raised, but this is by no means certain.

Bendinelli as youthful, is clean-shaven with body turned to the right and head *contrapposto* to the left.³⁷⁶ The figure leans slightly forward with the weight taken on his left foot which is at right angles to his right. The *pallium* is draped over and held in the left hand. Between this and the next figure is one of the *arcosolia* mentioned earlier (Chapter 2, section 2.2), outlined by red lines at internal and external corners, but otherwise completely undecorated. In addition to the red outlining two red curved lines connect the *arcosolium* with the two scenes above in the Upper Register. At the back of the *arcosolium* a cavity has been cut into the plaster approximately 0.8m long, 0.3m high.

The second figure (figure 69b) is a well-preserved portrait with minor plaster loss around the upper part of the figure's left leg and *pallium*.³⁷⁷ The figure appears older than the first, bearded with thick, but not long, dark curly hair and head turned to his left. The right hand is held out towards the first *arcosolium* with elbow bent and hand, upturned, at the level of the figure's waist, the thumb is held away from the rest of the hand. This is similar to the gesture of the two women either side of the right hand *arcosolium* in *cubiculum* B, but the third and fourth fingers are not curled into the palm. The *pallium* is thrown across the left shoulder and held in place by the figure's left hand.

The third figure (figure 69c) is destroyed below chest height as a consequence of the insertion of the second, unfinished *arcosolium*.³⁷⁸ The figure is bearded with thick, but not long, dark curly hair and head turned to his right. Two fingers of the right hand are visible indicating that the arm is held across the chest.

The fourth figure (figure 69d), similarly destroyed below chest height, poses in the same manner as the third, but has a shorter beard.³⁷⁹

³⁷⁶ The only published images of this figure is Bendinelli 1922: fig. 16 which is not clear, and on the far left of Sabatini 2011: fig. 5. The scale of the modern image combined with degradation of the fresco means that this image is poorly documented.

³⁷⁷ Bendinelli 1922: 325-7, tav. III, 1. Wilpert 1924: tav. XIV, lower. Bisconti 2011a: tav. 26.

³⁷⁸ Bendinelli 1922: 327, tav. III, 2. Wilpert 1924: tav. XIV, upper. Bisconti 2011a: tav. 27.

³⁷⁹ Bendinelli 1922: 327, tav. IV. Bisconti 2011a: tav. 28.

The fifth and final figure on this wall is complete, but badly abraded.³⁸⁰ The *pallium* is draped over and held by the left hand. The right arm is bent at the elbow, the right hand at shoulder height is turned palm towards the viewer and fingers and thumb splayed. The body is turned to its right and the head is turned *contrapposto* to the figure's left.

5.4.8.2 North (Rear) Wall.

The sixth and seventh figures (figure 70a) stand between the north-west (left-rear) corner and the portal inserted for the hypogeum's extension and were poorly preserved when discovered.³⁸¹ Little detail can be made out other than that the sixth's *pallium* is thrown over the left shoulder. The seventh's slightly better state of preservation allowed Bendinelli to note that the figure was bearded and for this figure the *pallium* is draped over and held in the left hand. The figures are turned slightly towards each other.

The eighth figure (figure 70b) is in the narrow space (0.85 m) between the extension portal and the right hand edge of the wall and is somewhat better preserved.³⁸² The *pallium* is thrown over the left shoulder. The right hand is extended with fingers and thumb splayed towards the *arcosolium* (identified by the remnants of red outlining) that was replaced by the portal.

5.4.8.3 Right (East) Wall.

The ninth figure in the Large Procession occupies the wall between the rear wall and the right hand niche (figure 71a).³⁸³ He holds his *pallium* draped over his left forearm. The figure's right arm is held down slightly bent at the elbow and he holds in his right hand a *rotulus*. His body is turned to the right with head turned to the left *contrapposto*.

³⁸⁰ Bendinelli 1922: 328, tav. V. Bisconti 2011a: tav. 25b.

³⁸¹ Bendinelli 1922: 328-30, fig. 18. Bisconti 2011a: tav. 29.

³⁸² Bendinelli 1922: 330-3, fig. 19. Bisconti 2011a: tav. 33.

³⁸³ Bendinelli 1922: 333-4, tav. VI. Bisconti 2011a: tav. 34.

The tenth figure (figure 71b) is on the return wall of the re-entrant corner that forms the north side of the right hand niche. The figure is more youthful and clean shaven, and appears to be moving towards the left i.e. into the *cubiculum*.³⁸⁴ The *pallium* is draped over the figure's left forearm and, as with the ninth figure, he holds a *rotulus* in his right hand.

The eleventh and final figure (figure 71c) fills the space between the north wall of the niche and the *arcosolium*.³⁸⁵ The figure is youthful and unshaven and has blond hair.³⁸⁶ The figure's body is turned towards the *arcosolium*, but the head, as with the previous figures is turned *contrapposto*. The right hand is raised, but bent at the elbow, the palm towards the viewer and fingers and thumb splayed.

There is no other decoration in the remaining part of the Lower Register either to the right of the *arcosolium* or on the south (entrance) wall. Despite the extensive plaster loss a lack of extant decoration in what little remains suggests that there had been no decoration other than the demarcation of the dado with a red line as on the other walls.³⁸⁷

5.4.9 Upper Register: West (Left) Wall.

The Upper Register of the west wall has three scenes (figure 72). The first on the extreme left (south) is a self-contained image within the apsidal field containing a picture referred to here as the 'shepherd' scene, that in turn is separated by a simple red line from a unified field consisting of a rectangle, which forms a scene referred to as the '*adventus*' scene, and an apsidal field comprising a cityscape containing a donkey.

³⁸⁴ Bendinelli 1922: 334, tav. VII. Wilpert 1924: tav. XV. Bisconti 2011a: tav. 40 (detailed image of face only).

³⁸⁵ Bisconti 2011a: tav. 34.

³⁸⁶ Bendinelli 1922: tav. VIII

³⁸⁷ Bendinelli 1922: 316. Bisconti 2011a: tav. 25.

5.4.10 'Shepherd' Scene.

Approximately a quarter of the first decorative scene was destroyed accidentally during the hypogeum's discovery. The image consists of a mature male, in his twenties or thirties, seated on the top of a mountain or hill (figure 73).³⁸⁸ There is no indication of any chair or seat. The figure is clothed in a white, long-sleeved tunic with red/brown *clavi*. A *pallium* is draped over his lap. The body below the shins is not extant due to an area of plaster loss. The hair is shoulder length with no receding hairline or grey hair. Bendinelli describes the figure as being bearded and is shown as being so in Bendinelli and Wilpert. Bisconti's post-restoration photograph, however, shows that the figure may be clean-shaven and the 'beard' may be no more than shadow below the chin. He is holding up, at chest height, an open *rotulus* as if to read it, but the gaze is turned away from the document towards the left and slightly downwards. At the base of the mountain are seven horned goats, rams or sheep.³⁸⁹ An eighth is at the foot and to the right of the figure while a further two may be to the left of the figure.³⁹⁰ Loss of plaster suggests that there is at least one other animal, possibly two bringing the total to eleven or twelve. All these creatures stand upon the hillside, which also has a scattering of bushes on its slopes.

5.4.11 'Adventus' Scene.

Within the second, larger field a picture consists of a continuous series of interconnected images (figure 74); the first of which (from left to right) is a group of male figures dressed in tunics and cloaks of various colours, some with *clavi* moving from left to right.³⁹¹ The tunics are knee-length and thus shorter, and vari-coloured, in sharp contrast to the images in the Large Procession in the Lower Register. There are at least eight figures, but an area of plaster loss means that there may be more. None of the figures appears to be bearded. The figure at the front of this group stretches his right hand at chest height towards an equestrian figure that is placed in

³⁸⁸ Bendinelli 1922: 344-6, fig. 24, tav. IX. Wilpert 1924: tavv. XII and XIII. Bisconti 2011a: tavv. 19 and 20.

³⁸⁹ Bisconti 2011a: tav. 21a for a detail of this.

³⁹⁰ Those on the left are clearer in Wilpert's aquatint than the modern photograph.

³⁹¹ Bendinelli 1922: 346, tav. X. Wilpert 1924: tav. XX. Bisconti 2011a: tav. 21b.

the middle of the rectangular section.³⁹² The palm of the hand is turned away from the viewer and the first two fingers are splayed pointing towards the centre, third and fourth fingers curled into the palm. The thumb is held almost vertical.

The rider is youthful i.e. not bearded and has short hair (figure 75).³⁹³ Although the figure had not suffered any plaster loss when excavated it was abraded and the picture is less distinct now than at the date of discovery. The rider is barefoot. The horse moves towards the right as if jumping with its rear legs stretched and its forelegs lifted from the ground. The rider wears a short white tunic with red/brown *clavi* and wears a cloak.³⁹⁴ The rider's right hand is raised behind his head.

Behind the rider is a colonnaded building, the image too badly abraded to discern the order, with cornice and tympanum. On the tympanum are *acroteria* of some form of quadruped. An undulating decoration is shown on the roof between *acroteria* and ridge. The rider is centred on the building which does not extend much beyond the figure of the rider and his horse. The ground immediately before and after the rider is strewn with splashes of red colour that suggest roses or other form of red flower similar to those seen in the niches within the vestibule *arcosolia*.

Approaching the rider from the opposite direction is another crowd of male figures that are shown coming out of a city gate (figure 76).³⁹⁵ There are fourteen distinct figures: thirteen in three-quarters and one (nr 12 in figure 76) facing away from the viewer and into the city. This figure raises his right hand in a gesture comprised of separate, vertical thumb and splayed first and second fingers directed towards those that are still within the gate. Figure number three also has held his right hand out at shoulder height towards the rider with open palm and thumb separate. Another figure, the seventh from the left dressed in blue, holds his right hand out with fingers splayed. All the figures coming out of the city are wearing longer tunics than those worn by the figures behind the rider, these finish midway

³⁹² Bisconti 2011a: tav. 22.

³⁹³ Bisconti 2011a: tav. 23.

³⁹⁴ Bendinelli 1922:347, tav. 10B. Wilpert 1924: 34, tav. XX.

³⁹⁵ Wilpert 1924: tav. XXI. Bisconti 2011a: tav. 24a and 24b.

between the knee and ankle.³⁹⁶ At least one (nr 5, figure 76) wears a tunic with red/brown *clavi*. Unlike the figures in the Lower Register these tunics are not uniformly white, but have a mixture of colours i.e. white, yellow or blue. At least six have *pallia* that are draped over both shoulders, the end coming over the right shoulder being draped over the left arm. These too are a mixture of colours: white, yellow, blue-green and red. All but figure number eight appear to be clean-shaven. Behind figures 10-14 and inside the portal are a number of indistinct figures which suggest a crowd just within the city.

The portal or city gate through which this group is advancing separates the rectangular part of the Upper Register from the second apsidal field which is filled with a bird's eye view of a city (figure 77). Within the city there are a large number of buildings, their windows clearly visible. There are at least three porticoed squares. A blue-green irregular stripe that resembles a river stretches from the upper right hand side to the bottom left where it meets the base of the city gate. On the far right i.e. on the other side of the river, is a continuation of the city with another porticoed square and multi-storeyed buildings. Bendinelli believed that a wall and towers ran parallel to the red dentillated line that defines the apsidal field,³⁹⁷ but this is not certain in Wilpert's aquatint and this part of the fresco is now too abraded to confirm one way or the other. Across the foreground of the scene, stretching from the city gate to the river and painted in more detail, is a roofed building supported by Doric columns.³⁹⁸ Part way along is a brick or stone built entrance and to the immediate right of this is a small, but clearly defined, donkey (figure 78) which is behind the colonnade and appears to be drinking or eating from a trough. There are no other animals or humans depicted in the city other than those leaving the city gate as discussed above.

³⁹⁶ Bendinelli 1922: 349.

³⁹⁷ Bendinelli 1922: 353.

³⁹⁸ Bendinelli does not mention the order of columns depicted, but the good state of preservation in this area combined with the high quality of the PCAS photograph indicates that they are Doric with plain capitols and a suggestion of fluting.

5.4.12 Rear (North) Wall.

The Upper Register of the rear wall comprises the whole of the lunette made by the principal barrel vault with no division by red or green lines.³⁹⁹ The whole is a complex scene divided into two distinct areas both of which are surrounded by a city wall (figures 79a-b). The left side is an unmistakably urban landscape depicted in bird's eye view. The right hand scene, despite the presence of a surrounding wall, appears to show a landscaped garden. These two areas are connected by a number of horizontal topographical features.

The left third of the picture, described here as the 'forum' scene,⁴⁰⁰ is dominated by a large *quadriporticus* bounded on two sides (the far and left hand sides) by serried rows of multi-storied buildings (figure 80). Beyond these buildings on the far side, close to the top of the lunette is a city wall which runs horizontally until it turns at a corner furnished with a tower then drops almost vertically down to a point just above the portal which destroyed part of the fresco. Here, there is another tower, at which point there is a slight change of direction, the wall continuing to a little above the bottom of the lunette. The city wall appears to have a gap along the bottom of the lunette as if to allow the viewer to see 'through' it to the *quadriporticus* within. The city wall reappears on the extreme left then turns to run near vertically within the lunette to rejoin the horizontal section described earlier. Between the *quadriporticus* and the city wall, on the left, rear/top and part of the right, the space is filled with a variety of multi-storey buildings.

The *quadriporticus* itself has approximately twelve columns on each side⁴⁰¹ and within the square there is a large crowd of around thirty to forty individuals gathered around a figure seated in the middle.⁴⁰² The seated figure, though indistinct, is recorded at the time of discovery as holding a rod.⁴⁰³ A number of figures

³⁹⁹ Bendinelli 1922: 354-9, fig. 28, tav. XI. Wilpert 1924: tav. XXII. Wilpert 1924: 40, fig. 9 is a line drawing useful for understanding the overall layout of the decoration reproduced in Bisconti 2004b: 32, fig. 12. Bisconti 2011a: tav. 30a.

⁴⁰⁰ Following Bendinelli 1922: 356 and others, Bisconti uses the term, "'oration' scene".

⁴⁰¹ The order is not discernible nor identified by Bendinelli.

⁴⁰² Bisconti 2011a: tav. 30b. Abrasion of the plaster does not allow a more accurate count.

⁴⁰³ Bendinelli 1922: 356.

in the crowd standing in front of the central figure are more clearly defined and are seen wearing tunics with red/brown *clavi*. Three figures are particularly well defined, one of whom (highlighted in figure 80), in front of the central figure, is described by Bendinelli as female with a *palla* draped over her head.⁴⁰⁴ Half way along the right hand wall is an entrance, immediately outside of which there is a figure wearing a white tunic with red/brown *clavi*.⁴⁰⁵

The second area, on the right side of the lunette, is also enclosed by a circumambient wall and is a contrast to that on the left (figures 81a-b). Although, as mentioned above, the wall suggests an urban context, the scene is of a garden with a variety of trees, shrubs, trellises and a rectangular garden feature defined by crosshatch fencing: for this reason, this area is usually described as the *hortus conclusus* scene. Around this garden area and running parallel to the wall is a crosshatch trellis fence within which are three arched entrances: one at the back and one on each side.⁴⁰⁶ Approximately a quarter of the scene has been lost because of the portal inserted later, but there are at least two entrances shown within the wall: one on the left side and one in the foreground.⁴⁰⁷ Both of these entrances have a youthful male figure either immediately inside or outside the garden.⁴⁰⁸ Each figure gestures towards the centre of the scene with open palm and separated thumb. The scale of the published images, however, does not allow one to judge whether the gestures are the same as those of the women on right hand wall of *cubiculum B*, one can only say it is possible. The figure by the left hand entrance is cut off at the knee by the portal, but the figure next to the foreground entrance is complete with tunic reaching to shin height.

⁴⁰⁴ Bendinelli 1922: 357.

⁴⁰⁵ Bisconti 2011a: tav. 31 and described as female. The bottom of the figure is lost through degradation of the fresco making identification more difficult but the short hairstyle suggests that the figure is a young man as described by Bendinelli 1922: 357.

⁴⁰⁶ Bisconti 2011a: tav. 32a.

⁴⁰⁷ Bisconti 2011a: tav. 32b.

⁴⁰⁸ A third entrance and attendant in Wilpert 1924: 40, fig. 9 (Bisconti 2004b: 32, fig. 12) is conjecture.

Within the garden are four further figures: three men and one woman (figure 81b). The two male figures on the left are standing close to each other and make the same hand gesture towards the woman who stands a little apart.⁴⁰⁹ The figures are cut off at approximately knee height by the portal. The woman faces the viewer directly and raises her right hand. She is dressed in yellow tunic and *palla* that covers the head and wraps around the body. The fourth and final figure is next to the right hand trellis arch and is dressed in a shin length blue or green tunic with *clavi* in contrast with the other two males dressed in white tunics with *clavi*.

The three horizontal features that connect the two scenes are, from top to bottom, a porticus or bridge; a ribbon-like feature; and a wall that unites the two surrounding walls.⁴¹⁰ The first consists of a row of ten arches supporting a two-storey structure. On the extreme right of this, close to the '*hortus conclusus*', is an arch which suggests that the whole of this first horizontal feature is a bridge.⁴¹¹ The second is a white curved feature that stretches from one 'enclosure' to the other finishing on each side at a gate within the enclosing walls. The feature is defined by an irregular border of green/blue that gives the impression of a road running through fields, but if it is a road, it is devoid of traffic. The final horizontal feature has largely been destroyed by the portal's insertion, but enough remains to show it to be a wall that connects the two walled areas at a height equal to those walls.

5.4.13 East (Right) Wall.

The Upper Register on the east wall depicts a banquet within the apsidal field.⁴¹² The rectangular field to the right, despite the vertical line at the corner, contains a unified series of figures that continues into the niche called the Small Procession. The whole of the lunette at the rear of the niche is occupied by two scenes, one above the other generally referred to as the 'Homeric' scene.

⁴⁰⁹ Bendinelli 1922: 359.

⁴¹⁰ Bendinelli 1922: 358.

⁴¹¹ On such structures defining the limits of ancient bridges see Holland 1961.

⁴¹² Bendinelli 1922: 359-61, fig. 29, tav. XII; Wilpert 1924:tav. XVII; Bisconti 2011a: tav. 35.

5.4.14 Banquet Scene.

Although abraded and subject to some plaster loss with the aid of both Tabanelli's aquatint published in Wilpert 1924 (figure 82a) and a post-restoration photograph from the PCAS archive (figure 82b) it is possible to make out all of the figures depicted within the Banquet Scene. There are sixteen in total: twelve diners around a *stibadium*, all male; a female figure (standing behind and between diners three and four) and three servants that are shown standing or moving in front of the *stibadium*. The diners are dressed in tunics of various colours which are, from left to right: yellow, blue/green, white, yellow, white, blue, white (rose?), yellow, blue, orange, white and blue.⁴¹³ They lean on a *pulvinus* which is arranged around the *stibadium*, which has six plates on it though there is no detail of any food. The woman has her hair cut short or tied up, she is not veiled and wears a long sleeved tunic which appears to be belted. She does not wear a mantle. The three servants in front of the *stibadium* are all male, barefoot and wearing white tunics with *clavi* that reach to shin. The servant on the left, his back to the viewer, appears to hold something in his right hand and moves towards the diners. The central servant's body is turned towards the viewer, but the head is turned to the left to look towards the diner on the (viewer's) extreme left of the *stibadium*. He raises a beaker in his right hand towards that diner, the little finger being extended and separate from the curved fingers holding the base of the beaker. The *clavi* on this figure's tunic extend only from shoulder to chest, at the end of the left-hand *clavus* is a motif in the shape of a Latin cross, and whether or not the motif is repeated on the right hand *clavus* is obscured by the figure's left hand raised to chest height. The third and final servant, on the far right of the scene, is turned away from the viewer and is moving towards the centre of the diners. The right hand is seen raised to shoulder height and in the left hand a tray or dish is being carried at chest height.

The presence of shadow and the suggestion of a green horizontal strip in the foreground suggested to Poe that the banquet was an outdoor one.⁴¹⁴ The lack of

⁴¹³ Note this is based primarily on Wilpert's aquatint as some colours have altered or faded since discovery.

⁴¹⁴ Poe 2007: 57.

any context within which the meal takes place, such as trees, however, means that it cannot be determined with certainty whether the scene is outdoors or not.

5.4.15 The Small Procession.

The Small Procession⁴¹⁵ consists of eleven figures: four on the face adjacent to the banquet scene (figure 83a) and seven on the re-entrant wall of the niche (figure 83b).⁴¹⁶ As in the 'banquet' scene the figures wear shin length tunics of various colours: white, yellow, pink and blue all with *clavi*. With the exception of number six in the series, who wears a cloak, the figures wear *pallia* of various colours and therefore resemble the figures coming out of the city to the right of the rider in the '*adventus*' scene. They are mostly youthful, only numbers six and ten in the series having a beard.⁴¹⁷ All the figures are depicted *contrapposto*, none of them are holding anything and they are all barefoot.

5.4.16 The Right Hand Niche.

The decoration above the *arcosolium* and Lower Register on the wall of the right hand wall niche formed by the re-entrant north-east corner (figures 84a-b) is divided into two registers: Upper and Middle. Recent restoration has revealed new features in both Upper and Middle registers, but other details have been lost in the years since discovery, therefore, as with the banquet scene, the Wilpert aquatint and modern PCAS photograph are included.

The boundary lines dividing the three registers signify a difference in the demarcation: between Lower and Middle registers, i.e. red, well executed, and Middle and Upper Registers, i.e. green and irregular. As noted above, (Chapter 1, section 1.3) evidence from mid-third century red-green schemes such as that of the Villa Piccola (figure 3) under the basilica of S. Sebastiano, shows that red lines are

⁴¹⁵ Bendinelli 1922: 361-4, fig. 29, tav. Xa; Wilpert 1924: tavv. XVII and XVIII; Bisconti 2011a: tavv. 36 and 37.

⁴¹⁶ Poe 2007: 57 queries whether there are ten or eleven figures in total, presumably because the fourth in the series is much degraded, however, despite poor preservation there is little to suggest that it does not exist. The eleventh and last figure in the series is obscured in Bisconti 2011a: tav. 37a by scaffolding, but its leg is just visible.

⁴¹⁷ Bendinelli 1922: 364 states that the last in the series is bearded, but appears clean-shaven in Wilpert 1924: tav. XVIII.

generally used as the means of dividing the field into its principal components; the green lines then provide further subdivisions. Therefore, whereas the Lower Register is separated from that above by a red line and hence is to be considered totally separate, the Upper and Middle registers divided as they are by a green line, are to be considered closely associated with each other.

5.4.16.1 *Description of Upper Register.*

On the far left of the scene, in the background, is a tree next to a two-storey building with a pitched, tiled roof. On one side of this building is a single storey pentise supported by Doric or Tuscan columns; on the other visible side a doorway provides access between the building and a courtyard immediately in front. The door seems to be open; if so the door opens inwards. There are no windows visible. Beneath the pentise is a female figure. The woman appears to have long, unbound hair; she wears a long sleeved tunic with *clavi* and does not wear a *palla*. The photograph published in Bisconti 2011 (figure 85a) appears to show a rod (*virga*) in her right hand.⁴¹⁸ This detail, previously not depicted in Wilpert, has been discussed by Elżbieta Jastrzębowska in the most recent study on this fresco who described it as showing, “*eine Frau mit dem Stab*”.⁴¹⁹ Unfortunately, this conclusion is erroneous as the image published in Bisconti 2011 is not the best post-restoration image available. The PCAS archive photograph (figure 85b) shows no rod and it is notable that Bendinelli makes no mention of it.⁴²⁰ The ‘rod’ is, indeed, an imperfection in the plaster.

The woman looks towards two other figures, apparently deceased, lying on some form of bed or catafalque within a courtyard enclosed by a low wall. The wall is depicted on one side only, the other two sides (the fourth being formed by the building) have been ‘cut away’ to show the figures within. These figures were not visible until the recent renovation and were published for the first time by Bisconti in 2010 and described by him as a scene of *prothesis*.⁴²¹ On the corresponding right

⁴¹⁸ Bisconti 2011a: tavv. 37b and 38.

⁴¹⁹ Jastrzębowska 2013: 60.

⁴²⁰ Bendinelli 1922: 367.

⁴²¹ Bisconti 2010: 29-30, fig. 2. These figures, unfortunately, are not visible in Bisconti 2011a: tav. 37b and barely so in tav. 38. Again PCAS ref. AUR_02_025_004R_dp (figure 85b) is a better reproduction.

side of the scene is another building; this too has a pitched tile roof with pentise, but no courtyard in front of its doorway, it is more clearly two-storey having top storey windows. There are no people associated with this building. Between these two buildings and set in the background is an urban scene consisting of multi-storey buildings with pitch roofs including an arch or gateway several storeys high (more evident in the 1924 aquatint, figure 84a). There are traces of vegetation between these background buildings and the left hand building consisting of two or three trees, now almost invisible, but, again evident from Wilpert's 1924 aquatint.⁴²² In the foreground of the scene are twelve quadruped animals, some standing, others lying down facing in various directions. They are all domesticated animals e.g. mules, camels, horses, cattle and goats.⁴²³

5.4.16.2 *Description of Middle Register.*

The Middle Register comprises (from left to right) a dark curved shape that resembles an opening or cave within which are at least three, seemingly nude, figures, whether male or female is uncertain due to the poor quality of the image (figures 84a-b).⁴²⁴ These figures, being in the dark area caused by water ingress mentioned above (section 5.4.7), were, as with the deceased figures of the Upper Register, invisible until recent restoration.⁴²⁵ To the (viewer's) right are a further three nude male figures progressing from left to right as if coming out of the 'cave'.⁴²⁶ They hold each other's hands, the first two look forward towards the centre of the picture, the last (i.e. the furthest right) looks back towards his companions and makes a gesture with his left hand towards the centre. The figure on the left appears to be mature and bearded whereas the other two are more youthful, clean-shaven figures. In the centre of the scene is an upright loom. Standing next and to the right of it is a woman dressed in a purple, ankle-length dress with *clavi*,⁴²⁷ her hair bound up with a fillet,

⁴²² Wilpert 1924: tav. XVI.

⁴²³ Bendinelli 1922: 367-8. Depictions of camels in Roman art are rare in part because they were not common in North Africa before the late third century AD, when they are thought to have been brought from the Arabian Peninsula via Egypt. See: Brogan 1954 and Bartosiewicz 2001.

⁴²⁴ Bendinelli 1922: 364-5.

⁴²⁵ Bendinelli 1922: 449 mentions two veiled women in the picture, which I believe are these figures.

⁴²⁶ Bisconti 2011a: tav. 39a.

⁴²⁷ Bisconti 2011a: tav. 39b.

she holds in her right hand a distaff or shuttle.⁴²⁸ She looks towards a bearded, semi-recumbent, male figure who occupies the far right of the picture. He is bareheaded and dressed in knee-length tunic with *clavi*, his weight is on his left arm while he holds up his right as if gesturing to the woman. Unlike the Upper Register this Middle Register has no background detail. Bendinelli described it as an interior scene, but there is nothing to suggest either interior or exterior.⁴²⁹

5.4.17 Entrance (South) Wall.

As noted earlier (section 5.4.7) most of the plaster decoration was lost during discovery and consolidation of the monument.⁴³⁰ There is no decoration within the Lower Register, but the Upper Register, on the only area to survive, has a small decorative motif which was not mentioned by Bendinelli and has no published, detailed photograph. It only appears on a general view of the Entrance Wall and appears to be either a basket or some form of mask.⁴³¹

⁴²⁸ Not visible in Wilpert 1924: tav. XVI (figure 84a), but seen in the PCAS photograph (figure 84b).

⁴²⁹ Bendinelli 1922: 364.

⁴³⁰ Bisconti 2011a: tav. 25a.

⁴³¹ Mazzei 2011: fig. 6.

Chapter 6. Examination of Decorative Motifs.

In those areas where the red-green linear scheme predominates, vestibule; *cubiculum* B and the vault of *cubiculum* A, there is a range of individual motifs, some of which are common to all three. The distribution of the motifs in the vestibule and *cubiculum* B is shown in figure 28; that for *cubiculum* A vault figure 62b. Despite the loss of plaster to the vault of *cubiculum* A the symmetry allows one to identify the original scheme with a considerable amount of confidence. The motifs are summarised in Table 1, page 126.

These elements are of two broad categories:

(1) Motifs that are common within the repertoire of third century AD Roman painting,

(2) Motifs that are exceptionally rare in the corpus of Roman art.

6.1 Motifs Commonly Found in Other Decorative Schemes.

I described earlier, in the review of previous writings on the hypogeum of the Aurelii (Chapter 1, section 1.5.3), that Himmelmann had repudiated the twin pillars upon which a Christian interpretation was based i.e. the 'Adam and Eve' of the upper chamber and Wilpert's Latin cross. It follows therefore, if there were a religious inspiration for the decoration can any of the decorative motifs be linked to cultic practice? If not, what implications does that hold for an understanding of the hypogeum?

6.1.1 Peacocks.

Fourteen peacocks appear in two variants (both coloured dark green on figures 28 and 62b). The vaults in *cubicula* A and B each have a set of four placed around the vaults' central medallions pictured frontally displaying their tail feathers (e.g.

figures 58 and 65). The second variant shows peacocks in profile, not displaying: in three pairs, either side of the lower *arcosolium* on each wall of *cubiculum* B, each pair facing towards a central floral vase (e.g. figure 49).

The depiction of peacocks was not uncommon in pagan funerary contexts and came to be used in Christian tombs. Peacocks may be seen in the first century AD tomb of C. Vestorius Priscus in Pompeii where, as in the hypogeum of the Aurelii, they may be seen in both variants: displaying either side of a depiction of a *stibadium* meal and non-displaying on the wall opposite an image of C. Vestorius Priscus carrying out his civic duties as an aedile.⁴³² A peacock is depicted in the original second century decoration of the central niche in tomb B (of Fannia Redempta) of the Vatican necropolis and a prominent example was found in a late second/early third century tomb on the Via Ostiensis (now in the Museo della Via Ostiensis, Rome).⁴³³

Clement of Alexandria, writing c. AD 200 (*Paed.* III.59.2-60.1), warned against the use of imagery connected to pagan cult and consequently inconsistent with the new religion.⁴³⁴ It follows that, despite the peacock's association with Juno, their continued popularity in the decoration of funerary monuments well into the Christian era was undoubtedly due to their perceived cultic neutrality and lack of association with any particular cultic practice.⁴³⁵ This flexibility of use, by differing religious adherents, is well illustrated in the fourth century AD catacomb of Via Dino Campagni/Latina. Here, peacocks in profile are depicted in *cubiculum* N, among the scenes of Hercules' Labours.⁴³⁶ In the same catacomb, *cubiculum* C has peacocks

⁴³² Ghedini 1990: 37.

⁴³³ Vatican necropolis, Toynbee and Ward-Perkins 1956: 42, pl. 6. Via Ostiensis tomb, Squarciapino 1956: 114.

⁴³⁴ Finney 1994: 111. Clement did not object to images, such as anchors or fish that, although current in contemporary society, were nonetheless compatible with Christian teaching.

⁴³⁵ Korač 1991: 110-111 (discussing evidence from the Balkans) notes that peacocks are found in third and fourth century pagan and Christian tombs and associates peacocks with Dionysian cult, but does not address the seeming contradiction between this and the strictures of Clement of Alexandria.

⁴³⁶ Elsner 1998: 219: fig. 144.

Table 1: Decorative Motifs in Vestibule and Lower Cubicula

Motif	Colour code	Vestibule	<i>Cubiculum</i> B	<i>Cubiculum</i> A.	Total
Peacocks.	Dark green	0	10	4	14
Other types of birds.	Lilac/'b'	7	12	12	31
Vases of flowers.	Red/'v'	2	21	6	27
Hippocampi/dolphins.	Yellow	1	8	0	9
Goats/rams.	Dark purple	4	6	0	10
Other quadraped.	'a'	0	0	4	4
Male nude figures.	Grey	0	2	0	2
Reclining figures.	Gold	0	4	0	4
Female figures.	Light green	3	4*	0	7
Male figures without rods.	Light blue	11	3	4	18
Male figures with rods.	Dark blue	2	14	2	18
'Good Shepherds'.	Black	0	0	4	4
Oscilla.	'o'	0	0	8	8

* Includes the central medallion female accompanied by two men and the head in the lower *arcosolium*, figure 57.

displaying together with Old and New Testament images i.e. Jonah, Adam and Eve, Moses etc.⁴³⁷ While the Via Dino Campagni/Latina catacomb has both pagan and Christian imagery peacocks continued in the unambiguously Christian context of the vault of the fourth century *cubiculum* of the *velatio* in the catacomb of Priscilla and well into the post-Imperial period as seen in the sarcophagus of Archbishop Theodorus (d. 693) in Ravenna (figure 86).⁴³⁸

Their evident ornamental value was also employed outside the funerary sphere. In Pompeii they are found decorating public secular spaces such as the bar of Euxinus.⁴³⁹ A century and a half later a near contemporary of the hypogeum of the Aurelii, the Caupona del Pavone in Ostia, has a displaying peacock set within the courtyard *lararium* of a private dwelling converted to an hostelry.⁴⁴⁰ Such use reinforces the idea that peacocks were not associated with any specific pagan cult.

6.1.2 Other Birds.

In addition to peacocks, there are thirty-one other birds of various types (coloured lilac in figure 28 and the letter 'b' in figure 62b). When depicted in pairs the birds appear perched on vegetal scrolls either side of a vase as in the vault of *cubiculum* B (figure 59) or, on the soffit of the portal between the vestibule and *cubiculum* B, on pedestals within a stylised landscape of red flowers (figure 35).⁴⁴¹ Pictures in each corner of the vault of the vestibule are now much degraded and barely recognisable on the modern photograph (figure 37), but Wilpert's aquatint records single birds perched with a shadow, but no other landscape feature.⁴⁴² Birds, like peacocks, were also neutral in terms of cultic significance in funerary art providing supplementary motifs to images within pagan funerary monuments. Ambivalence of use is seen in the birds that decorate the mid-second century AD pagan columbarium of the Via

⁴³⁷ Ferrua 1991: 107, fig. 87; 110, fig. 92. Fiocchi Nicolai et al. 2009: figs 108 and 115. For a useful plan of both decorative schemes see Elsner 1995: 273, figs 72-3.

⁴³⁸ *Velatio* in the catacombs of Priscilla see Fiocchi Nicolai et al. 2009: fig. 107. Ravenna, Kollwitz and Herdejürgen 1979: 67-8, taf. 66,1, Kat. B16. Deliyannis 2010: 146.

⁴³⁹ Roberts 2013: 59.

⁴⁴⁰ Gasparri 1970: 18, tav. XIII, 3. Dating see Mielsch 2001: 111.

⁴⁴¹ Wilpert 1924: tav. VI b. Bisconti 2011a: tav. 49.

⁴⁴² Wilpert 1924: tav. XI. Bisconti 2011a: tav. 44.

Portuense (figure 87) while around half a century later birds complement Christian iconography i.e. in Area I of the catacomb of S. Callisto (figure 88).⁴⁴³

6.1.3 Vases of Flowers.

Vases (canthari) of flowers (shown in red in figure 28 and the letter 'v' in figure 62b) are also depicted in large numbers. In addition to those that are shown between pairs of birds mentioned above there are 23 that appear separately as individual motifs within red/green panels. As with peacocks and birds they are a common feature in funerary imagery, but are also found in non-funerary contexts such as the House of the Painted Vaults in Ostia dated to c. AD 250 and the Villa Piccola (figure 3).⁴⁴⁴

6.1.4 Dolphins and Hippocampi.

Marine animals, found only in the vestibule and *cubiculum* B, are shown in yellow in figure 28. The four slender fields at the top of the corner pilasters are filled with pairs of dolphins (figure 89). Dolphins were a popular motif in pre-Christian funerary art and this popularity survived into the Christian era as demonstrated by a comparison between a third century sarcophagus cover, found near the Via Salaria and now in S. Sebastiano in Capite, Rome and a Christian sarcophagus cover securely dated to AD 353 (figures 90a-b).⁴⁴⁵ The style of the dolphins in the hypogeum of the Aurelii is, however, unusual. Whereas most dolphins, such as those illustrated in figures 90a-b, have tridental tails, those in *cubiculum* B have lunate tails. The only other examples of such a form are in the *cubiculum* of the Seasons in S. Callisto⁴⁴⁶ and the so-called Villa Piccola beneath the basilica of S. Sebastiano on the Via Appia.⁴⁴⁷ In both of these cases the dolphins 'swim' in pairs, the Villa Piccola pair painted within a mandorla on the ceiling within Room 34 (figure 3) and above the entrance to Room 34 (figure 91) holding ribbons in the same manner as the hypogeum of the Aurelii example. As noted above (Chapter 1, section 1.3), despite its proximity to a large number of tombs

⁴⁴³ Fiocchi Nicolai et al. 2009: 13; fig. 21.

⁴⁴⁴ Clarke 1991: 298-9, fig. 185.

⁴⁴⁵ S. Sebastiano in Capite: EDR100777. Mingazzini 1923: 103, nr 134. Christian dolphins: Vat. Mus. Pio Cristiano, 31583 (ex. Lateran 228). The dedicatory inscription records a consular date of 353.

⁴⁴⁶ Fiocchi Nicolai et al. 2009: fig. 106.

⁴⁴⁷ Fiocchi Nicolai et al. 2009: fig. 99.

and possible use as a place of death cult the Villa Piccola was not itself used as a place of burial.⁴⁴⁸

The use of dolphins in Christian funerary art is significant because, as noted with peacocks, from early in the development of Christianity importance was given to avoiding anything that could be construed as referring to pagan cult. The corollary is that if such symbols appear in Christian contexts then they would be construed as of no cultic significance to a non-Christian observer.

In addition to dolphins *cubiculum* B has four pairs of sea-monsters and hippocampi on the vault that fill the fields between the reclining figures and the light wells (figure 58). Another sea-monster is in the central mandorla of the right hand vestibule *arcosolium* (figure 31). Unlike dolphins, hippocampi were not generally used by Christians though they and other hybrid marine creatures were common in pagan iconography. The avoidance of the use of hippocampi and other imaginary sea creatures, however, does not appear to be due to any linkage with cultic practice that would have offended Clement of Alexandria. In his 1973 work on the meaning of Roman *Meerwesensarkophagen* Engemann maintained how earlier use of marine *thiasoi* had become increasingly devoid of its original mythological meaning, "*Sinnentleerung und Neutralisierung*".⁴⁴⁹ So much so that marine *thiasoi* could be used on at least one Christian sarcophagus, that of Curtia Catiana in the early fourth century.⁴⁵⁰

In contrast, sea-monsters such as those in the hypogeum of the Aurelii, accompanying the hippocampi are rare outside of their Christian use in the story of Jonah. *Ketoi*, in this form are seen in only two non-Christian sarcophagi.⁴⁵¹ In fresco, the closest to the hypogeum of the Aurelii *ketoi* are images above the portal in the

⁴⁴⁸ Jastrzębowska 1981: 36-9.

⁴⁴⁹ Engemann 1973: 67-8.

⁴⁵⁰ Engemann 1973: taf. 22a. The deceased's Christian belief demonstrated by the inscription: Curtiae | Catianae | c(larissimae) p(uellae) in pace. *AE* 1936, 0125 = EDR073322.

⁴⁵¹ Rumpf 1939: taf. 3, nr 16. *MNR Terme*, 72521. Sapelli, M. in *MNR Le Sculture* 1/8*, IV, 12: 206-7, dated to between the mid-2nd C. and the early 3rd C. AD. Rumpf 1939: taf. 57, nr 282. *Vat. Mus. Chiamonti*, 1836. *Andreae* 1995: taf. 884, nr 397 dated to the Severan period.

cubiculum of the Good Shepherd in the catacomb of Domitilla dated to the first decades of the third century (figure 4)⁴⁵² and in the ceiling of the *lucernium* in the *cubiculum* of Miltiades (figure 92).

6.1.5 Goats and Rams.

A total of ten goats or rams appear as if leaping either side of the entrances and either side of two of the *arcosolia* in *cubiculum* B (east, figure 45; rear, figure 49) - indicated by dark purple on figure 28. An additional four are in *cubiculum* A (marked 'a' in figure 64b) although the sole surviving image could not be positively identified by Bendinelli. Their placement in each case is symmetrical with the exception of right hand side *arcosolium* in *cubiculum* B. Here, where one might expect to see two leaping caprines, their places have been taken by two female figures (Chapter 5, section 5.3.7) suggesting that the right hand *arcosolium* is different to the other two. The use of 'floating' quadrupeds is not uncommon in either domestic or funerary art. Gazelles, flying horses and deer are all used as single motifs in the decorative panels of red and green lines typical of the period and earlier as seen in a detail from the *domus* of the Piazza dei Cinquecento (figure 93). Goats and rams, however, are not seen often and again the closest parallel is in the Villa Piccola under S. Sebastiano (figure 3).

6.1.6 'Good Shepherds'.

A significant difference in form and motif between *cubiculum* B/vestibule and *cubiculum* A is the use of *kriophoroi* as a decorative motif in the latter (e.g. figure 63). Early commentators attempted to use these 'Good Shepherd' motifs as evidence of Christian or Gnostic affiliation on the part of the Aurelii.⁴⁵³ However, the research undertaken by Theodor Klauser in the 1960s argued convincingly that the pre-Christian *kriophoroi* represented the ideals of *philanthropia* and *humanitas*.⁴⁵⁴

⁴⁵² Wilpert 1903: taf. 11; 85. Fiocchi Nicolai et al. 2009: 22-3, fig. 100.

⁴⁵³ Marucchi 1921a: 45. Rostovtzeff 1927: 150.

⁴⁵⁴ Klauser 1960. Koch 1993: 71 dates the first Good Shepherd sarcophagus to the reign of Gallienus (r. 253-268). As the hypogeum of the Aurelii probably dates to c. AD 240 the Good Shepherds here may be the earliest known.

Klauser's arguments were confined to 'Good Shepherds' decorating sarcophagi, but pre-Christian 'Good Shepherds' also are occasionally found in frescoed wall decoration to subterranean burials e.g. that found in the *cubiculum* della Madonna in the catacomb of Priscilla.⁴⁵⁵ Like other pagan motifs, the concept of the 'Good Shepherd' was taken up by Christian artists and used for their own iconographic purposes and there is no reason to suppose that it was any more objectionable to the Christian sympathies or symbolic for pagans than peacocks. Again, the overriding sentiment is one of religious neutrality rather than cultic affiliation.

'Floating' figures, either human or animal, do not have any special funerary meaning as far as we can tell. The late 2nd/early 3rd century *domus* on the north-east slope of the Palatine, excavated in the 1980s by the American Academy in Rome, shows the use of such 'floating' figures in a non-funerary context,⁴⁵⁶ as does the *domus* complex of the Piazza dei Cinquecento mentioned above (section 6.1.5). Such decorative features are found in the realm of the living as well as that of the dead and all these examples date to the late second/early third century i.e. broadly contemporary with the hypogeum of the Aurelii.

6.1.7 *Oscilla*.

Finally, there are the objects described by Bendinelli as *oscilla* found in the vault of *cubiculum* A. These are not true *oscilla* such as have been found in considerable numbers which comprise roundels or pelta-shaped objects hung between columns in gardens and decorated with a variety of pagan motifs, often satyrs, maenads etc.⁴⁵⁷ The mask motifs in the vault (figure 64) are certainly reminiscent of theatrical masks, but notwithstanding Tertullian's condemnation of the theatre (Tert. *De Spect.* 10) there is no imagery that could be directly linked to Dionysiac cult and thus contrary to Christian teaching.⁴⁵⁸ The other motifs are too indeterminate for any explanation.

⁴⁵⁵ Borg 2013: 102, fig. 63.

⁴⁵⁶ St Clair 2002: 239-42, figs 18-20.

⁴⁵⁷ For the most recent work on the use of Roman *oscilla* see Wilk 2014 and bibliography therein. For a comprehensive listing of the corpus, see Corswandt 1982.

⁴⁵⁸ On garden *oscilla* not necessarily being associated with Dionysiac cult, see Jashemski 1993: 124.

6.1.8 Conclusion.

All motifs discussed so far are derived from the existing repertoire of Graeco-Roman art, but that does not mean that they could be considered to be emblematic of any pagan cult. There is no reference to Dionysiac, Mithraic or Isaic cult nor reference to traditional deities associated with Roman religious practice. If that were the case then it is highly unlikely that they would be so popular in Christian contexts. That is not to construe that peacocks, vases, dolphins etc. were totally devoid of meaning, if that were so then their use would have gone out of fashion as indeed the hippocampi did. It is more likely that their symbolism was considered appropriate for a tomb in a more general context expressing appropriate concepts as Klauser demonstrated with regard to the 'Good Shepherd' motif.⁴⁵⁹ If the Aurelii were adherents of a single belief system it is not evident from the figural imagery in the red-green scheme. That itself is significant, rather than being hidden, religious affiliation is avoided, which argues for a group which defined itself by mutual interest outside of religion.

The lack of religious affiliation anywhere within the monument suggests that it may not have been a grouping based upon a shared religious belief. Francisca Feraudi-Gruénais has drawn attention to the marked decline in mythological representation in the first half of the third century.⁴⁶⁰ It is not implausible that in such instances decoration was bowdlerised to remove images that would be offensive to any particular occupant. Indeed if the tomb contained a small number of Christians a lack of religious imagery was probably a deliberate policy allowing those of different religious persuasions to be buried together as we know was the case in the Dino Campagni/Via Latina catacomb.⁴⁶¹ In the case of the via Latina catacomb both Christian and pagan motifs are evident though tellingly not in the same *cubiculum*.⁴⁶²

⁴⁵⁹ Klauser 1960: 112-27.

⁴⁶⁰ Feraudi-Gruénais 2001: 167. Whereas of those funerary decorative schemes dated to the second half of the second century 50% (i.e. ten out of twenty) had mythological scenes, those dated to the first half of the third century had less than 20% (i.e. three out of seventeen) had mythological scenes.

⁴⁶¹ For a discussion of collective burials of pagans and Christians, see Johnson 1997.

⁴⁶² Johnson 1997: 56. The Hercules/Alcestis cycle is found in Hall N with no accompanying Christian iconography; the Cleopatra/Tellus image is likewise unaccompanied by Christian iconography in *cubiculum* E. The so-called Ceres and Persephone images in *cubiculum* O (Ferrua 1960: fig. 114 and

The use of collegial tombs containing Christian and non-Christian members of such a *collegium* is known from the early Christian writings of Cyprian from the mid-third century bishop of Carthage (Cypr. *Epist.* 67.6.2).⁴⁶³ In it he complains of two Spanish bishops one of whom buried his son (whose age is not mentioned) among heathen graves as they were members of a *collegium*. The idea that a conscious effort was made to make decoration that was not offensive to any religious grouping (especially Christian) within a communal tomb, either that of a *familia* or non-familial *collegium*, is an idea that has not previously been considered.

6.2 Rare or Unique Motifs.

6.2.1 Male Nudes.

Two male nude figures (coloured light grey in figure 28) appear in *cubiculum* B in the central mandorla in the soffit decoration of the two upper side *arcosolia* (figures 48 and 53), detailed description in Chapter 5, sections 5.3.4 and 5.3.7).⁴⁶⁴ The figures hold some form of scarf or drape behind them with their arms outstretched. There are similarities with images found in the cryptoporticus beneath the Basilica of Maxentius or the frescoes discovered in the Villa of Numisia Procula on the Via Ardeatina and now in the Vatican Museums, but there are significant differences.⁴⁶⁵ Both are non-funerary in context and the hypogeum of the Aurelii figures are devoid of any cultic attributes whereas the Villa of Numisia Procula figures have attributes that link them to the cult of Dionysus. A closer funerary comparandum is seen depicted in the *cubiculum* of Miltiades (figure 92),⁴⁶⁶ the figure holding up a floral

Tronzo 1986: fig. 91), which are set among Christian images, are not securely identified as such and quite possibly represent Abundance. See detailed schema in Kötzsche-Breitenbruch 1976.

⁴⁶³ "...*Martialis quoque praetor gentilium turpia et lutulenta convivia in collegio diu frequentata et filios in eodem collegio exterarum gentium more apud profana sepulcra depositos...*" [Martialis furthermore has long attended shameful and filthy banquets at a collegium and in the same collegium buried (his) sons in the manner of foreigners among heathen graves.] Trans. author.

⁴⁶⁴ Bisconti 2011a: tavv. 65 and 76.

⁴⁶⁵ Cryptoporticus: Pisani Sartorio 1983: 165-6, fig 25 (phase II of the decoration is contemporary with the hypogeum of the Aurelii), unfortunately the only detailed, published images of this extensive cryptoporticus is the rather poor reproduction in Pisano Sartorio, Ferreti's originals are lost (Pisano Sartorio 1983: 168, fn 25); Villa of Numisia Procula: Vat. Mus. Galleria dei Candelabri, 2545. Biondi 1825: tav. X. Nogara 1907: 60, tavv. XL and XLII. Spinola 2004: 218.

⁴⁶⁶ Carletti 1992: fig. 11.

vase in one hand and a *pedum* in the other, attributes lacking in the hypogeum of the Aurelii figure. As we shall see in Chapter 7, the Christian provenance of the *cubiculum* of Miltiades is by no means certain.

6.2.2 Reclining Figures.

There are a total of four reclining figures (gold in figure 28) in *cubiculum* B found in two pairs: one pair in the semi-circles inscribed on the soffit of the upper *arcosolium* of the rear wall (figures 51a-b), the other on the vault (figures 60a-b), detailed description in Chapter 5, sections 5.3.6 and 5.3.10, respectively.⁴⁶⁷ Bendinelli described, but did not label, the figures and considered that both pairs of male and female figures represented a form of apotheosis of the deceased or an intimation of a *post mortem* paradise.⁴⁶⁸ Bisconti's 2011 publication described these pairs as personifications of Oceanus and Tellus though Bisconti does not explain his reasoning. There are many illustrations in the corpus of Roman art of Tellus and Oceanus which invariably have attributes to identify them e.g. a cornucopia in the case of Tellus and a trident and long beard in the case of Oceanus. None of hypogeum of the Aurelii figures have these or any other attribute that may support Bisconti's hypothesis which I believe, therefore to be in error.⁴⁶⁹

However, a close parallel to the hypogeum of the Aurelii figures is seen in the *cubiculum* of the Seasons in the catacomb of S. Callisto (figures 94a-b).⁴⁷⁰ These figures recline in a similar manner, the female touching the garland around her head like the female figure in the hypogeum of the Aurelii. The S. Callisto figures, male and female, are also dressed in a similar manner: the female in a waisted, sleeveless tunic; the male nude from the waist up and having some form of drape around his lower body. The principal difference is that the S. Callisto figures each hold an object in one hand. The male holds a bowl-like object in his left hand while the female holds a less well-defined, but larger, object in her left. Neither of these are specific attributes for

⁴⁶⁷ Bisconti 2011a: tavv. 55, 69 and 71.

⁴⁶⁸ Bendinelli 1922: 392, 406 and 473-4. Wilpert 1924: tav. V.

⁴⁶⁹ Bisconti 2004b: 26, fig. 7. Bisconti 2011a: tav. 60.

⁴⁷⁰ Fiocchi Nicolai et al. 2009: fig. 106.

the Seasons, thus it remains unclear whether they are indeed meant to portray the Seasons or are merely 'inspired' by them as suggested by Barbara Mazzei.⁴⁷¹ The centre of the vault is framed by four semi-circles as in the hypogeum of the Aurelii, but in the *cubiculum* of the Seasons the light well is situated in the centre of the vault, taking the place occupied in the hypogeum of the Aurelii by the central medallion. This allowed each of four semi-circles around it to contain a figure (although today two are lost). Pose, lack of traditional attribute and basic layout are not the only similarities between the two *cubicula*. Although the Seasons figures are contained within more elaborately decorated semi-circles, both have similar forms of dentillation and both have dolphins with lunate tails and birds in surrounding fields. This comparison has not been discussed in detail previously: Mazzei acknowledges the similarity, but considers the *cubiculum* of the Seasons, which is currently dated to the early fourth century, to be an example of, "*un fenomeno di attardamento*".⁴⁷² However, if it is not an example of anachronism, but a near-contemporary of the hypogeum of the Aurelii i.e. mid-third century this has implications for the interpretation not only of the *cubiculum* of the Seasons and its undoubtedly contemporary and neighbour, the *cubiculum* of Miltiades, but more importantly for the present study, the hypogeum of the Aurelii. This will be discussed further below (section 6.2.4).

6.2.3 Solitary Standing Females.

There are five solitary standing female figures (figure 95). Two form a pair, one in each of the apices of the vault mandorla of the vestibule (figures 39a-b, Chapter 5, section 5.2.3). These figures, standing as they do on vegetal stands, appear not to represent real people nor, given the lack of attribute, any specific mythical figures.⁴⁷³ A third standing female figure (Chapter 5, section 5.2.2) is within the soffit of the right

⁴⁷¹ Mazzei 2007: 310.

⁴⁷² Mazzei 2007: 311.

⁴⁷³ As mentioned in the detailed description Bendinelli's interpretation of the figures as representing *Spes* is flawed.

hand *arcosolium* of the vestibule (to the right, figure 31).⁴⁷⁴ It too stands on a vegetal base but differs from those in the vault by holding a *rotulus*.

Such figures are not unusual, but the last two female figures have a very different style standing either side of the upper right hand *arcosolium* in *cubiculum* B (figures 54a-b, Chapter 5, section 5.3.7) their appearance and pose is far more naturalistic. Like other images in the vestibule and *cubiculum* B, however, they do not have a landscape context other than a minimal representation of the ground and shadow. The status of the two women is not obvious. If they were servants they would probably be carrying something in line with their duties as in numerous examples from the second (e.g. Piazza dei Cinquecento, Rome) to the fourth centuries (e.g. the female servants depicted in the tomb at Silistra in modern Bulgaria).⁴⁷⁵ Furthermore, these women are wearing floor length tunics whereas servants are usually depicted with somewhat shorter tunics to allow greater freedom of movement.⁴⁷⁶ Such a comparison may be seen in the different lengths of the tunics of the attendants and the *domina* depicted in the mosaic in Room 12 of the Villa of Piazza Armerina (figure 96).⁴⁷⁷ The *domina*'s tunic reaches to the ankles with the feet only just visible whereas the female attendants' tunics are calf length.

The gestures of the two women mirror each other. The arm furthest from the *arcosolium* is down by, and slightly away from, her side, bent at the elbow. The arm closest to the *arcosolium* is bent at the elbow with the lower arm pointing towards the *arcosolium*. The left hand figure is much clearer: the thumb points directly up with the first two fingers pointing towards the *arcosolium* at right angles to the thumb, the third and fourth fingers are curled into the palm, which is turned more towards the viewer. The gesture by the right hand figure is unclear, but may have the palm of the hand upwards and the thumb away from the hand. Pointing gestures with one or two fingers are seen in the late antique codices of the plays of Terence, but do not show the thumb at right angles as seen here.⁴⁷⁸ Quintilian comments that

⁴⁷⁴ Bisconti 2011a: tavv. 53 and 54.

⁴⁷⁵ For further reading on the subject of servants in Roman art see Dunbabin 2003b.

⁴⁷⁶ The author thanks Dr Ursula Rothe for this observation.

⁴⁷⁷ Gentili 1999: 3.29, fig. 1.

⁴⁷⁸ Aldrete 1999: 56-67.

such gestures with the first two fingers extended and the third and fourth fingers curled betoken a degree of modesty which may be considered appropriate for a juvenile, or a woman:

"Binos interim digitos distinguimus, sed non inserto pollice, paulum tamen inferioribus intra spectantibus, sed ne illis quidem tensis qui supra sunt."

Inst. Orat. 11.3.98

"Sometimes, we separate the first two fingers from the others, not however inserting the thumb between them, but with the fourth and little fingers turned slightly inwards, and the other two also not fully extended."

The arm raised however, betokens something particularly impressive and rich while pointing out something with the thumb extended was common practice; though frowned upon by Quintilian:

"At cum speciosius quid uberiusque dicendum est, ut illud 'saxa atque solitudines voci respondent', expatiator in latus et ipsa quodam modo se cum gestu fundit oratio."

Inst. Orat. 11.3.84

"When we have to say something which is particularly impressive and rich – like *'saxa atque solitudines voci respondent'* – the arm sweeps out to the side and the language somehow expands with the gesture."

"Averso pollice demonstrare aliquid receptum magis puto quam oratori decorum."

Inst. Orat. 11.3.104

"Pointing out something with the thumb turned back I regard as accepted rather than really appropriate for an orator."

The use of such oratorical devices suggests a deliberate use of gesture to highlight the occupant of this particular *arcosolium*. We shall see further examples of the Aurelii using gesture to convey meaning in the decoration of the upper chamber (Chapter 11, section 11.4.1).

6.2.4 Male Figures Wearing Tunic and *Pallium*.

The most notable motif within the red-green linear areas of the lower *cubicula* is the large number of male figures each wearing tunics with *clavi*, *pallium* and holding a *rotulus* and/or a long slender rod: the best preserved of which is that above the left hand *arcosolium* of *cubiculum* B (figure 46). There are thirty-six such figures in total (see Table 1, page 126). Given the importance of these figures a simplified version of the earlier distribution illustrations is shown in figures 97 and 98, those holding rods are coded in dark blue and those without rods are coded in light blue. Figures are distributed symmetrically, the only exceptions, apart from that caused by plaster loss or degradation of the decoration, are:

1. There is no figure above the *arcosolium* on the right hand side of *cubiculum* B (i.e. between the two standing female figures) to mirror that on the left hand side. This may be due to the more constrained area on the right (compare figure 45 and figure 53).
2. One of the figures in the right hand *arcosolium* soffit in the vestibule is 'twinned' with a female figure.
3. The figures of the central medallion (figure 61), unlike all the others, form a group and though the figures are shown without context, they nonetheless form a distinct triad of two males and one female.

Although there is large degree of symmetry there is a noticeable preponderance of figures with rods in *cubiculum* B whereas they are almost completely absent in the vestibule. In *cubiculum* A the distribution of with/without rods is not certain due to plaster loss, but both forms do exist. The correction evident in the badly executed figure (figure 55) confirms that the choice of attribute was not haphazard, but rather considered essential even when the result of that modification produces a somewhat bizarre effect.

Out of a total of thirty-six figures eighteen are shown holding rods. This is all the more remarkable for in the whole corpus of funerary art, with the exception of

those that are obviously Christ or St Peter, images of figures wearing tunic and *pallium* and holding a rod are exceptional. The only other images may be summarised thus:

(1) Gold glass. There are thirteen extant examples where a figure in tunic and *pallium* is shown carrying a rod and alone (figure 99).⁴⁷⁹ Each representation is on a very small piece of glass 2-3cm in diameter and, therefore, limitations in size have required an abbreviated iconography. That these images represent Christ in the act of performing a miracle such as the raising of Lazarus is almost certain. Firstly because gold glass imagery is itself overwhelmingly Christian in context and secondly there are cases where similar gold glass has Lazarus without Christ; again because of shortage of space (figure 100).⁴⁸⁰

(2) Hypogeum of Campana. In 1840 a hypogeum of unknown date was found near the Tomb of the Scipios between the Via Appia and the Via Ardeatina within the Aurelian Walls and therefore constructed prior to c. AD 272.⁴⁸¹ Destroyed shortly after discovery it is preserved in a published reconstruction drawing based upon contemporary sketches (figure 101).⁴⁸² Although the pose of the tunicate figure resembled those of the hypogeum of the Aurelii it is one of a series of pictures set in a vault. The other images are obviously Christian in nature depicting various miracles common in early Christian iconography i.e. the raising of Lazarus, the multiplication of loaves and the bringing forth of water.

(3) The catacomb of Commodilla. In the *cubiculum* of the Lion, is a nimbed tunicate figure holding a rod. There is no evidence of miracle working connected with the figure, but its late date (c. 375-380) and a nearby image

⁴⁷⁹ Morey 1959: nr 161-4, 214, 216, 218, 317, 335, 404, 408, 414 and 456.

⁴⁸⁰ Morey 1959: nr 158, 330 and 430.

⁴⁸¹ Carletti 1992: 164.

⁴⁸² De Rossi 1886: index. Ferri 2016 for a discussion of this tomb and the original sketches by the Marchese di Cavelli.

of St Peter bringing forth water suggests a Christian context.⁴⁸³ Antonio Ferrua, because of the lack of associated miracle working, considered it to be the image of a generic holy miracle worker (*'un santo taumaturgo'*) rather than specifically Christ.⁴⁸⁴ We shall see below that such 'miracle working' explanations have their own difficulties.

The above cases are certainly found in Christian contexts, but only the first, the gold glass, example can be reasonably construed as specifically depicting Christ. The second and third, though undoubtedly Christian, show the presence of a rod without miracles being performed albeit in close proximity to depictions of miracle working. Two further images are more enigmatic: one in Naples, the other in Rome in the catacombs of S. Callisto.

(4) *Cubiculum* B17 in the catacomb of S. Gennaro in Naples has a tunicate figure with rod and *rotulus* set within a roundel which in turn is surrounded by a complex pattern of foliage (figure 102).⁴⁸⁵ The image stands on its own with no other attribute or accompaniment. The catacomb itself was founded in the second or third century and early parts of it appear to contain no Christian imagery.⁴⁸⁶ The tunicate figure has been dated to the fourth century and considered a representation of Christ: albeit unusual in not having reference to a miracle such as the raising of Lazarus from the dead.⁴⁸⁷ The figure is set in a roundel surrounded by abundant foliage reminiscent of some of the fourth century ambulatory decoration in the church of S. Costanza (figure 103), but *cubiculum* B17's proximity to the earliest part of the catacomb, the so-called 'vestibule of the lower catacomb', ought not to rule out an earlier date.⁴⁸⁸ In the same *cubiculum* is an image of St Peter or Moses striking the rock to bring forth water, but why the figure in B17 is represented without other symbolism or context is unclear.⁴⁸⁹ Hans Achelis believed the

⁴⁸³ Ferrua 1958: 40. Zimmermann 2002: 121.

⁴⁸⁴ Ferrua 1958: 33, fig. 27. Carletti 1992: 164.

⁴⁸⁵ Achelis 1936: 58, tav. 19. Fasola 1975: 68, fig. 47. Carletti 1992: 162, fig. 14.

⁴⁸⁶ Achelis 1936: 81.

⁴⁸⁷ Carletti 1992: 162.

⁴⁸⁸ Fasola 1975: plan III.

⁴⁸⁹ Achelis 1936: 39, tav. 22.

image was a shorthand version (“*Abkürzung*”) of the resurrection of Lazarus. What remained unexplained was why the artist would abbreviate the iconography when, unlike the gold glass described in (1) above, there was physically room to paint the picture complete with Lazarus. Mallardo, possibly for this reason, rejected Achelis’ suggestion and put forward the hypothesis that the figure was emblematic of young life, rather than some form of abbreviation.⁴⁹⁰ This area was considerably re-worked and modified at an early stage of the catacomb’s development so,⁴⁹¹ despite the undoubted later Christian context, there is no certainty that this figure represents Christ, but instead may represent a non-Christian concept.

(5) The so-called *cubiculum* of Miltiades (M2) in Area II of the S. Callisto catacombs is said, on stylistic grounds, to date to the late third or early fourth century,⁴⁹² yet it may be earlier. The *cubiculum* contains a medallion in the centre of which is a figure with a slender, curved rod. It is feasible that this figure formed part of an original decorative scene almost identical to that found in the hypogeum of the Aurelii (and S. Gennaro) and which later had a picture of Lazarus inserted to create a scene familiar to early Christians. This medallion is enclosed within concentric circles and half circles similar to those in the *cubiculum* B vault. Modern reproduction of this image (figure 104a) suggests that the figure is, like that in Naples, alone and divorced from any other pictorial motif in the same manner as those in the hypogeum of the Aurelii.⁴⁹³

⁴⁹⁰ Mallardo 1949: 94-5, fig. 7.

⁴⁹¹ Fasola 1975: 17-21. The south side of the ‘vestibule’ (the Basilica of S. Agrippino) has been dated to the second half of the third century.

⁴⁹² Carletti 1992: 158 dated it to the Tetrarchic period on stylistic grounds. Partyk’s 1993 survey of Lazarus figures remarks on the poor quality of the ‘Lazarus’ (Partyk 1993: 113, fig. 26, no. 16), but does not consider it to be anything other than contemporary with the rest of the *cubiculum* decoration which he dates to the early fourth century. Fiocchi Nicolai et al. 2009: 94 consider it early Constantinian, followed by Bisconti 2011b: 37. The name Miltiades was proposed by De Rossi 1864: II. 266-9 after the bishop of Rome at the time of Constantine’s conversion to Christianity but is only conventional. Josi 1931: 52 - *cubiculum* S (Josi uses a different nomenclature to that used by more recent scholarship).

⁴⁹³ Fiocchi Nicolai et al. 2009: fig. 105.

Early records, however, (by Wilpert in 1903, figure 104b, and Giovanni Batista de Rossi in 1864, figure 104c, based upon his discovery of the *cubiculum* in 1852) show this figure as Christ resurrecting Lazarus similar to that seen in many images in later catacomb art.⁴⁹⁴ The modern image lacking Lazarus is therefore an accident of preservation; the figure of Lazarus, originally monochrome, has now faded completely.⁴⁹⁵ The monochrome image is not only unusual, but out of context with the remainder of the *cubiculum*, which is fully coloured with red/green lines, some dentillated with colour motifs in the same manner as the hypogeum of the Aurelii. This suggests that the Lazarus 'mummy' was a later interpolation. Such an alteration would explain why Lazarus has faded completely whereas the other parts of the *cubiculum* and associated light well have not and remain, following modern restoration, clearly discernible. Unlike numbers 1-3 above, other than the Lazarus scene there is no obvious Christian imagery within the *cubiculum*. This point was made by de Rossi at the time of discovery, but explained by him as the result of a lack of established Christian iconography.⁴⁹⁶ The only other medallion figure in the *cubiculum* of Miltiades recorded by de Rossi was a poorly preserved image that suggests a Good Shepherd.⁴⁹⁷ I noted above (section 6.1.6) that, despite its adoption by later Christian iconography, the Good Shepherd alone does not establish a Christian link. It is likely that the Miltiades rodded figure dates from a pre-Christian phase. Carlo Carletti noted difficulties in ascribing a Christian interpretation on the *cubiculum* of Miltiades and the adjacent *cubiculum* of the Seasons.⁴⁹⁸ Furthermore, the adjacent Area I, *cubicula* of the Sacraments,

⁴⁹⁴ de Rossi 1864: II. tav. XXIV, 1; Wilpert 1903: 289, tav. 128, 1.

⁴⁹⁵ Autopsy by the author and Dr Eileen Rubery of Cambridge University (13/9/13) could detect no trace of a Lazarus figure.

⁴⁹⁶ de Rossi 1864: II. 269.

⁴⁹⁷ de Rossi 1864: II. tav. XXIV, 2.

⁴⁹⁸ Carletti 1992: 165: '*vi sono tematiche figurative che sarebbe arduo leggere in una chiave specificamente <<Cristiana>>*'. [These are figurative themes that would be hard to read in a specifically Christian context.].

complete with very Christian imagery⁴⁹⁹ had existed decades before the *cubicula* of Miltiades and the Seasons whose builders, if Christian, had not thought to incorporate any of their neighbours' iconography. Instead, drawing on Martine Dulaey's ideas (discussed more fully below) on the non-magical meaning of the rod, Carletti proposed that the figure in the *cubiculum* of the Miltiades was not Christ, but a teacher, the rod itself being a symbol of learning.⁵⁰⁰ The theory runs into difficulties, however, as it does not explain why, if the figure with rod is a teacher, there are no pupils. In images of teaching where the *magister* is shown with a *virga* then there is usually a group of followers clustered around as seen in the Via Latina/Dino Campagni fresco of the so-called 'Anatomy Lesson' or the mosaic from the villa of T. Siminius Stephanus from Pompeii.⁵⁰¹ Alternatively, if alone, the figures are pictured with symbols such as sundials that betoken the subjects learned status e.g. the Philosopher mosaic from Brading villa on the Isle of Wight.⁵⁰²

While the decoration of the vault itself is purely red/green the *lucernium* retains fantastical architectural features reminiscent of the Fourth Pompeian Style from which the red/green linear scheme was derived (figure 105).⁵⁰³ Although the decorative styles employed in *lucernium* and *cubiculum* appear very different there is no indication that they represent different phases of decoration. Examination of the painting at the junction of

⁴⁹⁹ The iconography identified in the 'chapels of the Sacraments' includes images of Jonah and whale, the curing of the paralytic and baptism. Focchi Nicolai et al 2009: 16-17, fig. 15, whereas the second level Area I is firmly dated on historical and archaeological evidence to the first years of the third century AD those *cubicula* that have Christian iconography, *cubicula* A1-A3 date from around AD 235 based upon the nearby deposition of Pope Pontianus (d. 235) in *cubiculum* L1. Testini 1966: 131. Finney 1994: 157-8; 215, fig. 6.48; 217, fig. 6.50; 227, figs 6.59-60.

⁵⁰⁰ Carletti 1992: 167: '*la figura del personaggio << à la baguette >> ... si configura come immagine del 'didaskalos'*'. [The image of the person with a rod appears as an image of a teacher.]. It is worth noting that the H grammaticon on the *pallium* of the 'Christ' figure is unique in the corpus of Lazarus figures, Partyk 1993: 113, tab. 1.1.

⁵⁰¹ MAN Naples, 124545. Ferrari 1989: 116, nr 15.

⁵⁰² Neal and Cosh 2009: 273-7, mosaic nr 331.6(g).

⁵⁰³ Carletti 1992: figs 5, 6 and 8.

the two schemes gives every indication of *lucernium* and vault having been painted at the same time (figure 106).⁵⁰⁴

There are similarities between the late second century AD Piazza dei Cinquecento frescoes (figure 107), completed before the full development of the red/green linear style, and the architectural features painted in the *lucernium* in the *cubiculum* of Miltiades. The 'attenuation' of architectural elements, that immediately precedes the final development of the red/green decorative style, is seen in an example of Hadrianic date found near the church of S. Crisogono (near the modern Piazza Sonnino in Trastevere) which has both 'attenuated' and 'realistic' architectural elements.⁵⁰⁵ There are parallels between this building and the House of Jupiter and Ganymede and the Caupona del Pavone (both in Ostia), which date to the late second century or early third century.

The evidence of the painting styles and motifs, the architectural development of the catacomb and the recognition that the 'Lazarus' does not belong to the original decorative scheme requires a re-dating of the *cubiculum* of Miltiades from the Constantinian period to the first half of the third century AD, if not earlier. If the figure with the rod is not Christ then an alternative explanation needs to be sought.

The closest *comparanda* to the Miltiades figure and that from S. Gennaro are in the hypogeum of the Aurelii described in Chapter 5, section 5.3.10, especially the one holding a rod over the central female figure (figure 61). The figures in the hypogeum of the Aurelii are therefore not unique, but they are rare. For such rare images to exist in the same geographical area and time, i.e. Rome in the third century AD, argues for them having the same meaning, a meaning that would be understood by contemporary viewers without further elaboration. The imagery of the male figure with a rod, at some point in the evolution of Christian iconography, came to be associated with miracle working either by Christ or St Peter as clearly demonstrated

⁵⁰⁴ Autopsy by the author and Dr Rubery 13/9/13.

⁵⁰⁵ de Vos 1968-9: 169 suggests a date of the AD 180-200 however Joyce 1981: 48, fn 160 argues in favour of an earlier date, c. AD 130-140, due to similarities with Room IX of the House of the Muses, Ostia (which is Hadrianic) and the presence of Hadrianic brickstamps found in the S. Crisogono excavations.

by the modification to the *cubiculum* of Miltiades figure and the proximity of the S. Gennaro figure, (4) above, to indisputably Christian symbolism. Christian miracles are associated with transformative processes e.g. water from a rock; feeding the five thousand or raising the dead i.e. the raising of Lazarus; perhaps the most extreme instance of transformation. These were developments later than the Aurelii images, yet it is not inconsistent that such transformative symbolism should derive from a procedure that brought about the transformation of a commercial object into a human being. If the hypogeum of the Aurelii, the *cubiculum* of Miltiades and probably that of S. Gennaro signify anything then I propose that they represent the same concept i.e. the concept of manumission. Jastrzębowska has already identified a link between the hypogeum of the Aurelii and the process of manumission (Chapter 1, section 1.5.5). However, I believe that concept of *manumissio* is expressed throughout the lower *cubicula* via the rodded figures and ultimately, as we shall see in due course, influences the decoration of the upper chamber.

6.2.5 Conclusion.

Many of the commonly found motifs discussed in Section 6.1 lack any reference to mythology or religious cult, Christian or not. Though pagan motifs did not die out completely this reduced popularity follows a trend noted by Feraudi-Gruénais in funerary art.⁵⁰⁶ I have proposed (Section 6.1.8) that this phenomenon may be a result of a group containing persons of different religious persuasions, including Christians whose antipathy towards images that they considered incompatible with the new religion is well-attested. It is the rare or unique motifs, combined with a comprehensive examination of the megalographia of *cubiculum* A, that are more likely to unravel the mystery of the hypogeum of the Aurelii's iconography. The following chapters will address all the images, but first, we shall examine the relationship between the figures with rods and the process of *manumissio vindicta*.

⁵⁰⁶ Cf fn 460.

Chapter 7. Rods of Manumission.

7.1 Previous Theories.

The figures with rods, including the trio in the vault medallion of *cubiculum* B are clearly significant by virtue of their rarity. It is now appropriate to provide an explanation for these images beginning by examining theories posited by previous scholarship. The scene in the central vault medallion of the hypogeum of the Aurelii's *cubiculum* B has been explained as some form of mystic symbolism or initiation into a religious sect. Bendinelli's idea was that the central female was an allegory of the soul accompanied by two saints or holy men.⁵⁰⁷ Wilpert, whose 1924 interpretation had a profound influence on the reading of all parts of the monument, put forward a mystic interpretation of the scene reinforcing his Gnostic explanation of the upper chamber and vice versa.⁵⁰⁸ Believing the figures to belong to the Ophite sect of Gnostics, Wilpert saw the medallion as a depiction of a, "*triade divina*": the first man, his son and the Holy Spirit that is the Gnostic Sophia. He interpreted the four male figures placed around this medallion as images of the Gnostic Christ being an emanation of the figures in the medallion. Such an analysis drew the scepticism of Bendinelli, but the mystical interpretation has remained surprisingly persistent.⁵⁰⁹ Bendinelli, Wilpert and those who followed the mystic interpretation paid little attention to the multiple images of male figures dressed in tunic and *pallium*, still less the unusual nature of those carrying rods.

Himmelmann introduced the idea of these figures as philosophers: images of philosophers wearing simple *pallia* were a popular motif on third century AD sarcophagi.⁵¹⁰ Images of similar figures wearing more everyday attire of tunic and

⁵⁰⁷ Bendinelli 1922: 472.

⁵⁰⁸ Wilpert 1924: 20-1.

⁵⁰⁹ Bendinelli 1922: 473. Cechelli 1928: 64-5, Lugli 1938: 444, Carcopino 1956 and Chicoteau 1976 followed Wilpert's Gnostic interpretation of the medallion with little alteration including the repetition of 'Christ' in the four surrounding figures. Logan 2006: 101 repeats the Gnostic explanation with a slight modification in the light of the discovery in 1945 of the Nag Hammadi scrolls.

⁵¹⁰ Himmelmann 1975: 17.

pallium are also not unusual and they frequently hold a *rotulus*, but (with the exception of those mentioned in Chapter 6, section 6.2.4) they do not hold rods in the manner found in *cubiculum* B.⁵¹¹ Despite Himmelmann's rejection of a general Christian interpretation, the similarity with miracle working by Christ or St Peter led to Himmelmann's 'wonderworker' theory.⁵¹²

Modern Italian scholarship, most notably Bisconti, has largely avoided the pitfall of Wilpert's Gnosticism and has sought an interpretation based upon a broader philosophical reading of the imagery. The *rotulus* and rod have been recognised as symbols not only of learning in general, but the attainment of that knowledge required to solve the mysteries of life beyond death.⁵¹³ Yet this theory does not explain the unusual nature of the hypogeum of the Aurelii's figures and although Bisconti steers away from the Gnostic argument he describes the medallion's trio as being the three deceased mentioned in the mosaic inscription in *cubiculum* A that gave the hypogeum its name.⁵¹⁴ Apart from a co-incidence of number and gender there is no obvious connection between these figures and the Aurelii named in the mosaic. Cecilia Proverbio follows the same argument despite acknowledging that the question remains: why would anyone execute a commemorative fresco in one room when the inscription (and presumably the bodies) is in another separated by a vestibule, three short flights of stairs and a landing?⁵¹⁵ If fresco and inscription represented the same people then a satisfactory reason for separation of fresco and inscription would need to be found, a reason that has not yet been promulgated. I

⁵¹¹ See Zanker 1995 and Ewald 1999 for a full exploration of the images of the philosopher in Roman funerary art.

⁵¹² The similarity with the miracle-producing Christian rod has resulted in the rods carried in the hypogeum of the Aurelii often being referred to as 'wands'. I have avoided this term, preferring their description as 'rods', to obviate any preconception concerning a supernatural interpretation.

⁵¹³ Bisconti 1985: 893-5: '*E agli stessi concetti di conoscenza, saggezza e dottrina alludono le figure dei palliati con 'virga' e rotolo, attributi intuitivamente riconducibili alla paideia e ai mezzi per accedere ai misteri della vita oltremondana.*' [And the palliate figures allude to these same concepts of knowledge, wisdom and learning with *virga* and *rotulus*, attributes instinctively connected with *paideia* and to means of entering into the mysteries of the life hereafter.].

⁵¹⁴ Bisconti 2004b: 28.

⁵¹⁵ Proverbio 2011: 208: '*La suggestiva ipotesi di potervi rintracciare i medesimi membri della famiglia degli Aureli citati nel mosaico pavimentale dell'ambiente ipogeo settentrionale sembra in realtà l'unica soluzione interpretativa.*' [The suggested theory allowing it to be connected to the same members of the Aurelii family mentioned in the floor mosaic of the northern hypogean room seems to be, in fact, the only interpretative solution.].

suggest that it is more likely that fresco and inscription represent different groups of people.

Finally, and most recently, Elżbieta Jastrzębowska has suggested a link with the ceremony of *manumissio vindicta*.⁵¹⁶ This I believe comes closer to a viable explanation of the actions in the central vault medallion and the figures with rods primarily found in *cubiculum* B. As we shall see in Chapter 9 and Chapter 10 Jastrzębowska is less successful in interpreting the *adventus* scene and “Homeric Scene”, equating these too with the practice of *manumissio vindicta*, but her conclusions with regard to the vault medallion are sound. This chapter shall broaden the context for this reading after a brief review of the symbolism of rods in Roman society.

7.2 The Meaning of Rods.

I mentioned above (Chapter 6, section 6.2.4) the possibility that the Christian rod of Christ and St Peter arose from imagery such as that found in *cubiculum* B and the *cubiculum* of Miltiades. Dulaey's 1973 article made clear that the carrying of rods, particularly the long, slender *virgae*, would not have been seen by contemporaries as being emblematic of supernatural ability, but rather of magisterial authority.⁵¹⁷ If an explanation of the hypogeum of the Aurelii 'rod' figures, both the pictures of individual males and the trio in the vault, is to be found then it is necessary to look at imagery either contemporary or antecedent to them.

There were many different types of rods in Roman society that symbolised a degree of authority.⁵¹⁸ Some symbols of authority were substantial rods such as that held by the domestic servant (described as a *tricliniarch*) in the frescoes of the Schola Praeconum on the Via dei Cerchi, near the Circus Maximus (figure 108).⁵¹⁹ Ammianus Marcellinus (Amm. Marc. 14,6,17) describes domestic officials using *virgae* to control

⁵¹⁶ Jastrzębowska 2013. The author is grateful for a pre-publication copy of Prof. Jastrzębowska's article in *Boreas*.

⁵¹⁷ Dulaey 1973: 16.

⁵¹⁸ On the origins and evolution of rods as symbols of authority in general, see Alföldy 1959.

⁵¹⁹ Strong 1916: 96, fig. 3, pl. III.

large numbers of attendants when rich personages paraded through the streets of Rome in the fourth century AD.⁵²⁰ Rods were also wielded by attendants of officers of state (*lictores*) to clear the way in public, protect the officials concerned, inflict punishment and act as symbols of the official's authority.⁵²¹ Although literary evidence is plentiful depictions of *virgae* are less so. On the mid-third century AD sarcophagus of Caius Statius Celso, *scriba librarius* and *eques romanus*, in the Bardo museum, Tunis an attendant is depicted holding a somewhat thick rod which is probably a *virga* (figure 109).⁵²² Closer in form to the hypogeum of the Aurelii rod is the *virga* carried by *lanistae* in their supervision of gladiatorial contests (figure 110).

In due course the performance of miracles became more closely associated with the wielding of a rod and such rods were considered as magic wands. The concept of the magical wand is a retrojection of later ideas unrecognisable to the third century AD viewer; rather than having supernatural powers the rod was emblematic of authority and power - be it a state official or Christ.

Himmelman's so-called *Wundertäter à la Apollonius of Tyana* is not supported by a reading of Philostratus' biography of Apollonius, (VA 4, 45; 7, 38), written during the Severan era and cited by Himmelman in support of his theory. Philostratus records various acts by Apollonius that were considered as miracles, but none involved the use of a rod. A generation earlier Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* also has instances of magic including a scene involving the raising of the dead (*Met.* 2.28). Again, however, it is the necromancer's application of special herbs that produces the desired supernatural effect - not a rod. Even when a *virga* is involved in

⁵²⁰ "*ita praepositis urbanae familiae suspense digerentibus atque sollicite, quos insignes faciunt virgae dexteris aptatae.*" [Just as those who have charge of a city household, are made conspicuous by wands grasped in their right hands.].

⁵²¹ To make room in public: Mart. *Epig.* 8.66; Plut. *Pompeius* 22; App. *BC* 1.78; App. *Mithr.* 20; Plin. *Pan.* 23.3. To stand at his side during speeches: Livy 23.23. To knock before he enters a house: Livy 6.34; Plin. *HN* 7.112; Petron. 65. To accompany him on private errands Juv. 3.128, Livy 25.17, Suet. *Iul.* 80 and App. *BC* 4.134. To carry out punishments: Cic. *Verr.* 5.54; Liv. 2.5; Val. Max. 3.8.1 and Sen. *Controv.* 9.2.22.

⁵²² Bardo Museum, C1443. Reinsberg 2006: 234, taf. 101.3, kat. 141. Himmelman 1973: taf. 2. Purcell 1983: 159. The perceived thickness of the *virga* may be due to the limitations of the medium.

transformation it is only in conjunction with the application of potions (e.g. *Virg. Aen.* 7.190-191).⁵²³

Proverbio addressed the *virga*'s role as a symbol of authority, but preferred to concentrate on Martial's description (*Mart. Epig.* 10, 62, 10) of the schoolmaster's *ferulae tristes*.⁵²⁴ This, Proverbio claims, is the source of the association between *virga* and knowledge: hence the association of *virgae* as depicted in the hypogeum of the Aurelii with a philosophical context for the monument as a whole. Proverbio was, I believe, premature in considering the rods as being emblematic of didactic authority as there is little evidence either in *cubiculum* B or elsewhere in the monument to justify a link with some form of philosophy.

In deciphering the decorative scheme I wish first to return to the central medallion described earlier (Chapter 5, section 5.3.10, figure 61) and the action that it portrays. Unlike the individual male rodded figures the central medallion's rodded figure is not the principal figure, but is attendant (together with a figure with *rotulus*) on another i.e. a female who stands between the two males. The scene is further highlighted by having a red background in sharp contrast to the predominately white background of the rest of the *cubiculum*'s decoration. Whether the medallion depicts an actual event or is symbolic is unclear (a point that will be discussed in more detail in the examination of *cubiculum* A, Chapter 9, Section 9.2.2), but it is worth noting that the *cubiculum* A medallion has close parallels with the *ad locutio* medallion scene in Mausoleum X (Clodius Hermes) underneath S. Sebastiano on the via Appia.⁵²⁵ The latter is not only similarly the central image of a vaulted ceiling, but also depicts some form of ceremony. The decoration in this instance can be dated to the second quarter of the third century i.e. near-contemporary with the hypogeum of the Aurelii and this phase has been linked to the Mausoleum X's transition from private to collegiate ownership.⁵²⁶ Whether symbolic or not the scenes in both cases

⁵²³ As when King Picus is transformed into a woodpecker: *aurea percussum virga versumque venenis, fecit avem Circe sparsitque coloribus alas*. [(Picus) struck with golden rod and transformed with potions, Circe made a bird and sprinkled the wings with colours – Trans. author].

⁵²⁴ Proverbio 2011: 206.

⁵²⁵ Borg 2013: fig. 95.

⁵²⁶ Jastrębowska 1981: 52-4. Borg 2013: 153 and 264.

are clearly important, if not the most important in the room. The hypogeum of the Aurelii example focuses upon the woman and the action in which she is participating, not the two attendant males. In an attempt to posit an explanation I shall now view the figures in the context of the one clear fact that we do know about some, if not all, of the monument's occupants i.e. they were freedmen and women.

7.3 Roman Law Associated with Manumission.

In Roman law, in addition to manumission by testament following the death of a master, slaves might be freed by a process known as *manumissio vindicta*. The procedure required the presence of a minimum of three persons: the slave, the manumitting owner and a magistrate with the authority to preside in a *legio actio* and known as the *adsertor libertatis*, who might or might not be accompanied by a lictor.⁵²⁷ Given that magistrates were accompanied by lictors (Livy 39, 12 and 32) it might be thought necessary for there to be a minimum of four persons present in the ceremony (i.e. slave, owner, magistrate and lictor). This may have been the case in earlier periods, but certainly by the early third century AD this does not appear to have been the case. A passage preserved from the jurist Ulpian (*Dig.* 40.8) states that it was not necessary for a lictor to be present in order for a magistrate to carry out an act of manumission. By the end of the third century AD, at least, Hermogenianus (*Dig.* 40.23) recorded that the magistrate was no longer required to be present and that he might be replaced by a lictor. Clearly, the process of manumission was evolving yet the person holding the rod in the vault medallion is more likely to be a magistrate than a lictor given the figure's advanced age. The whole process (Gaius *Inst.* 4.16) was based upon judicial trial and followed similar procedures involved in asserting property rights.⁵²⁸ The magistrate would assert that the slave was a free man.⁵²⁹ If the owner remained silent he was deemed to agree with the statement of the magistrate and the slave would become a freedman. Details evolved yet some elements remained constant: the action had to take place with all the principals

⁵²⁷ Buckland 1963: 73.

⁵²⁸ Buckland 1963: 73.

⁵²⁹ Waele 1927: 128. Scott 1973: 17.113 fn 1.

present (no representatives were allowed) and a rod called a *festuca* was used (Gaius *Inst.* 4.16).⁵³⁰

7.3.1 The Use and Derivation of the *Festuca*.

The term *festuca* is derived from the word for straw (Festus L76.13). This may account for the long, slender nature of the rod depicted in the hypogeum of the Aurelii. Nisbet identified a connection between *festuca* the instrument of manumission and *festuca* the term used for straw.⁵³¹ He suggested that the term *festuca* was connected with arbitration over landed property where a handful of straw substituted for disputed property and in time became employed in the transfer of another form of property i.e. slaves in a mock sale.

This agricultural derivation has not been universally accepted. Alföldy sought to associate the *festuca* of the *adsertor libertatis* with the spear that was often used as a symbol of authority by magistrates and some priesthoods.⁵³² A *festuca*, therefore, was synonymous with *hasta* and had nothing to do with an early agricultural transaction, but rather was emblematic of ancient armed strife. In this he is supported by a comment from Aulus Gellius:

“quod videtur dixesse conferens vim illam civilem et festucarium, quae verbo diceretur, non quae manu fieret, cum vi bellica et cruenta.”

NA XX.10.10

“... he seems to have expressed this by comparing that civil and symbolic power which is exercised in name only and not actually, with warlike and sanguinary violence.”

⁵³⁰ These rods used in manumission were also referred to as *vindictae*. A comment by the Severan jurist Paulus (*Dig.* 40.14) stating that a *vindicta* need not be used by the emperor for a manumission to be valid strongly suggests that it was used by all others. In Horace *Sat.* II, 7: 75-7 the slave Davus berates his master for not being truly free (of love) and uses the term *vindicta* as the means of conferring freedom - *tunc mihi dominus, rerum imperiis hominumque tot tantisque minor, quem ter vindicta quaterque inposita haud umquam misera formidine privet?*

⁵³¹ Nisbet 1918: 1-5.

⁵³² Alföldy 1959: 8, fn 78. See also Tondo 1967: 85-101.

Whatever the origins of the word the jurist Gaius uses the term *festuca* as the symbol of conferring freedom:

*“qui vindicabat festucam tenebat; deinde ipsam rem adprehendebat, ueluti hominem, et ita dicebat, “hunc ego hominem ex iure quiritem meum esse aio secundum suam causam. Sicut dixi, ecce tibi, vindictam inposui”, et simul homini festucam inponebat ... festuca utebantur quasi hastae loco, signo quodam iusti dominii.”*⁵³³

Inst. 4.16

“... whoever liberated, held a rod (*festuca*), and then grasping the object itself, as for instance a man, said, ‘This man I claim as mine by due acquisition by the law of the Quirites. See! As I have said, I have put my rod (*vindicta*) on him,’ and at the same time he laid his rod (*festuca*) upon the man ... Now the rod (*festuca*) which they used represented a spear, the symbol of absolute dominion.”

Trans. Poste and Whittuck/author.

I think that Alföldy goes too far in saying that Gaius is confused in his terminology. In the extract quoted above the jurist uses the word *festuca* three times in relation to manumission. Alföldy's arguments about the use of the *hasta* as a sign of *imperium* carry much weight, indeed are strengthened by Gaius' comment, but that does not preclude the development of a long, slender rod as a form of *hasta*, and by virtue of its shape, adopting the name of *festuca* to differentiate it from other forms of *hastae* used in different circumstances (e.g. the *imperium* to sell booty).⁵³⁴ Far from Gaius being in error I believe it to be more likely that if anyone was going to be precise in terminology it would be a lawyer who was, in turn, subsequently reviewed by Justinian's lawyers. Furthermore, we have literary evidence that the term *festuca* was crucial in the provision of freedom. Plautus' braggart soldier specifically states that it is the *festuca* that makes a slave free (*Mil. glor.* 961 – Pyrgopolynices, “*Quid ea? Ingenuane an festuca facta e serua libera est?*”) and Persius, in satirising the desire to be free from commerce and love, confirms that it is the lictor and the *festuca* he wields that confers freedom (5, 175 - *non in festuca*,

⁵³³ cf Festus L149 s.v. '*manu mitti*'.

⁵³⁴ Alföldy 1959: 3-7.

licitor quam iactat ineptus.). In the case of the symbol of authority for a magistrate and those whose duty it was to attend on him the terms *virga*, *festuca* and *vindicta* were synonymous: a long, slender rod which is used in the performance of freeing a slave under Roman law - *manumissio vindicta*.

7.3.2 The Mariémont Relief.

The difficulty in presenting the central medallion in *cubiculum* B as a scene of *manumissio vindicta* is that there are no comparanda. The so-called Mariémont relief of the first century AD was considered a possibility (figure 111).⁵³⁵ Waele thought that it represented the granting of freedom to a pair of coachmen based on the hats (*pilei*) they were wearing and the whips they were holding.⁵³⁶ This interpretation was followed by both Tondo and Pack - the latter refined Waele's reading by suggesting that the scene represented manumission in the Circus at the end of a race.⁵³⁷ Pack's argument does not address an important objection put forward by Ville however, namely while the wearing of a *pileus* is well-attested in literature as signifying the granting of freedom, the form of hat worn in the Mariémont relief is not that type of *pileus*.⁵³⁸ The Mariémont hat does not correspond to the *pileus libertatis* depicted on a coin of 43/42 BC issued by L. Plaetorius Cestianus and M. Iunius Brutus to celebrate the assassination of Caesar on the Ides of March (figure 112). The Cap of Liberty is clearly rounded whereas those worn by the figures on the Mariémont relief are pointed. Evidence from lamp stamps, contemporary with the relief, shows that the type of costume and hat worn by the Mariémont figures is that associated with *desultores* - acrobatic jockeys.⁵³⁹ Instead of a manumission scene the relief illustrates homage to the *editor* at the beginning of the games (lack of any victory emblems suggesting the start rather than the end of the event) at a time when the

⁵³⁵ Reinach 1909-12: II, 164, 3.

⁵³⁶ Waele 1927: 127-31.

⁵³⁷ Tondo 1967: 143-4. Pack 1980:189.

⁵³⁸ Ville 1963: 21-3. Mouritsen 2011: 11 concurs that the Mariémont relief may no longer be considered a scene of *manumissio vindicta*.

⁵³⁹ Ville 1963: 24.

editor was physically much closer to the participants than was the case in the later empire.⁵⁴⁰

The wearing of the *pileus* is mentioned in both republican and imperial sources as a token of freed status.⁵⁴¹ All such references, however, are to male manumission, often after military service or performance in the *ludi*, where the *pileus* (helmet lining) would be a normal item of dress not to be expected in the case of a woman.

7.3.3 The Figures Dressed in Tunic and *Pallium* Again.

The attribution of a manumitting scene to the central medallion puts the solitary male figures, especially those with rods, in perspective. It seems unlikely that they are true portraits (i.e. representations of recognisable individual physiognomies, see discussion below Chapter 9, Section 9.2.2). Despite some individualism in the images they are placed in a wide variety of positions, on walls and ceiling, with no prominence in the *arcosolia* (figures 97 and 98). The images in the vault, placed around the central medallion and standing on stylised floral bases, give no impression of alluding to or representing the deceased, nor can they realistically be considered servants in attendance on the deceased any more than the female figures examined earlier (Chapter 6, section 6.2.3). The wearing of a long tunic and *pallium* is inconsistent with a servile status; they neither carry anything for, nor focus upon, any particular individual.

Other 'floating' figures in the hypogeum of the Aurelii are, as discussed above, stock decorative images considered appropriate for the quietude of the tomb. The figures dressed in tunic and *pallium*, however, are special. The choice of *festuca* or *rotulus* was not arbitrary. The soffits to the side *arcosolia* (in both *cubiculum* B and vestibule) have pairs of figures: some with *rotulus*, others with *festuca*. On the vault, in addition to the central medallion the figures within the quadrants hold both. In contrast with the more specific symbolism of a specific act of *manumissio vindicta* in

⁵⁴⁰ Ville 1963: 28-30.

⁵⁴¹ Plaut. *Amph.* 461; Serv. *Aen.* 8. 564; Livy 24.16, 24.32; Sen. *Ep.* 47.18; Suet. *Tib.* 4; Pers. 5.82; Tert. *De Spect.* 21. Oblique references in Petron. *Sat.* 41; Mart. *Epig.* 1.68.4.

the medallion the figures that hold the *festuca* represent a general concept of the freedom attained by the occupants of the tomb, as the *festuca* probably does in the funerary relief of the Licinii (Chapter 4, figure 24). Although an emphasis on achievements post-*manumissio* was more usual, the freedman's use of libertination in funerary epitaphs exhibited his (or her) former servile status.⁵⁴² The alleged *macula servitutis* is far more likely to be a construct of the élite rather than the *libertus* himself. A pride in one's achievements post-manumission is likely to be enhanced, not detracted from, by drawing attention to one's servile past.⁵⁴³

The freedman's recognition of formal servile status will be of particular relevance when discussing the so-called 'Adam and Eve' and 'Creator' images in the upper chamber later (Chapter 12), but I shall first discuss how this emphasis on the freedman status of the tomb's occupants informs another aspect of decoration that has resonance in both *cubiculum* B and A i.e the prevalence of groups of twelve.

⁵⁴² A habit they were not obliged to do see Petersen 2006: 11, 228.

⁵⁴³ A point discussed by Mouritsen 2011: 282.

Chapter 8. The Importance of Twelve.

8.1 Scenes within the *Arcosolia*.

In contrast to the undecorated lunettes of the lower *arcosolia*, the upper *arcosolia* lunettes have been decorated in a most particular manner. In keeping with the rest of *cubiculum* B there is a great degree of symmetry between the frescoes with each picture having the following similarities (figure 47, east; figure 52, rear; figure 56a, west):

- Each has a row of figures divorced of any architectural or landscape context.
- In each case the figures are painted in the upper part of the lunette and would have been visible above any coffin or sarcophagus placed within the *arcosolium*.
- The lower part of each row of figures has been damaged to a greater or lesser extent by a cut within the plaster.
- In each case there are twelve figures.

In the *arcosolium* lunette of the rear wall all twelve figures (figure 52) are male, some bearded, some clean shaven, all wear tunics with *clavi* and *pallium* similar to those already described in section 6.2.4 and pictured individually throughout *cubiculum* B and vestibule.⁵⁴⁴ Unlike the wall figures, none carries a rod and they interact with one another turning towards each other in pairs, while their faces look out towards the viewer.⁵⁴⁵ There is no evidence of hierarchy among them. The figures appear animated with varying hand gestures and turn towards each other in pairs as if to make six separate conversations.

⁵⁴⁴ Bendinelli 1922: 403-5.

⁵⁴⁵ Bisconti 2011a: tav. 72.

The east wall *arcosolium* (figure 47) contains male and female figures in pairs with the woman always on the right hand of her male companion.⁵⁴⁶ As with the all-male rear *arcosolium* all the figures, male and female, are the same height with the exception of the (male) figure on the extreme right which is shorter in order to fit within the arc of the *arcosolium*. Again, there is no evidence of hierarchy.

In the west wall *arcosolium* (figure 56a) twelve men and women are dressed in the same manner as those in the left hand *arcosolium*.⁵⁴⁷ The figures are less uniform in height than in the left-hand *arcosolium*. Although there is no figure 'crammed in' on the far right, the figures are progressively taller from left to right. Despite this variance, as in the left-hand *arcosolium*, there is little difference in the height of the males and their adjacent female counterparts and again no evident hierarchy. A better state of preservation allows one to see that while the hair of the women may be covered their faces are clearly visible.⁵⁴⁸ As noted previously (Chapter 5, section 5.3.7), in this *arcosolium* symmetry between male and female has not been maintained. Although the row of figures starts with a woman and alternates with a man, part way across the alternation fails as one can see in figure 56a. Furthermore, there is a gap between the eighth and ninth figures from the left. This gap was noticed by Bendinelli, who noted that the (male) ninth figure's arm extends towards the (female) eighth figure (figure 56b).⁵⁴⁹ It is this pair of figures that Poe was probably referring to as indicating *dextrarum iunctio*.⁵⁵⁰ This possibility is unlikely, however, for a number of reasons:

- 1) If these two figures (nos. 8 and 9) were originally meant to be together, then why is there a gap between these figures and not the others?

⁵⁴⁶ Bisconti 2011a: tav. 67.

⁵⁴⁷ Bendinelli 1922: 395-400. Bisconti 2011a: tav. 78.

⁵⁴⁸ Bisconti 2011a: tav. 79.

⁵⁴⁹ Bendinelli 1922: 397-8.

⁵⁵⁰ Poe 2007: 69.

- 2) If the gap was meant to be filled by another figure then why is this figure not more evident?⁵⁵¹
- 3) The male figure's arm is elongated in proportion to the rest of the body.
- 4) The male figure's head is turned towards figure no. 10 not towards his 'bride'.⁵⁵²
- 5) If the figures were married to each other their marital status does not appear to be the primary aspect being portrayed.
- 6) *Dextrarum iunctio* scenes invariably depict either the married couple alone or with other scenes connected with their lives or emblematic of their virtues. They are depicted, on occasion, as a couple in different scenes, but never with other couples.⁵⁵³

A more likely possibility is that this gap was not an original part of the decoration, but has been created subsequently and the arm linking figures 8 and 9 serves as a visual link to cover the gap. This gap has not been addressed by previous commentators, but the latest campaign of restoration has revealed a further, thirteenth, figure that was subsequently erased which I have labelled number 8a. The figure is evident from the pinkish plaster that forms the 'shadow' of a figure. If the number of figures was meant to be twelve as in the other two *arcosolia* it seems that thirteen were painted in error and one had to be removed to match the number of figures in the *arcosolium* opposite. The removed figure may have been female on the basis that the remaining plaster is coloured a pinkish hue that bears a closer resemblance to the female figures than the male. If that were so then there would have been three females (nrs 7, 8 and 8a) near the centre of the lunette. This error would have been more obvious if either nr 1 or nr 12 at the end of the row had been

⁵⁵¹ On such figures as Juno Pronuba or Concordia in attendance in *dextrarum iunctio* scenes see Davies 1985: esp. 638 and Reinsberg 2006: 79-82.

⁵⁵² Bisconti 2011a: tav. 79.

⁵⁵³ For example on the 'biographical' sarcophagus MNR Terme, 125605. Boymel Kempen 1981: fig. 24.

removed to return the number of figures to twelve. The artist has attempted to remove the excess figure while at the same time maintaining the cohesion of the overall image by extending the right arm of the adjacent male figure (nr 9) towards the female figure: something that would not have been possible if figure nr 8 had been removed (i.e. the gap would have remained or one woman would have had to extend her arm towards another woman). The result is seven women and five men - not a perfect outcome, but the overall number of figures is at least consistent with the other *arcosolia* frescoes and the male/female distribution closer than would otherwise have been the case. It is notable that the only other place where a fresco has been altered, also with less than perfect results, is in the figure with the 'bifurcated' arm in the soffit to the same *arcosolium* (Chapter 5, section 5.3.7) and seen on the left side of the *arcosolium* soffit in figure 56a.

The two side *arcosolia* may represent two groups of twelve that happen to consist of equal numbers of men and women or, less likely in the author's opinion given the lack of coniubial attitudes, a single group of twelve men (perhaps a repetition of those in the rear *arcosolium*) accompanied by their wives. There clearly was a close bond between these figures and the number twelve was of significance. It is necessary now to turn our attention towards the twelve seater banqueting scene in *cubiculum* A (described Chapter 5, section 5.4.14).

8.2 The Twelve Diners.

On the east wall of *cubiculum* A, in the Upper Register at the point where the vault springs from the wall, is the small image of a banquet (compare figures 82a-b). The representation of dining in a funerary context is quite common. Whether the banquet depicted is one that exists in the real world or is being celebrated in the hereafter I will discuss shortly, but the point that I draw attention to here is the unusual number of diners. Many examples have four or fewer banqueters who are usually the deceased accompanied by spouse, parents or children, but to have as many as twelve dining together is most unusual.⁵⁵⁴ There are two examples, one from

⁵⁵⁴ A point made by Guarducci 1973: 188

Sentinum,⁵⁵⁵ the other from Este (figure 113),⁵⁵⁶ that each show a dining group of twelve persons, while a third, from Amiternum, has two groups of six, one sitting, the other reclining, that may signify some distinction within a group of twelve or may signify the same group in different roles.⁵⁵⁷ In the Este example the depiction of a *triclinium* rather than a *stibadium* meal suggests that it dates from before the end of the second century AD when the use of the *stibadium* for dining became more commonplace. A later image, now lost but certainly Christian and possibly fourth century, depicts eleven figures at a *stibadium* and one person standing (figure 114).⁵⁵⁸

In the corpus of images of banqueting in a funerary context collated by Jastrzębowska of those examples of five or more the usual number is five or seven (see Table 2, page 173).⁵⁵⁹ There is only one example of a banquet comprising nine persons in Jastrzębowska's corpus and literature records that the most profligate of emperors, Elagabalus, would frequently dine with eight companions i.e. there were nine in total (SHA *Elagab.* 29. 3). Whether the story concerning Elagabalus is true or not is immaterial to the information that a meal of nine was considered by the SHA author as evidence of the emperor's profligacy and decadence. This limit of the number of diners to an individual *stibadium* is borne out by archaeology where very late and grand houses, such as those investigated at Apamea, have *stibadia* that held seven or, at most, nine persons.⁵⁶⁰

It is not only the large number of diners in the hypogeum of the Aurelii fresco that is unusual however, but the fact that it is an even number. Among Jastrzębowska's 89 examples whose numbers can be confirmed overall numbers are split almost evenly between odd and even numbers. However, if those images

⁵⁵⁵ MN Ancona, 123. Dunbabin 2003a: 77, fig. 39.

⁵⁵⁶ The Este altar: MN Atestino, IG 1547. Fogolari 1956: 39-50. Dunbabin 2003a: 75, fig. 37. Martial and Pliny the elder both refer to *stibadia*, but in the context of an outdoor meal. There is no architectural evidence of *stibadia* being used for domestic dining until the end of the second century see Dunbabin 1991: 131-2.

⁵⁵⁷ Now preserved in the church of S. Stefano, Pizzoli. Giuliano 1963-4: 33, Dunbabin 2003a: 80, fig. 40.

⁵⁵⁸ Kanzler 1903: 177, tav. vi.

⁵⁵⁹ Jastrzębowska 1979: *passim*.

⁵⁶⁰ Dunbabin 2003a: 194.

containing fewer than five participants are removed (i.e. those dominated by familial groups) then there is a bias of 1:2 in favour of odd numbers of participants (see Table 2). I believe that the appeal of odd numbers for banquets is due to the importance of the positions of the diners around the *stibadium*. Philostratus the Younger (*Imagines* 396K) describes a painting of an outdoor *stibadium* meal in which it is explicitly stated that the guest of honour is seated in the middle of the five participants. That it is a *stibadium* meal is most likely given the reference in the description to, “the other wing of the company” and the early to mid-third century date.

Engemann has discussed the relevant positions of the participating diners and concluded that in the earliest use of the *stibadium* the *cornus dexter* was reserved for the host and the centre of the *stibadium* was the place of honour: a conclusion followed by Dunbabin.⁵⁶¹ It was only later, perhaps as early as c. AD 330, that the *cornus dexter* became the place of honour mentioned by Juvenius (3.614-21),⁵⁶² though as Engemann highlighted, the place of honour at the centre of the *stibadium* continued well into the fourth century and possibly beyond.⁵⁶³ Only towards the end of antiquity was the place of honour confirmed as the *cornus dexter* as mentioned by Sidonius Apollinarius (*Sid. Ep.* 1.11.10-16) in the mid fifth century AD and may be seen on Christian depictions of the Last Supper e.g. a sixth century mosaic from S. Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna (figure 115). Why this evolution took place is unclear and outside the scope of this work, but although the iconography of the place of honour changed over the years at the time of the Aurelii, the first half of the third century AD, the place of honour was in the middle, with the host *in cornu dextro* i.e. on the far left as seen by the viewer.

⁵⁶¹ Engemann 1982: 249. Dunbabin 1991: 135-6.

⁵⁶² “*Si vos quisque vocat cenae convivium ponens |⁶¹⁵ cornibus in summis devitet ponere membra | quisque sapit. Veniet forsitan si nobilis alter, | turpiter eximio cogetur cedere cornu*” [If someone prepares a banquet and invites you to dinner, he is wise who avoids placing himself on the *cornus summa* lest another illustrious guest arrives. Disgracefully one may be obliged to cede the *cornus*. Trans. author].

⁵⁶³ Engemann 1982: 241-6.

This is significant because with an even number of participants there could be no middle figure and consequently no place of honour. The banqueting image in *cubiculum* A appears to show the participants in a scene with no obvious display of hierarchy.⁵⁶⁴ The only indication of preferment is that displayed by the central servant figure shown raising a toast to the host: the figure *in cornu dextro*.

A connection appears to exist between an even number of diners and dining related to *collegia* as may be seen in three examples from the Greek east. The first, a stele from Panormos near Cyzicus, dating to the 1st century BC and now in the British Museum, shows a meeting of an association with six diners entertained at a banquet by musicians.⁵⁶⁵ A second stele, dating even earlier, to 119 or 104BC from Triglia, Bithynia is dedicated to a priestess of Apollo and Cybele and shows a similar scene of dining and entertainment – this time with ten diners.⁵⁶⁶ Contemporary with this latter stele comes an inscription from Delos with a consular date of 113 BC.⁵⁶⁷ This inscription has twelve names, six freeborn, six *liberti*, who are described as *magistri* of a group dedicated to Mercury, Apollo, Neptune and Hercules.⁵⁶⁸

Although such groups are less evident in the west they are not unknown. In Italy, in the town of Minturnae, Latium, a temple was constructed in the reigns of either Augustus or Tiberius.⁵⁶⁹ Its construction entailed the re-use of a total of twenty nine slabs that each recorded groups of eleven or twelve persons, in four groups of three described as *magistri*, one of which has a consular date of 65 BC (see Table 3, page 174). There was also evidence of burning on the stele which probably explains the reason for their production ceasing and their subsequent re-use.⁵⁷⁰ Where there were fewer than twelve names a space was left which would have enabled another name to be added. Groups appear to be composed of socially disparate individuals,

⁵⁶⁴ On the ideal of equality of the *convivium* see: D'Arms, J. 1990.

⁵⁶⁵ British Museum, BM 1890, 0730.1. Harland 2003: 56, fig. 7. Nielsen 2014: 274, pl. 61.

⁵⁶⁶ Athens EM 919. Pfuhl and Möbius 1977-9: vol. 2, pl. 332. Harland 2003: 58, fig. 8. Nielsen 2014: 274, pl. 62.

⁵⁶⁷ *CIL* I², 2504 = *AE* 1910, 0010 = EDCS-24700009.

⁵⁶⁸ The freeborn all have roman *trinomina* whereas the *liberti* have only their patron's *praenomen* and *nomen* together with libertination marker, but no *cognomen*.

⁵⁶⁹ Johnson 1933: 1-4.

⁵⁷⁰ Johnson 1933: 120-3.

freeborn, freed and slave. Professions are not stated, with one exception,⁵⁷¹ but there are a number of individuals who are denoted as being *socii* of the *salinatores* (salt merchants, 4 No.) or *picarii* (pitch merchants 5 No.). In addition to the social variations each group contains either all women or all men except in one instance where two female slaves are grouped with ten freedmen and slaves.⁵⁷²

An inscription found near the Porta Praenestina in Rome, probably dating to the late republic or early empire, refers to two *liberti* who bought a group of cinerary jars in a *sepulcrum* from twelve *socii* for themselves and their dependents.⁵⁷³ While a later inscription found at Tusculum, from the beginning of the second century AD, links a group of twelve with a *collegium*.⁵⁷⁴ The inscription records the career of the freedman T. Flavius Hilario culminating in the position of *iudex* (sic) for twelve members elected *ab ordine* of a *collegium fabrum tignariorum*. What his duties were, or those of the *electi*, is not evident from the inscription, but Hilario's position was evidently an important one as the post was the last in a distinguished career.⁵⁷⁵ Another inscription, this time from Rome and dating to the third century AD, records a T. Flavius Heraclidus as being a member of another group of twelve.⁵⁷⁶ No *collegium* is cited, but there is a reference to *emptores* who may have constituted a *collegium* or have been a sub-group within a *collegium*. In this instance his position in the group

⁵⁷¹ A *mentor* identified in *CIL* I², 2702 = EDR073259.

⁵⁷² *CIL* I², 2683 = EDR073261.

⁵⁷³ *CIL* VI, 6150 = *ILS* 7896 = EDCS-19000166: M(arcus) Antonius M(arcus) I(ibertus) | Philomusus | Pompeia Cn(aei) I(iberta) Zosima | sibi et suis ollaru(m) | decem sepulc(h)rum | partem tertiam dec<i=u> | mam emit ab soci{e}is | XII. Liebenam 1890: 195

⁵⁷⁴ *CIL* XIV, 2630. T(ito) Flavio T(itus) lib(ertus) Hilarioni | Decur(io) coll(egi) fabr(um) tignariorum) ex lustro XV (AD 64) | nungento ad subfrag(ia) lustro XVI (AD 69-73) | mag(ister) quinqu(uennalis) coll(egi) fabr(um) tignarior(um) |⁵ lustro XVII (AD 74-78) | honorat(us) ex lustro XIIX (AD 79) | censor bis ad mag(istros) creando(s) lust(ris) XIX et XX (AD 84-93) | iudex{s} inter elect(os) XII ab ordine lust(ro) XXII (AD 99-103) | Claudia Ti(berii) f(ilia) Prisca viro optimo |¹⁰ et Flavia T(iti) f(ilia) Priscilla patri optimo. Meiggs 1973: 319 believes that Hilario was a member of the Ostian *collegium fabrum tignariorum*, however, Royden argues with conviction that he was based in Rome. Royden 1988: 130-1, 228 nr 183

⁵⁷⁵ Royden 1988: 130-1 suggests that they were chosen to settle internal disputes within the *collegium* in a manner akin to the *iudex selectus* chosen by (republican) praetors or the emperor. For a discussion of the role of the *iudex selectus* see Staveley 1953.

⁵⁷⁶ *CIL* VI, 18079 = EDR 032581 = EDCS-10200274. Vat. Mus. Lap. 7.61 = 8624 [T(itus) Fl(avius) Hera]clida senior, qui fuit |[inter empt]ores XII loco VII is qui fuerunt |[soci eiu]s monumenti s(upra) s(cripti) in titulo maio | [re ita u]t s(upra) s(cripti) s(unt) eis donaverunt singula loca qui |⁵ fuerunt infra scripti |[Fl(avius) Hera]clida iunior emptoris f(ilius) |[eius, qui e]xuperaver(at) de titulo maiore, mon<u=i>men[tum] |[dila]psum ex vetustate refecit cum maceris |[et refugi]um fecit et si{i} qua alia intra eum mon<u=i>men[tum] fecit] |¹⁰ [pa]riter Fl(avia) Flaviane Heraclides em(p)toris [filia].

is simply described as being 'in the seventh place', but what that signified is not mentioned.

In light of the above there is evidence that within, at least some, *collegia* there were groups of twelve individuals. Although large groups of even numbers, when brought together for dining, seem to lack the more usual hierarchy of a guest of honour that would be usual in smaller, odd numbers of diners, the memorial to T. Flavius Heraclidus Senior indicates that each member within that group of twelve could have a specific place allocated to them. Given the repetition of groups of twelve in both subterranean *cubicula* of the hypogeum of the Aurelii then this is clearly of significance to an understanding of the monument. The dining group that is celebrated in *cubiculum A* is not arbitrary, but part of the formal structure of the body to which the Aurelii belonged. There is no indication that this body may be a *familia* nor, as discussed above in respect of the inscription (Chapter 3, section 3.4), is a family of blood-relations very likely. The only other collective organisation that would match the available evidence is that of the *collegium*.

8.3 Banquet Scene and Small Procession.

I now wish to examine other aspects of the banquet scene beginning with the question as to whether or not the scene is real or imagined. As previously noted portrayals of banquets in funerary contexts are not unusual.⁵⁷⁷ In the case of the hypogeum of the Aurelii Galvao-Sobrinho is the latest to discuss a graffito found underneath the 'Homeric' scene, now badly degraded, that mentions a *refrigerium*.⁵⁷⁸ There is, however, nothing to connect this graffito, which is a late addition, to the original decorative scheme.⁵⁷⁹ A more promising line of inquiry will be in reading the Banquet Scene in the wider context of the original decoration.

⁵⁷⁷ Ghedini 1990: 36 on the occasions when meals were taken in honour of the dead including a comprehensive list of primary references to the *silicernium*, *novemdiale*, *parentalia* and the deceased's *dies natalis*.

⁵⁷⁸ Galvao-Sobrinho 2012: 138. *ICUR* n.s. 6.15933: Re[m]meus Celerinus | Kal(endis) Iunis refrig[e]rum | [---] moum hono[---].

⁵⁷⁹ Giovagnoli 2011: 230-1.

There is a female element seen in the banquet. The female figure does not form part of the banquet itself, but is closely associated with one of the diners, the third from the left, by holding her right arm out towards him (figures 82a-b). If the female represents the deceased, Aurelia Prima, then it is legitimate to ask whether the banquet represented is in fact real or imagined. Lazzara maintains that the image is of Aurelia Prima in attendance on a, "*banchetto celeste*".⁵⁸⁰ This theory is based upon perceived similarities with the image in the catacomb of Vibia, which is clearly in the realm beyond the grave.⁵⁸¹ The comparison between the two, however, is not clear-cut. In the case of Vibia Mercury Psychopompus is seen presenting the deceased woman Vibia to Dis Pater and Persephone therefore the scene is clearly not of this world (figure 116), while another scene shows Vibia, this time accompanied by an *angelus bonus*, being led towards a *stibadium* banquet containing six diners (figure 117). Finally, Vibia is depicted sitting down amongst the diners. The banquet for Vibia is similar to private banquets depicted in Pompeii e.g. the banquet scene in the House of the Chaste Lovers.⁵⁸² In private Roman dinner parties women as well as men could take part, both in the real world of Pompeii and the *banchetto celeste* of Vibia. This is very different to that depicted in the banquet of the Aurelii where the woman is shown as being associated with at least one of the diners, but is not taking part in the *convivium* itself.

Unlike the catacomb of Vibia, there is no pictorial reference to an afterlife in the Aurelii banquet scene. Nor is there any indication that this picture is part of a storyline that might suggest that this is the case.⁵⁸³ Bisconti addressed this problem in his 2000 work on occupations represented in the catacombs.⁵⁸⁴ In his review of banquet images in the corpus of catacomb frescoes Bisconti posited a syncretism of the real and the unreal in the case of the Aurelii image. This idea arose out of evidence that suggests that, while earlier banqueting scenes recalled actual funerary

⁵⁸⁰ Lazzara 2011: 166.

⁵⁸¹ For a detailed analysis of the modern excavation of the catacomb of Vibia see Ferrua 1971 and 1973.

⁵⁸² Roberts 2013: 242, fig. 293.

⁵⁸³ Poe 2007: 163, drawing on Jastrzębowska 1979: 66-7, states that the explicit labels in the catacomb of Vibia are necessary, "to recast an ordinarily terrestrial image into otherworldly terms."

⁵⁸⁴ Bisconti 2000: 81-9 esp. 84.

meals, such as those carried out at the *silicernium* or *Rosalia* festival, later depictions carry a more supernatural understanding such as the images found in the catacomb of Vibia, dated to the second half of the fourth century, and depicting the deceased being led by the Mercury Psychopompus.⁵⁸⁵

There is a similar scene in a fragmentary, fourth century mosaic from a large room in a house in Carthage where a woman is shown between two of the (male) diners yet is neither a servant, nor one of the entertainers (figure 118).⁵⁸⁶ Given this similarity I suggest that there is no reason to suspect anything supernatural about the Banquet scene nor the adjacent Small Procession of eleven figures. Very little has been written about the Small Procession, yet, as mentioned above (Chapter 5, section 5.4.15) there are clear similarities with this, the '*adventus*' and Banquet scenes. In each case figures wear tunics and *pallia* of various colours strongly suggestive that they represent the same group or class of people. Drawing comparisons with other funerary decoration Poe came to the conclusion that, "Garments in a range of hues characterize the blessed ..." (i.e. deceased).⁵⁸⁷ There is, however, no reason to equate coloured tunics or *pallia* with a depiction of the afterlife. Evidence from Pompeii shows everyday scenes depicted with individuals wearing differently coloured clothing.⁵⁸⁸ Indeed, if anything, the use of coloured clothing indicates a mundane context. Clement of Alexandria's polemic against the wearing of coloured clothing suggests that coloured clothing was the norm (Clement of Alexandria *Paed* II, 11). Literary references on the colour of clothing mention that white is used for a variety of special occasions the corollary to which is that coloured costumes are to be expected in the everyday.⁵⁸⁹ The prevalence of such imagery i.e. white tunic and *pallium*, is solely because the majority of extant paintings are from

⁵⁸⁵ On the date of the catacomb of Vibia see esp. Ferrua 1971: 60.

⁵⁸⁶ Blanck 1981: 329, taf. 1405,1.

⁵⁸⁷ Poe 2007: 156-8. Poe's comparanda include the tomb of Octavia Paulina and the *columbarium* on the Via Portuense, Rome (now in the MNR Terme).

⁵⁸⁸ E.g. a market scene from the Praedia of Iulia Felix. MAN Naples 9062. Roberts 2013: 50, fig. 35.

⁵⁸⁹ In addition to the well known donning of the *toga candida* during election campaigns Aulus Gellius 3.4.1 records that Scipio Africanus wore white while under accusation; Tac. *Hist.* 2.89 records the wearing of white by *primi pili* and Herodian 8.7.2 records that delegates from Italian cities to Pupienus Maximus at Aquileia wore white after the fall of Maximinus Thrax in AD 238. Bennett 2006: 99.

Christian funerary contexts. In our case the scenes do not require an explanation set in spiritual afterlife. The position of the two adjacent paintings, Banquet and Small Procession, links them together as does the multi-coloured costume, but the discrepancy in the number of figures within the Small Procession i.e. eleven requires an explanation. Given the popularity of groups of twelve in *cubicula* A and B I suggest that the reading ought to be as follows:

1. The banquet shows the twelve diners as they had been in real life with the woman attendant upon one of the male deceased. Their relationship is clearly close, but, as a woman, she cannot join the collegiate *convivium* per se. The scene forms a link between the person commemorated on the rear wall and Aurelia Prima in the right hand niche.
2. The Small Procession, closely associated as it is with the Banquet Scene, indicates the remaining members of the dining group after the demise of one of their number.

8.4 Large Procession.

Since the discovery of the hypogeum of the Aurelii the eleven figures of the Large Procession, described in detail in Chapter 5, section 5.4.8, have attracted a great deal of attention. In large measure this is because they form the largest single decorative schema in the whole monument and because the figures are well executed and some are very well preserved. As noted elsewhere (Chapter 1, section 1.5.1) the figures were originally thought to be the twelve apostles, one having been lost when the portal was built for the hypogeum's extension, but in fact there were only ever eleven. As mentioned above (Chapter 2, section 2.2) traces of an *arcosolium* that was destroyed when the portal was built are evident in Bisconti's 2011 publication (figure 70b): the red outlining to the *arcosolium* is seen adjacent to the consolidation work.⁵⁹⁰

⁵⁹⁰ Bisconti 2011a: tav. 33.

The figures are all male, as in the Banquet and the Small Procession, the principal difference between Small and Large Procession is that the latter figures are dressed in white. The wearing of white, as noted above, separates the figures from the everyday. The similarity between them though is that both groups of figures have bare feet. Servants are not infrequently unshod as depicted in the Banquet scene (figures 82a-b), but their masters go unshod for religious reasons including rites associated with the dead. Ovid mentions feet being unshod during the feast of Lemuria, when spirits are being exorcised in the house (Ovid *Fasti* 5.432) and Suetonius records that Equestrians bearing the ashes of Augustus to his mausoleum went barefoot (Suet. *Aug.* 100).⁵⁹¹ The best known example of a portrait figure depicted clothed, but barefoot, is the Prima Porta statue of Augustus. It has been suggested that bare feet represent deification.⁵⁹² There are, however, other images of cuirassed figures without footwear, e.g. the figure in the Ravenna relief variously identified as Marcus Agrippa,⁵⁹³ Mark Antony,⁵⁹⁴ Drusus, father of Claudius⁵⁹⁵ or Cn. Domitius Ahenobarbus, father of the emperor Nero⁵⁹⁶ (figure 119) none of whom were deified, but all of whom were deceased at the probable time of the relief's construction.⁵⁹⁷ Pollini's investigation into Augustan funerary reliefs concluded that such high status examples of barefoot statuary were examples of the 'heroisation' of their subjects in the Hellenic tradition.⁵⁹⁸ It is unlikely that such lower status (and civilian) figures as those in *cubiculum* A could be accurately described as 'heroised' in quite the same way as members of the Julio-Claudian dynasty, but the fact that the figures in both processions are fully clothed, yet barefoot, marks them out as having a special status. In the case of the Small Procession the figures represent those

⁵⁹¹ For an illustrative example of Roman religious rites with barefoot attendants see the procession of *lar* carriers depicted on the Cancellaria relief Ryberg 1955: 76, pl. XXIV, fig. 37c.

⁵⁹² Goldman 1994: 105.

⁵⁹³ Vermeule 1959-60: 19, D5. Bovini 2008: 131.

⁵⁹⁴ Information board, MN Ravenna, October 2012.

⁵⁹⁵ Ryberg 1955: 92. Brilliant 1963: 61. Kleiner 1992: 146.

⁵⁹⁶ Pollini 1981: 139.

⁵⁹⁷ MN Ravenna, 5. The relief is generally thought to date to around AD 43 on the occasion of the visit to Ravenna by the emperor Claudius on his return from Britain. An over life-size statue of a Julio-Claudian general without footwear is now in the Vat. Mus. Gregorio Profano, 9948. Giuliano 1957: 26-7, cat. 29, tav. 17. Unfortunately, it is lacking its head and therefore cannot be identified more precisely.

⁵⁹⁸ Pollini 1978: 42.

remaining members of the banqueting group engaged in some part of the burial obsequies or paying honour to the deceased. Those in the Large Procession represent the world of the deceased.

The Upper Register therefore predominately contains idealised visions of life as it was or may have been, but is mixed with elements of the supernatural i.e. the youth in the *adventus* scene wears white and is barefoot, like the figures in the Large Procession, signifying that he is deceased yet commemorated among the living. The figure adjacent to the female figure in the Banquet scene wears white as do two of the male figures in the *hortus conclusus* scene (figures 81b and 82a-b). The eleven members of the Small Procession represent the twelve diners less the deceased adult male who has joined a new group in the Large Procession. The youth and the female, who were not part of the banqueting group are commemorated separately.

The division of the tomb's wall decoration into separate registers is unusual, but not unprecedented. The late first century AD tomb of Patron is similarly divided with a larger register featuring a paradisaical landscape of trees and birds (figure 120).⁵⁹⁹ Above this, in a narrower band, is a funerary procession of the widow accompanied by surviving members of the *familia* (all helpfully labelled) moving away from the deceased who heads in the opposite direction. Similarly in *cubiculum* A the primarily real-world of the Upper Register is in contrast with the supernatural element that predominates in the Lower Register. In the hypogeum of the Aurelii Patron's paradise is replaced by eleven palliate figures who are joined by a twelfth, the deceased, lying in an *arcosolium* that was subsequently destroyed when the hypogeum was expanded.

The deceased adult male (the only one of the three in the whole *cubiculum*) has left one group of twelve to make up the number of another group of twelve. That the deceased was of some lasting importance may explain why, when the portal was built, a replacement new *arcosolium* was constructed that damaged figures 3 and 4

⁵⁹⁹ Feraudi-Gruénais 2001: 102-3, K45. Martinez 1998: 85-95. Patron's desire to spend his afterlife in a realm of trees and birds is articulated in an inscription, in two fragments, found in the tomb. The surviving (processional) part of the fresco is now in the Louvre Museum inv. P37. The inscriptions are also in the Louvre: Ma 4247-8.

(figures 70c-d). Although now impossible to prove it is quite probable that the new *arcosolium* was prepared to take the remains disturbed by the insertion of the portal. It is clear that although the lifespan of the hypogeum was comparatively short, around 30-60 years, there were pressures to accommodate more bodies even before the commencement of the *cubiculum*'s extension. Despite this, no *loculi* were cut into the decorated plaster nor was the dedicatory inscription disturbed suggesting that the decorative scheme and the people they represented remained important to the later users of the tomb.⁶⁰⁰

8.5 Discussion.

We saw in the examples above (Chapter 4) that *liberti*, like *ingenui*, when commemorated individually or as part of a *familia* were depicted in an individualistic manner e.g. with spouses, children or *patroni* (the manner in which this is done will be explored further below, Chapter 9, Section 9.2.2). There is evidence, however, when commemorated in a collegial context then that commemoration is more generic e.g. Mausoleum X beneath S. Sebastiano.⁶⁰¹ The military imagery of the vault medallion in Mausoleum X, with its positional similarity to the manumission scene in *cubiculum* B, suggests a *collegium* associated with praetorians known to be stationed nearby as do the multiple *stibadia* in the mausoleum's attic.⁶⁰² In the case of the hypogeum of the Aurelii the depiction of banqueting with groups of twelve diners is

⁶⁰⁰ This point is discussed by Poe 2007: 41-4. The only *loculi* are those cut into the undecorated dado of the rear wall. Within the floor of *cubiculum* A an additional burial was inserted (see Bisconti 2011a: tav. 3a, my figure 13) next to the right hand *arcosolium* which was itself deepened to receive more burials (Bendinelli 1922: 316, fn1). The mosaic panel was edged by tiling suggesting: either, that the beaten earth floor on either side was part of the original scheme or, an original floor had been neatly removed to provide space for *fossae* without damaging the dedicatory inscription. As the other *cubicula* had proper flooring (albeit tiling) and given the elaborate nature of *cubiculum* A's decoration the latter possibility seems more likely, as Bendinelli concluded (Bendinelli 1922: 320). Poe also contrasts the "haphazard" nature of the secondary *arcosolium* and *loculi* with the neatness of the mosaic's framing. However, as all building operations in the hypogeum were brought to an abrupt halt by the construction of Rome's walls this may signify nothing more than hurried or incomplete work.

⁶⁰¹ Jastrębowska 1981: 53-55. Borg 2013: 264.

⁶⁰² Jastrębowska 1981: 54 rightly, in the author's opinion, rejects any connection with the story of the Gaderene swine an interpretation repeated by Pergola 1997: 181 and Bisconti 2010: 35. Borg: 2013: 153. Fiocchi Nicolai et al. 2009: fig. 125. On the military presence in and around S. Sebastiano see Latteri 2002.

unusual yet we know from epigraphic evidence that groups of twelve existed in a collegiate context, which strongly suggests that the hypogeum of the Aurelii must be viewed in the light of this evidence. Parallels between the groups of twelve in *cubiculum* B and the banquet image in *cubiculum* A, together with the appearance of male figures with *festuca* in both *cubicula* A and B, demonstrate that the meaning they display in *cubiculum* B is echoed in A, which we know contained the graves of freedmen and women. That is not to say that the figures depicted in the *cubiculum* B vault are those specifically commemorated in the floor mosaic of *cubiculum* A as has been suggested, by others (Chapter 7, section 7.1),⁶⁰³ the physical distance between them makes that proposition unlikely. It does mean, however, that the occupants of *cubicula* A and B belonged to the same class of persons. They were all *liberti* who celebrated what they had in common i.e. their social class and their group membership. To those who commissioned the paintings, religion was something that was left outside of the tomb; what was celebrated within it was the really significant event of their lives: their attainment of liberty and the acceptance within a *collegium* whose membership comprised both men and women and which had an emphasis on learning and literacy.

⁶⁰³ Proverbio 2011: 209 following Bisconti 2004b: 28.

Table 2: Numbers of Diners in Funerary Images.

No. of diners.	No. of examples.	% of total.	Even No.	Odd No.	Even %	Odd %
2	5	6%	5			
3	14	16%		14		
4	21	24%	21			
5	19	21%		19		
6	8	9%	8			
7	11	12%		11		
8	2	2%	2			
9	1	1%		1		
10	2	2%	2			
11	2	2%		2		
12	3	3%	3			
13		0%		-		
14	1	1%	1			
Total	89		42	47	47%	53%
≤4 diners	40		26	14	65%	35%
>4 diners	49		16	33	33%	67%

Table 3: Analysis of Minturnae Inscriptions.

C/L No.	EDR No.	Freeborn	Liberti	Slave	Uncertain	Male	Female	Uncertain	Total
I ² , 2678	130970		2	10		12			12
I ² , 2679	130971		2	2	8	12			12
I ² , 2680	130972		6		6		12		12
I ² , 2681	130973		6	6			12		12
I ² , 2682	130978		2	10		12			12
I ² , 2683 ⁶⁰⁴	073261		2	10		10	2		12
I ² , 2684	130986		2	10		12			12
I ² , 2685	073260	1	4	2	5		7	5	12
I ² , 2686	130979		5	6			11		11
I ² , 2687	073262		1	8	3	12			12
I ² , 2688	130976		10	2			12		12
I ² , 2689	073258			12		12			12
I ² , 2690	130974		1	11		12			12
I ² , 2691	073263		1	10		11			11
I ² , 2692	103988		1	11		12			12
I ² , 2693	130991		2	10		12			12
I ² , 2694	130975	5	1	5	1		12		12
I ² , 2695	130977		2	10		12			12
I ² , 2696	130980			12		12			12
I ² , 2697	130981			12		10	2		12
I ² , 2698	130982		1	11		12			12
I ² , 2699	130983		2	10		12			12
I ² , 2700	130984			12		12			12
I ² , 2701	130985			12		12			12
I ² , 2702	073259	2	2	7		11			11
I ² , 2703	130987		2	7	3	11		1	12
I ² , 2704	130989		4		7	11			11
I ² , 2705	130990		2	10		12			12
I ² , 2706	130992		1	11		12			12
Total		8	64	239	33	268	70	6	344

⁶⁰⁴ Includes a consular date of 65 BC.

Chapter 9. *Mulier bona vel mala?*

9.1 Introduction.

I now wish to discuss the decoration of the right hand niche (figure 84a-b) set into the east wall of *cubiculum* A (description Chapter 5, section 5.4.16). This area has not only attracted much attention in the past, but where solutions have been proposed none are wholly convincing and are subject to discoveries made during the course of restoration. Looking at the frescoes anew it becomes evident that in this instance Wilpert, who erred in many of his conclusions, was correct in this instance, albeit for different reasons. As elsewhere, before any re-interpretation can be proposed, existing theories need to be tested.

9.2 The ‘Homeric’ Scene.

9.2.1 Existing Interpretations.

Bandinelli was of the opinion that the Middle Register portrayed the story of Penelope working her loom while beset by suitors during the long absence of her husband Odysseus (*Ody.* 19.137-40).⁶⁰⁵ The three nude figures to the left of the loom were some of the suitors (the nude figures on the far left being then too imperfectly preserved to be properly recognised) and the male figure on the right was the mendicant Odysseus returned to Ithaca. There is nothing, however, in the scene that corresponds to the story of Odysseus’ return. Homer’s Odysseus does not plead with Penelope other than presenting an excuse to avoid revealing his true identity while not lying to his wife (*Ody.* 19.106-22). The exchange is done in a hall of the palace in the presence of the queen’s maidservants (*Ody.* 19.65; 97-100; 317-9) whereas there are none in the Aurelii fresco. Bandinelli may have been misled by reading the poorly preserved figures in the ‘cave’ (i.e. the area discoloured by the ingress of water on the left hand side of the lunette) as maidservants,⁶⁰⁶ but gave no reason for the apparent presence of the suitors during the conversation between Penelope and

⁶⁰⁵ Bandinelli 1922: 444-50.

⁶⁰⁶ Bandinelli 1922: 449.

Odysseus when Homer relates that the suitors had left the hall to rest (*Ody.* 18.427-8). Finally, during the conversation, Penelope tells of her ruse over weaving a shroud for her father, King Laertes, yet the loom is not present at the conversation. The loom is in her private apartments, not in the banqueting hall where the conversation takes place otherwise Penelope's ruse would have been discovered earlier. Indeed there is little, if anything, in this fresco that coincides with the return of Odysseus and the conversation with his wife as related by Homer.

Bandinelli makes a comparison with a painting in the *macellum* in Pompeii (figure 121).⁶⁰⁷ This Pompeian fresco, however, accurately reflects the scene related in the *Odyssey*: the hypogeum of the Aurelii scene does not. The Pompeian fresco shows Odysseus seated on a chair (*Ody.* 19.97-8), whereas the hypogeum of the Aurelii scene has 'Odysseus' reclining on the floor gesturing towards 'Penelope'. This does not accord with the conversation as set down by Homer. Furthermore, unlike the hypogeum of the Aurelii, the Pompeii version has a maidservant present, most likely Melantho or Eurynome, who is present throughout the dialogue. Finally, the Pompeian picture has no loom (because, as already mentioned, it is elsewhere in the palace) - the story of the weaving and unpicking of the shroud is adequately alluded to by the shuttle/distaff in Penelope's hand.

The description of the three nude male figures as suitors fails not only by their presence in a scene that does not call for them, but also by their nudity. The suitors are depicted nude in art, but only at the point in the story when they are in a life and death struggle with Odysseus and Telemachus i.e. when all participants in the fight are shown in heroic nudity.⁶⁰⁸

These difficulties were noted in 1945 by Charles Picard who proposed a different Homeric episode: that of the sorceress Circe. Yet this, too, suffers from

⁶⁰⁷ Bandinelli 1922: 447, fig. 65. "*Nessuna differenza intercede, ... tra le citate pitture pompeiane e il motivo del fregio al Viale Manzoni.*" [No difference separates the Pompeian pictures cited and the motif of the Viale Manzoni decoration.]

⁶⁰⁸ Latini 2011: 178, figs 8 and 9.

inconsistencies between fresco and myth.⁶⁰⁹ Picard linked the Upper Register with the Middle by interpreting the upper scene as an image of the sorceress with the companions of Odysseus already metamorphosed into animals and the middle scene with the three nude companions returned to their human form.⁶¹⁰ Thus the two women, one on the left in the Upper Register and the other in the centre of the Middle Register, are both Circe at different parts of the story. Again, however, there are problems with this interpretation when compared to the literary version of the myth. First Homer (*Ody.* 10.212) then Vergil (*Aen.* 7.15-18) and Ovid (*Met.* 14.255) describe Circe's palace as being surrounded by wild beasts i.e. lions, wolves etc. not the domesticated animals clearly shown in the fresco. Secondly, in the *Odyssey* (10.221-3) Circe is described as working a loom only at the outset of the encounter with Odysseus' companions i.e. before the feast at which she plies them with drugged food and drink, before their metamorphosis, before the triumph of Odysseus and the companions' safe return to human form. Only in the case of *skyphoi* from the fifth century BC sanctuary at Cabeirion near Thebes is there a loom associated with the Circe of the *Odyssey* (figure 122) and here the characters are clearly identifiable: Circe by inscription and Odysseus by his cap.⁶¹¹ Another problem exists in representing Odysseus as bare-headed. While this may have some credence in the story of the disguised, begging Odysseus (as the bare-headed Odysseus meeting Penelope in the Pompeii painting referred to above) it is inappropriate elsewhere. In Roman art Odysseus is always shown wearing a *pileus* when seen in conjunction with Circe.⁶¹²

Robert Turcan explained the quadrupeds of the Upper Register being different from those mentioned in the literary sources by noting that the range of

⁶⁰⁹ Picard 1945: 33-4. Swindler 1929: 402 had earlier suggested Odysseus and Circe as a possibility, but did not expand on the idea.

⁶¹⁰ Picard 1945: 35.

⁶¹¹ British Museum, 1893, 0303.1 and Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, G. 249. Latini 2011: 182, fn 47: these bizarre representations may relate to a satyr play by Aeschylus (the Ashmolean example shows, on the opposite side to Circe, a comical picture of Odysseus pursued by Boreas).

⁶¹² For Roman representations of Odysseus and Circe from the 1st C BC to the 3rd C AD see Touchefeu-Meynier 1968: 103-108, nrs 202-13 and *LIMC* vol. VI, 2: 24-31. The lack of *pileus* was a point made by Wilpert in a conversation with Bendinelli recorded Wilpert 1924: 2.

animals in artistic representation of the myth are less ferocious.⁶¹³ This is generally accurate, but in every instance the companions are depicted as half-man, half-beast. The representation of semi-metamorphosed humans immediately informs the viewer which myth is being presented; to do otherwise would not make it clear which figures represented the companions. The iconography is remarkably consistent through antiquity: from Archaic altars,⁶¹⁴ Classical *lekythoi* and *kylices*,⁶¹⁵ the Augustan *tabula odysseaca* “Rondanini”,⁶¹⁶ a third century AD north African plate fragment⁶¹⁷ to the fifth century *Vergilius Vaticanus*⁶¹⁸ i.e. those metamorphosed by Circe are shown as half-man, half-beast. The *cubiculum* A figures are neither semi-metamorphosed nor is the selection of animals of a kind that usually accompanies images of the story of Circe, either in literature or art. The selection is broader, but closer in kind to those depicted on the sarcophagus of Iulius Achilleus now in the Terme museum and dating to the latter half of the third century AD i.e. c. 50 years after the frescoes under discussion (figure 123).⁶¹⁹ Here, in addition to the human figures that shepherd the sheep, there are other domestic animals namely horses and cattle that populate the scene without the intervention or agency of humans.

Despite the difficulties of reconciling the Homeric myth with the frescoes a Homeric reading has been used, primarily by Carcopino⁶²⁰ and Chicoteau,⁶²¹ to validate a Gnostic origin for the tomb. Yet there is little evidence that the myth was important to Gnostic belief. When discussing the heresies of Simon Magus and Valentinus the early third century Christian writer Hippolytus (*Philosophumena* 6.15⁶²²) equates Moses’ turning sour water into sweet with Hermes’ prophylactic

⁶¹³ Turcan 1979: 166.

⁶¹⁴ Latini 2011: fig. 10.

⁶¹⁵ Latini 2011: figs 11-13.

⁶¹⁶ Warsaw National Museum, 147975. Mikocki 1999: III, 2. 23 no. 1, pl. 1.

⁶¹⁷ Museum de Djemila. Le Glay in *LIMC* VI,1: 60, fn 5 s.v. *Kirke* does not have an inventory number.

⁶¹⁸ The picture of Circe operating a loom in the *Vergilius Vaticanus* Codex 3225, folio 58r (de Wit 1959: pict. 39; taf. 22, 2; 35, 2) is an accurate representation of *Aen.* 7.10-20 and therefore not relevant to the Odysseus myth.

⁶¹⁹ *CIL* VI, 41286 = EDR073482. MNR Terme, 125802. The date on the information board at Terme gives a date c. 270, however, Evangelisti in *MNR Epigrafica*: 351-3 dates it somewhat later to the end of the third century as does Zanker and Ewald 2012: 167.

⁶²⁰ Carcopino 1956: 208-11.

⁶²¹ Chicoteau 1976: 51-6.

⁶²² Note: chapter references are from the 1921 translation for the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge by F. Legge other translations may have different chapter references.

against the magic of Circe. Hippolytus uses as metaphor a quotation from the *Odyssey*, but there is no explicit reference in Hippolytus' text either to the *Odyssey* or the source of the quotation. Hippolytus often uses metaphors and quotations from the Classical repertoire to illustrate his argument. In the sections relating to the heresies of the Naassene Gnostics (*Philosophumena* 5.6-10) Hippolytus includes various quotations to illustrate his argument from the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, Empedocles and possibly Anacreon and Parmenides without any suggestion that these have any religious significance in themselves to Gnostics or others.

In addition to Hippolytus his contemporary, Origen, refers to the sorceress in order to reject Celsus' accusation that Christians regard those supporting heresy as being akin to Circe (*contra Celsum* 5.63). The grounds for Celsus' accusation may be seen in the late second century writings of Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* VII, 16 (95)) who likened heretics to the wives of Circe.⁶²³ There is no evidence, however, that Origen or Clement, any more than Hippolytus, is using Circe as anything other than a metaphor, nor is there evidence that Gnostics themselves considered Circe to be of any significance in the formulation of their beliefs.

Picard cited Homer's description of Circe supplying the knowledge by which Odysseus entered the Underworld and returned to the land of the living (*Ody.* 10.503-40).⁶²⁴ Picard considered that this was the source of *gnosis*, but without evidence that Gnostics themselves considered this significant. Chicoteau augmented his original Gnostic thesis with an article in 1997 that interpreted the two buildings in the Upper Register as representing the two wells of Memory and Oblivion, the woman being the goddess Mnemosyne.⁶²⁵ The discovery of the two figures, seemingly on a catafalque, undermines this idea,⁶²⁶ but has not been accompanied by a serious review of the fresco's meaning. Latini interprets the use of Odysseus in the fresco as part of the increasing emphasis on the wisdom of Odysseus that

⁶²³ Chadwick 1965: 313 fn 6.

⁶²⁴ Picard 1945: 28.

⁶²⁵ Chicoteau 1997: 82-3.

⁶²⁶ Latini 2011: 186, fn 65 makes this point.

developed during the first two centuries of Empire.⁶²⁷ The discovery of the *prothesis* scene in the Upper Register, Latini adds, confirms the role played by Circe as Psychopompus to Odysseus.⁶²⁸ Yet there is no suggestion of Odysseus' journey to the Underworld in the fresco and thus a somewhat tenuous argument has arisen constructed thus: loom = Circe or Penelope = *Odyssey* = Gnostics because of Odysseus' journey to the Underworld and the *Odyssey* being quoted in early Christian writings on Gnostic heresy. This is an interpretation that has been repeated up to the present day: even when the Gnostic 'argument' for the monument as a whole has been seriously questioned.⁶²⁹

If the hypogeum of the Aurelii frescoes do not match the literary sources for the stories of Odysseus with Penelope or Circe, do they bear any relation to artistic representations of either? I noted above that there was a clear correlation between the meeting of Penelope and Odysseus as described by Homer and the fresco in the *macellum* of Pompeii. In all of the examples cited above, within the constraints of the medium, art reflects the literature: there may be modification or abbreviation, but there is no contradiction. Nowhere does the hero passively recline, in the *Odyssey* (10.321-4) and most illustrations, Odysseus, rendered immune from Circe's charms by Hermes' gift of the drug *moly*, threatens Circe with his sword while she pleads for her life. In each of the portrayals of the story the hero's courage and strength combines with the god-given immunity to achieve victory over the enchantress.⁶³⁰ Even in the grotesque representations on the Cabeirion *skyphoi* mentioned above the hero is shown armed (figure 122).

An argument has been put forward that the cult of Circe was important in the Severan period because of an inscription that records the restoration of an altar to Circe by Caracalla.⁶³¹ This inscription, together with a bust found in the same area,

⁶²⁷ Latini 2011: 187.

⁶²⁸ Latini 2011: 189 "... il valore simbolico impersonato dalle figure di Ulisse e di Circe, quest'ultima anche in veste di *psychopompós*." [the symbolic value personified in the figures of Odysseus and Circe, this last dressed in the clothes of the *Psychopompus* as well.]

⁶²⁹ Initially by Himmelmann 1975: 22-3 and Finney 1980; more recently Jastrzębowska 2013: 60.

⁶³⁰ *LIMC* vol. VI, 1: 52-60. Touchefeu-Meynier 1968: 87-108, nos. 172-213.

⁶³¹ Latini 2011: 187-8. *CIL X*, 6422.

relates to a shrine in Circeo close to a promontory in Latium long associated with Circe and the founding mythology of the Latins (Hes. *Theog.* 1011-16).⁶³² There is no known link between this and any cultic activity in the city of Rome to which the Aurelii may have belonged. Nor has any commentator brought forward evidence that the sorceress was the object of any form of veneration outside Circeo. The connection has been made solely on the premise that the hypogeum of the Aurelii contains an image of Circe and there is a broadly contemporary find related to Circe approximately 85km from Rome. An argument has therefore taken shape: the hypogeum of the Aurelii fresco depicts Circe in part because a cult centre belonging to Circe exists elsewhere in Latium at approximately the same time. If, on the other hand, the woman standing next to the loom is not Circe then there is no reason why these two sites should be connected.

While most attention has focussed on the Middle Register (with or without any connection to the scene above it) less attention has been given to the Upper Register. In part this is because at the time of discovery damage caused by water ingress on the left side of the picture obscured detail. However, the new evidence revealed by the restoration requires a reassessment.

Gian Luca Grassigli,⁶³³ also writing before restoration, having agreed with Picard et al. that the Middle Register is Odysseus and Circe, describes the Upper Register as representing the realm of the *fundus*, the villa estate to which a *dominus* could retire to pursue philosophical interests: an idea that was not revised in Grassigli's post-restoration publication.⁶³⁴ There are a number of difficulties with this theory. First, there is no suggestion within the Upper Register of philosophical pursuits, even allowing for the pre-restoration state of the fresco at the time of Grassigli's original article. Second, the image is not of a *villa rustica*, but rather an urban or suburban landscape with a collection of multi-storey buildings in the

⁶³² MNR Terme, 108914. de Lachenal in *MNR Le Sculture*: I,1,96, nr 74.

⁶³³ Grassigli 2002: 414.

⁶³⁴ Grassigli 2011: 82-4.

background that stretches between the two smaller foreground buildings, one of which in all probability is the monument itself.

Grassigli's argument is based upon the concept of *otium* and the retirement to the seclusion of the *villa rustica* by the highest echelons of society i.e. the Senatorial or Equestrian class. It is not evident that this well-represented concept applied to those among the lower strata of society such as the freedmen class to which the Aurelii belonged, even when such freedmen were prosperous. Finally, a similar landscape to that depicted in the 'Homeric' scene, an extramural scene of small sepulchres distributed amongst a landscape dotted with trees, is seen on the Avezzano relief (figure 124). Now in the Museo Lapidario Marsicano, Avezzano and dating from the second half of the first century AD, the relief shows a small town on the shores of the Fucine Lake, probably Marruvium.⁶³⁵ The relief is one of a number of fragments that commemorate the draining of the Fucine Lake, it shows boats upon the lake and figures constructing the drainage canals. In other words, it is a realistic portrayal within the artistic framework of Roman landscape depiction, of the event it is commemorating.

Bisconti, in an article published in 2004, before the completion of the restoration, attributed the Upper and Middle Registers to a synthesis of the two episodes in the *Odyssey*: the adventure with Circe and the return to Ithaca.⁶³⁶ Later, in 2010, with the benefit of the restoration, Bisconti linked the Middle Register scene even closer with Circe to the extent of seeing images of smoke and flames, wolves and lions which I do not believe to be credible.⁶³⁷ More believably Bisconti describes the scene in the Upper Register revealed by the restoration as an act of *prothesis* carried out by Aurelia Prima for Onesimus and Papirius.⁶³⁸ One can only say that it is

⁶³⁵ M Lapidario Marsicano, 67504. Campanelli 2003: 68-87, fig. 56.

⁶³⁶ Bisconti 2004b: 33-4.

⁶³⁷ Bisconti 2010: 32. "*La donna ... va sicuramente identificata con la maga ... incastonato nella boscaglia, da cui si sprigionano fumo e fiamme e intorno al quale si aggirano animali esotici e/o feroci, tra i quali lupi e leoni.*" [The woman is securely identified with the sorceress ... set within woodland from which spring smoke and flames and around which circle exotic and/or ferocious animals among which are wolves and lions.]

⁶³⁸ Bisconti 2010: 30.

possible, but unprovable that the deceased are Onesimus and Papirius. At the same time Bisconti saw the foreground buildings as the sepulchre and *villa rustica* of the Aurelii:⁶³⁹ parts of a *praedium Aureliorum* with a cityscape in the background. If the building on the left is the sepulchre then it is a representation of the hypogeum of the Aurelii itself. The fresco cannot represent some sepulchre for the Aurelii on a supposed rural family estate as the sepulchre was in fact built close to the Via Labicana approximately 750m from the Esquiline gate in the Servian wall. In an area on the Esquiline hill that had been used for burials for centuries.⁶⁴⁰ I submit that it is far more probable that the fresco represents the area around the hypogeum of the Aurelii itself situated outside the Servian walls of Rome: the site of numerous funerary monuments and gardens. The bucolic imagery of trees and domestic animals therefore represents the peace of the necropolis in an allegorical manner such as that seen in the sarcophagus to Iulius Achilleus mentioned earlier (figure 123) rather than a country estate. The *monumenta* built outside the walls of Rome were frequently furnished with small gardens that served as places for celebratory meals and shops that together with the produce from the *hortuculi* probably furnished a small income for the maintenance of the associated tombs.⁶⁴¹ Some had *stabula* and *meritoria* though it is unlikely that such *stabula* were literally animal pens,⁶⁴² but rather facilities for the use of celebrants who may have had to travel far.⁶⁴³ Such gardens would have created a bucolic landscape to which only the imagined domestic animals need be added.

Finally, Jastrzębowska, in her discussion of the importance of the ceremony of *manumissio vindicta* to the interpretation of the Aurelii frescoes, sees a connection between the power of the *virga* in that ceremony and the use of a wand by Circe.⁶⁴⁴ However, the argument of Circe's wand as metaphor for the granting of freedom (with or without further eschatological meaning) stumbles on the lack of wand in the

⁶³⁹ Bisconti 2010: 29-30.

⁶⁴⁰ Colini 1943: 268-279. Toynbee 1971: 43-4. In the area of Via Pr. Eugenio a number of graves were recorded by Pasqui (Pasqui 1911: 393-402) belonging to, among others, a *praeco a foro* (nr 20); a *medicus* (nr 24) and an imperial *dispensator a iumentis* (nr 27).

⁶⁴¹ On gardens in Roman necropoles see Gregori 1987/8.

⁶⁴² *CIL* VI, 15640; *CIL* X, 1450; *CIL* X, 3750.

⁶⁴³ On this point see Egelhaaf-Gaiser 2000: 363-4.

⁶⁴⁴ Jastrzębowska 2013: 60-1.

better quality post-restoration photographs as noted above (section 5.4.16.1) and the difficulties in ascribing these frescoes to the myth of Odysseus and Circe.

In summary, therefore, there appears to be no connection between the adventures of Odysseus and the 'Homeric' fresco of *cubiculum* A. It remains to put forward another theory that may more accurately reflect the evidence that we have before us.

9.2.2 What is a Portrait?

Whereas the previous two chapters have related the iconography to the group identities (libertine, collegiate) of the deceased the remainder of this thesis shall concentrate on interpreting the remaining frescoes in the context of individualistic commemoration. Identifying individuals, especially when those individuals are of differing ages and/or genders, can be useful in helping to understand the wider social environment to which they belonged. However, we have to address a matter that was touched upon earlier in relation to the vault medallion of *cubiculum* B (Chapter 7, Section 7.2) namely, does funerary decoration reflect in some way the individuals interred? If it does, how may such identification illuminate the society in which these individuals lived? Before interpreting the decoration further its typology requires consideration and two questions need to be answered: (1) does the decoration have a direct association with the deceased? and (2) does that decoration depict actual events and people or is the decoration symbolic?⁶⁴⁵

We are aided in the first question by the relatively undamaged state of *cubiculum* A. We are given the information that there are three named deceased and there were, at the tomb's inception, three burial places. It would be perverse to suggest that those in the inscription did not match those buried within each of the three original *arcosolia*. The decoration of the right hand (east) wall has three images of women: attendant on the banquet; in the top register of the right hand niche and

⁶⁴⁵ Nowicka 1993: 140-52. The term 'symbolic' is vague, but in this context means anything that is not a direct representation of reality, but nonetheless alludes to events or persons which may have or still existed at the time of the decoration's commission.

the middle register of the same. The image of the loom in particular is associated with females as I shall discuss shortly, but more to the point it is highly unlikely that such a feminine attribute would be applied to the grave of a male.⁶⁴⁶

In many cases decoration remains anonymous, but there are a number of examples (pre-dating and post-dating the hypogeum of the Aurelii) of decoration directly adjacent to a grave which is associated with named individuals. The first is in the first century AD hypogeum of Pomponius Hylas. There, either side of a burial niche (containing two *ollae*), in the spandrels are two figures: a man and a woman.⁶⁴⁷ The figures are identified by an inscription as a married couple whose final resting place this was.⁶⁴⁸ A closer association between deceased and adjacent funerary decoration is found in a early fourth century tomb in Sicily where the inscription also survives to allow context.⁶⁴⁹ The inscription above the *arcosolium*, advises that the deceased was a soldier, while adjacent to the *arcosolium* is the image of a helmeted individual armed with spear and shield. Where it can be identified, either by number and gender in the case of Nestor and Hedone, or by profession in the case of Maximianus, imagery is associated by proximity with the deceased. In the fourth century Regione della Scalone del 1897 in the catacomb of Domitilla the decoration, showing a variety of individuals in their role as *mensores frumentarii*, runs around an octagonal *cubiculum* in a register above the *arcosolia* in a manner similar to that of *cubiculum A*, but with a more uniform, and easily interpreted, schema.⁶⁵⁰ Although lacking an inscription the central figure, directly opposite the entrance, is larger and almost certainly relates to the individual buried beneath. In a similar position in Tomb G beneath the basilica of St Peter's on the via Cornelia is the image of a seated individual in purple tunic standing in front of a desk and attended by a diminutive

⁶⁴⁶ P. Ferrarius Hermes erected a funerary stele (Florence MAN 1914) in the first century AD to his deceased wife and son and decorated it with mirrors and toiletries and worktools side by side see Matthäus 1984: 91-2, abb. 15. *CIL* XI, 1471 = EDR079791.

⁶⁴⁷ Feraudi-Gruénais 2001: 99, abb. 98.

⁶⁴⁸ *CIL* VI, 5546 = EDR093672: Q(uintus) Granius Nestor fec(it) | sibi et Vinileiae Hedone | coniugi bene m(erenti).

⁶⁴⁹ Agnello 1969. D(is) M(anibus) Fl(avius) Maximianus | de n(umero) M[---] vi(xit) an(nos) XXI | Carinus frater pientissimu | s fecit (n.b. I have only found a record of this (painted) inscription in Pergola, at time of writing it does not appear in EDR, EDCS or *AE*).

⁶⁵⁰ Pergola 1990: 167-84; Borg 2013: 93-4.

figure holding a tablet.⁶⁵¹ This figure, part of the original decoration dating to the mid-2nd century AD, has been interpreted as a 'teacher' with pupil, but is more probably some form of administrator with assistant.⁶⁵² 'Real-life' depictions such as these are reasonably clear cut yet more allegorical or unrealistic scenes can also link dedicatee and decoration as in the tomb of Patron mentioned earlier (Chapter 8, Section 8.4).⁶⁵³ Had artist hired by Patron's heirs not included the names of the individuals in the upper register or had the inscriptions been lost the meaning of Patron's tomb decoration would have been almost as problematic as that of the Aurelii.

To answer the second point i.e. are the scenes of the Upper Register meant to be read as realistic portraits of the deceased? The evidence gathered by Maria Nowicka shows that in the majority of instances the painted portraits are placed within a *clipeus*, are busts and are large enough for individuals traits to be incorporated to the limit of the artist's skill.⁶⁵⁴ Such a portrait may be seen above the *aediculae* in the via Portuensis tomb (figure 87) and is very different to the images in the Upper Register of *cubiculum* A or the vault medallion in *cubiculum* B mentioned earlier (Chapter 7, Section 7.2) none of which could be considered to be a portrait i.e. a realistic portrayal of an individual's physiognomy. Nevertheless the highly detailed, unusual and individualistic nature of the decoration argues strongly for it being directly associated with the respective *arcosolia* and the persons buried within them although the small size and lack of *clipei* argue against the figures being individual likenesses.

9.2.3 Interpretation of Upper Register – *prothesis*?

Returning to the 'Homeric' scene the existence of the child's grave on the left hand (west) wall combined with the use of the word *virgo* in the mosaic inscription has led to a degree of confusion as both Poe and Borg considered them to belong to each

⁶⁵¹ Liverani and Spinola 2010: 89-92, fig. 50.

⁶⁵² Ward-Perkins 1956: 77, pl. 16; Mielsch and von Hesberg 1986/1995: abb. 132 and 138 illustrates the Liverani and Spinola 2011: 92.

⁶⁵³ Cf fn 599.

⁶⁵⁴ Nowicka 1993: 140-52.

other.⁶⁵⁵ The consequence of this misunderstanding is that Poe believed that Aurelia Prima was the six to nine year old daughter of a member of a *collegium* despite the fact that the decoration of the west wall has, as will be discussed in the next chapter, a markedly male emphasis. However, given the possibility that Aurelia Prima was an *adulta virgo* as discussed above (Chapter 3, section 3.2) then she may have been buried in the adult grave on the right hand (east) wall and thus be associated with that wall's female emphasis.

Within the Upper Register some form of rite is being performed in which a female figure is attendant upon two deceased.⁶⁵⁶ It is, in all probability, connected with Roman funerary practice, but it is not evident what part of the funerary rites is depicted. The initial placement of the body on the ground (*deposito*) and the washing of the body would not have taken place at the burial site, but at the place of death: in which case the building would need to represent the home of the deceased. However, the style and scale of the building appears much closer to the appearance of the funerary structure itself i.e. a fairly compact structure within a courtyard. Absence of other people rules out any part of the procession from the home to burial site.

It is perhaps unwise to read the image too literally: the image is likely to be a compendium of various stages of the funeral. What is important is the focus on the image of the woman in attendance on the dead. In this case the woman has her hair unbound as one might expect from one in mourning (Plut. *Mor.* 267 a) and is paralleled in the unbound hair of female mourners depicted on the Tomb of the Haterii (figure 125).⁶⁵⁷ Although Varro, writing in the first century BC considered that female mourners ought to wear veils and dark clothes (*de vita pop. Rom.* 105R) the fact that she wears a white costume accords with Plutarch's second century AD observation that women wear white when attending a funeral (*Mor.* 270 e-f,

⁶⁵⁵ Poe 2007: 121. Borg 2013: 112 and 252 cf fn 685 below.

⁶⁵⁶ On Roman funerary rites see Latte 1960: 101-3; Toynbee 1971: 43-8; Corbeill 2004: 90-9; Lennon 2013: 101-4.

⁶⁵⁷ Vat. Mus. Gregorio Profano, 9999.

cf Herodian 4.2.3).⁶⁵⁸ This image of *prothesis* is very different from that on the Tomb of the Haterii, but both reinforce the concept of women playing an important role in mourning the dead.⁶⁵⁹ Bisconti's interpretation of the scene as a rite of *prothesis* is reinforced by other literary references highlighting this importance.⁶⁶⁰ Valerius Maximus records that a daughter was given the duty of attending to her mother's funerary rites (Val. Max. 2. 6. 8). In the *Aeneid* Anna leads the preparation of her sister Dido's body for immolation (Virg. *Aen.* 4.683). While elsewhere in the epic the mother of Eurylaus (Virg. *Aen.* 9.486-9), as Eurylaus' closest female kin, claims the right to cleanse his body for burial and speaks of her role in weaving her son's funeral shroud. This reference to the two important roles undertaken by the virtuous woman, i.e. weaving and performing funerary rites, ought to be remembered in discussing the register below.

9.2.4 Interpretation of Middle Register – *lanificium*?

Wilpert,⁶⁶¹ rejecting Bendinelli's Homeric interpretation, proposed that the Middle Register image represented the clothing of the needy, *nudos vestire*, by Aurelia Prima deriving the phrase from a poem by Pope Damasus (r. 366-384; *Epigrammata Damasiana* No. 26) in memory of a bishop Leo.⁶⁶² Furthermore, he suggested that the clothed male figure was that of Aurelius Felicissimus, dedicator of the mosaic inscription.⁶⁶³ The idea was followed by Swindler and Mingazzini, but received no credence in the post-war years.⁶⁶⁴ Wilpert's hypothesis revolved around the importance of wool-working as a feminine virtue and in particular its relation to Christian charity: a hypothesis that lost favour when the 'Homeric' fresco became linked to arcane Gnostic practice.

The concept of *facere lanam*, however, was not exclusively Christian, but was a universal feminine virtue (Suet. *Aug.* 73), with a long history in literature and

⁶⁵⁸ Olson 2007: 106-7.

⁶⁵⁹ Corbeill 2004: 67-106, especially 68-70. Šterbenc Erker 2011: 44-8.

⁶⁶⁰ Bisconti 2010: 30, fig. 2.

⁶⁶¹ Wilpert 1924: 26-30.

⁶⁶² "haec mihi cura fuit nudos vestire petentes".

⁶⁶³ Wilpert 1924: 30.

⁶⁶⁴ Swindler 1929: 402. Mingazzini 1942-3: 359.

epigraphy that commemorates women. One inscription, dated to the Augustan era, is to a freeborn woman by the name of Murdia whose virtues include the making of wool.⁶⁶⁵ The freedwoman Alia Potestas is commemorated in a long epitaph dated to the first half of the first century AD and described as never putting down her wool without good reason.⁶⁶⁶ Similar sentiments are found in a later Hadrianic inscription to a woman whose status is not identified, but whose name may denote servile origin.⁶⁶⁷ Another, undated, inscription to a wife whose name is lost has her ease of wool-making listed among her accomplishments.⁶⁶⁸ In other examples the dedicatory inscription may not mention wool-making, but it is made explicit by accompanying decoration such as that seen in an inscription now in the Epigraphic Gallery of the Capitoline Museum and dated to the third century AD.⁶⁶⁹ It commemorates Severa Seleuciane and though there is no mention of wool-making in the inscription itself next to it is a picture of a loom and a shuttle (figure 126). Diligence in wool working as symbolic of ancient feminine virtue continued into the fourth century AD as shown in the poem dedicated by the Christian Ausonius (fl. 365-380) to his mother (*Parentalia* II.4):

*“morigerae uxoris virtus cui contigit omnis,
fama pudicitiae lanificaeque manus
coniugiique fides ...”*

“in you was found every virtue of a duteous wife,
chastity renowned, hands busy spinning wool,
true to your bridal vows ...”

Trans. author.

⁶⁶⁵ *CIL* VI, 10230 = *ILS* 8394 = EDR116599: ... quod | modestia, probitate, pudicitia, opsequio lanificio, diligentia, fide | par similisque ceteris probeis feminis fuit ... (vv27-29). Now in the Palazzo Rondanini, 136, Rome. Candilio and Bertinetti 2011: 147-9, nr 136.

⁶⁶⁶ *CIL* VI, 37965 = *AE* 1913, 0088 = *CLE* 1988 = EDR072588: ... | lana cui e manibus nun{c}quam sine caus{s}a recessit| (v. 16). Now in the MNR Terme, 58694. Evangelisti 2012 in *MNR Epigrafica*: 545-7.

⁶⁶⁷ *CIL* VI, 11602 = 34045 = *ILS* 8402 = *CLE* 0237 = EDR116689: Hic sita est Amydone Marci (uxor) optima et pulcherrima |lanifica, pia, pudica, frugi, casta, domiseda. Now in the Castello of Spizzichina outside Rome, but from near S. Lorenzo in Lucina, Rome.

⁶⁶⁸ *CIL* VI, 1527a-c = 37053 = EDR093344: Domestica bona pudiciae opsequi comitatis facilitatis lanificiis stud[i religionis] (v31). The fragment containing this line is now lost.

⁶⁶⁹ Cap. Mus. Epigraphic Gallery, NCE 2799. De Rossi 1857-61: *ICUR* I:21, nr 14 = *ILCV* 1, 645. Gordon 1958-65: nr 302, pl. 144c. Oliver 1979: 116. Velestino 2015: 62-5. Note Wilpert 1924: 29, fn 121 reference (De Rossi 1857-61: I, 21, 4) is incorrect.

and his pagan contemporary Q. Aurelius Symmachus (*Ep.* 6. 67):

1 “... *Interea, domina filia, honoratum me opimo lanificii tui monumento satis gaudeo; una quippe et amor in parentem tuum et industria matronalis inclaruit. 2. Sic priscae feminae vitam coulisse traduntur.*”

"... in the meantime, my mistress daughter, I am pleased you have honoured me with this luxurious example of your wool-working, indeed it has made clear both your affection for your father and your maternal diligence. 2. It is said that that the women of yesteryear spent their life thus."

Trans. author.

The universality of this metaphor of feminine industry has been mentioned by Latini and Bisconti.⁶⁷⁰ The former cites the use of the loom by all women in Homer: queen or slave. While Bisconti records a grave inscription from the catacomb of Domitilla that commemorates a six-year-old girl.⁶⁷¹ Next to the deceased's name is an image of a loom; given that the girl was too young to use a loom to weave cloth it is most likely that here the loom was included with the epitaph to denote her femininity.⁶⁷² Nevertheless, both scholars maintain a Homeric interpretation of the Middle Register when such a construction is not necessary. The two images of the Upper and Middle Registers complement each other adequately by portraying the deceased woman Aurelia Prima in roles consistent with traditional feminine virtues (i.e. attendance upon the deceased and making wool) as extolled in other memorials, epitaphs and literature, both Christian and pagan.

The explanation of the woman standing by the loom as a real woman in an idealised pose rather than a mythological or spiritual character informs our understanding of the male figures to either side. These too must represent or allude to real people in the sense that they represent those who have benefitted from the life of Aurelia Prima and her work. It may be that the semi-recumbent male to the right is the dedicator of the inscription and presumably the sponsor of the tomb's

⁶⁷⁰ Latini 2011: 175. Bisconti 2000: 138, 215-16, cat. IXa 1.1; IXa 2.1 - IXa 2,4.

⁶⁷¹ Bisconti 2000: 215, cat. IXa 1.1 = *ICUR* n.s. 3. 6918.

⁶⁷² For a wider discussion of the grave goods of female children and juveniles see Martin-Kilcher 2000: 63-77.

decoration Aurelius Felicissimus: it is impossible to tell and may be of little importance in understanding the tomb's decorative programme. What is of importance is that those on the left are nude and move towards the right while the figure to the right of the loom is clothed through the agency of the good woman Aurelia Prima.

The idea first proposed by Wilpert (that the scene represented *vestire nudos*) thus appears to be closer to the truth than has long been credited. Arguments between pagan and non-orthodox Christian theories have taken attention away from the inconsistencies in the 'Homeric' interpretation which I have reconsidered and found unsupportable. As described above the ability to clothe one's family was a feminine virtue in Christian and pagan society, whether a member of the imperial family or former slave.

9.2.5 Discussion.

The so-called 'Homeric Scene' is thus a misnomer. There are too many inconsistencies between the hypogeum of the Aurelii fresco with other depictions of Odysseus, Circe and Penelope, of whatever date and whatever medium, to make a Homeric connection tenable. The restoration discoveries have not only failed to provide any further substantiation for such a hypothesis, if anything they have undermined it. The 'Gnostic' interpretation relies upon two fundamental tenets: (1) that the image is Homeric; which it is not and (2) that Gnostics held the story of Odysseus in some form of special regard in their exegesis which, as explained above (section 9.2.1), they did not. Unusual though the images within the right hand niche are their interpretation ought not to be separated from the general nature of Roman funerary commemoration, especially in respect of women. It is the context of other funerary commemoration, and the value systems they reflect, that provides an insight into the world of the Aurelii. This context and these values allow an alternative explanation for the Upper and Middle Registers i.e. they pay homage to the customary virtues of the woman Aurelia Prima.

The images are not photographs of actual events taking place, but convey concepts within an artistic representation of realistic surroundings. The Upper

Register's portrayal of *prothesis* and the image of a sepulchre in the vicinity of Rome does not comply strictly with what we know of Roman funerary rites, but the image is nonetheless representative of that practice and the important part played in it by women. The animals in the Upper Register are all domesticated animals, certainly far from the sort of animals associated with Circe and described by the poets. They are however, redolent of bucolic imagery that would become more popular in the decoration of sarcophagi as the third century progressed. The Middle Register's *lanificium* is unusual in its depiction of the naked and the clothed, but it is not out of place in the celebration of feminine morality. Spiritual, philosophical or mythological interpretations are unnecessary: these images are a celebration of the virtues of the woman buried in the *arcosolium* below.

9.3 The Role of Women.

The presence of women among the groups of twelve and the commemoration of a woman in the right hand niche appear to argue against the tomb's use as a collegial monument given the male dominated world of the Roman *collegium*. Emily Hemelrijk has recently stated that women were “virtually absent” from occupational *collegia*.⁶⁷³ However, the evidence from *CIL* VI, 10350 that I discussed in relation to the hypogeum of the Aurelii inscription (Chapter 3, section 3.6) shows that women were involved in some capacity in *collegia*. Whatever restrictions there may have been in the holding of certain offices there were no legal prohibitions on women being members of *collegia*.⁶⁷⁴ From the twelve individuals identified, four were women including one, Suavettia Amaryllis who is described as a *curator*. Furthermore, this situation is not unique. It is seen in an inscription that was re-used in Mausoleum Y in the Piazzuola under the church of S. Sebastiano on the Via Appia.⁶⁷⁵ The inscription gives a list of members of a *collegium*: 24 individuals, nine

⁶⁷³ Hemelrijk 2015: 205. In this she concurs with Veyne 1997: 189-91 that women could not be part of a *collegium* due to the quasi socio-political offices that reflected wider political roles closed to women.

⁶⁷⁴ Becker 2016: 923-4.

⁶⁷⁵ *AE* 1977, 0095 = *Epigraphica* 5/6: nr 78 = EDR 076644 = EDCS-09300755 dated by Ferrua to the mid 3rd century AD: D(is) [M(anibus)] | nomina collegiariorum || Silvanus et Acilia | Eutyches et Iulia |⁵ Primus senior | Restutus et Marcia | Primus iunior | Felix et Chreste | Fortunius senior |¹⁰ Datus |

of whom are female. Six of the women identified are linked with males suggesting that they may be there by virtue of their husbands' status, but three have no obvious connection with a man and therefore may be among the *nomina collegiariorum* either as widows or in their own right. In the Classe inscription discussed above (Chapter 3, section 3.4) the secondary inscription, dated to the Tetrarchy, has six women listed amongst its members who have their own title i.e. *matres* while a further seven are listed after the men of the *ordo*. The significance of these titles is unclear, as Kloppenborg noted: those declared as *matres* and *patres* are not equivalent to *patrona* and *patronus*.⁶⁷⁶ In the case of the *collegium* of Aesculapius and Hygia at Lanuvium, whose membership list and rules are preserved on an inscription now in the Vatican,⁶⁷⁷ those described as *pater* and *mater* received the same as the *quinquennalis perpetuus*, but are mentioned after him. They are clearly of some importance though not preeminent. Furthermore, whereas there were only one *mater* and *pater* in the *collegium* of Aesculapius and Hygia, there were multiple *matres* in the Classe *collegium*. Evidently different *collegia* had different structures and terminologies, but in both women had a role of some significance. In some organisations, such as that in Classe, women of the *ordo* within the *collegium* were listed separately from the men: in others, notably where there was a higher percentage of women, the female names are mixed in with the male. This point is illustrated in an inscription dated AD 9 now in the Capitoline Museum (figures 127a-b).⁶⁷⁸ In this example there are two lists of twelve names: the first has three women interspersed with the men, in the second six men and six women alternate in a manner reminiscent of the *cubiculum B arcosolia*.

Fortunius iunior | Cyriacos | Turranus et Nice | Eufrosynus et Cornelia |¹⁵ Tertius | Onesiphorus | Iulia Zenon | Iulius Palladius Capito | Aurelia Primigenia |²⁰ Aurelia Exsuperantia | et ii qui ad nos perteneunt(!). The inscription, which is almost certainly pagan by virtue of the fragmentary D(is) M(anibus) top line, was re-used by a Christian to commemorate a *frater* (AE 1977, 0096 = Epigraphica 5/6: nr 79 = EDR 076644 = EDCS-33201176: Amantio innocenti qui vixit | annis p(lus) m(inus) XXII d(e)p(ositus) in p(ace) Kal(endis) Aug(ustis) | Sternicus fratri fecit || TE. This secondary inscription makes no allusion to a *collegium*, but if the mausoleum was still in collegiate hands at the later date it may be another example of the dedicator referring to his *collega* as a 'brother'.

⁶⁷⁶ Kloppenborg 1996: 24. For a more detailed discussion of the role of women as *patronae* or *matres* see Hemelrijk 2008.

⁶⁷⁷ CIL VI, 10234 = ILS 7213 = EDCS-16100462. Vat. Mus. Pio Clementino, 1172.

⁶⁷⁸ CIL VI, 34004 = EDR118433. CIL VI.1 *Supp Imag.* 746. Cap. Mus., NCE 714.

Another *collegium* membership list inscription, believed to be from Rome, but now preserved in the University of Uppsala, has a similar proportion of women.⁶⁷⁹ This fragmentary inscription has around thirty names of which eight are certainly women. Despite its fragmentary condition, there are consular dates included in the inscription ranging from AD 48 – 69. The women are interspersed within the list of men and do not appear to be paired with men as might be expected if they were included as the spouse of male members. Under each consular date is a series of names, three to six in number, who are memorialised for some reason. It may be for either dying and leaving the organisation during the year in question or, probably more likely, joining the organisation. In the year AD 68 there are three female, but no male names reinforcing the idea that they were members on their own account. At least two women are identified by their profession (*nummulariae*, money-changers) in the same manner as their male colleagues.⁶⁸⁰ Unfortunately other than the dates and the list of names and the occasional mention of profession there is no other information which may throw light on the precise terms of their membership or the *raison d'être* of the organisation.

Many *collegia* were predominately male in composition, but that is hardly surprising given that many of the trades to which these *collegia* belonged required a high level of physical strength that would be inappropriate for women. Where physical strength was less important for the performance of the work then women could and did belong in noteworthy numbers. The place of women in *cubiculum* B and the commemoration of Aurelia Prima among the *fratres* strongly suggests that such placement is more than symbolic. In Birk's recent survey of sarcophagi and the depiction of 'learned women' she comments, "when it comes to women; we see them as metaphors instead of roles because we have difficulties imagining Roman women in the same roles as men."⁶⁸¹ This may well be true in the senatorial

⁶⁷⁹ *CIL* VI, 8639 = X, 6637 = EDR135658. Uppsala Universitets Antiksamling, 1391+1400. Thomasson 1997: 93-4, nr 149, fig. 32.

⁶⁸⁰ Whose professions are: *tegularius nummularius, structor nummularius, nummularius, topiarius, aedituus, vilicus, lini praefectus, dispensator, atrensis, a valentudinario* and *a piscine* which shows a range of domestic and commercial professions within the same organisation. All the names suggest freed status though there is no libertination noted.

⁶⁸¹ Birk 2013: 85.

commemoration which is displayed on the finer sarcophagi, but the evidence from the hypogeum of the Aurelii means that the argument is less sound when addressing the lives of those less exalted. Notwithstanding Veyne and Hemelrijk's scepticism concerning female *collegae* their rarity does not altogether preclude their presence and in all probability it varied from profession to profession. Women may be excluded from the *convivium*, but that does not exclude them from membership of a professional *collegium*.

Chapter 10. A Child's Presence.

The principal scene in the Upper Register of *cubiculum A*'s left hand wall is the so-called '*adventus*' scene described in detail above (section 5.4.11). Early commentators considered that the scene represented some form of triumphal entrance into a city, the most popular theory being that it represented Christ or a prophet's entry into Jerusalem, either real or celestial.⁶⁸² A Christian connection was believed evident because of the image of the donkey within the city. More recent commentary has maintained this basic premise⁶⁸³ with the exception of Grassigli's theory of the *dominus* making an *adventus* in imitation of an imperial *adventus*.⁶⁸⁴

Commentators, however, have concentrated on the painting without considering the physical position of the painting and the distribution of the deceased within the *cubiculum*. What has been overlooked is the fact that of the three original burials, one on each wall excluding the entrance wall, the burial on this side is much smaller. The *arcosolium* on the left hand side is small, with a trench that measures only 1.2m in length and 0.3m wide, which indicates that the burial was, in all probability, for a child, "no more than about nine years old".⁶⁸⁵ Furthermore, in contrast to the female bias of the right hand side of *cubiculum A*, the right niche in particular, there are no female figures on the left, *adventus*, side. This argues for one of the male dedicatees, Papirius or Onesimus, as being commemorated here. I shall argue below (section 10.4) that the individual concerned is Aurelius Onesimus, but we must first reconcile the child with his status as a *libertus*.

If the deceased were a child then this fact has to be taken into account in any interpretation of the painting together with the only unassailable fact concerning the Aurelii i.e. that they were all *liberti*. I suggest that the implications of the occupant of

⁶⁸² For a summary of interpretations see Braconi 2011: 91-5, 120-1.

⁶⁸³ Bisconti 2004b: 30 (the deceased soul entering the idealised city); Logan 2006: 108 (a Gnostic prophet entering a city of Gentiles represented by a donkey).

⁶⁸⁴ Grassigli 2002: 413.

⁶⁸⁵ Bendinelli 1922: 316. Poe 2007: 26, fn 84; 43, fn 128. Poe highlights this point, but does not take the implications further. Borg 2013: 112 and 252 also associates this *arcosolium* with Aurelia Prima, but that would require the undoubtedly female biased right hand wall decoration to be associated with one of the two male dedicatees.

the left hand *arcosolium* being a child have not been considered for two principal reasons. First, there is little published data on the physical structure of the hypogeum. Other than Bendinelli's original section through the whole monument and simplified plan there is no published information that shows the *arcosolium* in any detail. Indeed, the only published illustration that confirms Bendinelli's measurements is a plan of *cubiculum* A printed (with scale, but no dimensions) in Bisconti's post-restoration publication (figure 13).⁶⁸⁶ Secondly, Roman law put significant restrictions on the manumission of children and, as the occupants were undoubtedly freedmen, the possibility that either Aurelius Papius or Aurelius Onesimus were children has simply not been discussed. Yet the evidence shows that the left hand *arcosolium* within *cubiculum* A is almost certainly the grave of a minor. This fact, as will be seen below, heavily affects the interpretation of the frescoes above it. An explanation first requires an examination of the practice of Roman manumission and its relationship to young slaves. Having established that the *arcosolium* was constructed for a child, a discussion of how children are represented in Roman art will enable both the 'adventus' and the neighbouring 'shepherd' scene above it to be re-interpreted as representations of the deceased.

10.1 Manumission of Slaves under the Age of 30.

The *lex Aelia Sentia* of AD 4 put a minimum age of 30 for the manumission of slaves. There were, however, a number of exceptions that allowed the manumission of someone younger (Gaius *Inst.* 1.18-19; 36-41). Slaves that might be freed at a post-pubescent age, but below the requisite age of 30, included: foster-parent (*educator*); nurse (*nutrix*); educational assistant (*paedagogus* or *capsarius*); for the purposing of acting as a financial agent for the patron (*procurator*) or to marry (*causa matrimonii*).⁶⁸⁷ This last, the habit of a male owner manumitting a female slave in order that they might have a legitimate union and offspring appears to be widespread such as Abudia Megiste who was commemorated by her patron and

⁶⁸⁶ Bisconti 2011a: tav. 3a.

⁶⁸⁷ Perry 2014: 64-5.

husband.⁶⁸⁸ She has assumed her husband's *nomen* upon her manumission and her freed status is clearly stated: she evidently had enjoyed considerable success as a businesswoman either independently or in association with her husband.⁶⁸⁹ Other men freed their female slaves after having enjoyed an unofficial union as *contubernales* as in the case of Claudia Steptena where their status as cohabitantes was recorded after a long life time together.⁶⁹⁰

There are some women who appear to have won their freedom and married, but not to their owners. The memorial to the 26-year-old *liberta* Graecina Succesa says that she was married, but had been formerly owned by a woman.⁶⁹¹ It is to be supposed that the (unnamed) husband managed to purchase Graecina Succesa from her owner, but we cannot know what the circumstances were surrounding her manumission: clearly marriage to an owner was not the only way a woman could secure her freedom. There are other cases where the reasons for manumitting young women are even less obvious. Favonia Primigenia died at the age of eighteen a freed woman.⁶⁹² Still young, and presumably of some economic value, we know neither her marital status nor why she was given her freedom. If there were a husband it is probable that he was still alive at the time of Favonia Primigenia's death given the presumed shortage of time between marriage and death of the woman. The lack of commemorative mention of any husband in this instance may be due to shortage of space (the inscription being on a commemorative tablet within a columbarium); less

⁶⁸⁸ *CIL* VI, 9683: Di{i}s Manibus | Abudiae M(arci) Lib(erta) | Megiste piissimae fec(it) | M(arcus) Abudius Luminaris |⁵ patronus idemque coniux bene merenti | negotiatrici frumentariae | et legumenariae ab scala | Mediana sibi et libertis | libertabusque posterisq(ue) |¹⁰ et M(arco) Abudio Saturnino filio trib(us) Esq(uilinae) seniorum | vixit annis VIII.

⁶⁸⁹ On the subject of the relationship between patron and freedwoman as recorded in inscriptions see Perry 2014: 99-110.

⁶⁹⁰ *CIL* VI, 15598 = EDR119129. Cap. Mus. NCE 1605: Dis Manibus | Claudiae Stepteni vix(it) | annis LXXII fecit Ti(berius) | Claudius Aug(usti) l(ibertus) Nymph[o] |⁵ dotus patronus et contub(ernalis) co(n)iugi suae kar(issimae) bene meritae de se | cum qua vix(it) ann(is) XLVI sibi et suis | posterisque eorum. It is possible that Claudia Steptena was manumitted after she had reached the age of 30. However, I believe it more likely that having had an unofficial union for a period of time she was manumitted and married at the age of 26, the period of forty six years being from the time of their legal status as *coniuges*.

⁶⁹¹ *CIL* VI, 19068 = EDCS-12100979: Dis | Manibus | Graecinae | M(arci) et J(mulieris) l(iberta) |⁵ Succesae | vix(it) ann(is) XXVI | mens(ibus) VII | çonjũgi

⁶⁹² *CIL* VI, 17738: Favonia M(arci) l(iberta) | Primigenia | vix(it) an(nis) XVIII.

obvious though is why the commemoration of another eighteen year old freedwoman, Fabia Sabina, would be by her sister and not a husband or parents.⁶⁹³

The manumission of young male adults is less problematic. Numbered among the allowable exceptions to the *lex Aelia Sentia* age restrictions were various positions that could only be filled by males. Most notable was the position of *procurator* or *tabularius* in both civic and private capacities (Gaius *Inst.* 1.18. Ulpian *Dig.* 40.2.13. Front. *Aq.* 105).⁶⁹⁴ Freeing a slave and then appointing the freedman to the position of *procurator* allowed them to transact business, manage property and appear in court on behalf of their patron.⁶⁹⁵ The theory that an owner, especially the emperor, was reluctant to free administrative staff may be exaggerated.⁶⁹⁶ While not numerous their existence at all shows that it was perhaps more usual than Weaver gives credit.⁶⁹⁷ The *structor* Tiberius Claudius Domnio is likely to be more than a simple tradesman to have won his freedom before the age of 23 and have a posterity to be commemorated by his sister.⁶⁹⁸ Freedmen of such a status are likely to be more numerous than the epigraphic record suggests: having a reasonable life expectancy and thus dying later than the prescribed age limit of *lex Aelia Sentia*, their age at the time of manumission would be invisible.⁶⁹⁹ Another reason a private, under-age, male slave might gain freedom was to avoid intestacy (Gaius *Inst.* 1.21).⁷⁰⁰ A slave granted his freedom could become the owner's *heres*, provided the owner was not

⁶⁹³ *CIL* VI, 17625: Fabia ♂ (*mulieris*) l(iberta) | Sabina | v(ixit) a(nnis) XIIX | F(abia) Primige | nia soror.

⁶⁹⁴ *CIL* VI, 8449 = EDR118445: D(is) M(anibus) | T(ito) Flavio Aug(usti) l(ibertus) | Ianuario | adiutori tabular(ii) |⁵ XX hereditatium |... (vv1-5) . Mouritsen 2011: 218-19. Verboven 2012: 99.

⁶⁹⁵ Verboven 2012: 100.

⁶⁹⁶ Weaver 1972: 102.

⁶⁹⁷ Weaver 1972: 101 notes only three under the age of 25 (*CIL* XIV, 4062 = EDR145162, aged 17; *CIL* VI, 8613, aged 19; 8417 = EDR100366, aged 22), but *CIL* VI, 10666, aged 20; 8449 = EDR118445, aged 26 and 8488, aged 29 are also all under-age as are three imperial *libertae*: *CIL* VI, 10988; 10237 and 20384).

⁶⁹⁸ *CIL* VI, 9047: Ti(berio) Cl(audio) Augustor(um) l(iberto) et | structori Domnioni | Antonia Asia fratri | carissimo benemerenti |⁵ vix(it) an(nis) XXIII m(ensibus) II d(iebus) X fecit | et sibi libertis libertabus | posterisq(ue) eorum.

⁶⁹⁹ Those *liberti* who enter the epigraphic record are not only likely to have been wealthier, but would not have been subject to the abuse of those who remained in slavery, hence in all probability their chances of reaching the age of 30 were greater.

⁷⁰⁰ Buckland 1963: 80.

himself in debt in which case the release of the slave would be considered a fraud perpetrated on the creditor.

In addition to these adult freedmen and women released before the age of 30 there is a class of slaves freed before they reached adulthood, some very young. As with young adults there were exceptions to the strictures of *lex Aelia Sentia* for children. Children fathered by the mother's owner might be freed as an act of paternal affection, whether or not the mother was likewise freed (Gaius *Inst.* 1.19). Alternatively, a child may have been as a result of sharing the same wet nurse as a legitimate child (*collactaneus*). Despite these sanctioned exceptions anomalies remain. Fabius Marcianus died at the age of twelve and is commemorated on a funerary urn.⁷⁰¹ As a *libertus* of woman he would not have been the natural son of his (female) owner. A child followed the class (slave or free) of its mother (Ulpian 5.9-10: *quoniam cum his casibus conubia non sint, partus sequitur matrem*). Therefore, whereas a child fathered by a free man, but born of a slave mother would have been slave and may have subsequently been freed, thereby gaining the label *libertus*, the same would not have been the case if the child had been born of a slave father and free mother.⁷⁰² The child would have been born free and would not have gained the label *libertus*. If Fabius Marcianus was not freed because of parental affection then he must have gained his freedom at a young age for some other reason, such as being fathered by the owner's husband or other relation, but such cases did not qualify as permissible exceptions to the *lex Aelia Sentia*. Parental affection is more likely in the case of the seven-year-old Publius Cornelius Perennis⁷⁰³ or, the even younger, Fulvia Fatalis⁷⁰⁴ who was born a slave, but died aged three a *liberta*. An instance of natural parental manumission is commemorated by the cinerary urn dedicated to Titus

⁷⁰¹ *CIL* VI, 17544: A(ulus?) Fabius | Marcianus O (mulieris) | libertus vix(it) an(nis) | XII m(ensibus) VI d(iebus) XIX h(oris) I. Listed in Mennella's inventory to the Palazzo Ducale di Urbino, Mennella 1973: 89.

⁷⁰² Buckland 1908: 398.

⁷⁰³ *CIL* VI, 16274 = EDR141634: P(ublius) Cornelius | P(ubl(i) l(ibertus) Perennis | vixit ann(is) VII.

⁷⁰⁴ *CIL* VI, 18701: D(is) M(anibus) | Fulviae | Fatali | lib(ertae) et vern(ae) |⁵ q(ui) v(ixit) a(nnis) III d(iebus) XXIII | Ful(via) Sabina | [d]ulcis[sim(ae) fec(it)].

Farlontius Sabinus remembered as both father and *patronus*.⁷⁰⁵ While the elegiac poem to the ten-year-old Petronius Antigones was set up by his father Hilarus described as *pater ipse patronus*.⁷⁰⁶

Examples of manumission, below the statutory age of thirty laid down in the *lex Aelia Sentia*, demonstrate that, despite what the jurists prescribed, there is no reason why the *libertus* buried within the left wall *arcosolium* cannot be a child.⁷⁰⁷ With this in mind we need now to examine how children are depicted in Roman funerary art so that we may interpret the '*adventus*' scene within this wider context.

10.2 Children in Roman Art.

Children are first encountered in Roman funerary art in the mid-1st century BC in group portraits of a style closely associated with freedmen and which lasted into the second century AD.⁷⁰⁸ Rectangular reliefs give the impression of windows from which the busts of the commemorated look out. In these reliefs parents are not infrequently accompanied by the image of a child. Such is the case for the freeborn L. Vibius Tro and *liberta* Vecilia Hila (figure 128) who are clearly elderly, but depicted alongside a young child, L. Vibius Felicio, who presumably died some years before the relief was carved.⁷⁰⁹ The child was, as shown by his *trinomina*, freeborn so born after his mother had been freed though, as the former slave of a woman, her husband cannot have been her owner. A son's more explicit declaration of freeborn status is shown in a relief from the Via Po, Rome where the freed parents, Antonia Rufa, her husband Caius Vettius Nicephor, and a *liberta*, Vettia Calybe, are shown

⁷⁰⁵ *CIL* VI, 17723: D(is) M(anibus) | T(ito) Farlontio | T(iti) F(ilio) Sabino | patri pientis(sime) |⁵ patrono pa | tronorum.

⁷⁰⁶ *CIL* XI, 6435 = EDR016121. ... haec Hilarus mihi contulerat pater ipse patronus | si non infelix contraria fata habuissem ... (vv11-12). Ferrara, Civico Lapidario dei Diamanti no inv. nr

⁷⁰⁷ Mouritsen 2011: 85. Mouritsen 2011: 132 drawing on Harper 1972:342 and Alföldy 1986 (1972): 305-7 notes an average age of 25.2 years for freedmen. Mouritsen seriously questions Harper and Alföldy's methodology and it is not the intention of this paper to argue percentages of early manumission, but the point that manumission was often below the statutory age limit is valid nonetheless.

⁷⁰⁸ Huskinson 2007: 324.

⁷⁰⁹ *CIL* VI, 28774 = EDCS-14802730: L(ucius) Vibius L(ucius) f(ilius) Tro Vecilia ♂ (*mulieris*) l(iberta) Hilae | L(ucius) Vibius Felicio Felix Vibia L(ucius) l(iberta) Prima. Vat. Mus. Chiaramonti, 2109. Kleiner 1977: 234, nr 69.

alongside the young C. Vettius Secundus who displays his freeborn status by the *bullā* around his neck.⁷¹⁰ Such images are not so much aspirational as celebratory.⁷¹¹ Vecilia Hila clearly displays her wedding ring to show that she had made an honourable match and, although she may have lost her freeborn son at a tender age (and a freed daughter, commemorated in the inscription, but not the relief), she has died a respectable Roman matron. Female children are less obviously freeborn as there is no visual clue comparable to the *bullā*. The relief of Lucius Vettius Alexander and his family shows two daughters, one deceased, and the other still alive. The inscription alone confirms that one (Polla) was freeborn while the other (Hospita) was freed.⁷¹² These examples show that children, even when already deceased, freeborn or freed, honour the fact that the family is an independent and legitimate unit as a consequence of their parents' attainment of liberty.

The somewhat stylised images of the freedman portraits of the first century BC and early first century AD begin to give way in the latter half of the first century AD to a freer form of depiction among both freed and freeborn commemorations of children who died young. These often reflect the thwarted hopes of the parents in their prematurely deceased offspring. This is especially so in the case of funerary altars that usually commemorate a single individual. A fine example is the altar erected in honour of Q. Sulpicius Maximus who died at the age of eleven at the end of the first century AD (figure 129).⁷¹³ Having won a poetry competition at the Capitoline Games in AD 93/4 the child is shown, complete with toga and *rotulus*, in the attitude of declaiming his poem which is written, in Greek, on the altar itself. Although we know, from the inscription, that Q. Sulpicius Maximus had yet to reach his twelfth birthday there is no indication of his youth in his portrait statue. He has

⁷¹⁰ AA 1973, 88: 620 = EDR030308. Antonia P(ubli) l(iberta) Rufa, C(aius) Vetti(u)s ♂ (mulieris) l(ibertus) Nicephor, C(aius) Vettius C(ai) F(ilius) Secundus, Vettia C(ai) l(iberta) Calybe. Huskinson 2007: 326, fig. 17.2. The relationship of Vettia Calybe to the others is uncertain, she may be a blood relative of Nicephor, being purchased by Nicephor from their mutual patron or she may have had a close, non-blood relationship with the others. See Kleiner 1977: 41-2; 243, nr 84.

⁷¹¹ Stewart 2008: 67.

⁷¹² MNR Terme, 125830. AA 1973: 690. Kleiner 1977: 244, nr 85. *thanatos* Lucius Vettius ♂ (*mulieris*) l(ibertus) Alexand(er) | *thanatos* Vettia L(ucii) f(ilia) Polla | Vettia L(ucii) l(iberta) Eleutheris | Vettia ♂ (*mulieris*) l(iberta) Hospita.

⁷¹³ CIL VI, 33976 = EDR107864. Cap. Mus. Centrale Montemartini, III.116 = 1102 = NCE 2963.

no *bullae* around his neck which would surely be the case if, like C. Vettius Secundus, he was shown in a realistic manner. Furthermore, the features are decidedly adult in proportion. The boy has been represented as he would have been had he lived ten years more.

Although the memorial to Q. Sulpicius Maximus is unusual in being securely dated and being found with its inscription intact giving details of why he is being depicted thus, it is not alone in showing children or infants in an adult pose even when the child's features are depicted more realistically. One can see this variant, child-like body with adult dress, in the joint altar dedicated to two babies: Nico and Eutyches.⁷¹⁴ The two figures are represented standing with *rotuli* and wearing togas in a similar manner to that of Q. Sulpicius Maximus, but their facial features are decidedly chubby. If the inscription were missing one would be uncertain whether or not these were adults. The inscription tells us that the children could hardly stand, let alone read, aged as they were eleven and seventeen months old respectively. Not only is their pose deceptive, lacking any inscription one would suppose them both to be freed or freeborn: the toga being the prerogative of the free citizen. The survival of the inscription, however, informs us that the older child, Eutyches, was a *verna*, a house born slave of the other boy's mother whose name, Publicia Glypte, suggests she herself was freed. Whether Nico was a slave is unclear. Rawson believes that he may be a slave though he could equally well be a *libertus* or even⁷¹⁵ freeborn. If freed (or freeborn) then a *nomen* has been suppressed and filiation/libertination omitted, yet if slave why the distinction of *verna* for Eutyches, but not Nico? Whatever Nico's status at the time of his death it is clear that Publicia Glypte looked forward to the time when, as adults, they may have worn the toga and have acquired the learning hinted at by their *rotuli* and adjacent *cippus*.

⁷¹⁴ *CIL* VI, 22972 = *AE* 2010, 89 = EDCS-13201257: D(is) M(anibus) || Niconi filio | dulcissimo | qui v(ixit) mens(ibus) XI | diebus VIII || Eutycheti | vernae | qui vix(it) an(no) I | mens(ibus) V dieb(us) X || Publicia Glypte fecit. Villa Albani, 920. Dated on the basis of hairstyles to AD 100-110. Bol and Allrogen-Bedel 1988-1994: 1.121-3, kat. 34, taf. 59-61.

⁷¹⁵ Rawson 2003: 259-60.

A similar hope, if more playfully expressed, is seen in a sarcophagus dating from c. AD 270 which shows a child in the guise of a philosopher teaching other children each of whom is, in turn, playing the part of the Muses (figure 130).⁷¹⁶ Though there were memorials to children depicted as children playing, these examples show that it is not unusual for the deceased child to be depicted in the manner of an adolescent or adult older than the reality. As Jason Mander commented, such scenes are, "far from documentary" and continued to be so for well into the third century.⁷¹⁷

Scenes such as that of the young Q. Sulpicius Maximus and the even younger Nico and Eutyches were not complete fabrications, but rather an expression of what might have been had fate not intervened to cut short the children's lives. These visions were not infrequently fanciful: portraying the deceased in adult garb and/or posture while maintaining either their infantile features, or performing the tasks that might be expected of them, depending on gender and social status, had they reached maturity.⁷¹⁸

While boys' portraiture, showing their future roles as citizens, is more common than girls', young females were not ignored and might even be presented in the adult forms that could not now be fulfilled. Such a case is seen in the one-year-old Hateria Superba, from the tomb of the Haterii in Rome, but now in the Uffizi, Florence.⁷¹⁹ Her funerary altar shows the young girl accompanied by pet birds and a dog, but the deceased herself is being crowned by *erotes* as if she were a young man having won a competition. A more traditional sculpture, dating from the mid first century BC and now in the Centrale Montemartini museum, however, shows a mother and young girl both dressed as respectable Roman *matronae*.⁷²⁰ Unfortunately, we have no accompanying inscription to provide details of age and status, but the child's size suggests that she is five or six years of age. As with

⁷¹⁶ Vat. Mus. Galleria dei Candelabri, 2422.

⁷¹⁷ Mander 2013: 20.

⁷¹⁸ Kleiner 1987: 87-8, nr 68.

⁷¹⁹ Uffizi, 942. Boschung 1987: 93, kat. 555, taf. 14. *CIL* VI.3 *Supp. Imag.* 3453.

⁷²⁰ Cap. Mus. Centrale Montemartini, I.36. Fittschen and Zanker 1983: 39, nr 42, pl. 54. George 2001: 178-89.

Q. Sulpicius Maximus she does not show any attribute that would denote her childish nature such as holding a doll or pet. Neither does she exhibit any of the childish ‘puppy fat’ that might be expected of a girl of that age and her coiffure is not the simple style suitable for a child, but is as complex as her mother’s and she wears a *toga*. Although *togae* were worn by female children it was no longer worn once the girl reached puberty. Whereas a male child would take up the *toga virilis* the *toga muliebris* was a mark of infamy for an adult woman being worn only by adulteresses and prostitutes (Cic. *Phil.* 2.44).⁷²¹ The commemoration of a female child is thus fraught with difficulty: in trying to convey the child as an adult displaying the hair, pose and modesty of a *matrona* the *toga*, because of its different connotations in a female context, displays an awkward dichotomy of meaning. The purpose of the statue group of mother and daughter (with possibly a now lost father) was meant to demonstrate, as with the boys, not only the loss of a child, but the loss of a future young adult. Finally, sarcophagi representations of young girls sometimes show them with *rotuli*; an attribute more usually associated with learning among boys, but not exclusively so.⁷²²

Figures shown on horseback, however, are exclusively male. That the 18 year old M. Coccei⁷²³ is shown on horseback is not too surprising, but others are very young: C. Petronius Virianus Postumus aged ten (figure 131);⁷²⁴ a six year old whose epitaph has been embellished by a graffito of a person on a horse⁷²⁵ and the two year old Sindrius has an image of a rider set within roundel on his epitaph (figure 132).⁷²⁶

⁷²¹ For the significance of Roman women’s clothing in general see Sebesta 1994 and Olson 2008a. Olson 2008a: 47-51 questions whether the term *toga muliebris* ought to be taken literally to mean that prostitutes habitually wore *togae*.

⁷²² Rawson 2003: 197-209, fig. 1.18. While Birk finds no gender bias overall in the depiction of learned men and women there is a bias towards boys rather than girls (Birk 2013: 201 lists 25 boys and 5 girls).

⁷²³ *CIL* VI, 15889.

⁷²⁴ *CIL* VI, 24011 = EDR121426. Cap. Mus., Sala del Fauno, NCE 2637. Kleiner 1987: 187-8, nr 61, pl. XXXVII, 1.

⁷²⁵ *CIL* VI, 16742 = EDCS-12001639.

⁷²⁶ *CIL* VI, 9484 = EDR133628. MAR Antonio Salinas, 3833. Bivona 1970: 249, nr 333, tav. CLX. The inscription, now in Palermo, was found near the second milestone of the Via Appia, Rome. The deceased child appears to be in the lap of the rider and a boar is beneath the feet of the horse. There is no personal dedicator that might identify the rider e.g. a father, but rather a reference to *ses(s)or(es) inundatores* though what this refers to is unclear.

In the case of the two year old Eutyches, whose mid-third century memorial relief and epitaph is now in the church of S. Maria della Rotonda in Albano Laziale,⁷²⁷ there is a clear reference to a form of apotheosis: an eagle grasps the horse's reins and leads horse and rider heavenwards (figure 133).⁷²⁸ This is an exception, however, none of the other images suggests any form of apotheosis. More substantial memorials display equestrian youths without any hint of apotheosis. One such, dating from the latter half of the third century AD, was found at Acilia on the Via Ostiense (figure 134).⁷²⁹ This half life-size statue holds its right hand up in a manner similar to that of the '*adventus*' figure under discussion: a space in the rump of the horse probably contained the ashes of the deceased.⁷³⁰ Another equestrian statue, on a smaller scale, was found on the Isola Sacra near Ostia and is preserved today in the site museum at Ostia Antica (figure 135).⁷³¹ Again in a funerary context, it was found in Tomb 90 and probably dates from the second century AD. Although when found it had clearly been moved at some time in antiquity there is no suggestion that it had moved very far.⁷³²

With these representations in mind one ought to consider how children were viewed in ancient Roman society. There was no autonomous concept of childhood in the manner of modern western thought.⁷³³ Children were subject to the same social constraints as their parents. Children were obliged to work and operate in the

⁷²⁷ Guarducci 1970: 168 dated on epigraphic grounds.

⁷²⁸ *AE* 1971, 0078 = EDR137471.

⁷²⁹ *MNR Terme*, 115164. Talamo in *MNR Le Sculture* 1/1, 90: 126-7. Bergemann 1990: 110, P53.

⁷³⁰ Bergeman 1990: 111, fn 563 noted without conclusion, "*Der typologische Vergleich mit einem Bild aus dem Aurelierhypogäum am Viale Manzoni kann die Frage nicht beantworten, da diese Stelle des Bildes beschädigt ist.*" [The question of typological similarity with an image from the hypogeum of the Aurelii on the Viale Manzoni cannot be answered, as the context of the image is damaged.] Nonetheless, Bergemann rightly rejected the idea of the pose being of a hunter as the youth clearly does not hold anything in his right hand and his gaze is straight ahead rather than down and to one side as would be the case if he were striking an animal.

⁷³¹ Ostia Antica Site Museum, SBAO 33.

⁷³² Calza 1940: 187-8, fig. 93 and 236-7, fig. 135.

⁷³³ Monda 2008: 125-36 who argues that the idea of a distinct personality for the child was first expressed by St Augustine in his Confessions. For a general discussion on the definition of childhood in ancient Roman society see Mander 2013: 48-50. For a contrary position see Olson 2008b: 139 who argues that the existence of differing dress between adults and children argues for a distinction between the two stages of life. The jurists and epigraphic evidence, however, argues that in the field of work there was little distinction.

everyday world as if they were adults. The jurist Ulpian (*Dig.* 7.7.6.1) defined a slave as being economically useful from the age of five onwards and it is probable that poorer parents would have had similar views for their own children. The lower down the social scale the more likely it would have been that children, free as well as slave, would have been expected to assume the burdens of work from an early age. The fourteen-year-old Eucharis, freed woman of Licinia who lived in Rome in the late republic, is a case in point.⁷³⁴ Despite her youth she is said to have mastered all the arts, "*docta erodita omnes artes*" and so therefore presumably must have had some years of tuition in her profession as a dancer in public performance, "*decoravi choro et Graeca in scaena.*" Furthermore, while her father lavishes praise on Eucharis' accomplishments she was not unique in this respect as testified by several other artists younger than Eucharis memorialised nearby.⁷³⁵

10.3 Discussion.

To return to the '*adventus*' scene in *cubiculum A* we can now review what we know of the deceased and the forms of commemoration that might be applied. We know that he was a *libertus* and, from the size of the *arcosolium*, probably no more than nine years of age. Despite legal restrictions on the manumission of slaves under the age of 30, the epigraphic record shows that, over and above the 'obvious' reasons (marriage if a woman; business if a man), early manumission was not uncommon. In the *mors immatura* of a young child, the promise cut short by Fate might be commemorated by representing the deceased child in adult clothing or have him (and in such portraiture it is almost invariably 'him') assume the physiognomy of an adult. Memorials might also include the deceased on horseback, either on their own or, as in the case of the statue group from the Isola Sacra, accompanied. Nor does this mean that there is an apotheosis in the literal sense as Braconi has maintained.⁷³⁶ Eutyches from Albano Laziale is evidence that, on occasion, such apotheosis was believed: however, such cases were most uncommon. In the Albano Laziale example

⁷³⁴ *CIL* I², 1214 = VI, 10096. Courtney 1995: 46-9, 238-40, nr 20. Ricci and Salvadori 2008: 145-66. Keegan 2014: 83-6.

⁷³⁵ E.g. Hellas who died at the age of 14 is described as a *pantomima* and Phoebe a twelve year old *emboliaria* (performer during intermissions).

⁷³⁶ Braconi 2011: 143.

there is a clear indication of the process of apotheosis, something that is absent from the hypogeum of the Aurelii image. There is no indication that the city towards which the rider is heading is anything other than a place where, had he lived, the child would have fulfilled the promise he displayed as a young boy. It is a detail within this city that I now discuss, a detail that will enable us to choose between Papirius and Onesimus as the likely occupant of the child's grave.

10.4 The Image of the Donkey.

The image of the donkey in the urban scene on the left hand wall (figure 78) suggested to Paribeni that there was a connection with the entry of Christ into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday while Wilpert put forward the Gnostic philosopher Epiphanes as an explanation.⁷³⁷ Although both theories were called into question not long after the publication of Wilpert's monograph,⁷³⁸ no satisfactory alternative has been brought forward to explain the presence of this comparatively small, but nonetheless clearly defined, detail. Where this detail has been discussed, as with other parts of the hypogeum's decoration, there has been a strong tendency to read the various scenes from a Christian (orthodox or non-orthodox) perspective.⁷³⁹ As Swindler pointed out, the fact that donkey is clearly inside the city and not being ridden into it undermines theories connecting the hypogeum of the Aurelii donkey with Palm Sunday.⁷⁴⁰ Recently, Braconi has sought to identify the donkey with the concept of the *pars rustica* in contrast with the *pars urbana* of a large suburban villa as exemplified by such mosaics as those in the Bardo Museum (figure 136).⁷⁴¹ This theory has been developed alongside Grassigli's overall theory of the *dominus splendidus in villam successus* for late Roman self-representation.⁷⁴² However, this idea is also less than convincing as the donkey, even if one could accept that it served

⁷³⁷ Paribeni 1921: 102 suggested that Christ's entrance into Jerusalem was made more recognisable to contemporaries by means of emulating depictions of an *adventus*; Bendinelli 1922: 350, fig. 27, tav. X; Wilpert 1924: 39, tav. XX.

⁷³⁸ Swindler 1929: 402.

⁷³⁹ Logan 2006: 108.

⁷⁴⁰ Swindler 1929: 402; Kantorowicz 1944: 215.

⁷⁴¹ Braconi 2011: 148, fig. 17.

⁷⁴² Grassigli 2011: 75-84.

as a unique, but genuine symbol of the countryside, is clearly within the urban environment and not on the side of a road as stated by Braconi.⁷⁴³

The key to solving the mystery of the donkey lies in an examination of contemporary or near-contemporary commemorative practice. An important aspect of this was examined in Ritti's 1977 work on the evidence relating to onomastic puns and allusion in literature and inscriptions. Ritti showed that both *cognomina* and nicknames (*signa*) were often made the focus of attention in visual, as well as written, form. Furthermore, not only did illustrations on funerary material make reference to the name of the individual, but it might also do so in ways that required a degree of bilingualism that is not always given credence. I submit that this tradition of visual punning is at work here and allows us to assign the child's *arcosolium* to one of the two remaining Aurelii i.e. Onesimus. I shall now examine the use of visual puns and bilingualism in Roman commemoration.

A Julio-Claudian funerary altar or statue base to Tiberius Octavius Diadumenus (figure 137) has, within the inscription, a depiction of the *diadumenus* statue by Polyclitus.⁷⁴⁴ A more subtle allusion to a *cognomen* is in the Julio-Claudian inscription from the Villa Daniella, Empoli (now lost) set up by Gaius Gavius Asper (*asper* = wild or harsh) to commemorate his family including his brother Lucius Gavius Mansuetus (*mansuetus* = tame or soft).⁷⁴⁵ Beneath the inscription is an image of a fox and a stork eating out of the same bowl (figure 138). The allusion is to the contrasting *cognomina* of the two brothers with an illustration from Aesop's fable (Phaedrus I, XXVI). This imagery from the natural world, in forms that make reference to plants or animals related to the names of the deceased, is found in other funerary

⁷⁴³ Braconi 2011: 148, "da leggersi non come città, ma come una sterminata proprietà suburbana, testimoniata dalla presenza dell'asino collocata al margine della strada." ["it is to be read not like a city, but as an immense suburban property as testified by the presence of a donkey on the side of the road.].

⁷⁴⁴ *CIL* VI, 10035 = EDR133800. Vat. Mus. Cortile del Belvedere, 1142. Ritti 1977: 313, nr 74, tav. XII, 2. Note Ritti's inventory number (1147) and inscription reference (*CIL* VI, 10030) are incorrect. There is a further visual pun on the sides of the altar: one side has an image of a pine tree, while the opposite side has the words *ad pinum*, presumably a reference to some topographical connection to the deceased. Kleiner 1987: 97-8, nr 1, pl. 1, 1. Spinola 1996: 43-4, cat. PE 29.

⁷⁴⁵ *CIL* XI, 1736 = EDR103944. Ritti 1977: 311, nr 72. Van Rooijen-Dijkman 1990: 250-1.

contexts. A later example from the catacomb of Panfilo, and dated to the mid third century AD, the simple commemorative inscription to the deceased, Cepasius, has the crude outline of an onion (*caepa*) superimposed (figure 139).⁷⁴⁶

More popular than the use of the names of flora as *cognomina*, however, was the use of fauna with a wide variety being used. Literature provides examples of insects, e.g. *Musca* (fly),⁷⁴⁷ birds⁷⁴⁸ and domestic animals,⁷⁴⁹ but it is funerary evidence that gives an indication of how these *cognomina* were an important means of identifying with the individual deceased. Some images on the funerary memorial were humorous: in the epigraphic collection in the Terme Museum the grave stele of M. Gavius Amphion Mus, a freedman of the Praetorian Prefect in Rome, and therefore, in all probability, of some wealth and standing, was commemorated by having a mouse, gnawing at a loaf, engraved on the *fastigium* of the stele (figure 140).⁷⁵⁰ A fine example of funerary punning is the memorial to Titus Statilius Aper now in the Capitoline Museum (figure 141).⁷⁵¹ The monument, dated to around AD 120, shows the deceased, a 22-year-old man, a *ensor aedificarum*, with the tools of his profession.⁷⁵² At the feet of the deceased is a dead boar (*aper*). The appearance of the boar is a pun on Titus Statilius' *cognomen* as well as being a reference to the premature death of Meleager in the hunt for the Calydonian boar (itself a popular subject for funerary memorials and sarcophagi) as explained in the accompanying verse inscription. If the inscription had been lost the connection with the Meleager myth may have been adduced because of the similarities with other depictions of the victorious Meleager and the Calydonian boar,⁷⁵³ yet the connection

⁷⁴⁶ Ritti 1977: 295, nr 46, tav. IX, 2.

⁷⁴⁷ T. Sempronius Musca, Livy 45.13, 168 BC; A. Sempronius Musca, Cic. *De Orat.* II, ix, 247.

⁷⁴⁸ Quintus Axius greets a group of friends, Cornelius Merula (blackbird), Fircellius Pavo (peacock), Minucius Pica (magpie) and Marcus Petronius Passer (sparrow), as an aviary (*ornithona*): Varro *Rust.* III, II.2.

⁷⁴⁹ Varro *Rust.* II, I.10 mentions *cognomina* derived from domesticated animals: Porcius (pig), Ovinus (sheep), Caprilius (goat), Equitius (horse), Taurius (bull) and Asinius (donkey).

⁷⁵⁰ *CIL* VI, 38411 = EDR106368. MNR Terme, 54748. Ritti 1977: 301-2, nr 59, tav. XII, 1; Bonanome/Sabbatini Tumolesi in *MNR Le Sculture I/7**, VI, 13: 191-3; *MNR Epigrafica*: 467. Marcus Gavius Maximus was Praetorian Prefect for twenty years under the reign of Antoninus Pius *PIR*² G 104.

⁷⁵¹ *Cap. Mus.*, 209 = NCE 2535. Kleiner 1987: 213, nr 83, pl. XLVI.2-4, XLVII.1. Courtney 1995: 374, nr 176; Kolb and Fugmann 2008: 157-9, nr 40; Squire 2009: 173-5.

⁷⁵² *CIL* VI, 1975 = *ILS* 7737 = *CLE* 441 = EDR032796.

⁷⁵³ E.g. *LIMC* vol. VI, 1: 422-3, nos. 71-6 s.v. Meleager.

with the deceased's name would not be evident. Though women rarely had *praenomina* they did have *signa* linked to the natural world. One late 1st or 2nd century AD example, said to be in the Museo Archaeologico dell'Antica Capua, is dedicated to Atalante Claudia by her two siblings who simply sign themselves Apricula (little boar) and Lupus.⁷⁵⁴ The *signum* Apricula may be an allusion to the sister's *praenomen* Atalante,⁷⁵⁵ the female hunter who accompanied Meleager on his hunt for the Calydonian boar, if that is so then the memorial gives an insight into the familial relationship between the dedicatees and their sister. These single animal names were often used within families. Like Apricula and Lupus another set of siblings is recorded in an inscription, of uncertain date, from Volterra, now in the Museo Guarnacci, Volterra, it records three brothers, Ursus, Lupus and Aper, dedicating a memorial to their mother.⁷⁵⁶ The fact that the three brothers chose to perform their filial duty using these names, rather than their gentile names, suggests that these might be considered more accurately as *signa*, or nicknames, rather than *cognomina* proper, their use being more intimate than the sons' 'proper' names.

An example that illustrates the use of both *signum* and *cognomen* in fresco survives in the early fourth century tomb of Trebius Iustus, less than one mile from the Porta Latina on the Via Latina.⁷⁵⁷ The principal frescoed inscription informs us (figure 142) that the deceased is another young man, similar in age to T. Statilius Aper, whose image is surrounded by writing implements.⁷⁵⁸ The inscription states that he went by the *signum* of Asellus (donkey); in this case possibly to differentiate

⁷⁵⁴ Oebalus, 5, 2010: 264, nr 6 = EDR127940: Atalante | Claudia | Apricula | et Lupus |⁵ sorori. Solin 2010: 264, nr 6 discusses whether the name Apricula is a *cognomen* of the deceased or should stand alone as a sister of the deceased. The rarity of female *cognomina* in general and the presence of the *et* in the inscription leads the author to consider Apricula to be a sister and not the deceased herself.

⁷⁵⁵ The age of Atalante Claudia is not mentioned in the inscription, but that she was commemorated by a brother and sister rather than husband or son suggests that she died at a young age.

⁷⁵⁶ *CIL* XI, 1777 = EDR105788: D(is) M(anibus) | Iaroniae Ver[e] | cundae pient[is] | simae fili Urs[us] |⁵ et Aper et Lupu[s] | matri bene me[rent] | ti vixit annis | XXXXI. Museo Guarnacci, 118. Bacci 1974: 74-5, nr 1.

⁷⁵⁷ Dated primarily on stylistic grounds: Casalone 1962: 60; Bisconti 2004a: 134. Rea 2004: 149-50 adds that a brick closing a nearby *loculus* (nr 14) may be dated to AD 306-337.

⁷⁵⁸ *CIL* VI, 37833 = *ILCV* 1631a = *ICUR* n.s. 6.15844: Trebius Iustus et Horonatia (!) Saeverina filio maerenti (!) fecerunt | Trebio Iusto signo Asellus | qui vixit annos XXI | me(n)ses (!) VIII diis (!) XXV.

son from his father who had the same name.⁷⁵⁹ That Asellus was his familiar appellation is confirmed by a separate brief inscription below the *arcosolium* toasting the deceased.⁷⁶⁰ A further possible connection between the *signum* of Trebius Iustus junior and the tomb's decoration is on the opposite wall where, either side of the entrance to the *cubiculum*, there are pictures of two laden donkeys each with an attendant (figure 143). It is problematic whether these donkeys are making direct reference to the deceased or those other areas of decoration that show images of construction work (on the side walls) and harvest (above the entrance). Above the figure to the right of the entrance is the name 'Leo' (now much faded), while above the figure to the left the name 'Fortunatus' has been erased and another name, 'Leporius', placed above the donkey. It is impossible to know why the original name was erased, it may have been nothing more than an error on the part of the painter, but it seems unlikely that the name 'Leporius' refers to the donkey and not the man.⁷⁶¹ First, there is the general objection of why any donkey would be commemorated in this manner, secondly the donkey attended by the servant 'Leo' is not named - so why one and not the other? The picture of a donkey on either side of the entrance seems too much of a coincidence with the known *signum* of the deceased. Rather the donkeys represent the deceased attended by servants: Leporius on one side; Leo on the other. Text and images are meant to be read together. The composition provides linkages between the deceased and the servants who are left behind, one of whom, on the right hand wall of the *cubiculum*, addresses the deceased as, "*Generosus Magister*".⁷⁶² As with the memorial to T. Statilius Aper, without the principal inscription advising that Trebius Iustus junior's *signum* was Asellus this level of meaning would be lost.

⁷⁵⁹ See Kajanto 1966: 56 on other instances of *signa* being used to differentiate between homonymous father and son.

⁷⁶⁰ *CIL* VI, 37833 = *ILCV* 1631b = *ICUR* n.s. 6.15845: *Asellae piez(eses)*. Note the use of *-ae* for the second declension singular vocative in lieu of *-e* is a late Latin development cf Orlandi in Rea 2004: 81. The use of *-ae* for *-e* is considered by Adams as a 'hypercorrection' for discussion of a more general trend towards the replacement of diphthongs by monophthongs Adams 2013: 78-9.

⁷⁶¹ *Contra* Casalone 1962: 53, fn 1. Rea 2004: 89. Bisconti 2004a: 144.

⁷⁶² For a full discussion of the interdependence of text and pictorial decoration in Rome wall painting see Squire 2009.

Greek names were common, especially in the servile and lower classes during the late republic and early centuries of the empire, as noted in the example of T. Claudius Diadumenus above. The mixing of Greek and Latin suggests bilingualism of a significant portion of the population. Some memorials take a direct translation of a name to make a point about the dedicatee e.g. a certain Glycon (Γλύκός = "sweet") is remembered by her husband as being sweet (*dulcis*) by name and sweeter (*dulcior*) by nature.⁷⁶³ Bilingualism is evident in some Greek/Latin *signa* for example an Antonine funerary altar discovered on the Via Appia ad Montem Marium, Rome. Written in Greek it commemorates the fifteen year old Titus Statilius Boudion (Βουδίων = bull), known as Taurus.⁷⁶⁴ To emphasise the *cognomen/signum* the tympanum of the altar has a bull carved into it. Similarly, an example from Dalmatia, dated AD 245, records a centurion, M. Ippius, who has the *signum* Equitius though in this instance there is no image of a horse to reinforce the pun.⁷⁶⁵

An interesting example is found in a Latin inscription from Puteoli dated to the end of the second century AD and set up by Numerius Naevius Moschus to his son and his wife.⁷⁶⁶ Naevius Moschus' *cognomen* is Greek for calf and, as in the case of Trebius Iustus, the son took on the name of his father. However, the name changes over the generations so that his son's *cognomen* changes from the Greek Moschus to the Latin equivalent to become Numerius Naevius Vitulus.⁷⁶⁷ In addition to the two inscriptions on the front and back of the altar there are two animals carved one on each side of the altar. One, on the left side, is the image of a calf (figure 144a) which Ritti, almost certainly correctly, explains as referring to the deceased and the

⁷⁶³ *CIL* VI, 19055 = *CLE* 495 = EDR121839: Hoc iacet in tumulo secura Glyconis honesto | dulcis nomine erat, anima quoque dulcior usque ... (vv1-2). Cap. Mus. NCE 797.

⁷⁶⁴ Moretti 1973, II, 2: 371, nr 950. [...]Τ(ίτωι) Στατειλί|ωι Βουδίω| ι ὦι χαί Ταύ|ρωι ἐτῶν | ιε' οἱ θρέψαν | τεξ. Ritti 1977: 293, nr 42, tav. VIII.

⁷⁶⁵ *CIL* III, 2706 = EDCS-28300032. Kajanto 1966: 57.

⁷⁶⁶ *CIL* X, 1807 = EDCS-11500742: *lato anteriore* Dis Manibus | N(umeri) Naevi N(umeri) f(ili) Palat(ina) | Vituli decurioni Puteol(anorum) | et Naevi(ae) Saturnina(e) |⁵ matri eius piissimae. *Lato posteriore* N(umerius) Naevius Moschus | augustalis Puteol(anorum) | N(umerio) Naevio Vitulo f(ilio) | dulcissimo |⁵ et Naeviae Saturnina(e) | coinugi carissimae | consacavit. Vat. Mus. Sala della Biga, 2345. Ritti 1977: 305, nr 69. Lippold 1956: III, 2: 93-4. Spinola 2004: 70 cat. SB23.

⁷⁶⁷ George 2006: 19 suggests that a foreign sounding name could have a negative effect on a person's social acceptability. How 'foreign' a Greek name would sound in a city with a history such as Puteoli's is a moot point.

dedicator's *cognomina*.⁷⁶⁸ The other image, on the right side of the altar, is the image of a sow (figure 144b) that Ritti suggests may be connected with sacrificial ritual.⁷⁶⁹ Reference to sacrifice on such an altar is common yet it is unclear in this instance why a pun on the name of one of the deceased should be twinned with a symbol of sacrifice when the settings of both are near identical. Pigs are known to have a role in Roman funerary rites being sacrificed to Ceres,⁷⁷⁰ but when depicted in a sacrificial context they are either shown garlanded, accompanied by officials, or both, as seen on the altar to the *lares* of the *vicus Aescultus* (figure 145)⁷⁷¹ or on a votive basin from the Via Casilina.⁷⁷² Neither the calf nor the sow on the altar of the Naevii are garlanded or attended as if for sacrifice. The sow is probably a pun, this time referring to the mother not by her *cognomen*, but by another name by which she was known - a *signum* for Naevia Saturnina, the wife of the dedicator and mother of N. Naevius Vitulus. The fact that the *signum* is of a female animal reinforces the possibility of its relevance to the deceased Naevia Saturnina; Macrobius (*Sat.* 1, 6) recalls an incident where a wife is referred to as a sow (*scrofa*). The incident led to the husband assuming the *cognomen* Scrofa.⁷⁷³ To believe that a sow is an unfitting, if not insulting, nickname for a mother and wife is to see the world through modern, rather than Roman, eyes: calling someone 'donkey' in modern parlance would likewise be disrespectful, but the (well-to-do) parents of Trebius Iustus *signo* Asellus clearly meant no insult. The altar to the Naevii therefore illustrates not only the prevalence of bilingualism, but also an example of a pictorial reference to a *signum* where that *signum* is not evident from the text alone. Two further examples of how images on such altars did not exclusively refer to sacrifice may be seen in two altars almost identical in form to that of the Naevii with Ammon heads and eagles at each corner

⁷⁶⁸ Another inscription, *CIL* VI, 27743 (1st C. AD, Rome) similarly commemorates the daughter of a Vitulus (whose wife co-incidentally was another Saturnina) with an accompanying image of a calf. Gatti 1887: 119. Rawson 1966: 73. Ritti 1977: 306, nr 70.

⁷⁶⁹ As does Altmann 1905: 95 who considers the sacrificial link 'obvious', but makes no comment on the onomastic puns on the altar.

⁷⁷⁰ Latte 1960: 101-3.

⁷⁷¹ Cap. Mus. Centrale Montemartini, 387539 = Cap. Mus. Palazzo Nuovo NCE 2970. Zanker 2010, fig. 65.

⁷⁷² Daltrop and Oehler 1996b: 2. 81-3, nr 11.

⁷⁷³ Varro (*Rust.* II, IV, 1-2) recounts a different derivation of the same individual's *cognomen*.

connected by garlands. The first, now in the Galleria degli Uffizi in Florence,⁷⁷⁴ has, in addition to the depictions of sacrificial instruments on the side, a mouse devouring a piece of fruit. The deceased, Iunia Procula, was only eight years old at the time of her death. Clearly not a sacrificial victim the mouse was probably a pun, not on her real name as is the case with M. Gavius Amphion Mus, but on a pet name given to her by her parents as we now from a second century inscription that uses *mus* as a *signum* for a thirteen year old girl.⁷⁷⁵ The second, in the Ny Carlsberg Glyptothek in Copenhagen (figure 146),⁷⁷⁶ has on the front of the altar a naked reclining female that must represent the dedicatee, Cornelia Cleopatra, depicted as the historical *femme fatale*, though without the snakes, thus focusing on her allure rather than her tragedy.

Finally, these verbal/pictorial jokes are evident in non-funerary contexts. From the Forum Baths at Pompeii a bench and brazier paid for by Nigidius Vaccula are decorated with images of a small cow (*vaccula*),⁷⁷⁷ while Plutarch's *Life of Cicero* (*Cic.* 2) records that Cicero, when quaestor in Sicily, made an offering inscribed with the words Marcus Tullius and the image of a chickpea (*cicer*) thereby making a joke out of a *cognomen* that some considered to be demeaning.

Returning to bilingual switching between Greek and Latin this is evident in the satires of Martial. Whereas Juvenal's satire uses readily understandable, onomastic puns in Latin alone (*Juv. Sat.* 8.32: *nanum cuiusdam Atlanta uocamus, Aethiopem Cycnum*)⁷⁷⁸ Martial's poetry is more subtle and shows a facility in both Greek and Latin which assumes a like ability on the part of his audience, otherwise the humour of his poetry would be lost.⁷⁷⁹ As Juvenal highlights the use of ludicrous or demeaning servile names Martial combines this with the Roman habit of giving slaves Greek names to create puns on the character or occupation of the person in question.

⁷⁷⁴ Uffizi degli Uffizi, 950. Kleiner 1987: 132-34, nr 23.

⁷⁷⁵ CIL VI, 35887 = EDR120786: |⁵ Mus vixit annos XIII. Cap. Mus. NCE 222.

⁷⁷⁶ Ny Carlsberg, 860. Østergaard 1996: 46-8.

⁷⁷⁷ Cooley and Cooley 2004: 81-2, D107-8.

⁷⁷⁸ ["A dwarf who we call 'Atlas', an Ethiopian 'Snowball'." Trans. author].

⁷⁷⁹ Vallet 2006: 121-44. For an example of bilingualism in the other direction i.e. a knowledge of Latin among Graecophones see Herodian 1.12.2.

Vallat's 2006 article on punning in Martial's poetry highlights how the literal meaning of the Greek name applied to the object of poet's jibe has to be understood if the satire of the poem is to be effective.⁷⁸⁰ For example, a barber named Eutrapelus ('skilful', 'dextrous') transpires to be so inefficient that by the time he has shaved his customer the customer has grown another beard (Mart. *Epig.* 7.83); while in another poem (Mart. *Epig.* 6.8) an auctioneer is called Eulogus ('good word').

Martial uses more complex bilingual puns that involve a more extensive knowledge of Greek and Greek literature. For example the lines:

*“Si tibi Mistyllos cocus, Aemiliane, vocatur,
Dicatur quare non Taratalla mihi?”*

Mart. *Epig.* 1.50

“If your cook is called Mistyllos, Aemilianus, why
should mine not be called Taratella?”

Trans. Vallat.

This appears to be regular Latin with the inclusion of the seemingly Greek name Mistyllos and Latin Taratalla. The names are deceptive, however, and not real at all, but derived from Homer's *Iliad* 1.465: μίστυλλον τ ἄρα ταλλα ('they cut up the rest (and put it on skewers)'). The agglutination of the Greek verse to create a unique Latin name requires a sound knowledge of Homer if the joke is not to be lost. Vallat uses this particular example to illustrate that Martial's humour would have been understandable only to a 'happy few'.⁷⁸¹ Such a complex Latin/Greek pun may have been lost on all but the (presumably) erudite Aemilianus mentioned in the satire, yet Martial is drawing on a tradition that dates back to the earliest surviving Latin literature of a more populist nature. Plautus uses simple Latin-Greek punning in proper names such as the less than heroic Pyrgopolynices in *Miles Gloriosus* or the grasping money-lender Misargyrides in *Mostellaria*. The puns are a consequence of the Greek models that formed the basis of Plautine comedy. As the Greek names were not translated into something that an audience competent in Latin alone could

⁷⁸⁰ Vallat 2006: 125-7.

⁷⁸¹ Vallet 2006: 131, 134.

understand, then at least some ability on the part of that audience to recognize the pun must have been assumed by the author: otherwise, as with Martial, the joke would have been restricted to very few.⁷⁸²

The combination of the use of animals as *cognomina* or *signa* (with their depiction on grave stele and memorials), the use of Greek names for members of the servile and libertine classes and the habit of bilingual punning may now inform our understanding of the donkey in the hypogeum of the Aurelii fresco. In the floor mosaic of the same *cubiculum* A that contains the donkey fresco we have the three named dedicatees and one dedicator that gave the hypogeum its name i.e. Aurelius Onesimus, Aurelius Papirius, Aurelia Prima and Aurelius Felicissimus. The first name is the one that concerns us here. The name Onesimus is very common with hundreds found in Rome and the surrounding area.⁷⁸³ The name is Greek (ὀνήσιμος) and can be translated as 'useful' and, as noted above, a typically Roman form of wit when naming slaves.⁷⁸⁴ The word is derived from ὄνησις (use, profit or advantage) which sounds similar to the Greek word for donkey, ὄνος; in Latin, Asellus. The *cognomen* Asellus or its cognates Asinus, Asellinus etc. had been in use since the second century BC if not before and, as we have seen in the example of Trebius Iustus above continued at least into the fourth century as a *signum* and remained popular into late antiquity to be used among Christians.⁷⁸⁵ The image of the donkey draws on and melds these traditions of bilingualism, servile names, animal *cognomina* or *signa* and punning and consequently alludes to the name of the first of the deceased, the young Aurelius Onesimus, who is buried on this side of the *cubiculum*.

⁷⁸² It is worth recalling that the Plautine plays were written prior to the large influx of Greek influence and slaves during and subsequent to the Second Punic War.

⁷⁸³ On the relative popularity of certain slave names see Solin 1996: 680 who calculated Onesimus as the eighth most popular servile name with 185 examples out of Solin's sample of 28,000 attestations from Rome.

⁷⁸⁴ Other popular servile names included Felicissimus (e.g. the dedicator of the Aurelii inscription) and Fortunatus.

⁷⁸⁵ E.g. the tribune of 140 BC Tiberius Claudius Asellus recorded in Aulus Gellius *NA* 4,17,1. Kajanto 1965: 87. Kajanto 1966: 22 also refers to *CIL* VI, 23556 = *ILCV* 4481 and possibly *ICUR* n.s. 3.6600b as examples of Asellus being used as a *signum*.

10.5 The 'Shepherd' Scene.

The association of the *adventus* and donkey in the left hand wall Upper Register with a child allows us to see the 'shepherd' scene (figure 73, described section, 5.4.10) with new insight. All early commentators, until the time of Himmelmann's article in 1975 believed that the 'shepherd' was an image of Christ surrounded by a flock representing either the apostles or those attending the Sermon on the Mount. This was despite the fact that there are no known representations of Christ as early as the first half of the third century AD and when Christ is depicted in the fourth century and the following two/three centuries he is shown youthful and without a beard. The theory of the image representing Christ as the Good Shepherd, articulated in the Bible (John 10:11, 14) and then in the late second/early third century *cippus* of Abercius, now in the Museo Pio Cristiano, proved dominant until Himmelmann's interpretation of the figure as a philosopher.⁷⁸⁶

The philosophical interpretation has been broadly endorsed by Bisconti over the last three decades describing the figure as a *homo spiritus*⁷⁸⁷ or *pastor intellectualis*.⁷⁸⁸ This concept of the figure representing some form of philosopher encounters the difficulties we shall discuss in greater detail when considering the figures in the upper chamber. The figure is clearly learned, but it is unclear to what degree such a figure ought to be considered a 'philosopher'. The sarcophagus of Iulius Achilleus mentioned earlier (section 9.2.1, figure 122) has a variety of animals in a bucolic landscape considered appropriate for a tomb which suggests that the bucolic landscape here belongs to the same genre. The age of the 'shepherd' appears incompatible with the age of the deceased in the *arcosolium* immediately below (figure 73). Yet we have seen in the discussion on the *adventus* scene how children, especially young boys, are often represented in the prime of life as we saw in the case of Q. Sulpicius Maximus (section 10.2). Similarly, on a child's sarcophagus from

⁷⁸⁶ Vat. Mus. Pio Cristiano, no inv. nr. On Abercius, who lived in third century Asia Minor and considered himself to be a 'servant to the shepherd', see Guarducci 1978: 4, 377-86 and Mitchell 2008: 303-35. Himmelmann 1975: 19-21.

⁷⁸⁷ Bisconti 1985: 894.

⁷⁸⁸ Bisconti 2011a: 16.

the last quarter of the second century (figure 147a),⁷⁸⁹ in between scenes of the child's upbringing (figures 147b-c) and being led away by Mercury Psychopompus, a scene of *prothesis* shows the deceased as an adult (figure 147d).⁷⁹⁰ Apparent disparity between the ages of the deceased, the mounted figure and the 'shepherd' thus creates few difficulties. The concept is not unusual, merely the manner in which it is presented in the case of the hypogeum of the Aurelii. Rather than presenting the child in a series of vignettes that recall his earliest days: of birth, nursing and education the child incumbent of the west (left) wall *arcosolium* is shown first as a mature man set in a bucolic landscape reading then as a youth on horseback riding towards a future that was forestalled by Fate. The two characteristics of Aurelia Prima I discussed in the previous chapter were separated by a green line indicating that these characteristics co-existed. The characteristics of the young boy Aurelius Onesimus, however, are demonstrated by two distinct phases of his (curtailed) life separated by a red line. It is here, furthermore, that the two curved red lines (mentioned in Chapter 5, section 5.4.8.1, figures 67 and 68) are used. Lines such as these are not found associated with other *arcosolia*, but here appear to serve as a connection between the 'shepherd' and *adventus* scenes in the upper register and the *arcosolium* that has been placed below the division between them. The curved red lines thus unite the deceased with the images of his unfulfilled self above.

A close examination of the two sidewalls and right hand niche of *cubiculum A* allows us to assign the *arcosolium* on the west wall to a young boy no more than nine years old called Aurelius Onesimus and the right hand niche to a young, unmarried woman by the name of Aurelia Prima. In both instances the frescoes in the Upper Register above their respective *arcosolia* reflect on the characteristics of the deceased: lost promise for Onesimus, female probity for Prima. The remaining burial, in the rear wall in an *arcosolium* that was almost completely destroyed by the

⁷⁸⁹ Museo Torlonia, 414. Boymel Kampen 1981: 47-58 esp. 53, pl. 8, fig.7. Amedick 1991: 154, kat. 198, pl. 55.3. Amedick gives the overall length of the sarcophagus as 1.57m which suggests an individual approximately 1.45m in height. A male of this height would be between nine and fourteen years of age see Koepke and Baton 2005: table 2, fig. 3 and CDC 2000 Growth: table fig. 11.

⁷⁹⁰ Birk 2013: 311, cat. 622 raises the possibility that the image of the deceased as an adult may have been recarved (from a child's features) in modern times. The adult proportions of the body however seem, to the author, that an adult was always intended even if the facial features were left incomplete in antiquity.

extension portal, may now be assigned to the only remaining deceased mentioned in the mosaic floor inscription, Aurelius Papirius. This too must reflect on Papirius' characteristics, which, as an adult male *libertus* revolves around the world of work, but before we interpret the rear wall fresco we need to turn our attention to the upper chamber as there are connections between its sidewalls and *cubiculum A's* rear wall.

Chapter 11. The Aurelii at Work.

11.1 Introduction.

I described earlier (Chapter 4) how a feature of freedman funerary art was the celebration of the world of work and their relationship with their patrons. The patron and Aurelii I shall discuss in the next chapter, but here I wish to turn to the subject of work, in particular, the kind of work that may have been undertaken by the Aurelii.

The mosaic decoration recording the dedication by a group of *fratres* and the groups of twelve in *cubiculum* B, the banquet and Processions argue for a collegial tomb. Furthermore, I argued that lack of religious iconography made it highly probable that the *collegium* was not based on cultic practice, but rather some form of profession. The prominent position of women within the decoration argues for a *collegium* that could find a place for women in their organisation. The question is, 'what profession?'. For that, we have to examine the rear (north) wall of *cubiculum* A (described section 5.4.12) and the sidewalls of the upper chamber, which I shall now describe.

11.2 Description of Upper Chamber Side Walls.

The *arcosolia* of the sidewalls are outlined in red with the interiors decorated in a simple linear scheme of green and red lines on a white ground.⁷⁹¹ Matching compositions occupied the rest of the space on each sidewall; that on the east (left) wall (figure 148) is better preserved than that on the west (right) (figure 149). Each composition consists of a monumental portico, with a double colonnade of Doric columns.⁷⁹² This portico appears to curve around the arc of the *arcosolium*, but more likely represents the perspective of two facing porticoes with a connecting central

⁷⁹¹ Wilpert 1924: tav. II. Bisconti 2011a: tavv. 7 and 13.

⁷⁹² Bendinelli 1922: 306 describes the columns as belonging to the Doric order, but there is no fluting which suggests Tuscan columns (Wilson Jones 2000: 110). The lack of fluting may be simply due to the limitations of the scale so either is possible. For ease of reference I maintain Bendinelli's description.

gateway with tympanum.⁷⁹³ Within the portico, entrances or doors are indicated that would lead into a structure behind the portico.

Next to the portico profile, at each end and either side, is an arch that provides a frame for a seated male figure. On the east wall the figure on the left (i.e. the north east corner) holds an open *rotulus* at chest height, his head turned slightly downwards as if reading. He wears a white tunic with *clavi* and has a *pallium* draped over his right shoulder.⁷⁹⁴ The lower part of the figure, from the waist down is not visible due to plaster loss and abrasion. The corresponding figure on the right is dressed in the same manner. He holds a partly rolled up *rotulus* in his left hand and away from his body, while his right hand is held up at shoulder height with his two forefingers extended and separated and the third, fourth fingers and thumb curled in a "V for Victory" manner (figures 150a-b).⁷⁹⁵ He looks away from the *rotulus*. Both figures are mature, but not elderly, with beards and neatly cut hair.

On the less well preserved west wall the figure on the left (i.e. the southwest corner) is seated, possibly holding an open *rotulus* and has short hair and a beard: despite plaster loss a portion of the scroll is visible, unfurled and touching the ground close to the figure's feet.⁷⁹⁶ The detail of his clothing has been destroyed at mid chest and knee level by two horizontal grooves, but a white tunic, with a red/purple *clavi* is visible as is a *pallium* that reaches to his ankles. Despite the plaster loss to the middle part of the figure his feet and the hem of his tunic are visible, his feet are bare.⁷⁹⁷ On the right the upper part of another seated figure remains, similar in dress and form to that on the left and holding a scroll in the 'frame' of the arch at the end of the portico. It was badly preserved at the time of excavation and no details are

⁷⁹³ This detail is difficult to discern even on Wilpert's aquatint but is described by Bendinelli 1922: 306.

⁷⁹⁴ Bisconti 2011a: tav. 8.

⁷⁹⁵ Bisconti 2011a: tav. 9. Pergola 2011: 85 suggests that the figure on the right is speaking, possibly to the figure with the unrolled *rotulus* (on the left).

⁷⁹⁶ Bendinelli 1922: 309. Wilpert 1924: tav. 2b. Bisconti 2011a: tav. 13. The loss of plaster makes it uncertain but Bendinelli believed the figure held a *rotulus* with part of it reaching the floor. The author is given to accept Bendinelli as the figure would match that on the left wall, but acknowledges that an element of doubt remains.

⁷⁹⁷ Bendinelli 1922: 308.

visible either today or in the published records. The lower half of the frescoed plaster facing in this area has been restored with plain plaster.⁷⁹⁸

11.3 Previous Theories.

11.3.1 *Cubiculum A Rear (North) Wall.*

Bandinelli rejected the idea that the scenes on the rear wall (figures 79a-b, description section 5.4.12) were supernatural. The 'forum' scene (figure 80) he interpreted as a depiction of the Aurelii's conversion to Christianity, while listening to a Christian apostle seated in the centre of the 'forum' holding a rod in the manner of a teacher.⁷⁹⁹ Most theories, however, have interpreted the scenes on the rear wall as variants on an idealised world in the afterlife.⁸⁰⁰ Each interpretation was an element within each individual scholar's broader understanding of the monument. Wilpert, for example, interpreted the 'forum' and the '*hortus conclusus*' (figures 81a-b) as elements in the life of the Gnostic prophet Epiphanes. In the '*hortus conclusus*' the woman shown was the mother of Epiphanes with whom he had a "*rendez-vous de plaisir*".⁸⁰¹ Many commentators, both those who preferred an explanation based upon orthodox forms of Christianity and those who followed a more 'heretical' interpretation, thought the townscape represented the celestial city; Colli going so far as to propose that this was the first depiction of the celestial Jerusalem.⁸⁰² Himmelmann's more secular approach recognised a similarity between the 'forum' scene and the funerary depictions of Roman magistrates such as that of C. Vestorius Priscus, the first century AD aedile from Pompeii (figure 151), but concluded that the lack of lictors ruled out any 'real-life' imagery and posited that the fresco depicted a scene of wonder-working on the lines of that recorded for Apollonius of Tyana.⁸⁰³

⁷⁹⁸ Bandinelli 1922:309.

⁷⁹⁹ Bandinelli 1922: 460-1.

⁸⁰⁰ For a brief summary of opinion see Pergola 2011: 95-8, 120-2.

⁸⁰¹ Wilpert 1924: 42.

⁸⁰² Colli 1983: 147-8.

⁸⁰³ Himmelmann 1975: 18. For the same reason that he saw allusions to 'wonder-working' in *cubiculum B* i.e. the presence of the rod held by the central figure.

Bisconti thought the larger figures in the '*hortus conclusus*' were representations of the Aurelii, but within an idealised landscape of the hereafter.⁸⁰⁴

In contrast Grassigli brought forward an explanation that, like Bendinelli, rooted the pictures within the real-life society of the late second/early third century AD. As Himmelmann did before him, Grassigli saw similarities with the tomb of C. Vestorius Priscus, but unequivocally set the scene within the real world of the third century AD, describing previous explanations as being clouded by religious prejudice.⁸⁰⁵ Grassigli's interpretation sees the 'forum' images as a celebration of the life of the deceased and a transitional form of such representation between the first century AD tomb of Vestorius Priscus and the fourth century tomb of Trebius Iustus, the three tombs charting the evolution in the concept of the *dominus splendidus in villam successus*.⁸⁰⁶ In his discussion of the *dominus* on his estate however, Grassigli's argument does not take account of the fact that the Aurelii were freedmen, and therefore socially of a very different class to the freeborn Vestorius Priscus or Trebius Iustus. Furthermore, whereas the tombs of Vestorius Priscus and Trebius Iustus are obvious displays of personal wealth (figures 152 and 153) the same cannot be said of the Aurelii who, while evidently of reasonable financial means (else the hypogeum would not have been built in the first place), nevertheless are not ostentatious about it. Nor is there anything that suggests the aristocratic world of *otium* as the inspiration for the decorative schema. Throughout *cubiculum A* the imagery is predominately urban in context, especially on the rear wall. Even the '*hortus conclusus*' is surrounded by walls and turrets and directly connected with the urban 'forum' scene (figures 81a-b). With the exception of the 'shepherd' scene on the left hand wall all the scenes are urban or suburban in nature and there is little of a bucolic nature in *cubiculum A*.

⁸⁰⁴ Bisconti 2004b: 31.

⁸⁰⁵ Grassigli 2002: 413. Grassigli 2011: 82, "*Soltanto che la pregiudiziale religiosa, iconograficamente assai poco fondata come mostrano i confronti con i due cicli analizzati, ha impedito di proseguire correttamente lungo la strada intravista.*" [Only religious prejudice, iconographically based upon very little, as shown in comparisons between the two (decorative) cycles (i.e. Vestorius Priscus and the Aurelii), has prevented going correctly along the path of understanding].

⁸⁰⁶ Grassigli 2011: 82-3.

11.3.2 Upper Chamber Sidewalls.

Bendinelli's fundamentally orthodox Christian interpretation saw the figures on the sidewalls as prophets or apostles.⁸⁰⁷ The buildings in between the seated figures he viewed as representative of: the Temple of Jerusalem; the House of the Lord or a contemporary church. He stated that there were those who considered the buildings to be some form of *stoa* as used by peripatetic philosophers, but Bendinelli rejected this idea without citing who put it forward.⁸⁰⁸

Wilpert's Gnostic interpretation saw the four figures on the sidewalls as receivers of *gnosis* and this basic idea was followed by all of those who considered the hypogeum to be evidence of Gnostic practice in third century Rome.⁸⁰⁹ Carcopino modified this idea by seeing the figure on the right hand side of the west wall as female,⁸¹⁰ an interpretation followed by Doresse and Logan.⁸¹¹ The female figure was believed by these scholars to represent either Mariamne, mentioned by Origen (*Contra Celsum* 5.62) as being the leader of the Gnostics, or Sophia, the mother of the Gnostic creator or Demiurge.⁸¹² Whether the figure is female though is unproven: its state of preservation extremely poor. Certainly, Bendinelli did not consider any of the figures to be female⁸¹³ and neither Tabanelli's aquatint in Wilpert,⁸¹⁴ nor Bisconti's post-restoration record⁸¹⁵ suggests anything other than a male figure.

Himmelman's 1975 article read the figures as philosophers congruent with his overall understanding of a philosophical inspiration for the tomb's decoration (Chapter 1, section 1.5.3).⁸¹⁶ Bisconti's 1985 paper also described the figures as

⁸⁰⁷ Bendinelli 1922: 439-40.

⁸⁰⁸ Bendinelli 1922: 439, "*Si è anche creduto di riconoscere nell'edificio di fronte a ciascun personaggio seduto, non un tempio, ma un portico, una stoà per filosofi peripatetici.*" ["It is also thought that the building opposite each seated person is, not a temple, but a portico, a stoa for peripatetic philosophers."]

⁸⁰⁹ Wilpert 1924: 10-13.

⁸¹⁰ Carcopino 1956: 106-10.

⁸¹¹ Doresse 1960: 92. Logan 2006: 96.

⁸¹² For the role of Sophia in Gnostic belief systems see Filoramo 1990: 73-80.

⁸¹³ Bendinelli 1922: 312.

⁸¹⁴ Wilpert 1924: tav. II.

⁸¹⁵ Bisconti 2011a: tav. 13.

⁸¹⁶ Himmelman 1975: 16.

philosophers, but did not dwell upon the images in detail.⁸¹⁷ The idea that these figures represent the concept of the pursuit of philosophy and *otium* continues to this day.⁸¹⁸

11.4 Discussion.

I demonstrated in Chapter 9 and Chapter 10 that two of the deceased were commemorated in accordance within traditional Roman commemorative practice i.e. the woman as a model of female *pietas* and the child as *mors immatura*. The idea that the rear wall is therefore uniquely supernatural in inspiration is no longer sustainable.

Grassigli and Himmelmann placed both rear wall *cubiculum* A and upper chamber sidewalls in a tradition of the deceased *dominus* as philosopher and it is true that from the late second century AD onwards the depiction of philosophers, people emulating philosophers or being in the company of philosophers became popular in funerary iconography.⁸¹⁹ Closer consideration, however, reveals that these scenes do not conform to the usual commemorative 'philosopher' style employed on sarcophagi. Outside a general observation that the Aurelii were *liberti* and therefore less likely to have the privilege of the *otium* which was the preserve of the élite, when the élite are represented as philosophers such representations contain one, or more, of the following characteristics:

1. They may assume the habit that identifies them as ascetic philosophers. There are a number of prevalent attributes: they wear a *pallium* with no tunic underneath; have a receding hairline and/or unkempt beard; carry a walking stick and are often shown alone or in a place of quietude (figure 154). None of these features is evident in the upper chamber figures.⁸²⁰

⁸¹⁷ Bisconti 1985: 891.

⁸¹⁸ Grassigli 2011: 79.

⁸¹⁹ For a full discussion of this phenomenon see Zanker 1995 and Ewald 1999.

⁸²⁰ E.g. Sammlung Ludwig, 256. Ewald 1999: 139-40, abb. 2a.b; taf. 8,1-3; 9, kat. A11=G2.

2. More commonly the deceased is depicted in a philosophical pose, but wearing more usual clothes i.e. a tunic underneath the *pallium*. The so-called sarcophagus of Plotinus in the Vatican is a case in point (figure 155).⁸²¹ This sarcophagus, dating from around AD 280, has the central figure seated with an open *rotulus* on his lap accompanied by, in addition to two female admirers, at least three male figures who more closely resemble the philosopher stereotype.⁸²² In other cases he may be accompanied solely by philosophers (figure 156)⁸²³ or by his wife (figure 157)⁸²⁴ who may in turn be presented as a Muse. On other occasions the (male) deceased might himself bear the feathered trophy of the Muse (figure 158).⁸²⁵ In all these instances, however, the deceased is not alone, but demonstrates his erudition to those around him. The sidewall figures, while striking similar poses, do not have any attendant figures to whom they can demonstrate their sophistication. The upper chamber figures have no sympathetic or admiring companions.

3. There are occasions when the deceased is depicted in a variety of roles, each illustrating an aspect of their personality or career, one of which may be as a 'philosopher'. The most famous of these is the 'Brother' sarcophagus (figure 159) dated to the same period as the Plotinus sarcophagus and now in Naples museum.⁸²⁶ The sarcophagus relief does not actually represent brothers, but rather the same individual four times in various guises, one of which is the 'philosopher' with *pallium* only. In the upper chamber frescoes, although there are two figures on each side, there is nothing to suggest that they are anything other than four individuals.

⁸²¹ Vat. Mus. Gregorio Profano, 9504. Ewald 1999: 167-9; taf. 42, 1-2; 43, 1-4, kat. D3.

⁸²² Zanker 1995: 277-9. The male figures are dressed in different ways suggesting to Zanker that they represent different schools of philosophy.

⁸²³ MNR Terme, 113227. Ewald 1999: taf. 103.2,3, kat. I1.

⁸²⁴ Vat. Mus. Cortile del Belvedere, Ottagone 34. Ewald 1999: taf. 51.2, kat. E6.

⁸²⁵ MNA Tarragona (P) 60. Ewald 1999 taf. 28.3, kat. C6.

⁸²⁶ MAN Naples, 6603. Ewald 1999: 200-1, taf. 88,1, kat. G9.

The sidewall figures of the upper chamber are dressed in a respectable, everyday manner in tunic with *clavi*. They are clearly expressing learning by the presence of the *rotuli* that they are holding, but not in an abstract manner involving idealised company or context. If, therefore, the figures do not match the ideal of the deceased as 'philosopher' then another solution must be sought.

Unlike these 'philosopher' figures and those dressed in tunic and *pallium* in *cubiculum* B the upper chamber and *cubiculum* A figures are set in realistic environments. The prominence of the porticoed buildings in the rear wall of *cubiculum* A and the sidewalls of the upper chamber (and, it will be recalled in the cityscape on the west (left) wall of *cubiculum* A, Chapter 5, section 5.4.11) and the positioning of figures in both suggest not only that there is a link between the two, but also that they were significant to the commissioners of the monument.

Given the tradition of freedmen funerary commemoration discussed in Chapter 4, it seems likely that the 'forum' scene depicted on the rear wall of the *cubiculum* A represents one or more of the Aurelii at work. That work was not banal, nor is it likely to have been magisterial. The lack of any depiction of fasces argues against any magisterial capacity, either as principal (e.g. in the *sevirate*) or assistant, being commemorated.⁸²⁷ If the former one would expect a greater emphasis on the post being held, either in the inscription or by a greater prominence of the figure concerned as seen in the tomb of Vestorius Priscus. It is more likely that the person concerned was an assistant or *apparitor* of some description, attendant upon the person shown in the centre of the *quadriporticus*. This would explain the figures near the seated figure depicted in greater detail (described section 5.4.12): they are attendants upon that figure, who though not magisterial, is someone of importance.

The *hortus conclusus* scene (figures 81a-b) ought to be read, as the 'forum' scene, as one set within this world. Given the prominence of the figures in the centre of the *hortus* there is no reason to doubt the views of earlier commentators who

⁸²⁷ A detail noted by Himmelmann 1975: 18.

equate the Aurelii of the inscription with those represented in the *hortus conclusus*. The presence of the *hortus* adjacent to the walled city containing the 'forum' is reminiscent of a suburban estate as seen in the Avezzano relief (figure 124). Yet it should also be noted that a number of *porticus* in the city of Rome may have had *horti* associated with them e.g. the Templum Pacis, the Temple of Claudius and the Adonea⁸²⁸ and the *porticus* of Livia was renowned for having a particularly impressive vine (Pliny *NH* 14.12).

11.4.1 Gestures.

In the discussion on the rear wall of *cubiculum* A (section 11.4) I suggested that the 'Forum' scene was a depiction of the deceased at their place of work. I now wish to examine one of the figures in the upper chamber in detail (figures 150a-b). Bendinelli and Wilpert both believed that the figures represented teachers of some description, albeit of a spiritual nature.⁸²⁹ The teacher interpretation was prompted by the "V for victory" gesture mentioned earlier (section 11.2) that is clearly visible in the figure on the left hand wall.⁸³⁰ A gesture, of the first two fingers extended with the third and fourth turned into the hand, is described by Apuleius (*Met.* 2.21) as being that used at the commencement of a speech at a dinner party:

"Ac sic ... porrigit dexteram et ad instar oratorum conformat articulum duobusque infimis conclusis ceteros eminens porrigens et infesto pollice clementer subrigens infit Thelyphron."

Apuleius *Met.* 2.21.

"And so, ... he extended his right arm, shaping his fingers to resemble an orator's: having bent his two lowest fingers in, he stretching the others out and pointing the thumb outwards, gently rising, Thelyphron began."⁸³¹

Trans. Loeb modified.

⁸²⁸ For the possibility of these building complexes containing *horti* see Lloyd 1982. Vitruvius *De Arch.* 5.9.5 recommends the use of *horti* within porticus.

⁸²⁹ Bendinelli 1922: 307, "*nel gesto del docente*". Wilpert 1924: 12, "*... insegnare di Vangelo*."

⁸³⁰ It is worth noting that this gesture is also used by figure nr 3 of the rear *arcosolium* in *cubiculum* B. Bendinelli 1922: 405, "*tengono perciò alzato l'avambraccio destro, uno di essi, con le dita delle mano semiaperto,*"

⁸³¹ On the meaning of *pollex infestus* see Corbeill 1997 esp. 7; Richter 2003: 34-44.

Virgil is described by Fulgentius as using a similar gesture with thumb pressing inwards when commencing his explanation of the Aeneid:

“itaque compositus in dicendi modum erectis in iotam duobus digitis tertiam pollicem comprimens ita verbis exorsus sit.”

Fulg. *Ex. Virg. Cont.* M143.

“And so, posed in a speaking manner with two fingers sticking out in the shape of an iota and pressing together a third, the thumb, thus he began with (these) words.”⁸³²

Trans. author.

The upper chamber figure, however, requires a more nuanced interpretation to that given by Bendinelli and Wilpert as it differs from the description in Apuleius and is not strictly that usually associated with oratory, teaching or reading.

The first and second fingers are splayed, with the thumb, not separated, nor pressing against the index finger, but turned into the hand. The gesture is not that of an orator or *ad locutio* where the figure always stands, arm raised with hand stretched out and palm downwards in a manner seen unchanged from the late republic (figure 161)⁸³³ to at least the mid-third century as depicted on a coin of Gordian III (r. 238-244) (figure 160).⁸³⁴ Nor is the gesture the same as that used in the didactic poses seen on sarcophagi e.g. that dated to the first half of the second century AD from the Via Ostiense, Rome, and now in the Louvre (figures 162a-b).⁸³⁵ In such cases the arm is not extended and the forearm is near horizontal with the first and second fingers together i.e. much closer to that described by Apuleius. We have, therefore, two distinct two gestures: that of the figure in the upper chamber, which I shall call the vertical gesture and that on the Louvre sarcophagus, which I shall call the horizontal gesture. Given the precision with which the gestures are depicted there is no reason to suppose that they are the same. Two end panels, most

⁸³² Despite the phrase *‘erectis in iotam’* which suggests a vertical gesture this gesture is predominately depicted horizontally on sarcophagi (fig. 162b) and in the Terence manuscripts to signify the character speaking (http://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Vat.lat.3868).

⁸³³ NAM Florence 2, the *arringatore*.

⁸³⁴ *RIC* IV, 313.

⁸³⁵ Louvre, Ma 475. Ewald 1999: 135-6, taf. 1; 2,1-2; 3, kat. A1.

probably from the same early third century AD sarcophagus, but now separate, show both gestures, one on each panel (figures 163a-b).⁸³⁶ On each is a single seated figure dressed in the guise of a philosopher flanked by different attributes associated with learning: theatrical mask, two open *rotuli* on stands, and a sundial. As the different objects exemplify different aspects of learning the different gestures are associated with different actions in connection with that learning. It is not clear from these images precisely what the differences are, but it is not the only representation of both vertical and horizontal forms on the same sarcophagus. Another, dated to c. AD 270, now in the crypt of Cagliari cathedral, shows both gestures on the lid of the sarcophagus (figure 164).⁸³⁷ What the gestures mean is not clear from the Cagliari example, but the deliberate use of both gestures in the same 'scene' indicates that some nuance in meaning was intended.

A clue to this nuance may be found in a comparison of two sarcophagi that depict very similar scenes, both originally from Rome and dated to the last quarter of the third century: one now in the Louvre, Paris,⁸³⁸ the other in the Vatican.⁸³⁹ Both sarcophagi represent the deceased as a 'philosopher', but in both cases they are children who demonstrate their precocious talents to other children around them. The first, in the Louvre, is the central image of a series of episodes that refer to the short life of the child (figures 165a-b). Holding an open *rotulus* in the left hand, his right hand is held in the horizontal gesture. Around him are four figures rapt in concentration on the deceased's words. At least two of them have feathers in their hair to present them as Muses; one, closest to the 'philosopher', has a stylus and writing tablet, but is not in the act of writing. In the second child's sarcophagus (which we met earlier, figure 130), a single episode shows a gifted child again dressed as a philosopher in the company of other children, but in this instance they represent the canonical number of Muses, each with their particular attribute. Here the child holds his arm up in the vertical gesture (figure 166), with his third and fourth fingers curled

⁸³⁶ Vat. Mus. Chiaramonti, 1256 and 1258. Ewald 1999: 144-5, taf. 13, kat. A23 and A24, respectively.

⁸³⁷ Cagliari cathedral crypt (no inventory number), Ewald 1999: 213-14, taf. 98, kat. I5. Teatini 2011: 201-9, figs188-92, nr 42.

⁸³⁸ Louvre, Ma 1520. Ewald 1999: 170, taf. 44,2; 45,2; kat. D7=H7.

⁸³⁹ Vat. Mus. Galleria dei Candelabri, 2422. Ewald 1999: 169-70, taf. 44,1; 45,1, kat. D5. Spinola 2004: 89-90.

inwards and the palm out towards his fellow who is standing in the same position relative to the 'philosopher' as in the Louvre example, but this one is writing. The child is therefore dictating rather than simply reading or teaching. In the case of the hypogeum of the Aurelii the same vertical gesture is used, the figure seems to be dictating rather than teaching.⁸⁴⁰

Furthermore, while most comparanda are unavoidably taken from funerary contexts, recent excavations have brought to light an example of the same gesture in a very different context. In 2005, in the area of the *Templum Pacis* in Rome, near to the central Aula, an ivory statuette was discovered showing the same vertical gesture as in the upper chamber.⁸⁴¹ It represents Septimius Severus, dressed in *toga contabulata* (figure 167) of a type dated to the very last years of the second century, making it contemporary with the rebuilding of the *Templum Pacis* after the disastrous fire of AD 192 (Dio Cassius 73.24). Spinola describes this gesture as *ad locutio*,⁸⁴² but as we saw above the image is very different from the *ad locutio* gesture depicted either in statuary, or in imperial iconography expressed in coinage.

The reconstruction conformed closely to the layout of the Library of Hadrian at Athens with a central audience hall flanked by libraries and auditoria (figures 168a-b).⁸⁴³ The *Templum Pacis* was not simply an arena for the display of works of art. Most famously one of the halls in the *Templum Pacis* contained the *Forma Urbis* which signifies that one of the principal purposes of the *Templum* was administrative, possibly the office of the Urban Prefect.⁸⁴⁴ The discovery of niches in the walls that

⁸⁴⁰ Richter 2003: 94 construed that the vertical gesture exhibited in the Galleria dei Candelabri sarcophagus was a gesture signifying instruction to a group rather than a single individual but, does not address why the Louvre example, despite including it in his corpus, should be horizontal although that child too has a group audience. Richter does not include the gesture shown in fig. 163b nor the hypogeum of the Aurelii figure in his corpus.

⁸⁴¹ Meneghini and Valenzani 2007: 66, fig. 61. Meneghini 2009: 89-91, followed by Lusnia 2014: 148-9, describes the figure as a 'philosopher'. Spinola 2014: 165-8. The extant overall height of the statuette is 24.8cm and shows signs of burning in antiquity.

⁸⁴² Spinola 2014: 165.

⁸⁴³ Carandini 2013: vol. 2, tav. 104. Meneghini 2014: 289-98. For the structural form of libraries in the ancient world and its origins see Makowiecka 1978 on more recent scholarship see the bibliography to Caruso 2014 and the précis of known or possible libraries in Stročka et al. 2012: 167-84.

⁸⁴⁴ Meneghini 2010: 37.

became incorporated into the church of SS Cosma and Damiano confirms the *Templum* had at least one library, probably that mentioned in ancient literature (Aulus Gellius 5.21.9; 16.8.2 and in the SHA *Tri Tyr.* 31.10).⁸⁴⁵ The statuette, although found near the central Aula, is far too small to be a cult statue,⁸⁴⁶ but is of a size that would be consistent with busts and sculptures that decorated libraries and indeed a bronze (clipeate?) bust of the philosopher Chryssipus was found in the same area.⁸⁴⁷ There is no suggestion that the *Templum* was associated with any didactic activity, however, a gesture of dictation would be appropriate for a library. Such institutions were not lending libraries, therefore the copying and dissemination of material was an important aspect of a library's work,⁸⁴⁸ both in the ordinary course of events and after disaster had befallen archives elsewhere (Suet. *Dom.* 20). It would not be out of place to have an image of the emperor dictating laws and rescripts for those working in the library to copy down.⁸⁴⁹

The Aurelii figure with the vertical gesture thus is engaged in a similar activity to the precocious child on the Vatican sarcophagus and the emperor dictating works for dissemination or preservation. A contemporary would not have needed to read an inscription, 'reading' the image would have told the viewer the deceased's role in society.

11.4.2 Background Buildings.

Bearing the discovery of the statuette in mind the background to the upper chamber figures provides an important context for their interpretation. The building depicted shows two parallel porticoes receding into the distance towards a central

⁸⁴⁵ Dix and Houston 2006: 692-3 notes the possibility that the library was not rebuilt as it is not referred to afterwards in the literature and wisely awaits the outcome of the (then) ongoing excavations. Meneghini 2014: 296 states that Severan reconstruction work indicates the construction of the niches is commensurate with the presence of a library, though, of course, the nature of that library may not have been the same as pre-192.

⁸⁴⁶ Meneghini 2009: 89.

⁸⁴⁷ Spinola 2014: 165, fig. 6.

⁸⁴⁸ Nicholls 2011: 139.

⁸⁴⁹ It is worth recalling that the adjacent Argiletum was a place of booksellers (Mart. *Epig.* 1.2.7-8; 1.3.1-2; 1.117.9-12) in AD 85/6 though whether this activity survived the various post-Vespasianic alterations and rebuildings is unclear. Anderson 1982.

architectural detail that is now badly faded, but Wilpert's aquatint indicates a structure linking the two porticoes in a similar manner to a fresco from Pompeii (figure 169).⁸⁵⁰ Unlike the Pompeian fresco though there is no suggestion that this is some form of villa with gardens or pools. Furthermore, the arches in which the figures are placed are out of proportion and perspective when viewed with the rest of the picture. This disjuncture between the figures and the porticoes suggests that: (1) the figures are placed within a cross-section of the portico and are depicted in the portico or (2) are in part of the building immediately behind the portico and the position of the viewer forms the fourth side of a quadriform building. The figures are made significant not only by their size, but also by their association with the portico building.

The depiction of Doric columns is unusual in that the majority of columnar construction in third century AD Rome was carried out in the Corinthian order. The presence of Doric columns here, therefore, is interesting as they crop up elsewhere in the hypogeum, namely supporting the roofed structure containing the donkey on the left wall of *cubiculum* A (Chapter 5, section 5.4.11) and the mausoleum structure in the Upper Register of the so-called 'Homeric' scene (section 5.4.16.1). To find three examples of it in one hypogeum together with the quadriporticus of the forum scene in *cubiculum* A (whose order may or may not be Doric) indicates that this fact is more significant than has been previously considered. A building type closely associated with Doric columns is the *porticus* of which there are several examples in Rome using the Doric order.⁸⁵¹ Developing from the Classical and Hellenistic *stoa* such *porticus* formed a covered way with pitched roof, the different proportions of the different orders allowing internal (Ionic) and external (Doric) columns to have the same diameter but different heights;⁸⁵² this was still considered good practice in the first century AD (Vitruvius *De Arch.* 5.9.2). These *porticus*, the most prestigious of

⁸⁵⁰ Claridge and Ward-Perkins 1976: kat. nr 6. MAN Naples, 9406.

⁸⁵¹ The *porticus* of the Danaids on the Palatine; the *porticus* of Gaius and Lucius in front of the Basilica Pauli in the Forum Romanum; the Porticus Octaviae as demonstrated by columns surviving in the Piazza Funari and another *porticus*, possibly the *porticus Minucia Frumentaria*, remains of which are incorporated into a building in the Via S. Maria dei Calderari.

⁸⁵² Coulton 1976: 100. For an illustration of the preponderance of the use of Doric columns as the outer row of *stoa* columns see Coulton 1976: 219-25.

which was the *porticus* of Gaius and Lucius in the Forum Romanum,⁸⁵³ provided protection from the weather and evolved into quadrilateral *porticus* where the Doric order was used, albeit less frequently, in Imperial times. Doric columns were probably used in the Porticus Liviae from which they were later taken and re-used in the nearby church of S. Pietro ad vincoli.⁸⁵⁴ Although little of the Porticus Liviae has been found its layout is attested on the *Forma Urbis* and the structure consisted of a large rectangular building with a double colonnade. The Porticus Octaviae, contained a library upon its inception (Plut. *Marc.* 30, Suet. *De Gramm.* 21), and the adjacent Porticus Philippi enclosed the Temple of Hercules Musarum which probably served as a meeting place for a *collegium poetarum*.⁸⁵⁵ While others e.g. the Porticus Minucia Frumentaria were associated with administrative functions of the city such as the *annona*.

11.4.3 Discussion.

If the figures in the upper chamber are represented in a manner similar to those we have seen in banausic trades, then they signify a more learned sphere of work. The porticoed buildings and the 'V' for Victory figure reinforce this hypothesis. The hypogeum of the Aurelii, however, is not unique in the pictorial depiction of bureaucratic work.

The 'Altar of the Scribes', discovered in 2000, dating from AD 25-50 and now in the Terme museum, Rome, commemorates the occupations of two *scribae aedilium curulium*, the sons of Quintus Fulvius Eunus.⁸⁵⁶ The altar shows, on each side, a male figure, probably the deceased, reclining on a couch, one attended by a standing servant, the other accompanied by a female who sits at the foot of the

⁸⁵³ Sear 1998: 56-7, fig. 29.

⁸⁵⁴ Carandini 2013: 1.312, fig. 89; 2. tav. 106.

⁸⁵⁵ Schmidt in *BNP*: 3.535, s.v. *collegium poetarum*. Viscogliosi in *LTUR*: 3.17-19, s.v. *Hercules Musarum, Aedes*. Horsfall 1976.

⁸⁵⁶ EDR106295: (in *tabula ansata*) Dis Manibus | Q(uinto) Fulvio Q(uinti) f(ilio) Qui(rina tribu) Prisco | Scr(ibae) aed(iliu)m cur(uliu)m vixit an(nis) XXVII | Q(uintus) Fulvius Eunus pater |⁵ fecit. (on altar) Dis Manibus | Q(uinto) Fulvio Q(uinti) F(ilio) Quir(ina tribu) | Fausto, scribae et | scribae librario aedilium |⁵ curulium vix(it) an(nis) XXXII. MNR Terme, 475113. Zevi and Friggeri in *MNR Epigrafica*: 355-62, nr VI, 47.

couch offering a drink or libation to the deceased (figures 170a-b).⁸⁵⁷ On the front of the altar are two scenes. The first scene, in the upper part of the altar (figure 170c), shows two seated figures dressed in full-length togas either side of a table, their faces turned towards the viewer. They are attended by three servants, depicted in a smaller scale and dressed in short tunics and cloaks.⁸⁵⁸ All five figures appear to be engaged in administrative work e.g. holding *rotuli* or *tabulae cerae*. The lower part of the altar has a crowd scene comprised of around twenty individuals (figure 170d), including one woman and two children, who look up towards a *tabula ansata* that has an inscription to one of the deceased. The male figures are all dressed in short tunics and, as in the upper scene, some hold *rotuli* others *tabulae cerae*. These figures are clearly subordinate to the deceased to whom they, literally, look up.

The lack of inscriptional evidence to provide a *curriculum vitae* makes it impossible to ascertain whether or not the Aurelii became *apparitores* in the same way that the sons of Q. Fulvius Eunus did, but that does not preclude their employment in similar clerical posts either governmental or private. The form of clerical post is suggested by three points:

1. The upright 'V' gesture in the upper chamber.
2. The *porticus* buildings in the upper chamber and *cubiculum A*.
3. The presence of women in *cubicula A* and *B* and their prominence in the decoration.

The first two points suggest that the Aurelii were connected with a library of which twenty-eight were recorded in fourth century regional catalogues in the city of Rome,⁸⁵⁹ of which the positions of twelve are known with some accuracy⁸⁶⁰ and

⁸⁵⁷ The status of the female figure is unclear. She, (unlike the servant on the opposite side) is the same scale as the deceased and therefore is of similar importance but neither of the two inscriptions mentions a woman. The dedicator is the father of one, probably both, men commemorated. The author's interpretation is that the female figure may be a pre-deceased mother.

⁸⁵⁸ There is a marked difference in scale of these servile figures compared to the depiction of Atimetus and his freedman mentioned above.

⁸⁵⁹ Nicholls 2005: 336.

⁸⁶⁰ Palombi 2014: 98-118. The bibliography on the form and practice of libraries in Rome is extensive, especially in recent years and English. Palombi's article, in addition to summarising the latest work on the subject, gives the most up-to-date bibliography.

there were, no doubt, many other private or specialist libraries that were not listed (Macrobius *Sat.* 1.6).⁸⁶¹ The third point, the prominence of women, reinforces, rather than undermines, such a conclusion. Epigraphic evidence shows that women could be and were employed in secretarial posts using a variety of terms i.e. *a manu*,⁸⁶² *amanuensis*,⁸⁶³ *libraria*⁸⁶⁴ or *notaria grece* (sic).⁸⁶⁵ There were also women who bore the title *lectrix*⁸⁶⁶ or *anagnostria*⁸⁶⁷ which is probably associated with scribal activity.⁸⁶⁸ The inscriptions confirm that these women were of libertine or servile class, but their occupation would require a high level of education and some of them were 'married', either formally or informally, being addressed by the dedicator as *contubernalis* or *coniunx*.⁸⁶⁹ Reference to female scribes in literature is less plentiful, but not non-existent.⁸⁷⁰ In the first century AD Vespasian is said, on the death of his wife, to have resumed his relationship with Caenis, described as *liberta et a manu* of Antonia (Suet. *Vesp.* 3), while Juvenal refers to a *libraria* feeling the wrath of her mistress (Juv. *Sat.* 6.476).⁸⁷¹ Closer to the time of the Aurelii Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiae* refers to Origen (c. AD 175-254) employing: κόραις ἐπὶ τὸ καλλιγραφεῖν ἡσκημέναις ('girls trained in calligraphy' Eus. *HE* 6.23.2) alongside male scribes and copyists.

⁸⁶¹ For evidence of a private library see *CIL* VI, 6314 = *CLE* 1014 = EDR004934, a *librarius a manu* called Nothus, one of seven *tabularii*, *librarii* and *a manu*, listed in Caldelli and Ricci 1999: appendices 1 and 3, discovered in the *monumentum familiae Statiliorum*, (MNR Terme, 30828, *MNR Epigrafica*: 540-1). On the topic of specialist libraries see Martinez and Senseney 2013.

⁸⁶² *CIL* VI, 7373 = EDR141842 = EDCS-18600087; 9540 = *ILS* 7397 = EDCS-19200253; 9541 = EDR160219.

⁸⁶³ *CIL* VI, 9542.

⁸⁶⁴ *CIL* VI, 3979 = EDR119454; 8882; 9301 = EDR137602; 9525 = EDR078376; 37802.

⁸⁶⁵ *CIL* VI, 33892 = EDR000884 = EDCS-24100405.

⁸⁶⁶ *CIL* VI, 8786 = EDCS-18700127; 33473 = EDR152970 = EDCS-23900587. For further comment on this last individual, Dercetos Aurelia, cf fn 186.

⁸⁶⁷ *CIL* VI, 33830; 34270.

⁸⁶⁸ On the subject of educated women at work both as scribes and pedagogues see Treggiari 1976.

⁸⁶⁹ On the distinction between the two see Pomeroy 1975: 150-8 and 193-7.

⁸⁷⁰ For a discussion of the literary evidence for female scribes together with a critique of how such evidence has been interpreted by previous scholarship see Haines-Eitzen 1998.

⁸⁷¹ The term used by Juvenal, *libraria*, is usually translated as 'wool-maid' due to a scholiast's gloss of *lanipendia*. For an analysis of this and restitution of the reading *libraria* see Haines-Eitzen 1998: 638.

Whether the Aurelii, male and female, were employed in a private or public institution is uncertain,⁸⁷² but there are a number of possibilities:

1. The private archive of an individual or *familia*.
2. A public library or archive of a public institution.
3. The Aurelii may have been from a variety of separate institutions private and/or public.

Given the large number interred with the hypogeum of the Aurelii as a whole it seems less probable that they belonged to a private establishment. Tombs such as Tomb H ("Tomb of the Valerii") in the Vatican necropolis,⁸⁷³ which are certainly familial, give a prominence to the immediate family which is absent in the hypogeum of the Aurelii and there is no suggestion in *cubiculum A*, despite the prominence of the individuals mentioned in the inscription, that they are part of a *familia* or of different roles that might be played by individuals within that *familia* (Chapter 3, section 3.4).⁸⁷⁴ The allusions to similar occupations in the upper chamber and *cubiculum A* would require a very large household, with this tomb being reserved for only one part of that household; an unprecedented situation.

The large numbers may be the consequence of the Aurelii belonging to some form of public institution, but this is unlikely on two grounds: (1) most public institutions in Rome were imperial in foundation and there is no allusion to imperial benefaction or involvement, and (2) as with collective tombs for *familiae* there is no suggestion of other forms of work being carried out and such institutions would have had a great many employed in a variety of roles.

⁸⁷² Although magistrates generally used their household staff to assist in their official duties Cicero suggests that there were additional state employed *librarii*: "*sed statim describi ab omnibus librariis ... atque edi populo Romano imperavi*" in contrast to his own staff: "*prius etiam edituri indicium fuerint scribae mei ...*" (Cic. *Sull.* 42-44).

⁸⁷³ Toynbee and Ward-Perkins 1956: 82-6, appendix A for familial relationship of the Valerii and others within the Vatican necropolis. Fejfer 2008: 120-3. Liverani and Spinola 2010: 97-102.

⁸⁷⁴ The various members of the *familia* Statiliorum identify their respective roles within the *familia* e.g. the *olla* to the secretary Nothus, *CIL VI*, 6314 = EDR004934. MNR Terme, 30828. For other memorials to members of the *familia* Statiliorum see *CIL VI*, 6213-6640.

There is, however, ample epigraphic evidence of trade specific organisations in Rome and further afield. In addition to the three most common *collegia*: the *centonarii*, *dendrophoroi* and *fabri tignuarii*, there were a wide range of others including officials e.g. the *collegium viatorum*,⁸⁷⁵ cooks,⁸⁷⁶ entertainers e.g. *collegium scabillariorum*,⁸⁷⁷ medical doctors e.g. *schola medicorum*⁸⁷⁸ and artisans e.g. the *collegium aurificium*.⁸⁷⁹ *Scribae* also formed trade-specific *collegia* as confirmed by an inscription set up by the freedman P. Pompeius Pylades with his wife and son in the first century BC.⁸⁸⁰ Literature, also, provides evidence of *collegia* of scribes working in the city of Rome near contemporaneously with the Aurelii of a status equivalent to lictors and *praecones* attendant on the obsequies paid to Pertinax in AD 193 (Dio Cassius 75.4.5).⁸⁸¹ The decoration is, therefore, consistent with the Aurelii being members of a similar *collegium scribarum* or *librariarum* working or based in one of the many *porticus* in the city of Rome.

⁸⁷⁵ *CIL* VI, 1942 = EDR107866.

⁸⁷⁶ *CIL* VI, 8750 = EDR107378.

⁸⁷⁷ *CIL* VI, 32294 = EDR029587.

⁸⁷⁸ *CIL* VI, 29805 = EDR115591. For a discussion on the presence of *scholae medicorum* in the Templum Pacis area see Palombi 1998-98.

⁸⁷⁹ *CIL* VI, 9144 = EDR126004. The most comprehensive listing of professions associated with *collegia* remains Waltzing 1895-1900 vol. 4.

⁸⁸⁰ *AE* 1991, 0114 = EDR005022. P(ublius) Pompeius P(ubli) l(ibertus) Pylades | scr(iba) libr(arius) tribun(icius) et mag(ister) conl(egi) | scr(ibarum) libr(ariorum) quinquennalis | [-] Pompeius P(ubli) f(ilius) Sabinus, f(ilius) |⁵ Pompeia uxor. Cf *CIL* VI, 37148 = EDR072232; *AE* 1939, 0153 = EDR073397; *AE* 1959, 0147 = EDR080165; EDR121083; *CIL* VI, 1851 = EDR121950; *CIL* XIV, 2265 = EDR131119; *CIL* XIV, 409 = EDR146430 all of which refer to *magistri* and *decuriones scribarum*. For a discussion of the status and organisation of *scribae* see Purcell 2001.

⁸⁸¹ “... καὶ τὰ ἐν τῷ ἄστει αὐτῷ γένη, τό τε τῶν ῥαβδούχων καὶ τὸ τῶν γραμματέων τῶν τε κηρύκων καὶ ὅσα ἄλλα τοιουτότροπα ...” [“and the guilds of the City itself – those of the lictors, the scribes, the heralds, and all the rest”].

Chapter 12. 'Adam and Eve' and 'Creator'.

12.1 Introduction.

The rear wall fresco in the upper chamber is the most fragmentary of all those within the hypogeum of the Aurelii yet is important nonetheless. We have seen how all the frescoes, when read in the light of third century AD funerary practice may be understood as having a direct relevance to the occupants of the tomb. The commissioners of the hypogeum of the Aurelii celebrated their achievement of their liberty in the rodded figures and the *manumissio vindicta* in *cubiculum* B; their membership of a *collegium* was remembered in the groups of twelve in *cubiculum* B's *arcosolia* and the banquet and processions in *cubiculum* A and their professional competence was honoured in the rear wall of *cubiculum* A and the sidewalls of the upper chamber. The rear wall fresco in the upper chamber is the last to be analysed and, as we shall see, reveal itself to be an example of patron commemoration in a form unique in Roman art.

Interpretation will commence with a discussion of the so-called 'Adam and Eve' scene. Previous interpretations have drawn heavily on early Christian iconography particularly on sarcophagi of the fourth century, but despite superficial similarities a close examination of early Christian iconography shows that the upper chamber imagery is simply too disparate to make a Christian explanation tenable. I shall then review and discuss the theories of Nikolaus Himmelmann and Helga Kaiser-Minn. These two were the principal scholars who rejected a Christian interpretation, but overlooked information from elsewhere in the hypogeum and did not fully contextualise the hypogeum within the wider realm of third century AD Roman society. Avoiding, wherever possible, anachronistic comparison with fourth century iconography such contextualisation reveals that the so-called 'Adam and Eve' and 'Creation' scenes, far from being examples of nascent Christian iconography, are rooted in a Classical tradition that had, by this period, evolved into a blurring of the boundaries between the real world and that of myth.

12.2 The Rear Wall of the Upper Chamber, Description.

The rear wall has lost all but a narrow band of plaster from the centre and the larger patches still in place at either side are fragmentary (figure 171). The right side is the better preserved (figures 172a-c) although cut into by the continuations of the same two horizontal grooves which damaged the adjacent side walls. At the corner is a tree, now very faded, but once extending the whole height from floor to the edge of the shelf, with large round, red fruit, described by Bendinelli as pomegranate, filling the upper angle and clearly dividing the scene on this wall from that on the right side wall.⁸⁸² Under its spreading foliage is a large seated figure, in three-quarter view turned towards the viewer's right with the face looking towards the viewer. He is approximately two-thirds life-size, clean-shaven with a downturned mouth, mature but not elderly. His hair is cropped short, his right shoulder is bare, and he has bare feet, his right foot projects in front of the left. Part of his draped right hip survives on a small fragment of plaster still *in situ* to the left. Between the seated figure and the tree is the top half of a much smaller male figure whose flesh tones are a darker brick-red colour than the seated figure. This smaller figure has short hair and is apparently naked.⁸⁸³ The smaller figure is cut off at chest height by the upper groove making it impossible to determine whether he is standing or not. The relationship between the two figures is not easy to determine; the smaller figure may indicate a position in the distance, but the seated figure's left hand appears to be touching the small figure suggesting that they belong together. Behind and slightly above the seated individual there is further foliage within which there is a curved line in the form of an upturned and elongated C. Within this curved line there are two wavy lines (highlighted in figure 172c) which are remnants of branches hanging from the tree.⁸⁸⁴ A narrow strip of plaster in the centre of the wall (figure 173), broadly level with the head of

⁸⁸² Bendinelli 1922: 312.

⁸⁸³ Bendinelli 1922: 312.

⁸⁸⁴ Bisconti 2004b: 35 and Bucolo 2011: 129 state that this last detail became apparent after restoration, however, it is shown in Wilpert 1924: tav. 1.

the large male figure, bears traces of foliage and fruits similar to those in the tree at top right.⁸⁸⁵

On the left hand side of the extant plaster, where the upper groove stops short of the corner, is the clearly visible upper half of a nude male that has survived above the thighs, painted in reddish brown against a white background (figures 174a-b). The figure is youthful, clean-shaven, has short hair and faces in the general direction of the centre of the wall. The right arm is crooked with the hand held over the left breast and upper arm. The left arm is at the figure's side with the lower arm raised slightly away from the left hip. Despite plaster loss it is unlikely that anything was held in the right hand, but it is less obvious whether or not anything was clasped in the left.⁸⁸⁶ The head is inclined slightly forward and the gaze is downward with the head turned slightly to the right. The gaze of the figure leads to an individual that is even more fragmentary whose lower legs are partially preserved to the right, in front of him and somewhat below. The second figure must have been of about the same height, or slightly shorter, with feet and legs bare, at least to above knee height, the right foot is turned out to the side and a shadow under the left foot suggests movement in that direction. A snake coils up beside the left leg, the rest of its body extending on the ground behind the left ankle. Its head is large and diamond-shaped, with an eye looking upwards to the figure. Immediately to the right is the trunk of a tree, which appears again in the narrow strip of plaster preserved at a higher level, bending over to the left. It is possible that, like the tree at the far right of the wall, it extended all the way up to the shelf and arched over the two figures.

Despite the fragmentary nature of the plasterwork between the two end scenes there is no suggestion of any dividing vertical lines in red or green such as those in the lateral *arcosolia* and elsewhere in the hypogeum. Instead, the upper horizontal strip depicts a background of arboreal foliage with fruit similar to that seen

⁸⁸⁵ Wilpert 1924: tav. 1. Though lost to modern photographs close autopsy (18th October 2012) reveals some traces remain.

⁸⁸⁶ Wilpert 1924: tav. 1 (figure 174b) appears to show some form of curved stick in the figure's left hand but there is no mention of this in Bendinelli's report. Comparison with the modern photograph (figure 174a) shows that it is probably an imperfection in the plaster.

in the right hand panel above the diminutive figure and has no division into panels. The evidence, therefore, suggests that the rear wall had only one decorative scheme.

12.3 Interpretation.

12.3.1 'Adam and Eve'.

The presence of a snake and two human figures, apparently nude, led Bendinelli to interpret the figures as Adam and Eve, the first man and woman, from the Book of Genesis in the Christian Bible (Gen. 2, 15 - 3, 24).⁸⁸⁷ As this identification has informed all later discussion of the hypogeum of the Aurelii it is worth examining in some detail.

According to the Christian Bible after God created the first couple they dwelt in the Garden of Eden without a sense of shame at the fact that they were naked. In that garden were two trees, the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge. God forbade eating the fruit of the latter, but Eve was persuaded by a serpent to do so and she, in turn, offered it to Adam who also ate it.⁸⁸⁸ The result was that they understood the difference between right and wrong and consequently realised their nakedness and were ashamed of it. In response they made aprons out of fig leaves and hid themselves. Because of their disobedience of God's command they were punished: Eve by bringing forth children in sorrow and Adam by harvesting food only through considerable toil. Thus the Old Testament sought to explain the respective roles of men and women.

The subject, known as the 'Fall from Grace', is found very early in Christian art and is the only one which involves nudity. An example appears in the church at Dura-Europos, which was destroyed by the Sassanid Persians in c. AD 253-256 (figure 175a): a nude man and woman, covering their genitalia, stand to either side of a tree around which is entwined a snake. Exactly the same iconography appears

⁸⁸⁷ Bendinelli 1921b: 234; 1922: 436.

⁸⁸⁸ The fruit of the Tree of Knowledge is often depicted as an apple in Roman and later art though it is not described as such in Genesis.

on Roman sarcophagi of the early fourth century (e.g. figure 175b) and in a graffito from Rome (figure 175c).⁸⁸⁹

Exceptions are known however. A sarcophagus in Trier, for example, of possibly early fourth century date and local manufacture, shows Adam and Eve naked on either side of the Tree of Knowledge and a snake, but they make no attempt to cover their nakedness (figure 176).⁸⁹⁰ Since the snake has an apple in its mouth and is offering it to Eve, it is probable that the scene refers to the period of innocence immediately before she eats the apple.

A similar example of a lack of shame in the presence of the snake, on a relief probably from a sarcophagus of c. AD 300 in Velletri (figures 177a-b), has the tree and snake positioned to the left.⁸⁹¹ Adam and Eve face each other holding each other's right hands in a traditional Roman pose of *dextrarum iunctio*. Adam rests his left on Eve's shoulder: while she displays a degree of modesty Adam does not. The snake, approaching them with a fruit in its mouth suggests, as with the Trier sarcophagus, that this is a depiction of Adam and Eve before their Fall from Grace.

A sarcophagus from Trinquetaille in Arles, dated AD 325-350, has two scenes of Adam and Eve: (1) a conventional scene of Adam and Eve in the centre of the lid, where the couple stand to either side of the tree covering their nakedness (figure 178a);⁸⁹² (2) a scene on the front of the chest, top left (figure 178b).⁸⁹³ This second scene is more complicated and merits closer examination. The scene contains four large male figures, all dressed in tunic and *pallium*, and two diminutive, naked figures, one female the other male, that appear to express no sense of shame and may not be animated. From left to right the first large figure stands behind a second, seated in a high-backed chair which has been covered in drapery. Both of these males are bearded. The first places his right hand on the back of the chair and the seated

⁸⁸⁹ Sarcophagus: Vat. Mus. Pio Cristiano, 31495 (ex Lateran 154); graffito: Vat. Mus. Pio Cristiano, 32458.

⁸⁹⁰ Rheinisches Landesmuseum, Trier, 37.518. Dresken-Weiland 1998: 131, nr 421, taf. 119,2.

⁸⁹¹ Velletri, Museo Civico, 171. Gerke 1940: taf. 6. Dresken-Weiland 1998: 83-4, taf. 80,2.

⁸⁹² Engemann 1976: taf. 10, 11b; Christern-Briesenick 2003: 23-5, no.38; Bucolo 2011: fig. 7. Sintès 1996: 157, nr 155.

⁸⁹³ Engemann 1976: taf. 10, 12a.

figure in turn places his right hand on a third figure who turns to face him. This third figure is more youthful in appearance being clean-shaven with long hair to the nape of the neck. He places his right hand on the head of the first of the smaller figures (the female). This figure is clearly Christ as it is repeated in five other scenes: in each case a miracle is being performed. The fourth and final large figure is probably St Peter as the same beard and hairline is evident in the lower register where St Peter is depicted bringing forth water in captivity. The Trinquetaille scene therefore appears to show a miracle - that of the creation of mankind in the form of Adam and Eve. The seated, and therefore senior figure, is God whose power, augmented by the Holy Spirit who stands behind Him, is being transferred through Christ to the human figures in order to animate them.⁸⁹⁴ We have therefore on the Trinquetaille sarcophagus two scenes with Adam and Eve: the moment of creation and the moment after the Fall from Grace.

This dual symbolism, signifying creation and Fall, is also demonstrated on the 'Dogmatic' sarcophagus now in the Vatican and of similar date (figure 179).⁸⁹⁵ Here scenes signifying before and after the eating of the forbidden fruit, appear beside each other. To the left are figures at the moment of creation with similarities to those seen in the Trinquetaille sarcophagus. The order of figures is somewhat different here: the seated figure places his hand on an older figure that in turn places his hand on a clearly unanimated small figure. The figure behind the chair has a receding hairline suggestive of St Paul.⁸⁹⁶ Thus in this instance we have from left to right: St Paul, God and the Holy Spirit. The agency of Christ in the act of creation has been removed to the next scene on the right. Here Adam and Eve, covering their genitals, are separated not by the Tree of Knowledge, but an image of Christ, who presents a sheaf of corn to Adam and a lamb to Eve - symbols of the work and toil after the Fall

⁸⁹⁴ Engemann 1976: 170 believes that the first figure behind the seated figure is an assisting angel with the Holy Spirit evident in the fourth figure. However, that does not take into account the similarity with the principal figure in the scene of the miracle of the bringing forth of water on the lower register who most certainly is St Peter.

⁸⁹⁵ Vat. Mus. Pio Cristiano, 31427 (ex 104). Bovini and Brandenburg 1967: 41, no. 43.

⁸⁹⁶ Bovini and Brandenburg do not identify the figure behind the throne on the 'Dogmatic' sarcophagus, but the figure's hairline is more receded than the certain images of St Peter on the same sarcophagus. An identification with St Paul would be appropriate given its findspot close to the baldacchino in St Paul's outside the Walls.

referred to in Genesis (*Gen.* 3.16-17). The Tree of Knowledge, entwined by the snake with an apple in its mouth, is set to one side. The 'canonical' order has been revised in order to portray a specific exegesis i.e. the consequence of disobedience of God's command.

These exceptions to the usual symmetry in the depiction of the Fall from Grace have the very specific iconographic purpose of illustrating the story at slightly different points in the narrative of creation. The Trinquetaille and 'Dogmatic' sarcophagi have scenes of creation with the spirit of life being engendered either by Christ (Trinquetaille) or the Holy Spirit ('Dogmatic'). The Velletri and Trier examples show the First Couple in a state of innocence: in each case a fruit is being offered by the snake to make evident the point within the narrative being depicted. If lack of shame gestures in the hypogeum of the Aurelii fresco were a depiction of Adam and Eve at this innocent stage then the snake would have a fruit in its mouth: as it does not, then, despite superficial appearances, linking the hypogeum of the Aurelii image with the story of Genesis is open to question.

Inconsistencies between the hypogeum of the Aurelii and the canonical representation of Genesis were thought to arise either from lack of an established Christian repertoire in art in the early third century or the consequence of the hypogeum being used by a heretical sect. As noted in the sub-chapter on the history of the monument's interpretation (Chapter 1, section 1.5.2) Wilpert's Gnostic interpretation had a heavy influence on later writers. Rostovtzeff, in supporting Wilpert's explanation, went as far as declaring that the correct interpretation of the rear wall of the upper *cubiculum* was the key to the understanding of the hypogeum as a whole.⁸⁹⁷ The snake was interpreted by Wilpert as being linked to the Ophite sect that considered that spiritual knowledge was conveyed to humanity via snakes (Irenaeus *contra Adv. Haer.* 1.30) and that the image on the right was an illustration of a Gnostic myth of the creation of mankind by a semi-divine creature called Ialdabaoth.⁸⁹⁸ There is however, no evidence within the frescoes to maintain such a

⁸⁹⁷ Rostovtzeff 1927: 151.

⁸⁹⁸ Wilpert 1924: 8-10. For a full explanation of the role of Ialdabaoth in the creation of man according to Gnostic belief see Filoramo 1990: 73-80.

theory other than the presence of the snake, and snakes were far from being the preserve of Christian, or Gnostic, imagery.

12.3.2 Snakes in Roman Funerary Art.

Snakes could possess multiple cultural values in the Graeco-Roman world and although snakes appear to have a lesser importance in Roman culture than Greek they nevertheless occur frequently: being associated with the introduction of the cult of Aesculapius (Livy 11 *periochae*; Ovid *Met.* 15.622-740), the worship of Juno Sospita at Lanuvium (Propertius 4.8.3; Aelian *NA* 11.16 places the cult at Lavinium), divination (Cic. *De divinatione* 2.62) and prophecy (Tac. *Ann.* 11.11).⁸⁹⁹ Inscriptions suggest that they were primarily benevolent forces, *genii loci*, connected to one particular site and the painted *lararia* of Pompeii, in both large and small town houses, stores or shops and street-side bars often depict large snakes appearing in pairs, approaching offerings of eggs on an altar.⁹⁰⁰ These snakes sport a crest and a beard, or occasionally, only a crest which characterise them as male and female respectively (Aelian *NA* 11.26).⁹⁰¹ They are associated with the *genius* of the household as is evident from a bronze statuette (ht. 0.178m) of such a *genius* found in Pompeii.⁹⁰² The figure is shown holding *patera* and cornucopia and has a bearded and crested snake wrapped around its right arm and appearing above the figure's head.

Such bearded and crested snakes also appear in connection with the cult of Isis as seen on the altar of Cantinea Procla (figure 180).⁹⁰³ However, the snake depicted on the hypogeum of the Aurelii has neither crest nor beard, but rather is naturalistic.⁹⁰⁴ This form is notably absent from *lararia*, but is found in Pompeian wall

⁸⁹⁹ On snakes in the Graeco-Roman world see Ogden 2013 esp. 308-9; Charlesworth 2010: 126 and Orr 1972: 65. For further examples of snakes in Roman cult see Orr 1972: 66, fn 88.

⁹⁰⁰ e.g. Baldassarre 1990-2003: vol. 1, 197, fig. 3 (Ins. I, 6, 2. Casa del Criptoportico); vol. 1, 918, fig. 7 (Ins. 1, 8, 18); vol. 2, 515, fig. 14 (Ins. I, 11, 1. Caupona).

⁹⁰¹ Orr 1972: 74 divides such snakes into two classes: Type I - those with a large diamond shaped, viperine head and Type II - those without such a head.

⁹⁰² MAN Naples, 133334. Fejfer 2008: 93, fig. 56.

⁹⁰³ *CIL* VI, 34776. MNR Terme, 125406. Kleiner 1987: 102-4, nr 5, pl. IV, 1-4.

⁹⁰⁴ Orr's Type III. Orr 1972: 74.

paintings where they may be seen in garden paintings climbing up trees in pursuit of birds' eggs (e.g. The House of the Orchard, I.ix.5, *cubiculum* 12; figure 181).

Beardless/crestless snakes appear in funerary contexts as on a third-century sarcophagus in the Terme Museum, Rome (figure 182) where a snake is seen rising up from a reclining female figure, probably a personification of Tellus (Earth).⁹⁰⁵ This association is also found in literature. For example, in the *Aeneid* a giant snake appears at the tomb of Anchises (Virg. *Aen.* 5.85). Aeneas is uncertain whether the snake represents his father's soul or is a guardian spirit in the form of a snake, but clearly either were deemed possible. Pliny the Elder also mentions snakes that act as guardians over the soul of the deceased (Pliny *NH* 16.234). The ability of snakes to go from the everyday world to the underworld is reflected in the entwined snakes on the *caduceus* of Mercury Psychopompus, who led the souls of the deceased to the realm of Dis.⁹⁰⁶

On the 'Hermes of Andros', a statue of a youthful nude male with a cloak draped over his left shoulder, a snake with a flat triangular head is wrapped around its large tree stump support.⁹⁰⁷ The statue is one of a possible pair discovered in a tomb on the island of Andros in 1834.⁹⁰⁸ Dating from the 1st century BC and mounted on a single plinth the statue is called the 'Hermes of Andros' for its pronounced resemblance to the 'Farnese Hermes' now in the British Museum, which has a similar tree stump support, but no snake. The 'Farnese Hermes' carried a *caduceus* in his left arm and wore winged sandals on his feet whereas the Andros figure lacks these divine attributes: its pairing with a female portrait statue and their funerary setting argue for a mortal interpretation. The existence of the two 'Hermes' is illustrative of the custom of creating both divine and human forms of the same subject. The snake is associated with the human form while the god has the divine attributes of *caduceus* and winged sandals. This duality is recorded in a fable by the second century AD

⁹⁰⁵ MNR Terme, 255953. *RE* 517. Sapelli in *MNR Le sculture I/8**, II, 20: 97-100.

⁹⁰⁶ Charlesworth 2010: 140.

⁹⁰⁷ Karusu 1969: 145-6, tavv. 66, 67; Hallett 2005:35, fig. 19.

⁹⁰⁸ The companion being a female statue of the Large Herculaneum type which, though considered by the excavator to be paired with the male statue and of the same date, may be Hadrianic and have no connection. On this topic see Trimble 2011: 40, 368-9, nr 14.

writer Valerius Babrius that records the story of two clients wanting the same statue: one for a grave, the other as the image of a god (Babrius *fab.* 30). A funerary relief from Athens of the second century AD (figure 183) shows the figure of a youth, naked except for his *chlamys*, standing in front of his horse, with the rest of his arms and armour hanging from an adjacent tree.⁹⁰⁹ A very long snake with a diamond-shaped head, with no crest or beard, has come down from the tree and is rising up to feed from the youth's hand.

Even closer associations of snakes and the deceased are found on some monuments in Rome. One of Julio-Claudian date found on the Via Laurentina near the Abbazia delle Tre Fontane shows an adolescent, 12-14 years of age, who holds an egg in his left hand towards an approaching snake (figure 184).⁹¹⁰

Similar snakes continue to appear in funerary contexts well into the later imperial period. An early second century AD example in the Vatican shows a snake entwined around the chest of a male bust set within an *aedicula* from the early second century AD.⁹¹¹ Another *kline* monument, also in the Vatican dating from the mid second century AD (figure 185), shows a woman asleep, with a snake wrapped around her right arm.⁹¹² Although subject to various modifications and alterations in its history the snake is generally considered to be an accurate reconstruction.⁹¹³ In the mid-fourth century *cubiculum* E of the catacomb of Via Latina/Dino Campagni an image, sometimes known as the 'Death of Cleopatra', shows a half-draped female figure reclining among roses with a snake (described by Ferrua as an asp) twisting around her left arm.⁹¹⁴ She is dressed only in a hip mantle and, unlike the Vatican *kline*, is not asleep. Ferrua suggested a depiction as Tellus,⁹¹⁵ an identification that matches the figure on the sarcophagus in the Terme described above.

⁹⁰⁹ NM Athens, EM 1450. Stavridis 1984: 170, pl. 15d.

⁹¹⁰ MNR Terme, 61586. Dayan in *MNR Le Sculture: I/2*, II, 64: 177-8.

⁹¹¹ Vat. Mus. Gregorio Profano, 10025. Daltrop and Oehler 1996b: 2.40-3, nr 3.

⁹¹² Vat. Mus. Cortile del Belvedere, 891. Andreae et al. 1998: taf. 143, 13*. Spinola 1996: 82.

⁹¹³ Amelung 1908: II, 179, nr 73, taf. 19. Cumont 1942: 392 n. 3. Bieber 1977: 245-6.

⁹¹⁴ Ferrua 1991: 102-3, fig. 79; Fiocchi Nicolai et al. 2009: fig. 108. On the date of *cubiculum* E Tronzo 1986: 15.

⁹¹⁵ Ferrua 1991: 102, fig. 79.

In sum, the image in the hypogeum of the Aurelii upper chamber, of two people standing, possibly both naked, possibly a male and a female, adjacent to a tree with a snake in attendance, has similarities, but no immediate parallel in Roman art, either Christian or non-Christian. Yet snakes are found in pagan domestic worship and are closely associated with funerary cult as mentioned in literature and are seen in funerary contexts as either an expression of the spirit of the deceased or as guardians of the deceased as depicted on sarcophagi.

As noted above in the detailed description (section 12.2) the lack of any evidence for a division between the left and right sides means that the 'Adam and Eve' scene is almost certainly linked with the 'Creator' image and therefore any explanation has to reconcile both sides. When, in 1975, Nikolaus Himmelmann addressed this fresco he did not satisfactorily reconcile 'Adam and Eve' with the 'Creator' but provided an important impetus in the study of the fresco.

12.4 Himmelmann's Theory.

12.4.1 On 'Adam and Eve'.

Himmelmann's article was the first to challenge, on iconographic grounds, the prevailing reading of the left side of the wall as Adam and Eve.⁹¹⁶ He could see no motive for the tree to be moved to one side of the two naked figures, putting forward many of the points made above. The hypogeum of the Aurelii figures are clearly animated (figure 174a-b), unlike those figures in Christian sarcophagi that do not show shame i.e. the Trinquetaille sarcophagus (figure 178a) and the 'Dogmatic' sarcophagus (figure 179). Nor does the snake hold within its mouth a fruit/apple in temptation as seen in the Trier (figure 176) and Velletri (figure 177b) sarcophagi.

Himmelmann further suggested that the figure closer to the tree, and less well preserved, was larger in scale to that of its companion believing that the figure's left knee coincided with the height of the damage.⁹¹⁷ That would place the knee

⁹¹⁶ Himmelmann 1975: 8-16.

⁹¹⁷ Himmelmann 1975: 11, "*da in der Höhe der Beschädigung erst knapp das linke Knie erreicht ist*" ["as the amount of damage reaches almost to the left knee"].

above the head of the snake in which case the 'Eve' figure would indeed be much larger than that of 'Adam', and its head, unless bent over, ought to appear in the next band of extant plaster above, where the tree continues. Yet an examination of the newly conserved image appears to show no great difference in size between the two figures' feet, while the knee is more clearly located *below* the level of the snake's head as a slight bulge in the line of the leg indicates - a subtle detail that probably was not visible before restoration. The height of the 'Eve' figure is thus broadly as suggested by Wilpert, even if the rest of his reconstruction is conjecture (figure 186).⁹¹⁸ This misreading of the height of the 'Eve' figure led Himmelmann to propose that the scene depicted was possibly Hercules, accompanied by his nephew Iolaus, in the Garden of the Hesperides, where the tree of golden apples was guarded by a serpent. Examples of the myth are found in painting from Pompeii in the Casa del Sacerdos Amandus (figure 187) and on a medallion of Antonine date (figure 188).⁹¹⁹ Yet Iolaus appears in neither of these, and Himmelmann himself could only refer to a fourth century BC red figure vase, admitting that no later imperial art shows Iolaus in attendance on Hercules.⁹²⁰ This tentative suggestion by Himmelmann (and his even more cautious alternative of Jason and Medea) has not been accepted by later commentators with the result that Himmelmann's main thesis, that the figures were not Adam and Eve, has received less credit than it deserved.⁹²¹

⁹¹⁸ Wilpert 1924: 9, fig. 4.

⁹¹⁹ Gnechi 1912: tav. 54, 1.

⁹²⁰ Himmelmann 1975: 12, fn 20.

⁹²¹ Himmelmann 1975:12, "*Beide Deutungen (i.e. Hercules/Iolaos, Jason/Medea) lassen sich nicht beweisen, da genaue bildliche Parallelen fehlen. Wichtiger ist in unserem Zusammenhang zunächst, daß die Benennung auf Adam and Eva aus typologischen Gründen zwingend ausgeschlossen wird.*" ["Neither interpretations ... can be proved, as detailed pictorial parallels are lacking. More importantly for our purposes, above all, is that the attribution of Adam and Eve on typological grounds is absolutely impossible"]. Bisconti does not discuss Himmelmann's findings but erroneously infers that both Himmelmann and Kaiser-Minn read the right hand side of the wall as a Gnostic creation scene. Bisconti 1985: 891, "*nonostante che Himmelmann vi abbia riconosciuto rispettivamente Eracle nel giardino delle Esperidi e il Demiurgo create*" ["notwithstanding that Himmelmann recognised respectively: Hercules in the garden of the Hesperides and the Demiurge creating"]; fn 9, ... vd. anche H. Kaiser-Minn, *Die Erschaffung des Menschen ...* ["see also H. Kaiser-Minn, *The Creation of Mankind ...*"].

12.4.2 Himmelmann's Philosopher.

Having deduced that the left hand side could not sustain a Christian interpretation Himmelmann considered the implication this would have on the right hand image. There were clear similarities between the 'Creator' image and the image of Prometheus found in a tomb on the Via Ostiensis (figure 189) dating to the late second-early third century.⁹²² Nevertheless Himmelmann rejected the possibility that the image was of Prometheus on the grounds that the beardless figure of the hypogeum of the Aurelii was like contemporary (i.e. late Severan) portraits and that there was no known representation of mortals in the guise of Prometheus on sarcophagi.⁹²³ Himmelmann identified the scene on the right hand side of the wall as a philosopher seated beside a herm and argued, notwithstanding earlier ambivalence, that a link with Hercules and the Hesperides was possible.⁹²⁴ In support of this idea he cited a possibly third century sarcophagus from Aphrodisias in Asia Minor, where the deceased was the philosopher and was associated with Hercules.⁹²⁵ The 'Creator' was therefore a philosopher, moreover not a generic type but a real person in the guise of a Greek philosopher.⁹²⁶ An examination of all the published photographs of the Aphrodisias sarcophagus, however, shows little obvious link between Hercules and philosopher. The bare shouldered philosopher is carved on one long side of the sarcophagus, Hercules on the other where he is accompanied by two draped women (damage prevents more positive identification).

As noted above with regard to the sidewall figures Chapter 11, section 11.4, the concept of the deceased as philosopher in Roman funerary art is common,

⁹²² Squarciapino 1956: 114.

⁹²³ Himmelmann 1975: 14, "*Der bartlose Kopf mit der knappen Haarkappe im ... Stil der späten Caracalla-Zeit wirkt ... ausgesprochen porträthaft. Auf den Sarkophagen findet sich allerdings kein Beispiel für die Kombination des Prometheus mit einem bürgerlichen Porträt.*" ["The clean-shaven head with the crewcut hair in the ... style of the late Caracalla period ... looks very portrait-like. On sarcophagi, there is, however, no example of a combination of Prometheus with a citizen portrait."]

⁹²⁴ Himmelmann 1975: 18.

⁹²⁵ Erism 1973: 67-8, figs 31-3; Himmelmann 1975: 15, fn 36. Note Pergola 2011: 84 and 119 erroneously attributes a Promethean interpretation to Himmelmann.

⁹²⁶ Himmelmann 1975: 14, "*Sucht man die Deutung des Wandbilds im menschlichen Bereich, so liegt es am nächsten, den Sitzenden wegen der nackten Füße und der Tracht für einen Philosophen zu halten.*" ["One seeks the interpretation of the mural in the earthly realm, in which lies the closest parallel, the seated man with a philosopher's bare feet costume."]

however, interpreting the 'Creator' figure as a philosopher is not without its difficulties. Ewald's analysis of 218 philosophical images in Roman sarcophagi shows that where the deceased is depicted in everyday clothes, wearing a tunic and *pallium*, the deceased is either reading in quietude or reciting to others, very often his wife.⁹²⁷ In only two instances are the figures barefoot⁹²⁸ and in only two instances,⁹²⁹ excepting isolated busts in *tondi*, do the philosopher figures look out directly towards that viewer as in the hypogeum of the Aurelii.

If comparanda for the 'Creator' figure are difficult to find among the corpus of philosopher images the adjacent diminutive figure is even more problematic. Himmelmann tentatively compared a vignette on a garland sarcophagus from Ephesus (figure 190).⁹³⁰ It shows a figure, whose reduced dimensions suggest a servant, reading from a scroll to a seated couple. However, as Himmelmann was aware, there is little direct correspondence with the hypogeum of the Aurelii.⁹³¹

The hypogeum of the Aurelii fresco's particular combination of a bucolic setting, the frontal pose of the head and the gaze towards the viewer, the bare feet, and the small figure, has no equivalent in philosopher representation. These difficulties subverted much of Himmelmann's work.

Bucolo revisited Himmelmann's theory in detail in 2011, and concluded in favour of a Christian significance. She cited the example of the Velletri sarcophagus as an example of a non-orthodox representation of Adam and Eve, and a detail from a sarcophagus from Campi as an example of the Christian creator with the small figure of a man on a pedestal, an idea first put forward by Velabrega.⁹³² Her main contention *contra* Himmelmann, however, was that recent restoration had revealed

⁹²⁷ Himmelmann 1975: 13 was mistaken in believing that the hypogeum of the Aurelii figure was not wearing a *tunica* no doubt due to the degraded state of the frescoes at that time. The presence of a tunic is more obvious post-restoration.

⁹²⁸ Ewald 1999: C24 and E24.

⁹²⁹ Ewald 1999: D3 and D4.

⁹³⁰ Himmelmann 1970: 18 refers to further illustration and information but unfortunately does not provide a reference; Himmelmann 1975: 15, tav. 22a.

⁹³¹ Himmelmann 1975: 15, "*Daß es sich bei diesem um einen Philosophen handelt, dürfte aber schwer erweisbar sein.*" ["That this is about a philosopher, however, would be difficult to prove."]

⁹³² Bucolo 2011: fig. 8. Valabrega 1986: 48.

the presence of another figure behind the creator.⁹³³ The evidence consisted of the inverted 'C' shape (highlighted, figure 172c), interpreted as a second figure participating in the act of creation, but this is far from convincing. This theory, first put forward by Bisconti, found a resemblance to the Dogmatic and Trinquetaille sarcophagi (both a century later than the hypogeum of the Aurelii) where more than one figure is attendant upon the creation of humankind.⁹³⁴ The comparison that Bisconti/Bucolo put forward, however, has a flaw that neither author addresses in addition to those objections made above. Whereas both Dogmatic and Trinquetaille sarcophagi almost certainly depict elements of the Holy Trinity such an attribution to the hypogeum of the Aurelii fresco is only a remote possibility.⁹³⁵ The concept of the Holy Trinity was not promulgated until the Council of Nicaea in AD 325 and it took most of the fourth century to become orthodoxy.⁹³⁶ As the hypogeum of the Aurelii pre-dated Nicaea by approximately a century it seems improbable that there is likely to be any reference to the concept of the Trinity at the time of the hypogeum's decoration.⁹³⁷

If true Bucolo's Christian conclusion would be obliged to recognise that the rear wall of the upper chamber of the hypogeum of the Aurelii contains three highly unusual Christian iconographic representations: Adam and Eve to one side of the Tree of Knowledge; Adam created on a pedestal and a representation of the Holy Trinity a century before the Council of Nicaea. Even in a time when the canon of Christian art was in its infancy such arguments are unpersuasive.

12.5 Kaiser-Minn's Contribution.

In 1981 Kaiser-Minn, although agreeing with Himmelmann that a late Severan date rendered it unlikely that the iconography of the right-hand scene was Christian, countered his philosopher theory maintaining that the figure was Prometheus despite the cropped hairstyle and lack of beard.⁹³⁸ Prometheus, Kaiser-Minn argued,

⁹³³ Bucolo 2011: 129.

⁹³⁴ Bisconti 2004b: 35-6, fig. 14. Bucolo 2011: 131. Cf fn 884.

⁹³⁵ For a discussion of the Trinity as depicted in the 'Dogmatic' sarcophagus see Utro 2007.

⁹³⁶ *EEC*: 851, B. Studer 1992, s.v. 'Trinity'.

⁹³⁷ Engemann 1976: esp. 163 and 170.

⁹³⁸ Kaiser-Minn 1981: 86-7.

has short curly hair in the Cologne glass plate (figure 191); is clean-shaven in a medallion of Antoninus Pius (figure 192); and faces the viewer on the Albani fragment in the Louvre (figure 193). Consequently, Kaiser-Minn read the scene on the right as a representation of Prometheus rather than Himmelmann's generic philosopher image.⁹³⁹

Having proposed the 'Creator' image as Prometheus rather than the Christian God then Kaiser-Minn deduced that the fragmentary pair and snake on the left were the proto-humans described in pagan mythology.⁹⁴⁰ Yet the short curly hair in the Cologne glass plate (which cannot be accurately dated) is not that much different from other Promethean images i.e. reasonably short hair, thick and wavy or curly. The Cologne figure's hairstyle bears little relation to the cropped style of the hypogeum of the Aurelii figure. Secondly, the Albani relief Prometheus is unique in not looking directly at the figure being created, but is not looking directly towards the viewer either. The turn of the head and body suggests that he is looking over his shoulder towards Athena. Finally, the Antonine medallion cited as showing a beardless Prometheus seems, *contra* Kaiser-Minn, to have a beard although wear has made it less obvious than in other depictions.⁹⁴¹

To adequately assess if Kaiser-Minn's Promethean interpretation is tenable it is necessary to examine in closer detail the myth of Prometheus as the Creator of Mankind as it is known from literature and art from the Classical to the Roman imperial era.

Classical and Hellenistic writers paid little attention to the Promethean creation myth. Greek myth was primarily concerned with the titan Prometheus aiding mankind with such things as stealing fire from the gods or tricking Zeus into accepting the lesser parts of the sacrificial beast, reserving the better portions for men. Plato (*Protag.* 321c.) mentions that having made all the animals, including mankind, Zeus

⁹³⁹ Pergola 2011: 84 n. 22 mentioned Kaiser-Minn's Promethean interpretation but does not include her theory in the otherwise extensive listing of interpretations on Pergola 2011: 119.

⁹⁴⁰ Kaiser-Minn 1981: 89.

⁹⁴¹ Kaiser-Minn 1981: 88.

gave Prometheus and his brother Epimetheus the task of attributing qualities and skills to each animal.

Only Aesop (*Fab.* 430) credits Prometheus with making the first man and woman out of clay and tears, providing a link to Athena, who is the goddess of potters.⁹⁴² Gems (e.g. figure 194) from the Hellenistic period confirm that Prometheus, creator of mankind, was known earlier than surviving literature suggests.⁹⁴³ During the Imperial period the creator-Prometheus became more popular and his role is mentioned by Horace (*Carm.* 1.16.13-15),⁹⁴⁴ Ovid (*Met.* 1.82-88),⁹⁴⁵ Pausanias (10.4.4)⁹⁴⁶ and Lucian (*Dial. D.* 5(1).1).⁹⁴⁷

In figurative art there are a number of examples of Promethean iconography from the first to fourth centuries AD. These are described here in chronological order. After the descriptions the characteristics of each are compared with those of the hypogeum of the Aurelii in Table 4, page 262).⁹⁴⁸

- Terracotta lamp (figure 195).⁹⁴⁹ First century AD. Lost. Known from a 17th century drawing of a tunicate seated Prometheus with human on pedestal with Athena. The pose of the proto-human is very similar to the pose of the hypogeum of the Aurelii figure.
- Medallion of Antoninus Pius (r. AD 138-161) (figure 192).⁹⁵⁰ Prometheus is seated wearing a *pallium* that reaches as far as his

⁹⁴² A late antique mosaic from Edessa specifically describes Prometheus as 'potter' and shows Athena (without the usual attributes but labelled) in attendance. Bowersock 2001: 415.

⁹⁴³ *LIMC* vol. VII, 1: 543-7.

⁹⁴⁴ "*Fertur Prometheus addere principi limo coactus particulam undique*".

⁹⁴⁵ "*quam satus lapeto, mixtam pluvialibus undis, finxit in effigiem moderantum cuncta deorum*".

⁹⁴⁶ "τοῦ Προμηθέως τὸ γένος πλασθῆναι τῶν ἀνθρώπων."

⁹⁴⁷ "ΖΕΥΣ: ... ἀλλὰ καὶ τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς ἐξορύττεσθαι, ἀνθ' ὧν τοιαῦθ' ἡμῖν ζῶα τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ἔπλασας καὶ τὸ πῦρ ἔκλεψας καὶ γυναῖκας ἐδημιούργησας."

⁹⁴⁸ A sarcophagus from Puteoli (Koch and Sichtermann 1982: 184, fig. 216) and now in the Naples museum (MAN Naples, 6705) although listed in *LIMC* as Promethean (*LIMC* vol. VII, 2 s.v. 'Prometheus' nr 110, pl. 429) is so different as to put in doubt its listing among Promethean sarcophagi. Two eastern mosaics, one from Edessa, the other from Philippopolis I have omitted as both being heavily influenced by eastern artistic style and much later than the third century (see Bowersock 2001: 411-15 and Will 1953: 27-48).

⁹⁴⁹ Bartoli 1691: vol. 1, 1-2; *LIMC* vol. II, 1: 1103, nr 404.

⁹⁵⁰ Gnechi 1912: tav. 54, 8.

knees and is draped over his left shoulder. He looks towards a small figure that stands on some form of pedestal. The figure holds its right arm out towards Prometheus. The image is worn, but he appears to be bearded. Behind the small figure, i.e. in front of Prometheus, is Athena with helmet, but no lance; she holds her right hand out above the head of the proto-human. The goddess leans against a tree behind which is a snake that rears its head. The snake does not appear to have a crest or beard. Dated to AD 140-3.⁹⁵¹

- A sarcophagus fragment in the Prado Museum, Madrid is dated to the second half of the second century AD (figure 196).⁹⁵² Prometheus is dressed in a *pallium* and is sitting on a rock. He has a thick beard and hair that flows to the nape of the neck. On a short column or pedestal adjacent to Prometheus stands a small nude male figure held by Prometheus at the knee. Athena stands in front of Prometheus and places a butterfly on the head of the statue which appears animated by twisting its head and body away from Prometheus and towards the goddess. Behind Athena is Psyche and behind Prometheus are two full-size female figures. One figure, almost completely nude except for a drape around her left shoulder and right thigh, holds in her left hand a vessel from which pours a stream of water. The other is dressed in mantel and *chiton*.
- Via Ostiensis fresco (figure 189). Dated to the end of the second or the beginning of the third century AD.⁹⁵³ The closest comparandum to the hypogeum of the Aurelii 'Creator', identification is assured by the presence of the goddess Athena, standing, in this instance, to the right, ready to bring the clay to life.⁹⁵⁴ The fresco was painted in the

⁹⁵¹ LIMC vol. VII, 1: 545, nr 100.

⁹⁵² LIMC vol. VII, 1: 545 c. AD 150; vol. VII, 2, nr 101, pl. 429. Schröder 2004: 497 AD 180-190. Prado, 140-E.

⁹⁵³ Andreae 1957: 225. Moormann 1988: 81 is more precise in dating it to the Severan era.

⁹⁵⁴ The first man and woman are sometimes referred to as Deucalion and Pyrrha (e.g. ASR III, 199) however these names are more commonly used in relation to a separate tradition concerning the

lunette of the principal *arcosolium* of a tomb containing three *arcosolia*. The lunettes of the two lateral *arcosolia* were each painted with a single peacock (figure 197).⁹⁵⁵ Other than the lunettes the only recognisable decorative features were traces of painted garlands and faux marble.⁹⁵⁶

- A sarcophagus (figure 198) brought from Rome by Napoleon in 1808, now in the Louvre, depicts Athena with a helmet standing behind the proto-human i.e. in front of Prometheus.⁹⁵⁷ She lays her hand on the head of the human being made by Prometheus who has thick, curly hair to the nape of the neck and a full, but well-managed beard. Prometheus is barefoot and wears a *pallium* or hip mantle without tunic. Behind the first man is a flowering tree. Dated to AD 220.
- The left side of the principal face of another third century sarcophagus in the Louvre, found in the 16th century near Arles, shows the creation of mankind by Prometheus assisted by Athena who on this occasion stands behind him (figure 199).⁹⁵⁸ Prometheus has bare feet and is seated facing right i.e. towards the remainder of the sarcophagus frieze. He is dressed in a *pallium* with no tunic he is holding onto, and his gaze is towards a small male, nude figure that stands upon a pedestal. The smaller figure shows no sign of animation. Prometheus is clearly depicted with thick curly hair that reaches to the nape of the neck and he has a full beard. The *pallium* is thrown over the left shoulder and reaches to the ankles beneath the hem he is clearly shown barefooted. The goddess Athena carries a lance and has her

survivors of a Great Flood. In order to avoid confusion between the separate traditions I shall avoid naming the proto-humans. The only certain naming of Deucalion in connection with the creation of mankind in Roman art and literature is on a fresco in the tomb of P. Aelius Maximus on the Isola Sacra dated AD 120-130 (Calza 1928: 155, fig. 16; *LIMC* vol. III, 1: 384-5; for dating Mielsch 1975: 162) that shows Athena, but not Prometheus.

⁹⁵⁵ Himmelmann 1975: 13, taf. 20. Mielsch 2001: abb. 187.

⁹⁵⁶ Squarciapino 1956: 111, 115 fn 17.

⁹⁵⁷ Louvre, Ma 355. Baratte and Metzger 1985: 112. *LIMC* vol. VII, 2, nr 1, pl. 420.

⁹⁵⁸ Louvre, Ma 339. Baratte and Metzger 1985: 115. *LIMC* vol. VII, 2, nr 104, pl. 429.

helmet tilted back to reveal her face, her right hand rests upon the bare right shoulder of Prometheus. The sarcophagus is dated c. AD 270-80 by Andrae or c. AD 240 by Turcan.⁹⁵⁹

- The sarcophagus relief from the Albani collection, now in the Louvre, known as the Albani relief (figure 193).⁹⁶⁰ Athena, dressed as before with lance and tilted helmet, is again behind Prometheus, but this time with a clear space between them in which are three diminutive figures. Her right hand holds either a butterfly or dove with which she touches the nearest of these small figures. Prometheus is depicted seated with a full head of hair and beard in the act of sculpting a small male figure that has its right arm stretched out. In this example Prometheus turns to look over his right shoulder and in doing so turns his gaze towards (but not directly at) the viewer. Behind Prometheus is a luxuriant tree with fruits in whose branches is a reclining male figure wearing a hip mantle and holding some form of foliage. Dated no more accurately than 3rd century AD.⁹⁶¹
- A third century AD glass plate (figure 191) from Cologne (now lost) depicts Prometheus seated creating a human figure. Prometheus is bearded with short curly hair wearing a hip mantle.⁹⁶² Prometheus is accompanied by Hypometheus, probably a misunderstanding for Epimetheus. Athena is not in attendance. The label states that man is being created - *anthropogonia*. Beneath the scene is a personification of Ge/Tellus.
- The Promethean sarcophagus now in the Capitoline Museum has Athena (figure 200), this time without lance, but with the usual tilted

⁹⁵⁹ Baratte and Metzger 1985: 118.

⁹⁶⁰ Louvre, Ma 445. *LIMC* vol. VII, 1: 545 for bibliography; vol. VII, 2, nr 102, pl. 429.

⁹⁶¹ *LIMC* vol. VII, 1: 545 dates it to the third century AD though Raggio (in *LIMC*) describes it as 'Hellenistic' without giving any grounds for such description.

⁹⁶² Fremersdorf 1951: 4, tavn. 4-5. Kaiser-Minn 1981: 88, pl. 26b.

back helmet standing behind the First Man.⁹⁶³ She is touching the proto-human on the head with a bird.⁹⁶⁴ Behind the goddess is a leafy tree. The figure being touched by the goddess lacks the animation seen in the Albani relief or Prado sarcophagus and stands on the lap of Prometheus who once again is seated dressed in a *pallium* thrown over the left shoulder. In his right hand he holds some form of spatula as if moulding the figure in front of him. The hair and beard are longer and more unkempt than previous examples, but not excessively so. Another small nude male figure stands on a pedestal.

On the left hand side panel of the sarcophagus and separated from the figure of Prometheus by an image of a forge and metalworking are two naked figures beneath a tree (figure 201). The figures are animated, the female clearly displaying a 'shame' gesture. Behind her stands a male who is less obviously displaying 'shame' and is calling out over his right shoulder. Brandenburg dates the sarcophagus to the third quarter of the third century AD; Kaiser-Minn to the late third century and Sichtermann and Koch to the early fourth.⁹⁶⁵

- A fragment of third century AD sarcophagus relief in the Sala dei Busti (figure 202), Vatican Museums shows a bearded, nude, and named, Prometheus with a diminutive figure being made by him.⁹⁶⁶ Two further small figures are depicted: one standing looking down at the other lying on the ground. The figure of Athena is absent.

⁹⁶³ Cap. Mus. Palazzo Nuovo, 329.

⁹⁶⁴ *LIMC* vol. VII, 2, nr 105, pl. 429.

⁹⁶⁵ Brandenburg 1978: 466 considers that the male figure exhibits 'shame' and thus is evidence of Jewish influence, but this is highly problematical not only because the evident pagan imagery on the remainder of the sarcophagus, but because the male's gesture is not explicitly one of shame. Kaiser-Minn 1981: 87. Sichtermann and Koch 1975: 63-4, cat. nr 68, pls. 165-7.

⁹⁶⁶ Vat. Mus. Sala dei Busti, 638. Amelung 1908: 541. No. 353, taf. 66. *ASR* III, 3, nr 354. Sichtermann 1970: 113, taf. 54,1.

There are both similarities and differences between the image on the rear wall of the upper chamber of the hypogeum of the Aurelii and representations of the Promethean legend. I shall now set forth a solution that addresses the apparent difficulties in the theories of Himmelmann and Kaiser-Minn who both argued for a pagan interpretation, but came to different conclusions.

12.6 Resolution of the Argument.

12.6.1 Contemporary Portrait as Prometheus.

Himmelmann rightly noted the hairstyle of the seated figure is reminiscent of imperial and private portraits dated from the AD 230s to the 250s (figures 203 a-d). Where beards are depicted on busts of this period their depiction is extremely short - barely more than stubble. A similar representation in fresco could easily appear as clean-shaven especially given the poor quality of the surviving fresco. Thus the beard (or lack of it) of the hypogeum of the Aurelii figure is much closer to portraiture of the first half of the third century than the thick full beard shown on depictions of Prometheus of approximately the same date.

The position of Athena is variable: sometimes in front of Prometheus, sometimes behind (see Table 4). When placed in front of Prometheus the more common composition is Athena touching the head of the proto-human i.e. in the act of animating the figure, but the iconography allows for some variation as in the Via Ostiensis fresco. Athena is also separated from Prometheus and proto-human when she placed behind Prometheus as in the Louvre Ma 339 sarcophagus or the Albani fragment and in two examples (the Sala dei Busti sarcophagus relief and glass plate from Cologne) she is absent altogether. Thus, the absence of Athena in the extant hypogeum of the Aurelii fresco may be due either to the loss of plaster or she need never have been represented in the first place.

Table 4: Prometheus and the Creation Myth 1st to 3rd Centuries AD.

	Date.	Prometheus seated.	Prometheus faces away from figure.	Prometheus wears tunic.	Prometheus has curly hair.	Prometheus has beard.	Position of Athena in respect of Prometheus.	Tree closely associated with scene.	Additional animated human figures.
1) Lamp.	1 st C. AD	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	In front	✗	✗
2) Medallion.	140-3.	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	In front	✓	✗
3) Sarcophagus. Madrid.	150	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	In front	✗	✗
4) Tomb fresco, Ostia.	c. 200	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	In front	✗	✗
5) Sarcophagus. Louvre Ma 355.	220	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	In front	✓	✗
6) Sarcophagus. Louvre Ma 339.	240-70	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	Behind	✗	✓
7) Sarcophagus. Louvre Ma 445.	3 rd C.	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	Behind	✓	✓
8) Glass plate.	3 rd C.	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	Absent	✗	✗
9) Sarcophagus. Cap. Mus.	250-300	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	In front	✓	✗
10) Sarcophagus. Sala dei Busti.	3 rd C.	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	Absent	✗	✓
Hypogeum of the Aurelii.	1 st half 3 rd C.	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	?	✓	✓

If the figure is a synthesis of a contemporary portrait with the attributes of Prometheus then the contemporary hairstyle and the absence of Athena are more understandable. Such synthesis belongs in the realm of heroisation as it was used in the second and third centuries AD.

12.6.2 Heroisation as a Genre.

Identifying the deceased with divine or mythological figures is well-known in the Roman world. The best known examples are imperial members personified as particular heroes or deities e.g. the statue found in Ostia of Julia Domna, the wife of Septimius Severus, depicted in the guise of Ceres.⁹⁶⁷ Another example, dated to the AD 170s shows a couple as more than life-size statues in the guise of Mars and Venus (figure 204).⁹⁶⁸ Although Mars and Venus in this instance were probably members of the imperial family such mythological representations were not solely the preserve of august circles. Young boys or youths such as the fifteen-year-old L. Marcius Pacatus, whose memorial is now in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford (figure 205), were portrayed as Hercules.⁹⁶⁹ An intrepid girl such as the young Aelia Procula was portrayed as Diana in a memorial now in the Louvre and dated to the second quarter of the second century AD.⁹⁷⁰ A sarcophagus, now lost, dated to around AD 220-230 (close to the period suggested for the painting of the Aurelii frescoes) showed a figure with realistic features, but in the guise of Aesculapius, suggesting a medical professional together with a female figure, presumably his wife, commemorated as

⁹⁶⁷ Calza 1978: 50, tav. XLIX, nr 63.

⁹⁶⁸ MNR Terme, 108522. De Lachenal in *MNR Le sculpture I/8**, V, 1: 219-24. Calza 1978: 19 considered the group to be the young Commodus and his wife Crispina. Wrede 1981: 133 also considers the group, "*mit einiger Wahrscheinlichkeit*" to belong to the imperial house. In contrast Kleiner 1981: 539 argued that the couple were not an imperial couple. North, in his review of Wrede, suggests that any appropriation of imperial imagery by private individuals would have been too dangerous for private individuals, North 1983: 172.

⁹⁶⁹ Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, 152. *CIL* VI, 22086 = EDR150944. Wrede 1981: 249, kat. 143. Boschung 1987: 114, kat. 960. Undated. See also *CIL* VI, 36105 where the six-year-old Phoebus is shown as the young Hercules strangling two snakes.

⁹⁷⁰ *CIL* VI, 10958 = EDCS-17200680: D(is) M(anibus) | sacrum | D(i)eanae et | memoriae |⁵ Aeliae | Proculae | P(ublius) Aelius Asclepiacus | Aug(usti) Lib(ertus) | et Ulpia Priscilla filiae |¹⁰ dulcissimae fecerunt. Louvre, Ma 1633. The age of the deceased is not mentioned in the inscription, but Wrede considers her to be about five years of age. Wrede 1971:138. Kleiner 1987: 241, nr 104, pl. LX, 1. Rawson 2003: 48.

the goddess Hygeia/Salus.⁹⁷¹ The latter may have been depicted thus as being suitable for the spouse of a doctor or it may be a pun on her name - Cornelia Hygia. The inscription records that the sarcophagus was made by the deceased's freedmen a habit that is not unusual.⁹⁷²

The use of contemporary hairstyle in such images as the marriage of Jupiter and Juno in the House of the Tragic Poet (VI, 8, 3.5) in Pompeii suggests the commemoration of real people in the guise of divinities or heroes dates from as early as the first century AD:⁹⁷³ a habit that had previously been lampooned when Augustus had hosted a dinner in the guise of Apollo (Suet. *Aug.* 70). Commemoration of the deceased in mythological form, however, became more common during the Antonine period and continued well into the third and early fourth century AD.⁹⁷⁴ The use of Venus as a metaphor in funerary contexts was popular: Wrede lists nearly fifty instances of women depicted as Venus in various guises, with or without Mars. Claudia Olympia is one such woman. Identified as Venus Victrix (figure 206) by the palm branch, she was commemorated thus by her husband around AD 130-40.⁹⁷⁵ The grave stele was originally accompanied by another relief (now lost) depicting the Three Graces and was probably part of a mausoleum.⁹⁷⁶

Are the flattering images simply meant to express the deceased's form in a manner redolent of the widower's opinion of her? Or is there a more metaphysical meaning expressing the concept of the love of a married couple? What is undisputable is that there was a clear relationship between the mythological figure depicted and the relationship of the deceased to the commemorator.

⁹⁷¹ Wrede 1981: 197, kat. 5 and kat. 164.

⁹⁷² *CIL* VI, 16229a = EDCS-12001125: D(is) || Fecerunt li | berti univ(er) | si Corne| lio Herma|⁵ dioni et Co| rneliae Hy| giae patro| nis suis be| ne meren|¹⁰ tibus || M(anibus).

⁹⁷³ Wrede 1981: 181. Baldassarre 1990-2003: 4.538.

⁹⁷⁴ Wrede 1981: an analysis 343 examples gives the following statistic: pre-Flavian 4 No.; Flavian 14 No.; Trajanic/Hadrianic 62 No.; Antonine 96 No.; Severan 72 No.; later than AD 235 70 No. with 25 undated. Although precise dating is problematic there is, nonetheless a marked rise in the latter part of the second and early third centuries.

⁹⁷⁵ Wrede 1981: kat. 310. British Museum, 1948, 0423.1, now (2017) in Tullie House Museum, Carlisle.

⁹⁷⁶ Wrede 1981: 85, kat. 119.

12.6.3 Less Obvious Heroisation/Personifications.

Other correlations of myth and reality are less obvious. In the Tomb of the Varrii (tomb 87) on the Isola Sacra, dated around AD 125-135 a patroness,⁹⁷⁷ Varia Servanda, was buried within an *aedicula* beneath which was an image of Pyramus and Thisbe (figure 207).⁹⁷⁸ In this instance we are less able to ‘read’ the picture than in the case of Venus above. Does the tragic death of the two mythical lovers as told by Ovid (Ovid *Met.* 4.55-166), have some significance in the life of Varia Servanda: was she identified with Thisbe? It could be a combination of various meanings: multi-valency in commemoration is found in the Hadrianic tomb of Claudia Semne where, in addition to her depiction as Venus, she was also Fortuna and Spes.⁹⁷⁹ Whatever the reason behind the choice of Pyramus and Thisbe for Varia Servanda it is unlikely to be random. Other imagery within the same tomb does not relate to this myth or Ovid⁹⁸⁰ so the choice of an unusual myth in the most important position, i.e. immediately opposite the entrance,⁹⁸¹ must have had some relevance to the deceased and/or the commemorator that escapes us, but the position of the image calls to mind the picture on the rear wall of the upper chamber of the hypogeum of the Aurelii where a painting is immediately below a burial place and opposite the entrance to the *cubiculum*. The Varii inscription above the entrance to the tomb advises that although the most prominent position was occupied by Varia Servanda, neither she nor any spouse erected it - it was built by her clients Ampelus and Ennuchis, for themselves, their *patrona* Servanda, and their freedmen and

⁹⁷⁷ Calza 1940, nr 347 = Thylander 1951/2: nr 270 = Helttula, 2007: nr 108 = EDR101627: D(is) M(anibus) | Variae P(ublilii) F(ilia) Ser | vandae | Ampelus et |⁵ Ennuchis | liberti d(e) s(uis) p(ecunia).

⁹⁷⁸ Calza 1940: 113-17. Borda 1958: 277. Petersen 2006: 205-19, figs 129 and 131.

⁹⁷⁹ *CIL* VI, 15594 = *ILS* 8063b. Fortunae | Spei Veneri | et | memoriae |⁵ Claud(iae) Semnes | sacrum. Wrede 1971: 129, 142.

⁹⁸⁰ Decoration includes a togate figure with a scroll and servant and an emperor (?) seated at the back of adjacent niches and on the walls scenes from the Trojan War including the abduction of Cassandra.

⁹⁸¹ The myth is not known in literature other than Ovid who himself says it is unusual *Met.* 4.53. In the corpus of Pompeian wall painting four are known (in a triclinium in the House of Lucretius Fronto, V, 4, a; IX, 5, 14, MAN Naples, 111483; House of Venus in a bikini, I, 11,6,7; in a *biclinium* in the House of Octavius Quartio, II, 2, 2 together with a picture of Narcissus, another Ovidian subject). Aside from these and the Isola Sacra tomb 87 under discussion no other wall paintings are known (see Baldassarre 1981 for discussion) and a few other depictions on gems and metalwork see *LIMC* vol. VII, 1: 606 for details.

descendants.⁹⁸² We therefore have a vertical relationship of patron (occupying the prime position), client (i.e. the commissioners of the tomb) and freedmen (i.e. in the future) all buried within the same tomb. I submit that a similar situation is not only possible, but probable in the case of the hypogeum of the Aurelii.

The choice of Pyramus and Thisbe may remain forever obscure: the lack of husband recorded in the tomb may be significant. In the case of the hypogeum of the Aurelii we have no comparable inscription, yet the inscription we do have (in *cubiculum* A) shows that the hypogeum was used by freedmen. Himmelmann's objection on the grounds that there is no Promethean comparandum is no obstacle to reading the image as Prometheus. Varia Servanda's Pyramus and Thisbe has no comparandum either yet her freedmen clearly considered it appropriate. The difference with the Pyramus and Thisbe representation is that there is no plausible alternative to cloud the issue. As the choice of Venus for a deceased wife, Aesculapius for a doctor, Hercules for a soldier-son, Diana for a lost daughter all reflect the relationship between deceased and commemorator so the answer lies in the realm of iconic meaning and the connection between Prometheus and liberation.

12.6.4 Relevance of Prometheus to Freedmen.

Mouritsen has pointed out that the psychological effect of being liberated must have been considerable as someone who once had been nothing more than a chattel was made human once more.⁹⁸³ The image of the freedman has been the victim of satire, most famously by Petronius in the creation of the *parvenu* freedman Trimalchio. As one of Trimalchio's freedman guests remarked in a heated response to the barbed ribaldry of the freeborn Asclytus, "*Et nunc spero me sic vivere, ut nemini iocus sim. Homo inter homines sum.*" (Petron. *Sat.* 57).⁹⁸⁴ In this passage the speaker is not immediately identified by name. As he opens his verbal assault on Asclytus he is described simply as, "*unus ex conlibertis Trimalcioni*" (Petron. *Sat.* 57) - is he speaking

⁹⁸² Calza 1940, nr 346 = Thylander 1951/2: nr 269 = Helttula, 2007: nr 107 = EDR101462: P(ublius) Varius Ampelus | et Varia Ennuchis | fecerunt sibi et | Varias P(ublii) F(iliae) Servandae patronae |⁵ et libert(ibus) libertabus posterisq(ue) eorum (vv1-5).

⁹⁸³ Mouritsen 2011: 284-5.

⁹⁸⁴ ["And now I hope to live so that I'm a laughing-stock to no-one. I am a man amongst men." Trans. author.]

on behalf of all freedmen? Freedmen almost certainly were proud of their new free status and, as discussed, depicted that status by celebrating their crafts and their acquisition of a legitimate free family. Such pride was no doubt common among freedmen who had achieved a degree of independence and prosperity and is reflected in the frequent commemorations of themselves and their families in funerary monuments large and small. In this respect, the words put into the mouth of the freedman by Petronius were not so very far from the attitudes of many a freedman who was now allowed, "to live as a man amongst men". This flash of reality (intended or not) is lost in the satirical world created by Petronius who, as an aristocrat, uses Trimalchio's dinner party as an illustration of the vulgar display of wealth and the veneer of sophistication supposedly typical of the freedman class.⁹⁸⁵ The outrageous behaviour displayed by Trimalchio was, however, unlikely to have earned his freedom. In the real world proper deference, respect and gratitude towards the *patronus/-a*, rather than *braggadocio*, would be a more successful strategy for the slave seeking liberty.⁹⁸⁶

After manumission the freedman continued to be under obligation to his patron and former owner in the same manner as a son to a father:

*"liberto et filio semper honesta et sancta persona patris ac patroni videri debet."*⁹⁸⁷

Dig. 37.15.9 (Ulpian)

"The character of patron and father ought always be thought by freedman and son to be honourable and sacred."

Trans. author

⁹⁸⁵ On whether the Satyricon's author was the C. Petronius mentioned in Tac. *Ann.* 16.18-19 see Courtney 2001: 5-11.

⁹⁸⁶ A lack of respect on the part of the freedman towards his *patronus/-a* would lay the freedman open to an accusation of *accusatio ingrati liberti* under the provisions of the *lex Aelia Sentia* of AD 4 (See Gaius *Inst.* 1.19). Although there are recorded instances of 'ingratitude' on the part of former slaves the aristocracy's paranoia about 'disrespectful' freedmen as described by Tac. *Ann.* 13.26-7 ought not to be taken as evidence that such occurrences were commonplace.

⁹⁸⁷ Quoted by Mouritsen 2011: 37.

There are many instances of commemorative inscriptions set up in memory of a well-deserving patron as in the case of the Varii cited above. One, in the British Museum, was set up for L. Antistius Cn. F Sarculo and his wife and freedwoman Antistia L. I. Plutia.⁹⁸⁸ It was their freedmen Rufus and Anthus who set up, "*imagines de suo fecerunt patrono et patrona pro meritis eorum*".⁹⁸⁹ It would hardly be surprising therefore to find, as in the case of Varia Servanda, the patron honoured in a prominent position. A representation of that patron in a mythological guise would conform to the fashion for heroisation. As the patron had effectively ensured the 'rebirth' of his freedmen as, "*homines inter homines*" then a correlation with Prometheus the creator of the first men is particularly apposite.

On the right of the rear wall, then, we have an example of what Wrede calls '*Privatdeification*':⁹⁹⁰ the deceased patron depicted as the titan Prometheus while on the left the newly liberated ex-slaves are seen as human beings created by the magnanimity of their patron. Wrede's terminology is, to a degree, misleading: representation of the deceased as a deity or character from myth was not to be taken literally as a form of apotheosis. Rather it served as a medium by which the characteristics of the deceased could be made evident in visual form.⁹⁹¹ The commemorator, who was in all probability a freedman and client of the figure depicted as Prometheus, depicted him in a way that reflected the feeling of the commemorator as being 'recreated'. This could also explain the possible absence of Athena:⁹⁹² for it is not the goddess who has engendered new life into the slave, but the Promethean patron. The myth is alluded to without the necessity of precise repetition of an iconography that, as noted in Table 4, is itself subject to some variation in composition. By depicting the patron as Prometheus the client followed a tradition of paying due respect and honour to his patron. As noted above (Chapter 7, Section 7.3.3) the *macula servitutis* is not likely to have been reprehensible in the

⁹⁸⁸ *CIL* VI, 2170. British Museum, GR 1858.8-19.2 dating to the Augustan period.

⁹⁸⁹ ["They made images of their patron and *patrona* on account of their merits." Trans. author.] Zanker 1975: 296.

⁹⁹⁰ Wrede 1981: *passim*.

⁹⁹¹ Hallett 2005: 263.

⁹⁹² Athena is also absent in the Vat. Mus. Sala dei Busti sarcophagus fragment (example nr 10, Table 4).

eyes of the successful *libertus* – else why would they have acknowledged that status? It is an accident of preservation that in this instance the image survives without the inscription rather than vice versa – the more usual outcome. In all probability the inscription was placed either on a sarcophagus placed on the shelf above the painting or on a plaque between the two principal parts of the extant fresco where the major plaster loss now is.

I said earlier (section 12.4.2) that Himmelmann's argument in favour of a philosopher was flawed in part because of the paucity of comparanda of philosophers looking out directly at the viewer. Images of the deceased addressing the viewer as if they were still alive are, on the other hand, not uncommon. The '*sguardo atroce*' and '*bocca semiaperta*' that Wilpert⁹⁹³ noticed and which he explained as being the melancholic outlook associated with Gnosticism is, in fact, not so very far from the gloomy utterances from beyond the grave recorded in many Roman sepulchral inscriptions:

*"[Hoc] legite et felices vita plus min(us) e[ste]
[d]i uva vini et aqua prohibent, ub[i]
ta[r]tar(a) aditis; vivite, dum si[dus]
vitae dat tempus, honeste."*

CIL VII, 154 = RIB 292

"Read this and be more or less happy. The gods forbid wine and water in Tartarus. Live honestly while your star grants you life."

Trans. author.

In order to understand the image it is not necessary to consider the decorative scheme as a syncretism of Classical and Christian art. Still less does one need to rely on the complex theology of an obscure sect (e.g. Ophism) operating within a larger religious milieu (i.e. Christianity) that was nevertheless still a small

⁹⁹³ Wilpert 1924: 9.

minority within the general population.⁹⁹⁴ The frescoes are better understood as part of a wider tradition of funerary imagery that, in the second and third centuries AD, had evolved into the use of classical mythological figures to reflect the particular attributes of the deceased as they were perceived by the commemorators.

⁹⁹⁴ A notoriously difficult statistic to ascertain the Christian population of Rome has been estimated at 5% on the basis of a mid-third century letter preserved by Eusebius but this can only give an order of magnitude: Lee 2000: 39-40, Hopkins 1999: 84. Hopkins 1998: 193 suggests an empire-wide Christian population of 1,000,000 or 2% in the mid-third century rising to 10% by AD 300. Although adherents in Rome may have been numbered in the thousands as a proportion of the overall population their numbers would have been tiny.

Chapter 13. Conclusions.

13.1 The Final Resting Place of a *collegium* of Professionals.

At the outset of this thesis (Chapter 1, section 1.1) I put forward a number of points that required investigation by reviewing the evidence in the light of prior or contemporary funerary practice. It is now time to summarise the findings of this investigation.

13.1.1 Do previous and existing theories of the frescoes' meaning stand scrutiny?

I have examined each of the theories and their general application to individual rooms and frescoes and shown how, with the exception of Jastrzębowska and, to a lesser extent Grassigli, commentators have given, what I would suggest is, undue weight to material, written and archaeological, that postdates the tomb by around a century. The evidence put forward for various forms of religious affiliation simply does not exist. Wilpert's 'Latin Cross' was shown to be an accident of preservation over forty years ago (Chapter 1, section 1.5.3) yet is still repeated together with the canard that there were originally twelve figures in the Large Procession representing the apostles.⁹⁹⁵ Meanwhile, evidence that may elucidate the groups of twelve in the banquet scene or *cubiculum* B, beyond a possible biblical association, has not been sought.

The Area I of the catacomb of S. Callisto, dated to AD 190-220,⁹⁹⁶ is contemporary with, or even earlier than, the hypogeum of the Aurelii yet contains clearly Christian motifs including baptism, Jonah beneath the gourds, the sacrifice of Abraham and the curing of the paralytic (Chapter 6, section 6.2.4, footnote 499). This demonstrates that had some form of Christianity been the inspiration for any of the frescoes then that symbolism most likely would have been evident: the Christian

⁹⁹⁵ Coarelli 2007: 200-2. Petsalis-Diomidis 2007: 278.

⁹⁹⁶ Finney 1994: 146. Borg 2013: 75.

iconographic repertoire of the first half of the third century AD may have been limited, but it was not non-existent. The idea of some form of Gnostic or other esoteric sect also fails. Evidence brought forward in support of such theories becomes suspect when such evidence e.g. the writings of the early Christian Fathers are read in context. References to Circe, for example, are made because the cultural milieu in which they lived was still essentially pagan, not because of any particular eschatological reason. There has been no explanation for, what I consider, a significant feature i.e. the very lack of any identifiable religious connection. Grassigli was correct in identifying this aspect (Chapter 11, section 11.3), but erred in seeking a solution in an élite milieu which would have been inappropriate for the libertine Aurelii. The syncretic ideas of Bisconti (Chapter 1, section 1.5.4) and other recent scholars have attempted to answer the difficulties posed by the frescoes yet their theories have also been promulgated by reference to later, Christian art. In looking the wrong way through the telescope the answer has appeared further off rather than closer.

Himmelmann and Kaiser-Minn both came near to unravelling the mystery of 'Adam and Eve' and 'the Creator' (Chapter 12, section 12.6), but neither pursued the link with contemporary heroisation to a conclusion. In the case of Himmelmann a belief in the supernatural aspect of the *virgae* and an acceptance of a Homeric reading of the right hand niche of *cubiculum A* led away from a more prosaic explanation based upon third century AD funerary commemorative practice.⁹⁹⁷ Kaiser-Minn's identification has been largely ignored primarily on the basis that there is no comparandum of Prometheus as a *Privatdeification*,⁹⁹⁸ yet, as we saw with the Pyramus and Thisbe fresco in the Isola Sacra (Chapter 12, section 12.6.3) such singular examples of heroisation makes them no less valid, only rare.

The so-called 'Homeric Scene' (Chapter 9, section 9.2) has no connection with the myth of Odysseus, either with Penelope or Circe. The only similarity is the image of a loom, but as we have seen in the funerary inscription to Severa Seleuciane

⁹⁹⁷ Himmelmann 1975: 22 acknowledges the similarity between the *adventus* scene and the child rider from Acilia yet does not pursue the matter further.

⁹⁹⁸ Cf fns 917 and 939 above.

(figure 126) such iconography is emblematic of feminine virtue. Reading the texts cited in support of the Homeric interpretation does not bear out the scene in *cubiculum A*. Finally, in Roman art Odysseus is never depicted subservient when dealing with Circe, the suitors are never nude unless in conflict and Odysseus' companions are always depicted semi-metamorphosed.

13.1.2 Is the current reading of the mosaic inscription of *cubiculum A* sound?

The hypogeum of the Aurelii derives its name from the mosaic floor inscription (figure 19) that records three deceased and one dedicator all with the *nomen* Aurelius/-a. Despite the common name, several aspects argue strongly against them being a familial group (Chapter 3, section 3.4). The first is a re-examination of the inscription. The endings in the last line are mostly absent. We do not know the case of the *colliberti*, nor the person and number of the verb *fecere*. We know Aurelius Felicissimus was the dedicator, but what of *fratris*? Despite an exhaustive search through modern databases there is no other example of *fratris* as an abbreviation of *fratribus*. In contrast, the evolution in vowel sounds is well testified, in particular the coalescence of the long 'e' and short 'i'. This development is evident in inscriptions from the mid-fourth century, but discussions by early grammarians, such as Terentianus Maurus, who were broadly contemporary with the hypogeum of the Aurelii, show this evolution began much earlier than the epigraphic record might suggest (Chapter 3, section 3.3). The paucity (but not complete lack) of this phenomenon in the epigraphic record is no doubt due to the stonecutter's expertise in following the dictates of 'correct' spelling rather than the *vox populi*.⁹⁹⁹ The *corpus* of Vindolanda correspondence, dating to the early second century, shows that persons of similar social status addressed each other as 'brother', a habit already known in the east in non-military contexts. Reading *fratris* as *fratres* (and hence the verb as *fecerunt*) provides a new explanation of the relationship between the individuals named in the inscription. The deceased were commemorated by the group as a whole with Aurelius Felicissimus either an official of that group or

⁹⁹⁹ It is notable that one of the stone epigraphs displaying this phenomenon (*CIL* VI, 9592, fig. 20) is particularly crudely executed.

someone especially close to the deceased. The most likely group that would be associated with communal burials and have a familiarity between its members, calling each other *frater*, would be a *collegium*. Finally, in addition to the general infrequency of sibling, civilian commemoration, there are none of the usual endearing epithets (*carissimus*, *piissimus* etc.) often found in memorials to close relatives.

The implications of the Aurelii not simply being *fratres* by birth, but commemorated by *fratres* opens up, as I shall discuss below, questions beyond this singular monument. Similarly, the assumption that the epithet *virgo* belonged to the child-sized grave, on the west side of *cubiculum A*, when there is a clear feminine bias in the decoration on the east side of the *cubiculum* has resulted in missed opportunities for a fundamental review of the hypogeum's meaning.

13.1.3 Can one interpret the frescoes individually and/or collectively?

The confusion over identifying Aurelia Prima with the child's grave is symptomatic of other missed connections. The Promethean *patronus* is precisely that because we know that the Aurelii were *liberti*. While the *virgae* or *festucae* that have elicited comment over the years can be interpreted as signifying manumission for the same reason. Addressing the similarities between individual frescoes opens the way for wider understanding. The *porticus* of the rear wall in *cubiculum A*, the Doric columns and *porticus* in the upper chamber sidewalls and the Doric columns of the Donkey fresco, when taken together, give a clue as to what kind of people the Aurelii were. The prevalence of the number twelve in different images in *cubicula A* and B gives clues as to their social organisation. Likewise, this in turn informs the interpretation of the Large and Small Processions (Chapter 8, sections 8.3 and 8.4).

13.1.4 Were the frescoes commissioned by the same client/s, and was there a religious affiliation?

There is no doubt that the presence of the *porticus* and *festucae* in different *cubicula*, when such images are so rare elsewhere, argues for the same clients for all three

extant rooms. The neutrality of the symbols answers the second part of the fourth point. If the tomb's occupants were Christian there is no evidence, but neither is there anything that would upset an early Christian such as Clement of Alexandria.¹⁰⁰⁰ This cannot be accidental. The fact that there is no explicit religious content, Christian or otherwise, in the decoration argues for a group that deliberately avoided such content, a heterogeneous group brought together for reasons other than religious affiliation. The images of the Good Shepherd (*kriophoroi*) in the vault of *cubiculum A* might suggest a Christian presence, however, they are not evidence of any association with Christianity (Chapter 5, section 5.4.6),¹⁰⁰¹ but rather, they are amongst a repertoire of motifs, pagan in origin yet unobjectionable to early Christians. Motifs that, in some cases e.g. the *manumissio*/ Lazarus figure in the *cubiculum* of Miltiades (Chapter 6, section 6.2.4), were later adopted and modified by them.

Cyprian's correspondence (Chapter 6, section 6.1.8) is evidence that such mixed collegial tombs existed despite the strictures of church elders. The hypogeum of the Aurelii is, I submit, such a burial club as Cyprian complained of. What bound these people together was not their religion, but their profession.

13.1.5 How, in the context of the third century AD, does this information shed light on the commissioners of the tomb?

If previous existing theories are deficient what is the alternative? In investigating the hypogeum of the Aurelii I have done so as far as possible in the light of previous or contemporary practice and have tried to avoid retrojecting ideas that arose in later eras. It is unlikely that a definitive solution will ever be found to every conundrum; one may only posit a series of conjectures that, hopefully, will bring us closer to the elusive truth.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Cf fn 434.

¹⁰⁰¹ On the subject of Christianity adopting the iconography of the *kriophoros* see Klauser 1960 and Schumacher 1978.

Commencing in the upper chamber, understanding the Aurelii as members of a professional *collegium* provides an explanation of the 'Creator' figure and its associated human figures (Chapter 12, section 12.6). All *collegia* and *liberti* were in need of a *patronus*. It is impossible to say if the *patronus* was indeed buried in the upper chamber, but his heroisation as Prometheus, the Creator of Mankind, fully accords with what we know of contemporaneous mythologising commemoration. Furthermore, this heroisation would be considered appropriate by the commissioners of the tomb: *liberti* made free men and women in a manner analogous to Prometheus' creation of the first human beings and depicted on the left rear wall using iconography similar to that on the Capitoline Prometheus sarcophagus. The rear wall of the upper chamber, fragmentary though it is, gives an insight into how *liberti* felt towards their *patronus*. Whether such emotions were genuine or not is pure speculation and outside the scope of this work, the *patronus* as Prometheus is how they had him commemorated. Thus the *patronus* is depicted in the company of his *clientes* carrying out their duties as scribes or copyists set in their place of work for eternity. We saw a similar portrayal of *patronus* and *clientes* in the Altar of the Scribes (Chapter 11, section 11.4.3, figure 170c-d) except in the context of the hypogeum of the Aurelii the commemorators are the *clientes* rather than their social superiors.

The most prominent feature in *cubiculum* B, the central vault medallion, is the depiction of a scene of *manumissio vindicta* (Chapter 7, section 7.3). The person being freed is female, accompanied by her owner and an official who wields a long slender rod, the *festuca*. The *festuca* is the symbol of his authority to free the woman from servitude and the ceremony, as depicted, accords with the jurists' description of *manumissio vindicta* in the early/mid third century AD (Chapter 7, section 7.3.1). Consequently, the medallion shows the most important moment in this, anonymous, woman's life and is the only extant image of manumission to have survived from antiquity. Figures wearing *pallium* and tunic, some with *festucae*, others with *rotuli*, are repeated throughout *cubiculum* B, the vestibule and to a lesser extent *cubiculum* A (Chapter 7, section 7.3.3). Some of these figures are in pairs, one with, one without *festuca*, matching the males in the vault medallion i.e. either side of the

threshold between vestibule and *cubiculum* B and in the vault of *cubiculum* A. This most unusual motif of the monument exemplifies the concept of freedom from servitude achieved by the deceased. These 'wands' are not magical, but represent the transformative power vested in the *festuca*: making a thing into a human by the process of manumission. The hypogeum of the Aurelii confirms Dulaey's suspicions that the depiction of the *virga/festuca* as a means of transformation died out as the judicial procedure of *manumissio vindicta* ceased with the passing of the Roman Empire.¹⁰⁰²

The central figure in the manumission scene, the pictures of women on the right hand wall and the female figures equal in prominence to the men in the upper *arcosolia* of *cubiculum* B, demonstrate that women played a significant role within this *collegium* (Chapter 8, section 8.2). Evidence from the epigraphic record and comments from Origen and Eusebius speak of women employed as scribes or in similar administrative positions (Chapter 11, section 11.4.3) and reinforces the idea that the images from the upper chamber are associated with some form of administration.

The Upper Register of the rear and two sidewalls in *cubiculum* A reflects upon the lives and characters of the deceased mentioned in the mosaic inscription. These may be summarised by a revision of the diagram we saw earlier (Chapter 5, section 5.4.7, figure 67) illustrating the new interpretation (figure 208). On the west wall the young Onesimus is commemorated in a variety of ways alluding to the life he might have had if Fate had not intervened: as a vibrant youth in the *adventus* (Chapter 10, section 10.2) and as a mature member of his profession in the 'shepherd' scene (Chapter 10, section 10.5). He is also remembered by his *signum* 'Asellus'; a pun upon his Greek derived name (Chapter 10, section 10.4), recorded on the right hand side of this wall by the small image of a donkey, set within a Doric columned building.

The rear wall contained the remains of the other deceased male, Aurelius Papirius within an *arcosolium* later destroyed as part of the abortive expansion

¹⁰⁰² Dulaey 1973: 38.

programme. The unfinished *arcosolium* in the left hand wall may have been intended as a replacement grave suggesting a degree of continuity. The lunette in the rear wall created by the barrel vault has two closely associated scenes. On the left there is a scene set in their place of work, a *quadriporticus*, one of a number in Rome (Chapter 11, section 11.4): Aurelius Papirius and the other deceased gather in a group around a leading figure. The adjacent '*hortus conclusus*' scene is difficult to interpret, but certainly contains images of the deceased as they were in real life. It may represent a suburban property, but it may equally portray an urban scene. Gardens were associated with certain *porticus* within the city of Rome including the *porticus* of Livia (Chapter 11, section 11.4.2). Again, there is nothing to suggest a spiritual or other-worldly context.

The east wall is formed of two sections: re-entrant corner and niche. The re-entrant corner shows the life of the *collegium* dining. Evidence from Minturnae (Chapter 8, section 8.2) demonstrates that such groups were often twelve in number to obviate traditional hierarchies in dining places and usually, though not always, single sex. A connection between the all-male banquet and the third deceased, the adult, but unmarried, Aurelia Prima, is commemorated by showing her within the picture, but not part of the *convivium* itself (Chapter 5, section 5.4.14). The architecture of the right hand niche separates Aurelia Prima from the dining group and the decoration celebrates, not her participation in the world of work, but the more traditional virtues of women in the ancient world: administering to the dead and weaving cloth (Chapter 9, section 9.2.5).

The numbers in the Small and Large Processions have not been previously explained: there are eleven in both. Both have bare feet, but different clothing reflecting different meaning (Chapter 8, section 8.4). The Large Procession figures, in white, represent people pre-deceased who have been joined by Aurelius Papirius in the rear wall *arcosolium*: the Small Procession figures, in multi-coloured, everyday attire, represent the surviving members of Aurelius Papirius' dining group, their bare feet emblematic of mourning. Whether or not they represent actual portraits is unknowable (see discussion Chapter 9, Section 9.2.2). Beneath the idealised vignettes of life as it was for the deceased (or could have been for the child Onesimus)

the Large Procession alludes to an afterlife. Such a horizontal partitioning of realms is seen in the tomb of Patron (Chapter 8, Section 8.4) and in some sarcophagi where those dedicating the sarcophagus are shown on the lid whereas the deceased is shown in an idealised form on the body of the sarcophagus.¹⁰⁰³ Such examples are rare as few sarcophagi survive with their original lids, but a similar duality exists here.

13.1.6 What are the broader implications of a more holistic interpretation of the frescoes?

The recognition of the hypogeum of the Aurelii as the final resting place for a *collegium* of professional bureaucrats has a significance beyond this single monument and throws light on other areas of research. The gesture discussed in Chapter 11, section 11.4.1 highlights that there are more varieties of hand gesture than those identified in Quintilian: the statuette from the Templum Pacis, for example, shows gesture being used outside of public oratory. The discussion on *cubiculum A's* donkey as a punning rebus (Chapter 10, section 10.4) demonstrates how such examples can occur on artefacts that have previously been interpreted differently e.g. the altar set up by N. Naevius Moschus where the wife's rebus of a sow has been traditionally interpreted as a sacrificial animal. The inference is that there are further examples to be found. Beyond these interesting points this thesis provides important insights into the fields of iconographic evolution; the operation of collegiate dining and the composition of *collegia*.

The scene of manumission has not been identified earlier because, apart from the pre-conceptions inherent in many previous studies, it is a woman who is being manumitted. Had it been a male slave then, in all probability, he would have worn a *pileus*, the scene's link to the process of manumission would have been more obvious and the history of the frescoes' interpretation would have been very different. The multiple depictions of the *festuca* emphasise the power that resided in the rod of manumission. It is little wonder therefore that this symbol of transformation came to be used in Christian iconography for miracles such as the raising of Lazarus. The

¹⁰⁰³ Birk 2013: 27, fig. 60, cat. 498 and fig. 10, cat. 512. The latter example from the mausoleum of the Valerii depicts a deceased husband as a lion hunter while his wife, who dedicated the sarcophagus, is shown on the lid holding a *rotulus*.

'Lazarus' image in the *cubiculum* of Miltiades, adjacent to the *cubiculum* of the Seasons, demonstrates how an existing *manumissio* figure could be adapted to the new faith when the tomb was used in Christian times (Chapter 6, section 6.2.4).¹⁰⁰⁴ In this respect the male figures with rods are similar to the Good Shepherd images in the *cubiculum A* vault and other non-Christian *kriophoroi* whose bucolic symbolism became part of established Christian iconography in the fourth century.

The fact that the manumitted figure is female raises further questions beyond the immediate concern of the hypogeum of the Aurelii. Within the whole of the monument there is a female element evident in each of the three *cubicula*. It is highly probable that the fragmentary, so-called 'Adam and Eve' fresco of the upper chamber depicts nude male and female figures in the same manner as the Promethean imagery on the Capitoline sarcophagus (figure 201). The presence of a female behind one of the diners in the banquet scene of *cubiculum A*, the honouring of feminine virtue in the so-called 'Homeric Scene' and, most abundantly, the females in the *arcosolia* and on the walls of *cubiculum B* are all evidence that the commissioners of the tomb held women in high esteem. This prominence in the decoration argues for a greater role in, at least some, professional *collegia* than has been recognised. The inscription, now in Uppsala University (Chapter 9, section 9.3) demonstrates that women could have a profession and become members of a *collegium* on their own merits. Furthermore, the work of Treggiari and Haines-Eitzen shows that women were often used in scribal positions in archives and libraries of which there were many in Rome.¹⁰⁰⁵ The status of women, which has gained greater recognition in the last forty years, is literally made manifest in the tomb.¹⁰⁰⁶ In the *arcosolia* of *cubiculum B* they are granted near parity with the men and while the so-called 'Homeric Scene' records the traditional feminine virtues of Aurelia Prima,

¹⁰⁰⁴ The similarities between the hypogeum of the Aurelii and the *cubicula* of Miltiades and the Seasons raises questions about the dating of Area II of S. Callisto, but that is outside this thesis.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Treggiari 1976; Haines-Eitzen 1998.

¹⁰⁰⁶ The seminal work of Pomeroy in 1975 opened the way for a large number of writers in a variety of fields bringing fresh insights into the role of women in the Graeco-Roman world. The literature is now extensive and an ample and up-to-date bibliography may be found in Keegan 2014 and Hemelrijk 2015.

nevertheless the inscription associates her with the *collegium* realm of a learned profession by addressing her as *frater*.

The recognition of the ‘*adventus*’ and ‘shepherd’ scenes as being part of the commemoration of a child raises important questions concerning the role of children in Roman society (Chapter 10, section 10.2). Here the literature is less extensive though the twenty first century has seen scholars pay greater attention to children and the family in ancient society.¹⁰⁰⁷ The evidence from the hypogeum of the Aurelii demonstrates that a child might have the right to membership of a *collegium*.¹⁰⁰⁸ The example of Eucharis as a *docta erodita* at the age of fourteen shows that nine year old Onesimus could equally have had a profession and be deemed worthy of remembrance (Chapter 10, section 10.2). Papyrus evidence from Egypt shows that children frequently worked within the family and when apprenticed outside of the immediate family a close connection existed between apprentice and ‘master’.¹⁰⁰⁹ Many papyri show contracts for child employment from around twelve years of age, but evidence from Herculaneum demonstrates that work-related injuries might occur as young as five-years-old.¹⁰¹⁰ If children could be employed at such a young age then it is hardly surprising to find that a profession that did not require a minimum amount of physical strength employed the very young. This view is admitted by Ulpian (*Dig.* 38.1.7.5) who states that a *libertus* was still liable to an *actio operarum* on the decease of his or her *patronus* even if *impubes* as long as the child was a, “*librarius vel nomenclator vel calculator*” or similar. As women in these professions were not excluded then there need not be a restriction in the *collegium*’s membership merely on the grounds of age. There is a growing mass of evidence that children did work, the ‘shepherd’ and *adventus* scenes are evidence that their contribution, like that of women, was acknowledged by their *collegae*.

¹⁰⁰⁷ In this respect see especially Cohen and Rutter 2007 and Rawson 2003. Beyond the Anglophone world see Petermandl 1997 and more recently, the collection of papers in Marconi 2008 provide bibliographies on various aspects of ancient childhood.

¹⁰⁰⁸ *CIL* VI, 34027 = EDCS-24100371 records a five year old commemorated by a *collegius* (*sic*):] | q(ui) vix(it) an(nos) V | m(enses) X colle|g<a=ius) bene | merenti | fecit. On the correction from the diplomatic text *collegius* cf fn 242.

¹⁰⁰⁹ On the subject of children working in Roman Egypt see Vuolanto 2015.

¹⁰¹⁰ Mander 2013:49.

Despite their membership of the *collegium* the age of Onesimus and the gender of Aurelia Prima barred them from certain activities of that *collegium*. It is significant that Onesimus' *arcosolium* is marginalised and has no interior decoration yet is connected by two curved red lines with the 'shepherd' scene immediately above (Chapter 5, section 5.4.8.1, figures 67 and 68). Prima's *arcosolium* is likewise separated from the male adult world by the construction of the niche. Aurelius Papirius, in contrast is placed among the Large Procession, making up their number to the requisite twelve. The concept here of joining (or re-joining) a group similar to that known while alive presages the scenes in the Tomb of Vibia a century later. Here, however, the concept is more vague, depiction less explicit, a seeming consequence of ill-defined ideas of life after death.¹⁰¹¹

The groups of twelve exemplified by the banquet scene, the two processions of *cubiculum* A and the *arcosolia* of *cubiculum* B elucidate the organisation of *collegia* (Chapter 8, section 8.2). The hypogeum of the Aurelii literally paints a picture of such groups in action, dining in a manner that acknowledges a host on the *cornus dextra* of the *stibadium*, but allows no single figure higher status than the rest in a position of honour. Images of similar dining groups show a bias towards even numbers and evidence from Minturnae confirms the idea of having twelve within a group. This phenomenon explains such references to *ab soceis XII*,¹⁰¹² *inter electos XII ab ordine*¹⁰¹³ and *inter emptores XII*¹⁰¹⁴ seen in the epigraphs that I have discussed. It may further provide a rationale behind why some mausolea had membership based upon duodecimal units¹⁰¹⁵ and altars such as that from Este which depict groups of twelve. It may also partly explain the large fragmentary mosaic dating from fourth century Carthage, now in the Bardo Museum, which shows twenty-four diners seated (rather than reclining) three to each of eight tables (figure 209).¹⁰¹⁶ In addition to the

¹⁰¹¹ On this point see Zimmermann 2007 especially 159-60.

¹⁰¹² Cf fn 573.

¹⁰¹³ Cf fn 574.

¹⁰¹⁴ Cf fn 576.

¹⁰¹⁵ The *monumentum sociorum XXXVI* on the Via Latina (*CIL* VI, 11034-54) contained five *sortes* each of thirty six places making a total of 180. Cf *CIL* VI, 10350 discussed in section 5.2.6.

¹⁰¹⁶ Bardo Museum A162. Blanck 1981: 335. Dunbabin 1978: 124, pl. 116, cat. Carthage 29. A ninth table is seen within the oval made by the other tables Blanck 1981: 336, table C, tav. 146,2.

duodecimal number of diners there are parallels in the Bardo mosaic with the banquet scene in *cubiculum A* discussed earlier (Chapter 9, section 9.2.1) i.e. the diners are all male, but with a female depicted between, and somewhat behind, two of the diners (figure 118). The manner in which the diners are seated in groups of three is reminiscent of the name lists at Minturnae (Chapter 8, section 8.2) and the diners display, “no hint of social inferiority”.¹⁰¹⁷

The sidewalls of the upper chamber portray the *liberti* in their place of work, a *porticus* in the city of Rome constructed with Doric columns (Chapter 11, section 11.4). Many of these *porticus* were associated with either libraries or state administration or were themselves the homes of *collegia* (Chapter 11, section 11.4.3). Their occupation was administrative, possibly at some form of library or archive and involved the recitation of works for the reproduction of manuscripts rather than public performance (Chapter 11, section 11.4.1) as illustrated by the presence of unfurled *rotuli* and a gesture that betokens dictation. Those who served in an administrative capacity were as anxious as artisans to commemorate their position in society. We have several inscriptions that record posts in various libraries around the city of Rome and individual *grammatici*, such as the second century M. Mettius Epaphroditus (figure 210) now in the Palazzo Altieri, were portrayed in ways similar to the Aurelii.¹⁰¹⁸ The career of M. Consius Cerinthus demonstrates (Chapter 4, section 4.1) that it was possible for *liberti* to reach the upper ranks of the *apparitores*, and there were *ordines* below the rank of Equestrian who were vital in support of their superiors.¹⁰¹⁹ It is within this stratum of society that the Aurelii lived.

That such individuals formed an association should come as little surprise. The surprise is that *collegia* of administrators are not more evident. We noted in

Unfortunately the sparse remains do not allow a proper identification of the purpose of this table, but if it were for diners then they would have their backs to those behind them and would impede the view of the entertainment provided. It seems more likely to the author that this ‘extra’ table would either be associated with the entertainment or the service of the banquet.

¹⁰¹⁷ Dunbabin 1991: 136.

¹⁰¹⁸ *CIL* VI, 9454 = *ILS* 7769 = EDR161399.

¹⁰¹⁹ On *ordines* below the rank of Equestrian see Cohen 1984 and Tran 2006 esp. 341-2. On the *ordo scribarum* Purcell 2001. For *scribae* forming an *ordo* see Cic. *Cat.* 4.15 and Cic. *Mur.* 42.

Joshel's work (Chapter 4, Section 4.1) that administrative workers were almost as likely to be commemorated as those of banausic professions.¹⁰²⁰ Given the low absolute numbers of individuals holding administrative posts, even in an imperial capital, they are highly visible in the surviving epigraphic *corpus* as individuals. Yet, other than the mention of their attendance on the obsequies of Pertinax (Dio Cassius 75.4.5) such *collegia* are little attested; in Waltzing's compendium one inscription refers to *scriba* commemorated by the *ordo*, presumably, but not certainly, *scribarum*;¹⁰²¹ one suggests a *collegium viatorum*;¹⁰²² and there are three *scholae* directly associated with various *apparitores*.¹⁰²³ The hypogeum of the Aurelii broadens that evidence and sheds light on how these individuals viewed themselves, their brother administrators and their patrons. These were not the high officials whose names are writ in the *fasti* of Rome, but the people who ensured the smooth running of those institutions that made Rome the cultural and administrative heart of empire.

Jaś Elsner's 1995 *Art and the Roman Viewer* brought to light the semantic change from literal to symbolic representation during the course of the first to sixth centuries AD. The hypogeum of the Aurelii holds a unique place along the spectrum of this shift containing, as it does, elements of the literal that hark back to the earlier freedman's celebration of their life and profession. Yet it also contains seeds of the symbolic in the figures with rods and the eleven bare-foot *convivae* providing a place for the deceased Aurelius Papirius. It is hoped that this study opens up a window on the world of the Aurelii, how they worked, how they viewed themselves and enlightens aspects of Roman society far from the Viale Manzoni.

¹⁰²⁰ Joshel 1992: 69, cf fn 276.

¹⁰²¹ *CIL* VI, 32282 = EDCS-19900124 = Waltzing 3.1329. M(arco) Ulpio Celsiano | scrib(a)e librar(io) | ex decreto | ordini[s].

¹⁰²² *CIL* VI, 1942 = EDR107866 = Waltzing 3.947. Valerius L(uci) l(ibertus) | Stasimus mag(ister) | conl(egi) viatorum.

¹⁰²³ *CIL* VI, 103 = EDR161231 = Waltzing 3.618: *schola Xanthi*; *CIL* VI, 816 = EDCS-17300954 = Waltzing 3. 711: *schola viatorum quaestoriorum*; *CIL* VI, 1936 = EDR160855 = Waltzing 3.784: *schola viatorum triumvirum et quattuorvirum*. Note there are a number of administrative posts associated with officials e.g. *CIL* VI, 1019 = Waltzing 3.729 viat(ores) q(uaestorii) | ab aer(ario) Sat(urni) or *collegia* e.g. *CIL* VI, 1935 = Waltzing 3.783 viatori | tribunicio || decuriae majo | ris mercatori | olei hispani, but these are not explicitly associations of administrators.

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