The epitaphs of Damasus and the transferable value of persecution for the Christian
community at Rome in the fourth-century AD

by

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B.A., University of Saskatchewan, 2008

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ABSTRACT

The epitaphs carved in marble and set up around the city of Rome by Damasus I (366-384) have long been understood as important in the political and ecclesiastic history of the city and as crucial in the development of its Christian martyr-cult. I have applied principles of collective memory and material culture theories in order to discuss the role of the epitaphs as physical vehicles of cultural value and self-conception for the post-Constantinian Christian community at Rome.

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<u>Prefatory note</u>

Several months ago, in the course of reading and researching for this thesis, I became aware of a new book on Damasus' epitaphs that had been very recently published. It is M.G. Schmidt's *Epigrammata Damasiana. Propaganda z rzymskich podziemi* (2007). I was naturally very excited to learn of it and requested it at once through interlibrary loan. Several weeks later I was informed that no North American libraries had the title in stock (both regretful and rather dismal, I thought) and that the two (international) locations that had been found were "not currently lending partners". I mention this here to note, first, that I am aware of the book's existence and will continue to attempt to get my hands on a copy, since any recent scholarship on the epitaphs is both noteworthy and exciting. Second, in order to point out that I have not been able to make use of it in the preparation of this thesis. Any resultant discrepancies with the most recent scholarship are therefore, of course, entirely my own.

This is for my dad, with whom I first watched *Spartacus* and *The Robe*, and whom I think of every day. I hope that he would have liked it.

Introduction to Section I

Around the beginning of the seventh century AD a small but striking basilica was

erected along the Via Ardeatina, embedded up to its high-set windows in the earth. This

was in order that the main altar of a new basilica could be built directly over the *in situ*

bones of its eponymous martyrs, Nereus and Achilleus, buried in the early fourth century

in a *cubiculum* within the third level of the catacombs lacing the site.[1] The *cubiculum*

was subsequently enlarged into a crypt by Damasus I, bishop of Rome from 366 to 384[2],

to allow for easier access to the martyrs' tomb. Today, as then, a visitor to the site

descends to the level of the basilica floor via a stair case opening into the southeast wall

of the narthex. The eye is carried at once to the left, towards the length of the nave and

the altar at its end. But the monumental heart of the basilica is towards the right, centered

high on the rear wall of the narthex. It is a marble plaque, truly larger than life (about 8

feet by 4), and once glimpsed it dominates not just the narthex but the entirety of the

basilica's interior space. It was erected by Damasus as a mark of his activity at the site

and is inscribed with palm-sized, deeply-grooved letters which read,

> Nereus and Achilleus, martyrs. They had given their name for the military and
> carried out their bloody term of service, heeding the orders of the tyrant, ready to
> follow his orders with driven dread. The fulfillment of the thing is marvelous:
> suddenly they place aside their battle-rage, they turn and flee. They leave the
> impious camp of their dux, they hurl off their shields, their kit, their cruel weapons,
> having confessed they are glad to carry the trophies of Christ. Believe through
> Damasus what the glory of Christ can do.
>
> *Nereus et Achilleus, martyres.*
> *Militiae nomen dederant saevumque gerebant*
> *officium pariter spectantes iussa tyranni*
> *praeceptis pulsante metu servire parati.*

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[1] The catacombs in question are those of Domitilla. For them, see: Webb 2001, 232-236; Carletti 1986,
13-16; J. Ripostelli and H. Marucchi 1967, 281-285; G.P. Kirsch 1933, 153-63; Ferrua 1942.
[2] All dates are AD, unless other specified.

Mira fides rerum: subito posuere furorem
conversi fugiunt. Ducis inpia castra relinquunt,
proiciunt clipeos faleras telaque cruenta
confessi gaudent Christi portare triumfos.
Credite per Damasum possit quid gloria Christi.[3]

The plaque belonged to a larger set of similar epitaphs, all inscribed in the same distinctive typeface and set up around the city under the direction of Damasus.[4] Roughly thirty dedicated to various martyrs survive in some form, in addition to a handful for non-martyrs and a plethora of fragments which are impossible to establish any provenance for but which are assigned to the Damasian corpus due to their marking with the Filocalian script.[5] The typeface in question had been commissioned by him from the prestigious calligrapher Furius Dioysius Filocalus, who is named on the frontispiece of the Codex-Calendar of 354 and who seems to have worked for an elite circle of Christian patrons throughout the latter half of the fourth century.[6] The Damasian epitaphs were carved in tablets of marble, most of which survive to the present day only in a fragmentary state. The epitaph for Nereus and Achilleus in the basilica at the Domitilla catacombs, for instance, is in large part a later restoration, although two sizable chunks from each of the

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[3] Ferrua 8. All translations are my own unless otherwise specified.

[4] I have provided a brief conspectus of their general features and number in the appended table. Ferrua 1942 remains the standard edition, though the preceding edition of M. Ihm (1895) is still referenced as well. Carletti 1986 gives a small selection of the epitaphs with more recent commentary. Curran 2000, 148-55, is to my mind best and most succinct synopsis of Damasus and his epitaphs currently available. Saghy 2000 and Trout 2003 also stand out in the recent scholarship, though in each case the author approaches the epitaphs from a specific and limited perspective. O. Marucchi 1974, 340-361, is somewhat dated but provides a general discussion with quite a few examples.

[5] For the assessment of determinable martyr-inscriptions as numbering thirty, see Thacker 2007, 33. Ferrua thinks that there were about 60 originally, as is indicated by the parameters of his edition of the inscriptions. Lonstrup 2008 says between 60 and 80. For a fuller description of the epitaphs see appended table.

[6] For Filocalus see Alan Cameron 1992, "Filocalus and Melania," *Classical Philology* 87.2: 140-144; Salzman 1990, 26, 202-204; Curran 2000, 148, 222. Filocalus makes a very striking self-reference in the margins of the epitaph to the fourth-century martyr Eusebius: see Cameron 1992, 142, and the appended table. The letter type designed by Filocalus for Damasus' plaques was imitated throughout subsequent centuries, a fact which has not aided the easy identification of genuine Damasian pieces!

bottom corners are pieces of the original plaque. Its hexameter verses exhibit several of

the characteristics shared in common amongst the Damasian epitaphs. These most

common features include an anecdote from the life (or death) of the martyr or martyrs—

in this case, Nereus and Achilleus, two erstwhile soldiers—showcasing their devotion or

courage; some reference to past persecution, either personalized (as here) or invoked

more generally as "the time when the vitals of mother church were cut open" (*tempore*

quo gladius secuit pia viscera matris); mention of divine reward (very often--as here--

given in the vocabulary of contest and battle); and a tag naming Damasus, either as the

tablet's founder or in the more personal form of second-person invocation.

What I intend to do in this thesis.

   The scholars who have written about the epitaphs have tended to emphasize certain

aspects of their collective significance, such as their role in the formation of a newly

Christianized topography at Rome or their importance to the development of pilgrimage

to, and at, that city.   Great and longstanding interest has been shown in Damasus' use of

the epitaphs as a tool to promote Rome as the *sedes apostolica* (and so his own primacy

as its bishop). Recent articles have focused on political themes embedded in the

hexameter verses: the unity of the church (especially in light of the schisms and

theological conflicts of the mid-fourth century), or the notion of a pointedly Christian

romanitas.[7] Furthermore, scholarship on Damasus himself has often tended to slot neatly

into well-used and predetermined boxes: Damasus the politician, Damasus the

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[7] I am thinking in particular of Saghy 2000 and of Lafferty 2003, respectively. Another work with a
pointedly political focus is Blair-Dixon 2002, which deals with Damasus' work at the urban shrines of S.
Laurence as one aspect of negotiating his own position and political goals within the schismatic and
sectarian context of Roman Christianity.

ecclesiastical opportunist, Damasus as the champion of post-Arian orthodoxy or the promoter of confessional unity. While each of these perspectives is valid, one point deserving more emphasis than it has generally received is the traditional and automatic aspects of the Damasian programme. Neither the epitaphs, their topographic situation, nor Damasus' actions were a departure in any fundamental way from either late antique cultural norms or the traditions of earlier Christianity, and the way they worked upon their audience only makes sense once we integrate them into a culture-contextual understanding of monuments and commemoration at Rome. Focusing on *how the epitaphs worked* will ultimately inform more conventional approaches, as well, since even discussions of political or opportunistic agenda must gain from an understanding of the social and mechanical means upon which their deployment and dissemination depend. Recent work in the field of Roman monumental display, especially the significance and function of its non-textual and material characteristics, gives the basis for a new and exciting look at the real-life effect of Damasus' epitaphs. Moreover, Damasus himself can profitably be studied as one in a series of protagonists within the historical narratives of monumentality and martyr-cult at Rome.

My argument, then, will proceed as follows. I will begin by describing the historical context of monumental and epigraphic commemoration at Rome in order to provide a context for the epitaphs and to highlight the ways that they follow traditional and historic conventions of Roman display. I will discuss the cultural and monumental history of memory at Rome and give some of the theoretical models I have followed in this project, chief among them collective memory studies and the role of the 'reading' audience. I will then deal with how I think the epitaphs worked, the effect of this working process

upon its audience, and why the epitaphs' operative function (rather than simply their content or their role as a tool of political design) merits more emphasis than it has usually received. I assert that what the epitaphs most importantly effected was the cultural translation of the values and identity of the persecuted Christian community--the volitional quality of their confession, for instance, or the figuring of the Christian experience as personal contest--into the post-Constantinian period at Rome. The successful transfer and survival of this 'persecuted' identity and its core values, spawned from the past experience and rhetoric of personal Christian martyrdom, was negotiated and facilitated by the particular monumental function of late-antique Christian monuments, a function best and most coherently represented in the epitaphs erected by Damasus.

    In section two I will apply the broad historical and methodological framework given in chapters one through three to the specific context of the late antique Christian community. I will briefly describe and give a chronological conspectus of martyr-cult at Rome, beginning with the earliest evidence for its development and proceeding towards the activity attributed to Damasus. This will be followed by a discussion of the epitaphs themselves: their common characteristics, defining features, and historical and topographical context. Several of the epitaphs will be presented in full and more thoroughly contextualized in order to provide some useful idea of their nature. Finally, I will glance at the way that the physical development of martyr-cult at Rome is mirrored in the use of the language of martyrdom and persecution by the literary and epistolary discourse of the post-Constantinian church. I will conclude with a nod to the development of pilgrimage at Rome in the centuries that follow Damasus' work.

General context: Damasus as man and as bishop, and his Rome.

Having described the impetus and plan of this thesis, it will be useful to give some brief background for Damasus and for his role as bishop. What we know about Damasus, the man, is quickly gone over.[8]   He was born probably in 303 and was a Spaniard, the son of a lector of the church at Rome.[9] Damasus first appears on the scene in the 350s as a deacon appointed by the embattled bishop Liberius (352-366). For his support of Trinitarian theology and of its head, Athanasius, Liberius was exiled to Thrace in 355 and a replacement bishop, Felix, was set up in his place by the emperor. Damasus initially sided with those clergy who protested this move, but in the end he switched his support to Felix. Liberius returned to Rome in the late 350s and resumed his seat; his death in 366 brought about another volatile election process. Two bishops were elected by two rival groups of clergy: Damasus was one and the other was Ursinus, who had led the group that refused to support Felix back in 355 and was therefore celebrated as Liberius' *de facto* heir. For the next several months a violent and bloody contest was staged between them across the city and in its basilicas. In the most severe incident of violence recorded between supporters of the rival bishops-elect, 137 persons were killed at the Sicininian basilica (thought to be at the site of the present-day S. Maria Maggiore).[10]

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[8] For Damasus in general: Trout 2003; Saghy 2000; Morison 1964; Curran 2000, 138-141 and 148-155; Blair-Dixon 2007, 70ff for his subsequent reputation and portrayal, particularly in the *Collectio Avellana*. For the circumstances of his election: Morison 1964; Kahlos 1997; Ruggini 2003, 373-376; Maier 1995, 244ff, for the role of contested topography in the rivalry. One of the places that Ursinus' supporters met was, apparently, in certain of the *coemeteria martyrum*.

[9] Morison names his father as Leo. Ruggini says he was named Antonius and served the church first as secretary (*exceptor*), deacon (*levita*), and finally priest (*sacerdos*), citing inscriptions and the *Prosopographie chretienne du Bas-Empire*. See Ruggini 2003 n. 44 and 46.

[10] For contemporary accounts of the violent struggle between the supporters of the two rival bishops: *Collectio Avellana* 1.5-7; Ammianus Marcellinus 27.3.12-13, amongst others. For rioting and public violence in fourth-century Rome and threats to civic peace from either religious or other factors: see in

The dominant features of Damasus' subsequent years as bishop are quite different from this early tumult. He is remembered primarily for two things: his relationship with the secular magistrates and aristocratic circles of Rome (and perhaps most infamously for the moniker given him in the *Collectio Avellana* 1.9: the tickler of ladies' ears: *matronarum auriscalpius*), and the projects of patronage that his position as a diplomatic and savvy bishop enabled him to accomplish.[11] In addition to the sort of accomplishments I will focus on here--his extensive architectural and epigraphic articulation of martyr-cult, and its expansion in the catacombs around the city--another remarkable aspect of Damasus' role as *patronus* is his relationship with Jerome and his role, near the end of his life, in the creation of the Latin Vulgate.

Damasus' projects, epigraphic and otherwise, were made possible due largely to the singular position and qualities attached to the role of bishop in the latter fourth century at Rome.[12] A bishop's role and spheres of jurisdiction were not precisely or comprehensively defined by any written code or legislation; instead, the particularities of personality and of the local civic situation tended to dictate the actions and influence of the bishop in any given time or place. So, for instance, in the late fourth century, the protection of a person who fled to a church for sanctuary depended not on his simply gaining the ground of the church, but on the success of the bishop in question in his subsequent negotiations with the ruling governor. It was, in other words, "a test of personal authority and of diplomacy such as any other notable...might have had to

particular Ruggini 2003, especially 368 and 372-376; Purcell 1999, 156ff; Lançon 2000, 117-119; Morison 1964, 248-251; Kahlos 1997. For the city of Rome in late antiquity: Liebeschuetz 2001; Lançon 2000; Purcell 1999, for demography and civic society; Elsner 2003, 75ff; Krautheimer 1983, 93-121.

[11] For his aristocratic connections and for a very brief conspectus of the tradition of Damasus as 'society pope', citing both ancient and modern sources: Lafferty 2003, 39-40.

[12] For the role of bishops see especially Liebeschuetz 2000, 137-168; Brown 1992, especially 146-158; Averil Cameron 1993, 71-73; Gilliard 1984.

undertake on behalf of a client."[13] In some cases this very individualized nature of a

bishop's authority resulted in rather sensational instances of power-wielding: so,

Ambrose's domination of Theodosius in the aftermath of the riots at Thessalonica in

390.[14] Such cases were the exception rather than the rule, though, especially in the earlier

centuries of late antiquity, and it is important to remember that the bishop of the fourth

century moved and acted within a civic administration that remained almost entirely

secular.[15] The eventual changes that did occur should be read as belonging to a late

antique 'desecularization of social life' that manifested itself as a shifting of the lines

marking out spheres of activity for secular magistrates and for their ecclesiastical

counterparts.[16]

   A large part of the authority the late antique bishop did possess derived from qualities

and operative functions very similar to those of a (secular) Roman magistrate engaged in

traditional Roman magisterial activities and dependent on the social networks of

patronage and aristocratic advantage. The real, if unlegislated, power of the bishop lay in

his ability to influence (and mobilize, when necessary) substantial blocks of the urban

population: the Christians under his leadership, but also, notably, the urban poor who

became eventually dependent on the benefaction and alms of the church.[17] The absolute

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[13] Brown 1992, 146.

[14] For Ambrose and Theodosius, see Brown 1992, 109-112.

[15] Liebeschuetz 2000: 143ff. In the fourth century the role of Rome's bishop did not yet approach the zenith it would reach in the late sixth century, with the dissolving of local secular government (the last known urban prefect held office from 597 to 599) and the much larger role of the bishop in the administration and representation of the city. So, for instance, a bishop of Rome who rode out to bargain with the Vandals!

[16] The powers of the bishop expanded more quickly in the east than in the west, and Rome was atypical even as western cities went. Scholars differ in the quality of this process of desecularization: Brown, for instance, suggests for a deliberate and focused push for more power on the part of bishops ("We are dealing...with a struggle for a new style of urban leadership", 1992: 77), while Liebeschuetz 2000 prefers a more organic interpretation of the shift ("a vigorous, creative, and forceful institution expanding under its own momentum": 138).

[17] For the relationship between the bishop and the urban poor, see Brown 1992, 71-117.

authority a bishop possessed over the Christians under him derived largely from the historical conditions of the pre-Constantinian context: namely, that the ongoing threat of persecution tended to reinforce the internal cohesion and strength of loyalty to church leaders, and also that these earlier bishops had held almost unchecked moral discretion over the private lives of their flock by virtue of their power to exclude members from the group at will.[18]

Another point that reinforced every aspect of the bishop's authority was his membership within (and, often, his origin from) the upper circles of elite society. Brown points out that at the end of the fourth century "the church...reflected the sharp divisions in Roman society: its upper echelons were occupied by highly-cultivated persons, drawn from the class of urban notables".[19] Both Christians and pagans of senatorial rank (so, both Ambrose and Symmachus, for instance) adhered to "the model of the cultured and moderate aristocrat (*verecundus*)".[20] Furthermore, the Constantinian reorganization of the urban churches created an empire-wide ecclesiastical network which mirrored the structural lines of the secular imperial administration. From this point on bishops enjoyed links of access and communication not just with the imperial administration but with the other members of this united church hierarchy. A final point of shared 'magisterial' advantage: bishops were immune from criminal prosecution except by a

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Purcell 1999: 146-148 gives a helpful discussion of the nature of, and the dynamics between, aristocratic patronage and ecclesiastical charity: it is "a process of convergence". For patronage and clientship in late antique Rome see also Lançon 2000, 62-63; Cooper 1999; Maier 1995; Krautheimer 1983, 94-104.

[18] For a recent study of the bishop in late antiquity see Rapp 2005.

[19] Brown 1992, 76. Gilliard 1984 makes a study of the prosopographical evidence for the actual incidence of senatorial bishops in the fourth century. Apart from a handful of notable exceptions (Ambrose, for instance) he concludes that the majority of fourth-century bishops (not just at Rome, but throughout the Empire) were *curiales* rather than *senatores*. The rise in senatorial bishops he assigns to the fifth century, once imperial legislation had more securely established Christianity and outlawed definitely the practice of paganism.

[20] Ruggini 2003, 367.

jury of their peers, and they held the right to hold their own courts of arbitration--the
episcopalis audientia--which was allowed to hear secular cases as well as church ones so
long as both interested parties agreed to recognize its ruling. This gave the bishops a
means to be regularly seen in public by their constituents and offered an inroad into the
duties traditionally allocated to secular magistrates.[21]

Fourth-century bishops also possessed several particular privileges which shaped their
spheres of activity and civic influence, and which their secular counterparts did not
share.[22] A bishop once elected held office for life; this made him a permanent figure in
the eyes of the populace, unrivalled by any of the city's annually-elected magistrates.
Furthermore, bishops were exempt from the performance of public duties--in theory, this
was to free them to devote themselves to religious duties, in particular to prayer on behalf
of the emperor and the state, but in practice it meant that the wealth of these men was
protected, and freed up to be used for private or ecclesiastical benefaction. In addition to
any private wealth he possessed, the bishop also oversaw the jurisdiction of the church's
wealth, including the deployment of proceeds from any church-owned properties[23]. The
administration of church holdings (and of the proceeds from them) became a more
sizable thing once Constantine legislated that the church could legally inherit property.[24]
The administration and deployment of such wealth allowed the bishops of late antiquity

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[21] For the *episcopalis audientia* see especially Brown 1992, 100. Augustine, for example, presided over his court all morning and sometimes right into siesta! Possidius, *Life of Augustine*, cited on p. 100 of Brown 1992.

[22] The peculiar advantages of the bishop apparently did not escape the notice of their secular counterparts, either, to judge from the very famous remark of Praetextatus, the urban prefect, to Damasus: 'make me a bishop of Rome, and I will be a Christian tomorrow' (Jerome *C. Ioh. Hier.* 8). For Praetextatus: Alan Cameron 1999; Barclay Lloyd 2002; Kahlos 1997. Kahlos argues for a longstanding alliance of mutual support in place between Praetextatus and Damasus.

[23] The estates confiscated by Leo III in 729 were said to be valued at 250,000 *solidi*: Liebeschuetz 157 n. 138. According to the *Liber Pontificalis* (39), Damasus' personal family wealth comprised 250 *solidi* per annum, derived in part from estates in Ferentinum and Cassinum: Ruggini 2003, 374 n.46.

[24] Averil Cameron (1993), 71.

to engage in local building and patronage and so to situate themselves as important civic

patrons within their cities. Brown points out that Damasus' successful development of

the Christian cult of saints at Rome and his role as "great patron of the catacombs"

depended on the fact that he "managed to harmonize...(his) own patronage system with

that of...(his) influential laity"--in other words, the easy circulation and ties he and his

clergy maintained with the noble (and, importantly, the monied) houses of Rome.[25] The

important point here is that the civic, social, and financial situation of the bishop in the

fourth century put Damasus and his contemporaries in a position to effectively and

judiciously involve themselves in the administration of local martyr cult at Rome.[26]

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[25] Brown 1981, 36. Remember, again, his title 'auriscalpius matronarum'! In fact, one of the criticisms of the anti-Damasian sixth-century *Collectio Avellana* is that he is "inextricably entwined in Roman imperial politics and patronage structures" (Blair-Dixon 2007: 73). Complementing the instance of Damasus--or for that matter of any bishops at Rome--we have Ambrose at Milan and Paulinus at Nola both engaging in various types of civic patronage. In the case of Ambrose, for instance, he was involved in traditional functions of patronage before his ordination, and his activities afterwards were simply an extension (or a continuance) of his previous, secular functions. See Averil Cameron 1993, 72-73.

[26] See Liebeschuetz 159 n. 149. By the sixth century, historical bishops were themselves being widely incorporated into local martyr cults in various places. Liebeschuetz 2001, 159: "Civic identity came to be based on the cult and patronage of early bishops who were now believed (unhistorically) to have been martyrs". But this had been happening at Rome since Damasus at least.

Chapter 1: commemorative epigraphy at Rome

One of the most striking things about visiting the city of Rome today is the sheer

number of ancient epitaphs on display. Some are fragmentary, but many are intact.

Some are set carefully into the walls of interior halls where they are inaccessible except

by deferent recourse to the appropriate authorities (so for instance the Lapidary Gallery at

the Vatican Museums). More remarkable, though, is the number of them that are simply

stuck, seemingly at random, into the nearest plaster walls at churches of early

provenance: S. Lorenzo in Lucina, S. Maria in Trastevere, S. Agnes fuori le mura, S.

Clemente, to name just a representative few. The impression one gets is of epigraphic

detritus, as if the ground of Rome had opened up and spewed the flotsam and jetsam of

its long past across the courtyards and narthexes of the city. Epitaphs are crowded

together on interior and exterior walls; they line the entrances to catacombs; they are

stacked together with a blithe disregard for the categorization of paleographic type or

dating. Much has been written about the Roman 'epigraphic habit', but until one

experiences its embarrassment of riches crowding at the senses it is hard to really

comprehend the breadth and extent of this phenomenon. There are epitaphs to Christians,

pagans, children, soldiers, bakers, generals, emperors. This is what unites them, then,

disregarding both personal status and religious affiliation: their passing from the world is

marked in stone.

The epitaphs of Damasus stand in the confluence of two longstanding traditions at

Rome, each important: epigraphic commemoration (specifically of the type noted above:

individual posthumous epitaph) and the adaptation of the urban landscape. These can

hardly even be discussed separately, since most of the common forms of epigraphic

display were in some sense landscape-altering: tombstones, statue bases, dedicatory plaques, military diplomas—all were seen markers inscribed across urban and suburban public space. In this chapter, I will outline the history of commemorative epigraphy at Rome and the importance of topographically localized associations in the conceptualization and use of Rome's urban space. My aim will be to demonstrate the most definitive features of the broader context within which Damasus' epitaphs fit, and must be understood.

The general features of Roman commemorative epigraphy

Romans were used to encountering inscribed history everywhere, whether it was imperial history written on arches and obelisks or local municipal history written in civic bathhouses and *fora*.[27] Taken together, the epigraphic monuments of Rome formed a narrative of monumentality at that city, inscribed forwards from the earliest days of the Republic. One of the most striking of early monumental phenomena at Rome are the Republican victory temples, vowed from the spoils of war and erected along the established path of triumphing generals.[28] These temples testified to past victories--and, both implicitly and by their inscribed dedications, to the great men who had won them. A Roman of the mid-Republic passing by the present area of Largo Argentina would encounter, for instance, in the space of a few yards, monumental reminders of vindicated battle vows from the first war against Carthage, from 264-241 BC (temples to Janus and Hope), the campaign against the Insubrians in 197 BC (temple to Juno), and the battle

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[27] So, for instance: *CIL* 14.139 from AD 385-389, recording the restoration of the Forum Baths at Ostia by a private individual though at the city's expense.
[28] For Roman victory temples, see especially L. Pietila-Castren 1987; also Hekster and Rich 2006, esp. 152-155, and Ziolkowsi 1992, 307ff.

against the Seleucid Antiochus in 191 BC (Temple of Pietas).   The Augustan

monumental program (27 BC--AD 14) and its reordering of the Roman landscape hardly

needs mention.[29] The Roman epigraphic habit and its commemorative aspects require no

general survey here.[30]   I suggest, though, that Damasus' inscriptions fall into traditional

patterns established by both earlier and contemporary commemorative epigraphy, and

that his work is most profitably understood when the man himself is read as the

protagonist within his contemporary chapter of monumental commemoration at Rome. I

will begin from general characteristics of Roman epigraphy, with the aim of showing

how earlier Roman precedents formed the basis for Damasus' programme.

Roman epigraphic commemoration is first of all characterized by its use of the

language of individual excellence and activity. This is evidenced, first and with most

frequent incidence, in the kind of posthumous and personal epitaph mentioned above.

Personal epigrams first appeared in the Greek context of inscribed funerary stelai and

experienced a resurgence in the first century AD, when the grave relief type of the

Roman Republic gave way to new funerary types that once again featured the inclusion

of text alongside, or even in place of, images.[31] In spite of its ubiquity, though, personal

epitaph was not the only genre used for the public display of merit-based epigraphic

commemoration. Many of the same features were shared by the dedicatory plaques on

buildings and other edifices and the honorific statue bases which characterized the

Roman city. From the victory temples of the early Republic right on through to the

column of Phocus in the Forum (erected in AD 608, and generally considered to be the

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[29] For the Augustan monumental program and the experience of Rome under Augustus: Gowing 2005; Favro 1996.

[30] For Roman epigraphy: Bodel 2001; MacMullen 1982; Meyer 1990; Corbier 2006.

[31] For Roman funerary epigrams see Koortbojian (1996), 226-229; Lattimore 1962; Meyer 1990.

last incidence of classic Roman monumental commemoration), the merits of figures who

had rendered notable service to the state or to particular persons or associations were set

in stone for the eyes of posterity. The erection of new buildings or the repair of old ones

would be accompanied by an inscription dedicating the work to a particular person

(usually listing the noteworthy qualities which justified the dedication) and often naming

the person or group responsible for setting up the plaque.[32] So, for instance, *CIL* 6.1189:

> Because our illustrious [etc.] Emperors Arcadius and Honorius restored the walls,
> gates, and towers of the Eternal City [in AD 401] while removing massive quantities
> of rubble…the Senate and the People of Rome set up these statues of the two
> emperors in lasting memory of their name.[33]

Another common setting for dedicatory inscriptions to individuals was inscribed statue

bases—so, for instance, *CIL* 6.32422, set up by the pontiffs to a head priestess of the

Vestal Virgins in recognition of her "chastity, purity, and her outstanding knowledge in

ritual and religious matters". What all of this emphasis on individual excellence

exemplifies--whether seen in posthumous, personal epitaph or public honorific

inscription--is the traditional Roman showcasing of individual merit in order to provoke

its emulation. Emulation was a central component to the way that Romans thought about

their past and about the relationship of the past to the present.[34] The people and deeds of

the past bore a certain immediacy in Roman society: in the same way that triumphing

generals felt themselves to be competing against not only their contemporaries but also

with the great military leaders of Rome's past, so current men and events had necessarily

to be measured against and viewed within the backdrop of the past--a long skein of great

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[32] For other examples featuring private individuals: amongst many others, *CIL* 6:1.1725, cf. pp. 3173 and
3813, an inscribed statue base from AD 441-445 set up at request of the senate by the emperors in honor of
Fl. Olbius Auxentius Draucus "because of his distinction as an administrator"; *CIL* 6.1710; 6.1749, statue
inscriptions from the Forum of Trajan erected to individuals for merit in public service and personal virtue.
[33] Translation from Aicher 2004, 21.
[34] For emulation and its importance in the Roman context: Gowing 2005; Geiger 2008, 32-34.

and base deeds, unravelled against the physical topography of the city of Rome. The

notion of emulation (along with its binary, the use of biography as cautionary tale) shows

up in literature and oratory: for instance, Livy (59 BC--AD 17) intended his readership to

imitate or to take as a warning, respectively, the (quasi)historical exempla given in his *Ab

Urbe Condita*:

> There is this exceptionally beneficial and fruitful advantage to be derived from the
> study of the past, that you see, set in the clear light of historical truth, examples of
> every possible type. From these you may select for yourself and your country what to
> imitate, and also what, as being mischievous in its inception and disastrous in its
> issues, you are to avoid.[35] (1 pr.10)

> *hoc illud est praecipue in cognitione rerum salubre ac frugiferum, omnis te exempli
> documenta in inlustri posita monumento intueri: inde tibi tuaequae rei publicae quod
> imitere capias, inde foedum inceptu, foedum exitu, quod vites.*

It was also and more tangibly expressed in the monuments the Romans erected and in the

wording of the texts they inscribed in public—so, as we have seen, honorific statue bases

and inscribed plaques provided not just the name of the person in question but the

specific actions that made him meritorious and deserving of such commemoration.

The *summi viri* statues with which Augustus ringed his forum are a classic example of

'emulatory display' at Rome[36] and are specially pertinent to the Damasian corpus in

several aspects. Suetonius (c. 71--c. 135) writes that Augustus set them up "so that he

himself, in his lifetime, and Rome's leading men of subsequent ages, might be measured

by citizens according to the standard of those men" (*commentum id se, ut ad illorum

vitam velut ad exemplar et ipse, dum viveret, et insequentium aetatium principes

exigerentur a civibus*: *Aug*. 31.5). While the statues of the kings of Rome were fairly

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[35] Translation by William M. Roberts (J.M. Dent, London, 1912-1924).
[36] For the *summi viri* statues see Cooley, "Inscribing history at Rome" in *The Afterlife of Inscriptions* (2000), 16-17; Geiger 2008.

simply labeled with their name, descent, and the years of their respective reigns, each of

the *summi viri* of the Republic were inscribed with the most critical and praiseworthy of

his deeds and achievements. Take, for instance, the one to Q. Fabius Maximus

Verrucosus (c. 280--203 BC), which begins with the standard *cursus honorem* (in

Verrucosus' case containing multiple consulships, aedileships, and quaesterships) and

proceeds to the less formal *elogium*:

> *Primo consulatu Ligures subegit, ex iis triumphavit. Tertio et quarto Hannibalem*
> *compluribus victoriis ferocem subsequendo coercuit....Consul quinque Tarentum*
> *cepit, triumphavit. Dux aetatis suae cautissimus et re[i] militaris peritissimus*
> *habitus est. Princeps in senatum duobus lustris lectus est.*

> In his first consulship he conquered the Ligurians, from the spoils of which war he
> triumphed. In his third and fourth he chased and cut off fierce Hannibal from
> multiple victories....In his fifth consulship he fell upon Tarentum, and took it. He
> was the most cunning leader of his age and was accustomed to the most dangerous of
> military strategies. He was chosen as first man in the senate on two occasions.

The sort of deeds being espoused are for the most part quite different, of course, from

those which appear in lives of Damasus' epitaphic crowd, but a fundamental resemblance

nevertheless exists with respect to several underlying aspects: laudatory biography,

monumental display, and the personal imitation tacitly expected from the onlooker.

It remains to note that Damasus' epitaphs fit within two overlapping sub-categories of

Roman epigraphic display: epitaph or funerary inscription, and *carmina epigraphica*, or

verse inscriptions. I will shortly deal with funerary inscriptions and the resemblance that

Damasus' corpus bears to the general Roman type; here I will describe, briefly, the

category of *carmina epigraphica*.[37] *Carmina epigraphica* are, first of all, defined by their

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[37] For the carmina epigraphica I am indebted to the work of Dr. Manfred G. Schmidt (Berlin). The standard
edition of Latin verse inscriptions remains Franz Bücheler and Ernst Lommatzsch's *Carmina Latina
epigraphica* (*CLE*), published as part of the *Anthologia Latina* of Alexander Riese (*Anthologia Latina* II 1–
2. *Carmina Latina epigraphica*. conlegit F. Bücheler. Leipzig 1895/1930–1897; II. 3 Supplementum

metrical quality. They are severely in the minority in comparison to prose inscriptions
(of the over 350,000 extant Latin inscriptions only 1-2 % are in verse), and belong to not
just the Roman epigraphic context but also to the parameters of Roman literary
composition. Epigraphy as a field of study has tended generally to neglect verse
inscriptions, and it was not until the 17th century that editions first differentiated *carmina*
as a particular subset of inscriptions. The tradition of inscribing text in metrical form,
though, is an old one: it begins at Rome with the first of the Scipio *elogia*. The pattern
set by this first instance holds true for the course: about 80% of all *carmina epigraphica*
are funerary/epitaphic in nature. Up to the third century AD metrical epitaphs tend to be
evidenced primarily among the lower and middle classes, but in late antiquity is it taken
up by the higher classes as well: *equites*, senators, and--as Damasus illustrates--the
highest figures of the urban Christian hierarchy. The Damasian use of *carmina* finds an
intriguing parallel in--fittingly enough--the last of the Scipio *elogia* which had first
introduced the genre at Rome, that to Gn. Cornelius Scipio Hispanus (praetor in 139 BC).
Like Damasus' epitaphs, it is monumental, set up along the suburban roads of Rome, and
is metrically composed in hexameter verse (unlike the earlier Scipio pieces in Saturnian
meter):

> Gnaius Cornelius Scipio Hispanus, son of Gnaius, praetor,
> curule aedile, quaestor, military tribune twice,
> on the Board of Ten for the trial of lawsuits, on the Board of
> Ten for the performance of rituals
> With noble behaviour, I piled still higher my family's glory;
> I continued the line with children and aimed for my father's successes.
> I attained the fame of my ancestors: they would rejoice that I
> was born a Scipio. My career has ennobled my clan. (*CIL* 6.1293)

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curavit E. Lommatzsch. ibid. 1926; several reprints). The *Anthologia Latina* will often group verse
inscriptions together with short poems or poetic fragments, indicating the basic similarity of the genres.

Cn. Cornelius Cn. f[ilius] Scipio Hispanus
pr[aetor] aid[ilis] cur[ulis]
q[uaestor] tr[ibunus] mil[itum] II, Xuir sl[itibus] iudik[andis]
Xuir sacr[is] fac[iundis].
Virtutes generis mieis moribus accumulaui,
progeniem genui, facta patris petiei.
Maiorum optenui laudem, ut sibei me esse creatum
laetentur; stirpem nobilitauit honor.[38]

To tie all of this together, then: in keeping with the tradition of Roman epigraphic commemoration to which they belong, Damasus' epitaphs are biographical, laudatory, and set up with the express intention of inspiring self-measurement and imitation in the viewing public. These attributes are apparent, for instance, in the Nereus and Achilleus epitaph quoted earlier.[39] Some biography is given: enough to make the verse anecdotal rather than dryly didactic, and--perhaps more importantly—enough to situate the individual in the 'real life' Roman past, to make him not an abstraction but a member of the familiar Roman world. Nereus and Achilleus are Roman soldiers; they had carried out a standard term of service (*saevumque gerebant officium*); they carried Roman arms (*clipeos faleras telaque*); their conversion is described not as an erudite or esoteric experience but in language both vivid and relatable to the average Roman. They leave one camp for another; they drop the gear of their former life; they are motivated by trophies (almost incidentally, the reader feels, the trophies *of Christ*).

The role and importance of topography in Roman commemoration

If commemorative display at Rome is to be read as a historical narrative, then Damasus-as-protagonist acts concurrently within two interwoven plots: epigraphy (as we

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[38] For the Scipios: Lattimore 1962, 271; further, and for the translation, Aicher 2004, 307-313.
[39] See introduction.

have seen) and topographical context and adaptation. In this respect, too, Damasus'

program was more traditional than it was an aberration. It is particularly important to

make this point because the notion of the epitaphs as delineating a suburban 'Christian

pomerium' of Rome is one of the more romanticized aspects of the Damasian

programme: modern sentiment is easily arrested by ideas of a dramatic 'reclamation' of

the urban landscape. It is true that the epitaphs belong to the larger Christianization of

Roman topography, but their function and situation (if not their message) remains in

many respects fundamentally Roman. Funerary epitaphs and monuments had belonged

to the suburban roads since the days of the Republic.[40] This was due, of course, to the

prohibitions on intramural burial[41], although the roadways also guaranteed easy

pedestrian access and prime visibility, two basic concepts of Roman monumentality. In

the case of the epitaphs, of course, their placement was constrained by more than just the

norms of funerary display: they were placed where the bones of the Roman martyrs

happened to rest. These were in the catacombs, for the most part, but also in the

extramural basilicas; both locales were roadside and outside the walls, and so implied

certain associations by their topographical situation.

This leads to a second important point. The martyrs stayed *in situ* because they had

to, legally—but also, I think, because the Christian notion of the sanctity of *ad limina*

ground tied closely and inseparably to traditional Roman ideas of topographical

'loading'. The events that had taken place on a certain piece of earth, or the artefacts that

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[40] For Roman burial and funerary practice: Koortbojian 1996, especially for Roman tombs as monuments. See Wataghin 1999 for urban burial and the late antique transition from extramural to *intra urbem* cemeteries.

[41] For Roman legislation forbidding burial within the city: Wataghin 1999, 157. He cites as the main texts Cicero's reference to the Twelve Tables (*De legibus* II.23.58) and a Theodosian edict preserved in the Justinianic Code (*Cod. Theod.* IX.XVIII.6).

rested upon it, were able to render that space forever and inviolably sacred. This connects to the broader Roman practice of weighting the city's topography with cultural significance according to its site-specific historical associations.[42] The *locus classicus* for this is Livy, who in his *Ab Urbe Condita* tied historical *exempla* to particular topographical sites within Rome's urban landscape. By so doing, Livy provided etiologies for places that were not only easily identifiable but in almost every case still in regular and pedestrian use. So, for instance, the Circus Maximus, which he describes as first marked out for public races after Tarquinius Priscus' (c. 616--578 BC) war against the Latins, when he brought home enormous bounty and staged games greater than had ever been held before (continued into Livy's day as the *Consualia*). Livy's etiology here forges from the observance of the Consualia and the ground of the Circus Maximus a link between the Tarquinian period and contemporary Rome.[43] The audience of his *History* would see the Circus not merely as the current theater of racing games but as a signifier of Rome's first foreign conquests and as the forerunner of all future games and buildings financed by the *manubiae* of great men. The observation of the races becomes not just present escapism but the reaffirmation of a victorious and defining past. The real efficacy of Livy's topographical marking is in his practice of weighting *the places themselves* with the significance of the specific event which he narrates. He ties the past to the immediate environment of his reader and makes it present, immediate, its recollection

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[42] For the topography of Rome and its important in popular conception, see: Favro 1996, 10; Elsner 2003, for the existence and function of a 'Christian localism' in the context of the fourth century; Ando 2001, who suggests that "Christian and pagan sacred topographies for the late Roman empire can be shown to rest on similar theological presuppositions. Above all, they both assumed theories of materiality that bound human and divine to concrete landscapes" (370).

[43] For the Circus Maximus: Aicher 297-303; Richardson, 84-87; Livy 1.35.7-9: "Tarquinius Priscus' first war was waged against the Latins....Returning with more booty than reports of the war led people to believe, he put on games that were costlier and more elaborate than those of earlier kings. Then for the first time the ground was marked out for the racetrack which is now called the Circus Maximus."

unavoidable. The negotiation of the entirety of Rome's topography was predicated upon this idea that it mattered where something had happened. In the case of the bones of the martyrs marked by Damasus, this historical 'weight' derived not merely from the event of their martyrdom (for in many cases it is not explicitly connected to the site of their tomb); the *limina* were also important because past Christian observance (especially that during the persecutions) had hallowed the spot. The soil of Rome *itself* was sacred, Livy thought[44]: "[In Rome] there is not a spot which is not full of religious associations and the presence of a god" (5.52.2). Its topography was hallowed by the divine (and human) acts which had occurred there. Following upon this is the idea, argued by Camillus in Livy's Book 5, that it is patently *in Rome* that they must be worshipped. In this speech Livy draws explicit links between this inhabiting divinity and *particular* spots in the landscape of Rome; topographical association is tied not just to human *exempla* (such as appeared in the preceding paragraphs) but to a divine providence active in the spheres of men.

> Even granting that your valour can pass over to another spot, certainly the good Fortune of this place cannot be transferred. *Here* is the Capitol where in the old days a human head was found…for in that place would be fixed the head and supreme sovereign power of the world. *Here it was* that whilst the Capitol was being cleared with augural rites, Juventas and Terminus, to the great delight of your fathers, would not allow themselves to be moved. *Here* is the Fire of Vesta; *here* are the Shields sent down from heaven; *here are all the gods*, who, if you remain, will be gracious to you.[45]

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[44] "Romanness here is presented not as a nebulous, abstract quality but as concretely related to a particular place and imperiled by absence from that place." Edwards 1996, 47.
[45] Italics mine. See 5.51.1--5.54.7, for the entire speech. Tr. Rev. Canon Roberts (E.P. Dutton and Co., 1912).

So: the landscape advertises human *exempla* (as Damasus' epitaphs will also do) but also recalls to present memory, and so surrounds the reader with tangible tokens of, resident divine favour.

By their placement where the weight of Christian import pressed most heavily and with extant tangible links (like relics), Damasus' plaques gained from both of these Livian implications: human *exempla* and divine presence. A final, and more concrete, implication of the practical playing-out of topographical marking at Rome is the notion of monuments as locative-set guaranteers—in other words, as signifying some past agreement or reality with continued present-day effect. One historical example is the inscribed monuments displayed on the Capitol from the period of the Republic that documented the status of allies, families, or individuals and were originally set up by the persons so concerned. Private copies would also be made and circulated for private use, but the original documents remained on the Capitol as public guarantees of status or privilege and so "acted as guarantees of family history."[46] The capacity of these contracts to act as 'guarantors' of status or privilege was, importantly, secured by their situation on the Capitol: the site of the temple to Jupiter Optimus Maximus and the most sacred spot in Rome. Another useful instance of inscribed text as a tangible 'guarantee' is *CIL* 6:4:2.33840, dating to 227, found on the Via Ostiensis. It is an inscribed marble tablet, a copy of a request by a farmer along the Via Ostiensis to build a tomb. The tablet records both the text of his original request and an administrative note from the heads of the *collegium* which owned the land he farmed, citing its proper filing and delegation of

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[46] For the inscriptions on the Capitol see Cooley, "Inscribing history at Rome" in *The Afterlife of Inscriptions* (2000), 12-13. After the fire of 68-69, Vespasian wanted to replace all 3,000 inscriptions it had destroyed on the Capitol.

his petition! Like these, and depending on an identical understanding of monumental significance, the epitaphs of Damasus referenced, and loaded Rome's topography with, reminders of what had happened before--and so, by extension, of the present status and identity of Rome's Christian community.

Chapter 2: monument and memory at Rome

Images, Cicero said, require an abode: *sede opus est*.[47] At its most literal level his statement refers to a house crafted by the imagination, the standard paradigm of Roman mnemonic practice, through which the mind composed and arranged in patently spatial terms those things to be remembered and held at ready recall. A Roman employing the mnemonic device of the memory house, then, quite literally 'walked himself through' whatever it was he wanted to recall: in his mind he moved through a fully realized house or landscape and 'saw' points of memory as a bust, a lamp, a mosaic floor. Just as the topography of a city could be loaded with particular points of significance, so the specific rooms and furnishings of such an imaginary house served as locative anchors of personal memory.[48] First originating in Greek thought, the paradigm of the memory house is one that recurs not just through Roman history but in all of her various social manifestations: architecture, topography, art, rhetoric, philosophy, oratory. It could almost be said that the memory house forms a sort of crux or nexus around which the entirety of elite Roman self-conceptualization (as least as enacted in the physical and rhetorical worlds) coalesced. I have so far presented several important aspects of the Roman epigraphic tradition within which Damasus' epitaphs most securely belong, and the Livian notions of topographical and associative weight which they will be shown to have incorporated. In this chapter I will discuss the long-standing tradition of cultural and social memory at Rome which fundamentally informs both the function and the lasting significance of the

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[47] *de Oratore* 2.358. In the surrounding passage Cicero discusses how memory works and its exercise by and within the human mind.
[48] For the memory house: Bergmann 1994; Yates 1966, 1-49 and especially 1-3; Favro 1996, 7.

Damasian programme.[49]   As I argued in chapter one, the very topography of Rome and

its environs acted as a mnemonic map for the Roman past, one presented in stacked-up

layers that demonstrated the ongoing nature of the concern with the past's public

representation. If the representation of Rome's past was sedimentary it was also locative

in the particular sense, as we have seen: certain topographical sites were intimately

associated with events or persons of the past. The primary way these connections were

achieved—or 'fixed' in place—was by physical monuments, and it was at these

particular, *monumental* sites that memory was most critically evoked.[50] Following upon

this point and because Damasus' epitaphs were, first and fundamentally, monuments, it

will serve to address their nature generally at this point.[51]   In this chapter, I will briefly

give the etymological and social functions of ancient monuments. Having once

established this basis, I will introduce the idea and nature of collective memory and

discuss several of its facets that bear particular relevance to monumentality and to the

nature of the fourth-century Roman church.

A brief overview of Roman monuments

The function of late antique monuments still followed closely upon traditional Greek

notions of monumentality, which are based in two complementary conceptions of

monumental function. One is of the monument as a σήμα: a sign or marker whose

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[49] On the general nature of Roman memory see Chaplain, 14ff; Gowing 2005, 12-15 (especially for the memory of the dead and their continued impact upon society); Yates 1966, 1-49.

[50] These are, in other words, "site-specific associations of meaning". The phrase is from Favro 1999, 369: she briefly discusses the field of 'place studies', which discusses physical sites "in which society and space are mutually constituted". The field is not one I have explicitly treated here but its present development promises exciting things for the future of topographical study.

[51] For monuments, in general: Thomas 2007, 165ff; A. Meadows and Williams 2001, especially 41-42; Hedricks 2006. Hedricks is probably the most recent author to stress the distinction between monuments and documents, and my thought is heavily indebted to his work.

function is primarily locative—that is, it marks something in a fixed and deliberate place within the landscape. The other is as a μνῆμα (memorial to recall the past or to the specific dead): "Whereas a σῆμα is differentiated from its surroundings, a μνῆμα is related to the living and arouses patterns of memory."[52] The circumscriptive weight of the Greek philology is borne out and reinforced in the Latin: Varro writes that the word *monumentum* is related to both the noun *memoria* and the verb *monere*. It implies, then, both reminder and warning:

> So also the monuments which are on tombs and in fact by the roadside, that they may remind passers-by that they themselves were mortal and that the passers-by are as well. From this, the other things that are written or done to preserve memory are called monuments (*monimenta*).[53]

> *sic monimenta quae in sepulcris, et ideo secundum viam, quo praetereuntis admoneant et se fuisse et illos esse mortalis. Ab eo cetera quae scripta ac facta memoriae causa monimenta dicta.*

Note that all these definitions are related to the function of a structure or artefact, not to the appearance or form, and Festus (late second century) bears this out: "A monument is both what has been built for the dead and *anything that has been made in someone's memory*, such as shrines, porticoes, written texts, and lyric hymns."[54] So, most basically: Roman monuments were intended to serve as tangible reminders of past events or persons. Buildings and other monumental artefacts in the ancient world were erected with a view to posterity (frequently one's own) and survived for this posterity as a trace

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[52] Thomas 2007, 166.

[53] *De lingua Latina* 6.49. The translation is from Williams and Meadows 2001, 41-42. In the same passage Varro also makes an etymological connection with *mens* (mind). Cf. *OLD* s.v. 'moneo', 1: 'to bring to the notice of, remind, tell (of)'; 2: 'to suggest a course of action to, advise, recommend, warn, tell'. And also the entry for 'monumentum' [MONEO+-MENTUM], 1: 'a statue, trophy, building, or sim., erected to commemorate a person or event'; 3: 'anything which serves as a commemoration, a memorial'; 3b: 'a token, reminder; an example'. For ancient etymology and general definition see Meadows and Williams 2001, 33-34 and 41-42; Thomas, 168; Koortbojian 1996, 210.

[54] Festus 123L. Translation from Thomas 2007, 168, italics mine.

of the past. They were set up in some cases to the memory of individuals, and this type

(especially in the Roman period) served as "moral examples", commemorating not just

the person in question but the abstract qualities which they in theory embodied while

living. Other types served as reminders of an event (often military or political) or

honoured a divine entity. I suggest that Damasus' epitaphs must be understood first as

resembling traditional Roman monuments in each of these respects. Like his

contemporaries, Damasus would have known himself to be writing for posterity. His

epitaphs slot precisely into both the σήμα and μνήμα monumental functions, and serve as

tangible reminders of past persons and events.   It is also worth noting here that the form

and the palaeographical aspects of Damasus' epitaphs align specifically with the

characteristics of *monumental* Roman epigraphy. The Filocalian script is strongly

evocative of the lettering which is typically used on Roman public monuments: it is

straight, spatially ordered and symmetrical, and is characterized by its use of large,

standardized capitals. Damasus' inscriptions also recall the distinctive appearance of

Roman monumentality in that they are carved into plaques of marble, a medium typically

associated with fundamentally public display. In his discussion of the *tituli* which often

accompanied portraits in Roman funerary representations (he examines, for instance, the

early Augustan funerary relief for the family of Lucius Vibius Felix), Michael

Koortbojian argues that the use of inscriptions and (even more so) of monumental letter

forms was an effective method of public display in spite of the (il)literacy of those who

might encounter the reliefs: "the very style of the letter forms--their conspicuous attempt

at regularity and symmetry--seems intended to allude to the grandeur of inscriptions that

adorned public monuments, to the prestige of the messages of state they proclaimed, and

to the magisterial effect they no doubt had on their beholders".[55] In other words: it

mattered fairly little whether the onlooker could read them: he could still comprehend

certain meanings of the monument. If this can be argued for the Vibius relief it surely

stands true even more in the case of Filocalus' magnificent script on the Damasian

epitaphs. It maximized the effect of the whole and lent the entire site a certain gravitas.[56]

The role of collective memory

The importance that I have attached to the epitaphs--that they played an integral part

in negotiating the changes of the fourth century by virtue of their monumental capacity to

serve as vehicles, and catalysts, for popular memory and self-conception--depends on the

ability to understood them as 'working' precisely in the manner of all Roman

monuments: that is, as operating most fundamentally by reminding, rather than

instructing, their audience. Since I depend here on certain assumptions regarding

collective or social memories and their application for the Christian community at Rome

in the Damasian period, it will serve to lay these out before proceeding further.[57] The

notion of collective memory owes its first conception, and the outlines of its modern form

and prominence, to the work of Maurice Halbwachs (1877-1945). Collective memory is

constituted from the common memories and history that a given group of people share

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[55] Koortbojian 1996, 218. For the Vibius relief: Valentin Kockel, *Porträtreliefs stadtrömischer Grabbauten : ein Beitrag zur Geschichte und zum Verständnis des spätrepublikanisch-frühkaiserzeitlichen Privatporträts* (Mainz : von Zabern, 1993), 180-1, cat. no. L7. Relevant bibliography for the controversial issue of literacy in the Roman world includes William A. Johnson and Holt N. Parker, *Ancient literacies: the culture of reading in Greece and Rome* (Oxford University Press, 2009); Alan K. Bowman and Greg Woolf, *Literacy and Power in the Ancient World* (Cambridge University Press, 1997); William V. Harris, *Ancient Literacy* (Harvard University Press, 1991); Mary Beard et al., *Literacy in the Roman World*, JRA Suppl. Ser. 3, Ann Arbor, 1991.

[56] Koortbojian 1996, 218-219.

[57] For collective memory in general: Halbwachs 1992; Lambert and Ochsner 2009; Lowenthal 1976; Irwin-Zarecka 1994, 47-65. For the collective identity of the Christian community: Yasin 2005 (especially for its expression and reinforcement through funerary monuments).

between them and forms the basis of the group's identity. Halbwachs' model defines

collective memory as posited on several fundamental notions. First, it is based, and

depends absolutely, on the existence of some shared experience between different

persons: people will participate in collective memories--and so will inhabit collective

memory 'sets'--to exactly the extent that they have experienced shared events of common

or cultural significance. An individual can (and usually will) 'belong to' or share in a

collective memory set without having ever consciously subscribed to it, and definitely

without having ever met most of his or her fellow memory-set constituents. Furthermore,

the collective memory of a given individual is differentiated according to sub-groups,

with each of whom he shares certain (and distinct) shared experiences. So, for instance,

one part of my collective memories might be held in common with my elementary school

peers (the same childhood cartoons, the same dated fashion statements) and another

might be constituted by the group of students with whom I first visited Rome. Collective

memory can belong to the citizens of a nation, the members of a graduating class, the

adherents of a religious group. Finally, collective memory is neither a static nor a

unilateral state. It is more usefully defined by what it *does* (create a framework for

viewing the world which is inhabited by a given group of people) than by the particular

parameters of its composition.

Most importantly for this thesis: a collective-memory group will often be defined and

constituted by either the survivors of some traumatic event[58] or by the members of a

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[58] So, for instance, the Holocaust. This will eventually evolve into historical memory: "In a sense, the bonding initially created by living through a trauma extends, with time, to those from whom remembrance of that trauma acts as a key orienting force for their lives and public actions." Irwin-Zarecka 1994, 48. One interesting approach here is to look for comparative cases from more recent history. It is no coincidence that one of the most active subfields of present collective memory studies is the history and memory of the Holocaust. Another contemporary social phenomenon of tremendous interest is the nature, and the fate, of

given generation. I would suggest that the post-Constantinian Christian community

belonged in some sense to both of these categories, as 'survivors' of the persecuted age

and as members of a very liminal and turbulent generation. Halbwachs makes a definite

distinction between two broad 'types' of collective memory: autobiographical and

historical. The first of these is built upon memories of events or incidents which a given

person has personally experienced: so, for instance, his marriage, the events of his

childhood, his membership in a particular club or organization. This sort of collective

memory involves *personal witness* of the event in question, and depends on 'a memory'

in its most concrete and definite form: the memory of a specific thing, of its vivid

occurrence, not of its form as retained through retelling or record. Historical collective

memory, on the other hand, is based not on direct personal memories but on a common

version of the transmitted past, conveyed through written (and other) records. It is

defined not by the personal *witness* of the participant but by its possession of personal

relevance to him or to her.[59] It is upon this latter type of collective memory that

Damasus' epitaphs operated as a catalyst. They referenced, and so recalled to the present

moment, persons and events that would have been familiar to their Christian audience

(albeit primarily through second-hand transmission). This process of 'reminding' was

dependent not on any objectively 'true' quality of its version of the past, but rather on

whether the particular agent or point of catalysis (the specific story, or name, or motif)

'fit' the collective memory upon which it drew. Nor did it matter whether or not the

lineaments of the martyr-topography of Rome reflected the 'real' past: "The landscape's

Soviet collective memory. See for Soviet collective memory in general the introduction to Halbwachs 1992.

[59] Halbwachs 1992, 24. For the witness vs. relevance binary: Irwin-Zarecka 1994, 49.

apparent rather than its actual origin is what matters"[60]. What matters is whether the story being told finds an echo in the sentiments held and sustained by its viewers. It is this capacity to reach and articulate the common memory set of its audience that made any monument--Christian or otherwise--effective or meaningful; it was the ability of Damasus' inscribed monuments to resonate with the collective memories of the Christian community at Rome which elevated them from trite, often melodramatic hexameters to personally and culturally affective commemoration. The 'real' versus 'resonant' dichotomy also makes this model applicable no matter the state of historical collective memory for local martyrs at Rome--in other words, how much accurate data had survived the Diocletianic persecution, the manner of its preservation (oral or written), or even to what extent the epitaphs drew on an established body of facts. (I think that they did--but my point here is that it doesn't ultimately matter.) Regardless of whether the community possessed a clear or comprehensive local 'martyrology' at every stage of this period, they were acutely conscious of the persecutions and the martyrs. This is widely evidenced in letters, in sermons, in iconography and apologetic, on gravestones.[61] So to whatever extent Damasus 'invented', he was only putting faces to very familiar voices, marking with names and with σήματα what his audience was ready to see. An analogy might be someone half-remembering an event experienced in childhood (VE Day, or something like it) and years later reading an official description—'yes, that's how it must have been, that's how it was', because enough is familiar to guarantee the truth of it.[62]

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[60] "*The landscape's apparent rather than its actual origin is what matters, however*….Landscape assemblages and details are most attractive when their origins, meaning, and function conform with the viewer's presuppositions." Lowenthal 1978, 44, italics mine.

[61] For the general iconography and art of the early church at Rome, see: Huskinson 1982; Elsner 2000.

[62] So, in order to tap the power of collective memory, Damasus' epitaphs had to be in tenor and in sentiment familiar; they had also to fit present anxieties, since the collective memories which will prove

Collective memory and the idealized past: nostalgia

In the first part of this chapter I have addressed the narrative of memory at Rome and the application of collective memory theory towards its interpretation. In a moment I will address a point of collective memory bearing particular relevance for the case of Damasus' epitaphs: the idealization of the past. First, though, I want to discuss the *effect* of the epitaphs' function—that is, of this monumental catalysis within the viewer. The memory triggered was primarily affective, rather than cerebral or objective. This 'affective memory' was for the past—particularly, for the past as it existed in the collective memory of the Roman Christian community—and so it might be best described as a sort of social nostalgia. What I will discuss now is the nature of cultural nostalgia and its connection to monuments in the ancient and late antique worlds—and, in particular, its application to the Damasian corpus.

This thesis first grew from my extracurricular interest with the cenotaphs and war monuments of the first World War and the aspects of their social meaning.[63] One of the more provocative notions that I encountered in reading on this topic is that to that portion of their audience which had lived through the war and had any affective memory attached to the world before that conflict, these monuments possess a significance and worth far disproportionate to their explicit written 'meaning'. The words or images inscribed on a

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most resonant will be those which bear some special relationship to the group's present anxieties or hopes. The backward gaze of a society or group is not impartial, but will look for "examples in the heroic past that match present conditions". So, for instance, 20th-century Israel found a model for its current traumas and struggle in the story of Masada, and it became a prominent trope in that nation's collective memory. The heroic past examples used in Damasus' epitaphs did not exactly match present conditions—in fact they were quite the opposite—but they were nonetheless fitted to the needs and anxieties of the present. See Halbwachs 1992, 34.

[63] For the memory and commemoration of WWI through gravestone, ritual, and war memorial, see Tarlow 1997; Walter 1993.

given monument might explicitly commemorate a certain battle (Verdun, or Ypres) or list

the war casualties from a particular village or district. It might be dedicated to a

particular corps or battalion. My point is that each of the monuments one might find will

give a subset of information that is specific or particular; it will (explicitly) commemorate

a point in time or special set of persons. But that is not the extent of the monument's

'meaning'. For many of the survivors of the war, these monuments evoked something

beyond the specific: the entirety of pre-First World War sentiment and experience. For

the members of that subgroup whose lives and identities grew up in the pre-war period,

these monuments marked the passing of *a way of being in the world* as concretely as they

commemorate the particular fallen or mark a specific battle. They remind their viewer of

something far larger and more comprehensive than the words engraved on them would

indicate. In short: they provoke nostalgia, on both personal and collective levels, in its

weightiest and most powerful manifestation.[64] The parallel for this in the case of the

Damasian epitaphs is that they both provoke and encapsulate a far broader sense of

nostalgic memory than would be attached to any one of the single persons

commemorated in their verse inscriptions. A pilgrim or local pedestrian stopping to view

the monumental inscription for Agnes, for example, on the Via Nomentana would not be

reminded simply of a girl who escaped the violation of her chastity due to the sudden call

of heaven's 'mournful trump' and whose parents remembered her with great weeping.[65] I

would argue that the girl's virtue or the leering gaze of the accuser would not be even the

primary points of their response. Rather, the inscription (and its setting) would call to

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[64] Walter 1993 makes the useful distinction between personal grief, which is generally for what might have been (the loss of a loved one, for instance, denies the possibility of a life lived with them), and nostalgia, which is for a mythologized lost past: what is perceived to have been, and is now no longer (70).

[65] The inscription to Agnes is no. 37 in Ferrua. For further discussion see pp. 88ff, with related bibliography at n. 185 and 187.

mind the entirety of *a world in which such an event could happen.* This has two implications. One, it did not matter especially if the particular points of the story were relevant to the lives of the audience members or readers--whether, in other words, the reader was able to identify with Agnes (as young, female, threatened) or felt any personal connection with the specific details of her death. They felt, and were impressed by, the weight of a far larger narrative with far greater import. Two, the primary nostalgia provoked by the epitaphs was for this lost world more than for an event or person. The separation between the present reality of the reader and this vanished past will seem, in some sense, absolute rather than relative: the measurement binary is present/gone rather than simply a variable of distance.

So: what monuments most basically commemorate--Damasus' epitaphs included--is indeed persons or events, as we have seen, *but what they most basically mark is absence.* Monuments, in other words, signify something which was there but now is not, and the felt absence is often most precisely for a world rather than for a person or thing. "The ruin exists in the here and now....At the same time, however, the ruin suggests an absence: something that is not there, but that has been."[66] The traces of the past left behind in the physical world mark the absence and so make it more acute, not less.

This notion of monuments marking absence applies no matter the physical medium of the artefact in question (for, as we have seen, monuments are defined and categorized by their function rather than by any particular aspect of their form). Charles Hedrick, for instance, applies this principle in discussing the psychological aspects of Tacitus' historical writings: he argues that reading Tacitean history conveys the sense that the

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[66] Hedrick 2000, 152.

author has lost something, survived something, lives in the absence of something that

used to be.

> "…for Tacitus, the obligation to write history has much in common with the feelings that give rise to "mourning and melancholy" and to nostalgia." The substance of the past--in other words, of *what was*--"will leave traces of its passing in memory and in the material world. These traces... suggest the thing that is no longer there [and]...call it to mind, but also...remind us of the fact that this same thing has indeed been irretrievably lost".[67]

So: nostalgia is the apprehension of something that is absent, and it apprehends not just

the absent other but also the absence of identity, personal or collective. To survive the

past is to leave something of the self behind. This point will be taken up later, and with

specific application to the late fourth-century context.

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[67] Hedrick 2000, 169.

Chapter 3: how the epitaphs worked

There is a well-known anecdote about the day in 1854 when Giovanni Battista de Rossi[68], then a young archaeologist of only 32, first introduced Pope Pius IX to the Crypt of the Popes in the S. Callisto catacombs. It was the Pope's recent purchase of the vineyard above the site, upon de Rossi's petition, that had allowed the work to go forward at all, but the pontiff had taken every opportunity to give de Rossi a hard time about the endeavour. At their initial meeting he had pretended to hardball the archaeologist's petition and had remarked that such pursuits were "dreams, only dreams". On the very day of his visit to the newly-excavated site, His Holiness and de Rossi had both had dinner with the Knights of Malta on the Aventine. Pius' dinner conversation was spent waxing good-naturedly on the folly of modern archaeology and its adherents (Culhane has de Rossi muse "I could not say anything, of course, in the presence of so many distinguished guests; but we are now going to the catacombs, and I'll let the monuments speak").[69] Pius' attitude shifted, though, once they entered the catacombs and he found himself in the narrow confines of the crypt itself, a small cave with a tiny anteroom attached. The anteroom is almost filled with an altar on the front of which is attached one of the most famous of the Damasian epitaphs. It makes reference to the vast host of martyrs buried in the catacombs (vividly, 'hic') and specifically to the popes in the crypt as an honor guard of Christ. De Rossi told the pope that the other fragmentary inscriptions in the crypt named his predecessors of sixteen centuries earlier. Deeply moved, Pius fell silent for several moments before asking if this could really be true.

[68] For de Rossi and Pius IX: Culhane 1951. When de Rossi published the results of his excavations he wrote as the dedication *Pio Nono, Pontifici Maximo, alteri Damaso* ("To Pius the ninth, Pontifex Maximus, the second Damasus"), to which the Pope responded "if I am the second Damasus, it is because I have found my St. Jerome in you." Culhane, 709.

[69] Culhane 1951, 708.

Then de Rossi's alleged (and legendary) reply: "But they are all dreams, Holy Father, all dreams!"

I include this anecdote for its illustration of the emotional and vivid effect that the inscribed word can produce within its beholder. It is hard to imagine anything more visceral than the feeling that must have possessed Pius IX on his first physical acquaintance with the tombs of his predecessors, hardly touched or even looked upon for centuries. I have so far in this thesis presented the epigraphic and historical context for understanding Damasus' epitaphs as grounded in traditional methods and conceptions of commemorative display and memory at Rome and as operating according to principles of collective memory theory. My aim in the next chapter will be to discuss *how I think the inscriptions worked* and to show that in their mechanism, as in their nature, they bore a fundamental resemblance to traditional Roman commemorative practice. I suggest that understanding precisely how the epitaphs worked upon their audience—whether it consisted of pedestrian passersby, local Christian devotees or pilgrims—lies at the very root of both their importance and their associations with traditional Roman display. I will argue that it was precisely the extent to which the epitaphs drew on long-functioning mechanisms of monumental reading that made them so effective and that allowed them to provoke so potent and nostalgic an experience of the transmitted past in their viewers.

All of what follows depends, first, on this: that Roman public monuments of all kinds acted within, and upon, social memory: and that monuments exercise effective agency only and exactly in so far as they articulate something familiar to the collective memory of their audience—that is, the narrative which that group of people already inhabits and sustains. Like Roman monuments in general, then, the epitaphs of Damasus acted as a

catalyst for the inherent knowledge of their audience: they worked because, and insofar as, they nurtured and stimulated the collective memories of their audience. Importantly, what this catalytic function provoked in the participant was not merely the sum of whatever details were explicitly provided in Damasus' verses. By alluding to a particular name or event, they evoked and localized in the particular epitaph the fuller body of familiarity with the Christian past possessed by the reader, whether derived from oral tradition, communal anecdotes, visual or architectural suggestion, or other written record. The most important function of the epitaphs, I am arguing, was not in the particular stories they told (though these are also valuable) but was resident in their action as catalysts which strengthened, and caused to coalesce, the fundamental values and components of Christian identity as it had been formed and framed in the persecuted, pre-Constantinian era.

Correlative to this: the extent to which Damasus' epitaphs adhered to conventional patterns or Roman epigraphic display increased, rather than subtracted from, their effectiveness. While certain aspects of the Damasian *elogia* do differ from the broad conventions of public commemoration at Rome, their dependence upon several basic and longstanding principles of monumental agency prevented the exercise of their catalysis from being overly laborious or contrived.[70] The monumental 'recall effect' upon which all this depends operated, of course, at the interface between audience and epitaph, and

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[70] One noteworthy point of difference, for instance, is that a central feature of Roman commemorative monuments is that they are absolutely and even aggressively public. They are there to be seen and to be read (whether literally or in a broader experiential sense) by whoever happens by: so the frequent address of the funerary epitaph to "you passerby, whoever you might be". Damasus' epitaphs are also public monuments, but their audience is necessarily limited to those who are visiting the graves of the martyrs and other sites of martyr-cult: so, usually, within the catacombs. Not all of these will be devout supplicants (then, as now, we can assume a certain number of the curious and the casual), but all of them will have gone there on purpose. The audience is, in other words, to a certain extent pre- and self-selecting.

should be understood as automatic, engendered by the particularities of context and viewer rather than laboriously imposed by the machinations of any contriving personality (Damasus or otherwise). This process was affected by several aspects of monumental reading, each of which I argue is both present and important here: first, the quality, and efficacy, of writing itself, especially of monumental writing; second, the implications of speech-act theory; third, the role of the audience, both active and passive, with particular reference to subjective attachment and to late antique Christian notions of the viewer and his gaze. I will discuss each of these here; let me stress again, though, that in each case my argument depends fundamentally on assuming this 'catalytic' effect of monuments upon the collective memories inhabited by their individual viewer.

Writing as the preservation of the absent

I begin by addressing certain relevant points deriving from ongoing scholarship on the history of writing and writing technologies.[71] Two points in particular will inform my interpretation of the epitaphs' function. One of them is a theme which recurs throughout both antique and later periods: the notion that writing—be it inscribed, handwritten, set or printed—serves as a physical safeguard and defense against forgetfulness and the eroding qualities of passing time. In other words, the act of writing is conceived of as a security against forgetfulness: "by virtue of its permanence, [writing] can secure ephemeral events against the passing of time. The silence against which this kind of writing measures itself is…a silence produced by time, by the passing of things and of

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[71] The history of writing and of writing technologies is a fast-expanding one and is as pertinent to antiquity as to post-printing societies. For writing and writing technologies, see Gamble 1995; Hedrick 2006.

narrators out of existence."[72] Moreover, this notion of writing as an almost aggressive act

of preservation also appears outside the context of monumental expression and dominates

classical conceptions of memory and posterity. It motivates and underpins, for instance,

the prefatory remarks of the father of history himself, Herodotus. He writes "[in order]

that the past not be forgotten by men over time; that deeds, both great and wondrous,

some manifested by Hellenes and others by *barbaroi*, not become without fame" *(ὡς μήτε*

τὰ γενόμενα ἐξ ἀνθρώπων τῷ χρόνῳ ἐξίτηλα γένηται, μήτε ἔργα μεγάλα τε καὶ θωμαστά, τὰ

μὲν Ἕλλησι τὰ δὲ βαρβάροισι ἀποδεχθέντα, ἀκλεᾶ γένηται, τά τε ἄλλα καὶ δι᾽ ἣν αἰτίην

ἐπολέμησαν ἀλλήλοισι: Herodotus 1.1, tr. Lewis Stiles). Or, similarly, in Tacitus: "As I

see it, the chief duty of the historian is this: to see that virtue is placed on record, and that

evil men and evil deeds have cause to fear judgement at the bar of posterity" (*quod*

praecipuum munus annalium reor ne virtutes sileantur utque pravis dictis factisque ex

posteritate et infamia metus sit: *Annals* III.65.1). Ovid's conclusion to the

Metamorphoses raises the same idea: "And now I have established this work, which

neither the anger of Jove nor fire no steel nor the teeth of time will be able to wear away"

(*iamque opus exegi, quod nec Iovis ira nec ignis nec poterit ferrum nec edax abolere*

vetustas: XV. 871-72).

   The second point derived from questions of the use of writing technologies—the act of

writing the past down—is the capacity of writing (and, I would add, especially of public

and monumental writing) to sustain and reinforce an existent body of collectively held

memories. Though my fundamental argument is that the act of epitaph-reading catalyzed

and so *acted upon* collective memory, the relationship between epitaph and collective

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[72] Hedrick 2000, 132.

memories was, of course, far more complex than a simple, one-way process of retrieval. In addition to provoking the collective memory of the Christian community at Rome, the epitaphs of Damasus (and the similar inscriptions erected by his successors) contributed to sustaining it. The inscriptions functioned as part of a 'dialogue in marble' or 'topographical dialogue' played out across the city but directed towards and constituted by individuals and sub-groups of the larger Christian community. This publicly inscribed dialogue—or, more exactly perhaps, its component pieces—presented to the Christian community an image of their mutual identity which was, to a certain extent, able to supersede confessional and affiliative divisions within the community.[73] Every Christian at Rome had a vested interest in the martyrs; everyone would visit them. They were tokens of the basic collective memories that all Christians in Rome held in common, and upon which their historical identity was based.

Writing and the implications of speech-act theory

Another factor that informs this matter of how the epitaphs worked--the particular dynamic of their effect--is speech-act theory and, specifically, its application to Roman monumentality.[74] Speech-act theory gives a model of interpreting spoken and written words in which the written or engraved word is weighted with precisely the authority and significance it would have as an oral declaration. In a way, it gives the counterpoint to

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[73] A monument, in general, "strengthens the sense of communities by offering its members an image of their membership": Lambert and Ochsner 2009, 11. Yasin remarks of family members visiting tombs of their deceased relatives: "Theirs was the perspective of members of a group whose collective identity was in part constructed by the very monument to which they regularly returned" (2005: 439). I think the same applies to the Christian monuments of fourth-century Rome. For confessional division and 'heterodox' elements within the church at Rome see most notably Maier 1995, who discusses the existence of a "heterodox topography" at Rome and of "private dissent" localized in particular private spaces; but also Morison 1964.

[74] For speech-act theory see Hedricks 2000, 137-140, and Ma 2000.

models which emphasize the permanence of writing (such as that discussed above). While conceding the permanence of written words, speech act theory suggests that this quality of permanence does not prevent the written word's possession of a vivid and immediate efficacy, the sort achieved by oral pronouncement or dialogue. In other words, to write something is not to doom or to render static its voice. Speech-act theory holds that each statement (again, either oral or written, since the two carry the same efficacious weight) can be interpreted as either a constative utterance--one which is descriptive and can be categorized as either true or false--or as a performative one, which attempts to *do* something and is categorized along an effective/ineffective (or, to hold rigorously to speech-act vocabulary, a felicitous/infelicitous) binary. Examples of this latter category are statements like "I do thee wed" or "I declare you ambassador": their utterance changes something in the world or in the status of, or the relationship between, given persons. More precisely--and pertinently, to my topic here--constatives can also be said to have a performative function in the sense that to say "Achilleus did this" is, in effect, to say "(I say that) Achilleus did this". This type of constative statement is known in speech-act theory as a 'locutionary act', and it is within this subset that Damasus' epitaphs best fit. By writing events of the martyrs' lives, Damasus implies his personal assertion of the stories: so, for instance, when he writes that Nereus and Achilleus "were glad to carry the trophies of Christ", the underlying pronouncement is really "[I, Damasus, bishop of Rome, guarantee and assert that Nereus and Achilleus] were glad to carry the trophies of Christ". 'Performative force' is also attached to written words by the author's announcement of a defined intention and/or statement of having accomplished that intention—again, a hallmark of Damasus' epitaphic composition.

Writing and the role of the reading audience

The most essential implication of speech-act theory here is the interpretation of the epitaphs as (performative) assertions on the part of Damasus, a notion which plays into very pervasive and deeply-held ideas of an actual dialogue taking place between (inscribed) monument and its audience. Very frequently, Roman monuments address their readers directly.[75] This often occurs *in propria persona*, in which the deceased speaks in his own voice to the bystander; in the Damasian epitaphs, interestingly, the voice is that of the bishop himself, rather than of the martyr or other honoree.[76] A verb that frequently occurs when describing this relationship is *contemplari*: for the reader to be alone with the monument, to be in personal and one-on-one dialogue with its voice.[77] The personal quality of this monument-reader 'dialogue' will derive much of its potency from the presence of subjective attachment--what Lowenthal calls "affective links" between persons and particular landscapes or localities. A given person attaches to a specific locality (or here, monument) due to the weight of specialized "associations or aspirations"—that is, due to some personal and particular involvement with the locality in question, an involvement that is about affiliation more than anything else.[78] In other words: the experience of the viewer or 'reader' of a monument—specifically, the late antique Christian reader of a Damasian epitaph—will depend precisely and to a large extent on preexistent and personal affective links. The topographical sites of the

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[75] For the idea of a dialogue between person and monument, see especially Koortbojian 1996, 227-228; Lattimore 1962, sections 63-65 for general incidence and section 96 for Christian examples; Thomas 2007, 184. So, for example: *Homo es: resiste et tumulum contempla meum* (*CE* 83.1, near Beneventum).

[76] For *in propria persona*, with examples, see Koortbojian 1996, 228.

[77] It appears, for instance, in Varro *Ling*. 7.9.

[78] For this idea see Lowenthal 1978, 9-10.

Damasian epitaphs were--as will presently be discussed in more detail--those already

associated with the Christian past. Their placement in localities loaded with the

associations and aspirations of 'historical' Christian collective memory ensured the

activation of automatic 'affective links' with their viewers both contemporary and

posterior.[79] This is, in a sense, another way of stating the most basic premise of this

thesis: that the epitaphs catalyzed or 'activated' in the viewer—they *recalled*--what was

already present by virtue of collective memory and personal affiliation.

So: the crux of the process is defined as much by the gaze of the reader as by the

'message' of the epitaph. Of pertinence here, then, is the fact that the sermons of several

late antique Christian authors exhibit interest with the nature of the dynamic operative

between martyrial relics or *monumenta* and the gaze of their (Christian) viewers.[80]

Augustine, for instance, uses the rhetoric of theatrical performance and spectatorship to

discuss this viewer/*martyrium* dynamic.[81] In this model the viewer-as-spectator is an

active participant in the transaction (what I will call the process of catalysis) by means of

his active gaze. It is the eye (spiritual, but also physical) that grasps the monument,

receives its message, and so comprehends its meaning. While these martyr spectacles

were to be ultimately seen in the heart (*theatro pectoris*), they were evoked by what the

physical gaze took in at the *martyrium* or *memoria*.

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[79] These might be derived from context (physical, social, textual) or based on his own personal past
experience. It might further be affected by particular conditions of the landscape: "the context of
interaction between man and milieu depends on mood and circumstance, weather and light and time of day,
views from on foot or in a vehicle, stationary or in motion, deliberately chosen or accidentally come upon.
Finally, the viewer's purpose helps determine how well he likes what he sees." Lowenthal 1978, 4, italics
mine. See also Craik 1986, especially 49-50.

[80] See Miller 2005. Miller's very useful article looks at several Latin authors who also talk about the cult of
relics and meaning of the viewer's gaze, and who are roughly contemporary parallels to Chrysostom: what
she refers to as the "visionary literature" associated with the cult of relics (28).

[81] For all of this (Augustine, theatrical rhetoric, the 'Christian gaze' and martyr spectacle): Miller 2005, 28-
33.

Like many others in antiquity, Augustine thought that the eye was active rather than passive. He described the mechanics of seeing, now called the theory of extramission, as follows: 'In this very body which we carry around with us, I can find something whose inexpressible swiftness astonishes me: the ray from our eye, with which we touch whatever we behold. What you see, after all, is what you touch with the ray from your eye.'[82]

So, in this model, "the act of seeing was performative"[83]: the sight of a viewer was not incidental, taking in or receiving whatever happened to pass by, but was instead volitional and active. Augustine suggests to an audience in Carthage that they chose what spectacle they 'saw': the choice was between pagan shows and spectacles and 'more honest and venerable' ones, based on the passions of the martyrs.[84]

But there is a sort of parallel action going on here: alongside Augustine's active gaze ('I watch the martyrs and then I choose to imitate them'), the monuments also act upon the viewer.[85] For John Chrysostom (347-407), as for Augustine, individual sensory experience is involved in the reception of martyr cult and its meaning, and this involves the participant not only in an active capacity but also as recipient of the monument's effect. This effect goes beyond the intellectual to affect the viewer on a very personal and emotional level. So Chrysostom writes of the effect of viewing relics, specifically at *martyria*: "What can I say? What shall I speak? I'm jumping with excitement and

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[82] Miller 2005, 29; the quotation is from *Serm*. 277.10.
[83] Miller 2005, 30.
[84] Miller 2005, 30: see *Serm*. 313A.3. These 'martyr-spectacles' "differ from the other kind of spectacle in that the eye is directed inward, where the drama is played out in the mind's eye" [and in the heart: theatro pectoris] (Miller 2005, 31-32). She also quotes *Serm*. 301A.7: "I love the martyrs, I go and watch the martyrs; when the passions of the martyrs are read, I am a spectator, watching them". See also the sermons of Leo the Great (440-461) for the martyr *passiones* as a means of competing with traditional venues of entertainment for the attention of the masses: Leo complains that "mad spectacles draw greater crowds than blessed martyrs" (*Sermon* 84.1).
[85] This receptive role of the viewer is emphasized more in Prudentius' discourse (Miller 2005, 38-39).

aflame with a frenzy that is better than common sense."[86] In another homily he reiterates this even more dramatically:

> My point is that in the same way that those who descend from the theatres reveal to all that they've been thrown into turmoil, confused, enervated through the images they bear of everything that took place there, the person returning from viewing martyrs should be recognizable to all—through their gaze, their appearance, their gait, their compunction, their composed thoughts.[87]

For both Chrysostom and Augustine, the effect of these monuments upon their audience happened as the individual viewer was prompted to imagine the sufferings and passions of the martyrs whose stories they told or whose relics they contained: "while urging his audience to 'stay beside the tomb of the martyr', [Chrysostom] advised them at the same time to 'immerse yourself perpetually in the stories of his struggles'. This suggests that the 'spectacle' was a form of visionary storytelling in which the drama signified by the martyr's bones was enacted in the beholder's mind."[88] It is by this process that "the venerator at the shrine becomes part of the text, as it were, of the martyrial narrative"[89].

I have argued in this chapter that the epitaphs of Damasus worked as catalysts upon the body of Christian collective memory at Rome; that their monumental 'recall effect' operated at the interface between audience and epitaph; and that the particular experience of the reader was affected by the particularities of his context and pre-inclinations. I have proposed several points of writing theory as specially relevant to understanding how the epitaphs worked, and have shown that notions of audience and gaze were centrally present within late antique Christian discourse. What remains is to describe the epitaphs themselves and to show that the Damasian programme both stands as the next chapter in

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[86] John Chrysostom, *Homily Delivered After the Remains of the Martyrs*, ed. *PG* 63, col. 467; tr. W. Mayer and P. Allen, *John Chrysostom* (London, 2000), p. 86; quoted by Miller 2005, 24.
[87] *A Homily on Martyrs*, ed. *PG* 50, col. 666; tr. Mayer and Allen, *John Chrysostom*, p. 97.
[88] Miller 2005, 26.
[89] Miller 2005, 28.

the narrative of monumental epigraphy at Rome, and sets the course for what came after it; in other words, to show that what followed Damasus, both with respect to martyr-cult and monumental Christian verse, supports my interpretation of his epitaph's function and importance.

Introduction to Section II

At the time of Damasus' birth the last major persecution of the church, under

Diocletian and his co-emperors, was coming into its death throes. It had decimated the

resources of the church and brought about a last virulent tide of apocalyptic rhetoric

within the Christian community.[90] The records of the church, which Damasus' father

was probably responsible for collocating and maintaining at Rome were dissolved and for

the most part lost (a fact that informs, and helps to explain some aspects of, his son's later

activity). Damasus' earliest memories would almost certainly have been formed in a

setting, then, of profound and (for almost the first time) universal persecution. The

following decades of his life read like an almost unbelievably headlong and dramatic

upheaval in terms of changes within and upon the Christian community. He would have

been still a boy at the time of the Milvian Bridge and Maxentius' defeat (in 312), and

barely a teenager when the Edict of Toleration was declared. His adolescence would

have coincided with the new and victorious emperor's appropriation of the building

projects of Maxentius: the basilica along the Via Sacra; the circus-palace complex on the

Via Appia; most notably, when the Arch of Constantine went up between 312 and 315,

most enduring of monuments to Constantine's new reign.[91] He was in his early 20s when

the Council of Nicaea established a new standard of orthodoxy for the church and his

mid-30s when the Constantinian basilica on the Vatican would have been completed (and

when its imperial benefactor died). He was almost 60 when Julian briefly resurrected

state paganism, just a few years after the violent and prolonged rift of the church at Rome

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[90] For the Diocletianic persecution, see: Caseau 2001, 26-27; Curran 2000, 47-49; Frend 1965b.
[91] For Constantinian monuments, see: Holloway 2004 (19-53 for the arch); Elsner 2000, for the connections between Constantine's deployment of *spolia* and of relics; Curran 2000.

in the late 350s.[92] His own papacy was characterized by theological and administrative

wrangling between church and emperor and by the ramifications of Constantinople's new

prominence.[93] In 391, just seven years after Damasus' death, the emperor Theodosius

would publish the formal edicts against paganism that effectively legitimized its

subsequent prosecution. The process would go on for decades, even (in some senses) for

centuries, but on some level at least the Theodosian edicts act as a terminus for the period

of time most truly 'transitional' between pagan and Christianized Rome.[94] And Damasus

was for almost all of it front and centre. He would have witnessed personally, or was

personally involved in, almost every important milestone in the onslaught of religious

and cultural change that was fourth-century Rome.

Any study of this period of Christian history--that is, of the post-Constantinian fourth-

century transition--must inevitably grapple with the question of how a tradition so bent

on valuing martyrdom and persecution was able to maintain its relevance and to find its

footing once the community in question no longer existed in a persecuted state--or, to put

it another way, once its identity could not justly be defined any longer by the fact of its

persecution.[95] The basic question here is what can possibly survive the level of cultural

and social upheaval that is evidenced for the period of Damasus' lifespan. In the case of

the late antique Christian context what survived was, in part, the discourse of martyrdom

and persecution. But what is the *value* of this 'martyr discourse' for the post-Constantine

age--or, more precisely, what was its *transferable* value? To acknowledge that the

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[92] For Julian, see: Averil Cameron, (1993), 85-98; Gaddis 2005, 88-97.

[93] For Constantinople and Rome in the fourth century: Ando 2001; Elsner 2003, 78ff; Morison 1964, 256ff; La Piana 1921, 63-64.

[94] For a summary of the progression of anti-pagan legislation in the fourth century: Caseau 2001, 29.

[95] Cormack 2002, xv. She applies this same notion to the context of medieval Islam, looking at "ways in which the rewards of martyrdom were made available...in times of peace and prosperity".

Damasian church still talked about martyrdom and the persecuted existence must imply something deeper than the simple retelling of gory anecdotes from the past. What did the survival of this discourse really imply, and what was the 'transferable currency' of martyrdom for the Damasian church?

In the preceding section of this thesis I have addressed the histories of memory and of monumentality at Rome, and have laid out the methodological and theoretical framework within which Damasus' epitaphs can be best and most effectively understood. In this section I will turn to the narrower context of the monumental program of Damasus: martyr-cult at Rome, its development and evolution, up to the period of Damasus' late-fourth century activity. This will be followed by a look at the prevalence of martyr discourse at Rome in the immediately post-Damasian period as correlative evidence for the vigour of the collective values and self-representation which the epitaphs, as monuments, helped to translate and to sustain. I will then refer to six of the Damasian epitaphs in order to illustrate his own work by looking at particular points of interest in certain individual inscriptions. Some of these I have selected on account of distinctive or remarkable aspects of their context or histories; others are here because they illustrate in their particular instances some general characteristic tying them to the broader Roman epigraphic habit and so emphasizing the traditional aspects of Damasus' programme. Having given first-hand these several epitaphs, I will discuss their role in the wide scale changes of the fourth-century and argue that (drawing on the principles and mechanisms of collective memory and monumental voice discussed in the last section) they were engaged in a process of transmitting the currency of the persecuted church into the post-persecuted Roman context.

Chapter 4: Christian martyr-cult at Rome

Describing his days as a student of rhetoric in Rome in the early 360s, S. Jerome wrote

> While I was a boy at Rome...I used to be inclined to go all round the tombs of the apostles and martyrs with my group of friends (this was on Sundays) and to enter into the darkness of the crypts, which were dug into the pit of the earth. On every side upon entering the tunnels the entombed bodies in their graves and all things everywhere were obscured....and as the black night closed around, there would come to my mind that line of Vergil: *Horror unique animos, simul ipsa silentia terrent.*

> *Dum essem Romae puer...solebam cum caeteris ejusdem aetatis et propositi, diebus Dominicis sepulcra apostolorum et martyrum circuire; crebroque cryptas ingredi, quae in terrarum profunda defossae, ex utraque parte ingredientium per parietes habent corpora sepultorum, et ita obscura sunt omnia....et caeca nocte circumdatis illud Virgilianum proponitur: Horror ubique animos, simul ipsa silentia terrent.*[96]

Jerome's description usefully demonstrates the dual realities of martyr-cult at Rome in the middle of the fourth century.[97] His experiences as a student coincide with the occasion of Damasus' election as bishop, but his description would hold generally true for the nature of martyr-cult at Rome in the century before the peace of Constantine. While the two aspects of his characterization will appear at first contradictory, they are in fact simply two ways of describing the situation as it stood in the first half of the fourth century. On the one hand, it is evident from Jerome's account that the catacombs were in fact frequented by Christians visiting the tombs "of the apostles and martyrs", and so that these gravesites were well-known; on the other hand, the picture given seems most vividly characterized by darkness and obscurity. The primary points of the description are the bodies themselves and the darkness surrounding them rather than any projects of decoration or accessibility (systematic or otherwise). What I intend to do in this chapter

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[96] *Commentaria in Ezechielem* in *Patrologia Latina* XXV, col. 0375A-B. Jerome's "early memories are of the catacombs in general as potentially full of holy sites; he writes of descending into darkness to enter crypts dug deep into the earth and lined on both sides with the bodies of the dead, rather than of devotions focused upon specific martyrial sites." Thacker 2007, 30.

[97] For Jerome: Stevenson, 24-25; Curran 2000, 269-298; Booth 1981.

is to give in brief summary the development of martyr-cult sites at Rome in the period leading up to, and including, the late fourth century, and so to show more clearly the role of Damasus' activities and the monumental context within which his epitaphs acted as vehicles of cultural values. My aim will be to place Damasus in the context of the ongoing history of martyr cult at Rome both before and after his own activity. I will begin by describing the picture of the Christian past at Rome as it existed when Damasus found it. I will rely on and make reference to two main categories of evidence by which the legacy of Christian martyrs of the past was preserved in pre-Damasian Rome: textual and monumental. The former category includes martyrologies (lists of martyrs and their festal days), such as that found in the Codex-Calendar of 354, and writers such as Eusebius who mention particular martyrs or martyrdoms in passing in the course of their epistolary or apologetic writing. The latter category is perhaps more obvious and would include topographical monuments of all kinds, basilicas, shrines, catacomb *loci*, etc. Since the two types of evidence very frequently substantiate and inform each other, though, I will discuss them together.

Martyr-cult at Rome: the third and early fourth centuries AD

The first point to be taken from Jerome's account and from the overall body of available evidence is that Christians evidently made regular visits to the catacombs and the open-air cemeteries around Rome long before the peace of Constantine, let alone before any sort of systematic renovations or building programmes had made the sites particularly pilgrim-friendly. They went to see the tombs of martyrs but also of their family members or ancestors, and it is important to make the point here that much of

what can be said about the popular observance and practice of early Christian martyr ritual is for the most part extrapolated from what we know of the general funerary rituals and care of the dead practised by Christians.[98] After all, martyr cult is simply an extension of such fundamental observances. We know, for instance, from the *Apostolic Constitutions* (a fourth-century compilation of earlier source material) that commemoration of departed persons was to be observed on the third, ninth, and thirtieth days after death, respectively.[99] Whether or not this was to happen at their graves is not stated, but what is certain is that Christians did customarily engage in the traditional observance of bringing food and wine to the dead in order to celebrate *refrigeria* at their tombs.[100] As early as the middle of the second century, the Christian congregation at Smyrna was assembling at the tomb of the martyr Polycarp to celebrate the anniversary of his martyrdom.[101] In the middle of the third century, Cyprian writes that "we celebrate

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[98] With respect to practical arrangements, Christian burials seem to have functioned more along the lines of the traditional funerary *collegia* than anything else--that is to say, there was no compunction for Christians to be buried in a specially Christian burial ground even after these developed, and for quite some time the spots were apparently administered and sold not by any branch of the church but by the *fosseres*. There is continued evidence into at least the fourth century of parallel pagan and Christian burials, or of the burial of one within an area containing primarily those of the opposite affiliation. See Johnson 1997; Spera 2003, 26; Stevenson, 22-23 (for the role of *fossores* in the control and jurisdiction of the catacombs).

[99] Johnson 1997, 43. *Apostolic Constitutions*: *Hippolytus* Bk. VIII.**XLII: "**Let the third day of the departed be celebrated with psalms, and lessons, and prayers, on account of Him who arose within the space of three days; and let the ninth day be celebrated in remembrance of the living, and of the departed; and the fortieth day according to the ancient pattern: for so did the people lament Moses, and the anniversary day in memory of him." These instructions are intriguingly interpolated between "Thanksgiving for the Morning" and "Concerning Drunkards"! The 'ninth day' specified here may go back to the *dies feriae*, the days of mourning traditionally observed at Rome and which seem to have lasted for nine days. See Yasin 2005: 439 and especially the sources given in n.32.

[100] Brown 1981: 26: "In the 380s, Ambrose at Milan, and, in the 390s, Augustine in Hippo, attempted to restrict among their Christian congregations certain funerary customs, most notably the habit of feasting at the graves of the dead, either at the family tombs or in the *memoriae* of the martyrs." Augustine draws the explicit link to the origin of the *refrigeria* in traditional pagan practice in his *Ep.* 29.9. See also Johnson, 47: "it was at such a relatively late date that Christian authorities were attempting to differentiate their funerary practices from those of the pagans". For the specific use of the word *refrigeria* in Christian *graffiti* of the third and subsequent centuries see especially Lietzmann 1923 and La Piana 1921.

[101] *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 18.3.

the anniversary days of the martyrs by an annual commemoration."[102] Pope Felix I (270-5) purportedly said mass over the martyrs' tombs at Rome, although there is no indication of the frequency with which this occurred or the extent of the practice.[103]

Christian martyr-cult at Rome, generally speaking, began in and belonged to the suburban cemeteries, both open air and underground (these latter, of course, being the catacombs).[104] It follows then that the central backdrop for the early development of martyr-cult at Rome is the emergence of specifically Christian burial spaces at the very beginning of the third century.[105] In some cases, these were simply areas circumscribed within existent cemeteries. Sometimes the 'Christian' area eventually expanded to surround and incorporate pagan areas and graves as well.[106] The second way that Christian cemeteries developed was by a process whereby pieces of land held by wealthy individuals eventually became the site of collective Christian burial, and in these instances the eventual cemetery on the site often came to be called by the name of the land's original owner.[107] The earliest evidence we have for specifically Christian cemeteries is at Carthage and at Rome. In 203, Tertullian says that Carthage had an area for Christian burial. Sometime during the time that Zephyrinus was bishop of Rome (198/9-217) he delegated the deacon (and future pope) Callistus to organize and

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[102] Stevenson 1978, 12-13.

[103] Stevenson 1978, 34.

[104] For the catacombs in general: Stevenson 1978, especially 24-44; Kirsch 1933; Alchermes 1989; Webb 2001; Spera 2003.

[105] For the development of Christian cemeteries and the popular observance of funerary cult, see Johnson 1997; Spera 2003, 24-28, for developments along the Via Appia; Yasin 2005, 439-441 and 447-451.

[106] For examples of this see Johnson 1997, 50-51. He is particularly interested in the ongoing coexistence of Christian *areae* (private or collective) and pagan *necropoleis*, citing for instance at Rome the Hypogaeum of the Flavii within the catacomb of Domitilla and the Hypogaeum of the Acilii in the Catacomb of Priscilla.

[107] For these 'cemeteries by private donation' see Spera 2003, 25 n.19.

administer the cemetery on the Via Appia which later bore his name.[108] Another of the

cemeteries organized in the early third century for specifically Christian use is that in the

Praetextatus complex.[109] Both of these sites include an open-air cemetery as well as

underground tunnels. Pope Fabian (226-50) "ordered many things to be built throughout

the cemeteries" (*multas fabricas per cimeteria fieri iussit*) and Pope Dionysius (259-68)

"set up the cemeteries and the parish dioceses" (*cymeteria et parrocias diocesis*

constituit).[110]

   The sites of martyr-cult first venerated by the Christian community at Rome seem

definitely to have been those associated with the two apostles who died in the imperial

city--Peter on the Vatican (the purported site of his execution, when the hill still served as

the site of Nero's palace) and Paul on the Via Ostiense.[111] We know from a passing

reference in Eusebius that a monument to Paul on the Via Ostiense and one at the cult site

on the Vatican both existed by around 180 (*HE* II, 25, 7).[112] Graffiti around the shrine of

Peter at the Vatican indicates that the site was venerated at least by the second century.[113]

A third important and early *locum sanctum* was at the cemetery *ad catacumbas*, between

the Via Appia and the Via Ardeatina. Around the middle of the third century, the

Christian presence at this site notably increased. A new cult area to the apostles was

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[108] The Callixtus cemetery lies between the Via Appia and the Via Ardeatina and was formed by the incorporation of several earlier *hypogea*. It likely existed before Callixtus was put in charge of it, but by this point at least we can say that its nature was distinctly Christian. For Callixtus' oversight of it see the *Philosophumena* of S. Hippolytus. For the San Callisto catacombs see Spera 2003, 24-25; Stevenson 1978, 26-27; Webb 2001, 229ff; Kirsch 1933, 135-152; Ripostelli and Marucchi 1908/67, 296-337.

[109] For the Praetextatus site see Spera 2003, 24-25.

[110] Johnson 1997, 40-41.

[111] Holloway 2004 gives a very detailed and useful archaeological description of the earliest remains around the apostle's purported tomb.

[112] See Thacker 2007, 22. Also Frend 1988, 31: Eusebius' quotation of Gaius at *HE* ii 25.7 is "the first time any visible association of the Apostles and Rome is mentioned".

[113] See Holloway 2004, 145. Many of the graffiti are simply initials. Some are names of the dead, accompanied by the phrase "may you live in Christ" (*vivas in Christo*).

created in this period, containing a porch and a *triclia* famous for the large amount of

graffiti it holds, dated to the late third and early fourth centuries and consisting of

personal invocations directed to the two apostles, indicating that their *refrigeria* were

celebrated here.[114] The cemetery earlier organized by Callixtus was another of the sites

which demonstrates the earliest evidence specifically for the observance of martyr-cult

(as opposed to generic funerary practices): its Crypt of the Popes (later to be the scene of

de Rossi's exchange with Pius IX) held the interred remains of third-century bishops,

many of whom were also martyrs and were venerated as such. Taken together with the

Pauline *memoria* on the Via Ostiense and the papal crypt in the S. Callisto catacombs,

then, the *ad catacumbas* site "looks as if it was part of an area of developing Christian

cult in the mid-third century."[115]

So: the tombs of martyrs at Rome were known and visited long before the activities of

Damasus' pontificate or even the subterranean wanderings of a youthful Jerome.

Furthermore, the early and popular practice of martyr-cult at Rome is well and

convincingly indicated from both direct reference and correlative funerary practice. It

can nevertheless be safely stated that martyr-cult at Rome in the third and early fourth

centuries--in other words, prior to the Constantinian peace--was radically subdued and

informal compared to what would follow it.[116] In this earlier period, the graves of the

martyrs did not yet experience much traffic and were not generally marked out in any

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[114] Spera 2003, 26-27. Spera suggests that the new activity at the site in the middle of the third century was provoked by inaccessibility at the Vatican and the Via Ostiensis sites due to the Valerian persecution of 257 AD. For the site in general see the sources cited in n. 167.

[115] Thacker 2007, 22-23.

[116] See Spera 2003, 28; Alchermes 1989, 34-36: "The unpretentious appearance of martyrs' graves in the third century doubtless stems in part from the station and means of the Church, at a considerable remove from the position attained under Constantine and through donations and bequests in the later fourth century" (35).

systematic or distinctive way: they were "generally similar to other burials within the cemetery", "for the most part simple and inconspicuous".[117] The extent of 'marking' on martyrs' graves in the third century was likely simply an identifying legend cut into the slab of their *loculus*. Even the grave of the martyred Pope Sixtus II, for instance, located in one of the exceptions to this general picture--the Crypt of the Popes in the Callixtus catacombs--consisted of a simple *mensa*-style tomb.[118] Furthermore, those sites which do evidence early traffic (through the presence of *graffiti* or of *tropaia*, for example) and which we might call, collectively, the pre-Constantinian nexuses of Christian martyr-cult are focused around a fairly select group of figures: either one of the two apostles (on the Via Ostiense and at the Vatican), popes and bishops (in the Callisto catacombs) or the apostles, jointly (at *ad catacumbas*). The picture is scantily populated compared to the one that would so memorably greet the pilgrims who flocked to the city in the early medieval period from all over western Europe and found there access stairwells cut into the earth, porticos and covered walkways for their ambulatory convenience, itineraries and trinket-shops--not to mention the hostels and hospitals set up for their provision.[119] The beginnings of this change belong to the first decades of Constantine's reign.

Martyr-cult at Rome: the Constantinian period

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[117] Quotations from Spera 2003 and from Alchermes 1989, 34, respectively.

[118] The example is from Spera 2003, 28. Sixtus was killed during the Valerian persecution.

[119] These last, amusingly, sometimes organized by national or ethnic affiliation, like a sort of late antique Olympic village. For medieval pilgrimage to Rome, see: Llewellyn 1970, 173-198; Webb 2002; Birch 2000. Lloyd 2002: 19-21 mentions colonnaded porticoes built to shelter pilgrims walking to S. Paolo, to the Vatican, and to S. Lorenzo fuori le mura, possibly in existence by the 5th or even the 4th centuries. Noble 2001: 53 mentions bath houses, fountains, paved walkways and covered porticoes as particular concessions to pilgrim convenience around the Lateran and the Vatican in the 8th and 9th centuries.

Much of the development at Rome's major sites of Christian martyr-cult can be traced

securely only from the period of Constantine's rule (312-337). Eusebius credits

Constantine with a longstanding interest in promoting the martyrs both at Rome and in

Constantinople: he "never ceased honouring the memorials of the holy martyrs of

God".[120] It is during the last decade of Constantine's rule--so, in the 330s--that

Stevenson puts the beginning of building churches (often martyrial) in the cemeteries.[121]

The Constantinian building program at Rome is frequently addressed in the *Liber*

Pontificalis, compiled in the early sixth century but incorporating earlier material.[122] It is

particularly useful (though not absolutely reliable) for the Constantinian apostle-basilicas,

built over surface-level tombs at the Vatican and on the Ostiense (*LP* 1. 176-9) and for

the several suburban 'funerary basilicas' also assigned to Constantine, called 'cimiteriali'

or 'circiformi' basilicas. These last were associated both with the catacombs and with

martyrs. There are six such basilicas presently associated with the Constantinian period:

on the Via Prenestina (unnamed), on the Via Ardeatina (unnamed), SS Marcellinus and

Peter (Via Labicana), S. Lorenzo fuori le mura (Via Tiburtina), S Agnese fuori le mura

(Via Nomentana), and Holy Apostles on Via Appia (S. Sebastiano, built over the earlier

memoria apostolorum ad catacumbas).[123] The Constantinian basilica on the Vatican was

built over an earlier shrine to Peter which had stood in the necropolis there (the one,

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[120] *Life of Constantine* II, 21, 28, 40; III, 1.6.
[121] He includes in this stage the Basilica Apostolorum and the basilica of Nereus and Achilleus at Domitilla, among others: Stevenson, 36. For the fourth-century history of the S. Paolo fuori le mura site and the possible role of Damasus in acquiring imperial patronage for a late-fourth century basilica there see Barclay Lloyd 2002.
[122] For the *Liber Pontificalis* see especially Blair-Dixon 2007 and Thacker 2007.
[123] For the Constantinian building at these sites: Thacker 2007, 24-28. Some are mentioned in the *Liber Pontificalis* (1.170-201) and all enclose graves. S. Agnese and S. Lorenzo fuori le mura date probably to about 350.

presumably, which Eusebius records that Gaius had seen and noted back in the 180s).[124]

The erection of the Constantinian basilica involved filling in the rest of the necropolis

around Peter's shrine and levelling off part of the hill, after which the Petrine *memoria*

was incorporated into the Constantinian basilica. To visit it today is to walk the streets of

the Roman necropolis (!). Julius I (337-52) also built three churches explicitly connected

with the catacombs: S. Felix, S. Valentine on the Via Flaminia, S. Calepodius on the Via

Aurelia Antica.[125] In the mid-fourth century, then, post-Constantine and immediately pre-

Damasus, the formal, monumentally-celebrated network of martyr cult at Rome had

begun to expand from the sites of apostolic and papal burial (now marked by basilicas on

the Vatican and along the Ostiense) to include the martyr-burial-complexes in and around

the suburban catacombs.

One of the most important sources for martyr-cult at Rome at this point, and for its

early systemization, is *the Codex Calendar* of 354.[126] Commissioned by a Christian

member of the nobility from the same Furius Dionysius Filocalus who would later carve

the famous Damasian letters, the *Codex* is a collection of lists and illustrated calendars.

His name is on the title page and he is responsible for the calligraphy (probably) and the

illustrations (quite likely). The important parts for martyr cult are two lists, the *Depositio*

martyrum and the *Depositio episcoporum*. The *Depositio episcoporum* is a list,

organized primarily by feast day, of most of the bishops of Rome from Lucius (253-4)

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[124] Holloway 2004 and especially his ch. 4 give an excellent site history of the Vatican.

[125] Stevenson (1978), 37. For Julius I see *Liber Pontificalis* i: vi-vii, 8.

[126] For the Codex-Calendar: Salzman 1990; Thacker 2007, 20-21; Akerstrom-Hougen 2001, 159; Elsner 2003, 79. For Filocalus, refer to n. 6 of this thesis. The calligraphy and the full-page illustrations (the first in Western codices) were both probably done by Filocalus. It survives in fragments and in copies (from original codex or froma lost Carolingian copy); the earliest full copies are from the sixteenth century. The text of the *Depositio episcoporum* dates probably from 336, with later additions. The only certain dating for the *Depositio martyrum* is a *non post quam* of 354.

through Julius I (337-52); the *Depositio martyrum* is similarly arranged and includes 52 named martyrs, all of which except for three are from Rome or its suburbia.[127] Both lists usually name the place of burial (hence '*depositio*'), which are spread along the roads all around the periphery of the city. The local nature of the *Depositio martyrum* is particularly noteworthy since little evidence actually exists for Roman martyrs--that is, about the particular victims of any local persecutions--from any pre-Damasian evidence.[128] Even in the case of those names we do know to predate Damasus' activity— for instance, those figures around whose veneration the Constantinian funerary basilicas were based--dates and details are frequently lacking (even for the most famous, like Agnes). The *Acta*, for instance, the primitive accounts of judicial trials and punishments which form the earliest records of Christian martyrdom and shape our understanding of early Christian martyrdom throughout the Roman empire, are very rarely from Rome; of the 28 *Acta* given in Musurillo's standard edition, only three take place in the imperial city.[129] Alan Thacker claims that for the figures engaged in developing Christian martyr cult in the fourth centuries and onwards, known 'Roman' martyrs existed, for the most part, only insofar as they were names about which one could write nearly whatever they liked. They were, in other words, primarily a list of σήματα around which to draw a

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[127]Thacker feels that the *Depositio martyrum* reflects the bulk of the martyr-cult at Rome in 354 as opposed to being merely a selection, and that it therefore provides the picture of the cult's delineation when Damasus came on the scene as bishop. For this line of reasoning see Thacker 2007, 23. The very nature of the Calendar and of the *Depositio Martyrum*, however, seem to counter-indicate this notion.

[128] Thacker 2007 argues this most strongly. See p. 36: "[E]verything suggests that in the late fourth century almost nothing was known of the Roman martyrs. Damasus in fact had very little to work with; his saints have no history and often no name. Far from blotting out, or selecting from a countless multitude, he was...providing the city with saints and feast days that had never before existed or had been remembered so dimly that they had to be reinvented."

[129] See Thacker 2007, 20. For the *Acta*: Musurillo 1972; Bisbee 1988.

picture of the past. It was in the context of a martyr-cult defined by such opportunity that

Damasus' epitaphs would come to play such a central and definitive role.[130]

Martyr-cult at Rome: Damasus and the latter fourth century

   From about the middle of the fourth century, martyr cult at Rome began to be

systematically marked by buildings, shrines, and other topographical modifications and,

over time, to increase with respect to both the number and the story-systems of its local

martyrs. The suburban funerary complexes continued to be further developed, and in

general there appeared more cult structures associated with martyrs' tombs.[131] Existing

Christian cemeteries (such as Callixtus and Praetextatus) were expanded, both open-air

and underground, and new ones were developed. It was within this pivotal stage of

martyr-cult at Rome that Damasus and his projects must be understood. What Damasus

did was to direct his activity towards the expansion and facilitation of what was already

happening, rather than the invention or introduction of radically new behaviours. As

much as was possible, Damasus involved himself with existing cult sites, incorporating

his own work into the Constantinian basilicas and the complexes grown up around them.

In addition, he expanded the focus of ritual and veneration from the above-ground

basilicas into the suburban underground of Rome's periphery.[132] Each of Damasus'

'monumental interventions' would typically be marked by an epitaph: composed in

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[130] I am of the opinion that Thacker's argument is problematic in two respects: first, he assumes that the scarcity of our earlier data on Roman martyrs means that it did not exist; second, it does not adequately take into account the existence of a Christian oral tradition and collective memory capable of sustaining and so 'archiving' such cultural knowledge regardless of its current topographical or public reflection. While I do think that these names functioned as σήματα around which a picture of the Christian past could be drawn, Damasus' greatest opportunity was not in *inventing* this picture, but in welding together its most compelling and recognizable features with the locative σήματα of Rome's topography.
[131] For specifically fourth-century developments see Spera 2003, 28ff.
[132] See table and appendix for synopsis of his activities.

hexameter verse by Damasus himself, carved in the striking Filocalian script, and erected in some prominent position at the site of his activity. Elsner suggests that a core component of Damasus' program was to bring together under the authority of Rome's bishop what had probably functioned previously as a collection of rival cult sites, each with its own group of devotees and visitors.[133] In the next chapter I will look at several particular epitaphs that demonstrate Damasus' emphases and activities in more detail. Here, I will simply underline that three main themes can be demonstrated broadly throughout the Damasian project: physical renovation or reworking of the site itself, a marked emphasis on the presence of a collective mass of buried Christian dead rather than a handful of saints venerated at their named basilicas, and the expansion of the Roman martyrology by the naming, and marking, of new martyrs via epitaph placement. He introduced 15 'new' names to the Christian martyr-cult of Rome--that is, his epitaphs mark their first topographical and cultic commemoration at that city.[134] This expansion was, again, especially important for the establishment and systematic celebration of a local corpus of Christian martyrs.

The prevalence of martyr discourse in late antiquity

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[133] Elsner 2003, 79. For this idea see also Maier 1995, especially 246ff.

[134] Caseau and Lançon both give the number of 'new' martyrs introduced by Damasus as 15, citing Pietri's calculations; Thacker says 77 in total (but he counting the 62 unnamed of n. 43 among these). Thacker 2007, 33: "All told, some thirty of his inscriptions [erected at cult sites] celebrating the martyrs survive or have been recorded, of which eleven commemorate 77 saints (including the 62 unknown martyrs of the Via Salaria Nova) not mentioned in the Philocalian calendar." See also Caseau 2001, 42: "By engraving poems near the tombs of fifteen unknown saints whose days were added to the church festal calendar, Pope Damasus created a wreath of oratories around the city, defining an *urbs sacra* surrounded by martyrs." For an example of his new introduction of martyr-figures into the topography: at the cemetery of Thrason on the Via Salaria Nova he set up an inscription to Saturninus (included in the Codex lists) but also erected epitaphs to several 'new', previously uncelebrated martyrs: Chrysanthus and Daria (45), Maurus (44), and the 62 Unnamed (43). See Thacker 2007, 32-33.

I have argued that the epitaphs were particular vehicles in a process of cultural transfer which worked through monuments and their popular reception, and that the most striking and important implication of this transfer was its capacity to preserve and transmit the core values and motifs of persecuted Christianity into the very different post-Constantinian era. Long after Christianity had experienced general toleration, and then become the imperially-sanctioned religion under Constantine, the values and memory of the persecuted past remained a vital component of Christian sensibilities.[135] Abstracted from particular stories and temporal contexts, and recast in archetypal and heroic figures unsullied by human ambiguity or indecision, the core themes that inhabited the heart of Christian martyrdom were relocated on the Roman topography in epitaph, shrine, and monument and so retained their currency into the present. Furthermore, the physical and topographical expansion of martyr-cult at Rome occurred in conjunction with, and was mirrored in, a continued survival and use of the language of martyrdom and persecution in Christian literature and letters. Themes and modes of self-conception that had emerged in a context of insular rhetoric and constant threat retained their pertinence and prominence within the discourse and collective self-modelling of a radically different, and differently constituted, Christian community. It remained the martyrs who were to be emulated and who best embodied the defining values of the Christian community,

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[135] The point should be made, too, that martyrdom was by no means an occurrence strictly of the past, either in the way it was discussed or in actual incidence. The missionary endeavours that took place, especially after Gregory the Great's pontificate, were often entered into with the distinct expectation of martyrdom. Nor did the Constantinian peace spell the end of religiously-motivated violence; the fourth century in particular was a hotbed of sectional and confessional discord and the various confessions had little hesitation about using force against each other. Probably the ultimate example of this is the Donatists, the sect that began in North Africa and held to fierce and old-fashioned doctrines of imminent eschatology and volitional martyrdom. Post-Constantinian martyrdom was, for them, not just a discursive theme but quite a present reality. For religious violence in the fourth century, see notably Gaddis 2005 (especially ch. 2): he discusses the historical incidence of violence and 'persecution' in the fourth century as well as the polemical use of the language of martyrdom by the fourth-century Church, both in issues of internal unity and dissension and against state interference.

whether their essence was translated through monumental catalysis or woven like a

thread through the apologetic and exhortative writing of late antique Christian writers.

   This continued presence and relevance is hardly surprising, given the longstanding

centrality of martyrdom to the self-conception and representation of the Christian

community. Persecution was fundamental to the way that Christians thought about

themselves: they were, foremost and always, the heirs of Christ and the imitators of his

suffering. The experience of suffering and persecution and, especially, of personal

martyrdom was the purest and realest form of *imitatio Christi*.[136] To give the historical

survey of persecution is well outside the scope of this thesis;[137] given my emphasis on the

function of the epitaphs as receptacles for the values of the pre-Constantinian church,

though, and especially of the modes and motifs of its self-representation, I think I cannot

go further without at least highlighting a few other of the core motifs and values that run

throughout its framing by the historical Christian community. Central among these are

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[136] A least theoretically at the root of most Christian martyrology throughout the historical period in question, the *imitatio* is both a theological and an emotionally affective construct. It is not just that the martyr follows Christ as an examplar (of sacrifice, courage, love); Christ actually suffers in the martyr. This is sometimes physicalized in the language of the Acta, as in the Decian story of Nemesion, who "was informed against as being a Christian, and came bound before the governor. He most unjustly inflicted on him twice as many tortures and scourgings as he did on the robbers [with whom Nemesion had been co-accused], and burnt him between them, thus honouring him, happy man, with a likeness to Christ." Eusebius 6.41.21, tr. John E.L. Oulton. Or the account of Blandina, who is tied to a stake like the cross in such a way that the onlookers see Christ in her form. In other cases the notion shows up via descriptions of Christ himself not merely symbolically indwelling but actually standing alongside, in physical form, the martyr as he or she suffers. So, for instance, in the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 2.2: "at that hour of their torture...the Lord was standing by and talking with them".

[137] For Christian martyrdom in general see the brief but excellent survey of the question given by David Loades 1993; Cormack 2002 and the various essays within; Droge and Tabor 1992, for its context within classical Roman conceptions of voluntary and noble death. Frend 1965a and 1965b remain seminal works. Salisbury 2004 is disjointed and at times bewildering but raises some interesting points; Lacey Baldwin Smith 1997 is an ambitious cross-cultural and -generational analysis of martyrdom and its motivation. See also J. Whaley 1981 for general context; Castelli 2004 and Grig 2004 for stimulating discussion of the treatment and reception of Christian martyrs in late antiquity and beyond.

the volitional quality of martyrdom;[138] the idea that through their suffering Christians

engaged in a struggle that was cosmic and eschatological in nature; [139] the idea of

martyrdom as a fundamentally performative act (efficacious either as bearing witness to

the truth of Christ or, more radically, for both personal and vicarious atonement); and the

view of confessors (and especially of martyrs) as a group apart within the Church.[140] The

impact and vitality of these motifs continued to make itself felt long after the peace of the

church. If anything, the increasing distance and disparity between the two contexts

caused the absent past to take on, in a sense, a nostalgic glow.   The process of cultural

transfer within which the epitaphs operated belonged, in fact, to a community engaged in

an idealized and fervent collective recollection of its persecuted past. The inclination

towards such an idealization is a particular trait of collective memory, according to

Halbwachs. Even those experiences characterized by pain and discomfort are frequently

characterized otherwise:

> "That faraway world where we remember that we suffered nevertheless exercises an
> incomprehensible attraction on the person who has survived it and who seems to

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[138] That is, the idea that the Christian should not only accept but should actually long for a martyr's death. It is embodied in the person of Ignatius (fl. 107) and especially in his Letter to the Romans. The ultimate apology for volitional martyrdom must, though, surely go to Tertullian's *De Fuga*, in which he describes the mentality suitable to a Christian: "[the Holy Spirit] incites all almost to go and offer themselves in martyrdom, not to flee from it....seek not to die on bridal beds, nor in miscarriages, nor in soft fevers, but to die the martyr's death, that He may be glorified who has suffered for you" (9-10, tr. S. Thelwall). See, too, the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 3.1 (tr. Kirsopp Lake): "For when the proconsul wished to persuade him (Germanicus) and bade him have pity on his youth, he violently dragged the beast towards himself, wishing to be released more quickly from their unrighteous and lawless life."

[139] The real enemy was The Devil, represented incidentally and for the moment by the Roman Empire. Hermas (fl. c. 100-130), for instance, presented the world as divided absolutely into two cities, two camps, two laws, two governors, and posits the Christian as being under different jurisdiction and a different law than 'the world'. Frend comments wryly that "The writings of Ignatius and Hermas between them explain why Christianity was never tolerated explicitly until it had achieved victory" (1965b, 200). For the ideology of Clement, Ignatius, Hermas, et al, see Frend 1965b, 194-200.

[140] Some distinction was made between the categories of confessors and of martyrs (those who had actually sealed the deed with their death): Frend 1965b, 14-15. The terms used are ο μαρτυς and ο τελειος μαρτυς. There seems to have been a particularly vehement insistence upon this distinction on the part of the confessors themselves: Stuart G. Hall 1993, who argues that Lyons martyrology was used to validate policies of reconciliation (see especially 12-14).

think he has left there the best part of himself, which he tries to recapture. This is why, given few exceptions, it is the case that the great majority of people more or less frequently are given to what one might call nostalgia for the past."[141]

In other words, what I am referring to is a recollective 'backward gaze' in which memory, at both the collective and personal levels, engages in an idealization of the past. Nostalgia, itself a sort of gazing backwards, is frequently spawned by crisis and appears in its aftermath. This is evidenced for pre-Roman and Roman periods (think of Thermopylae's epitaph or the fetishization of the Roman Republic) as well as in times much closer to our own.[142] It was a similar (idealized) characterization of the past by a retrospective present which took place in the Christian community of Damasus' day. In the aftermath of the peace of Constantine, several disagreeable issues characterized the late antique Christian experience: doctrinal schism, administrative abuse, and widespread anxieties about the new position of the Church. The reaction of the Church in the immediate aftermath of Constantine had been, to begin with, far from unilateral. On the one hand there is the attitude taken up by Eusebius' record of the general response to Constantine's edict of Toleration (313), quite in line with what one would expect: "day after day they kept dazzling festival; light was everywhere, and men…greeted each other

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[141] Halbwachs 1992, 48-49. He is speaking of recalling suffering in one's personal past (for instance childhood or personal history), but I think that the statement can also be applied to the a larger picture. Halbwachs' own conclusion is that the remembrance of past troubles as less than they were--as softened by this 'retrospective mirage'--is due to the fact that "past constraint has ceased to be operative". The removal of those limitations which once delineated the past renders it (insofar as it survives at all, in memory) better, the object of nostalgia, and a template for the negotiation of present anxieties and challenges.

[142] Lowenthal, for instance, addresses cultural nostalgia and the notion of a 'golden age' in America in the aftermath of the Civil War (1861-65), arguing that it was "not until Americans became generally dissatisfied with the present…[that] they begin to long for the past as such…and to fantasize a Colonial or Revolutionary golden age." In this backward glance of nostalgia, the past is seen better, more united, and free from present disagreeable issues (in Lowenthal's 19th century America: immigration, industrialization, and residual disunity from the years of civil war). Lowenthal 1986, especially 106-107; quotation from 106. He suggests that the rise of this sentiment was due to several factors: the Civil War and the demoralizing years of its aftermath, especially as seen against the further-distant (and so idealized) Revolutionary war ("more hopeful, less sanguinary, and imbued with the attractive ambience of ancient myth.").

with smiling faces and shining eye. They danced and sang in city and country alike" (*HE* X). But this was not the only side of the picture. The loss of an officially persecuted existence brought within it several very practical points of concern: the sincerity and commitment of converts could not be so easily assumed, for instance. 'Group loyalties' and divisions within the church became increasingly entrenched, likely owing both to new emphasis on the definition and enforcement of orthodoxy and to the decreased perception of outside threats.[143] Because clergy were quickly exempted from public service and became rivals to civic officials in their prominence and potential for wealth, the appointment and status of bishops and other clergy became ripe for abuses.   The general level of imperial involvement in church governance and policy became another point of concern, especially under the vehemently pro-Arian rule of Constantius II (337--361).[144]

In the face of these new realities, the persecuted past--or, more precisely, the values and motifs which were felt to have sustained it--became a bulwark and a point of common reference for Christians navigating the post-Constantinian, Damasian world. Hosius goes so far as to attribute his sturdiness as a defender of the truth to the fact that he is a veteran of persecution: "I was a Confessor at the first, when a persecution arose in the time of your grandfather Maximian; and if you shall persecute me, I am ready now, too, to endure anything rather than to…betray the truth." Martyrdom remained the gold

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[143] For issues of sectarianism, orthodoxy, and unity within the fourth-century church: Elsner 2003; Saghy 2000; Maier 1995.

[144] Concern over the delineation of church/state authority was expressed, notably, by Hosius of Cordoba (c. 257--359), who challenged Constantius' II's involvement in the Arian controversies: citing Mark 12.13-17, he wrote "Intrude not yourself into ecclesiastical matters…but learn them from us. God has put into your hands the kingdom; to us He has entrusted the affairs of His Church!" *Historia Arianorum* 44, tr. Karl Morrison. For the general picture of imperial-ecclesiastic relations, see amongst others Mark Edwards 2006.

standard of Christian aspiration, at least rhetorically. Damasus' forerunner as bishop, for

instance, Liberius, wrote in 355 to a group of exiled bishops: "Although under the guise

of peace the enemy of the human race seems to have waxed more savage in his attacks

upon the members of the church, your extraordinary and unique faith has shown you,

priests most welcome to God, to be approved by God, and has marked you out already for

future glory as martyrs."[145] The rhetorician Lactantius[146] (fl. 303-311), for instance,

wrote a moralizing piece of apologetic, *De Mortibus Persecutorum*, on the divine

judgments meted out on 'bad' emperors (including his recent contemporaries)—that is,

on those who had persecuted the Christians. The rhetoric of martyrdom shows up

recurringly in the pro-Nicene, anti-Constantius polemic of the mid-fourth century: Hilary

of Poitiers, a notable of the anti-Arian camp, begins his *Contra Constantium* (c. 360) by

advising that "the time for speech is come, the time of silence past. Let us look for

Christ's coming, for Antichrist is already in power….let us go forth to martyrdom".[147]

Gregory of Elvira (fl. 359-385), a Spanish bishop and another opponent of Arianism,

writes that it is by martyrdom that we best partner with Christ in bringing light to the

darkness of the world: "[when] we break our very bodies in death during persecution on

account of Christ's name, then we take up the lamps of martyrdom and the bloody

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[145] Liberius, *Letter to the bishops Eusebius, Dionysius and Lucifer*, in Hilary of Poitiers, *Against Valens and Ursacius* 2.4, cited by Gaddis 2005, 68. Translation is from Gaddis citation.

[146] Lactantius was a rhetorician who served at the court of Diocletian in Nicomedia before eventually becoming tutor to Constantine's son after his conversion to the emperor's faith. His historiography is also a fascinating look at the way a classically-trained intellectual of the fourth-century meshed classical conceptions of history and of Rome's historical primacy with a Christian providentialism. See Oliver Nicholson 1999.

[147] *Contra Constantium* (360 CE) 1. The middle decades of the fourth century were marked most notably by the Arian/anti-Arian conflicts that followed in the wake of the Council of Nicea (325). Tr. from Philip Schaff, ed., *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: Second Series, Volume XI. Hilary of Poitiers, John of Damascus* (1886-1900).

torches of faith, by which we show the light of truth to those wandering in shadow".[148]

Sulpicius Severus (fl. c. 380-410) pauses in his breakneck summation of sacred history to linger briefly over Diocletian and Maximian, under whose reign

> almost the whole world was stained with the sacred blood of the martyrs. In fact, they vied with each other in rushing upon these glorious struggles, and martyrdom by glorious deaths was then much more keenly sought after than bishoprics are now attempted to be got by wicked ambition. Never…did we ever achieve victory with a greater triumph than when we showed that we could not be conquered by the slaughters of ten long years.[149]

Maximus of Turin (d. 408) repeatedly refers in his sermons to specific martyrs as exemplars.[150] Jerome's *De Viris Illustribus* is focused on showcasing learned men of the Christian faith, but at least thirteen of the figures profiled were either martyred during the persecutions or are described as having at least aspired towards the martyr's end.[151] Furthermore, his account of a Diocletianic-era woman 'martyred' upon a false accusation of adultery highlights similar tropes to those that characterized pre-Constantine, persecuted martyrology.[152] Prudentius (fl. c. 405) compiled the *Liber Peristephanon* ('Crowns of the Martyrs'), a collection of Latin poetry composed on various Spanish and Roman martyrs. Augustine (AD 354-430) makes the example of the martyrs the selling point of his argument for valuing eternity above this life: "Now we must follow in the footsteps of the martyrs by imitating them; otherwise our celebration of their feast-days is

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[148] *Tractatus Origenis de libris SS. Scripturarum* XIV, 160, 16-161, 3.

[149] *Chronica* II.32.4-6. The *Chronica* is a summary of sacred history up to Severus' own period. Tr. from Philip Schaff, ed., *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: Second Series, Volume XI. Sulpitius Severus, Vincent of Lerins, John Cassian* (1886-1900).

[150] See for instance *Sermon* 13.2; 1; 12; 16.2; 106.

[151] Including: Simon Peter, Paul, Ignatius of Antioch, 'the fourth disciple', Polycarp, Irenaeus, Polycrates, Origin, Alexander of Cappadocia, Pope Cornelius, Victorinus, Pamphilus, Methodius of Lycian Olympus, and Lucifer.

[152] Letter 1, "A woman struck by seven swords". So, for instance, the woman's longing to die and to 'strip off this hateful body"; her confidence that ultimate vindication will come from a heavenly judge; her belief in the afterlife as a negation of present death. Here too we encounter an idea without which martyrdom (here or elsewhere) absolutely cannot be understood as either reasonable or coherent: that it weighs out perfectly *by the scales in use*.

meaningless....Move on from loving this temporary life, if you can, to loving everlasting life, the life that the martyrs loved, while counting this life as nothing."[153]

So: fourth-century Christian collective memory, and the idealization of the past which it sustained, allowed (I think) the memory of a persecuted existence to become the subject of a late antique nostalgia. It is this sentiment, this apprehension of the absent past (and past identity), which Damasus' epitaphs provoked in their audience and which coalesced around the martyr-cult sites of late antique Rome. The epitaphs did not invent, they conserved—and what they conserved was the essence of *what Christians thought that they had been* as their past, persecuted, 'better' selves. They marked in stone (and so held on to) enough of this 'absent' identity to guarantee the ongoing coherency of the western Christian community, and this is evidenced in the late antique 'persecution discourse' which characterized not just the monumental record at Rome (the epitaphs, the *martyria*, the basilical churches dedicated to the martyrs) but also in the literary, epistolary, and apologetic texts being produced by Christian writers throughout the Roman west.

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[153] *Sermon* 302.1-2. Translation E.M. Adkins, Robert Dodaro.

<u>Chapter 5: the epitaphs</u>

What I would like to do now is to present several of the epitaphs--the circumstances of

their erection, the particularities of their location, the significance of their biographical

and thematic aspects--in order to give some idea of the context in which they were

generally erected, the stories which lay behind them (in those cases where some hint does

exist), and the role they played in the development and definition of various martyr-cult

sites around Rome. I have chosen six that I think are particularly useful and serve to

exemplify the most interesting and pertinent points of the corpus entire. These are the

epitaphs to Felicissimus and Agapatis, to S. Cornelius, to Peter and Paul at *ad*

catacumbas, the one set up in the Crypt of the Popes, the epitaph for Marcellinus and

Peter, and finally the one dedicated to Agnes, on the Via Nomentana. Taken together,

these six epitaphs exemplify the most striking and important aspects of Damasus' entire

body of inscriptions. Each one demonstrates in a particular way some aspect of the

fourth-century context or illuminates some specific emphasis of Damasus' verses. My

intention is that this section will give the reader enough familiarity with the actual form

and content of the epitaphs so as to usefully judge their position within traditional Roman

commemoration, their function as vehicles of this cultural transfer, and their influence in

the post-Damasian context.

1. Elogium SS. Felicissimi et Agapiti: thematic motifs and their pagan precedents

I have suggested earlier in this thesis that the epitaphs of Damasus exhibit a consistent

resemblance to traditional epigraphic commemoration in their laudatory aspects, their

careful situation within, and marking of, Roman topography, and their physical

appearance and form (most notably with respect to the monumental nature of the Filocalian typeface). Another trait that reinforces the resemblance of the epitaphs to traditional Roman representation--and therefore that they 'worked' upon their audience by appealing to the culturally mechanical processes of audience-monument dialogue--is seen in the thematic motifs that appear in descriptions of the deceased. Many of the themes that Damasus uses are familiar ones, well-precedented in the corpus of pre-Christian epitaph at Rome; in some cases, the qualities remarked upon have simply taken on a Christian gloss.[154] Here I will present some examples of these thematic parallels in order to demonstrate Damasus' clear and widely evidenced deployment of modes and manners of epitaphic celebration familiar and meaningful to his Roman audience.

One particularly striking example of such parallel motifs is provided by the inscription set up to the martyrs Felicissimus and Agapitus,[155] which reads:

> And look! this mound holds the heavenly limbs of the saints whom the kingdom of heaven suddenly snatched--
> these unconquered comrades of the cross and equally holy servants of their leader and pursuers of faith and merit.
> They sought heavenly homes and the realms of the saints.
> The singular glory of the Roman people rejoices in these men because they deserve trophies in the portico gallery of Christ.

> *Aspice et hic tumulus retinet caelestia membra*
> *sanctorum subito rapuit quos regia caeli*
> *hi crucis invictae comites pariterque ministri*
> *rectoris sancti meritumque fidemque secuti*
> *aetherias petiere domos regnaque piorum*
> *unica in his gaudet Romanae Gloria plebis*

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[154] I should stress, though, that this is not a comprehensive resemblance; there are important and consistent differences between pagan and Christian epitaph. Some of the more obvious and striking exceptions are the frequency with which Latin epitaphs express doubt or denial of immortality (e.g. *nihil sumus et fuimus mortales*: CE 1495), or reference to the malice of the gods as a cause of death (*pro superum crimen, Fatorum culpa nocentum*). See for these Lattimore 1962, 78-82 and 153-154.

[155] It was discovered in 1927 in three fragments that, together, make up most of the original marble tablet, at the church of S. Nicola de Calcarariis (a Cesarini); it was subsequently fixed to the wall of the *spelunca magna* in the cemetery of Praetextatus.

> *quod duce tunc xysto Christi meruere triumphos*
> *felicissimo et agapeto sanctis martyribus Damasus episcopus fecit.*[156]

So, in this epitaph: the dead are suddenly snatched away by the kingdom of heaven (*hic tumulus retinet caelestia membra | sanctorum subito rapuit quos regia caeli*); in traditional epitaph the agent is death itself, but the sentiment expressed is the same: "silent death crept up and brought sudden disaster, death which snatched the young spirit from you still growing" (*mors tacita obrepsit subito facitque ruinam | quae tibi crescenti rapuit iuvenile figuram*).[157] The martyrs celebrated here "sought heavenly homes" (*aetherias petiere domos*); the adjective Damasus uses here, *aetherias*, is used in Roman epitaph to refer to the seat of the soul after it has been separated from the body. So, for instance: "world, I flee your snares, goodbye you traitor...(my) spirit burns to come to an airy home" (*Munde, tuas fug]io insidias, vale proditor....spiritus ae]thereas ardet adire domos*).[158]

A cursory glance through the rest of Damasus' epitaphs will give some idea of the widespread resemblance between traditional and Damasian epitaphs with respect to specific qualities of the deceased cited in support of their posthumous praise and remembrance. One of the notable qualities specifically named in both instances is chastity, particularly in the case of women: "praised always on account of her great chastity" (*magno s[emper lauda]ta pudore*, CE 545.3-4), or "spotlessly modest, innocent of vulgar things, faithful to her husband" (*casta pudens, volgei nescia, feida viro*, CE 959.2).[159] Compare these, for instance, with examples from Damasian epitaphs:

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[156] Ferrua 25.
[157] *CE* 441, 3-4.
[158] *CE* 1340; "aetherium cupiens" appears also in the Proiecta epitaph.
[159] For the virtues celebrated in pagan and in Christian epitaph: Lattimore 1962, 290-299 and 335-339.

"modesty proves the worth of the girl" (*pudor probaret* (*virginis meritum*), 11.4); "the

sweet charm of chastity" (*decus alma pudoris,* 37.9); "the girl retains her chastity"

(*virgineum retinere pudorem*, 16.9); "content with modesty alone" (*solo contenta pudore*,

51.4). Another particular quality given in both instances is that of virtue itself: "the

pious reputation of which unrivalled daughter will live forever" (*filiae incomparabili*

cuius fama pietas vibet in aeternum, *CIL* 10.1091, cf. *CIL* 8.1646). Compare these

instances with Damasus' "the virtue of the girl is to be honoured" (*pietas veneranda*

puellae, 11.7). Other examples of qualities attributed to the deceased in both Damasian

and traditional epitaph include charity--for Damasus see Ihm 33: "I was concerned with

this: to clothe the naked who sought (help), to feed the poor" (*haec mihi cura fuit nudos*

vestire petentes, fundere pauperibus); cf. CE 74.2 from pre-Caesarean Rome: "[the tomb

of] a good man, compassionate lover of the poor" (*hominis boni misericordis amantis*

pauperis)--and the possession of old-fashioned qualities or ideals. This last appears in

Damasus' epitaph to the deacon Tigradus-- "Holy on account of his office, dignified in

his life, old-fashioned in his nature" (*Sanctus ab officio, vita gravis, indole priscus*, 73)--

and can be usefully compared with *CE* 1123.4: "famous especially for his old-fashioned

chastity" (*priscae praecipue fama pudicitiae*) or with *CE* 1223.3: "equally learned to the

ancients in the art of sweet-speaking" (*suaviloq[ua priscis aequabar doctus in arte*). I

give as a final example the notion of the deceased as spurning the world. This idea is

suggested, for instance, by *Munde*, above; cf. also *respuens mundum* (Diehl 1605) and its

incidence in Damasus' verses: "when she shall flee the world" (*cum fugeret mundum*,

11.9) or "he left behind the world and this life" (*mundum vitamq. reliquit*, 18).[160]

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[160] For the trope of spurning the world in pagan epitaph: Lattimore 1962, 205-210.

2. Elogium S. Cornelii: Damasus' concern with accessibility

> Look: with the descent made and with the shadows fleeing
> you see the monument of C. and his sacred tomb.
> The zeal of Damasus accomplished this work (though he is ill)
> that there might be better access,
> and that the help of the saint be made convenient for the people,
> and so that—if you prevail to pour out prayers from a pure heart—Damasus be able
> to rise up better--though not love of the light, but care for his work, is what seizes
> him.

> *Aspice, descensu extruoio, tenebrisque fugatis,*
> *Corneli monumenta vides tumulumque sacratum.*
> *Hoc opus aegroti Damasi praestantia fecit*
> *esse ut accessus melior, populisque paratum*
> *auxilium sancti, et, valeas si fundere puro*
> *corde preces, Damasus melior consurgere posset,*
> *que non lucis amor tenuit mage cura laboris.*[161]

The subject of this epitaph is S. Cornelius, pope from 251 to 253, who purportedly died in exile during the Decian persecution and was posthumously venerated as a martyr. In it Damasus brings to the foreground his persistent interest in facilitating the breadth and ease of accessibility at various sites of martyr-cult at Rome. Again and again, his epitaphs reference specific, physical projects of revelation or renovation. He uses words like 'found', 'uncovered', 'made a way', presenting himself in the dual roles of locater and of facilitator, removing the problems of access and space that would otherwise hinder the grave's observance and visitation (and therefore its incorporation into the popular practice of Roman martyr-cult). He devotes the first four lines of the Cornelius epitaph to describing what he did at the tomb to make it more practically accessible, centred around his construction of a stairway leading down into the S. Callisto catacombs. Damasus

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[161] Ferrua 19. I follow here de Rossi's reconstruction of the epitaph's *pars sinestra*. See Marucchi 1974, 353; Ferrua 1942, 136-137.

stresses this same feature of his work--a pronounced emphasis on site accessibility--in the epitaph to Protus and Hyacinthus, and in both epitaphs makes it clear why such access is important--not simply because it makes the tomb more accessible, but because in so doing it renders more immediate and secure the help of the saint (*esse ut...populisque paratum auxilium sancti*). In the *elogium SS. Proti et Hyacinthi*, Damasus' performative agency in this process is taken a step even further: he self-represents as not just the guide to, but the *finder* of martyrial remains: "the tomb was hidden under the highest heap of the mountain; Damasus reveals this, so that he might protect the limbs of the saints" (*Extremo tumulus latvit sub aggere montis, | Hunc Damasus monstrat servat quod membra piorum*).[162] In all of this (and in the other epitaphs showing similar intention), by placing the stress on making sites accessible and on finding *what is already present*, Damasus actually strengthens the integrity of his program (at least in its public perception) by demonstrating his own awareness of, and familiarity with, the existence and cult-sites of martyr-cult at Rome which preceded him. In other words: by self-representing as finder and facilitator of what was already present, Damasus was able to strengthen and widen the basis of his authority as current *impresario* and defender of Rome's Christian martyrs.

3. *Elogium Sanctorum ad papas iacentium: the sancta turba*

I have characterized Damasus' activity as centrally important to the process by which the emphasis and focus of Christian martyr cult at Rome shifted from the basilicas to the catacombs. There had pre-existed him a cognition, of course, that the catacombs were

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[162] Ferrua 47.

full of the Christian dead--we have seen this already in Jerome, and in the popular

observance of celebrating *refrigeria* and martyr masses. What changed in the fourth

century--and most pointedly under Damasus in particular--was the monumentalization

and decoration of this notion, and so its reinforcement and expansion. The epitaphs

operated, in other words, as σημα and μνημα for a visceral sense of the host of Christian

dead (martyred and otherwise, though the rosy glow of the former part tended to suffuse

easily through the whole) who inhabited the periphery of Rome in their catacombs. So,

for instance, at the cemetery of Thrason Damasus set up--in addition to the person-

specific epitaphs--an inscription to the anonymous host of martyrs (Ferrua 42): "Memory

is able to hold on to neither the names nor the number of those saints whose tombs you

choose to venerate".[163] The sentiment is most notably expressed, though, in the epitaph

which de Rossi found around 1854 in the Crypt of the Popes--a double *cubiculum* in the

Callixtus catacombs which, as we have seen, was the site of interment for many third-

century popes and bishops and a fairly early site of Christian martyr-cult veneration at

Rome.[164] Mostly in fragments, the inscription--the same one so memorably exhibited to

Pius IX--was found when reconstructed to make reference to the various groups and

types of martyrs buried in the vicinity. Even the language used here boosts the notion of

a *sancta turba*:

> If you should ask: here lie crowded together (*congesta*) a throng (*turba*) of saints.
> The tombs-to-be-venerated retained the bodies of the holy ones when the heavenly
> kingdom took up their sublime souls. Here are the comrades of Xystus who carried
> off trophies from the enemy; here a numbered bodyguard which serves the altars of
> Christ; here the one is placed who lived long as a priest in peace; here are the holy
> confessors whom Greece sent. And here the young boys and old men and the chaste

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[163] Christian visual art at Rome can also be read as "re-imagining the city as a sort of martyr-filled mother-earth": Elsner 2003, 99.

[164] For the site: Alchermes 1989, 24-34.

grandchildren and the one who was pleased to retain her virginal chastity. I confess that I, Damasus, wished to lay my own bones here, but I was afraid to disturb such holy ashes of the saints.

Hic congesta iacet quaeris si turba piorum
corpora sanctorum retinent veneranda sepulcra
sublimes animas rapuit sibi regia caeli
hic comites Xysti portant qui ex hoste tropaea
hic numerus procerum servat qui altaria Christi
hic positus longa vixit qui in pace sacerdos
hic confessores sancti quos Graecia misit
hic iuvenes puerique senes castique nepotes
quis mage virgineum placuit retinere pudorem
hic fateor Damasus volui mea condere membra
sed cineres timui sanctos vexare piorum.[165]

Though the most fundamental sense of the 'crowded throng' here is of the physical host

of martyrs saturating the ground of Rome, the phrase carries with it other implications as

well. The *turba piorum* can also be read as a powerful evocation of the Christian church

entire, encompassing all its members whether living or dead, local or foreign, present or

absent. Earlier I discussed the capacity of monuments to make present what is absent and

to render immediate what has been lost: in this case, the visitor to the Crypt of the Popes

would become participant in a process of monumental evocation by which the walls of

the cubiculum contained, for a moment, the entirety of the Christian community, past and

absent. This point gains strength and pertinence from the fact that a central attraction of

the Christian religion--both in its own self-perception and in its appeal to society at large-

-stemmed from the fact that it was seen as offering a new system of kinship and

community, one claiming to be based on egalitarian and charitable principles. The notion

of an empire-wide Christian *ecclesia*--formed of all those who had joined themselves

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[165] Ferrua 16.

voluntarily to its community--was, then, a second, more abstract component of Christian

self-identity suggested by the *turba piorum* of the Damasian epitaph.[166]

4. In basilica apostolorum Petri et Pauli in catacumbas

> Here, right here, you ought to know, if anyone should ask, first held the names of
> Peter and equally of Paul. The East sent the apostles, as perhaps you've heard; by
> means of their blood, having followed the merit of Christ through the stars, they
> sought heavenly harbour and the realms of the saints: Rome better deserved to guard
> her citizens. Damasus brings forward these new stars to your adulation. (Ferrua 20)

> *Hic habitasse prius sanctos cognoscere debes*
> *nomina quisq. Petri pariter Pauliq. requiris.*
> *Discipulos Oriens misit, quod sponte fatemur;*
> *sanguinis ob meritum Xpumq. per astra secuti*
> *aetherios petiere sinus regnaque piorum:*
> *Roma suos potius meruit defendere cives.*
> *Haec Damasus vestras referat nova sidera laudes.*

The epitaph placed at the *ad catacumbas* site[167] (now the S. Sebastiano catacombs, set

between the Via Appia and the Via Ardeatina) is noteworthy on two points important

enough that I include both here--first, the role it played in the prolonged controversy over

the *ad catacumbas* site and its role in the transport and location of the apostolic remains

in the third and subsequent centuries; second, its articulation of the notion of a blood-

purchased Roman citizenship.[168]

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[166] A final aspect of the *congesta turba* stems, ultimately, from this notion of the Christian community as a kinship group or family. Just as members were expected to act selflessly on each other's behalf while living and to pray for each other, so an extension of this was the idea of the Christian dead as intercessors in heaven for their living comrades. The intercession of martyred saints was, in this paradigm, especially effective, rendered so by the act and quality of their death. Brown makes the idea of martyrs as intercessors and heavenly *patrones* central to his model wherein their graves function as "privileged places, where the contrasted poles of heaven and earth met" (1981:3). For the idea see also Caseau 2001, 42; Cooper 1999.

[167] The inscription was erected at the shrine to the two apostles by the third milestone of the Via Appia (where the basilica of S. Sebastian is now). For the site and its archaeological history, see Lietzmann 1923, 151-156; La Piana 1921, 71-77; Holloway 2004, 146-155; Spera 2003.

[168] This epitaph survives to the present day through textual reception. For its complete text we are indebted to the seventh-century pilgrim who copied it and so allowed its preservation in an eighth-century Einsiedeln manuscript. For discussion of the epitaph see Chadwick 1962; Lafferty 2003, especially 41-43; Curran 2000, 152-153.

This epitaph plays a central role in one of the most problematic historical questions regarding martyr-cult at Rome: the resting place, and translation, of the bones of the two apostles, and the implications for the topographical development of Rome.[169] The earliest name attached to the Constantinian church on the *ad catacumbas* site, the Basilica Apostolorum, refers to the belief that the remains of both Peter and Paul rested here at some point and were the centre, and cause, of cult veneration at the site. Below the floor of the Constantinian basilica there lie the remains of the *triclia* (a portico) and the general area around it, known as the *memoria*. It is within this triclia that the most striking piece of evidence for the veneration of the apostles at the site exists. Visible to this day behind a wall of glass are about 190 graffiti addressed to SS. Peter and Paul, many of which record the celebration of Christian *refrigeria* at the site. The graffiti are characterized by personal invocation and sentiment, asking the two apostles to remember and keep in mind the individual Christians who wrote them. So, for instance, "Peter and Paul, keep Sozemenus in mind" (*Paule Petre in mente habete Sozemenum)* or "Tomius Coelius held a *refrigerium* for Peter and for Paul" (*Petro et Paulo Tomius Coelius refrigerium feci[t])*. Many of them are signed. One of the graffito has a consular date of 260, which gives a date for the graffiti (and so for the coincident veneration).[170]

The problem of interpreting this cult site lies in the fact that Peter and Paul are also venerated elsewhere in the city--at S. Pietro and at S. Paolo fuori le mura, respectively-- and that in each case this veneration was firmly associated with the physical presence of

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[169] For the controversy with regard to the various sites claiming apostolic burial I have relied most of all on R. Ross Holloway's excellent *Constantine and Rome* (Yale University Press, 2004), esp. 105-9 and 146-55. See also Chadwick 1962; Cooper 1999, 308ff; La Piana 1921; Lietzmann 1923; Lonstrup 2008.

[170] For the graffiti: Lietzmann 1923, 155-156 and 160-161; La Piana 1921, 77-79.

the martyrs (or at least of their remains).[171] The situation is convoluted at best, but several

pieces of evidence can be definitely said to bear on the question. The *Liber Pontificalis*,

states that Pope Cornelius (251-253) took the relics of the apostles from the catacombs

and placed them at the sites of their purported martyrdoms: where Paul was beheaded

and where Peter was crucified. There is a relevant entry in the *Depositio martyrum* in the

Codex Calendar under the date June 29th,[172] and the evidence of the Damasian inscription

itself suggests at least that by the time of its erection at *ad catacumbas* the apostles'

remains were no longer there (if ever they had been). Such a multitude of theories exist

that trying to present them in any sort of comprehensive way would be both foolhardy

and beside the point of this thesis.[173] All I will do here is underline in the broadest

strokes the basic lines of argument; they can be divided into two main categories. There

is, first, the idea that the apostles were buried separately and at the sites of their

martyrdom, but that their remains were moved at some point (perhaps during the Decian

persecution, as per the account in the *Liber Pontificalis*), and for an unspecified but

limited length of time, to the site *ad catacumbas*. This theory explains the presence of

the cult site and of its *refrigeria* graffiti and, furthermore, gives a possible explanation for

June 29 being the feast day of the two apostles: that it was the date of the remains'

theoretical translation to the site. The second model proposes that the *ad catacumbas* site

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[171] Damasus wrote verses for all three of the sites: Ferrua 1, 4, and 20, respectively.

[172] Much ink has been spilled over the significance of this date. For an exhaustive discussion see Lonstrup 2008, which details the significance of the date in both Roman and early Christian calendars. For more on the topic: La Piana 1922; Lietzmann 1923; Barclay Lloyd 2002, 22ff, for the more practical aspects of the joint feast day and its liturgical celebration.

[173] For instance: A *passio* of the fifth century claims that some Greek Christians were attempting to steal the bodies of the apostles from Rome but were stopped by a divinely-appointed earthquake and ended up leaving the remains at the *ad catacumbas* site (La Piana 1921, 57). Prudentius, visiting in 402-403, lists only S. Pietro and S. Paolo as connected to the feast day's celebration (*Peristephanon* XII).

was a centre of Christian cult but that no actual martyrs' remains were ever attached to it. Some proponents of this theory suggest that perhaps legend had it that Peter once lived there, or that some other apocryphal tradition tied the memory of the apostles to the site. Holloway's suggestion is an inversion of the first, and stems from the account in the *Liber Pontificalis*: he argues that the purported remains of both apostles were first entombed at *ad catacumbas* and remained there until 251, when Pope Cornelius moved at least parts of the bodies--not for fear of their disturbance but in order to strengthen Christian fortitude by re-marking the sites of the martyrdoms themselves, on the Ostiense and on the Vatican. It then follows that in 258 (as per the record of the *Depositio martyrum*) Christians could assemble to celebrate the two martyrs at any of the three sites; furthermore, when the Constantinian basilica was erected at the site, it would very naturally follow that it be called the Basilica of the Apostles.

The second feature of this epitaph worth noting is its promotion of the idea of a Christian *romanitas* secured by the act of martyrdom--stems from the second through fourth lines of the epitaph, which refer to the eastern birth of the two figures (*discipulos Oriens misit*) but imply that their spilled blood made Rome more fitted (*potius meruit*) to be the seat of their enfranchisement.[174] The broad and longstanding implications of this idea hardly need to be stated: it not only reinforces the primacy of Rome as the centre of

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[174] For this see Chadwick 1962, 314: "[t]hey are, so to speak, naturalized Romans and their authority and power has accordingly been transferred from East to West". Chadwick discusses at some length the analogy here with the traditional Roman incorporation of foreign cults and divinities. For *romanitas* see also Mark Edwards 2004 and Oliver 1999 (for its treatment specifically by Lactantius). Another of Damasus' epitaph contains this idea just as explicitly and even more strikingly: the *elogium Saturnini* (46), which reads "Now dwelling in Christ, before he was of Carthage....he changed his citizenship with his blood, and his name and his family. His birth among the saints made him a Roman citizen" (*Incola nunc Christi fuerat Carthaginis ante....sanguine mutavit patriam nomenque genusque. Romanum civem sanctorum fecit origo*). His martyrdom is, in other words, "the moment of his naturalization as a Roman citizen" (Lafferty 2003, 43).

citizenship, but also bears particular relevance for the contemporary tensions between

eastern and western empire and (more precisely) between the ecclesiastical hierarchy of

Rome and that of Constantinople, a contest which reached a zenith during the period in

which Damasus was bishop.[175] It would have been clear to anyone attuned to the

contemporary nature of imperial and ecclesiastical politics during Damasus' papacy that

the balance of power had begun, inevitably and irretrievably, to shift towards the East and

specifically towards Constantinople. By making the terms of Rome's priority about

apostolic foundation rather than political significance or even economic or administrative

situation, however, Damasus was able to credibly claim continued pre-eminence for the

church of Rome. He stressed the city's authority as predicated precisely upon the

church's founding by Peter and Paul and its consecration by their joint martyrdoms

precisely because these were the terms by which he could win *ad perpetuum*.[176]

Damasus' concern with establishing a particularly 'Roman' Christianity also

manifested itself outside of his epitaphic composition--for instance, in the Latinization of

the liturgy at Rome, and specifically of the eucharistic prayers which formed its central

and most sacred component.[177]   The standardized (and Latinized) version of the liturgy

seems to have come into use at Rome between 360 and 382--so, most likely during the

time that Damasus was bishop. Throughout the third century, the language of the church

at Rome was Greek: Christian literature, grave inscriptions, and prosopography are all

primarily in Greek. While this dominance had begun to shift by the end of the third

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[175] See Chadwick 1962, 314.

[176] For the articulation of this point I am indebted especially to Morison 1964, 252-254.

[177] For the Latinization of the liturgy and Damasus' role in it see especially Lafferty 2003. She remarks on several noteworthy points of the Peter and Paul epitaph that draw out and intensity its notion of *romanitas*: its use (in keeping with the rest of the Damasian corpus) of Vergilian hexameters, the *metrum heroicum*, for instance, and the figuring of the two apostles as ascending to heaven (*per astra secuti*), evoking the imperial apotheosis as a star or constellation. Lafferty 2003, 42.

century, the Eucharistic prayers at least continued to be in Greek until their Latinization under Damasus.[178] Lafferty argues that the adoption of Latin for these prayers was an appropriation by Damasus of a key component of *romanitas'* symbolic and actual definition: the Latin language.[179] Damasus' commissioning of Jerome to produce a new translation of the Scriptures in the common Latin of the day must also, I think, be counted a particular expression of this larger interest.

5. *Marcellinus and Peter: the reality of martyrdom*

When I was a boy your executioner bore to me, Damasus, your tomb:
he said that these commands were given to him by the mad butcher—that he should
sever your necks then in the middle bushes,
lest anyone be able to recognize your tomb.
(He said) you, eager, to have prepared your tomb with your own hands,
and after to have lain obscured under a cave
Afterwards (he said) Lucilla considered that it was more pleasing lay your limbs
here, on account of your piety.

Marcelline tuum pariter Petriq. sepulcrum
percussor retulit Damaso mihi cum puer essem:
haec sibi carnificem rabidum mandata dedisse,
sentibus in mediis vestra ut tunc colla secaret,
ne tumulum vestrum quisquam cognoscere posset.
Vos alacres vestris minibus fodisse sepulcra
candidule, occultos post quae iacuisse sub antro;
postea commonitam vestra pietate Lucillam
hic placuisse magis sanctissima condere membra.[180]

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[178] Interestingly, "[this] is long after the African church began to use Latin, and, indeed, long after Rome itself began to use Latin for other parts of the liturgy of the mass, most notably the readings, and the sermons." Lafferty 2003, 29.

[179] She describes the process as contributing to the notion not simply of *romanitas* but of a western '*Latinitas'*.

[180] Ferrua 28. For the site and its archaeology: Alchermes 1989, 21-24; Kirsch 1933, 107-112; Thacker 2007, 34-36. At the same site Damasus also erected an epitaph to a previously unvenerated martyr, Tiburtius (31), as well as one to the martyr Gorgonius (32). This last epitaph emphasizes the numerous other (albeit presently unmarked) saints interred at the cemetery and so strengthened the notion of subterranean Rome as one, single, vast *locum sanctum*. For Marcellinus and Peter: Negri and Pirolli 1999, 38-41. The sixth-century *gesta* is published in the *Acta SS. Junii*, I (Paris, 1867), 167-69, cited by Alchermes 1989, 22 n. 35.

Marcellinus and Peter were purportedly two of those Christians martyred at Rome under
Diocletian (as is indicated by the epitaph itself). A 6th-century version of their passion,
based on the Damasian epitaph and on oral tradition, gives the following account of their
passiones. Peter was a local exorcist who, while under guard and awaiting trial for his
refusal to sacrifice, engaged in all sorts of madcap schemes intended to convert his
Roman guard (for instance, having himself chained in prison and escaping, Houdini-like,
to the guard's house, apparently in order to convert him by sheer force of personality).
Peter's miracles were so successful that he was soon in need of a priest able to baptize his
new converts, so he sought out Marcellinus. They were eventually martyred together--
according to the Acta, taken out at night to the Silva Nigra (so named for its dense flora)
on Via del Porto and beheaded. Lucilla (and another matron, Firmina) later moved their
remains to the cemetery *ad duos lauros* on the Via Labicana (this cemetery was
subsequently named after them and remains so today).[181]

While this inscription is not one of the more frequently-discussed items of the
Damasian corpus, I think it extremely valuable for its (oblique) reference to the practical
details of Diocletianic martyrdom and its anecdotal reinforcement of Damasus' epitaphic
veracity. First: the epitaph addresses the provenance of Damasus' martyr-stories (and,
so, to their authority): the details of Peter and Marcellinus' demise were, purportedly,
from the very lips of the erstwhile executioner himself, who pointed out the site of the
beheading to Damasus while the future bishop was still in his boyhood. Second, we are

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[181] Lucilla appears as an important anecdotal figure in several different martyr *gestae*, always performing
similar functions. It stands to reason that she represents a type or archetype of person in the Christian
community at Rome. For Lucilla see Alchermes 1989: 22-24. Alchermes argues that doubts about the
historicity of the person of Lucilla should not negate belief in the existence of this type of matron as
involved in the burial of martyrs. Alchermes 1989, 22 n. 34. For Lucina (a twin-figure to Lucilla within
the *gesta martyrum*) and a discussion of her significance see Cooper 1999, 307ff.

given particularly vivid details of the execution itself, and not the sort which most

typically characterize martyr *Acta*. Here there are no heavenly doves or sail-shaped

winds to keep the flames at bay, no miraculous interventions. They are, simply,

decapitated in the middle of thick underbrush, and their burial is similarly prosaic: their

bodies are buried in a cave. The practical details of both death and burial are intended,

assumedly, to prevent any Christians who might take it in mind to steal the bones and

make relics of them, or to venerate the site of their deaths.[182] For the same reason,

Alchermes suggests, the victims dug their own graves so that no *fossores* (gravediggers)

would be able to point it out afterwards.[183] Also evident here is the practice of moving

bones and proto-relics to ensure their preservation and safety (and, apparently, its success

rate in spite of all cautionary measures on the part of the Roman authorities!). Damasus

says that the bones were placed 'here'--at the cemetery *ad duos lauros*, which in its first

stages predates Damasus. A basilica and mausoleum were constructed on the site for

Helena, the mother of Constantine, adjacent to a cemetery which contained the tomb of

the martyr Gorgonius. Sometime between the 330s and about 360 AD a cubiculum

around the *loculus* of Peter and Marcellinus was enlarged, and staircases were put in for

easier access to the *loculus*. In this period increased incidence of burial is in evidence

around the martyrs' tombs (in keeping with the general development of burial *ad sanctos*

which was a hallmark of the funerary martyr-basilicas). During his papacy, Damasus

renovated the *cubiculum* and the tombs of Peter and Marcellinus, had marble put in

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[182] Something of which the authorities were very aware and took great pains to prevent (cf. *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 18). Ammianus refers to the veneration of relics by Christians "as an explanation of the thoroughness with which the victims' murderers removed all trace of their mortal remains". Hunt 1985, 193 n. 46. See Ammianus 27.7.5-6, where the *quaester* Eupraxius warns the emperor not to give the Christians more martyrs.

[183] Alchermes 1989, 21.

around the *loculus* (to the detriment of nearby tombs!), and added a framing arch above which his epitaph was placed. Here, within the confines of a single cemeterial site, we are able to recognize the triple action characteristic of Damasus' activities throughout the sites of Christian martyr-cult at Rome: improved access; pronounced emphasis on the presence of a *turba piorum*--here, in his epitaph to Gorgonius, which promises "whoever comes here seeking the threshold of the saints will find those blessed ones living in the places close by (*hic quicumq. venit sanctorum limina quaerat | inveniet vicina in sede habitare beatos*); and the introduction of new names to the martyr corpus (at this site he erected an epitaph to the previously uncelebrated Tiburtinus).[184]

6: Agnes and the transferable value of martyrdom

> *Fama refert sanctos dudum retulisse parentes*
> *Agnen cum lugubres cantus tuba concrepuisset*
> *nutricis gremium subito liquisse puellam*
> *sponte trucis calcasse minas rabiemque tyranni*
> *urere cum flammis volvisset nobile corpus*
> *viribus immensum parvis superasse timorem*
> *nudaque profusum crinem per membra dedisse*
> *ne domini templum facies peritura videret*
> *O veneranda mihi sanctum decus alma pudoris*
> *ut Damasi precibus faveas precor inclyta martyr.*

> So the story goes: the holy parents reported back then
> that when the mournful sound from the trumpet rang out
> Agnes at once left behind the embrace of her nurse
> and scorned the threats and anger of the savage tyrant
> when he wanted to burn her noble body with flames;
> she overcame that dreadful terror with young courage and
> let her hair loose over her naked body,
> lest any mortal gaze should see the temple of God.
> Oh one to be adored by me, holy delight, sweetness of chastity—
> Oh pure martyr, I pray that you might favour the prayers of

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[184] For the epitaphs to Tiburtinus and Gorgonius, see appended table.

Damasus.[185]

The epitaph to S. Agnes is one of the most intact of all the extant Damasian pieces. It is set into the right-hand wall at the very bottom of the stairs that lead into the semi-subterranean basilica at S. Agnese. It is the one you can get the closest to, of all the Damasian epitaphs currently on public display--you can walk right up to it, see it at eye-level, stand within inches of the marble surface. It is about 39" by 121" and preserved complete except for a small fragment of the top left-hand corner (so would be a quite remarkable speciman on this account alone). The fullest version of the story it recounts comes from this fifth-century *gesta*. A Roman prefect's son had fallen in love with the teenaged Agnes and begged her to marry him. Responding that she already had another lover (Christ), she was given a choice: become a Vestal Virgin, then, if you don't want to marry, or else be put into a brothel. She chose the latter, the story goes, and miraculously managed to escape being raped; they tried to burn her to death, but the flames went out; she finally died by being stabbed.[186] She was buried in the catacombs that have been on the Via Nomentana site since the third century. One of the more striking of the Constantinian suburban complexes was constructed here in the early fourth century, when the site was the imperial estate of Constantina, Constantine's daughter. A funerary

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[185] Ferrua 37. The S. Agnese epitaph is one of the Damasian epitaphs which refers to a person and martyr-anecdote for which there exists quite extensive, and near-contemporary, correlative evidence. These include the *Depositio martyrum* (first mention of Agnes at all); Ambrose's *de virginibus*, c. 377 (caput II.5-9); *de officiis* 203 (c. 389-390), also Ambrose; Prudentius' 'Hymn to Agnes'; and her *gesta* by Pseudo-Ambrose in the early fifth century, with its subsequent translations into Greek and Syriac. The importance of these other sources is their confirmation that in crafting his martyr *tituli* Damasus was, at least, working within the broad strokes of what anecdotal narrative did exist, in oral or otherwise preserved memory. While all but the brief entry of the *Depositio martyrum* post-date Damasus, the fact that later versions give much fuller detail than does his epitaph suggests that his was not the sole version of the story. This confirms, in other words, that his epitaphs were based in, and coincided with, the broad lines of the martyr stories as they existed in Christian collective memory. For this list: Visser 2000, 96 n. 3.

[186] The language of the Damasian version uses stock epitaphic descriptions of the prematurely deceased in order to emphasize her youthfulness and vulnerability (*CE* 383.1-4); see Lattimore 1962, 184-197. One example here is the reference made to the embrace of Agnes' nurse (*nutricis gremium*).

basilica was built adjacent to the tomb of S. Agnes in the catacombs (its remains can be

seen at the site), and the little circular church of S. Costanza rests just a few hundred

yards away from the present basilica: its original purpose is not entirely certain but it was

perhaps an imperial mausoleum or a baptistry. It was within this existing complex,

already enjoying significant cult veneration, that Damasus placed his epitaph to the

martyred girl. By about 400 there was a church here, constructed partially within the

levels of the catacombs in order to allow for an *ad corpus* orientation.[187] The present

subterranean basilica dates to the seventh century, roughly contemporary with the one at

the Domitilla catacombs which houses the Nereus and Achilleus epitaph.

S. Agnese as a hinge

At the beginning of this section I put the question of what 'transferable value' might

be said to have survived or been conveyed from the pre- to the post-Constantinian church

at Rome, given the disparate anxieties and experiences that defined the Christian

community in each period. It is easy to forget, though, from our perspective across the

such a long span of years, that--first of all--persecution had not really ended so very long

ago. This was all still close enough to the late fourth century to be visceral. //It is

undeniable that residual issues were still outstanding from the most recent persecutions.

The aftereffects of the Decian persecution (250-251) had been especially devastating due

to high incidence of Christian compliance, and the energies of the post-Decian church

were taken up with the resultant issues of disunity and of the 'lapsed' who sought reentry

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[187] For the Agnes site and its archaeology, see Kirsch 1933, 89-92; Carletti 1986, 39-42; Visser 2000, esp. 96ff.

to the confession.[188] Even more recent was the Diocletianic persecution (beginning in 303), with its unprecedented empire-wide scope and aggressively anti-Christian agenda. Diocletian's aim had been to dismantle the organization of the Church--the top members of its hierarchy, its financial and material resources--and the effects of this were particularly felt into the middle and latter fourth centuries.

My larger point, though, and one that applies to a long-term view of cultural transfer as well as to the period of time when persecution's most immediate aftereffects were still felt, is that the actual content of the transfer consisted of the core values of martyrdom as they were traditionally conceptualized by the Christian community. The epitaph for Agnes renders this model into its clearest form, and it is as an example of this value translation that its most exciting significance lies. We read in lines four through six that Agnes "scorned the threats and anger of the savage tyrant when he wanted to burn her noble body with flames; she overcame that dreadful terror with young courage". The key vocabulary here resides in the verbs used to describe Agnes' mental bearing, rather than any aspect of her physical action or response: they are *calco* and *supero*, directed respectively towards the threats of the tyrant and the immensity of her terror. *Calco* is etymologically derived from the noun *calx*, indicating the back part of the foot or the heel: the literal meaning, then, is to put one's heel upon something, to trample on or to spurn it. The use of *supero* underlines similar notions: to climb over or to defeat, especially in the context of combat or contest.[189] Both verbs, then, work together to

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[188] A compliance which "posed a much greater threat to the church than the persecutions that had taken relatively few lives in the previous century and a half": Salisbury 2004, 21. For the incidence of lapse and compliance to the edict, see Eusebius *HE* 6.41.11-13.

[189] The *OLD* entry for *calco* is worth citing at length here: "[CALX + -O] 4. 'to tread or set foot on'; 7. 'to tread on insolently, trample under foot'; 7b. '(fig) to trample on, spurn'; 7c. 'to ignore, make light of (evils,

underline Agnes' ability to ultimately surmount both threatening persecutor and her own human weakness.   Damasus does not simply say that she endured, and so won a martyr's crown: the language he uses emphasizes Agnes' capacity to *make her torment nothing*, to gain the upper hand not by eliminating the threat to her safety but by trampling its teeth under her heel and embracing a paradigm in which the threat of suffering is *negated*, is reckoned as nothing. The quality of the response, in other words, is able to render the threat of violence and suffering effectually impotent.

   In couching his description as he does, Damasus could as easily be a Roman author writing of Mucius Scaevola or the virulent second-century apologist Tertullian, espousing the glory of voluntary martyrdom: the values advertised are identical.[190] Compare the Agnes epitaph, for instance, with Tertullian's defence of Christian martyrdom: "so we have conquered, when we are killed; we escape when we are condemned" (*Ergo vicimus, cum occidimur, denique evadimus, cum obducimur: Apology* 50.5-6).[191] He reminds his Roman readers of the figures of their own (pagan!) past who displayed similar attitudes to their would-be torturers: "But the very desperation and recklessness you object to in us, among yourselves lift high the standard of virtue in the cause of glory and of fame."[192] Anaxarchus responded to threats with witticisms, Tertullian writes; Empedocles gave his body to the fires of Etna; the foundress of Carthage gave herself to the pyre; the Athenian courtesan bit off her own tongue and spat it in the face of the raging tyrant; Regulus was

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etc.)'". And for *supero*: "1. 'to climb over'; 3. 'to be superior to, surpass, excel'; 4. 'to prevail over, overcome, defeat; (absol.) to gain the upper hand (in war, combat)".

[190] Cf. also Damasus' epitaph 21 to Eutychius, who "was able to conquer the cruel orders of the tyrant...because he displayed the glory of Christ" (*crudelia iussa tyranni...vincere quod potuit monstrauit gloria Christi*).

[191] For Tertullian: T.D. Barnes 1971, Robert D. Sider 1971 and 2001.

[192] This and all subsequent Tertullian quotations taken from *Apology* 50, tr. S. Thelwall.

"even in captivity a conqueror!" by the total embracing of his tortures.[193] A Roman

general and consul, Regulus was taken prisoner by the Carthaginians in 255 BC. Five

years later, following the Carthaginian defeat at Panormus, he was sent back to Rome to

present terms of peace to the Senate. Instead, he urged them to press their advantage and,

having said goodbye to his family, returned to Carthage rather than dishonourably break

the terms of truce on which he had been sent. Ancient authors give various versions of

his subsequent execution; none of them is any less gruesome than the others.[194]

Tertullian's admiration of him is made even more remarkable by the fact that it was

shared by so pivotal a shaper of late antique Christianity as Augustine, who dedicates two

chapters of his *City of God* to praising the Roman hero. "Rightly do they praise a

fortitude superior to such a great misfortune", he writes (*merito certe laudant virtutem*

tam magna infelicitate maiorem). In the very midst of his tortures, Regulus was "happy

in his mind" (*animi virtute beatum*).[195] Throughout his captivity he maintained an

unconquered mind (*invictum animum*). He concludes that "among all their men

deserving of praise and distinguished by notable virtues, the Romans offer none better

than Regulus" (*inter omnes suos laudabiles et virtutis insignibus inlustres viros non*

proferunt Romani meliorem).

   So, for Augustine, Regulus stands before all other Romans. Even before Regulus,

though, in his list of pagan examples, Tertullian names Mucius Scaevola, who voluntarily

left his hand in the fire in order to prove the courage of Rome and so displayed his

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[193] Another Christian piece, the *Octavius* of Minucius Felix, extols the same notion (either Tertullian drew
on it, or *vice versa*) and cites the same Roman precedents: "mocking the noise of death, [the Christian]
treads under foot the horror of the executioner….triumphant and victorious, he tramples upon the very man
who has pronounced sentence against him!" (37.1, tr. Roberts-Donaldson).
[194] For Regulus: Horace *Odes* iii.5; Aulus Gellius, *Attic Nights* vii.4; Aurelius Victor, *de Viris Illustribus*
Romae 40; Augustine, *City of God* I.15 and I.24.
[195] The first two quotations are from I.15, the latter two from I.24 (Loeb).

sublimitas animi (and, in the process, saved the city from its enemies). Mucius Scaevola

is an outstanding figure of Roman myth, embodying the essence of Roman *virtus* and

celebrated by traditional Roman authors--so, for instance, by Martial:

> The right hand that sought the king, cheated by his satellite, doomed, imposed itself
> upon the sacred hearth. But the pious enemy could not bear so cruel a spectacle [*tam
> saevum miraculum*] and demanded that the man, snatched from the flames, depart.
> The burning hand which Mucius, in contempt of the fire (*contempto...igne*), could
> bear to watch, Porsena could not. The fame and glory of the cheated hand is the
> greater. Had it not erred it would have achieved less" (I.21).[196]

So: the notion of the willing embrace of suffering as a means of subverting the power of

the persecutor is not unique to the Christian model, but in fact was a substantial motif in

Roman social identity.[197] This is an equation where suffering replaces fighting as the

means of furthering one's cause.[198] Look, again, at the vocabulary running through these

accounts: *calcasse...superasse...vicimus...triumphamus...in captivitate victorem*. The

identical notion drives Martial's Mucius Scaevola and Tertullian's crowd of historical

figures as Damasus' Agnes: the martyr achieves victory over his torturers and their

tortures by his despising of them and by embracing his very debasement.

Again, Tertullian. "O glory legitimate," he writes,

> "because it is human, for whose sake it is counted neither reckless foolhardiness, nor
> desperate obstinacy, to despise death itself and all sorts of savage treatment; for
> whose sake you may for your native place, for the empire, for friendship, endure all
> you are forbidden to do for God! And you cast statues *in honour of persons such as
> these*, and you put inscriptions upon images, and cut out epitaphs on tombs, that their
> names may never perish."

Here, then, hangs the weight of my argument, and the pith of this thesis. It is for

"persons such as these" that Romans cut out epitaphs. In Agnes there is evidenced the

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[196] Tr. Carlin Barton 2002.
[197] See for this Carlin Barton 2002, especially 24 and 30-31.
[198] Straw 2002, 43.

bolt of the hinge forged between Tertullian and Damasus, between the pre- and post-Constantine periods of Christian martyrological discourse and so on either side of the value transfer effected through the monumental catalysis of communal memory. The notion of victory-through-debasement that informs Agnes' epitaph also, and crucially, runs through the stories most indisputably fundamental to Roman self-conception--Mucius Scaevola and his undaunted Roman *virtus,* Regulus and his *invictum animum*. It is with such figures that Tertullian (and, later, Augustine) challenges his Christian audience, making explicit the link between pagan *virtus* and the courage necessary to a martyr (or their figurative successors in the post-Constantinian age). This is how a Roman shows his valour; this is the behaviour worth emulating; this is how Agnes wins the day. Romans erect epitaphs for people *like this*; Tertullian, speaking as one of the most fanatical rhetoricians of the persecuted church, honours such behaviour even in pagans; and, coming full circle, Damasus erected epitaphs *for such people*, echoing both the pagan and the Christian earlier traditions. My point is, fundamentally, this: that by erecting the epitaphs Damasus was accomplishing two things: he was cutting out epitaphs for 'persons such as these' (so, he is acting in a traditional Roman manner); and he is precisely in line with, and expressing the values of, pre-persecution Christianity. Far from simply retelling the old stories and recording them for posterity, the epitaphs of Damasus recalled them--and the cultural values they embodied--to present sensibility. I have said that the epitaphs can be read as part of this effort to translate the veneration and values of martyrdom into a post-persecuted scenario. This kind of transfer was not unique to, nor originating in, the post-Constantinian period,[199] but in the monumental programme

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[199] The extent to which Augustan discourse and representation strove to maintain the perceived values of

of Damasus it found its clearest late antique expression, one operating by the individual

catalytic provocation of collective memory.

Republican Rome has long been understood, and is manifest in a number of public and explicit ways: from
Augustus' appropriation of Republican language and symbols (his use of *princeps*, his claim to have
restitio res publicae, etc.) to the inclusion of Republican military and political figures amongst the *summi
viri* of his forum. Similarly, the preservation and reception of cultural elements from the monarchical
period at Rome is evident in the Republican period. See for this especially Gowing 2005.

Conclusion

I have argued that the epitaphs form an integral part of a cultural transfer of the

communal and spiritual currency of martyrdom and the persecuted age, happening

through monuments and particularly through their function as locative anchors for

collective memory and for public sentiment. By catalyzing a particular set of points, a

particular nostalgia for a particular picture of the past, they contributed to the translation

of pre-Constantinian identity and its negotiation into the post-persecuted Christian age.

Furthermore, they played a central role in what would become a defining characteristic of

post-Damasian Rome: Christian pilgrimage to the catacombs and the sites of martyr-cult

within that city.[200] Christian pilgrimage to Rome had been happening since at least the

second century. Its initial raison d'être was, of course, the legacy of the martyrs

associated with that city and the presence of their bones in the suburban catacombs and

cemeteries. As we have seen, Peter and Paul were of first importance, and it was the fact

of their martyrdoms and the presence of their (purported) relics that made the city the

sedes apostolica. "So strong were the city's associations with these apostles that

pilgrimage to Rome was often referred to in the medieval period as a pilgrimage *ad

limina apostolorum*."[201] It was these two figures and their apostolic authority,

furthermore, that would underpin the emergence of Rome as a city special quite apart

from the relics of its past--a city, in other words, which held a preeminent position due

not just to the martyrs but to the spiritual primacy of Rome.

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[200] For Christian pilgrimage to Rome, start with Birch 2000; Webb 2002; Bitton-Ashkeloney 2005; Caseau 2001; Thacker 2007.
[201] Birch 2000, 61.

The earliest direct evidence of pilgrimage to Rome includes an inscription of

Abercius, purportedly the bishop of Hieropolis in Phrygia, which mentions his visit there

around the middle of the second century.[202] Eusebius cites several fragments from the

writings of Hegesippus, a convert Jew who wrote a chronicle of the church and travelled

to Rome during the time of bishop Anicetus--so, between c. 150 and 167 (*HE* ii.23; iii.2;

iii.35; iv.8; iv.22). He also records a visit to Rome by Origen while Zephyrinus was

bishop of Rome (between 199 and 217): "Adamantius--for this also was a name of

Origen...visited Rome, *'desiring,'* as he himself somewhere says, *'to see the most ancient*

church of Rome'" (*HE* 6.14.10). These few examples seem to indicate at very least that

by the end of the second century Rome was a destination city for Christians throughout

the empire. As we have seen, graffiti from the *ad catacumbas* site and from the Vatican

would seem to indicate the presence of pilgrimage at these sites from sometime in the

third century. The emergence in the late fourth century of a more extensive--and more

extensively celebrated--martyr-cult initiated an increase in pilgrimage traffic and

advertisement that would shape the topography of the city over the subsequent centuries.

Damasus' epitaphs took a central role in this process,[203] but--just as his monumental work

drew its relevance and efficacy from its resemblance to traditional methods of epigraphic

commemoration--so, here, his promotion of martyr-cult were no radical aberration from

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[202] For the inscription see F.C. Conybeare (1895), "Harnack on the Inscription of Abercius," *The Classical Review* 9.6, 295-297. It was discovered by W.M. Ramsay during his archaeological work in Asia Minor and was subsequently discovered to be the same inscription previously copied down in the fourth century by a Greek author. It is not entirely clear from the inscription that he came as a pilgrim; at least part of the expedition was, it seems, to cast out a devil from the daughter of Marcus Aurelius!

[203] All of Damasus' activity, in fact, whether epigraphic or related to site improvement and renovation, must be understood as fundamentally contributing to the ongoing facilitation of pilgrimage to, and at, Rome. The audience of the epitaphs and of martyr-cult sites throughout the city were, of course, for the most part pilgrims of one variety or another (though some of them would have been local traffic taking part in stational liturgies and festal days). See Alchermes 1989; Thacker 2007, 47-48; Blair-Dixon 2007 (quotation from 342). For stational liturgy in this and successive centuries: Alchermes 1989 and Noble 2001, 84-90.

the tenor of his predecessors' work; his particular contributions should be seen as establishing what preceded him and setting a pattern for what came afterwards. Where Damasus added most to the qualitative focus of earlier martyr-cult at Rome was in the scope of his activities and in his emphasis on representing Rome as the seat and receptacle of a martyred *congesta turba*: one big *locum sanctum*, entire. It is precisely this notion of the 'universal Christian dead' celebrated in several of the Damasian epitaphs that underpins the subsequent development and increase of Christian pilgrimage to that city. Other cities could boast the presence of prized martyr-relics (Lyons, Constantinople, Nola, Arles, to name a few).[204] Only Rome came to be viewed as sacrosanct in her very soil.

This continued facilitation of martyr-cult and of its popular celebration had a notable effect on Rome's image in the following centuries. By at least the turn of the fifth century, Rome had come to be seen as the unrivalled and sacrosanct seat of the martyrs and as worth travelling to on this account alone. Nor was this limited to outside traffic; Jerome wrote in 403 that Rome herself was 'stirred to its depths and the people pour past their half-ruined [pagan] shrines to visit the tombs of the saints' (*Movetur urbs sedibus suis, et inundans populus ante delubra semiruta, currit ad martyrum tumulos*).[205] His words are reminiscent of the 'centrifugal pull' suggested by Peter Brown, in which the

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[204] At Arles, local martyr cult centered around S. Genesius, who was purportedly killed under Diocletian after attempting to escape by swimming across the Rhone. Both the site of his execution and of his burial were marked. The fifth-century church built over his grave also became the locus for the cultic celebration of early local bishops. See S.T. Loseby 1996, especially pp. 58ff. Arles is a particularly fascinating instance both of Christianized topography in late antiquity and of the Christianization of local urban identity. At Tarraco the tombs of the local martyrs Fructuosus, Augurius, and Eulogius were likely housed in a *martyrium* that was replaced by a basilica-style church in the fifth century. See Simon Keay 1996, especially pp. 31-33. Another of Tarraco's late antique churches was built, fascinatingly, into the existent amphitheatre! For Constantinople see Snively 2006, especially p. 713: in contrast with Rome, only two local martyrs are known for Constantinople. A church was constructed around the remains of one of these, Mokios, purportedly by Constantine but at least by the year 402.

[205] *Letter* 107.1, tr. Curran 2000.

topography of the city recentred in late antiquity around the Christian, suburban foci of the martyr-sites and the complexes that grew up around them.[206] This realignment had several particular effects. First, it led to the development and use of *ad sanctos* suburban cemeteries during the fifth to seventh centuries.[207] These *ad sanctos* burial places are different again from either of the two types of evolution evidenced for the third century;[208] they grew up around the martyr tombs in response to the populace's growing desire to lie, in death, as close to the saints as possible.

So, increasingly, the dead sought residence in the martyrs' suburban *loci*. This was paralleled among the living, too, as more and more pilgrims sought out the martyr-cult sites of Rome: "[t]he tombs of the martyrs, now decorated and refurbished, also became important sanctuaries for the living".[209] Sites around the tombs were enlarged to allow for better access and to accommodate greater numbers of visitors. Such activities were engaged in by many, if not most, of Damasus' successors. Sixtus III (432-440) established a monastery near the Basilica Apostolorum.[210] Pope Leo I (440-461) built an underground basilica around the tomb of Cornelius in order to protect it and to allow for its easier access. Pelagius II (579-590) cut the floor of a new basilica at S. Lorenzo FLM down to the catacomb level housing the nominal martyr's tomb, and built a gallery into the church to allow pilgrims to more easily view the tomb. At the Vatican he had an annular crypt installed which similarly facilitated larger crowds of pilgrims and solved logistical problems of the flow of so many visitors to the site. Gregory the Great (590-

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[206] Peter Brown 1981. For the reorientation of the urban landscape of Rome see Wataghin 1999, 153-154.
[207] These *ad sanctos* burials occurred not generally in the catacombs but in adjacent cemeteries and in the funerary basilicas. For *ad sanctos* burial see especially Wataghin 1999.
[208] So: the express organization of Christian burial grounds, or privately donated land that later expanded into a collective site.
[209] For this, and the quotation: Spera 2003, 37-38.
[210] Spera 2003, 38.

604) modified the cult sites at S. Pietro and S. Paolo in order to further ease access and allow the celebration of mass immediately over the relics, likely in response to the increasing traffic of pilgrims visiting the sites from outside Rome. His projects "may also have been prompted...by anticipation and expectation of the even greater numbers of pilgrims, who could be expected to begin making the journey *ad limina apostolorum*, as a result of...[his] 'missionary strategy'"[211]--in other words, Gregory's emphasis on the expansion of Christianity meant that pilgrims were coming from further and further afield.[212]

The height of Christian martyr-cult at Rome and of popular pilgrimage around the suburban tombs and basilicas belongs to the seventh and eighth centuries.[213] It is during these centuries that the *loca sancta* of the apostles and of local martyrs were mapped out in itineraries such as the *Notitia ecclesiarum urbis Romae*. This systematic account of the holy sites of Rome, grouped according to cemetery, includes 106 different sites (not counting a Vatican appendix) and dates to sometime in the papacy of Honorius I (625-38).[214] From the same period are the *syllogae*: collections of epitaphs transcribed from Roman tombs, especially from the *loca sancta*. The seventh century also saw the erection of newly-renovated basilicas at several of the old Constantinian sites (as I have mentioned, for example, at the catacombs of Domitilla and at S. Agnes). The last half of

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[211] Birch 2000, 36-37.

[212] In the seventh century, for instance, Benedict Biscop and Wilfrid made their way to Rome in search of relics which would form the basis of cults back in England: Thacker 2007, 13.

[213] For the situation up to the seventh century see especially Thacker 2007, 18-19. The sixth and seventh centuries, for instance, witnessed the development of the *Gesta martyrum*, fleshed-out and frequently romanticized versions of the martyrs' passions and sufferings. These *gestae* would in turn form the basis for the hagiographic nature that so characterized the entire medieval liturgy. For the *gestae* see Cooper 1999; Thacker 2007, 19.

[214] The *Notitia* is at the early end of dating for such itineraries. An exact purpose is not entirely known for either *syllogae* or itineraries; they were, perhaps, more like souvenirs than practical guides. See Thacker 2007, 18-19.

the eighth century witnessed the beginning of the wholesale transfer of relics into the city,[215] motivated by such events as the Lombard invasion of 756.[216] This culminated under Paschal I (817-24), who brought the remains of 2300 martyrs (!) into S. Prassede on account of the current destruction and neglect of the catacombs.[217]

Prudentius (fl. c. 405), who tellingly remarks in his *Liber Peristephanon* "how full Rome is with saints!" (*quam plena sanctis Roma sit*)),[218] included in its pages a description of the tomb of Hippolytus. It makes a fascinating study when compared with Jerome's description of his visits to the catacombs; like time-delayed snapshots, the two accounts throw into sharp relief the difference that the latter fourth century made in the topographies of martyr-cult at Rome:

> Into [the crypt's] secret recesses a steep path with curving stairs guides the way....Although the passages cut at random weave a pattern of narrow chambers and murky galleries, yet, where the rock has been cut away and a vault hollowed out and pierced through, light makes its way in abundantly. To such secret recesses the body of Hippolytus is entrusted hard by the place where an altar is dedicated to God and set up. The same altar-table bestows the sacrament and faithfully guards the martyr's bones. Now the shrine which encloses the relics of that brave soul gleams with solid

[215] Spera 2003, 38.
[216] By this point, though, a subtle but long-reaching change had occurred in how the power of martyr-remains was negotiated. The centuries after Damasus had seen a profound shift towards a transportable view of the sanctity of martyrs and of their relics. The most potent sanctity of a martyr no longer depended on any particular location or topographical 'loading': the sum total of meaning and efficacy was now in the bones themselves, not in the earth they were buried in. The legislation concerning the removal or resituation of relics is complex, and further complicated by the fact that we are dealing with multiple sets of evidence: secular legislation, Christian edicts, and both traditional and Christian taboos. One particularly indicative piece is an edict of 386 AD forbade the violation of tombs for the purpose of relic-trafficking. For the pertinent legislation: Johnson, 39-40; Stevenson 1978, 37; Caseau 2001, 36-38. For the disinterment of relics and the evolution of a 'transportable sanctity': Caseau 2001, 42-44. The subsequent centuries witnessed extreme instances of the notion: in Syria, for instance, oil was poured into holes in reliquaries in order that it might pass over the bones and be collected for distribution. Even oil burned in front of martyr's tombs could catch some of the 'contagious sanctity' of the place and was one of the souvenirs most trafficked in by pilgrims. The cathedral at Monza, for instance, possesses a collection of *ampullae* holding oil from 60 different martyr-tombs at Rome. See Caseau 2001, 43, especially n. 79. Another example are the pilgrims to the tomb of Peter in the sixth century who lowered pieces of cloth down near the relics and found, upon drawing them back up, that they emerged "so imbued with divine power that its weight is increased beyond what he found it weighed before": Holloway 2004, 122-124.
[217] Stevenson 1978, 42-43 and Noble 2001 for the situation of Rome in the 8th and 9th centuries.
[218] *Peristephanon* ii. 541-544.

silver. Wealthy hands have set in place a smooth surface of glistening panels, bright as a mirror and, not content to overlay the entrances with Parian marble, have added lavish gifts for adorning the whole place."[219]

Here, a mere generation after the end of Damasus' pontificate, the transformation and public articulation of the Roman sites of martyr-cult are already in evidence. The contours of martyr-cult and of pilgrimage at Rome in the decades and centuries following Damasus indicate that his contemporaries and successors were operating with priorities and concerns familiar, and continuous, from his own epitaphic and building programmes: access to the martyrs, facilitation of pilgrimage, and the continued maintenance and furtherance of the 'local saints' of Rome. The Christian monuments erected in these post-Damasian centuries worked, I have argued, by catalyzing from the collective memory of the Roman-Christian community the values and self-conceptions that had defined and reinforced its persecuted identity. Through this mnemonic process, the epitaphs and their monumental counterparts possessed the operative agency not simply to remind for the moment, but to stir and so to ultimately preserve the essential aspects and sentiments of the 'persecuted' collective memory of the Christian church. It is this operative agency which I have sought to emphasize, and which I think is the most remarkable aspect of the Damasian programme: its role as a vehicle of 'value transfer', transmitting the currency of the persecuted age into the Christian church of the post-Constantinian late fourth-century. The monumental capacity of the epitaphs involved a dual function, then: it positioned them to become the nexus of a phenomenon that would shape the next stage of Roman Christianity--namely, pilgrimage--while simultaneously sustaining and promoting the ongoing development of martyr-cult at Rome.

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[219] *Peristephanon* ii.316, tr. H.J. Thomson (Loeb).

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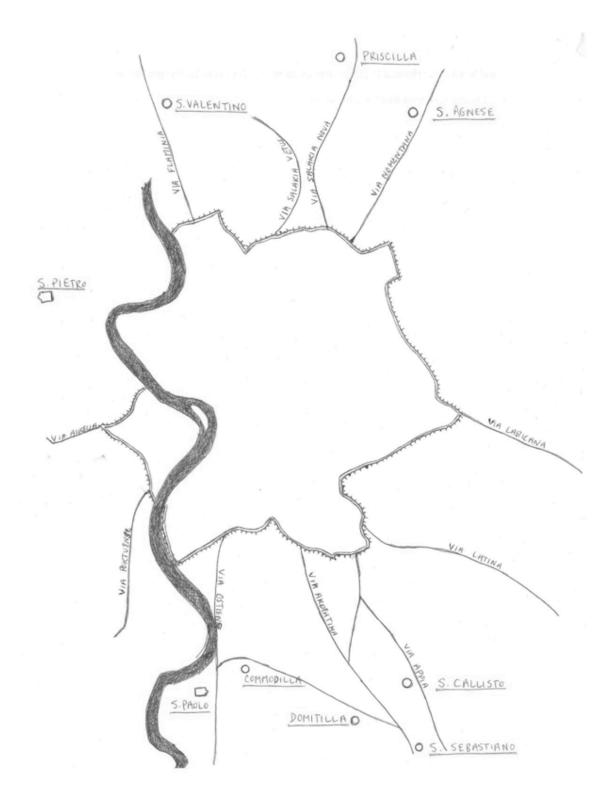*Middle Ages*: 45-91. Eds. Mayke de Jong and Frans Theuws with Carine van Rhijn. Leiden: Brill.

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Ferrua	title	state of the plaque	findspot	probable site of original placement	martyr or other object of celebration	textual notes	present location
1	Versus in beatum Paulum apostolum	N/A	N/A	unknown	Paul	see Ferrua for a lengthy list	N/A
2	Versus ad fratrem corripiendum	N/A	N/A	unknown	Tityrus (perhaps a deacon)	sylloge E	N/A
3 *	Ad fontes S. Petri	mostly intact	*in clivio super ecclesiam beati Petri in fontibus* (15th c.)	the Vatican or the Janiculum	construction of a baptistery	sylloge P	Vatican crypts (if you take the route of the public tour, it is fixed to the wall of the very last room on the right before you exit the crypts)
4	In baptisterio Vaticano	N/A	N/A	unknown		sylloge L	N/A
5	Fragmenta in coem. Pontiani	marble fragments of a balustrade !	1917 in the *coem. Pontiani via Portuensi*	in *magna ecclesia* at same site	? perhaps Abdon and Sennen, martyred c. 250 at Rome	N/A	in the cryptoporticus at the *coem. Pontiani*
6	SS. Faustino et Viatrici	two adjoining fragments of a marble architrave !	1868, around the old basilica in *coem. Generosae via Portuensi*	unknown	martyred at Rome under Diocletian	N/A	in *coem. Generosae*
7	Elogium SS. Felicis et Adaucti	single large fragment	*coem. Commadillae*	subterranean church in the cemetery, later moved to Vatican museums	martyred at Rome, c. 304	sylloges T, L, E, C	in the Lateran museum
8 *	Elogium SS. Nerei et Achillei	two bottom corners of the original	1874, cemetery of Domitilla	basilica of Nereus and Achilleus	martyred at Rome, second century	sylloges L, E, T	narthex wall at their basilica in the S. Domitilla catacombs
9	Fragmenta e coem. Domitillae	four fragments	1861	unknown	N/A	N/A	now lost
10	Epitaphius Laurentiae matris Damasi	two pieces	*cubiculum of the 12 Apostles*	Via Ardeatina	Damasus' mother, Laurentia	N/A	*cubiculum* of the 12 Apostles
11	Epitaphius Irenes sororis Damasi	one fragment	collection of pieces kept in the forum	Via Ardeatina	Damasus' sister, Irene	L	*cubiculum* of the 12 Apostles

12	Epitaphius Damasi	N/A	N/A	Via Ardeatina	Damasus himself	T	N/A
13	Fragmenta elogii SS. Marci et Marcelliani	three pieces	pavement of SS. Cosmo + Damiani	unknown	martyred 286, brothers	N/A	? cemetery of Domitilla
14	Fragmenta epigrammatis	fragment	1915, at SS. Cosma e Damiano in the forum	unknown	N/A	N/A	in *repositis* of the Roman forum
15	Elogium S. Tarsicii	N/A	N/A	at S. Callisto	? third century, at Rome	L	N/A
16 *	Elogium Sanctorum ad papas iacentium	heavily fractured but pieced together	Crypt of the Popes at S. Callisto	Crypt of the Popes	*turba piorum*		Crypt of the Popes in the S. Callisto catacombs
17	Elogium S. Xysti papae	two adjacent fragments	in the Crypt of the Popes in S. Callisto catacombs	Crypt of the Popes	Pope Xystus	sylloge L	
18	Elogium S. Eusebii papae	thirteen fragments of original marble plaque	1856-1908	*cubiculum* of Eusebius in S. Callisto catacombs	Pope Eusebius	sylloges T, L bears Filocalian gloss	in the *cubiculum* of Eusebius in the S. Callisto catacombs
19 *	Elogium S. Cornelii papae	almost all of the right half	tomb of Cornelius in the crypt of Lucina	S. Callisto	Pope Cornelius	N/A	Ferrua says the crypt of Lucina, but I am certain that I saw the original in the basement of the Vatican museums
20	In basilica apostolorum Petri et Pauli	N/A	N/A	S. Sebastiano	Peter and Paul	sylloges L, E, T, C	N/A
21 *	Elogium S. Eutychii	mostly intact	S. Sebastiano	*ad catacumbas* cemetery (moved into basilica 1563)	martyred at Rome, 4th c.		later copy at S. Sebastiano, original in the basement of the Vatican museums
22 + 23	Fragmenta diversorum titulorum	N/A	*ad catacumbas*	*ad catacumbas*	N/A	N/A	fixed to the wall not far from the Platonia
24	Titulus S. Ianuarii	many fragments which	*coem. Praetextati*, 1863-1872	*coem. Praetextati*	? 162; one of the seven sons of S. Felicitas	N/A	fixed to the wall in the *magna spelunca* at the *coem. Praetextati*

		together form large part of the whole				T	fixed to the wall of the *spelunca magna* in the *coem. Praetextati*
25	Elogium SS. Felicissimi et Agapiti	three pieces forming the greater part of the whole	1927, spread over the pavement at S. Nicolai a Cesarini. bears marks of saw teeth--was put down under other marbles being cut!	*coem. Praetextati*	deacons of Xystus II, martyred 258 under Valerian		
26	Fragmenta epigrammatis	small fragment	spelunca magna in coem. Praetextati	unknown	N/A	N/A	same as findspot, fixed to the wall
27	Fragmenta epigrammatis	several substantial fragments of a single plaque	*coem. Praetextati*, between 1872 and 1919		N/A	has Filocalian gloss in the margins, like n. 18	fixed to the wall of the *magna spelunca* at *coem. Praetextati*
28 *	Elogium SS. Marcellini et Petri	single fragment	1913, in the cloister of SS. Quattro Coronati in an old cistern	*coem. ad duas lauros*, via Labicana	martyred 304 at Rome	see Ferrua for extensive list.	set into the wall of the cloister at SS. Quattro Coronati
29	Fragmenta tituli alterius	two fragments of marble from an ornamental arch	1896, when the tomb of the martyrs Marcellinus and Peter was being excavated	in *coem. SS. Marcellini et Petri*	N/A	N/A	not stated
30	Fragmenta alia	fragment	1921, coem. *ad duos lauros*		N/A	N/A	Ferrua: in the same cemetery
31	Elogium S. Tiburtii	N/A	N/A	cemetery *ad duos lauros*	martyred under Diocletian	sylloges T, C	N/A
32	Elogium S. Gorgonii	N/A	N/A	cemetery *ad duos lauros*	martyred under Diocletian	sylloges L, T	N/A
33	Elogium S.	N/A	N/A	basilica of Laurence, deacon of	N/A	sylloge	N/A

No.	Title	Condition	Provenance / find	Cemetery	Martyr / identity	Sylloge	Present location
34 *	Fragmentum epigrammatis Laurentii in sua basilica	pars sinestra intact	dug up in the Agro Verano in 1889	unknown	S. Laurence in the church at Rome, d. 258 under Valerian, moved afterwards to S. Lorenzo in Damaso	Centulensis, sylloge Laureshamensis	in the cloister of S. Lorenzo fuori le mura
35 *	Elogium S. Hippolyti	ten fragments, cut up into various shapes	cut up and used in opus sectile pavement at S. Giovanni Laterano in middle ages (perhaps 1425)	cemetery of Hippolytus on the Via Tiburtina	Hippolytus, presbyter of the church at Rome, d. c. 236 in exile but venerated as martyr	sylloge Centulensis (saec. VIII-IX)	In 1942 was in the Lateran Museum, now in the basement of the Vatican museums (Pio-Christian collection)
36	Fragmentum tituli	tiny fragment	crypt of Hippolytus	unknown	N/A	N/A	crypt of Hippolytus
37 *	Elogium S. Agnetis	intact apart from fragment of top left corner	1728 was found laid down in the pavement at the site	S. Agnese	martyred under Diocletian	V, T	bottom of the stairway leading to the subterranean basilica at S. Agnese
38	Fragmentum tituli	tiny fragment	basilica S. Agnese	unknown	N/A	N/A	fixed to the wall in cubiculum 8 of the S. Agnese catacombs.
39	Elogium SS. Felicis et Philippi	N/A	coem. Priscillae	coem. Priscillae	? 162 at Rome, two of the seven sons of S. Felicitas	V, T	N/A
40	Elogium S. Marcelli papae	N/A	ecclesia S. Silvestri in coem. Priscillae		pope 308-309, exiled under Maxentius	L, T, V	N/A
41	Elogium SS. Vitali Martiali et Alexandro martyribus	N/A	via Salaria nova		two of the seven sons of S. Felicitas	L, V. also preserved in an inscribed carmen of P. Vigilius, part of which is extant	Vigilian copy was found in 1804 and were at the Lateran when Ferrua wrote
42	SS. martyribus in	N/A	via Salaria		the crowd killed at	L, C, V, H	N/A

#	Name	State	Find location	Church / association	Date / Note	Sylloge	Current location
	coem. Thrasonis sepultis			nova	the end of the *gesta Chrysanthi et Dariae*		
43	SS. martyribus LXII	N/A	N/A	*ecclesia SS. Chrysanthi et Dariae*	unknown	L, C, H, V	N/A
44	Elogium S. Mauri	N/A	N/A	*ecclesia SS. Chrysanthi et Dariae*	under Numerian; son of SS. Hilaria and Claudius	L, C, H V	N/A
45	SS. Chrysantho et Dariae martyribus	N/A	N/A	tomb of the eponymous saints in *coem. Thrasonis* (Via Salaria nova)	third century, at Rome	C, L, H V.	N/A
46	Elogium S. Saturnini	N/A	N/A	*ecclesia S Saturnini, coem. Thrasonis*	c. 200, in Carthage	syllogae L and C	N/A
47 *	Elogium SS. Proti et Hyacinthi	*pars sinestra* intact, + two fragments from the ends of vv. 4-6	laid down in the pavement of SS. Quattro Coronati		Protus and Hyacinth, perhaps brothers, martyred at Rome under Valerian	sylloge Laureshamensis	fixed to the wall on the right side of the apse at SS. Quattro Coronati
48	Elogium S. Hermetis	three small fragments	1932-1940, in coem. *Basillae*	tomb of Hermes in the coem. *Basillae*	? second century, at Rome	sylloge L	unknown
49	In coem. S. Valentini	several fragments	1888-1905 in the *coem. Valentini*	N/A	unknown	N/A	in *coem. Valentini*, fixed to the wall
50	Elogium Marci	N/A	N/A	unknown	not certain, perhaps Pope Marcus	sylloge L	N/A
51 *	Elogium Proiectae	intact	a suburban cemetery (unspecified), afterwards put into the pavement at S. Martini in	unknown	Proiecta (see note below)	N/A	Lateran museum in 1942; now in the Pio-Christian collection in the basement of the Vatican museums

51 *	Elogium Proiectae	intact	a suburban cemetery (unspecified), afterwards put into the pavement at S. Martini in Montibus	unknown	Proiecta (see note below)	N/A	Lateran museum in 1942; now in the Pio-Christian collection in the basement of the Vatican museums
52	Fragmenta Capitolina	two fragments	SS. Quattro Coronati	unknown	unknown	N/A	in museum 'dei Conservatori'
53	Fragmentum Ostiense	fragment (five characters)	unknown	unknown	N/A	N/A	fixed to the wall in the monastic museum at S. Paolo fuori le mura
54 *	Fragmentum in S. Sabinae	fragment (four characters): VNDI	unknown	unknown	N/A	Ferrua speculates that it might belong to n. 7, end of v. 2	fixed to the wall of the narthex in S. Sabina
55 *	Fragmentum in S. Clementis	five fragments	1869, at the entrance to the ancient basilica	unknown	N/A	N/A	fixed to right-hand wall of the stairway leading into the underground basilica at S. Clemente
56 *	Fragmentum in Lucinis	fragment	1872, at S. Lorenzo in Lucina	unknown	N/A	N/A	set in the wall of the porch at S. Lorenzo in Lucina
57	Titulus archivorum	N/A	N/A	S. Lorenzo	Damasus' father, and	sylloge L	N/A

<u>Key to the table:</u>

All information is from Ferrua's edition unless otherwise specified. Those pieces

whose present location I have personally verified I have marked with an asterisk (*). The

manuscripts cited in the table are as follows:

L = Sylloge Laureshamensis, in cod. Vat. Palat. 833, 9th-10th centuries

T = Sylloge Turonensis, 7th century

E = Sylloge Einsidlensis, 8th-9th centuries

H = Harleiano 3685, *olim* Peutingeri, 15th century

V = Sylloge Virdunensis, 10th century

C = Sylloge Centulensis, in cod. Petropolitanus, 8th-9th centuries

<u>Breakdown of the table's data</u>

Of the 59 epitaphs listed, 33 of them celebrate martyrs or posthumously venerated

bishops; 5 commemorate private persons (Damasus, his mother and sister, his father, and

the young aristocratic girl Proiecta); 3 are written to mark projects (a baptistery and a

library, respectively) and 18 are fragments, impossible to attribute to any known epitaph.

This data is suggestive of Damasus' decision-making process in several respects: first, it

demonstrates that the majority of Damasus' epitaphs were dedicated to martyrs rather

than to private individuals (33 of the 41 attributable pieces), emphasizing the focus of his

epitaphs on the martyred and venerated figures of Rome's Christian past. His epitaphs

introduce 15 martyrs into the topography of martyr-cult at Rome (that is, persons whose

names do not appear in the *Depositio martyrum* of 354 and so may be posited as new

introductions on the part of Damasus). Of the 5 non-martyrs who are commemorated,

one is Damasus himself and 3 are members of his immediate family; the exceptional

individual is Proiecta (for a discussion of her probable identity and its implications see

Alan Cameron 1985). This seems to confirm Damasus' interest in promoting himself and

his family members as contributing, in correlation with and alongside Rome's historical

martyrs, to the fabric of Rome's Christian past. Finally, the epitaphs seem to appear in

bunched groups, centred around a particular few of the suburban cemeteries (see map for

details) and perhaps suggestive of Damasus' proclivities towards centring his work

around a nexus of those existing sites which possessed especial importance for the

popular practice of Christian cult at Rome.

A note on the editions:

   There are two standard text editions of the epitaphs of Damasus: Maximilian Ihm's,

published in 1895 (*Damasi epigrammata: accedunt Pseudo-damasiana aliaque ad

Damasiana inlustranda idonea*. Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1895), and the more recent

compilation of Antonio Ferrua, dating to 1942 (*Epigrammata Damasiana. Recensuit et

adnotauit*. SSAC 2 (Rome: Pontificio Istitutio di archeologia cristiana, 1942). Ihm was

from 1902 to 1906 the director of the Thesaurae Linguae Latinae in Munich and worked

also on the Corpus Inscriptionem Latinorum. He died in 1909 in Halle, where he held an

assistant professorship. Ferrua was a Jesuit priest and archaeologist (1901-2003). He

belonged to the group of Catholic archaeologists who excavated beneath the altar of St.

Peter's between 1940 and 1949. In 1947 he became Secretary of the Pontifical

Commission for Archaeology and in 1948 Conservator of the Museo Sacro in the Vatican

Library. Among his very extensive list of publications and projects involving the

catacombs and other aspects of the early Christian church was the nine volumes of

Inscriptiones Christianae Urbis Romae Saeculo Septimo Antiquiores, a collection

including over 40,000 ancient inscriptions and which built upon the earlier work of de

Rossi. The text of both Ihm and of Ferrua is in Latin. Both editions include the text of

those epitaphs preserved in the manuscript record (or reconstructed with reference both to

it and to whatever physical fragments remain extant) in addition to the few pieces that

exist as intact, or semi-intact, marble plaques.