Advancing an Eschatological Conversation: An Interpretation of the Via Latina's "Hercules Cycle" through the Eyes of a Late Antique Roman Viewer

The wall-paintings in the Via Latina catacomb present a unique case study of the interaction between Christian and polytheistic icons in the third and fourth centuries.[1] In particular, the "Hercules Cycle," which is unique to Via Latina, invites its viewers to consider the emerging Judeo-Christian doctrines as in conversation with Greco-Roman tradition.[2] Because of the ambiguity surrounding burial type in Via Latina, the

[1] John Lowden, *Early Christian & Byzantine Art,* London: Phaidon (1997), 44. For a more detailed description of iconoclasm in the early church, see Troels Myrup Kristensen, *Making and Breaking the Gods: Christian Responses to Pagan Sculpture in Late Antiquity,* Aarhus: Aarhus University Press (2013), 255; and Laura Salah Nasrallah, *Christian Responses to Roman Art and Architecture: The Second-century Church amid the Spaces of Empire.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (2010), 198-206. Conflicting historical accounts address the fundamental tension between Judaism's prohibitions against idolatry and the Roman Empire's grand displays of religious art, presenting Christians both as iconoclasts and preservers of the classical heritage. According to Kristensen, the mixed attitude of the early Church toward classical tradition represents a selective destruction and reuse of images for the purpose of creating a new iconography to express its blossoming theology. The archaeological record presents Christian artifacts that syncretize classical and biblical images, but some of the most striking examples appear in catacomb wall art. See Reita J. Sutherland, "Prayer and Piety: The *Orans*-Figure in the Christian Catacombs of Rome," Thesis, University of Ottawa, (2013), 7-8 for specific examples of religious syncretism in other archeological artifacts.
[2] David H. Wright, "Pagan Theology in the Via Latina Catacomb," *Proc. of Annual Byzantine Studies Conference*, Vol. 9. (1983), 69, and Fabrizio Mancinelli, *Catacombs and Basilicas: The Early Christians in Rome,* Firenze: Scala, (1981), 33-38.

interpretation of the Hercules cycle has been greatly debated, with scholarship defending multiple conflicting positions: to some it is nothing more than an illustration of a Classical myth while to others it is a Judeo-Christian allegory or, at least, an example of religious syncretism. Like the rest of the Via Latina frescoes (Figure 1), the images in the Hercules Cycle follow Roman impressionistic style, which typically depicts narratives more figuratively than illustratively.[3] The interpretative difficulty stems from the fact that catacomb frescoes align stylistically with Roman funerary art to the point that only subtle details distinguish a Christian motif from a similar Classical one.[4] In order to avoid the challenges of interpreting the Hercules Cycle through contextual evidence about burial type, this paper adopts a new framework for interpretation — approaching the images through the perspective of the viewer. Interpreting the Hercules cycle as part of a conversation on eschatology sheds light upon the relationship of pagans and Christians in late antique Rome and reflects the blending of the Judeo-Christian and Classical heritages, which would later influence the development of Western Civilization.

Traditionally, scholars have interpreted catacomb iconography based upon an identification of the burial type within the catacomb; however, definite identification of burials

[3] Barbara E. Borg, *Crisis and Ambition: Tombs and Burial Customs in Third-century CE Rome,* Oxford: Oxford University Press (2013), 276; Robin Margaret Jensen, *Understanding Early Christian Art.* New York: Routledge (2000), 24.

[4] Kathleen Enz Finken, *The Programmatic Sources of the Earliest Christian Art: Salvation History in the Catacomb of Callistus,* Diss. Rutgers, (1998), 153; for examples of funerary art in Roman tombs, see J. Stevenson, *The Catacombs: Rediscovered Monuments of Early Christianity,* London: Thames and Hudson (1978), 58.

as pagan, Christian, or mixed proves difficult, particularly in Via Latina.[5] Pioneering catacomb scholars such as Antonio Bosio and Giovanni Battista de Rossi assumed that although there was archaeological evidence for mixed burials above ground, Christians never shared underground burial spaces. Subsequent scholars built upon these fundamental assumptions, effectively limiting the objectivity of their later conclusions.[6] Since the academic world accepted that all catacomb burials were Christian, then scholarship naturally explained the appearance of Greco-Roman icons as an intentional form of repurposing for Christian use. Classical figures such as Orpheus became Christ-figures instead of a mythological hero.[7] Recent demographic evidence presented by John Bodel has called into question these interpretations called into question by demographic evidence presented by more recent scholars such as John Bodel, which support the high probability of collective burial given the scarcity of burial land in Rome.[8] His close survey of patristic writings and

[5] See Mark J. Johnson, "Pagan-Christian Burial Practices of the Fourth Century: Shared Tombs?," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 5, no. 1 (1997), 37 for more about the controversy in identifying burials in Via Latina.

[6] The selective records of both Antonio Bosio and Giovanni Battista de Rossi have heavily influenced the work of subsequent scholars on the catacombs. For more information, see Amy Hirschfeld, "An Overview of the Intellectual History of Catacomb Archaeology," In *Commemorating the Dead: Texts and Artifacts in Context: Studies of Roman, Jewish and Christian Burials,* Edited by Laurie Brink and Deborah A. Green, Berlin: Walter De Gruyter (2008), 19.

[7] Antonio Baruffa, *The Catacombs of St Callixtus: History - Archaeology - Faith,* Translated by William Purdy, Vatican City: L.E.V. (1993), 28. For more on this, see Emerson Howland Swift, *Roman Sources of Christian Art*, New York: Columbia University Press (1951), 52.

[8] John Bodel, "From *Columbaria* to Catacombs: Collective Burial in Pagan and Christian Rome," In *Commemorating the Dead: Texts and Artifacts in Context: Studies of Roman, Jewish and Christian Burials,* Edited by Laurie Brink and Deborah A. Green. Berlin: Walter De Gruyter (2008), 185.

the archeological evidence of recently discovered catacombs further invalidates Bosio and de Rossi's assumption.[9] Mixed burial in the catacombs opens not only the possibility for catacombs to house the tombs of Christians, polytheists, or some combination of both but it also indicates a greater interaction between polytheists and Christians.[10] With burial type much less certain, the need arises for a more nuanced interpretation of Catacomb frescoes based upon something other than burial context.

As Levente Nagy argues, the Hercules Cycle of Via Latina's Cubiculum N has become the most debated mythological icon in the history of art, for although Hercules appears often in Roman funerary art, he does not appear in any other catacomb.[11] Despite its ambiguous interpretation, the Hercules cycle presents commonly depicted eschatological themes, a term I am using here to refer to death, the afterlife, and salvation of the soul. It features the juxtaposition of death and deliverance by recounting the myth of Alcestis and two of Hercules' labors on Cubiculum N's two *arcosolia* or arched niches where sarcophagi would be placed (Figures 2 and 3).[12] The lunette in the left-hand *arcosolium* shows Admetus on his deathbed, with Alcestis by his side, arms extended as if in supplication for the life of her husband (Figure 4). To the left of

[9] Borg, *Crisis and Ambition*, 74. For more information, see Johnson, "Pagan-Christian Burial Practices."
[10] Stevenson, *The Catacombs*, 14.
[11] Levente Nagy, "Myth and Salvation in the Fourth Century: Representations of Hercules in Christian Contexts," In *Pagans and Christians in Late Antique Rome: Conflict, Competition, and Coexistence*, Edited by Michele Renee Salzman, Marianne Saghy, and Rita Lizzi Testa, New York: Cambridge University Press (2016) 378.
[12] Wright, "Pagan Theology," 69-70.

this is a panel depicting Hercules and Minerva clasping hands (Figure 5), referencing the hero's choice of virtue over vice. To the right is a painting of Hercules standing victorious over a slain enemy, perhaps Cacus or Death itself (Figure 5).[13] The lunette of the right-hand *arcosolium* features a panel depicting Hercules rescuing Alcestis from the underworld and reuniting her with Admetus (Figure 6). The *arcosolium*'s two other panels depict Hercules killing the Hydra of Lerna (Figure 7) and stealing the golden apples of the Hesperides (Figure 8). As the lunettes illustrate, the main focus of the Hercules cycle is Hercules' salvific role in the myth of Alcestis, with his deeds serving only to emphasize his power of deliverance from grief and death.

In the debate over the Hercules Cycle, scholars have approached their interpretations by assuming the religious convictions of the individuals who commissioned the wall-painting. Frederick Bargebuhr, for example, argues that Cubiculum N's patrons were Christians who practiced some degree of religious syncretism.[14] He draws his conclusion from the observation that all other pagan catacombs lack biblical motifs yet Via Latina abounds in both Classical and Christian icons. Scholars who posit that the patrons hold at least some Christian beliefs conclude as Bargebuhr does that Hercules serves as a type of Christ-figure whose salvation of Alcestis reflects the soul's return to life through salvation.[15] Based upon this interpretation, the Hercules Cycle assumes primary, allegorical Christian significance with the mythological events

[13] Nagy, "Myth and Salvation," 379.
[14] Frederick P. Bargebuhr, *The Paintings of the 'New' Catacomb of the Via Latina and the Struggle of Christianity against Paganism,* Edited by Joachim Utz. Heidelberg (1991) 35; 57.
[15] Bargebuhr, *The Paintings of ...*, 58.

serving only as repurposed vehicles of Christian doctrine. Opposing scholars such as Nicola Denzey Lewis assume the lack of overtly biblical motifs in Cubiculum N suggests its inhabitants were polytheists and that the Hercules cycle would have no obvert or implied significance to early Christians.[16] Scholars such as David Wright who agree with Denzey Lewis conclude that the Hercules cycle ought to be interpreted literally as a statement of pagan eschatology.[17] However, the ambiguity of the Via Latina burial type casts doubt upon the interpretative claims of scholars on both sides of the debate. The fundamental flaw with approaching iconographic interpretation through interpretation of the religious burial context is that there is no confirmable evidence of the type of burial in Cubiculum N or indeed any part of Via Latina. Levente Nagy indicates in his work that even if the religion of the patrons could be confirmed, the degree of involvement they had in the design of the scenes is still unknown.[18] It is impossible to account for the creative expression exercised by the artist — perhaps he crafted the cycle using Hercules to represent key eschatological themes less out of religious conviction and more out of a desire to produce a unique piece. Unless new archaeological evidence can shed greater light on the mystery of Via Latina's Cubiculum N, the Hercules cycle cannot be properly interpreted through an assessment of burial type or the religious background of the commissioners.

---

[16] Nicola Denzey Lewis, "Reinterpreting "Pagans" and "Christians" from Rome's Late Antique Mortuary Evidence," In *Pagans and Christians in Late Antique Rome: Conflict, Competition, and Coexistence,* Edited by Michele Renee Salzman, Marianne Saghy, and Rita Lizzi Testa, New York: Cambridge University Press (2016), 282.
[17] Wright, "Pagan Theology," 71.
[18] Nagy, "Myth and Salvation," 380.

Since it is impossible to enter the mind of the artist and his patrons to ascertain the Hercules cycle's intended significance, one might instead approach the significance of the scenes as they would have been seen through the eyes of the viewer. Tomb visitation was commonplace both above ground and in the catacombs—a fact that those buried there would have had in mind when commissioning their wall-paintings.[19] Catacomb frescoes were created not just to commemorate the dead but also to be seen by the living: they reveal the important themes of those buried in the catacombs they adorn and the invite the countless mourners who will later pass them by to engage with them. As Andre Grabar posits in his study of Christian iconography, catacomb paintings are not meant to be narratives in and of themselves but rather are crafted to suggest a narrative on which the viewer would reflect.[20] Like other paintings in Roman Impressionist style, catacomb art tends towards the abstract and figurative rather than the material and literal. The style of the wall-paintings would naturally lead visitors into a conversation by leaving interpretative room for the mourners to engage with the portrayed narrative along their own lines of thought. Because catacomb paintings possess a unique pictorial language that draws the viewer into the narrative, considering only the perspective of the commissioner fails to do justice to the complexity of this art form. The Hercules cycle clearly suggests an eschatological narrative, for it depicts death, the underworld, and an immortal deliverer who

[19] Gregory H. Snyder, "Pictures in Dialogue: A Viewer-Centered Approach to the Hypogeum of *Via Dino Compagni," Journal of Early Christian Studies* 13, no. 3 (2005), 357.
[20] Andre Grabar, *Christian Iconography: A Study of Its Origins,* Princeton: Princeton University Press (1980), 32.

overcomes death — the same elements that unite Hercules and Christ. As David Aune considers in his study of Heracles imagery in Christology, Christ and Hercules fulfill similar roles in opposing religious traditions.[21] Even early Christians such as Justin Martyr argue for the parallels between Christ and Hercules, who were both familiar with suffering, experienced in virtue, and sovereign over death.[22] Whether those who commissioned the Hercules cycle had in mind to portray Christian, polytheistic, or some synthetic eschatology, the result is a set of images that capture the major parallel themes between Judeo-Christian and Greco-Roman eschatology. The Hercules cycle invites Christians and pagans alike to reflect upon death and the afterlife and consider the themes of deliverance and resurrection depicted by the divine power of the great Roman hero.

The layout of the cubicula within the Via Latina further catacomb supports the interpretation of the Hercules Cycle as part of an eschatological conversation that involves Christians and pagans (Figure 10). As visitors passed through the catacomb, they would have come across the Hercules Cycle in Cubiculum N and then a parallel biblical narrative in Cubiculum O (Figure 11). Both rooms depict death, salvation, and resurrection, with Cubiculum O portraying images of Moses parting the Red Sea (Figure 12) and Christ's resurrection of

[21] David E. Aune, "Heracles and Christ: Heracles Imagery in the Christology of Early Christianity," In *Greeks, Romans, and Christians: Essays in Honor of Abraham J. Malherbe*, Edited by David L. Balch et al., Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press (1995), 3.
[22] Justin Martyr, *Justin the Martyr: Dialogue with Trypho,* Translated by Thomas B. Falls et al., Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press (2003), 69.3.

Lazarus (Figure 13) while Cubiculum N features Hercules' labors and Hercules' resurrection of Alcestis. As Beverly Berg has analyzed in her scholarship, the style of the mythological figures in Cubiculum N matches the style of the Judeo-Christian figures in Cubiculum O, a fact that provides a strong indication they came from the same workshop of artists.[23] Both the stylistic similarities and the parallel themes prompt catacomb visitors quite naturally to view both Christ's deliverance of Lazarus and Hercules' salvation of Alcestis as similar events rather than as contradictory religious doctrines.[24] Furthermore, the depiction of Christ bearing a wand while raising Lazarus from the dead puts the Classical tradition of Cubiculum N in conversation directly with the Christian tradition of Cubiculum O.[25] Although Jesus is never described with a wand in Scripture or patristic literature, the scene in Cubiculum O depicts Christ extending a

[23] For a more detailed discussion of the stylistic similarity between Cubicula N and O, see Beverly Berg, "Alcestis and Hercules in the Catacomb of Via Latina," *Vigiliae Christianae* 48, no. 3 (1994), 229.

[24] Snyder, "Pictures in Dialogue," 350. Although his research focuses primarily on the Hypogeum of Via Dino Compagni, he develops some compelling points about the nature of the narratives of catacomb wall paintings.

[25] The combination of pagan and Christian images can be seen even in the Catacomb of Callixtus, which is the earliest discovered catacomb and contains only Christian burials. Fabrizio Mancinelli argues at Mancinelli, *Catacombs and Basilicas*, 116 that the figure of Orpheus was altered to allude to Christian themes in addition to the pagan myth. Instead of surrounding the Orpheus figure with wild beasts, the panel depicts him surrounded by sheep and doves, suggesting perhaps the blessed souls in a pastoral paradise, as Janet Huskinson argues in "Some Pagan Mythological Figures and Their Significance in Early Christian Art," *Papers of the British School at Rome* 42 (1974), 70. In catacombs like Callixtus where the burial type is known, images such as the transformed Orpheus are easily identified as transformed pagan images serving Christian purposes. For more on the Orpheus figure, see Paul Corby Finney, *The Invisible God: The Earliest Christians on Art,* New York: Oxford University Press (1997), 186-187.

wand from Himself towards the forehead of the deceased Lazarus.[26] The representation of Christ with a wand conjures up tales from Classical mythology, such as Homer's account of Circe turning men into pigs using a wand.[27] Giving Jesus the instrument of a magician to depict His miraculous power over death creates continuity between earlier mythological traditions and Lazarus' resurrection.[28] In his research, Gyorgy Heidel concludes that the addition of the pagan wand serves to depict the theological significance of the crucifixion — Christ's supreme power over physical things — in images that a Roman audience could understand.[29] Regardless of the reason, this deviation

---

[26] Gyorgy Heidl, "Early Christian Imagery of the *'virga virtutis'* and Ambrose's Theology of Sacraments," *Studia Patristica*, Proc. of Sixteenth International Conference on Patristic Studies, Oxford, Ed. Allen Brent and Markus Vinzent, Vol. 59, Leuven: Peeters (2013) 69. For more on the scene, see L.V. Rutgers *Subterranean Rome: In Search of the Roots of Christianity in the Catacombs of the Eternal City*. Leuven: Peeters, 2000, especially the descriptions of Lazarus' Resurrection in the Catacombs of Priscilla and Callixtus on pp. 124; 136-7, and Lee M. Jefferson's "Perspectives on the Nude Youth in Fourth-Century Sarcophagi Representations of the Raising of Lazarus" *Studia Patristica*, Proc. of Sixteenth International Conference on Patristic Studies, Oxford. Edited by Allen Brent and Markus Vinzent, Vol. 59, Leuven: Peeters (2013).

[27] Homer, *The Odyssey with an English Translation by A.T. Murray, PH.D. in Two Volumes,* Translated by A.T. Murray, Cambridge, MA., Harvard University Press, (1919), 10. 237-240: "αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ δῶκέν τε καὶ ἔκπιον, αὐτίκ᾽ ἔπειτα / ῥάβδῳ πεπληγυῖα κατὰ συφεοῖσιν ἐέργνυ. / οἱ δὲ συῶν μὲν ἔχον κεφαλὰς φωνήν τε τρίχας τε / καὶ δέμας, αὐτὰρ νοῦς ἦν ἔμπεδος, ὡς τὸ πάρος περ."

[28] Jefferson, "Perspectives on the Nude Youth," 77. See Jensen, *Understanding Early Christian Art*, 95-97 for a discussion of how Jesus' depiction as a magician serves a narrative purpose for the early church. Besides the scroll, Thomas Matthews argues that the wand is the most consistent object that appears alongside Christ in early Christian art in *The Clash of the Gods: A Reinterpretation of Early Christian Art*. Princeton N.J.: Princeton University Press (1995), 54.

[29] Although Heidel suggests that the discrepancy of the wand can be solved if the wand is meant only to symbolize metaphorical power rather than magic, if the depiction is purely symbolic, then why does it appear only in miracle scenes and not in any other scene where Jesus would

from the literal Biblical narrative furthers the symbolic, as opposed to literal, nature of catacomb art and reinforces a harmony between Classical and Judeo-Christian narratives. In the same way that Justin Martyr claims that Hercules expresses certain qualities of Christ, so pagans would have had reason to associate Christ bearing a wand with their own mythological heroes. This alteration of the strict biblical narrative harmonizes Classical and Christian tradition to depict a narrative that would speak to the eschatological traditions of Greco-Roman legend and Christian teaching. Since Christ in Cubiculum O thematically and stylistically parallels Hercules in Cubiculum N, then it seems plausible that the eschatological themes of the Hercules Cycle would also be accessible to pagans and Christians alike.

The Hercules Cycle ought not be constrained into any previously offered one-dimensional interpretation, for it offered general eschatological themes that would have taken on different meanings to individual viewers. It should be viewed instead as a flexible prompt that would invite dialogue and then become a placeholder for the viewer's individual beliefs. This is not to say that there is no inherent or intended meaning within the cycle but rather that this is of secondary value, for it is not definitively preserved within the images. The late antique Romans who viewed the Hercules Cycle would have found in it

---

possess equal power and authority? He argues instead that Jesus' wand exists to allude to the salvific power of the cross and bases his argument on the fact that the wand appears suddenly in the second century and disappears rapidly during the fifth and sixth centuries when images of the crucifixion emerge for the first time (see Heidel, *Early Christian Imagery*, 70). Although this could be a pure coincidence, Heidel concludes convincingly that the image of the wand prefigures the power of the cross, which could not yet be depicted because of its controversial nature (see Heidel, *Early Christian Imagery*, 71).

a connection to their own eschatological beliefs whether they were polytheists, Christians, Jews, or religious syncretists. Common iconographic choices within catacomb paintings, such as the depiction of Jonah in the form of Endymion made familiar through Pompeian wall-paintings and Roman funerary art, would have habituated viewers to see harmony between the two traditions.[30] Christian viewers confronted with the Hercules cycle would naturally assign some degree of Christian significance to the figure of the great hero since the series emphasizes the parallels that exist between Christ and Hercules. Jas Elsner argues that the Hercules Cycle invites the viewer to perform "exegesis on Christian interpretative lines for images which are not Christian," for although it uses mythological scenes, it presents themes of resurrection and virtue that

[30] Although this paper does not extensively discuss the figures of Jonah, this depiction of Jonah is consistent across various catacombs both in wall-paintings and on sarcophagi. For more examples, see Matthews, *The Clash of the Gods*, 32-33; David Balch, "From Endymion in Roman Domus to Jonah in Christian Catacombs: From Houses of the Living to Houses for the Dead. Iconography and Religion in Transition." In *Commemorating the Dead: Texts and Artifacts in Context: Studies of Roman, Jewish and Christian Burials,* Edited by Laurie Brink and Deborah A. Green, Berlin: Walter De Gruyter, 2008, 273-302, especially 278, and Michael Koortbojian, *Myth, Meaning and Memory on Roman Sarcophagi*, Berkeley: University of California Press (1995), 63-84. For comparison, consider the depiction of Endymion and Selene on the west wall of Room F in the House of Pinarius Cerialis in Pompeii, discussed in Roger Ling's *Roman Painting,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009, 84. This depiction of Endymion represents the typical Roman motif of the Greek mythological figure, as argued in Koortbojian, *Myth, Meaning, and Memory*, 68. If any doubt remains about Jonah's connection to Endymion, it should be noted that the peculiar posture in which both figures recline has been well-established by Margaret Jensen and others as the method for depicting the Greek mythological hero and is not used for any other figures (see Jensen, *Understanding Early Christian Art*, 173).

resonate with Christian doctrine.[31] On the same grounds, the wand in the Lazarus Cycle invites pagans to connect the figure of Christ with their own eschatological tradition. Regardless of the convictions of those chosen to be buried in Cubiculum N, the images would have possessed similar theological undertones to both Christian and polytheistic viewers. Ultimately, the Hercules cycle indicates that the late antique Roman could have identified parallel truth in both Christian and mythological sources because catacomb art presented them as part of the same conversation.[32]

Without becoming embroiled in the debate of the burial type in Via Latina, it is possible to craft a compelling—and indeed more defensible—interpretation of the catacomb's most controversial images by considering what Levente Nagy calls "the complexity of the late antique gaze."[33] Although Jas Elsner's conclusions focus more on how Christians would perform exegesis on pagan images, he makes a profound point about how the images within Via Latina can take on multiple realities to promote a complex dialogue: "The Via Latina catacomb does not point to an arbitrary syncretism of themes but to a highly complex exegetic parallelism, where salvific cycles of images from different religious contexts were placed side by side deliberately."[34] Because similar Roman artistic techniques unify the images of the Hercules cycle with the biblical motifs of the adjoining cubiculum, both narratives become part of the same conversation. Whether or not Hercules

[31] Jas Elsner, *Art and the Roman Viewer: The Transformation of Art from the Pagan World to Christianity,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (1997), 275.
[32] Nagy, *Myth and Salvation*, 392.
[33] Nagy, *Myth and Salvation*, 393.
[34] Elsner, *Art and the Roman Viewer*, 272.

was meant to have overt Christian significance in cubiculum N, he certainly would have possessed some theological undertones to Christian viewers just as Christ raising Lazarus would have had theological undertones to pagans. The Hercules Cycle suggests a greater harmony between competing religious and cultural forces — the Christians and their polytheistic neighbors — which tend to be reduced to mutually exclusive and combative sub-groups. In addition to revealing the power of catacomb wall-paintings to engage the individual viewer in a dialogue, the Hercules cycle also provides a window into the culture of late antique Rome and the heritages which would come to shape all of Western civilization. Just as current archaeological evidence shows that pagans and Christians were united in burial within some catacombs, so too this new interpretation of the Hercules cycle suggests that they were united in life, seeking answers to the same questions about eschatology.

Katie Hillery
Hillsdale College
khillery@hillsdale.edu

Appendix

Figure 1: Frescoes within Via Latina (after Antonio Ferrua, *The Unknown Catacomb,* figure 26)

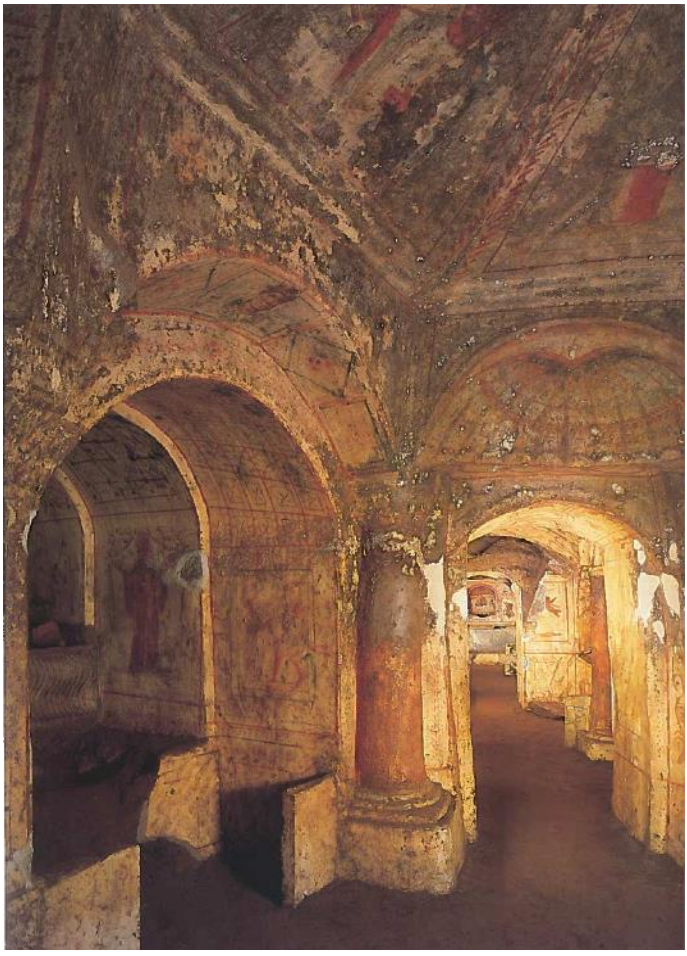

Figure 2: Left Hand Arcosolium, Cubiculum N, Via Latina (after Antonio Ferrua, *The Unknown Catacomb,* figure 124)

Figure 3: Right Hand Arcosolium, Cubiculum N, Via Latina (after Antonio Ferrua, *The Unknown Catacomb*, figure 127).

Figure 4: Admetus reclines on his death bed, with Alcestis and his family leaning over him (after Antonio Ferrua, *The Unknown Catacomb,* figure 124)

Figure 5: The Choice of Heracles, Cubiculum N, Via Latina (after Antonio Ferrua, *The Unknown Catacomb,* figure 125)

Figure 6: Hercules standing victorious over a slain enemy, perhaps Cacus, Antaeus, Alcyoneus, or Death itself, Cubiculum N, Via Latina (after Antonio Ferrua, *The Unknown Catacomb,* figure 126).

Figure 7: Hercules, next to Cerberus, leading Alcestis out of the mouth of Hell towards Admetus, Cubiculum N, Via Latina (after Antonio Ferrua, *The Unknown Catacomb,* figure 128)

Figure 8: Hercules Killing the Hydra, Cubiculum N, Via Latina (after Antonio Ferrua, *The Unknown Catacomb,* figure 129)

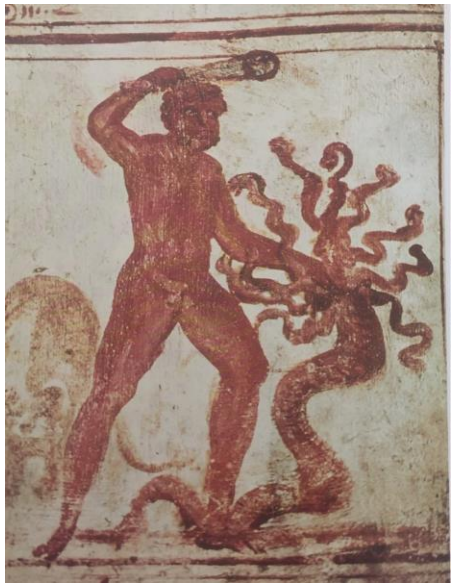

Figure 9: Hercules stealing the golden apples of Hesperides, Cubiculum N, Via Latina (after Antonio Ferrua, *The Unknown Catacomb,* figure 130)

Figure 10: Plan of the Catacomb (after Antonio Ferrua, *The Unknown Catacomb,* figure 4)

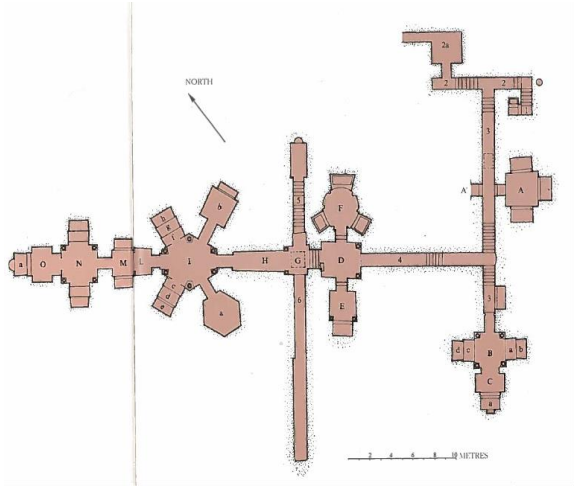

Figure 11: Partial View into Cubiculum O, Via Latina (after Antonio Ferrua, The Unknown Catacomb, figure 141).

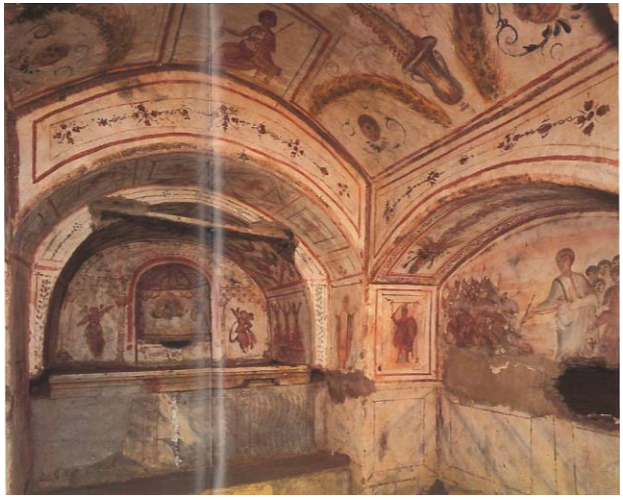

Figure 12: Moses parting the Red Sea, Cubiculum O, Via Latina (after Antonio Ferrua, *The Unknown Catacomb,* figure 134)

Figure 13: The Resurrection of Lazarus, Cubiculum O, Via Latina (after Antonio Ferrua, *The Unknown Catacomb,* figure 137)

Figure 14: Jonah reclining under a pergola, Cubiculum C, Via Latina (after Antonio Ferrua, *The Unknown Catacomb,* figure 73)

Works Cited

Ahlqvist, Agneta. "'What You Had to Remember': Aspects on Early Christian Catacomb-painting." In *Gender, Cult, and Culture in the Ancient World from Mycenae to Byzantium*. Proceedings of Second Nordic Symposium on Gender and Women's History in Antiquity, Helsinki. Edited by Agneta Stromberg and Lena Larsson Loven. Savedalen: Paul Anstroms Forlag, 2003, 116-39.

Aune, David E. "Heracles and Christ: Heracles Imagery in the Christology of Early Christianity." In *Greeks, Romans, and Christians: Essays in Honor of Abraham J. Malherbe*, Edited by David L. Balch et al.. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1990, 3-19.

Balch, David. "From Endymion in Roman Domus to Jonah in Christian Catacombs: From Houses of the Living to Houses for the Dead. Iconography and Religion in Transition." In *Commemorating the Dead: Texts and Artifacts in Context: Studies of Roman, Jewish and Christian Burials.* Edited by Laurie Brink and Deborah A. Green. Berlin: Walter De Gruyter, 2008, 273-302.

Bargebuhr, Frederick P. *The Paintings of the 'new' Catacomb of the Via Latina and the Struggle of Christianity against Paganism.* Edited by Joachim Utz. Heidelberg: Winter, 1991.

Baruffa, Antonio. *The Catacombs of St Callixtus: History - Archaeology - Faith*. Translated by William Purdy. Vatican City: L.E.V., 1993.

Berg, Beverly. "Alcestis and Hercules in the Catacomb of Via Latina." *Vigiliae Christianae* 48, no. 3 (1994) 219-34.

Bodel, John. "From *Columbaria* to Catacombs: Collective Burial in Pagan and Christian Rome." In *Commemorating the Dead: Texts and Artifacts in Context: Studies of Roman, Jewish and Christian Burials*. Edited by Laurie Brink and Deborah A. Green. Berlin: Walter De Gruyter, 2008, 177-242.

Borg, Barbara E. *Crisis and Ambition: Tombs and Burial Customs in Third-century CE Rome*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Carletti, Sandro. *Guide to the Catacombs of Priscilla*. Translated by Alice Mulhern. Vatican City: Pontifical Commission for Sacred Archaeology, 2005.

Castelli, Emanuel. "The Symbols of Anchor and Fish in the Most Ancient Parts of the Catacomb of Priscilla: Evidence and Questions." *Studia Patristica*. Proceedings of Sixteenth International Conference on Patristic Studies, Oxford. Edited by Allen Brent and Markus Vinzent. Vol. 59. Leuven: Peeters, 2013, 11-20.

Cutts, Edward L. "Traditions of Christian Art: The Catacomb Paintings." *The Art Journal (1875-1887)* 2 (1876) 86-90.

Denzey Lewis, Nicola. "Reinterpreting "Pagans" and "Christians" from Rome's Late Antique Mortuary Evidence." In *Pagans and Christians in Late Antique Rome: Conflict, Competition, and Coexistence*. Edited by Michele Renee Salzman, Marianne Saghy, and Rita Lizzi Testa. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016, 273-90.

Elsner, Jas. *Art and the Roman Viewer: The Transformation of Art from the Pagan World to Christianity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

Elsner, Jas. "Inventing Christian Rome: The Role of Early Christian Art." In *Rome the Cosmopolis*. Edited by Catharine Edwards and Greg Woolf. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, 71-99.

Enz Finken, Kathleen. *The Programmatic Sources of the Earliest Christian Art: Salvation History in the Catacomb of Callistus* (Dissertation, Rutgers University, 1998).

Ferrua, Antonio. *The Unknown Catacomb: A Unique Discovery of Early Christian Art*. New Lanark: Geddes & Grosset, 1991.

Finney, Paul Corby. *The Invisible God: The Earliest Christians on Art*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Goodenough, Erwin R. "Catacomb Art." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 81, no. 2 (1962) 113-42.

Gough, Michael. *The Origins of Christian Art*. New York: Praeger, 1973.

Grabar, Andre. *Christian Iconography: A Study of Its Origins.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980.

Hardy, Edward R. "The First Apology of Justin, the Martyr." *Early Christian Fathers Vol. I.* Edited by Cyril Charles Richardson et al. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006, 225–289.

Heid, Stefan. "The Romanness of Roman Christianity." In *A Companion to Roman Religion*. Edited by Jörg Rüpke. Malden: Blackwell, 2007. 406-26.

Heidl, Gyorgy. "Early Christian Imagery of the *'virga virtutis'* and Ambrose's Theology of Sacraments." *Studia Patristica*. Proceedings of Sixteenth International Conference on Patristic Studies, Oxford. Edited by Allen Brent and Markus Vinzent. Vol. 59. Leuven: Peeters, 2013, 69-76.

Hirschfeld, Amy K. "An Overview of the Intellectual History of Catacomb Archaeology." In *Commemorating the Dead: Texts and Artifacts in Context: Studies of Roman, Jewish and Christian Burials.* Edited by Laurie Brink and Deborah A. Green. Berlin: Walter De Gruyter, 2008, 11-38.

Homer. *The Odyssey with an English Translation by A.T. Murray, PH.D. in Two Volumes.* Translated by A.T. Murray. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, (1919).

Huskinson, Janet. "Some Pagan Mythological Figures and Their Significance in Early Christian Art." *Papers of the British School at Rome* 42 (1974) 68-97.

Jefferson, Lee M. "Perspectives on the Nude Youth in Fourth-Century Sarcophagi Representations of the Raising of Lazarus." *Studia Patristica*. Proceedings of Sixteenth International Conference on Patristic Studies, Oxford. Edited by Allen Brent and Markus Vinzent. Vol. 59. Leuven: Peeters, 2013, 77-88.

Jensen, Robin Margaret. *Understanding Early Christian Art.* New York: Routledge, 2000.

Johnson, Mark J. "Pagan-Christian Burial Practices of the Fourth Century: Shared Tombs?" *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 5, no. 1 (1997) 37-59.

Justin Martyr. *Justin the Martyr: Dialogue with Trypho*. Translated by Thomas B. Falls, et al. Washington D.C., Catholic University of America Press, 2003.

Koortbojian, Michael. *Myth, Meaning and Memory on Roman Sarcophagi*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995.

Kristensen, Troels Myrup. *Making and Breaking the Gods: Christian Responses to Pagan Sculpture in Late Antiquity*. Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2013.

Lamberton, Clark D. "The Development of Christian Symbolism as Illustrated in Roman Catacomb Painting." *American Journal of Archaeology* 15, no. 4 (1911) 507-22.

Ling, Roger. *Roman Painting*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Lowden, John. *Early Christian & Byzantine Art.* London: Phaidon, 1997.

Mancinelli, Fabrizio. *Catacombs and Basilicas: The Early Christians in Rome*. Firenze: Scala, 1981.

Matthews, Thomas F. *The Clash of the Gods: A Reinterpretation of Early Christian Art*. Princeton N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995.

Nagy, Levente. "Myth and Salvation in the Fourth Century: Representations of Hercules in Christian Contexts." In *Pagans and Christians in Late Antique Rome: Conflict, Competition, and Coexistence*. Edited by Michele Renee Salzman, Marianne Saghy, and Rita Lizzi Testa. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016, 377-98.

Nasrallah, Laura Salah. *Christian Responses to Roman Art and Architecture: The Second-century Church amid the Spaces of Empire.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Nicolai, Vincenzo Fiocchi, Fabrizio Bisconti, and Danilo Mazzoleni. *The Christian Catacombs of Rome: History, Decoration, Inscriptions*. Translated by Cristina Carlo-Stella and Lori-Ann Touchette. 3rd edition. Regensburg: Schnell & Steiner, 2009.

Richter, J. P. "Early Christian Art in the Roman Catacombs." *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 6, no. 22 (1905) 286-93.

Ross Barker, Ethel. "The Symbolism of Certain Catacomb Frescoes." *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 24, no. 127 (1913) 43-50.

Rutgers, Leonard Victor. *Subterranean Rome: In Search of the Roots of Christianity in the Catacombs of the Eternal City*. Leuven: Peeters, 2000.

Snyder, H. Gregory. "Pictures in Dialogue: A Viewer-Centered Approach to the Hypogeum of *Via Dino Compagni*." *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 13, no. 3 (2005) 349-86.

Stevenson, J. *The Catacombs: Rediscovered Monuments of Early Christianity.* London: Thames and Hudson, 1978.

Sutherland, Reita J. "Prayer and Piety: The *Orans*-Figure in the Christian Catacombs of Rome." Thesis, University of Ottawa, 2013.

Swift, Emerson Howland. *Roman Sources of Christian Art*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1951.

Tronzo, William. *The Via Latina Catacomb: Imitation and Discontinuity in Fourth-century Roman Painting*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press for the College Art Association of America, 1986.

Weitzmann, Kurt. "The Survival of Mythological Representations in Early Christian and Byzantine Art and Their Impact on Christian Iconography." *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 14, 1960.

Wright, David H. "Pagan Theology in the Via Latina Catacomb." *Proceedings of Annual Byzantine Studies Conference* 9, 1983, 69-71.