

Freedmen and Decurions: Epitaphs and Social History in Imperial Italy*

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I INTRODUCTION

Hundreds of thousands of inscriptions, mostly epitaphs, have been preserved from the Roman Empire, and this material offers the ancient historian a rare opportunity to move beyond the anecdotal and, it would seem, study Roman social history using proper statistical methods. In principle, the funerary inscriptions ought to be able to give us an idea of the social make-up of important sections of the Roman population, i.e. those who could afford epigraphic commemoration. However, it has long been noted that these documents in many respects present a very peculiar profile of the Roman population. The age patterns indicated by the epitaphs are quite unrealistic. There are too many males in relation to females, as well as a marked preponderance of children over parents.¹ These features alone warn against literal readings of the material, which is unlikely to present a direct reflection of socio-demographic structures and developments. But perhaps the most striking aspect relates to social and legal status, since the large majority of Romans commemorated in stone appear to come from a servile background.

In the city of Rome it has been estimated that at least three quarters of those commemorated in funerary inscriptions were former slaves, while most of the freeborn appear to be first generation *ingenui*.² In the imperial port of Ostia, closely linked to the capital, a sample of funerary inscriptions suggests a very similar picture with freedmen making up no less than 75 per cent of the individuals in the material, the remaining quarter largely consisting of their immediate relatives and descendants. In Puteoli D'Arms estimated that only one in sixteen in the epigraphic record was freeborn.³ In Canosa the proportion of

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Inscriptions are referred to using the following abbreviations and conventions:

Roman numerals followed by Arabic numbers refer to *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*.

PN followed by letters refers to D'Ambrosio and De Caro, see n. 36.

Numbers followed by ES/OS/EN refer to *Un impegno per Pompei*, see n. 36.

EE = *Ephemeris Epigraphica* 8 (1899).

AE = *Année Epigraphique*.

NSc = *Notizie degli Scavi di Antichità*.

MRG = *Miscellanea Greca e Romana* 13 (1988).

¹ e.g. K. Hopkins, 'On the probable age structure of the Roman population', *Population Studies* 20 (1966–67), 245–64; idem, 'Graveyards for historians', in F. Hinard (ed.), *La Mort, les morts et l'au-delà dans le monde romain* (1987), 113–26; M. Clauss, 'Probleme der Lebensalterstatistiken aufgrund römischer Grabinschriften', *Chiron* 3 (1973), 395–417; G. Pereira Menaut, 'Probleme der globalen Betrachtung der römischen Inschriften', *Bonner Jahrbücher* 175 (1975), 141–64; W. Suder, 'L'Utilizzazione delle iscrizioni sepolchrali romane nelle ricerche demografiche', *Rivista Storica di Antichità* 5 (1975), 217–28; H. Wolff, 'Zum Erkenntniswert von Namenstatistiken für die römische Bürgerrechtspolitik der Kaiserzeit', in *Studien zur antiken Sozialgeschichte. Festschrift Friedrich Vittinghoff* (1980), 228–55; J. C. Mann, 'Epigraphic consciousness', *JRS* 75 (1985), 204–6; D. B. Martin, 'The construction of the ancient family: methodological considerations', *JRS* 86 (1996), 40–60; G. R. Storey and R. R. Paine, 'Latin funerary inscriptions. Another attempt at demographic analysis', in *Atti. XI Congresso Internazionale di Epigrafia Greca e Latina* (1999), I, 847–62; *idem*, 'Age at death in Roman funerary inscriptions: new samples, analyses and demographic implications', *Antiquitas* 26 (2002), 127–49.

² L. R. Taylor, 'Freedmen and freeborn in the epitaphs of Imperial Rome', *AJP* 82 (1961), 113–32.

³ J. H. D'Arms, 'Puteoli in the second century of the Roman Empire: a social and economic study', *JRS* 64 (1974), 104–24.

securely identified freedmen in the epitaphs has been calculated at 73 per cent.⁴ The Pompeian material is somewhat different in composition and date, and here we find a somewhat lower proportion of freedmen, about 58 per cent of the total.

These findings, and particularly those from the capital, caused considerable debate in the first half of the twentieth century. Frank famously claimed that the urban plebs had become 'orientalized', a suggestion which was countered by De Sanctis and others concerned with the racial origins of modern Italians.⁵ In this context the ethnic meaning of Greek cognomina also became a contested issue, and it was argued that the 'servile' background of the Roman plebs, suggested by their Greek names, might not necessarily imply eastern origins.⁶ The debate entered a new phase in 1961 when Taylor published her influential article which argued that the epigraphic findings do not reflect the actual composition of the population: the freedmen had particular reasons for commemorating themselves and their families and are therefore heavily over-represented in the funerary material. This simple point provided an important new insight, which is the realization that inscriptions are the result of individual initiatives and personal motives that may not have been uniformly shared by all members of society. For that reason the material cannot be approached as a demographic database.⁷

In recent decades there has been a growing realization that the production of inscribed stones in the Roman world represented a very specific cultural practice, which some people might embrace and others ignore. Most attention has focused on the chronological limitations of this 'habit', and attempts have been made to explain the 'rise and fall' of Roman epigraphy in broad historical terms.⁸ The arguments advanced have often been very general in their scope and application, and to further the debate we may have to engage more directly with the evidence itself, rather than with the modern concept of the 'epigraphic habit', which has taken on a life of its own within the scholarly discourse detached from the actual inscriptions.

This paper reconsiders the basic question of why people put up inscriptions and epitaphs in particular, which make up the large majority of Roman documents on stone. The answer may seem obvious — to be remembered and to commemorate — but when faced with deceptively simple questions it is important to avoid 'common sense' responses, which may be little more than unreflected projections of contemporary practices and assumptions. Methodologically any attempt at addressing the issue will also have to stay as close to the ground as possible. This study, therefore, attempts a fairly detailed study at micro-level of individual sites which provide an extensive epigraphic and archaeological record. Two sites have been chosen, Ostia and Pompeii, which complement each other chronologically, the Ostian material largely post-dating the Pompeian. Before we can

⁴ The figures are 172 to 63, cf. M. Chelotti, V. Morizio and M. Silvestrini (eds), *Le epigrafi romane di Canosa II* (1990), 256.

⁵ T. Frank, 'Race mixture in the Roman Empire', *American Historical Review* 21 (1915–16), 689–708; idem, *Economic History of Rome* (1920), 155–64; G. De Sanctis, *Rivista di Filologia* 53 (1925), 287–9, cf. 599f.; A. Calderini, *Aquileia Romana* (1930), 417.

⁶ M. L. Gordon, 'The nationality of slaves under the early Roman Empire', *JRS* 14 (1924), 93–111.

⁷ Some studies of Roman social history still equate epigraphic findings with actual social and demographic structures. Thus, it has been suggested that the Roman plebs consisted entirely of freedmen and their descendants (N. Purcell, 'Rome and the *plebs urbana*', in *Cambridge Ancient History* X (2nd edn, 1994), 657f.), and social and demographic developments in Italian towns have also been deduced directly from the epigraphic record, cf. below nn. 21–2.

⁸ S. Mrozek, 'À propos de la répartition chronologique des inscriptions latines dans le Haut-Empire', *Epigraphica* 35 (1973), 113–18; R. MacMullen, 'The epigraphic habit of the Roman Empire', *AJP* 103 (1982), 233–46; E. A. Meyer, 'Explaining the epigraphic habit in the Roman Empire: the evidence of epitaphs', *JRS* 80 (1990), 74–96; I. Morris, *Death-Ritual and Social Structure in Classical Antiquity* (1992), 167–73; G. Woolf, 'Monumental writing and the expansion of Roman society in the early Empire', *JRS* 86 (1996), 22–39. These issues are also discussed in V. Hope, *Constructing Identity: the Roman Funerary Monuments of Aquileia, Mainz and Nimes*, BAR Inter. Ser. 960 (2001).

address the question of motivation, we will first have to ask who actually put up funerary inscriptions. For that purpose Ostia provides the fullest record.

II OSTIA

The extensive funerary record from Ostia comes from two main sites, the eastern Porta Romana necropolis and the Porta Laurentina necropolis which extended south of the city.⁹ Both sites go back to the early Empire, but few monuments — or inscriptions — survive from before the middle of the first century A.D. The last burials, on the other hand, date to the fourth century A.D., when the city went into general decline. The funerary epigraphic record comprises *c.* 2,500 inscriptions, but very few remain *in situ*, these mostly in the Porta Laurentina necropolis. The exceptionally well-preserved Isola Sacra necropolis represents a separate community, serving Portus rather than Ostia.¹⁰

As noted above, the overall social composition seems to be broadly in line with that found in Rome and other Italian towns. However, these figures are generally based on total aggregates of all inscriptions or random samples taken from the entire body of evidence. Also, in dealing with funerary inscriptions we must distinguish between two types: those recording the person/s responsible for building the monument and/or the dedicatee/s, and those referring to people who had also been admitted to the tomb.¹¹ The latter ‘secondary’ burials may have comprised many humbler members of the *familia*, i.e. slaves and freedmen, and it is therefore important to clarify to what extent their inclusion may have distorted the overall profile, or, in other words, whether the ‘tomb-builders’, i.e. those primarily responsible for the Roman culture of funerary monumentalization, differed from the overall epigraphic population. At Ostia a considerable number of inscriptions can be identified as ‘dedicatory’ *tituli*, originally displayed externally on the tomb, which allows us to study the owners/dedicators of monuments separately.¹²

Since we generally lack a secure archaeological context for the inscriptions, the identification of ‘dedicatory’ epitaphs relies mainly on internal criteria: references to the monument itself or the size of the plot, provisions for heirs and others who might be entitled to burial there.¹³ Sometimes the large size of an inscription may also suggest that it was placed externally, rather than attached to an internal niche.¹⁴ The inscriptions typically contain more than one name, that of the dedicator and the dedicatee, in the nominative and the dative, respectively, and for this purpose we are primarily interested in

⁹ M. F. Squarciapino *et al.*, *Scavi di Ostia III, 1. Le necropoli repubblicane e augustee* (1958); D. Boschung, ‘Die republikanischen und frühkaiserzeitlichen Nekropolen vor den Toren Ostias’, in H. von Hesberg and P. Zanker (eds), *Römische Gräberstrassen. Selbstdarstellung — Status — Standard* (1987), 111–24; M. Heinzelmann, ‘Die Nekropolen von Ostia: zur Entwicklung der Beigabensitten vom 2. Jahrhundert v. Chr. bis in die frühe Kaiserzeit’, in *Bestattungssitte und kulturelle Identität. Grabanlagen und Grabbeigaben der frühen römischen Kaiserzeit in Italien und den Nordwest-Provinzen*, Xantener Berichte 7 (1998), 41–7; idem, *Die Nekropolen von Ostia: Untersuchungen zu den Gräberstrassen vor der Porta Romana und an der Via Laurentina* (2000); idem, ‘Les nécropoles d’Ostie: topographie, développement, architecture, structure sociale’, in J.-P. Descoeurdes (ed.), *Ostie. Port et porte de la Rome antique* (2001), 373–84.

¹⁰ G. Calza, *La Necropoli del Porto di Roma nell’Isola Sacra* (1940); H. Thylander, *Inscriptions du port d’Ostie* (1952); I. Baldassare, ‘La necropoli dell’Isola Sacra (Porto)’, in von Hesberg and Zanker, *op. cit.* (n. 9), 125–38; eadem, *Necropoli di Porto. Isola Sacra. Guida archeologica* (1996).

¹¹ cf. W. Eck, ‘Aussagefähigkeit epigraphischer Statistik und die Bestattung von Sklaven im kaiserzeitlichen Rom’, in P. Kneissl and V. Losemann (eds), *Alte Geschichte und Wissenschaftsgeschichte. Festschrift für Karl Christ zum 65. Geburtstag* (1988), 130–9.

¹² This material is presented in full in H. Mouritsen, ‘Freedmen and freeborn in the necropolis of imperial Ostia’, *ZPE* 150 (2004), 281–304.

¹³ Some ‘dedicatory’ inscriptions may not have contained these features. A study of those found *in situ* indicates that they did not feature in one out of three inscriptions, which means that a number of inscriptions are not included in our database. On the other hand, the ‘dedicatory’ inscriptions often mention a number of people with a share in the monument, and lists of names should therefore be added to our criteria, cf. Mouritsen, *op. cit.* (n. 12).

¹⁴ e.g. XIV.5002, 5091, 4810.

the dedicators, i.e. those who took the initiative to build the monuments. The distinction between freeborn and freed is central to an analysis of the social make-up of this group, and the latter will be identified on the following criteria: firstly, the pseudo-affiliation, which explicitly indicates the status, but was increasingly omitted during the Empire. Secondly, onomastic criteria, Greek cognomina having long been recognized as a valid indicator of unfree origins, as underlined by Solin's study of Greek cognomina in Rome.¹⁵ Some Latin cognomina also had a distinctly 'servile' character to them,¹⁶ and, although they do not provide proof of servile origins, the increased likelihood that the carriers were freedmen means that the criterion should be taken into consideration when assessing material statistically.¹⁷ Thirdly, familial context which may in some instances suggest unfree background, particularly the sharing of family names by spouses.

This approach produces the following results. When we look exclusively at securely identified freedmen and freeborn, 17 per cent turn out to be freeborn while 83 per cent are freed (67 to 318). Concentrating on the onomastic evidence we find that 294 of 526 cognomina (56 per cent) are Greek and 118 (22 per cent) are 'servile' Latin names, leaving 114 (22 per cent) 'neutral' Latin names. Moreover, the large majority of the freeborn owners seem to be first-generation *ingenui* as indicated by their names and *tribus* allocation.¹⁸ In many cases their relatives also carry servile names, while others are married to freedwomen or dedicate the monument jointly with freed people who were not members of their *familia*.¹⁹ The result is that virtually everybody who commissioned tombs and monuments appears to be associated with unfree birth.²⁰ Funerary monuments seem almost exclusively to have been built by freedmen and their children, which in turn suggests that the social profile of the 'owners' did not differ from the overall composition of those represented in the funerary record. It was, in other words, not a question of poorer 'secondary' burials distorting the overall profile. However, if we look at those who are explicitly mentioned as dedicatees, we find a slight but significant shift towards the freeborn. Thus, 94 (28 per cent) out of the 341 dedicatees, whose status can be securely

¹⁵ H. Solin, *Beiträge zur Kenntniss der griechischen Personennamen in Rom, Commentationes humanarum litterarum* 48 (1971); idem, 'Die Namen der orientalischen Sklaven in Rom', in *L'Onomastique latine* (1977), 205–20; idem, 'Griechische und römische Sklavennamen. Eine vergleichende Untersuchung', in H. Bellen and H. Heinen (eds), *Fünfzig Jahre Forschungen zur antiken Sklaverei an der Mainzer Akademie 1950–2000* (2001), 307–30; idem, *Die griechischen Personennamen in Rom* (2nd edn, 2003). The servile character of Greek cognomina in Ostia is strongly suggested by the fact that among securely identified freedmen who built monuments 62 per cent carried Greek names, while only 11 per cent of the freeborn in the same material did so.

¹⁶ cf. I. Kajanto, *The Latin Cognomina, Commentationes humanarum litterarum* 36 (1965); R. Duthoy, 'Cognomen est omen? Quelques jalons pour une anthropologie sociale du monde romain', in *Mélanges P. Lévêque* ii (1989), 183–205; H. Solin, *Die stadtrömischen Sklavennamen. Ein Namenbuch* I (1996).

¹⁷ They include in the present sample amongst others *Successus*, *Faustus*, *Fortunatus*, *Ianuarius*, *Restitutus*, *Optatus*, *Felix*. The servile character of these cognomina is highlighted by the fact that among securely identified freeborn Ostians in the 'dedicatory' funerary inscriptions only 9 per cent carry them while the incidence is 24 per cent among freedmen. Moreover, these statistics probably exaggerate the use of these names in the freeborn population, since the Ostian material includes many first-generation freeborn and freedmen frequently gave their children 'servile' names despite the apparent stigma attached to them.

¹⁸ The *tribus Palatina* is important as an indicator of unfree background, cf. P. Garnsey, 'Descendants of freedmen in local politics: some criteria', in B. Levick (ed.), *The Ancient Historian and his Materials: Essays in Honour of C. E. Stevens on his Seventieth Birthday* (1975), 167–80, who argued that freedmen were typically allocated to this *tribus*. In XIV.665, AE 1988, 184, 185, *NSc* 1938, 48 no. 4bis, the dedicators were themselves inscribed in the *Palatina*, while in XIV.166, 4642, 4993 their relatives were so. In XIV.346, 4632, 4042, *NSc* 1938, 48 no. 4bis the dedicators carry Greek cognomina, and in XIV.1073, 1214, 1695, 4865, AE 1988, 184, *NSc* 1938, 74 no. 46 their Latin cognomina have a distinct 'servile' character.

¹⁹ The following feature relatives who were freed or likely to have been freed: XIV.166, 209, 214, 221, 314, 346, 415, 479, 665, 707, 772, 780, 1166, 1393, 1680, 4623, 4626, 4632, 4642, 4663, 4761, 4905, 4993, 5035, 5160, 5378, *NSc* 1938, 48 no. 4bis, 52 no. 10, 63 no. 23, 74 no. 42. In XIV.358, 1074, 1119, 1608, 4874, AE 1988, 183 the dedication was made jointly with freedmen. In XIV.4761 and 4865 the dedication was made to a freed person. Cf. Mouritsen, op. cit. (n. 12), appendix 1.

²⁰ The conclusions reached by Heinzlmann, op. cit. (n. 9, 2000), differ from those presented here. They are discussed in Mouritsen, op. cit. (n. 12).

identified, are freeborn. The onomastic material concurs with this finding, since 166 (29 per cent) of the 568 cognomina are Latin names without any apparent ‘servile’ connotation. The higher proportion of freeborn among the dedicatees reflects the fact that freed dedicators included their freeborn children, who were regularly given more ‘respectable’ Latin names.

This analysis of the tomb dedications raises wider questions about the composition of Ostia’s population. Some scholars accept the epigraphic evidence as a broad profile of those financially able to purchase monuments.²¹ Thus, Heinzelmann has recently argued that freedmen were indeed as prominent in Ostian society as the epitaphs would suggest, explaining them as successful immigrants from Rome who had profited from the boom in trade and industry during the second century A.D.²² The Trimalchian scenario invoked by this model is, however, in many ways problematic. Why, we might wonder, would their patrons in Rome let go of such a valuable and capable workforce in the first place? Where did they get the initial capital from, which enabled them to set up their businesses? And, if commercial success was so easily achievable, why did no ordinary freeborn Romans emulate the freedmen’s example? Faced with these questions, it might make better sense to assume that most freedmen remained attached to their patrons, largely acted on their behalf, and relied on their continued financial support, which was mainly responsible for their relative economic success.²³ Moreover, leaving aside the issue of socio-economic logic, it would also seem that freedmen are simply too dominant in funerary epigraphy for this type of evidence to be socially representative. In the Roman epitaphs we are confronted with a world which seems to be inhabited almost entirely by ex-slaves. This extraordinary situation naturally also raises the question of what happened to their children and descendants. While many of them may themselves have been freed, that cannot have been universal. Nevertheless, very few of them were represented as builders of tombs or recorded in ‘secondary’ funerary inscriptions.

Simple logic would suggest that there must have been freeborn Romans who were able to afford monuments, but, since the funerary inscriptions tend to represent our only source on the Roman population, we generally have no means of demonstrating their existence. Ostia, however, offers a rare opportunity to look for these ‘missing’ people, providing as it does a unique alternative source material for the composition of the urban population. A considerable number of *collegia* inscriptions have come to light, containing long lists of the members of various trading associations. The *collegiati* were probably relatively

²¹ Thus, for example A. Licordari, ‘Considerazioni sull’onomastica ostiense’, in *L’Onomastique latine* (1977), 239–44, and C. Pavolini, *La vita quotidiana a Ostia* (1986), 36–46, who both assumed that the onomastic distribution of Latin and Greek cognomina directly reflected those of the population as a whole. Others have been more cautious, e.g. R. Chevallier, *Ostie antique: ville et port* (1986), 151, who noted that: ‘Est-il besoin de répéter que ce pourcentage [of freedmen in the inscriptions] ne reflète pas la composition réelle de la population ...’

²² Heinzelmann, *op. cit.* (n. 9, 2000), 112–22. It is often assumed that because Ostia’s economy was exceptional in the role played by trade and commerce, the epigraphic sources may here give a broadly realistic profile of the population. The argument overlooks the fact that the social composition found in the epigraphic material from Ostia is not exceptional but fully in line with findings from other Italian towns. We are therefore dealing with a general phenomenon which cannot be explained by specific circumstances obtaining in one particular locality. Recently, W. Jongman, ‘Slavery and the growth of Rome. The transformation of Italy in the second and first centuries BCE’, in C. Edwards and G. Woolf (eds), *Rome the Cosmopolis* (2003), 100–22, has argued along similar lines that because of Rome’s exceptional demographic structure the proportion of freedmen might have been higher here; the epigraphical sources could therefore give a relatively accurate picture of the make-up of her population. Again, the problem is that, although Rome’s population may have been exceptional, the epigraphic sources, which are supposed to reflect this, conform to a general pattern encountered throughout peninsular Italy. See also W. Scheidel, ‘Human mobility in Roman Italy, 1: the free population’, *JRS* 94 (2004), 1–26, at 18.

²³ For a general discussion of the freedmen’s economic roles see H. Mouritsen, ‘Roman freedmen in the urban economy: Pompeii in the first century A.D.’, in F. Senatore (ed.), *Pompeii fra Sorrento e Sarno* (2001), 1–27.

affluent traders and businessmen, who would have been able to afford a monument.²⁴ Therefore, comparing the *collegia* lists with the funerary record, we may be able to detect differences in the two samples which presumably relate to the same economic 'middle class'. The *collegia* lists offer much less information about each individual member, and, in order to compare like with like, we must concentrate on the purely onomastic criteria, particularly Greek cognomina which provide the strongest indicator of unfree origins. As we saw, among the people who built monuments for themselves and others, 56 per cent have Greek cognomina. The corresponding figure for the members of the *collegia* ranges from 26 to 30 per cent.²⁵ Overall the frequency of Greek names is thus roughly twice as high among dedicators of funerary monuments as among *collegia* members. This disparity indicates that there existed in Ostian society a stratum of freeborn citizens who would have been economically capable of building monuments, but who nevertheless chose not to do so. This category of Ostians therefore remained largely invisible, but its presence is also hinted at in a single, highly unusual epitaph, which was commissioned by a freedman to commemorate no less than nine freeborn *patroni*.²⁶ Together they represent the largest single group of freeborn Ostians in any epitaph, and tellingly their epigraphic commemoration was due to the initiative taken by their freedman.

This situation draws attention to the behaviour of the local curial élite, who obviously would have been financially capable of building funerary monuments for themselves and their relatives. Did they follow the pattern set by the freedmen or the one suggested for the other freeborn families? The earliest examples of élite burials in Ostia date from the late Republic and early Empire, and the archaeological evidence suggests that before the beginning of funerary monumentalization, when urns were simply interred in the ground, the élite used sumptuous burial rites and pyres as marks of social status.²⁷ The earliest surviving monument was erected for Cartilius Poplicola outside the Porta Marina in early Augustan times (*Scavi di Ostia* III), and it was followed in the early Empire by a number of imposing — but poorly preserved — monuments in the Porta Romana necropolis. Heinzelmann plausibly suggests that they may have been built by members of the curial élite, although it must be stressed that since no inscriptions have survived this remains conjectural.²⁸ Only one inscription has survived from this period, XIV.426 for C. Tuccius L.f., *duomvir*. Later we have a Flavian epitaph, XIV.409 for Cn. Sentius Cn. fil. Cn. n. Ter. Felix, but not until the final decades of the first century A.D. do funerary inscriptions for members of the council begin to appear in more substantial numbers.²⁹ Their social and

²⁴ On the *collegia* of Ostia see R. Meiggs, *Roman Ostia* (2nd edn, 1973), 311–36, at 313, who noted that, for example, the *lenuncularii* and the *codicarii* were owners of boats, not manual workers. Likewise F. M. Ausbüttel, *Untersuchungen zu den Vereinen im Westen des römischen Reiches*, FAS 11 (1982), 42–8, observed that: 'Sie waren keineswegs besitzlos, sondern verfügten über ein mehr oder weniger grosses Vermögen, um am Vereinsleben teilnehmen zu können' (47), while adding that, particularly in Rome and Ostia, the members would have been wealthier than in smaller towns.

²⁵ Among the members of the *corpus fabrum navalium* (XIV.256) 26 per cent have Greek names (89 out of 349). The corresponding figures for the *ordo corporatorum lenunculariorum tabulariorum* (XIV.250 and 251) are 29 per cent (33 of 125) and 30 per cent (77 out of 258). Among the *fabri tignuarii* (XIV.4569) the proportion of Greek names is 30 per cent (89 of 295).

²⁶ XIV.1332. The freedman Q. Manlius Q. et Mariae l. Iucundus, who had been freed jointly by Q. Manlius and his wife Maria, commemorated the following members of the two families, who all carry filiation and 'respectable' Latin cognomina: M. Marius M.f. Vol. Pius, Manlia Q.f. Crispina, Cornelia Q.f. Maxima, Q. Manlius Q.f. Pol. Crispus, Maria M.f. Marina, Q. Manlius Q.f. Pol. Crispus, C. Marius M.f. Vol. Macer, M. Marius M.f. Vol. Potitus, and T. Marius M.f. Vol. Marinus. He also included Manlia Q. et Mariae l. Faustilla, who was presumably his wife and *colliberta*.

²⁷ Heinzelmann, *op. cit.* (n. 9, 1998), and *op. cit.* (n. 9, 2000), 49f.

²⁸ Heinzelmann, *op. cit.* (n. 9, 2000), 56f. That interpretation of the monuments would fit well into our general picture of Roman burial practices, which experienced a universal boom in the construction of élite monuments during the Augustan period.

²⁹ XIV.171, 292, 314, 321, 323a, 332, 335, 341, 354, 364, 378, 409, 411, 412, 414, 415, 432, 435, 4642, 4641/4644 (cf. AE 1986, 113), 4632, 4648, 4653, 4664, 4671(?), 5376, 5378, AE 1987, 204, AE 1988, 181, 182, 183, 184, 201, 208, 209, 211.

demographic profile is peculiar, however, since many of them are quite young, still junior members of the *ordo*, *decuriones adlecti* who had not held any magistracy.³⁰ Moreover, most of them appear to have been of unfree descent, as indicated by their names, *tribus*, or family connections.³¹ Very few high-ranking decurions are represented and most of them appear to have been outsiders or to have risen from humble, often libertine backgrounds. Just a single highly prominent member of the local élite, of apparently freeborn descent, is represented, C. Nasennius C.f. Marcellus, but he was commemorated by one of his freedwomen (XIV.171).³²

These findings have prompted some scholars to see the Ostian *ordo* as entirely taken over by newcomers and social upstarts, but, as I have argued elsewhere, that model presents a number of methodological and evidential problems.³³ Thus, a comparison between the funerary record and the local *fasti* suggests the continued existence of old curial families in Ostia. The *duoviri* listed in the *fasti* reveal a social profile distinctly different from that of the decurions documented in the epitaphs. From Flavian times onwards thirty-three cognomina are documented in the *fasti*, and only one of these is Greek, M. Valerius Euphemiatus, *duovir* in A.D. 109, while in A.D. 108 another *duovir* carried the cognomen Augustalis, which might suggest an unfree background.³⁴ By contrast almost half of the decurions in the epitaphs have Greek or 'servile' Latin names.³⁵

The absence of the top élite from the funerary record from the late first century A.D. onwards is unlikely to be the result of external factors of transmission or preservation; the existence of a 'noble' necropolis, yet undiscovered, is unlikely. Topographically the possibility seems remote, and the evidence clearly suggests that the prestigious burial site was the one outside the Porta Romana. The conclusion must be that the leading families of the city, like most of the freeborn population in Ostia, deliberately chose not to build monuments for themselves during most of the imperial period, when only young and/or low-ranking decurions, often from humble backgrounds, are represented in epitaphs. In order to explain the situation in Ostia we will have to turn to Pompeii, which provides a detailed record of the crucial period before the freeborn Ostian élite all but disappeared from the necropolis.

³⁰ XIV.292, 314, 321, 341*bis*, 378, 411, 412, 414, 4642, 4632, 4664, 4671(?), 5378, AE 1987, 204, 182, 183, 184, 211. For the structure of the Ostian *ordo decurionum* see H. Mouritsen, 'The album from Canusium and the town councils of Roman Italy', *Chiron* 28 (1998), 229–54, esp. 250–4.

³¹ XIV.292, 314, 321, 332, 335, 341*bis*, 354, 378, 411, 412, 414, 415*bis*, 432, 4642, 4632, 4644, 4648, 4653, 4664, 4671(?), 5378, AE 1987, 204, AE 1988, 182, 184, 201, 209.

³² Also the *duovir* C. Granus C.f. Quir. Maturus was commemorated in a funerary inscription (XIV.364), but as Meiggs, op. cit. (n. 24), 203, suggested he may have been a provincial trader from Africa. Other *duoviri* are documented in XIV.323a, 335, 354, 415*bis*, 432, 4653, AE 1988, 181, 201, but apart from the fragmentary inscriptions XIV.323a and AE 1988, 181, there are in all cases indications of unfree family backgrounds.

³³ F. H. Wilson, 'Studies in the social and economic history of Ostia', *PBSR* 13 (1935), 41–68; Meiggs, op. cit. (n. 24), 196–211; J. H. D'Arms, 'Notes on municipal notables of imperial Ostia', *AJP* 97 (1976), 386–411. More cautiously Pavolini, op. cit. (n. 21), 33–6; sceptical, H. Mouritsen, 'Mobility and social change in Italian towns during the Principate', in H. M. Parkins (ed.), *Roman Urbanism. Beyond the Consumer City* (1998), 59–82; idem, 'Ostie imperiale. Une révolution sociale?', in Descoedres, op. cit. (n. 9), 30–5. See also S. Demougin, 'A propos des élites locales en Italie', in *L'Italie d'Auguste à Dioclétien*, Coll. École Fr. Rome 198 (1994), 353–76, at 370ff.

³⁴ L. Vidman, *Fasti Ostienses* (1982).

³⁵ XIV.314 Sex. Carminius Parthenopeus, 321 P. Celerius P.f. Pal. Amandus, 332 M. Aemilius Hilarianus, 335 L. Combarisius L.f. Pal. Vitalis, 341 M. Cornelius M.f. Pal. Valeriani Epagathianus, 378 D. Lutatius D.f. Pal. Charitonianus, 415 L. Calpurnius L.f. Vot. Satyrus, 432 Q. Veturius Firmius Felix Socrates, 4632 Cladius Venidius Eupalus, 4642 D. Domitius [-]f. Pal. Fabius Hermogenes, 4653 L. Julius Crescens, AE 1988, 182 M. Canneius Zosimianus, AE 1988, 188 M. Modius Successianus. [L. Valerius] Eutyches, 4671 is also highly likely to have been a decurion.

III POMPEII

The Pompeian material comes from two larger sites, the Porta Ercolano and the Porta Nocera necropoleis, the latter extending along the Via Nucarina, and several smaller sites outside the Porta Stabiana, the Porta Vesuvio, and the Porta di Nola.³⁶ Additionally, we have a number of individual burial sites and some stray finds of inscriptions without an archaeological context.

Pompeii has been hugely influential in shaping our perception of Roman burial practices and commemorative culture. From the first discovery of the tombs outside the Porta Ercolano in the eighteenth century, scholars have tended to see the necropolis as a focus of civic display and competition. Here a great variety of monuments and inscriptions, representing the lives and achievements of the deceased, seem to be vying for the attention of people passing by.³⁷ That impression, however, ultimately remains subjective, and the appearance of fierce funerary competition may belie a more complex reality. We will have to consider who took part in this competition, when did they do so, and with whom they competed.

Starting with the question of chronology, the use of monumental burials appears to have been first introduced to Pompeii with the arrival of the Roman colonists in 80 B.C.³⁸ From that point onwards we find a steady growth of the necropoleis, with early examples of élite burials for leading colonists such as M. Porcius (X.997) as well as examples of monumental tombs for freedmen (3, 7 OS). During the Republic, however, the overall numbers remained small, and the construction of élite monuments only really took off in Augustan-Tiberian times, when we have evidence for twenty-four monuments having been put up for members of the ruling class, culminating in the huge tomb of Eumachia in the Porta Nocera necropolis.³⁹ This burst of activity was followed by an apparent decline in the number of élite monuments. In the last forty years of Pompeii's existence only five monuments were built for members of the élite in the urban necropoleis.⁴⁰

Before discussing the implications of these findings, we must consider whether the apparent change might be due to external factors of transmission and excavation. However, there seems to be no overt bias in the archaeological material to suggest that the more recent élite monuments might have been under-recorded. While in theory such monuments might have been located in outlying areas not yet excavated, in practice all the excavated sites show a broad chronological spread from republican through to Flavian times. Thus, the necropoleis did not generally develop according to a simple linear pattern, gradually expanding along the roads leading away from the city gates. In all the Pompeian necropoleis we find late monuments in close proximity to the gates, as well as early burials

³⁶ V. Kockel, *Die Grabbauten vor dem Herkulaner Tor in Pompeji* (1983); aa.vv. *Un Impegno per Pompei. Fotopiano e documentazione della Necropoli di Porta Nocera* (1983); A. D'Ambrosio and S. De Caro, 'La necropoli di Porta Nocera. Campagna di scavo 1983', in von Hesberg and Zanker, op. cit. (n. 9), 199–228; *Pompeii oltre la vita. Nuove testimonianze dalle necropoli* (1998). For the burials of the poor in Pompeii see F. Senatore, 'Necropoli e società nell'antica Pompei: considerazioni su un sepolcreto di poveri', in F. Senatore (ed.), *Pompeii, il Vesuvio e la Penisola Sorrentina* (1999), 91–121.

³⁷ For an expression of the conventional view see e.g. S. L. Dyson, *Community and Society in Roman Italy* (1992), 147–53.

³⁸ V. Kockel, 'Im Tode gleich? Die sullanischen Kolonisten und ihr kulturelles Gewicht in Pompeii am Beispiel der Nekropolen', in von Hesberg and Zanker, op. cit. (n. 9), 183–98.

³⁹ X.996, 998, 999, 1008, 1036, 1037, 1065, 1074, 1075, *EE* 318, 330, 859, 11 ES 3, 11 OS, 17 OS, 29 OS, 4 EN, 32 EN, *NSc* 1900, 344(?), 1910, 390, 405, 407, H. Mouritsen, *Elections, Magistrates and Municipal Elite. Studies in Pompeian Epigraphy*, *Analecta Romana Instituti Danici* suppl. 15 (1988), 99 n. 400, 103 n. 426. Most likely 3 ES, *NSc* 1910, 403 and 1961, 191 no. 2, also refer to members of the élite. It is generally problematic identifying members of the local upper class in the epitaphs, since they frequently do not list the deceased's public honours, see below p. 47.

⁴⁰ X.1019, 1024, PN FN, *Cronache Pompeiane* 2 (1976), 246f., *NSc* 1910, 402.

located at a considerable distance from them.⁴¹ The space closest to the town was, in other words, not progressively filled up before monuments were built further away.⁴² We have good reason, therefore, to assume that the extant record gives a representative sample of burials from all periods.

The decline in the number of élite monuments has hitherto received little attention, although it has been suggested that it reflected the actual decline of the curial élite, economically overtaken by rich freedmen and their descendants.⁴³ Apart from the inherent improbability of this scenario, the direct equation of changes in the funerary record with socio-economic developments also raises methodological questions. It seems unlikely that the élite had somehow become so impoverished that they could no longer afford even modest monuments for themselves and therefore were forced to leave the necropoleis to their freedmen.⁴⁴ If the ‘penury-model’ is discounted, we are left with the conclusion that the local élite deliberately discontinued the practice of building funerary monuments. That might seem a surprising and perhaps even unlikely suggestion, not least considering the apparent enthusiasm with which the élite had embraced the practice earlier. However, the contrast between the two periods may have been less pronounced than the conventional image of the preceding ‘boom’ would suggest. The question is whether the custom of funerary commemoration was ever universally adopted by the Pompeian élite, and to what extent it was driven by social competition.

When looking at élite burials, one is struck by the relative rarity of self-commemoration. There are only five extant examples of leading members of society erecting their own individual monuments, or arranging for it to be done *ex testamento*.⁴⁵ In four other cases a relative arranged the burial, and in one case a freedman did so.⁴⁶ It is also striking that in half the cases the city council was directly involved in the process, donating the burial site and/or sponsoring the funeral.⁴⁷ In these instances the inscriptions usually only give the name of the deceased, although the relative who erected the monument might also be mentioned. It follows that the initiative for monumental burials generally lay not with the local grandees themselves, but with relatives or, more commonly, with the local community, as represented by the *ordo decurionum*.⁴⁸ No standard practice can be discerned, and the decision to erect monuments appears to have been taken *ad hoc*. As we saw, few nobles appear to have planned their monument in advance, and, significantly, no son is on record commemorating his parents, as one might have expected in a climate of socially ‘competitive’ burial. Instead we find spouses, parents, daughters, freedmen, and indeed the public itself responsible for monumental

⁴¹ Thus, most of the tombs on the stretch of the Via Nucerina, located in the Fondo Pacifico and Area Prelatura c. 300 and 380 m east of the Porta Nocera, are of Augustan-Tiberian date, cf. *RM* (1888), 120–49, *NSc* (1961), 189–200, i.e. from a period when there was still ample free space in the necropolis closer to the gate. Similarly, we find a small cluster of republican tombs, OS 27–31, at some distance from the other early monuments near the gate. In these, as well as other cases, it must have been a question of land ownership and the different stages by which plots became available for purchase and development.

⁴² For a study of the development of the necropoleis of the capital see H. von Hesberg, ‘Planung und Ausgestaltung der Nekropolen Roms im 2. Jh. n. Chr.’, in von Hesberg and Zanker, op. cit. (n. 9), 43–60; Ostia: Heinzelmann, op. cit. (n. 9, 2000); Isola Sacra: Baldassare, op. cit. (n. 10).

⁴³ A. Los, ‘Les fils d’affranchis dans l’Ordo Pompeianus’, in M. Cébeillac-Gervasoni (ed.), *Les élites municipales de l’Italie péninsulaire des Gracques à Néron. Actes de la table ronde de Clermont-Ferrand (28–30 novembre 1991)* (1996), 145–52.

⁴⁴ For a general critique of the late Pompeian ‘crisis’ see Mouritsen, op. cit. (n. 39); idem, ‘Order and disorder in late Pompeian politics’, in Cébeillac-Gervasoni, op. cit. (n. 43), 139–44; idem, op. cit. (n. 33). See also, A. Wallace-Hadrill, *Houses and Society in Pompeii and Herculaneum* (1996), 118–42.

⁴⁵ 11 OS, 17 OS, 4 EN, *NSc* 1900, 344, Mouritsen, op. cit. (n. 39), 103 n. 426. *NSc* 1900, 344 was found outside Pompeii at Scafati, but it is not certain whether the monument was also located there. No traces were found, and given the small scale of the inscription (0.62 by 0.23 m) it might easily have been moved.

⁴⁶ X.1036, 1037, 1074, *NSc* 1910, 407, 29 OS.

⁴⁷ X.996, 998, 1036, 1065, *EE* 318, 330, 11 ES 3, 32 EN, *NSc* 1910, 390, 403, 405, 407, *NSc* 1961, 191 no. 1.

⁴⁸ For publicly sponsored funerals see in general G. Wesch-Klein, *Funus Publicum. Eine Studie zur öffentlichen Beisetzung und Gewährung von Ehrengräbern in Rom und den Westprovinzen* (1993).

burials, giving the general impression that there was little urgency — let alone any social imperative — behind the erection of these tombs.

A study of the monuments and their inscriptions casts further doubt on the supposed need for local nobles to demonstrate their public position in death. The publicly sponsored monuments are generally prominently located but often quite modest in scale and form. Many are so-called *scholae*, relatively simple stone benches, which seem distinctly unimpressive compared to the large *tumuli* and *aedicula* tombs found in the necropoleis.⁴⁹ Likewise, the inscriptions reveal little concern with the display of status. While some nobles, such as Mammia and M. Alleius Minius, may have had their names, and titles, inscribed prominently in large letters on the back of their *scholae*, others are commemorated only in small, easily overlooked *cippi*.⁵⁰ The content of their inscriptions may also be surprisingly modest. Thus, the epitaphs for M. Porcius and M. Tullius make no reference to their titles, offices, or public munificence, which are known from other sources. Even the epitaph for Eumachia, a woman not otherwise known to shy away from self-publicity, does not mention her public priesthood.⁵¹

Altogether this heterogeneous picture does not suggest that the building of monuments was driven by any acute sense of competition. Rather they appear to have been the result of public initiatives, probably combined with familial pride and personal devotion. No universal custom can, therefore, be discerned by which all members of the élite would receive monuments or even epigraphic commemoration. Very few inscriptions include a wider range of family members; in general they feature just a single person, sometimes also including a dedicator. Only two epitaphs stand out from this rule, and in both cases the families in question are outsiders to Pompeii. The inscription put up by Tillius lists his grandfather, father, mother, and brother (17 OS). The Tillii came from Latium, where they were already important in Arpinum and Verulae, and the inscription serves to demonstrate the family's prominence prior to their arrival at Pompeii. For that reason it also included relatives who might have been long deceased; the reference to Tillius *pater* may even incorporate features from an earlier epitaph, maintaining the archaic form *duomvir* (while his son is given as *duovir*). Similarly, the inscription (X.1074) put up by Clodia A.f includes four other family members: her grandfather/father(?), father/brother(?), mother/sister-in-law(?), and husband (?). In this case the family had come from Rome, where the grandfather(?) had been a *scriba*, and the inscription reflects the dedicator's personal wish to present her entire family and its achievements to the Pompeian public, even including a unique, highly detailed description of her father/brother(?) A. Clodius Flaccus' munificence.

These exceptional cases underline the general absence of universal commemoration at Pompeii, which in turn raises the question of what happened to those who did not receive monumental burial. Presumably their urns were simply placed in the ground inside a burial site belonging to the family, or in the internal chamber of an existing monument. Thus, even when only one person is mentioned in the dedicatory inscription, the monuments are usually intended for multiple burials, as indicated by the number of niches in the internal chambers, or the existence of a burial enclosure surrounding the monument. These 'secondary' burials rarely received any epigraphic commemoration, or only a temporary

⁴⁹ X.998, EE 318. E. Pozzi, 'Exedra funeraria pompeiana fuori Porta di Nola', *Rendiconti Accademia Archeologica Napoli* 35 (1960), 175–86; A. Pellegrino, 'Considerazioni sulle tombe a "schola" di Pompei', *Antiqua* 4 (Pompei 79 XIX centenario) (1979), 110–15; Kockel, op. cit. (n. 36), 18–22.

⁵⁰ L. Sepunius Sandelianus (32 EN), M. Tullius (EE 330), M. Porcius (X.997), Cn. Melissaes Aper (X.1008), Istacidia Rufilla (X.999).

⁵¹ 11 OS. The same applies to Sepunius Sandelianus (32 EN), whose duovirate does not feature in his epitaph. Similarly, when Arellia N.f. Tertulla's husband Veius Fronto erected a monument for her (NSc 1910, 405), he did not include his own titles or even his full name. He was presumably identical with M. Stlaborius Veius Fronto, documented as *duovir, quinquennialis*, and augur A.D. 25/6 (X.806 and 896).

one.⁵² For example, in Eumachia's tomb, the chamber contained no less than eighteen niches, but the inscription only mentions Eumachia herself.⁵³ Such instances are not unique, since monuments generally contain more burials than are recorded in inscriptions.

In this context it is important to bear in mind the distinction in Roman funerary epigraphy between dedicatory inscriptions placed on monuments and funerary markers directly linked to the burial itself. The inscriptions placed on the front of a monument are not strictly funerary inscriptions in a modern sense. Rather than providing a record of the people buried in the tomb, they are public declarations of responsibility and entitlement. Very frequently, though not at Pompeii, they give the precise measurements of the plot, thus stating the dedicator's claim to ownership. They could also declare for whom the monument was erected and who was allowed to use it in the future, an important legal point. They are thus closely related to building inscriptions, which also announce who was responsible and who were the beneficiaries.

These inscriptions must be distinguished from personal funerary commemoration, which in Pompeii commonly took the characteristic form of herm-shaped stelae. The separate function and character of the two types is underlined by the fact that in a number of cases the same person appears in both. Thus, A. Veius Atticus features as the owner of 11 ES in the frontal inscription on the monument but is also commemorated on a stele placed inside the enclosure and set directly above his urn.⁵⁴ These instances demonstrate that, despite the monumental inscription on the front, there might still be a perceived need for a personalized labelling of the actual burial, although this was clearly the exception and most urns received no inscribed marker.⁵⁵

The extent and nature of the 'boom' in elite monumental burials in Augustan-Tiberian times may have to be reconsidered. Monuments were generally built *ad hoc* for individual nobles, the initiative usually being taken by the council or surviving relatives. The notion of a systematic competition in this sphere is therefore not borne out by the evidence. The overall picture remains contradictory — grand ostentation mixed with surprising displays of modesty — and even in this period we have no reason to assume that all members of the

⁵² This phenomenon is also apparent in Rome and Isola Sacra, where W. Eck has shown that only a small fraction of those buried inside the monuments received epigraphic commemoration, 'Römische Grabinschriften. Aussagekraft und Aussagefähigkeit im funéraires Kontext', in von Hesberg and Zanker, *op. cit.* (n. 9), 61–83, and *idem*, *op. cit.* (n. 11), cf. V. Hope, 'A roof over the dead: communal tombs and family structure', in R. Laurence and A. Wallace-Hadrill (eds), *Domestic Space in the Roman World: Pompeii and Beyond*, JRA Suppl. 22 (1997), 69–88. Likewise, M. Heinzelmann, 'Grabarchitektur, Bestattungsbrauch und Sozialstruktur — zur Rolle der familia', in *Römischer Bestattungsbrauch und Beigabensitten*, Palilia 8 (2001), 179–91, noted that in Ostia most burials remained anonymous apart from the early imperial *columbarium* type burials (190). Painted inscriptions placed on the urns or located below internal niches are known both in Pompeii, 7 OS, and Herculaneum, X.1473–75; in Rome they feature in a large number of burial sites, e.g. the Mausoleum degli Innocentiores on the Via Appia: F. Feraudi-Gruénais, *Ubi diutius nobis habitandum est. Die Innendekoration der kaiserzeitlichen Gräber Roms*, Palilia 9 (2001), 126, fig. 134. Likewise, in the large *columbarium* of the Villa Pamphili C. Hülsen recorded 7 *tituli*, 56 painted and 11 'graffiti' epitaphs, RM 8 (1893), 145–65, and in Tomb C of the Via Portuense necropolis names were handwritten above the *loculi*, NSc 1957, 351f., cf. F. Feraudi-Gruénais, *Inschriften und 'Selbstdarstellung' in stadtrömischen Grabbauten* (2003), 69ff., who provides further examples (84, 97–104, 114). 'Graffiti' inscriptions were also attached to the *loculi* of the Via Latina *columbarium*, sections of which are now in Copenhagen: *Catalogue. Imperial Rome*, Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek (1996), 167–71.

⁵³ Similar epigraphic invisibility is demonstrated at 13 OS, where M. Octavius and his wife built a large *aedicula* monument crowned by three statues of themselves and a *vir militaris*, presumably their son. But, despite his visual prominence, the son received no mention in the dedicatory inscription placed on the front of the monument, which only refers to his parents.

⁵⁴ Likewise, X.1019 T. Terentius Felix; PN FN C. Veranius Q.f. Rufus, Verania Q.l. Clara; 15 ES L. Barbidius L.l. Communis; 25 OS Castricia (mulieris) l. Prisca; 11 ES A. Veius Atticus; 23 OS Vesonia P.f., P. Vesonius (mulieris) l. Phileros; NSc 1893, 333–5 M. Petacius M.l. Dasius, M. Petacius M.f. Severus, Petacia M.l. Vitalis.

⁵⁵ This practice may perhaps also explain the two modest stelae for two members of the elite, the *duovir* Cn. Melissaerus Aper (X.1008) and the public priestess Istacidia Rufilla (X.999), both found in the burial enclosure of the so-called Tomb of the Istacidii, Via dei Sepolchri South 4A. They might possibly have featured in the lost frontal inscription, although that remains entirely hypothetical.

élite received individual monumental burial or even personal commemoration. Certainly there are few attempts to record all members of a family; most élite inscriptions were 'dedicatory' and therefore included only the person responsible and/or a single dedicatee.

Viewed against this background, the fact that the practice came to an end may seem less puzzling; it was after all a fairly recent fashion, which was probably never universally adopted. Moreover, post-Tiberian élite burials are not only rarer, their composition also differs since they are much closer in profile to the decurions represented in the later Ostian epitaphs.⁵⁶ The monuments themselves are generally quite modest, and Vestorius Priscus' tomb outside the Porta Vesuvio brings out the ambiguity of the display in the later period (*NSc* 1910, 402). The young aedile, who probably held office in the A.D. 70s, received both a public burial site and a sponsored funeral, while the tomb itself was erected by his mother. On the front of the altar an inscription proudly states the son's achievements and honours and on the surrounding wall were painted scenes from Vestorius' year in office, including the games he had presided over.⁵⁷ This depiction, however, was placed on the inside of the enclosure wall, which meant it was kept out of public view. The monument has been compared to the ostentatious tomb of Petronius' freedman character Trimalchio, *Sat.* 71, but that overlooks the crucial fact that the scenes from Vestorius' life were private rather than public. What we find here is, therefore, a careful negotiation between, on the one hand, the parent's wish to record the son's early promise and, on the other hand, the current ideal of funerary restraint which had come to prevail among the local élite.⁵⁸ The satirical passage by Petronius, mentioned above, is therefore still relevant to understanding the Vestorius monument, but as an expression of the same aristocratic ideal of funerary simplicity and modesty, which Vestorius' mother was trying to accommodate in the design of the tomb.⁵⁹ Another late élite burial was organized by a freedwoman for her patron. The *duovir* Q. Veranius Rufus was commemorated by his freedwoman and included in her burial site (PN FN). His case draws attention to a small stele set up for Clodia A.f., *sacerdos publica*, and found inside the burial enclosure of a group of Clodian freedmen in the Porta Nocera necropolis.⁶⁰ These instances of prominent members of the late Pompeian élite receiving — very modest — commemoration through their freedmen, further indicate the low priority attached to monumental burial by the local élite during this period.

The apparent 'down-grading' of monumental burial may be interpreted in the context of the cyclical changes in funerary practices discussed by Cannon in his classic article, which — perhaps somewhat schematically — compared patterns of funerary display in

⁵⁶ Thus, three out of five were erected by parents or spouse, and in these cases there is a strong possibility that the person died young; A. Umbricius Scaurus had held the duovirate but was survived by his father; T. Terentius Felix held only the aedileship, and the same applies to C. Vestorius Priscus who died at the age of twenty-two. Four of them were buried at publicly granted sites, which may have provided the initial incentive; in addition the council also began sponsoring the funerals with 2000 HS.

⁵⁷ G. Spano, 'La tomba dell'edile C. Vestorio Prisco in Pompei', *Mem.Acc.Linc.* 7, 3 (1943), 237–315.

⁵⁸ S. Mols and E. M. Moormann, 'Ex parvo crevit. Proposta per una lettura iconografica della Tomba di Vestorius Priscus fuori Porta Vesuvio a Pompei', *Rivista di Studi Pompeiani* 6 (1993–4), 15–52, whose historical analysis of the monument relies on an out-dated view of the social conditions prevailing in late Pompeii.

⁵⁹ Similar attitudes may be traced in the tomb of M. Obellius Firmus, datable to the last decades of Pompeii (*Cronache Pompeiane* 1 (1975), 246f., cf. W. F. Jongman, 'M. Obellius M.f. Firmus, Pompeian duovir', *Talanta* 10–11 (1978–9), 62–5). Again the monument was built on a plot granted by the council, but the tomb itself is simple to the point of austerity; only the inscription, recording his honours, indicates that the deceased was one of the leading men in Pompeii. The building of this tomb, the only monument in late Pompeii erected for a single high-ranking magistrate, may have been triggered by the decision of the council and other civic organizations to grant a burial plot and provide lavish funding for the funeral, no less than HS 5000.

⁶⁰ 5 OS. The woman is unlikely to be identical with the homonymous priestess who erected the Augustan family monument discussed above, since that inscription (X.1074) explicitly stated that she did so 'sibi et suis', i.e. providing a burial site also for herself. The stele, on the other hand, is directly linked to an urn set into the ground and cannot therefore be a commemorative cenotaph, cf. *Pompei oltre la vita*, op. cit. (n. 36), 71–5. Moreover, since the monument itself appears to be Neronian, we are probably dealing with a later member of the Clodian family.

different societies and described their shifts between ostentation and restraint.⁶¹ He argued that conspicuous display of this type would naturally come to an end as it gradually lost its symbolic and practical impact. The medium would exhaust its potential as an effective marker of status and in turn be replaced by a new ideal of modesty. According to Cannon, the process was primarily driven by lower-class imitation — and in Pompeii the freedmen's tombs do indeed start to appear in larger numbers precisely when the élite's begin to peter out. Moreover, in Pompeii the huge monument of Eumachia, whose scale and decor broke all precedents, may have been instrumental in speeding up the process and effectively bringing élite competition to a close. The logical consequence was then a return to the simplicity of the pre-Augustan era.

This conclusion raises the question of where the élite were buried after the change in funerary fashion. The answer must remain conjectural, but most plausibly they simply continued to use existing monuments, which in some cases might be passed on to other families.⁶² We cannot exclude the possibility that there might have been a certain prestige associated with the ability to use older family monuments, which set one apart from newcomers who had to build their own. As we saw, freedmen might also have fulfilled their obligations towards the patron and accommodated him or her in their own burial sites. Alternatively, élite families might abandon the urban necropolis entirely, as suggested by the recent discovery of the tomb of the Lucretii Valentis, which challenges many traditional notions of Roman élite burial.⁶³ At Scafati in the *ager Pompeianus* a modest burial enclosure was found, facing a minor track road and close to a villa estate. It was surrounded by a high wall, measuring between 1.9 m and 1.75 m, and contained seven burials, each marked by a stele. The burials fall into two groups: the first, datable to Augustan times, consisting of two burials marked by anepigraphic stelae; the second, dating from the second half of the first century A.D., consisting of five burials all marked by inscribed stelae. Four of the burials are located inside a niche and can be placed in chronological sequence on the basis of their relative size and positioning. The earliest stele commemorated a woman, although the inscription is no longer legible. Next to her a D. Lucretius Valens was buried, followed by D. Lucretius Iustus (13 years old), and finally D. Lucretius Valens (2 years old). Separate from the others we find the burial of D. Lucretius Satrius Valens, who is documented through other sources as an imperial *flamen*, *duovir*, and as a donor of costly gladiatorial games.⁶⁴ The stele, however, merely gives his name and thus provides no hint that we are dealing with one of the leading men of late Pompeii. Such epigraphic modesty in a funerary context is not unique,⁶⁵ and in this case it is perhaps understandable given the private location. But the enclosure itself and its

⁶¹ A. Cannon, 'The historical dimension in mortuary expressions of status and sentiment', *Current Anthropology* 30, 4 (1989), 437–58, cf. Morris, *op. cit.* (n. 8), 147f., 168f.

⁶² Thus, it seems that Cn. Alleius Nigidius Maius, a leading citizen of late Pompeii, inherited Eumachia's monument, burying members of his family and household there in the A.D. 70s, cf. Mouritsen, *op. cit.* (n. 33), 68f. Importantly, he did not even erect a new monument for his mother, Pomponia Decharis, but merely commissioned a stele to be placed on the terrace of Eumachia's old monument, 11 OS no. 13.

⁶³ M. Conticello de' Spagnolis, 'Sul rinvenimento della villa e del monumento funerario dei Lucretii Valentis', *Rivista di Studi Pompeiani* 6 (1993/4), 147–66, whose publication of the epigraphic material has now been completely superseded by G. Camodeca, 'I Lucretii Valentis pompeiani e l'iscrizione funeraria del cavaliere d'età claudia D. Lucretius Valens (riedizione di AE 1994, 398)', in F. Senatore (ed.), *Pompei, Capri e la Penisola Sorrentina* (2004), 323–47.

⁶⁴ Mouritsen, *op. cit.* (n. 39), 105, 141f.; C. Chiavia, *Programmata. Manifesti elettorali nella colonia romana di Pompei* (2002), 133f., 163, 298f. See discussion in H. Mouritsen and I. Gradel, 'Nero in Pompeian politics. *Edicta munerum* and Imperial flaminates in late Pompeii', *ZPE* 87 (1991), 145–55, and Camodeca, *op. cit.* (n. 63).

⁶⁵ D. Lucretius Valens may also have held high office (possibly being identical with the aedilician candidate of A.D. 68/69), but again the stele gives only his name. Similar reticence is found in the inscriptions for Tullius (*EE* 330), Cn. Melissaeus Aper (*X*.1008), and L. Sepunius Sandelianus (32 EN).

location are remarkable, demonstrating as it does the complete withdrawal from funerary competition by a leading Pompeian family.

A fragmentary inscription, originally placed externally on the enclosure wall, may cast further light on the stages of this process. It records the career of D. Lucretius Valens who was raised to equestrian status under Claudius and died during his reign. Following the donation of public games, given jointly with his father, he had already been *adlected* to the *ordo decurionum* and received an equestrian statue in the forum, and upon his — presumably premature — death the council had granted him a public funeral and donated the burial site.⁶⁶ The last piece of information is important, since it implies that he was buried in the urban necropolis and not at Scafati. The presence of the commemorative inscription is therefore intriguing. It would appear that the family, following the prevailing trend towards funerary restraint, had chosen not to build a monument on the prestigious, publicly sponsored plot in the necropolis, which was offered for the burial. However, feeling that the young man's achievement still deserved some form of epigraphic commemoration, the family then put up an inscription on the external wall of an older burial ground on their country estate, a site which was subsequently used for simple family burials without any display.⁶⁷

The example of the Lucretii Valentes may have been followed by other Pompeian nobles, although the nature of the archaeological evidence does not allow us to quantify the extent of the élite's exodus; there are, however, other known examples of rural burials, including a funerary garden.⁶⁸ Recently another epitaph, presumably from Pompeii, came to light at Stabiae, when traces of an earlier inscription were identified underneath a later (post-A.D. 79) reworking of the stone.⁶⁹ The constitution of the text is difficult, but the dedicatee appears to be an aedile named [—] Proculus, while the dedicator was Q. Postumius Modestus, Pompeian *duovir* in A.D. 56 and quinquennial candidate in the 70s. When he made the dedication, he had held only the aedileship, which allows us to date

⁶⁶ Camodeca, *op. cit.* (n. 63), suggested that he lived into middle age and enjoyed a full municipal career, restoring the final part of line 2 as '[ed. Ilvir.i.d]'. That seems unlikely on several grounds. Listing the aedile alongside the *duovirate* goes against local practice, the former being obligatory. The initial 'a' may also be read as 'n' or 'm'. Importantly, however, the entire inscription seems to indicate a young man; the information about the early date of his *adlectio* is unparalleled for a mature man of high standing. Likewise, the emphasis on the games he gave jointly with his father — evidently at an early age — becomes odd if he later held magistracies and presented other, presumably equally generous, games. The final statement about his age at death is also a strong indicator of premature death, generally reserved for young people. Certainly, no middle-aged notable is recorded in this way. Early elevation to the *ordo equester* is frequently attested, e.g. X.3924 (Capua), X.7285 (Panhormus), XIV.341, 414 (Ostia), XIV.3919 (Tibur?). Camodeca's identification of Valens with the homonymous aedile in A.D. 33/34 is therefore open to doubt, and the proposed family tree for the Lucretii Valentes runs the risk of constructing a full picture on the basis of incidental and incomplete evidence. Thus, D. Lucretius D. f. Valens (v.a. II) is unlikely to be the brother of D. Lucretius D. f. Valens (identified by Camodeca as the aedile candidate of A.D. 68), since the relative size and positioning of their stelae suggest that he died after the latter.

⁶⁷ It is, of course, possible that a monument was also built for him in the necropolis. However, given the fact that funerary practices appear to have been changing at this time, it seems less likely that he would have received *both* a personal monument *and* a large commemorative inscription at Scafati, especially since the family shortly afterwards abandoned funerary display completely and withdrew to their estate.

⁶⁸ W. F. Jashemski, *The Gardens of Pompeii* (1979), I, 148f., II, 256. Other examples are given in M. M. Magalhaes, 'Prosopografia dell'ager Pompeianus (Comune di Scafati)', in Senatore, *op. cit.* (n. 63), 452–95.

⁶⁹ Traces of the text were first published in X.8138, but it has recently been republished twice, G. Camodeca, 'I Q. Postumii, magistrati pompeiani, in un' iscrizione incompleta: CIL X 8138 (Stabiae)', *AION(Archeol.)* 7 (2000), 187–96, and M. Pagano, 'Un palinsesto epigrafico a Castellammare di Stabia: l'iscrizione funeraria di Q. Postumius Modestus, magistrato di Pompei', *MEFRA* 113 (2001), 947–52.

the inscription to the first half of the 50s.⁷⁰ The key word indicating the relationship between dedicator and dedicatee is fragmentary; Camodeca has restored it as P[AT]RI, but the reading [F]R[AT]RI is also possible and perhaps preferable.⁷¹ Following the latter interpretation, Proculus was an otherwise undocumented junior magistrate, who died young and was commemorated by his brother. That fits the dedication into a general pattern of late Pompeian élite commemoration, and its discovery at Stabiae might, together with its considerable size (1.8 by 0.92 m), indicate that its original location was not in the Pompeian necropolis but on a country estate.

The Pompeian evidence thus allows us to trace a process by which a recent fashion of funerary display was discontinued by the local élite and the erection of new monuments in necropoleis largely left to others — who happen to be almost entirely freedmen; it is striking that only a handful of monuments exists for non-élite freeborn Pompeians, who at no point seem to have embraced the practice. The apparent surrender of a field of competition to social inferiors may seem surprising, not least given the traditional Roman obsession with hierarchies and status differentiation.⁷² In this context, however, we should bear in mind the — literally — marginal nature of funerary display. Both ideologically and physically the suburban necropolis remained a liminal zone. People might pass through and some even work there but the *suburbium* was often presented as a twilight world inhabited by the dead and surrounded by deep-rooted religious taboos of pollution.⁷³ The literary evidence certainly depicts the Roman *suburbium* as a notorious place where beggars, prostitutes, and criminals would gather, thereby underlining its social as well as its physical marginality.⁷⁴ For those reasons alone the necropolis was destined to remain secondary to the competition which took place within the city itself. On a practical note we might also wonder how often people would actually encounter the monuments. The most frequent visitors would probably have been farmers selling their produce in the city and workers at extra-urban production sites. The élite might only have passed them on their way to their estates, or when travelling to other towns, e.g. to attend the games. Moreover, in Pompeii no less than seven roads led from the town, which presumably meant that many Pompeians would visit some parts of the necropolis only very sporadically. Even a large monument like Eumachia's would therefore not have been a prominent public landmark comparable to those in the city centre.⁷⁵ In this perspective it

⁷⁰ Pagano, op. cit. (n. 69), identified the dedicatee as the well-documented aedilician candidate from the A.D. 70s, Q. Postumius Proculus, cf. Mouritsen, op. cit. (n. 36), 147f.; Chiavria, op. cit. (n. 64), 308. Following the late date implied by that identification, he restored the dedicator's office as 'AED [Q](uinquennalis)' but that is implausible, not least because it leaves out Postumius' duovirate. Moreover, the quinquennial duovirate is never abbreviated as 'Q' in Pompeian *tituli* but always as 'Ivir/dv quinq'. And as the obligatory first step on the career ladder the aedileship is generally left out of the *cursus honorum* of dignitaries who had moved on to hold higher office, cf. Mouritsen, op. cit. (n. 39), 74. Camodeca, op. cit. (n. 69), also reads 'aedil(is)'.

⁷¹ Camodeca, op. cit. (n. 69). Epigraphically the reading 'fratri' would improve the overall layout of the text, making the arrangement of the lines more symmetrical. For that reason the restoration 'fecit' in the final line would also seem preferable to Camodeca's suggestion 'et suis'. Likewise, by reading 'fratri' the spacing of line 5 would become more even than with 'patri'. It would be surprising if the father of the highly successful Modestus had reached middle age without holding the duumvirate, perhaps also suggesting a fraternal rather than paternal relationship between the two Postumii. The reading suggested by Pagano, op. cit. (n. 69), 'nutrici', seems implausible.

⁷² It is also worth remembering that after the end of the élite's monument-building activity, the necropoleis did not immediately become a 'libertine' area; for a long time they would continue to be dominated visually by the venerable old monuments built for the local élite in the past. It was, therefore, not as if the élite on leaving or entering the town would be confronted with the lower orders showing off at their expense.

⁷³ As N. Purcell puts it: 'The world of the dead, carefully excluded from the city, never became thoroughly safe and acceptable in the suburb. It remained a place of fear and ill-omen' ('Tomb and suburb', in von Hesberg and Zanker, op. cit. (n. 9), 25–41, at 41). Cf. H. Lindsay, 'Death-pollution and funerals in the city of Rome', in V. M. Hope and E. Marshall (eds), *Death and Disease in the Ancient City* (2000), 152–73.

⁷⁴ J. R. Patterson, 'On the margins of the city of Rome', in Hope and Marshall, op. cit. (n. 73), 85–103.

⁷⁵ Commenting on Pallas' funerary monument on the Via Tiburtina, the Younger Pliny, *Ep.* 7.29, mentions that he had just recently noticed it ('proxime adnotavi'), which, of course, may be a literary affectation, but also hints that even the monuments of famous men from the recent past might not have been widely known.

is perhaps not by chance that the Porta Ercolano necropolis along the Via dei Sepolchri appears to be more 'aristocratic' than the one outside the Porta Nocera, with a higher proportion of noble tombs. Topographically and architecturally it was more closely integrated into the urban fabric than the southern site, which in comparison feels distinctly separate from the life of the town.

The marginality of the necropoleis meant that funerary display remained optional for the local élite. There was no pressing imperative that a family had to assert itself against others in this particular field. Because the funerary sphere was so topographically diffuse, a decision not to take part in this competition would not stand out or attract negative attention. In terms of centrality and civic focus the necropoleis represented one extreme in a continuum the opposite end of which was occupied by the forum. For it was in this central location that the aspirations of the élite were overwhelmingly concentrated; here status was displayed, measured, and compared in statues, inscriptions, and public monuments, which celebrated individual achievements and benefactions. Much of the evidence for this display has been lost in Pompeii, but the surviving series of standardized statue bases still speaks eloquently both of the élite's desire to be represented here and of their chances of realizing this ambition. No less than sixty bases can be identified, dating from the last hundred years of the town's existence.⁷⁶ That allows us to make some broad calculations which suggest that around half of the members of the top curial élite could have expected this type of public commemoration.⁷⁷ And for those who failed there would always have been the consolation of seeing their names publicly displayed in a wide range of official documents.⁷⁸ An evocative illustration of the redundancy of funerary commemoration as a means of preserving the names of the élite comes from Herculaneum where members of the senatorial family of the Nonii Balbi were the recipients of no less than fifteen honorific dedications, sponsored by the town of Herculaneum as well as other Campanian and provincial communities.⁷⁹ They were located in various public spaces, in the theatre, in the so-called Basilica, and outside the Terme Suburbane, where a funerary altar was raised for the praetor and proconsul M. Nonius M.f. Balbus. Given this amount of public commemoration, there was little need for self-promotion at the grave, and the *aedicula* monument located right outside the city walls, which has been identified as that

⁷⁶ They include twenty-three standing statues in the porticus of the *macellum*, seventeen standing statues in the porticus of the building of Eumachia, five standing statues on the western side of the forum, and fifteen equestrian statues in the forum, cf. K. Wallat, *Die Ostseite des Forums von Pompeji* (1997), 35f., 154ff. P. Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus* (1988), 327, suggested that older statues might have been relocated to the colonnades during the early Empire, but there is no evidence for this. Moreover, honorific statues are likely to have been erected at other important locations in the town, cf. those by the so-called Fornix Holconiorum and in the large theatre (X.830, 837–40), as well as those for the CC. Cuspil Pansae in the restored amphitheatre (X.858–9).

⁷⁷ Thus, from early Augustan times to A.D. 79 around two hundred duovirates would have been filled. A fifth of these would have been quinquennial duovirates generally held after an ordinary duovirate. Iteration of the duovirate was also common, with twenty-nine documented instances, which reduces the number of individual officeholders in this period to max. 131.

⁷⁸ Thus, the names of the *duoviri* were always included in *ministri* dedications, partly to provide a local date alongside the consular one, cf. Mouritsen, op. cit. (n. 39), 92–9. Local *fasti*, similar to those found in Ostia (cf. n. 34) and Nola (X.1233), would probably also have been on display in Pompeii.

⁷⁹ X.1426–40, AE 1947, 53, in addition to their own dedication, X.1425, cf. L. Schumacher, 'Das Ehrendekret für M. Nonius Balbus aus Herculaneum (AE 1947, 53)', *Chiron* 6 (1976), 165–84; U. Pappalardo, 'Nuove testimonianze su Marco Nonio Balbo ad Ercolano', *RM* 104 (1997), 417–33; M. Pagano, 'Iscrizione della statua di Marco Nonio Balbo posta davanti alle Terme Suburbane', *Rivista di Studi Pompeiani* 2 (1998), 238f., who published yet another dedication to the Nonii, this time put up by one of their freedmen.

of the Nonii Balbi, may in fact also have been sponsored by the community.⁸⁰ A senatorial family of this standing was, of course, exceptional in a municipal context, but their case highlights the importance of the urban space and the rich opportunities for commemoration which it offered the élite.

Viewed in this perspective, the modesty of many funerary inscriptions may be less surprising. Since the necropolis was no vital locus of civic commemoration but secondary to the contest played out in the town centre, the relatives of a local grandee like M. Tullius could ignore his impressive career and honours in his epitaph, safe in the knowledge that they would be preserved for posterity where it really mattered, i.e. on buildings, statue bases, and public records in and around the forum (X.820–822). It follows that when the fashion of monumental élite burials peaked and began to lose its attraction — not least after Eumachia had gone beyond the bounds of traditional display — the abandonment of funerary competition became the logical option. Prominent families like the Lucretii Valentes could withdraw to old, very simple burial sites on their estates, where they would receive burial with only a minimum of commemoration and no monumentalization whatsoever.⁸¹ Formal burial of course remained important to the Pompeian élite, but that could take place within existing sites or monuments.

We have no reason to believe that the burial patterns encountered in Pompeii were unique; broadly similar processes may have taken place throughout Italy, although the chronology and modalities are likely to have varied according to local circumstances. Thus, despite regional variations, we do on the whole find very few élite monuments in the Italian towns after the first century A.D. At Puteoli, for example, only one in ten preserved epitaphs for members of the *ordo* post-dates the first century A.D., and characteristically that one commemorated Q. Aemilius Helpidephorus, X.1790, who was presumably of unfree descent.⁸² Likewise, at Tibur only six funerary inscriptions commemorate local magistrates, and in four of those there are indications that they may have been of freedman origins.⁸³ At Beneventum nineteen imperial epitaphs survive, and their profile broadly resembles those found at Ostia and late Pompeii. Thus, only three of them commemorate high-ranking magistrates from apparently freeborn backgrounds. The rest were mostly junior magistrates or simply *decuriones adlecti*.⁸⁴ Ten of them may have been of unfree descent.⁸⁵ Findings such as these would suggest that the general surge in funerary epigraphy during the second century A.D. was not shared by most of the local élites, although more work is needed in this field before any firm conclusions can be drawn.

⁸⁰ As suggested by C. C. Parslow, *Rediscovering Antiquity. Karl Weber and the Excavation of Herculaneum, Pompeii, and Stabiae* (1995), 144, cf. 335 n. 16. The monument appears to have been relatively modest given the importance of the family, containing an internal chamber with nine niches, A. R. Gordon, 'Jérôme-Charles Bellicard's Italian notebook of 1750–51: the discoveries at Herculaneum and observations on ancient and modern architecture', *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 25 (1990), 49–140, at 66f. The identification is questioned by G. Guadagno, 'Supplemento epigrafico ercolanese II', *Cronache Ercolanesi* 11 (1981), 129–64, at 154f. See also M. Pagano, 'La nuova pianta della città e di alcuni edifici pubblici di Ercolano', *Cronache Ercolanesi* 26 (1996), 229–62, at 230.

⁸¹ While the tomb of the Lucretii had no monumental ambitions, rural burial may not be inherently modest. Many rural monuments were prominently located in positions which commanded the surrounding countryside, the most conspicuous example being that of Caecilia Metella on the Via Appia (H. Gerding, *The Tomb of Caecilia Metella* (2002)).

⁸² This survey is based on the list given in D'Arms, op. cit. (n. 3). The other epitaphs are X.1685, 1799, 1804, 1806, 1807, 1808, 1810, 1725, and AE 1974, 266. Helpidephorus might also have been a *decurialis*.

⁸³ XIV.3663 M. Lurius M.f. Pal. Lucretianus (*tribus Palatina*), 3665 C. Maenius C.f. Bassus, 3674 T. Sabidius T.f. Pal. Maximus (*tribus Palatina*), 3680 L. Sextius Magianus (parents freed), 3682 C. Terentius Valens, *Inscriptiones Italiae* IV, 1 no. 200 C. Tiburtius C. Atticus (father also called Atticus); XIV.3654 is a posthumous honorific monument rather than an epitaph.

⁸⁴ IX.1614, 1655, AE 1968, 126. A *duovir* inscribed in the *tribus Palatina* appears in IX.1657; *quaestores/aediles*: IX.1637, 1646, 1648, 1651, 1658, AE 1981, 239; *decuriones*: IX.1604, 1617, 1638, 1639, 1653, 1654, 1659, AE 1968, 125, AE 1981, 238.

⁸⁵ IX.1637, 1638, 1646, 1648, 1654, 1657, 1658, AE 1981, 238, 239.

The situation in Rome attracts particular attention in this context. Here, as elsewhere, large-scale funerary competition among the aristocracy peaked in the late Republic and early Empire, partly as a result of changes in fashion, but probably also because the new political order put a limit on overt senatorial competition and self-promotion.⁸⁶ In Rome, however, the top élite did not withdraw completely from the necropolis; throughout the imperial period we find a broad continuation of senatorial burials at a relatively modest level. This feature may perhaps be explained by the exceptional political circumstances obtaining in the capital. For with the rise of autocracy came a redefinition of the civic centre of Rome, which was no longer available as a field of aristocratic competition in the way it continued to be in the Italian towns. The Imperial monopoly over the central monumental spaces of Rome thus reduced the scope for senatorial self-commemoration and thereby indirectly contributed to the continued aristocratic presence in the urban necropolis. The senators were, literally, forced into the margins, and in the early Empire some decided to evade the constraints of the capital and built their monuments outside Rome in the towns of Italy, while others apparently followed the route of the Lucretii and were buried on their country estates, or even managed without monuments entirely, cf. Pliny, *Ep.* 9.19.1. Despite its uniqueness, the situation in the capital therefore highlights the interconnection between different urban spaces, the forum and the necropoleis, which is vital for understanding the freedmen's use of funerary epigraphy.

IV FREEDMEN, BURIAL AND COMMEMORATION

The freedmen continued the practice of funerary commemoration long after the local élites had largely abandoned it. That is in itself not very surprising, since that was the medium which offered them the best opportunity for self-display. For while access to the civic centre was controlled by the curial élite, the necropolis was open to anybody who could afford a plot and a monument. Indeed, it is entirely possible that the disparity in accessibility and the relatively 'democratic' nature of funerary competition contributed to the eventual withdrawal of the élite. The sight of senators and decurions mingling with freedmen and outsiders in the necropoleis, and competing for the attention of passers-by, may have struck right-minded Romans as undignified and unseemly. Thus, a major attraction of the forum as a locus of civic competition was, apart from its physical centrality, its exclusivity, and the very fact that admission was restricted and regulated by the council. Commemoration here automatically entailed greater prestige since it was awarded by the council on behalf of the whole community in return for *beneficia* and was thus less tainted by the suspicion of overt self-promotion.⁸⁷ In fact, the practice of granting public burial sites and sponsoring funerals may have been an attempt at endowing the funerary sphere with some of the same exclusivity and prestige as the forum enjoyed.

The freedmen would have continued the practice because they had little alternative if they wished to be commemorated, which many of them clearly did, some even to excess. The ostentatious tombs of wealthy freedmen became a common sight in the Roman necro-

⁸⁶ No systematic study exists of senatorial funerary monuments, but see the important contributions by W. Eck, 'Senatorial self-representation: developments in the Augustan period', in F. Millar and E. Segal (eds), *Caesar Augustus: Seven Aspects* (1984), 129–67; idem, 'Ehrungen für Personen hohen soziopolitischen Ranges im öffentlichen und privaten Bereich', in H.-J. Schalles, H. von Hesberg and P. Zanker (eds), *Die römische Stadt im 2. Jahrhundert n. Chr. Der Funktionswandel des öffentlichen Raumes. Kolloquium Xanten 1990*, Xantener Berichte 2 (1992), 359–76; idem, 'Rome and the outside world: senatorial families and the world they lived in', in B. Rawson and P. Weaver (eds), *The Roman Family in Italy: Status, Sentiment, Space* (1997), 73–99; idem, 'Grabmonumente und sozialer Status in Rom und Umgebung', in *Bestattungssitte und kulturelle Identität. Grabanlagen und Grabbeigaben der frühen römischen Kaiserzeit in Italien und den Nordwest-Provinzen*, Xantener Berichte 7 (1998), 29–40, which discusses the relative scale of senatorial altar monuments.

⁸⁷ Thus, the Younger Pliny, *Ep.* 8.6.13f., seems far more incensed by the fact that the extensive honours granted to Pallas were advertised in a bronze inscription put up at a 'celeberrimus locus' in central Rome, than by Pallas' own immodest references to them in his epitaph, *Ep.* 8.6.1.

poles. A famous example was that commissioned by the freedman baker M. Vergilius Eurysaces, whose monument outside the Porta Praenestina in Rome proudly demonstrated both his wealth and its less than aristocratic source.⁸⁸ An even more evocative illustration of this mentality comes from Pompeii in the form of two monuments for C. Munatius Faustus and his wife Naevoleia Tyche. In the Porta Nocera necropolis C. Munatius Faustus built a relatively modest monument, which blended in with neighbouring tombs for other freedmen (9 ES). The inscription states that he had reached the rank of *augustalis* and *mag(ister) pag(i) Aug(usti) Fel(icis)*, and had built the monument for himself and his wife Naevoleia Tyche. The monument, dating from the middle of the first century A.D., is itself unremarkable, but outside the Porta Ercolano an altar monument was erected by Naevoleia Tyche for herself and her late husband (X.1030). Apart from being the couple's second burial site, the monument is also interesting in other respects. Architecturally it is more conspicuous:⁸⁹ an altar directly facing the street was raised on a high podium with an internal chamber; to the rear was an open burial area and the whole site was surrounded by an enclosure wall. On the front of the altar a large inscription stated that Naevoleia Tyche erected it for herself and her husband, who had been honoured by the council, with the people's approval, with a *bisellium* for his *merita*.⁹⁰ The very chair is depicted in relief on the side of the altar, while right above the inscription a sculptural panel reveals the nature of his *merita*, showing as it does a public distribution of grain. The sponsor himself stands prominently next to a slave who dispenses the grain to a line of waiting people carrying bags.⁹¹ The monument suggests that after the completion of the first tomb Munatius made the donation which earned him his *bisellium*, an honour which his widow felt should not go unrecorded. She therefore commissioned a second monument, which stressed this particular achievement, while also emphasizing her own prominence.

These monuments suggest a very strong preoccupation with public honours and self-commemoration, and in this respect they are far from unique. Freedmen's monuments and inscriptions generally reveal a far stronger degree of status awareness and competition than the élite's monuments. The importance of funerary commemoration is underlined by the fact that far more freedmen commissioned their own monument than did members of the élite. Thus, in Ostia 80 out of 130 *augustales* took direct responsibility for the inscriptions in which they appear, while only 8 out of 40 members of the *ordo decurionum* did so, suggesting that, in contrast to the élite, leading freedmen generally did not leave this task to their relatives or heirs.⁹² Similarly, while the élite might leave out references to their honours and offices, freedmen would go to considerable lengths to ensure they were

⁸⁸ CIL I².1203–5. Cf. P. Ciancio Rossetto, *Il sepolchro del fornaio M. Virgilio Eurysace a Porta Maggiore* (1973).

⁸⁹ Kockel, *op. cit.* (n. 36), 100ff.

⁹⁰ On *bisellia* see T. Schäfer, 'Der honor bisellii', *RM* 97 (1990), 306–46.

⁹¹ Above the scene of the grain distribution a woman, presumably Naevoleia herself, looks out from an open window. On the other side of the altar a seafaring ship is shown, possibly a reference to the source of Munatius' wealth.

⁹² Self-commemorators, also including cases where the *augustalis* had made testamentary provisions for his burial and commemoration: XIV.287, 290, 293, 297, 299, 308, 309, 310, 313, 316, 331, 333, 336, 339, 342, 355, 356, 357, 358, 369, 380, 381, 384, 386, 392, 394, 396, 404, 405, 411, 412, 416, 417, 418, 420 *ter*, 421, 427, 428, 436, 441, 442, 443, 4615, 4617, 4619, 4630, 4650, 4663, 4671, 4684, 5377, *AE* 1987, 191, 196, *AE* 1988, 176, 178, 180, 187, 189, 193, 197, 199, 202, 204, 206, 210, *AE* 1989, 124, *MGR* 1988, nos 19, 20, 27, 28, 29, 36, 38, 40, 42, 44, 48, 50. Commemorated by others: XIV.291, 295, 305, 318, 319, 320, 322, 329, 330, 338, 344, 345, 361, 366, 372, 379, 382, 383, 389, 397, 406, 407, 415, 425, 427, 433, 439, 4140, 4141, 4639, 4641, 4645, 4655, 4660, 4669, *AE* 1988, 177, 179, 186, 190, 191, 193, 200, 205, *AE* 1996, 304a, *MGR* 1988, nos 39, 33 *bis*, 43, *Acc.Pont.Mem.* 1982, nos 19, 21. Curial members who commemorated themselves: XIV.323a, 332, 341, 4632, 5378, *AE* 1988, 184, 188, 201.

recorded.⁹³ The Pompeian freedmen also included references to public munificence, which members of the élite deliberately left out.⁹⁴

Freedmen thus developed epigraphic norms and practices which contrasted sharply with those of the élite. It is striking that their most ostentatious and self-promoting monuments were built at a time when the élite were already withdrawing from this field. The change in élite attitudes is reflected in Petronius' satirical description of Trimalchio's monument, which ridicules his lack of restraint. In Pompeii we find not only libertine monuments which have many features in common with Trimalchio's,⁹⁵ but also manifestations of the new idiom of simplicity and modesty, which informed Petronius' text. The freedmen remained unaffected by this change in mentality, resulting in broadly contemporary monuments expressing markedly different values and attitudes. A comparison of the tombs of Naevoleia Tyche and the Lucretii Valentes effectively brings out the discrepancy, as does the contrast between the open display of munificence in freedmen's monuments and the relative modesty of Vestorius Priscus' tomb, where the pictorial references to his *munera* are decorously hidden from public view.

The original inspiration for the freedmen's use of funerary display presumably came from aristocratic practices — certainly in Pompeii — but it then developed seemingly autonomously of the élite, which draws attention to the motivation behind the undiminished interest of the freedmen.⁹⁶ Why did they continue a practice which the élite apparently found vulgar and in poor taste? Any attempt to answer this question must take into account the possibility that the freedmen may not have perceived themselves as being in competition with the curial class — nor presumably vice versa. The very fact that they continued a practice largely abandoned by the élite would itself imply that the wealthy freedmen were primarily trying to out-do each other. That point is made quite explicit by the tomb of the *augustalis* C. Calventius Quietus who chose to build his altar monument, proudly showing his *bisellium* on the front, right next to that of Naevoleia and Munatius.⁹⁷ While Calventius was of course also trying to impress the general public, it would seem that above all he was responding to a perceived challenge from another freedman. Rather than measuring himself against the curial class, Calventius compares himself to a freedman of a social standing very close to his own.

In this respect the funerary material would suggest the existence of a distinct freedman community which could develop its own values and preoccupations distinct from those of the majority of the population. Freedmen shared a fundamental common experience, having all undergone the same personal transformation from slave to free. It is tempting to see in this particular experience the driving motivation behind their concern with epigraphic commemoration. It is hardly inconceivable that their humble beginnings increased their sense of pride in their achievement and inspired a strong wish to leave

⁹³ In one case from Pompeii the title *augustalis* has been added to an existing inscription, which the owner had already commissioned before his elevation to this rank (23 OS).

⁹⁴ e.g. C. Calventius Quietus (X.1026), Naevoleia Tyche (X.1030), and N. Festius Ampliatus(?) (X.1025), cf. Kockel, op. cit. (n. 36), 75ff., fig. 20, 21A, showing the relief representations of gladiatorial games, which the last had presumably donated. On the other hand, neither the epitaphs of e.g. M. Porcius, M. Tullius, Mammia, or Eumachia mention their extravagant public donations. The only exceptions to this rule come from the Clodii inscription (X.1074), which is also in other respects unusual, and from the unique commemorative plaque put up by the Lucretii near their villa at Scafati.

⁹⁵ There are clear similarities between Trimalchio's and Naevoleia Tyche's monuments, both containing visual representations of the dedicator, of public munificence, and of a sea-going ship in addition to a detailed account of public honours. Another parallel from Brixia is discussed in E. Hübner, 'Zum Denkmal des Trimalchio', *Hermes* 13 (1878), 414–22.

⁹⁶ In Rome the situation may have been more complex. There the first examples appear in the second century B.C. when the élite's funerary self-commemoration was still in its infancy, and they dominate the late republican record documented in *CIL* I². The early emergence of libertine epigraphy might draw attention to possible Hellenistic influences, since in that period many freedmen would have come directly from the East and carried with them the cultural traditions of their homelands.

⁹⁷ X.1026, cf. Kockel, op. cit. (n. 36), 90ff.

behind a personal statement to posterity — which also demonstrated their worth to contemporary society. That would support Taylor's explanation of the urban funerary record as a product of the social aspirations of the freed population.⁹⁸ However, before accepting this thesis in its entirety we should consider whether the model is applicable to all inscriptions put up by freedmen, and on closer scrutiny a large proportion of Roman epitaphs turns out to be devoid of any overt social ostentation.

In Pompeii most freedmen are documented, not in 'dedicatory' epitaphs placed externally on monuments, but in modest stelae, set directly into the ground. They are generally quite small and the inscriptions they carry usually just give a single name. The prime function of the stele was to mark the grave. They were placed immediately next to the burial, thereby enabling relatives or descendants performing the libation rites to retrace the urn. That function, however, did not necessarily require an inscription and the majority of Pompeian stelae are therefore anepigraphic. About two thirds of the stelae carried no incised inscriptions.⁹⁹ That would, of course, have made them cheaper, but the decision whether or not to inscribe the stele may not have been financial. For those who did receive inscription were often young children, in many cases slaves,¹⁰⁰ and the inscriptions contain no recognizable element of status display, which would suggest that they primarily responded to a 'sentimental' need, rather than social pressures. This point is reinforced by the fact that most of the stelae were invisible to the public. For example, along the recently excavated stretch of the Via Nucerna south of the amphitheatre in Pompeii ninety stelae were found, only twenty-three of which were inscribed. They were mostly placed well away from the street, many against the back wall where they would have been barely visible to people passing by.¹⁰¹

The absence of a public audience is even more evident in the large burial enclosure (c. 400 m²) located south of the Porta Nocera which appears to have belonged to the Pompeian family of the Epidii.¹⁰² The earliest burials here were Samnite inhumation graves, and from Roman times we have 119 cremation graves, 95 of which were marked by stelae; the remaining 24 probably had markers of wood which have since vanished. A third of the stelae were inscribed — 32 out of 95 — and in virtually every case the person can be identified as a freedman, freedwoman, or slave, mostly of the Epidii, and a considerable number were children. As we saw, the site was located at some distance from the town, and surrounded by an enclosure wall which kept the burials out of public view. Its sole purpose was therefore to provide formal burial for members of the *familia*, and the stelae served solely to identify individual burials; the adding of names to some of them was presumably an act of affection by bereaved relatives and secondary to the primary concern of ensuring a formal burial. We are therefore far removed from conventional notions of civic competition as the driving force behind libertine epigraphy, although interestingly two of the freedmen built slightly more ambitious monuments within the enclosure. Their small niche monuments (Nos 66 and 104) were clearly meant to stand out from the rest and reflect the status of the owners, but since they too remained hidden behind the high enclosure walls, this — very modest — competition was confined to the small community

⁹⁸ cf. e.g. D. Dexheimer, 'Portrait figures on funerary altars of Roman *liberti* in Northern Italy', in J. Pearce, M. Millett and M. Struck (eds), *Burial, Society and Context in the Roman World* (2001), 78–84, who follows the conventional model.

⁹⁹ Thus, in the Porta Nocera necropolis a total of 156 stelae have been found, 49 of which were inscribed. It remains possible that the stelae might have carried painted inscriptions, which have since disappeared, although no traces of paint have been reported by the excavators.

¹⁰⁰ In the Porta Nocera necropolis 13 of the 49 inscribed stelae commemorated slaves, while in the Via Nucerna the proportion is 5 out of 23.

¹⁰¹ e.g. tombs PN SE-G. Moreover, the inscription itself was typically placed right at the bottom of the stele just above the ground, which meant that any vegetation would have obscured the text. Cf. *Pompei oltre la vita*, op. cit. (n. 36), 64, which shows the positioning of the inscriptions on the stelae within the Barbidi monument, 15 ES.

¹⁰² NSc (1911), 106–11, NSc (1916), 287–309. Cf. *Pompei oltre la vita*, op. cit. (n. 36), 93–5.

of the Epidian *familia*.¹⁰³ The claims made by the two freedmen were highly localized and targeted only at the other freedmen using the enclosure.¹⁰⁴

The Epidian burial ground was in essence a functional site, established to provide proper burial for people of relatively limited means. It made no public statements, and as such it fits into a general trend in funerary architecture during the Empire. As Hesberg has convincingly demonstrated, Roman monuments became less ostentatious and more utilitarian in their design and exterior decoration as the imperial age progressed.¹⁰⁵ Increasingly tombs were built to provide a suitable setting for the burials rather than to impress the general public. This tendency can be traced in the first century A.D. but became more pronounced in the second, when large conspicuous monuments are the exception. The Ostian necropoleis mostly belong to that period, and many of the tombs erected here fit that picture. Here too we find a tendency in the funerary architecture towards more inward-looking architectural forms, with the greatest expense lavished on the interior rather than the exterior, which generally remained austere and closed off.¹⁰⁶ With few exceptions most later monuments were relatively simple, and logically many were located along the quiet country roads south of the city where fewer people would notice them.

The layout and design of the tombs also meant that most Ostian epitaphs — almost entirely produced by freedmen, as we saw — would not have been visible to the public. Apart from the dedicatory inscriptions on the front, they would typically be located inside the buildings and enclosures, often attached to niches or written directly onto the urns deposited within them. The *columbarium*-style niche architecture allowed for multiple, relatively cheap, formal burials, which could be easily marked by small inscriptions carrying the name of the deceased. This particular type of inscription thus represents a variation of the simple stele which was common in Pompeii, and again the emphasis appears to have been on the provision of formal burial rather than on written commemoration. For it seems that inscribed markers may not have been universal here either. Comparative evidence from urban *columbaria* of the early imperial period suggests that not all urns deposited here received inscriptions,¹⁰⁷ and turning to later burial sites such as the St Peter necropolis, or the necropoleis of Ostia or Isola Sacra, we find epigraphic commemoration to be the rare exception.¹⁰⁸ The impression of selectivity is confirmed by the composition of those who did receive commemoration. Most often they were children commemorated by parents, or spouses commemorating each other, while very few parents

¹⁰³ Similar differentiation inside the funerary enclosures is also found in e.g. the St Peter necropolis in Rome, cf. Eck, *op. cit.* (n. 52). See also Hope, *op. cit.* (n. 52).

¹⁰⁴ This example recalls the urban *columbaria* where the general uniformity is occasionally broken by the enlargement of some *loculi* which received more elaborate decoration than those around them, as shown e.g. in the Vigna Codini *columbaria* II and III, cf. E. Nash, *Pictorial Dictionary of Ancient Rome* (1962), II, 336 fig. 1107, 339 fig. 1110. Again the intention was clearly to emphasize differences in status, but since it happened within an enclosed private space out of public view, the scope of the display remained highly restricted. These issues are also explored in Feraudi-Gruénais, *op. cit.* (n. 52, 2003).

¹⁰⁵ von Hesberg, *op. cit.* (n. 42); idem, *Römische Grabbauten* (1992); P. Zanker, 'Bürgerliche Selbstdarstellung am Grab im römischen Kaiserreich', in Schalles, von Hesberg and Zanker, *op. cit.* (n. 86), 339–58; Heinzelmann, *op. cit.*

(n. 9, 2000), 185f.; Feraudi-Gruénais, *op. cit.* (n. 52, 2001), 209ff.

¹⁰⁶ This feature is also apparent at Isola Sacra, where the exteriors generally remain rather simple, the only decoration usually being the characteristic relief representations of trades. The interiors, on the other hand, are often richly decorated, as illustrated, for example, by the floor mosaics in Tombs 52, 55 and 34 and in the Tomba della Mietitura, or by the rich wall decorations of Tombs 87, 90 and 93. The elaborately carved sarcophagi placed inside the chambers provide another instance of private rather than public funerary expenditure, e.g. Tombs 11, 34, and 72, cf. Calza, *op. cit.* (n. 10); Baldassare, *op. cit.* (n. 10).

¹⁰⁷ For example, in the Columbarium II in the Vigna Codini a large number of urns were inserted in a low panel running along the walls, none of which were marked epigraphically, cf. the reconstruction shown in Feraudi-Gruénais, *op. cit.* (n. 52, 2001), 92, fig. 87.

¹⁰⁸ Eck, *op. cit.* (n. 11); Heinzelmann, *op. cit.* (n. 9, 2000), 190.

are commemorated by children.¹⁰⁹ The ‘sentimental’ rather than ‘civic’ function is also suggested by the fact that far more personal epithets appear in internally-placed inscriptions than in the external ‘dedicatory’ inscriptions, which were primarily concerned with the assertion of ownership.

We are generally far removed from traditional notions of Roman epigraphy as evolving entirely around status and social hierarchy. The large majority of the epitaphs seem to represent the direct emotional response to bereavement.¹¹⁰ Thus, unlike the monuments themselves and the external inscriptions, often built and put up long in advance, the internal inscriptions would generally follow the death of the person commemorated. Their setting was semi-private, and their content emphasized the identity of the deceased, the person’s age, and the dedicator’s personal relationship with him or her.¹¹¹ The simple act of marking the urn with an inscription seems to have been essential and an end in itself, rather than a means of preserving the memory for posterity, presumably a secondary concern. Thus the inscriptions were sometimes merely temporary, either painted or scratched on the wall.¹¹²

By stressing the personal and emotional function of inscriptions and downplaying their civic role, we might seem to undermine any attempt at explaining the peculiar social profile of the ‘epigraphic habit’ in Italy. If inscriptions were typically put up in response to basic human emotions and life experiences, we are left with the question why only one section of Roman society — the freedmen — commissioned them. All Romans would have suffered the same personal losses, but when only one group reacted to this experience by putting up inscriptions, we will have to consider what specific reasons that particular category may have had for doing so. That means returning to the question of what set freedmen apart from the rest of society and gave them a separate identity and distinct patterns of behaviour.

What united all freedmen was their common experience — and the stigma — of servitude, which stayed with them throughout their lives and defined their place in society. It would have made them acutely aware of existing social and economic hierarchies, as underlined by the monuments and inscriptions discussed above. Their concern with status, often dismissed as an obsession with empty honours, was a natural corollary to their social marginality. Such marks of recognition were important in terms of self-affirmation within society as a whole and also as a means of establishing a position within their own sub-community. That aspect has typically been the main focus of modern studies of Roman freedmen, but this approach may not appreciate the full implication of the libertine experience. Manumission involved much more than simply access to civic honours and a chance of greater economic freedom; it was above all a personal transformation, whose main tangible benefit for most freedmen would have been gaining control over their own bodies, and with that also the right to form recognized and secure unions whose offspring were protected under law, in other words having a family.¹¹³ The fundamental right to a family, taken for granted by all other members of Roman society, was the one great privilege which became available to all freedmen, irrespective of their socio-economic standing, and awareness of this right is therefore likely to have been a prominent part of

¹⁰⁹ According to H. Sigismund Nielsen, ‘Interpreting epithets in Roman epitaphs’, in Rawson and Weaver, *op. cit.* (n. 86), 169–204, at 172, only 5 per cent of the urban epitaphs were explicitly dedicated to a parent, while R. P. Saller and B. D. Shaw, ‘Tombstones and Roman family relations in the Principate: civilians, soldiers and slaves’, *JRS* 74 (1984), 147, indicate that a total of 14 per cent were dedicated to a parent among the ‘lower orders’ in Rome, a figure identical to the one they give for Latium as a whole.

¹¹⁰ cf. M. King, ‘Commemoration of infants on Roman funerary inscriptions’, in G. J. Oliver (ed.), *The Epigraphy of Death. Studies in the History and Society of Greece and Rome* (2000), 117–54.

¹¹¹ See Sigismund Nielsen, *op. cit.* (n. 109).

¹¹² See examples listed in n. 52.

¹¹³ On the status of freedmen, see in general W. W. Buckland, *The Roman Law of Slavery* (1908), 437ff.; G. Fabre, *Libertus. Recherches sur les rapports patron-affranchi à la fin de la République romaine* (1981); A. Watson, *Roman Slave Law* (1987), 23–45; J. F. Gardner, *Being a Roman Citizen* (1993), 7–51.

their collective identity. This particular aspect of the freedman's condition may help us to understand better why they — unlike most other Romans — chose to commemorate their relatives in inscriptions and stress their conjugal or parental bonds. The point is that these ties had a different significance to freedmen than they did to any other group in Roman society.¹¹⁴

The emphasis on family relations among freedmen is also apparent in the characteristic use of portrait busts among freedmen in funerary monuments during the late Republic and early Empire.¹¹⁵ In these monuments they, literally, faced the public, and the wearing of togas, a symbol of Roman citizenship, has often been seen as the primary message. But the busts were hardly ever commissioned for single individuals; they almost invariably come in series, representing a whole family unit, and the assertion of family goes hand in hand with their citizen status. There is no contradiction between their civic ambitions and their familial sentiments, which were two sides of the same coin, mutually reinforcing each other. They were both part of the freedman's achievement, and the raising of freeborn children, especially sons, represented the natural focus of freed parents' affections as well as their civic aspirations. Unlike their fathers, freeborn sons carried no personal stigma — apart from their *novitas* — which meant that through them the freedmen could vicariously enter society on a formally equal footing.¹¹⁶

The drive to promote their offspring was thus entirely logical, and is demonstrated in numerous instances from the towns of Italy; most famously N. Popidius Ampliatus from Pompeii rebuilt the Isis temple on behalf of his six-year-old son in order to ensure his early entry into the *ordo decurionum* (X.846–8). Similarly in Ostia many young decurions are commemorated by their freed parents, and in these inscriptions the 'sentimental' and the socially assertive aspects are inseparable.¹¹⁷ However, these particular monuments should also be seen in their proper epigraphic context. For the general absence of the established curial élite from this field of civic display suggests that epitaphs would have presented an epigraphic default option. Thus, when young decurions died prematurely without having had the opportunity to receive public honours and official civic commemoration, their parents would have to take recourse to the less prestigious medium of funerary monuments.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ This line of interpretation presupposes that the large majority of the freedmen were born into slavery; presumably the restoration of freedom after, especially adult, enslavement would not have had the same profound impact on the freedman's identity or been experienced as a personal transformation in the same way as it was by slaves born in servitude. The current debate over the feasibility of slave populations reproducing themselves, e.g. W. Scheidel, 'Quantifying the sources of slaves in the early Roman Empire', *JRS* 87 (1997), 156–69, and W. V. Harris, 'Demography, geography and the sources of Roman slaves', *JRS* 89 (1999), 62–75, does not affect this point since the freedmen were drawn almost exclusively from a small sub-section of the slave population — the skilled urban slaves working in large households.

¹¹⁵ cf. P. Zanker, 'Grabreliefs römischer Freigelassener', *JDAI* 90 (1975), 267–315; D. Kleiner, *Roman Group Portraiture. The Funerary Reliefs of the Late Republic and Early Empire* (1977); H. G. Frenz, *Römische Grabreliefs in Mittel- und Südtalien* (1985); V. Kockel, *Porträtreliefs stadtrömischer Grabbauten. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte und zum Verständnis des spätrepublikanisch-frühkaiserzeitlichen Privatporträts* (1993); M. Koortbojian, 'In commemorationem mortuorum: text and image along the "streets of tombs"', in J. Elsner (ed.), *Art and Text in Roman Culture* (1996), 210–33, and B. Rawson, *Children and Childhood in Roman Italy* (2003), 31. Also Trimalchio insisted that both his wife and his son should be represented next to himself on his funerary monument, *Sat.* 71.

¹¹⁶ Some freedmen, the so-called *Latini Iuniani*, did not always produce children with full Roman citizenship. Attempts have been made to identify them in the epigraphic record: P. R. C. Weaver, 'Where have all the Junian Latins gone? Nomenclature and status in the Roman Empire', *Chiron* 20 (1990), 275–305; idem, 'Children of Junian Latins', in Rawson and Weaver, *op. cit.* (n. 86), 55–72, but these remain hypothetical and a systematic comparison of the epigraphic practices of the two types of freedmen is not feasible.

¹¹⁷ XIV.321, 411, 412, 414, 4642, 4644/AE 1986, 113, XIV.4664, AE 1987, 204, AE 1988, 182. Cf. XIV.166, 401, AE 1988, 184.

¹¹⁸ This contrasts with Volubilis where local magistrates who died young were commemorated by their relatives in honorific statues in the forum: W. Eck, 'Rang oder Alter: die Kompensation von Standeserwartungen in öffentlichen Ehrungen in Volubilis', in *Festschrift für Jenö Fitz* (1996), 67–9.

To summarize, funerary commemoration in Roman Italy appears to have been a socially specific response to an otherwise common experience, which was the personal loss associated with the death of spouses and children. This interpretation may seem paradoxical or even counter-intuitive, since universal human experiences are generally expected to produce broadly similar responses within a given culture. However, in the Roman world a category existed — the freedmen — whose background and social identity were so unique that they triggered highly individual reactions to common experiences. Thus, the direct link between the personal transformation from slave to free and the use of funerary epigraphy is underlined by the fact that their freeborn descendants generally disappear from the record after just one generation. Despite close family ties, they did not share the fundamental experience which had defined their freed ancestors, and they therefore soon assumed the behavioural patterns of the general population.

Outside the freedman community funerary commemoration never seems to have become standard practice. The élite obviously used epigraphy for self-promotion, but in ways which were carefully designed to emphasize differences in status. The freedmen's continued use of epitaphs, with little regard for the prevailing norms and customs, would suggest a certain degree of non-integration in Roman society. Instead of dealing with a straightforward top-down diffusion of cultural standards and ideals, we find distinct sets of values and patterns of behaviour within separate sections of the community.¹¹⁹ It follows that Roman society did not have a single focus of civic display but multiple foci serving different sub-communities, which developed their own practices. Among the freed population the overriding wish to celebrate and commemorate their families led to the creation of new burial practices and new physical frameworks. The communal tomb with large internal spaces facilitated multiple and therefore affordable formal burial. It meant economy of scale, and the small urns set into wall niches could be easily and cheaply labelled. This practice was developed exclusively within the freed community and never spread beyond it. Presumably it responded to a particular emotional need, and through their common response to bereavement the practice would also have come to define group membership and social belonging among a marginal sub-community.¹²⁰

V CONCLUSION

In his seminal article from 1982 MacMullen introduced the concept of the 'epigraphic habit' in an attempt to draw attention to the contingent nature of epigraphic practices, which were neither constant nor ubiquitous, but the product of specific social and cultural circumstances.¹²¹ The concept was primarily inspired by the distinct chronological patterns observed in the use of inscriptions, which seemed to defy historical explanation, but it also tried to grasp the underlying motivation behind the practice. This paper has tried to investigate the problem from a different angle, and the findings suggest that the notion of a single monolithic Roman 'habit' needs to be modified. No epigraphic practice was universal — throughout the Empire, or even within a region or a single community. Instead we find multiple 'habits', which changed and interacted with each other. Different

¹¹⁹ Also the use of funerary portraits, which was a characteristic feature of the freedmen's monuments in the first centuries B.C. and A.D., illustrates the possibility of distinct forms of self-representation developing among different social groups, cf. A. Lo Monaco, 'L'ordo libertinus, la tomba, l'immagine: una nota sulla nascita del busto ritratto', *Bullettino Comunale* 99 (1998), 85–100, and n. 115 above. B. Borg, 'Das Gesicht der Aufsteiger: römische Freigelassene und die Ideologie der Elite', in M. Braun, A. Haltenhoff and F.-H. Mutschler (eds), *Moribus antiquis res stat Romana. Römische Werte und römische Literatur in 3. und 2. Jh. v. Chr. Beiträge zur Altertumskunde* (2000), 285–99, argues that the portraits represented attempts at emulating aristocratic images, but their use in this particular context must nevertheless be recognized as a specific cultural practice which had no élite model or parallel.

¹²⁰ Heinzlmann, *op. cit.* (n. 9, 2000), 63–72, noted that in the early Empire the *columbarium* type burials at Ostia contained facilities for communal dining and socializing.

¹²¹ MacMullen, *op. cit.* (n. 8).

classes used different epigraphic media at different times and for different reasons. Any attempt at formulating a general model explaining the 'habit' as a uniform cultural practice or as an expression of a particular zeitgeist, therefore tells us only part of the story. Thus, Woolf analysed it in terms of social mobility and competition, i.e. as a means of claiming and asserting a place in society.¹²² But status turns out to be just one component in a more complex equation, and its manifestations were far from predictable. For when the 'rise of the freedman' supposedly forced others to assert themselves in a similar fashion, the reaction of the élite was quite the opposite: the withdrawal from funerary competition and a concentration on the more exclusive medium of publicly sponsored honorific monuments. Consequently, there was no single unified field of competition, but many separate, localized fields, which each developed their own conventions. The freedmen commissioned inscribed monuments for a variety of reasons, all rooted in their specific experiences and concerns, but in many cases MacMullen's 'sense of audience' may have played only a minor — and rather more complex — role since the commemoration was purely private. And since epigraphic practices remained socially contingent, the overall record produced by individual acts of commemoration has little value as a demographic source on the Roman population. But precisely this aspect also allows important insights into the mentality of specific sections of the population and indeed into the heterogeneous aspects of Roman society as a whole.

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¹²² Woolf, *op. cit.* (n. 8).