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INDEX

EUGENIO AMATO	<i>Note esegetico-testuali a Dione di Prusa V: Sull'abito (or. LXXII)</i>	9
LUIGI ARATA	<i>Breve storia del tecolito, con particolare riferimento alla medicina greca</i>	21
MIKA KAJAVA	<i>A Further Greek Hymn from Signia</i>	31
TUA KORHONEN	<i>Christina of Sweden and Her Knowledge of Greek</i>	41
PETER KRUSCHWITZ & VIRGINIA L. CAMPBELL	<i>What the Pompeians Saw: Representations of Document Types in Pompeian Drawings and Paintings (and their Value for Linguistic Research)</i>	57
LAURA NISSINEN	<i>Cubicula diurna, nocturna – Revisiting Roman cubicula and Sleeping Arrangements</i>	85
JANNE PÖLÖNEN	<i>Hiberus quidam in Dig. 8,2,13 pr: (M. Antonius) Hiberus (PIR² H 168)?</i>	109
OLLI SALOMIES & ZBIGNIEW FIEMA	<i>Latin Inscription from the Ridge Church at Petra</i>	108
KAJ SANDBERG	<i>Isis, the Pomerium and the Augural Topography of the Capitoline Area</i>	141
HEIKKI SOLIN	<i>Analecta epigraphica CCLII-CCLVIII</i>	161
KAIUS TUORI	<i>Dig. 34,2,33: the Return of the Cross-Dressing Senator</i>	191
STEPHEN EVANS	Review Article: <i>Dusting the Mythological Cobwebs</i>	201
	<i>De novis libris iudicia</i>	217
	<i>Index librorum in hoc volumine recensorum</i>	313
	<i>Libri nobis missi</i>	319
	<i>Index scriptorum</i>	337

WHAT THE POMPEIANS SAW: REPRESENTATIONS OF DOCUMENT TYPES IN POMPEIAN DRAWINGS AND PAINTINGS (AND THEIR VALUE FOR LINGUISTIC RESEARCH)

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1. Introduction

The way we look at texts is determined by various features, and as such the writing material, its format, and the layout in which a text is presented are among the most powerful factors that drive our expectations and our perception regarding any given text.¹ At an initial stage, before even reading any details, a first glance at a document tells us what content we should expect and the layout may trigger, almost as a reflex, expectations regarding the spread of specific information across a document. This works on an almost mechanical level, in fact to such a degree that modern word-processing software contains several templates for typical text types, in which one just needs to fill in the actual content, while all layout and formatting is provided and done by a computer.²

Text types, however, are not a modern invention, they seem to exist in virtually any literate or semiliterate society, and this is of little surprise: as writing is a tool, one would use it for specific purposes and in specific situations (in addition to occasional uses that are less easily categorised). What text types have in common is a set of shared features, macro-constituents, that often appear in a specific sequence or order on a document, and in many cases, the document itself may be subject to certain physical requirements such as format, size, and direction of writing on the document. Moreover, many text types, depending on their specific use in a society, depending on their *Sitz im Leben*, characteristically come with a specific, technical language used to fill in the macro-constituents of

¹ Discussed in greater detail in Kruschwitz 2008, 226–33.

² Moreover, for many standard text types there are international norms (such as ISO standards).

the template, making communication more efficient through standardisation and formulaic expressions.

The remains of Roman documentary texts – inscriptions, papyri, ostraka, pieces of parchment and so on – comprise a wide range of text types that fulfil exactly the requirements for text types as laid out above: standardised organisation of the template, use of technical language, use of formulaic expression, and specific format of the document itself. The typology of these texts has long been established by epigraphists, papyrologists, and ancient historians, but at the same time it has hardly been sufficiently exploited by linguists yet.

In this context, an interesting question to consider is this: how did "the Romans" themselves perceive their text types? Did they actually recognise them as such?³ How did they view them, and what did they mean to them? This inquiry into Roman attitudes towards text types seems to be all the more important, as it would support any future case to be made for the use and impact of documentary text types in the Roman world, as one could then argue with some confidence that what appears to be meaningful to us was meaningful to the Romans as well.

What one would need to make qualified judgements in this matter then, are drawn or painted representations of texts that usually occur in different contexts: drawings of inscriptions, letters, papyri, and ancient books.⁴ There is plenty of evidence for this, but already at first glance the vast amount of material one would have to consider, scattered across innumerable, often remote and unsystematic as well as incomplete publications, discourages one immediately from any attempt of a full-scale response to the questions posed. What seemed more realistic, in order to create a basis for future research, is an exploratory study of a coherent body of evidence. The most obvious choice, due to its excellent documentation, then, is the material that has been published in the fourth volume of the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*, comprising the hand-written and painted evidence from the Campanian settlements destroyed by Mt. Vesuvius in AD 79; this material can be supplemented with evidence from further places as available through publications such as Martin Langner's *Antike Graffitizeichnungen*⁵ or Francesco Paolo Maulucci Vivolo's *Graffiti figurati*.⁶

³ Interestingly enough, aspects of cognitive linguistics have almost entirely been neglected in the study of the Classical languages.

⁴ For linguistic studies of interaction between texts and pictorial elements cf. e. g. Muckenhaupt 1986, Hupka 1989, and Harms 1990.

⁵ Langner 2001.

⁶ Maulucci Vivolo 1993.

The chosen approach has some obvious limitations, and it seems important to spell these out: first of all, the material is chronologically restricted, as all evidence dates to AD 79 or earlier; any later view is lacking in the material covered here. Moreover, the view on representations of text types is restricted to what the Pompeians (Herculaneans, ...) saw, and it remains up to future studies to show that these insights are more than just a local slant on matters. However, whether or not these limitations and problems have any noticeable or even distorting impact on the findings in general, will have to remain subject of future study and will only to a minor degree lessen the importance of the findings to be presented here.

2. Representations of document types

The material that has been assembled in *CIL* IV generally comprises three major categories of text types represented in drawings and paintings: (i) inscriptions, (ii) books, and (iii) letters and other notes. Over the next few pages, we shall present and briefly discuss all relevant material, arranged by typological categories according to document type.

2.1. Inscriptions

The first category to be discussed – by far the best represented one in the material studied here – is inscriptions, i. e. cases in which inscriptions of certain shapes and types make cameo appearances in another genre, namely in graffiti and dipinti.

2.1.1. *Tabulae ansatae*

One shape that is typically recognised as distinctly Roman⁷ is the so-called *tabula ansata*, the winged tablet.⁸ The shape itself, comprised of trapezoidal handles

⁷ There are earlier attestations in Greek inscriptions. Moreover there are Greek inscriptions using this shape in a Roman context, see Romano 2007.

⁸ For a comprehensive discussion of the shape, see Schepp 2009. For discussions of late occurrences of *tabula ansata* in the Roman world, see Pani 1988.

or wings on each side of a rectangular panel, is believed to originate from the wooden panels used to display public notices in the Republican era.⁹ These were often mounted on poles, as were the *tabulae ansatae* depicted in the triumphal frieze on the Arch of Titus. The evolution of the panels from wood to other materials such as bronze and stone is unfortunately neglected, however, the evidence, particularly in the case of wood and metal, shows the use of chains or nails to mount the panels, indicating their intended use as a means to display a text.¹⁰ This shape features on monumental stone inscriptions both official and private, and was particularly favoured in use with votive offerings in the Imperial period.¹¹ This shape has also been used for metal¹² and wood panels,¹³ and occurs in mosaics.¹⁴ One remarkable aspect of the *tabula ansata* is its endurance in popularity as a recognisable form for text display across both space and time. Examples are found from Britain to the East, and range in date from the first century BC until the fourth century AD.¹⁵ In Pompeii, due to the unusual conditions of preservation, there is evidence for use of this form as dipinti electoral programmata,¹⁶ and in a non-monumental, sometimes parodistic way as graffiti.

⁹ See Keppie 1991, 10, 15 and Langner 2001, 27.

¹⁰ See e.g. *CIL* V 6875, a bronze *tabula ansata* that lost its left wing and subsequently had an additional hole made through the body of the panel in order to keep it on display.

¹¹ See Meyer 2004, 28 n. 38 and Hunt 2002.

¹² See e. g. Albert 1972, Calzolari 1985, and Hunt 2002. Amongst the metal examples of *tabulae ansatae*, many of which were part of votive offerings, there is one interesting occurrence from Pompeii of a door plate, inscribed with the name of the house's occupant. See *NSA* 1933, 322, 358 (cf. *AE* 1934, 143).

¹³ See Caruana 1987, discussing a wooden panel from Carlisle, dating back to the Flavian period. The possibility of a painted inscription on this panel has been discussed, but apparently has never been securely established. Nevertheless, use of nails to attach this ansate panel to another surface and therefore its function as carrier of an inscription of some sort is beyond dispute, especially in light of the fact that the nails were bent over prior to the panel's re-use in the flooring of the Flavian fort.

¹⁴ A number of the market stalls in Ostia's Piazzale delle Corporazioni contain identifying inscriptions framed by *tabulae ansatae*. See *CIL* XIV 4549, 1–4, 12, 17–19, 21, 34, 38.

¹⁵ See e.g. Hunt 2002, who gives a *terminus post quem* of 25 B.C. and a *terminus ante quem* of AD 379 for the bronze *tabulae ansatae* found at Summus Poeninus.

¹⁶ Reported e. g. for *CIL* IV 3460, 3462 (both for Gavius Rufus, in ins. VI 13), 3478 (for L. Ceius Secundus, ins. VI 14), 3496 (for Ti. Claudius Verus, ins. VI 14), 3686 (for L. Albucius and M. Casellius, ins. IX 3), 7749 (for Popidius Secundus, in ins. III 6). Slightly less clear is the situation in case of *CIL* IV 234 (for M. Cerrinius Vatia; "in tectorio in tabellae formam dealbato").

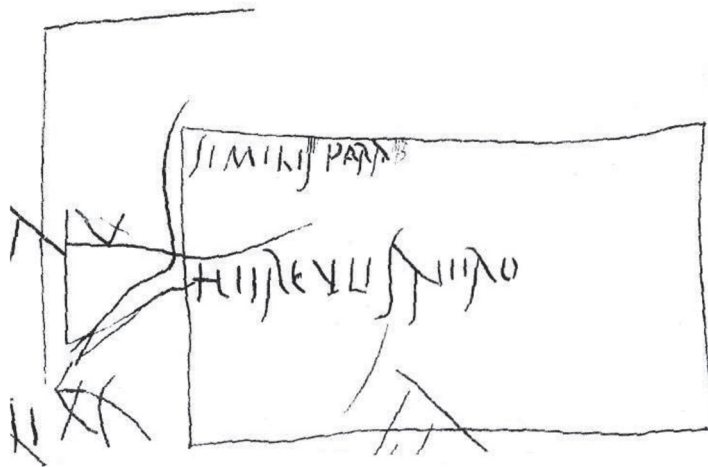
2.1.1.1. Personal names

The vast majority of attestations of the *tabula ansata* type in graffiti contains nothing but names. This group can be subdivided into names of (a) gladiators, (b) artists or craftsmen, and (c) other names that carry no specific attributes as above.

a) Gladiators

There are four secure attestations for gladiator names written in *tabulae ansatae*; it seems entirely possible, though, that there are further ones among the unidentified ones in section (c), below.

(1) **CIL IV 1513 (tab. XXIX 27)**: the first attestation was discovered on the building VI 14, 43, the so-called *Casa degli Scienziati*, to the right of the entrance of this building.¹⁷ The *tabula ansata* comes with a single wing on the left-hand side, and the spread of the inscribed text across the tablet is rather uneven:¹⁸



Similis Para[ti] (sc. seruus) | Herculis Nero(nianus).

Similis (slave of) Paratus, Hercules, gladiator of Nero's training school.¹⁹

¹⁷ For another inscription in a *tabula ansata* discovered here see below, text (15).

¹⁸ Drawing taken from *CIL IV tab. XXIX 27*.

¹⁹ On the *ludus Neronianus* cf. e. g. Jacobelli 2003, 45–6.

(2) **CIL IV 4294**: the next attestation to be mentioned here has been discovered in the so-called Gladiators' Barracks, V 5, 3,²⁰ on the second column of the left-hand side in the peristyle:

Inuetus | Pompe(i seruius?) (pugnarum) XIII || (coronarum) XI | III.

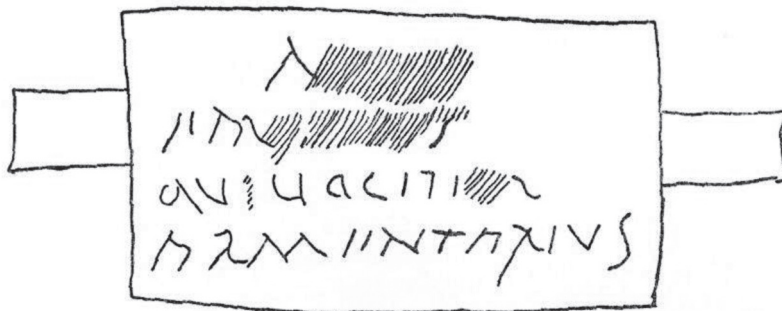
Inve(n)tus, slave of Pompeius (?),²¹ 14 fights, 14 wins.

(3) **CIL IV 4374**: the next secure attestation comes from the same place as (2), it too was discovered in the peristyle of house no. V 5, 3, but was read on the fourth column of the right-hand side; the text is not without difficulties:

+N(- - -) Murtius | (coronarum) II | P(ublius?) Asicius (coronarum) XV.

(...) Murtius, 2 wins, Publius (?) Asicius, 15 wins.²²

(4) **CIL IV 4379 (cf. p. 705)**: the final secure attestation also comes from the house no. V 5, 3 (like [2. 3]), and it was discovered on the same column as (3):²³



M[urmillo?] | Fau[stu]s | qui uocat[u]r | Armentarius.

Murmillo (?) Faustus, a. k. a. Armentarius.²⁴

²⁰ On this structure cf. Eschebach 1993, 145 and Jacobelli 2003, 65–6 (with notes on p. 119).

²¹ Castrén 1983, 205 no. 1 (and 3) thinks that Inventus is the slave of one Sex. Pompeius Proculus, as said Pompeius is supported by some Inventus in an electoral programma (*CIL IV 327*); this is of course rather haphazard, the text might just as well mean that Inventus fought (and won) at Pompeii or was a Pompeian himself.

²² On L. Asicius see more generally R. I. Curtis, "A Slur on Lucius Asicius, the Pompeian Gladiator", *TAPhA* 110 (1980) 51–61 (even if one might not be inclined to follow the general argument).

²³ Drawing taken from *CIL IV* ad loc.

²⁴ The text is more complicated than it might seem; H. Solin, "Analecta Epigraphica", *Arctos*

b) Artists/Craftsmen

The second sub-section comprises only two examples, yet it seemed appropriate to introduce it: artists' signatures are a text type in its own right, and artists' signatures in a special shape deserve special attention.

(5) **CIL IV 806. 807 (cf. p. 196. 461); ILS 6036**: the first example that needs to be mentioned here is the famous shop sign for the *hospitium* of one Sittius, presumably called *The Elephant*; the sign was discovered between the entrances VII 1, 44 and 45. Unfortunately the painting and the text have long since disappeared. According to the tradition, there was "dipinto e modo d'insegna un elefante [rosso] che cinto nel corpo da grosso [giallo] serpente è custodito da un pigmeo(r) sopra in una piccola tabella ansata leggesi [806] FIOR." (*CIL* ad loc.).²⁵ The text that is said to have been inscribed in the *tabula ansata* reads thus:

Sittius res|tituit | Elep(h)an|tu(m).

*Hospitium hic locatur. | triclinium cum tribus lectis || e(t) comm(odis) [- -
-].*

Sittius has restored the Elephant.

Tavern to let. Triclinium with three beds and amenities (...).²⁶

(6) **CIL IV 9257**: the second example in this category was discovered "in oeci n. 16 pariete occidentali sub secunda regione eleganter picta" in the villa "Santini" at Boscotrecase underneath a painting of a landscape.²⁷ According to the editors, this text has been "lineis inclusum":

Sabinus (sc. pinxit?).

(Painted by?) Sabinus.

40 (2006) 131–65, 133 s. v. *Armentarius* is right in pointing out that one should not easily assume *Armentarius* to be a *cognomen* here. Whether it is a nickname or something else entirely, still awaits explanation.

²⁵ For a more detailed description of the painting in Helbig 1868, 400 no. 1601.

²⁶ For a further discussion of the advertisement see Kruschwitz 1999, 238–9.

²⁷ Edited by M. Della Corte, *NSA* 1922, 474.

c) Other

(7) **CIL IV 2424 (cf. tab. XXXI 37)**: the following example was discovered in the so-called *corridoio de' teatri* (VIII 7, 20), above another (uninscribed) *tabula ansata*:



Antonius.

It seems noteworthy that the writer did not manage (or not intend?) to inscribe the whole name into the *tabula ansata*, since the final –s is clearly written outside the *tabula*, almost forming part of the right ansa.

(8) **CIL IV 4787**: the next attestation, surrounded by drawings of *phalloi*, has been discovered in the house no. VII 7, 19, to the right of the entrance of this building; according to the editors of *CIL IV ad loc.*, the inscription (or just the *tabula ansata*?) were already damaged in antiquity ("antiquitus erasa"):

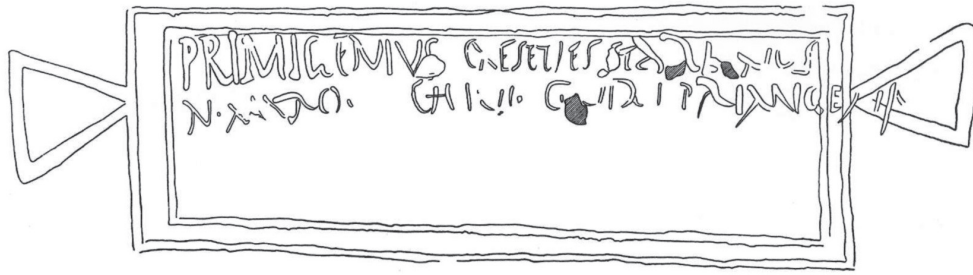
*Rarus | Idaeus | Verus.*²⁸

(9) **CIL IV 7425**: the next attestation, a dipinto (dimensions: 42 x 15 cm), discovered to the left of the entrance of building no. I 11, 6 (the so-called House of Venus in the Bikini), has been related to a street altar,²⁹ as it appeared to contain the names of the *ministri compiti* in letters of 30–12 cm height (decreasing):³⁰

²⁸ On this text see also H. Solin, "Analecta epigraphica", *Arctos* 43 (2009) 175.

²⁹ See van Andringa 2000, 59 no. 18 (with p. 61 fig. 21c).

³⁰ First edited by M. Della Corte, *NSA* 1913, 478–9. Image taken from *CIL IV ad loc.*



*Primigenius Caeseti(a)es, Stalbnus*³¹ | *N(umerii) Maro(nis?)*, *Chius C(ai) Viri (uel Vibi?) Primigeni*.

Primigenius, slave of Caesetia, Stalbnus, slave of Numerius Maro (?), Chius, slave of Gaius Virius (*or* Vibius) Primigenius.

(10) **CIL IV 8804**: The final case to be included here, discovered on the palaestra (II 7, column no. 117) is a bit complicated. The way the attestation is presented in the original publication in *Notizie degli scavi* (with some confusion over the numbers)³² is this:³³



Based on this edition, the *CIL* ad loc. suggests that the head and the inscription form a unit. According to Langner, however, who re-examined the drawing, this cannot be true – Langner's main point being that the inscription and the image are not situated in the same cannelure on the column.³⁴

³¹ Van Andringa 2000, 59 suggests the reading of Stab[ia]nus, which is hardly less problematic than Della Corte's original version. – A revision of the whole text has now been proposed by H. Solin, "Analecta Epigraphica", *Arctos* 43 (2009) 179f., also containing a fuller discussion of the text's very nature.

³² The image in *NSA*, whence the above drawing is taken, is incorrectly identified as no. 391.

³³ M. Della Corte, *NSA* 1939, 301, 390.

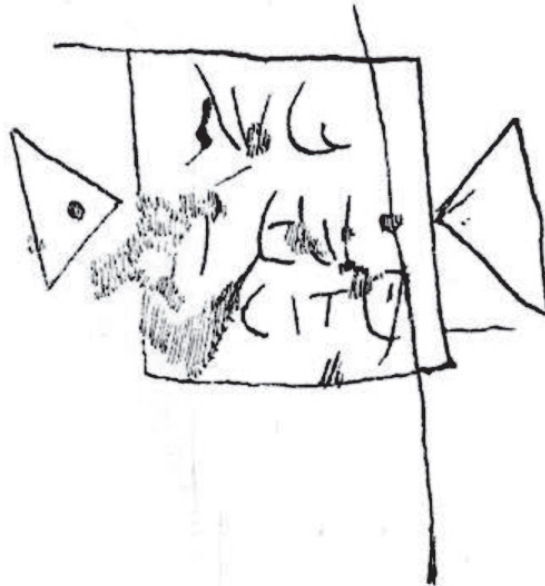
³⁴ Langner 2001, 44 n. 255.

The text seems to read either *Persi* or *Pers(- -)*:³⁵ the drawings at hand are not entirely clear.³⁶

2.1.1.2. Greetings/Wishes/Orders

A second sub-group of texts inscribed into *tabulae ansatae* in Pompeii comprises greetings, wishes, and orders.

(11) **CIL IV 2460 (cf. tab. XV 3)**: the first attestation that needs to be mentioned here was discovered on a column in the large theatre (VIII 7, 20) "ad scaenae parietis orientalis partem externam posita (...) in tectorio albo":³⁷



Aug(usto) |feli|citer.

Good luck to the emperor.

The function of the vertical line is unclear. Could this resemble a stick to which the *tabula* was attached?³⁸ Interestingly enough, another (presumably parodistic) official-looking text also inscribed in a *tabula ansata* was discovered at the very same spot, see below, text (17).

³⁵ Castrén 1983, 203 sub no. 302 regards this attestation of the name Persius as dubious.

³⁶ In addition to Della Corte's rendering in *NSA*, see Langner 2001, no. 414 (on CD).

³⁷ Drawing taken from *CIL IV tab. XV 3*.

³⁸ See above, p. 60.

(12) *CIL IV 5438*: the next attestation to be considered here was discovered outside the city wall, between the Vesuvian and the Herculanean gates in a passageway of a building that has been excavated by D'Aquinio.³⁹ The text was written with charcoal on whitewashed surface:

Cacator ca|ue malum [- - -?].

Defecator, expect the worst!

A common type of warning at Pompeii;⁴⁰ the official-looking template of a *tabula ansata* chosen for this message seems rather remarkable.

(13) *CIL IV 9223*: the final example for this category was discovered in the atrium of a villa rustica situated about 100 m to the north of the last tombs of the *Via dei Sepolcri*.⁴¹



*Caecinia | Orania | ua(le) ua(le).*⁴²

Caecinius Orania, farewell, farewell!⁴³

³⁹ See the report by A. Sogliano, *NSA* 1898, 494–5.

⁴⁰ Cf. *CIL IV* 813, 3782, 3832, 4586, 7714, 7715, 7716.

⁴¹ See the report by M. Della Corte, *NSA* 1922, 480–4, esp. 484 no. 21.

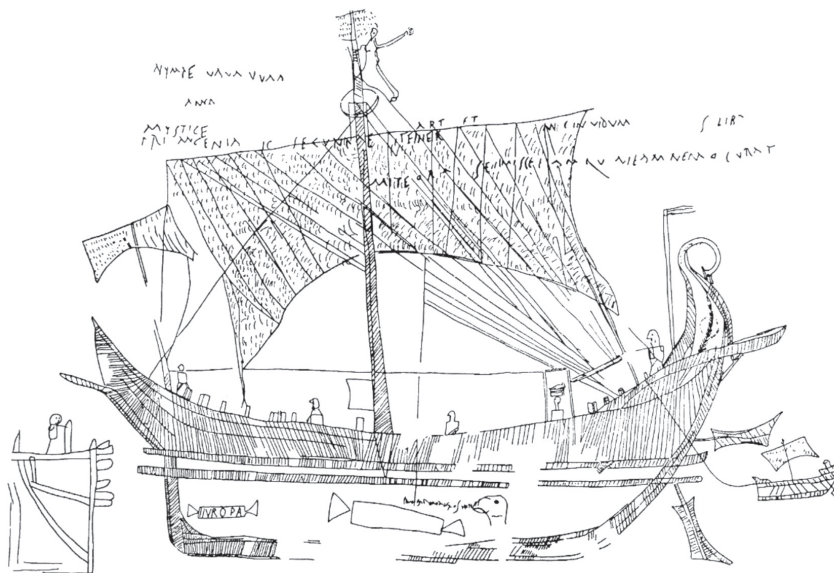
⁴² The text was most certainly incorrectly edited by M. Della Corte; the shape chosen here takes into account Solin 1973, 268 ad loc. One might even try *Caecini(a) ua(le) | Ornata* eqs. – the text remains problematic.

⁴³ The inscription is mentioned by E. Dickey, *Latin Forms of Address*, Oxford 2002, 74 with n. 67 as an example for address of females by two names rather than just one (a form of address well-attested in epigraphical sources, yet avoided in literary texts).

2.1.1.3. Ships

The category "ships" requires a little justification here, as there is only one example from Pompeii, viz. the well-known drawing of the ship called *Europa*. The rationale is this: there is at least one other example of a ship drawing, discovered in quarry III at Silsile (Egypt), displaying relevant related information in a *tabula ansata*, too.⁴⁴ Could this mean that actual ship names were displayed on *tabulae ansatae*?

(14) A complex graffito drawing from the *Casa della Nave Europa* (I 15, 2. 3), where it was discovered on the northern wall of the peristyle, to the left of the door leading towards shop no. 3. The dimensions, according to Langner, are 1.05 x 1.52 m.⁴⁵



The drawing shows a large vessel, and the body of the ship is decorated with two *tabulae ansatae*, one of which, close to one end of the vessel, is inscribed, containing what is believed to be the name of the ship: *Europa*. The function of the uninscribed plaque remains unknown.

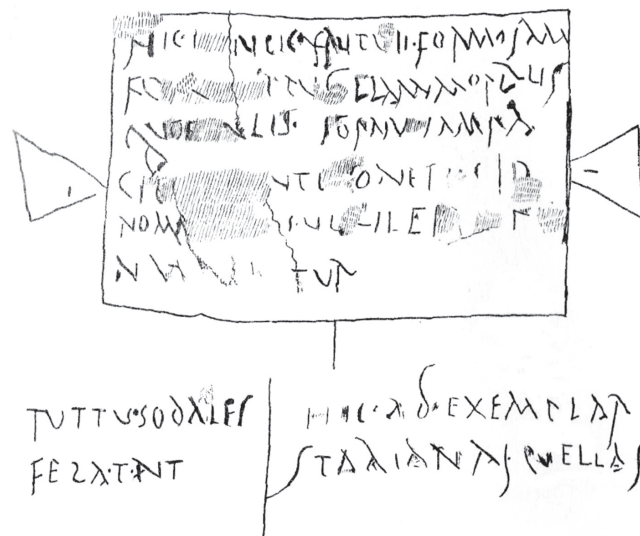
⁴⁴ Published by F. Preisigke – W. Spiegelberg, *Ägyptische und griechische Inschriften und Graffiti aus den Steinbrüchen des Gebel Silsile (Oberägypten)*, Strassburg 1915, Taf. VII no. 116.

⁴⁵ Drawing taken from Langner 2001, Taf. 129 fig. 2019. (also on CD) – For further discussion of this drawing cf. Pekáry 1999, 214 no. I-P 31, Langner 2001, 110 (inter al.), and Maulucci Vivolo 2003, 200–2.

2.1.1.4. Other

There is one more example that needs to be discussed under the rubric of the *tabula ansata*, and it is not only the longest text included in this shape, but at the same time also the most remarkable one.

(15) *CIL IV 1517* (cf. p. 463; tab. XXX 1. 2); *CLE 955 adn.*: this attestation, like text (1), was discovered next to the entrance of the building no. VI 14, 43, the so-called *Casa degli Scienziati*. The text, revealing a couple of phonetic peculiarities,⁴⁶ represents a (highly fragmentary) poem:⁴⁷



*Hic [ego] nuc futue formosam | for[ma] puellam morbus | qu[- - -]alis
form[- - -]am fa[cie[- - -]T[- - -]ONET[- - -] | nom[- - -]SVL[-]ILE[- - -]
N[- - -]tur.⁴⁸*

Here I have now happened to fuck a beautiful girl, whose beautiful face
(was affected by) such a disease...⁴⁹

The sentiment of the initial hexameter, followed by further lines of changing content (and decency) is attested many times inside and outside Pompeii,⁵⁰ once

⁴⁶ Cf. Courtney 1995, 308 no. 94b for a short commentary and more recently J. N. Adams, *The Regional Diversification of Latin 200 BC – AD 600*, Cambridge 2007, 442.

⁴⁷ Drawing taken from *CIL IV* tab. XXX 1. 2. From the way the text is presented in *CIL IV* ad loc. one would assume that the two lines in the drawing should join up.

⁴⁸ Constitution of the text is following Varone 2002, 120 n. 190.

⁴⁹ Translation by Courtney 1995, 99.

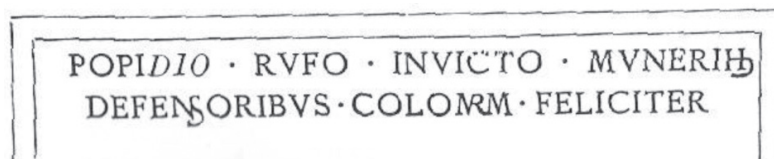
⁵⁰ Cf. Kruschwitz 2004, 41–2 with n. 43.

(not inscribed in a *tabula ansata*) even right next to the attestation mentioned here.⁵¹ The text inscribed in a *tabula ansata*⁵² here seems particularly noteworthy as an official-looking, monumental template is chosen for the announcement of sexual conquest as well as the announcement of an apparent disease.⁵³ It is more than obvious that in this case the chosen presentation lends further meaning to an otherwise just plain obscene text.

2.1.2. Other monumental inscriptions

The *tabula ansata* is the single most popular choice for representations of graffiti as monumental text, but not the only one. It would appear from the material that other types of monumental inscriptions were also used as a model for the presentation of handwritten texts – two texts in particular deserve mention here:⁵⁴

(16) **CIL IV 1094**: the first example was discovered in the gladiators' barracks VIII 7, 16.⁵⁵ The text itself is a dipinto, framed with a dark margin, and appears to be an acclamation in disguise of an honorary inscription.⁵⁶



Popidio Rufo inuicto muner(ario) III, | defensoribus colon(o)rum feliciter.

To Popidius Rufus, unbeatable organiser of games three times, (and) the defenders of the colonists: good luck!⁵⁷

⁵¹ *CIL IV* 1516; *CLE* 955. Cf. also Wachter 1998, 87 with n. 83.

⁵² Once again it would appear that the *tabula ansata* is drawn as if attached to a stick (for a similar case cf. text [11]), and here more than in the aforementioned case, one might wonder if that has a special meaning; see above, p. 60.

⁵³ For further discussion of this aspect cf. Varone 2002, 119–20.

⁵⁴ One could of course (and rightly) argue that the whole genre of dipinti as advertisements for candidates and circus games, as the letter shapes show, represents monumental inscriptions. However, these texts are text types of their own right and form a consistent group, therefore need to be dealt with in a different fashion than texts that usurp the shape of other genres for a more or less specific purpose on an individual basis. – Whether *CIL IV* 10485 ("in tabellis, pulchris litteris nigris") belongs here or not, could not be established.

⁵⁵ On this building cf. Eschebach 1993, 390.

⁵⁶ No drawing seems to exist; image taken from *CIL IV* ad loc.

⁵⁷ On Popidius Rufus cf. Jacobelli 2003, 44.

(17) *CIL* IV 2459 (cf. tab. XV 4); *ILS* 6439: the next text was discovered in the large theatre (VIII 7, 20) in the immediate vicinity of text (11), above. The inscription, a graffito, was described as *tabula ansata* by Karl Zangemeister (*CIL* IV ad loc.), but his drawing of the text seems to make it rather clear that the text is not inscribed in a *tabula ansata*: much rather a framed inscription, resembling a monumental type, is at hand.⁵⁸



Ex scito | ordinis | Primus OR|+++++++.

While it has rightly been recognised that this resembles official terminology,⁵⁹ it is also clear that this is not actually an official text, but must be a parody of some sort (similar to text [15]?). The very point of this text remains unclear.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Drawing taken from *CIL* IV tab. XV 4.

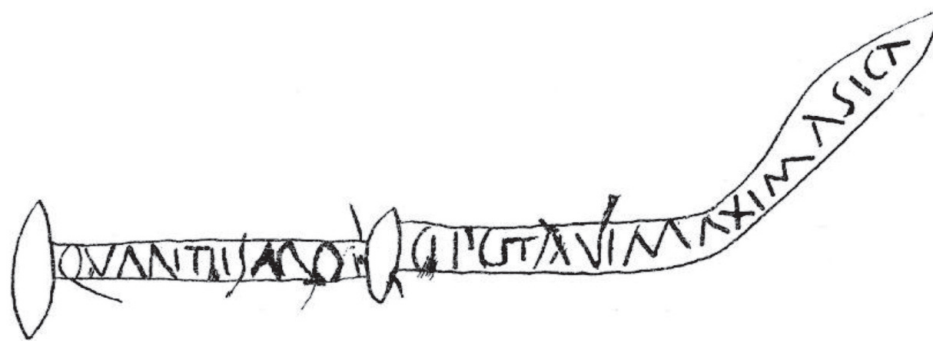
⁵⁹ See Castrén 1983, 59 with n. 9.

⁶⁰ The same might apply for *CIL* IV 2484, 2485 which are given with a frame in *CIL* IV ad loc. As frames were used for various purposes in *CIL* IV (mostly to indicate erasures, though) and no specific mention of a frame is made in the descriptions of these inscriptions in *CIL* IV, it seemed sensible not to include these examples into the main text. There are, of course, as Langner 2001, 27 points out, many further cases of simple frames drawn around graffiti to make them stand out more in their respective contexts, and most of them will not represent any monumental types, cf. e. g. *CIL* IV 8842, 8859, 8860, 8861, 10674 (to give but a few examples). The same appears to be true for lines drawn to highlight certain texts, cf. e. g. *CIL* IV 1237, 1237a, 1745, 2025, 10650. The case of *CIL* IV 8364 must remain open to debate; Della Corte, *CIL* IV ad loc. claims it was presented "in formam codicilli" however, the drawing does not support this. His reference to "epistola 2414" is useless.

2.1.3. Inscribed objects

Whereas subsections 2.1.1. and 2.1.2. dealt with inscriptions that basically represent monumental types, the next category will focus on representations of inscribed objects as they, for example, would be found in dedicatory contexts. There is only a single occurrence that requires mention in this context, however the text occurs twice on the same wall.⁶¹

(18) CIL IV 2396 (cf. p. 221. 704; tab. LII 10): the text was discovered in the peristyle of building no. IX 1, 22, and it would appear that this inscription has been inscribed in a *sica* ("dagger") as it is mentioned in the text itself.⁶²



Quant(a) es modesta, ui maxima, sica.

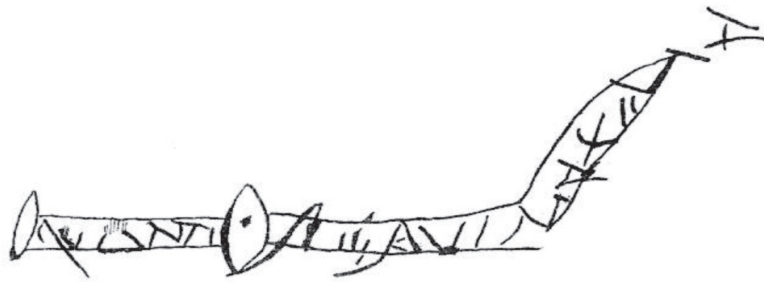
The text, clearly addressing the object as *sica*, is anything but clear – the text here represents Heikki Solin's efforts to decipher the text in repeated autopsy. Is it supposed to mean "how humble you are, despite your enormous power, dagger"?

(19) CIL IV 2397 (cf. p. 221; tab. LII 9): found in the same spot, apparently another, incomplete version of text **(18)**.⁶³

⁶¹ Another inscribed object is mentioned below, text **(27 d)**. It has not been included here, since it does not exactly represent a decorative inscription added to a mobile object. The same applies for actual vessels that are inscribed and sometimes show elements beyond the actual letters of an inscription, cf. e. g. *CIL* IV 9378, 9380.

⁶² Image taken from *CIL* IV tab LII 10.

⁶³ Image taken from *CIL* IV tab LII 9.

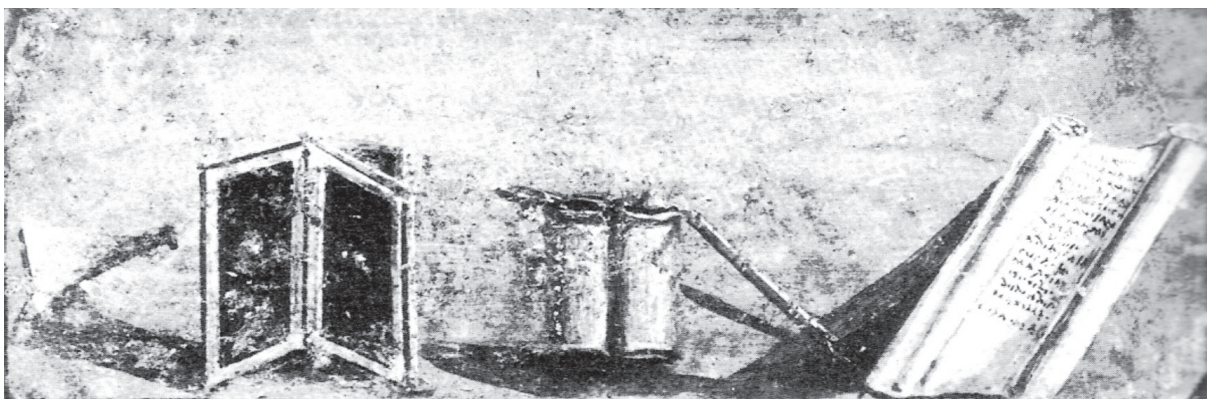


Quant(a) es modesta, ui maxima, sica (?).

2.2. Books

The next major category to be considered here comprises representations of books (usually in combination with further writing implements). Representations of books on Pompeian walls have been studied recently by Elizabeth Meyer – this section therefore is more of a digest than the previous one.⁶⁴

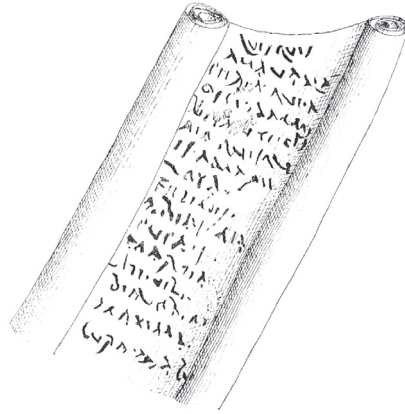
(20) *CIL* IV 1173 (cf. p. 204. 461; tab. XVIII 1); *CLE* 946: the first example, a complex wall painting (of uncertain origin)⁶⁵ showing a wide range of writing utensils, has a book on display that (partly) shows a poem which is attested many more times across Pompeii.⁶⁶



⁶⁴ Relevant and related materials have been collected and carefully described by Helbig 1868, 412–4; for a recent discussion see Meyer 2009 (who notes that the representations of writing accoutrements depicted in wall paintings can be confirmed archaeologically, see p. 570 n. 10), but also cf. e. g. Starac 2008 for examples from Histria.

⁶⁵ Cf. *CIL* IV p. 68: *Locorum incertorum*. Description in Helbig 1868, 413 no. 1724.

⁶⁶ Photo taken from N. Purcell, *The Arts of Government*, in J. Boardman – J. Griffin – O. Murray (edd.), *The Oxford History of the Classical World*, Oxford – New York, 1986, 560–91, 586; the drawing is from *CIL* IV tab. XVIII 1. See Meyer 2009, 591 cat. 13.



*Quisquis | ama ualia | peria qui n|osci amare: |⁵ bis [t]anti pe|ria quiqu|is
amare uota. | felices |¹⁰ adias ma|neas | o Martia | si te uidi (?) | du nobis |¹⁵
maxima | cura place.⁶⁷*

Whoever is in love, shall live long; who does not know to love, shall die!
He shall die twice as much, whoever forbids to love. Happy people may
you approach, may you await, oh Martia, as long as I saw you, my sweetest
concern, for as long as it pleased me.

As pointed out above, the text of the initial distich has been found in several spots around Pompeii,⁶⁸ which suggests a common source of some sort.⁶⁹ Since the text has only been represented in the form of a painting here (all other attestations are graffiti), one might wonder if – as in other cases – the painting was the origin for the local spread.⁷⁰ However, as the origin of the painting cannot be established, this must remain speculation. Another interesting question would be: does the text, as it is represented as book poetry in this case, go back to a (now lost) literary source? Again, nothing can be established with certainty.

(21) *CIL* IV 1174 (cf. p. 204. 461; tab. XVIII 3): another painting of equally uncertain origin, again showing a range of writing utensils. What seems to represent two adjoining *tabellae*, shown among other items, appears to contain a didascalical note:⁷¹

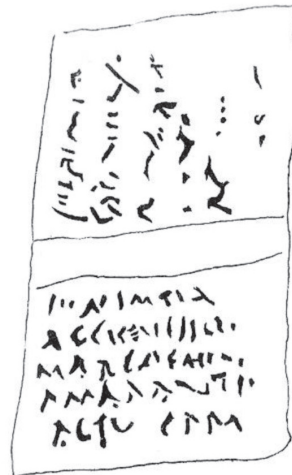
⁶⁷ The text of lines 9 ff. is anything but certain. Interestingly enough, it also hardly ever is mentioned in scholarship on this poem (which otherwise has been discussed abundantly especially due to its rather prominent linguistic features of a lowish diastratic variety of Latin).

⁶⁸ Cf. *CIL* IV 4091, 3199, 3200d, 5272, 6782, 9202. Solin 1975, nos. 18, 65, 66. Paraphrase / opposite meaning in *CIL* IV 4659, 466, 5186 (cf. 1824). Cf. Varone 2002, 62–3 with n. 83.

⁶⁹ Discussed by Wachter 1998, 76–7 with regards to features of "oral poetry".

⁷⁰ Cf. Kruschwitz 2006 for similar cases.

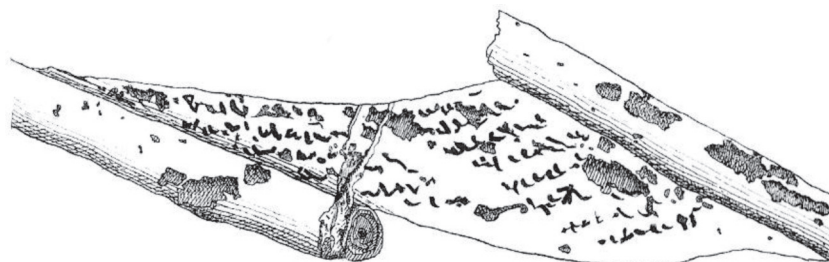
⁷¹ See Helbig 1868, 413–4 no. 1725 and Meyer 2009, 592 cat. 14, who identifies these as one-



Septimea | *Acci Caese(tiani?)*⁷² | *Marcella* | *Amaranti* | *actu(m) Pom(peis)*.
 || *Septimia Caes[e(tian)- - -]* | *A[- - -]RIA* | *[- - -]V[- - -]* | *[- - - - -]* | *[- - - - -]*.

This item, illegible as it is, shows two particularly interesting features: on the one hand, if the identification as a didascalic note (otherwise only attested for Terence's comedies in Latin) is correct, this would be a rare piece of evidence for Roman theatre practice as well as conservation of dramatic scripts; on the other hand, this item shows an interesting change of writing direction (which would add to the documentary flavour of the text type).

(22) *CIL IV 1175* (cf. *tab. XVIII 2*): yet another painting of uncertain origin, apparently found in Herculaneum (and not in Pompeii, as the previous items):⁷³



Except for *Publium* || *Aufidium* nothing certain seems to have been established.

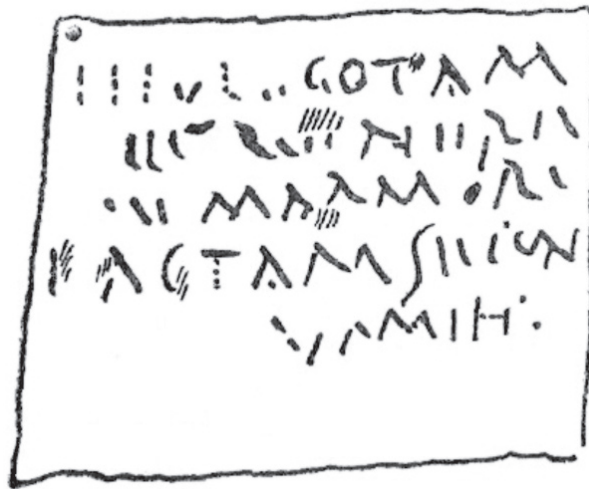
eared tablets or *tesserae frumentariae*.

⁷² Cf. Castrén 1983, 129 no. 3, 2.

⁷³ Image taken from *CIL IV tab. XVIII 2*. See Meyer 2009, 590 cat. 8.

(23) *CIL IV 3024*: a further painting of uncertain origin (K. Zangemeister, *CIL IV ad loc.* speculates whether it is from Pompeii, but it might just as well be from Herculaneum), displaying two *uolumina* and a diptychon.⁷⁴ Even though it is clear that there were written elements to be seen, nothing meaningful about the text has been established (cf. *CIL IV ad loc.*).

(24) *CIL IV 3691*; *CLE 951*: a wall painting displaying writing utensils as well as an opened papyrus scroll, discovered in the left wing of building no. IX 5, 11 close to the depiction of an Amor holding grapes and a sceptre.⁷⁵



*Non [e]go tam | [d]uc[o] Venere(m) | [d]e marmor[e] | factam secun|[dam
qu]am mih[i] | - - - - -.*

I don't think a Venus made of marble would be as favourable to me as ...⁷⁶

(25) *CIL IV 10481*: an interesting Greek example for the (painted) depiction of an ancient book was discovered in Herculaneum, ins. IV "8 in ambulacri membro posteriore supra ianuam quae ambulacrum partitur in dissaepti latere occidentali (i. e. contra aedium partem interiorem, non contra aditum)" (Della Corte ad loc.):⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Description in Helbig 1868, 412 no. 1719.

⁷⁵ Image taken from *CIL IV ad loc.*

⁷⁶ Translation by Varone 2002, 28–30 (with n. 20) who discussed the text in greater detail. Cf. also Kruschwitz 2004, 55–6.

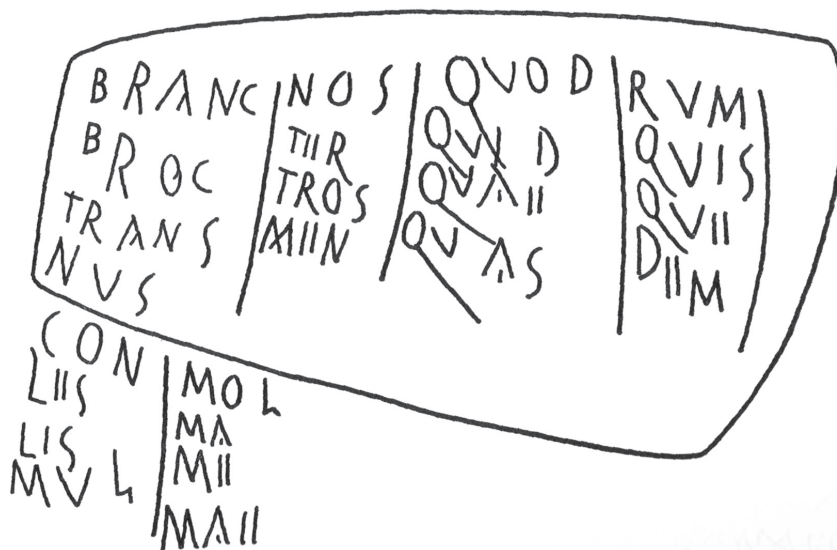
⁷⁷ Image taken from *CIL IV ad loc.*



Εὐτυχὸς χοριαμ[βικά - - -] σὸν μ[ο]υσικαῖς +++.
Eutychos' Choriambika with musical notes (?).⁷⁸

What is remarkable here is the way the content description has been written all across the scroll (rather than having been attached to the scroll in the form of a short *titulus*).

(26) **CIL IV 10567**: the final example to be presented here is rather different from all the previous ones, as it does not show an actual depiction of any book. Nevertheless it might perhaps provide a glimpse into the internal organisation of ancient grammar books? The text was discovered in Herculaneum (V 7 "in area ubi est nymphaeum, in pariete occidentali" [Della Corte, *CIL IV ad tit. 10565*]):⁷⁹



Branc | broc | trans | mus || Nos | ter | tros | men || Quod | quid | quae | quas
|| Rum | quis | que | dem | Con | les | gis | mul || Mol | mae | me | mae.

⁷⁸ The reading is very dubious, as Solin 1973, 274 rightly pointed out: one would expect the genitive of the name of the author, not a nominative.

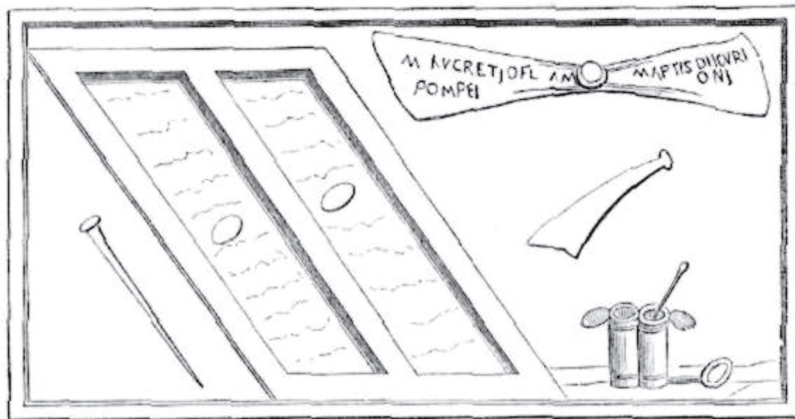
⁷⁹ Image taken from *CIL IV ad loc.*

The text, defying any translation, has been strangely neglected by scholars so far. It seems obvious that this is a grammatical exercise of some sort,⁸⁰ e. g. showing the declension of *noster/nostros* as well as forms of the interrogative pronoun *quod, quid, quae, quas*; however, most of the text as well as its organisation remains obscure.⁸¹

2.3. Letters and other notes

The next category to be considered here is a rather unusual one, comprising depictions of document types which are usually meant for circulation of some sort.

(27) *CIL IV 879* (cf. p. 197); *ILS 6364*: the first example that needs mention here is a painted papyrus letter. The painting was discovered in the peristyle of building no. IX 3, 5 (the so-called house of M. Lucretius, the name being derived from this very inscription). The image shows the letter next to further writing utensils, almost like providing an overview of the desktop of Marcus Lucretius:⁸²



M(arco) Lucretio flam(ini) (sigillum) Martis decuri|oni | Pompei(s uel -ano).

To Marcus Lucretius, flamen of Mars and decurio, at Pompeii (*or*: Pompeian). (*sealed*)⁸³

⁸⁰ Similar texts in *CIL IV* comprise *CIL IV* 1364, 9231, 9233.

⁸¹ But see Solin 1973, 275.

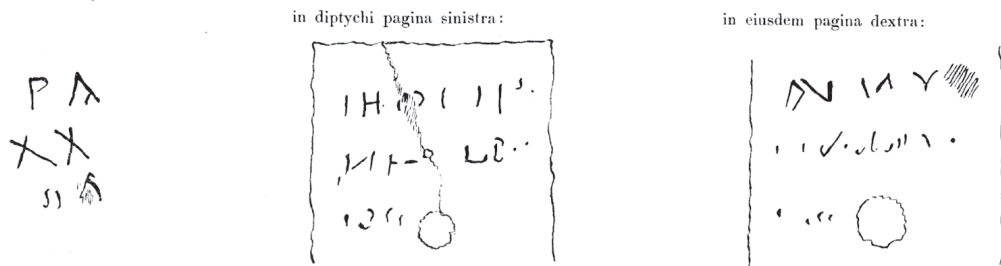
⁸² Image taken from Dyer 1867, 455. Further description in Helbig 1868, 412 no. 1722 and Meyer 2009, 589–90 cat. 3.

⁸³ Seals are also shown in text (28).

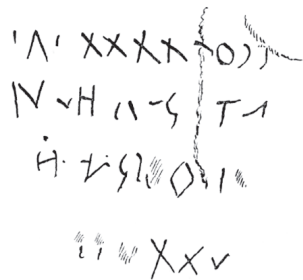
What is remarkable about this image is how the painting has been employed to serve and enhance the self-representation of the (alleged) house-owner, giving his religious and political office as part of the address.

(28) CIL IV 1175b (cf. p. 204. 462): the next example is slightly more complicated and confusing, not only because the exact provenance is unclear. Here is how the scenery of the painting is represented in *CIL IV* p. 462:⁸⁴

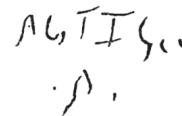
N. 1175b. *Pictura Pitt. d'Erc* V p. 375, Helbig 1702. 1726, extat Neapoli in Museo. Repraesentantur volumen papyri, diptychon, apertum, tabula. In papyri indice scriptum est:



in tabula:



In alia eiusdem parietis parte (Helbig 1702) repraesentatur vas fictile in quo scriptum est:



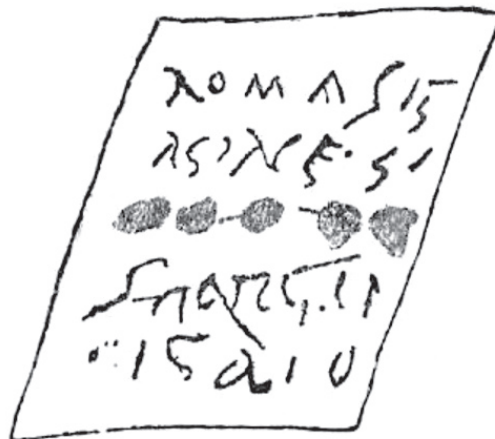
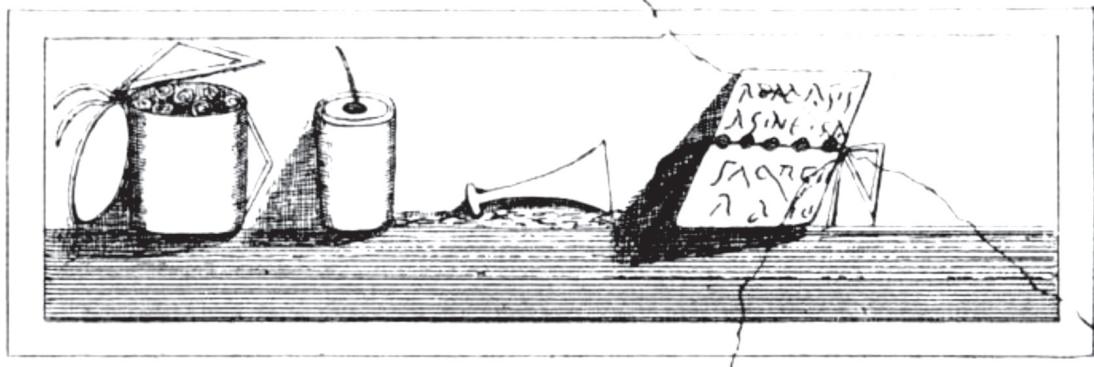
Apparently what one has at hand here is a plethora of different texts, (a) the *titulus* of a papyrus scroll, (b) a diptych inscribed on two pages, (c) a writing tablet, and (d) – on a nearby painting? – an inscribed object resembling a bottle. The texts have been "deciphered" thus:

- (a) *Pa(gina) XX | SSS.*
- (b₁) *IH OLLP | [-----] | [-----]*
- (b₂) *[-----] | [-----] | [-----]*
- (c) *IAI XXXX[---] | IVVH[---] | [-----] | II XXV.*
- (d) *AGIIS | P.*

As interesting as the painting may seem to be from a typological viewpoint, it is obvious that the illegibility of these texts does not help to form any strong argument.

⁸⁴ Further description in Helbig 1868, 412 nos. 1719–21 and 409–10 no. 1702. See also Meyer 2009, 589 cat. 2.

(29) *CIL IV 6696*: the next example is a painting from Boscoreale, discovered during the excavations of a villa rustica in that area. The wall painting, like the previous cases, represents a variety of writing utensils among which there is a *tabula*⁸⁵ showing both an inscription and a series of five seals:⁸⁶



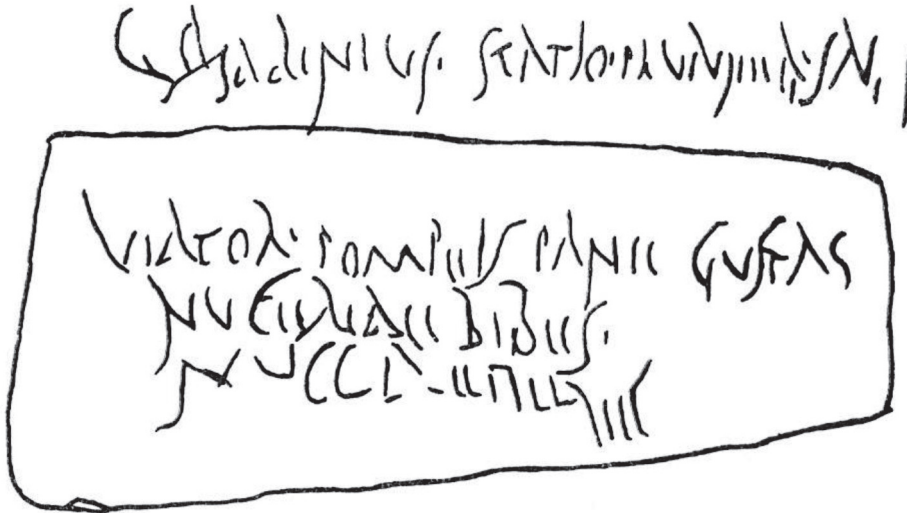
Roma sis | asine si | (quinque sigilla) | SAQ++++ | +++++.

Even though individual words can be recognised (Rome, may you be, ass/donkey, if), the text does not function as a whole. In the light of the previous examples, it appears remarkable that a (seemingly) nonsensical text was inscribed into what gives the impression of being an official document.

⁸⁵ As Meyer 2009, 572, 591 cat. 11 rightly notes, the direction of the text on the *tabula* is incorrect as an accurate representation of such a document, as it should run from left to right on a vertical plane with the seals between the two blocks of text. It has, however, been rotated to run from top to bottom in order to allow the viewer to read without turning the head to one side.

⁸⁶ A seal is also figures in text (26), above. Complete illustration taken from M. Della Corte, *NSA* 1921, 459 fig. 20A, detail view taken from *CIL IV* ad loc.

(30) *CIL IV 8903*: the final example in this category has been branded an *epistola iocosa partim lineis conclusa* by Matteo Della Corte in his edition of *CIL IV ad loc.* The text was discovered to the right of the entrance of shop no. III 5, 4:⁸⁷



Ga(ius) Sabinius Statio plurima(m) sal(utem). | uiator Pompeis pane(m) gustas, | Nuceriae bibes. | Nuceriae bibes ?].

Gaius Sabinus wishes Statio all very best. Wayfarer, try the bread at Pompeii, (but) you will drink at Nuceria (you will drink at Nuceria?).

3. Conclusion(s)

The material assembled in the previous sections, even though due to its geographical and chronological constraints is far from being a complete overview of all relevant material from across the Roman empire, allows for some interesting, more general insights beyond the individual case which shall conclude this article.

All three major rubrics – inscriptions, books, and letters – make it abundantly clear that people in antiquity looked at document types not only in a concrete way, but also in an abstract fashion: they must have understood and appreciated the abstract, common patterns behind all text types and their shapes, especially as the shapes are often represented in a grossly simplifying manner.

⁸⁷ As in many cases of texts edited by Della Corte, one might wonder about the correctness of the established text, as it contains some oddities (such as e. g. the unusual abbreviation *Ga.* instead of *C.* for the first name *Gaius*).

Instances that make this particularly clear include

- texts **(7)**, **(12)**, **(14)**, **(15)**, **(17)** depicting monumental inscriptions (and the *tabula ansata* type in particular), as they show parodistic content and mere shapes,⁸⁸
- virtually all examples for the book shape, as it would appear that more emphasis has been given to an accurate display of the text across the document than to producing a text that is easily legible,⁸⁹
- texts **(27)** and **(29)** not only reproduce an exact feature such as the seal in their depictions of document types, but also seem to subvert the genre by using it for purposes of self-representation in a specific setting or abusing it for presentation of (seemingly) meaningless content.

With regards to the first bullet point, one should also point out that of course in virtually all cases monumental shapes have been deployed for content that would not normally be presented in such a fancy way.⁹⁰ This means that even the simpler shapes among the graffiti (as opposed to the more elaborate shapes in the paintings) are remarkably effective in grabbing the beholder's attention. The form of presentation demonstrates an intentional aim on behalf of the inscriber to direct the viewer's attention towards a text that otherwise might not have stood out⁹¹ – in an almost monumental way? – from the mass of scribblings on the same surface.

The evidence presented here further reiterates the importance in epigraphical and linguistic studies the importance of the correlation of the text with the manner in which it is presented. In the Roman world (as in later times), texts were presented not only as mere words but as a combination of words and pictorial elements, and as such, cannot be fully understood independently of one another.

What does this mean for linguistic research? It certainly means that one can now justifiably look at the shape, appearance, and format of ancient texts and

⁸⁸ Text **(12)** is a bit of a borderline case, for the content certainly is meant to be taken seriously, yet the shape would appear to be a bit over the top (at least if it had been executed as a monumental text!).

⁸⁹ One might also wonder about the texts actually displayed on these books: how much of this was actually ever written in a book, and how much of the material has been "upgraded" to literary material by representing it in this particular fashion? Text **(20)** seems to be particularly interesting in this respect, see above.

⁹⁰ For symbolic use of monumental shapes in other contexts, and the *tabula ansata* in particular, see Pani 1986.

⁹¹ Langner 2001, 27 has mentioned this concept but it needs further development from a linguistic perspective.

discuss formal aspects with greater confidence, as it seems sufficiently clear now that our perception and the ancient perception of these formal aspects coincide. And finally, as especially parodistic forms among the material discussed above have shown, it would also seem that forms and shapes can indeed lend additional meaning to the verbal content of texts: an observation that certainly is true for modern texts, but that has never been formulated clearly (never mind been proven) for ancient texts as well.

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Postscriptum

Only after this article was prepared for print by the editors of *Arctos*, we obtained a copy of A. Varone – G. Stefani, *Titulorum Pictorum Pompeianorum qui in CIL Vol. IV collecti sunt Imagines* (Studi della Soprintendenza archeologica di Pompei 29), Rome 2009. In this wonderful collection of photographs, there are also images of a number of items discussed above. For convenience's sake, we shall give a concordance here: (17) – p. 374 (two photographs); (20) – p. 529 (no. 8); (21) – p. 365 (bottom); (22) – p. 529 (no. 6); (25) – p. 525 (Maiuri's drawing); (27) – Tav. XXXIII (top).]

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