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THE POMPEIAN WALL INSCRIPTIONS AND THE LATIN LANGUAGE: A CRITICAL REAPPRAISAL¹

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Introduction

Publications on the language of the Latin wall inscriptions (especially, but not exclusively) from the Vesuvian settlements of Pompeii, Herculaneum, Stabiae, and Oplontis have traditionally been restricted in their focus to a relatively small range of subjects. There has been considerable interest in aspects of historical phonology and morphology,² in the so-called vulgar Latin (not always distinct from the previous aspect),³ and – of course – in the abundant attestations of abusive, obscene insults and the sexual vocabulary in general.⁴ Moreover, there is a certain amount of research on the question of whether the Latin of the Pompeian wall inscriptions might reveal features of a regional variety of Latin, a Latin that somehow is influenced by the Oscan language originally spoken in this region.⁵

¹ Earlier versions and parts of this paper were presented by us in Pisa in April 2007, and by P. K. at the ICS Latin Seminar Series in London in March 2007 and the International Congress of Greek and Latin Epigraphy in Oxford in September 2007. We are extremely grateful to our audiences for their very helpful and inspiring comments and contributions. Last but not least, we would like to thank Laura Cox (Reading) for correcting our English.

² The most influential and important publication on this matter still is Väänänen, *Le latin vulgaire*³ (cf. also Väänänen, *Introduction*³). In addition one could also mention e. g. Lazzeroni, *Composti nominali* (on the formation of compound nouns), cf. also Lindner, *Lateinische Komposita* and Sblendorio Cugusi, *L'uso stilistico*. Baldi, *Foundations*² 235 ff. offers a sample of graffiti in order to provide inscriptional evidence for colloquialisms and "popular speech of the time" (236).

³ See inter al. Pulgram, *Italic, Latin, Italian*, Herman, *Du Latin*, and Iliescu – Slusanski, *Du Latin*.

⁴ In addition to the magisterial study of Adams, *Latin Sexual Vocabulary*, see e. g. Opelt, *Schimpfwörter*.

⁵ See e. g. Eska, *Oscan Substratum*, Cooley, *Survival of Oscan*, and most recently Adams, *Bilingualism* 145 ff.

Only very rarely, however, are there also studies on phenomena on or above the sentence level.⁶

Given the fact that there are some 10,000 wall inscriptions known from these places, and these offer text types that are only sparingly (if at all) attested elsewhere, the number of aspects covered by scholarly research appears to be surprisingly low and leave a lot to be desired (even if not all the texts may be of much use for linguistic research). We intend to cover a whole range of matters regarding the language of the Pompeian wall inscriptions in a book in a few years' time. Before this, however, some more general issues need to be identified and discussed, and some particularly prevailing (pre-)conceptions in this field need to be challenged. The aim of this paper, then, is to present some more general considerations concerning the peculiar nature of the textual corpus, to provide a firm basis and sound methodology for future linguistic research on the Pompeian wall inscriptions, and to show in what directions this future research may develop.

The Corpus of Texts: Some Basic Considerations⁷

This paper must start with a restriction: this is not a study of *Roman* wall inscriptions, it is a study of *Pompeian* wall inscriptions – and in fact only deals with the Latin wall inscriptions from Pompeii. While the first aspect – Latin – will be the subject of most of this paper later on, it is essential to make some remarks regarding the other implications first.

We shall begin with the aspect 'wall inscriptions'. Epigraphic methodology underwent considerable changes over the last decades, as can be seen clearly from the appearance of the volumes of the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*. What had started as a meagre collection of texts transmitted on material other than papyrus, parchment, and the like, is now a huge, multi-purpose edition and commentary of monuments that are inscribed. This is a considerable shift, as the focus has now widened. It is no longer narrowed down to the text itself, but takes into account the micro-context and macro-context as well, knowing that only such a broad approach to the material will result in a proper appreciation and understanding

⁶ But see e. g. Magni, *L'ordine delle parole*.

⁷ This section headline is deliberately replicating the subtitle of the very sound and useful article by Hernández Pérez, *Inscripciones parietales latinas*, which (as published in a somewhat remote place) unfortunately does not receive the attention it really deserves; the scope of this section, however, is somewhat different from his article.

of an inscriptional text as part of a monument and as part of an dedicatory act, according to standards of design of urban space, and so on.

When it comes to Pompeian inscriptions, however, one will still come across popular and non-popular work entitled "Decius war hier. Das Beste aus der römischen Graffiti-Szene" or "Erotica Pompeiana", to mention only two of the more recent and noteworthy publications in this field;⁸ and without meaning to offend the authors of these very useful collections, one must admit that the Pompeian wall inscriptions are still usually dealt with in a surprisingly out-of-context manner. In a series of articles Peter Kruschwitz recently has argued that it is about time for a general shift in attitude towards these texts.⁹ Moreover, one also ought to ask whether it is actually possible to define such a thing as an epigraphic habit of writing on the wall in general (whether restricted to Pompeii or not).¹⁰

A change in attitude, however, is not only needed in general terms, but also in linguistic approaches to the material.¹¹ It may seem to be a mere trifle, yet it cannot be overemphasised: linguistic research on the Latin language is always and exclusively research on a corpus of texts and verbal effusions that are

- limited in their number and therefore definite (without any chance of an indefinite increment),
- subject to various forms of transmission from antiquity to our times, and
- written (and whence a priori not manifestations of oral communication).¹²

⁸ Cf. Weeber, *Decius war hier* and Varone, *Erotica Pompeiana*.

⁹ See Kruschwitz, *Dossier*, Kruschwitz, *Edition*, and Kruschwitz, *Bedeutung*, cf. also Kruschwitz, *Romanes eunt domus* [forthcoming]

¹⁰ As there are virtually no sources which could be considered and evaluated in this matter, one might be tempted to jump to conclusions from the fact that such an enormous amount of inscriptions existed and that writing on walls (even in form of *graffiti*) might not have been seen as an act of vandalism, but was socially accepted. One will not find a general answer, as there is a considerable range of text types appearing in the form of wall inscriptions, and in some cases it in fact may be true that these were not seen as a form of vandalism. On the other hand, to draw a parallel with modern practice, it would be wrong to assume that *graffiti* these days are commonly accepted, because a pub owner might write part of his offers on the walls of his venue. What remains is the necessity to assess every instance carefully and without preconceptions and generalisations, which may lead to incorrect wholesale assumptions.

¹¹ Aspects of the communicative potential and perspective of these texts have been addressed earlier by Kruschwitz, *Dossier* 30–34.

¹² To be sure, even when texts are overtly *mimicking* a certain 'orality', they still are *written* texts.

These aspects – as well as the fact that most of the texts (the non-literary ones in particular) were designed for a certain purpose in a certain context – must be considered, if one intends to carry out research on wall inscriptions worthy of the name; and in some cases that will mean that quite a lot extra-textual information surrounding the actual text will have to be included in the considerations (the most obvious information being the actual nature of the inscription: is it a *graffito* or a *dipinto*?).

The remaining aspect – *Pompeian* wall inscriptions – will lead immediately to the first decidedly linguistic topic of this paper, because it is a crucial, yet commonly neglected problem that when dealing with the language of the Pompeian wall inscriptions, there is no such thing as 'the language of the Pompeian wall inscriptions' – unless one is looking for a rather heterogeneous collection of observations. The diversity of the material becomes evident already when considering the range of different types of texts written on the walls. But even when focusing on only just one text type, one will have to take into account that 'the Pompeian wall inscriptions' are the result of what a heterogeneous, yet specific, distinct, unique group such as the *Pompeian* people (and their visitors) felt they should write. It follows that the quality and amount of writings on the walls in Pompeii is closely related to the special character of the city. Already in a nearby place such as Herculaneum things were considerably different due to differences in the town's history and social composition and the number of non-residents (tourists, etc.) passing through.¹³ For this very reason, however, it seems to make good sense to restrict the focus of this study to one place only – and this will be Pompeii.

Who Were the Writers? Sociolinguistics, Linguistic Varieties of Latin, and the Language of the Pompeian Wall Inscriptions

Our preconceptions about the language(s) of the *graffiti* are intimately related to our preconceptions about the people who wrote them. The forwarding of unevidenced impressions about 'the' social status of the writers of Pompeian wall inscriptions has a remarkable history in Classical scholarship. Sometimes it is simply a repetition of what was found elsewhere, but in quite a few cases it is actually the premise and conclusion of linguistic research on the wall inscriptions

¹³ Solin, *Die herkulanensischen Wandinschriften* 97–99. According to Solin, those graffiti which are comparable to Pompeian ones were most probably written by visitors in Herculaneum, and the written output of the actual population of Herculaneum was small and uninteresting.

as well. The following citation (from Rex E. Wallace's *Introduction to Wall Inscriptions from Pompeii and Herculaneum*) summarises well this common conception:¹⁴

- [1] "The Latin of the wall inscriptions from Pompeii and Herculaneum is distinct from the Latin of Roman authors such as Cicero, Caesar, Horace, and Vergil in important respects. Whereas the Latin of those authors reflects a tradition of carefully crafted composition, based on Latin as it was spoken by educated (and therefore in large part) aristocratic Romans, the language of wall inscriptions, particularly the graffiti, reflects the Latin of less educated social orders (working classes, slaves, freedmen, etc.) as it was used during the first century A. D. This variety of Latin is generally known as 'Vulgar' Latin, a label derived from the Latin adjective *vulgaris*, *-e* meaning 'of the common people'."

One might raise many objections to this statement.¹⁵ It is decidedly wrong regarding the nature of literary Latin. Literary Latin certainly was not directly based on the way the upper classes spoke – it had a life of its own, with traditions and innovations rooted in the written, literary level of the language. Naturally literary Latin affected the speech habits of those who learnt to master it (typically upper class), but it was nobody's vernacular; no literary language is. Moreover, literary Latin is not the same everywhere – not even inside textual corpora as loosely defined as 'prose' or 'poetry' –, and of course it is not even necessarily aristocratic Latin: Plautus and Terence are only the more obvious examples for that, popular authors who were neither members of the aristocracy themselves nor exclusively interested in appealing to the members of the aristocracy in particular (even if, like Terence, they did).

But what concerns us here is the overall picture given of the language of the wall inscriptions. One aspect that requires special attention is the ubiquitous implication that 'the' Pompeian wall inscriptions reflect the Latin of less educated social orders. Is there any evidence at all for this hypothesis, especially when stated in this very generalised way? At any rate, it would have to be proved by those who wish to maintain this claim.

Those people who wrote on the walls may have been less educated than those orders of the society where the literary figures usually came from – although one may find it very hard to rule out the mere possibility that even Cicero wrote

¹⁴ Wallace, *Introduction* xxiv; Tanzer, *Common People* has the notion of 'the common people' writing such texts even turned into the title of her study of the *graffiti*. The list could easily be expanded, but this shall suffice to prove the point.

¹⁵ See also Kruschwitz, *Romanes eunt domus* [forthcoming].

on a wall.¹⁶ No matter, the fact that people wrote on a wall, and that they wrote at all, reveals that they quite obviously must have learned how to write, quite possibly had gone to school, and also, for all we know, read literary texts as part of their schooling – a fact evident to everyone, but usually forgotten, especially when it comes to the evaluation of the language. Taking into account the fact that in ancient times and also in Pompeii literate skills were the property of a more restricted class of people than in modern western societies, this consideration already removes the average *graffito* writer from the illiterate *uulgus*¹⁷ whose speaking habits the *graffiti* usually are thought to reflect.¹⁸

On the other hand, the sheer amount of inscriptions, the variety of topics, as well as the large amount of deviations from standard spellings may also indicate that literacy was rather wide-spread.¹⁹ Or to put it in another way: the level of literacy we assume for Pompeii in the first century A. D. is relevant when we try to say something about the writers of wall inscriptions – if we think that the lowest classes produced them, then we are also assuming a considerably high literacy rate. But, in any case, it is the wide range of topics and text types and the amount of *graffiti* in the first place that should lead us to this conclusion, not the obscene content of many of the texts.

The traditional approach, as it is formulated by Wallace, implies that there is one variety of Latin (a system which consistently differs from other varieties) and that all the wall inscriptions testify to this same variety – and consequently, that the persons writing there were also a more or less homogeneous group. However, merely the fact that somebody wrote something on the wall does not tell us anything essential about this person. For the most part, we simply do not know who these people were, whether they were working class, freedmen, slaves – or not. Two more general questions ought to be asked:

- Are uneducated people more likely to write on walls than educated ones?
- Does a misspelling *necessarily* hint towards a (substandard) phonological feature?

¹⁶ And once again considering modern parallels might be helpful: restrooms of institutions of higher education only very rarely look considerably different from those of pubs. Why should there have been such a distinction in antiquity then?

¹⁷ If one ought to rely upon such an arrogant conception at all.

¹⁸ Cf. Coleman, *Poetic Diction* 25: "Even the most vulgar Pompeian graffiti were after all written by literates and subject to conventional literary pressures" – even if not exactly 'literary' pressures, at least 'standard written', one might note.

¹⁹ One should also take into account the picture of education in Pompeii as created, for example, in the very useful study of Gigante, *Civiltà*.

The first question is particularly important, and one may doubt that without empirical data there can be a conclusive answer for any given period of time and / or any place in the world. However, there are ways to approach this problem, and here a proper distinction between the *dipinti* and the *graffiti* is essential, and we would like to concentrate on the *graffiti* here. So: what do we know about writers of *graffiti*? If one believes in certain human constants throughout the ages (like 'we all walk upright, from a certain age onwards'), it seems justified to say that even in antiquity it will have been the *young* rather than the *old* who wrote obscenities and witticisms on the wall (never mind the education of either group), and it was more likely to happen in urban centres than in the countryside (maybe due to some sort of a social control mechanism and population density).²⁰

That means: in case of the *graffiti*, there still will be a sociolect (*Gruppensprache*) to be found, however the social group is not to be determined by their level of education, but by their age in the first place. This immediately poses the question whether then it is not only a *Gruppensprache*, but also a *Sondersprache*, i. e. a variety of the language used by a certain (peer) group to distinguish themselves from other groups of a community / society – a feature that is very common in all kinds of youth languages or slangs (*Jugendsprachen*) nowadays.²¹ Just one example: it is a tradition throughout the ages to state that one has been ... somewhere. A Pompeian example can be seen in this inscription:²²

[2] *Aufidius hic fuit. Va(le).*

An equivalent English *graffito* of this type could read:

[3a] *Kilroy was here.*

Very often, however, one would find it in a different spelling:

[3b] *Kilroy woz 'ere.*

²⁰ For more general and modern graffiti-research see Reisner, *Two Thousand Years of Wall Writing*, Abel – Buckley, *Handwriting on the Wall*, Kreuzer, *Graffiti-Lexikon*, Bosmans – Thiel, *Guide*, Bauer, *Toiletten-Graffiti*, and Beck, *Graffiti*.

²¹ This would in fact make the whole issue even more interesting. In general nowadays features of slangs do not have a particularly long lifespan, but often appealing elements can be found in common language of later generations – i. e. youth language, a language variety, can in a good deal of cases be seen as the origin of a language change; it often is adopted into common language. (For references see Neuland, *Jugendsprache*.) Would it be too radical to assume that also 'youth language' in antiquity might have been the source of certain language changes?

²² *CIL* IV 6702.

One cannot deny that this is a phonetic spelling – and if in three hundred years' time there is a shift from *was* to *woz* and from *here* to *'ere* in the orthography of the standard language, our colleagues in two thousand years in the future will be happy to find an inscribed predecessor somewhere. For the historical linguist that will be enough. For us it is not, because the reason for the spelling (which by no means is accidental and result of missing knowledge) can be determined: in English the phonetic *woz 'ere* does not indicate unawareness of the correct spelling, but first of all it is an intended display of 'coolness'. Can we exclude similar phenomena for Pompeii – where forms like *ic* are well attested²³ – to stay in keeping with the examples mentioned above?²⁴ The difference is essential, however, if one wishes to say something about the level of education of the writer, and the question might have to be addressed individually in every single case where there is something that deviates from what is supposed to be the norm.

On vulgar Latin and other things vulgar

These considerations suggest to challenge another highly popular term dominant in this field: vulgar Latin. The term vulgar, in the context of Latin studies, potentially has three meanings: it can mean a linguistically vulgar phenomenon (spelling / form / construction), a vulgar (i. e. obscene) content, or a vulgar person (i. e. an ignorant member of the lowest social orders). There certainly are people that one would sometimes be tempted to call vulgar, and there are things, words and even word forms which, when said aloud, written down, or used in the wrong situation, strike us as vulgar. But these have nothing to do with what is meant by vulgar Latin. In Pompeii all these three meanings seem to form a delightful mess:

- first, the suspicious act of writing on walls, done by the vulgar *vulgus*
- second, the vulgar, i. e. obscene, content of many of the wall inscriptions,
- and finally, vulgar Latin as a sort of a technical term in the study of variation and change in Latin

This multiple meaning of the term 'vulgar' is behind statements like these:

- [4] "We can see a similar phenomenon in a (doubly!) vulgar graffito from Pompeii" (Mackay, *Expressions* 233 on [6], below)

²³ Cf. Väänänen, *Latin vulgaire*³ 58.

²⁴ We are not alleging that this is true for the case of *ic*.

This supposedly means that both the content is obscene and that there is a construction not known to us from literary sources.

- [5] "The writer who uses a 'vulgar' spelling need not himself be 'vulgar'" (Adams, *British Latin* ²⁴)

This then can be taken to mean that the fact that somebody uses a phonetic spelling does not necessarily mean that he belonged to the lowest social stratum.

We are neither the first nor the last scholars to criticise the term vulgar Latin,²⁵ and one might ask what Väänänen's study and the other numerous studies addressing the problem of vulgar Latin are about if there is no such thing as vulgar Latin – as we argue here – and if the average *graffito*-writer was not the vulgar and ignorant semiliterate person he was once thought to be? Instead of attempting to define what vulgar Latin is, we approach the problem by asking exactly what the study on vulgar Latin is concerned with. For it appears that vulgar Latin is a term used to describe scattered bits of what more accurately should be called "variation and change in Latin".

The efforts in finding a new definition for vulgar Latin are usually the result of discontent with the traditional definition "spoken language of the illiterate *uulgus*", which usually is accompanied by the obvious observation that, strictly speaking, there cannot be such thing as a vulgar Latin text. By Kiesler, for example, the term is defined as follows: "Wir schliessen uns demgegenüber der weiten Auffassung an und betrachten das Vulgärlatein als zu allen Zeiten der Latinität existierende, diastratisch und diatopisch variable Umgangssprache aller Mitglieder der lateinischen Sprachgemeinschaft."²⁶ He adopts more or less the view which has been presented by J. Herman and V. Väänänen.²⁷

This broad definition thus comprises social and regional variation, all through the history of Latin, emerging mainly in the spoken language. What does

²⁵ See e. g. Adams, *The Language of the Vindolanda Writing-Tablets* 131–132.

²⁶ Kiesler, *Einführung* 13.

²⁷ Cf. the following definitions of Herman and Väänänen: "Taking all these considerations into account, in this book the term "Vulgar Latin" (henceforth regularly used without these inverted commas) is used to refer to the set of all those innovations and trends that turned up in the usage, particularly but not exclusively spoken, of the Latin-speaking population who were little or not at all influenced by school education and by literary models" (Herman, *Vulgar Latin* 7). "Le latin vulgaire au contraire, tel que nous le concevons, comprend les états successifs depuis la fixation du latin commun, à l'issue de la période archaïque, jusqu'à la veille des premières consignations par écrit de textes en langue romane; it n'exclut ni les variations sociales, ni même régionales" (Väänänen, *Introduction*³ 6). See Kiesler, *Einführung* 8–14 for a useful summary of the different definitions and opinions regarding this problematic term.

this mean then? Is this not what the study of language variation and change is all about? We claim that vulgar Latin, as defined above, is used as a noun standing for "variation and change in Latin". This is why there is no meaningful definition of the term; after all, we do not try to capture the whole picture of variation and change in modern languages by calling it vulgar German, English, or Finnish.²⁸

The changes in the spoken language take place, as always, behind the written form of the language, which is conservative by its very nature. The texts have a varying relationship to spoken language. However, within one language the different forms, both written and spoken, still form a continuum, and there is no justification in positing in Latin a situation with two macro-registers, as it were, 'literary Latin' and 'vulgar Latin'. The whole scope of variation was, even in Latin, much more complex than this. Insisting on these concepts will lead to an incorrect interpretation of the texts we have.

Väänänen in his classic study on the language of the Pompeian wall inscriptions was one of the first researchers to combine genuine Latin evidence with the later Romance development. We do not have many attestations this early of those tendencies that were taking place in the language, which is why the Pompeian inscriptions are so important for the historical linguist. Even if the wall inscriptions do not testify to one linguistic stratum, they do tell us much about linguistic variation and change. A person can be literate on many levels, and literacy below the social élite of course existed (this élite naturally formed only a small minority of the society), showing its own forms of writing, and containing much variation within the group. Furthermore, to connect this to a point made earlier in this paper: even if a text tells us something about language variation and change (such as giving a phonetic spelling, or using a syntactic construction avoided in literary texts), it does not follow that the writer of the text is an uneducated person representing the lowest strata of Roman society.

Historical linguistics, especially phonology, is that aspect of the language of the Pompeian wall inscriptions which has, by far, received the most attention by philologists and linguists so far.²⁹ After going through all the aforementioned issues, however, it should by now be clear that this is another field which finally deserves reconsideration in terms of the methodological problems addressed above.

²⁸ For a more thorough discussion on this topic, see Halla-aho, *The Non-literary Latin Letters* [forthcoming], ch. 2.

²⁹ From the high number of publications on this issue it shall suffice to mention the magisterial studies by Veikko Väänänen (*Latin vulgaire*³; *Introduction*³). But see also the bibliography gathered above in n. 2 and 3.

What do phonetic spellings tell us about language variation and change?³⁰ The answer depends to a great degree on the phenomenon in question. In some cases the wall inscriptions only attest in overwhelming abundance, in writing, to a feature that undoubtedly was common in all spoken Latin of the period, such as the weakness or dropping of the final /m/, or the monophthongisation of /ae/ – changes that had already happened in the phonological system, but were not attested in literary texts (undergoing a manuscript tradition).³¹ In others, it is more a question of variation according to the speaker and the situation – and, of course, in yet others the *graffiti* may testify to a feature that was a clear social marker, something which the upper classes would have tried to avoid in their speech.

It is also important to keep the different levels of language separate. Even if a *graffito* contains a phonetic spelling, this does not mean that every linguistic feature in it is a spontaneous reflection of spoken language.³²

Also sometimes the spread of a substandard phenomenon attested in a *graffito* will be something other than what the context (here: a Pompeian brothel) would at first suggest. To give an example of an interesting case of linguistic (syntactic) variation from Pompeii, consider the following *graffito*:³³

[6] *Hic ego cum ueni, futui | deinde redei domi.*

When I came here, I had sex, then I went back home.

The locative *domi* is used here to express goal of motion, in place of *domum*. This text (with parallels from inscriptions and other non-literary texts) has been discussed in some detail by Mackay.³⁴ He explains it as a matter of variation in case syntax and cites examples from various documents from different parts of the empire, thus showing that the phenomenon was in all probability common to substandard (and spoken) Latin throughout the Empire.

On the other hand, Adams – in his discussion of a similar case from Vindolanda³⁵ – connects this phenomenon to "the tendency in substandard Latin

³⁰ This implies that there are a lot of meaningful 'mistakes' and variants to be found (see e. g. Solin, *Entstehung und Psychologie* on this matter). But how to determine these and to separate them from merely 'accidental' errors which also will have occurred?

³¹ See also Adams, *The Language of the Vindolanda Writing-Tablets* 87–88.

³² For more on this point, see Halla-aho, *Linguistic Varieties* [forthcoming].

³³ *CIL* IV 2246.

³⁴ Mackay, *Expressions*.

³⁵ Adams, *The New Vindolanda Writing-Tablets* 551 (on *tab. Vindol.* III 617).

for adverbials expressing the idea 'place to' to be replaced by adverbials with the sense 'place at' as complements of verbs of motion". When citing the Pompeian example he also draws attention to *hic* at the beginning – used for *huc* – and thus exemplifying the same phenomenon as *domi* in the same text.³⁶ The second reason behind this phenomenon, according to Adams, is the fossilization of place names in one commonly used case form.³⁷

In Pompeii, in addition, there is some evidence for an 'opposite' type of confusion, i. e. expressions of direction used with stative verbs.³⁸ There are thus potentially three different tendencies behind the use of *domi* and *hic* in [6]:

- a use of the locative case indicating goal of motion,
- confusion in directional and locative uses and adverbials generally, and
- the fossilization of place names in one case – *domi* might well be included in this group.³⁹

At any rate, one of the most interesting aspects in this use of the locative concerns its social distribution. Useful additional information comes from Vindolanda, where there are altogether three examples of this phenomenon: all three concern names of the 2nd declension where the ablative is used as the locative. One case (*tab. Vindol. II 343, 15–17 coria que scribis esse Cataractonio scribe dentur mi*) stems from the letter of Octavius which usually is thought to contain many

³⁶ See Mackay, *Expressions* 236–238 and Adams, *The New Vindolanda Writing-Tablets* 551 (also Adams, *The Language of the Vindolanda Writing-Tablets* 110–111, differently on *tab. Vindol. II 266*). For further examples elsewhere, see Mackay, *Expressions*. See also the editors' discussion on *tab. Vindol. III 611, i, b, 4–5*.

³⁷ E. g. the locative *Alexandrie* in the letters of Claudius Terentianus (*P. Mich. VIII 467–472*) which is used also to indicate goal of motion, see Adams, *The New Vindolanda Writing-Tablets* 551.

³⁸ Väänänen, *Latin vulgaire*³ 119–120 under "Confusion des notions 'ubi' et 'quo' (locatif et accusatif)" lists the following three types (i) one case of *quo bibit [sc. vivet] (?.)ossa cinisque tegunt* 6825, (ii) *foras pro foris*, which is clearly a special (lexical) case, as it appears in Cicero, too (Cic. Q. frat. 3, 1, 19 *cum Pomponia foras cenaret* – both *foras* and *foris* are continued in Romance), and (iii) temporal expressions with *posteru = posteru(m) pro postero = postridie*, but as a temporal expression *posteru* might not be comparable to actual expressions of direction. Väänänen also refers to the general character of this confusion (citing Apul. Met. 9, 39 *ubi ducis asinum istum*).

³⁹ Mackay, *Expressions* 239 points out that what the Pompeian example tells us is that there is no need to connect this use of the locative with the army (the other documents where this phenomenon is found stem from military context). It must be stressed, however, that seeing an example of military *Sondersprache* in a syntactic feature like this would not be a very attractive interpretation in the first place.

substandard features.⁴⁰ Another case (*tab. Vindol. II 266 uolo ueniat ad me Coris*) is in a letter written to Flavius Cerialis, the prefect of the Ninth cohort of Batavians, but we have no information on the writer. But the third example (*tab. Vindol. III 617 festinabitis Coris*) is from a letter most probably written by Flavius Cerialis himself, thus attesting the phenomenon also in the language of the officer class.⁴¹ Flavius Cerialis had clearly received a thorough education in Latin, as his elegant language use elsewhere shows.⁴²

This type of construction is a good example of variation in Latin – variation which did not lead to language change, because other changes were overshadowing it.⁴³ Now that new non-literary evidence has been – and is still – coming to light, there are suddenly parallels for many of the phenomena found in Pompeii. This confirms the fact that they (in most cases) are general Latin tendencies, current on many social levels.

What Is in a Text Type?

Text Typology, Technical Language, and the Pompeian Wall Inscriptions

We have claimed that part of the diversity of the Pompeian wall inscriptions stems from the range of different text types incorporated in the material. We should like to shed a little more light on this aspect here. A major branch of current linguistics that is regrettably only very slowly shifting towards Classical scholarship⁴⁴ deals with non-literary text types, technical text types, their structure and their (technical) language. A text type is a non-literary group of texts which forms a unit due to a cluster of shared features, resulting in what might be called a certain isomorphy of each text type.⁴⁵ One may rightfully say that it is the non-literary equivalent to a literary genre. The shared features may typically be structural, formal, contextual, visual, or language-related.

⁴⁰ See Adams, *The Language of the Vindolanda Writing-Tablets* 127.

⁴¹ See the editors, introduction for *tab. Vindol. III 616 and 617*.

⁴² See Adams, *The Language of the Vindolanda Writing-Tablets* 129.

⁴³ Also Mackay, *Expressions* 239.

⁴⁴ But see now Langslow, *Medical Latin* and Fögen, *Antike Fachtexte*.

⁴⁵ A very useful introduction to the theoretical framework may be found in Roelcke, *Fachsprachen*² (with further references). For a more general documentation see the authoritative volumes by Hoffmann – Kalverkämper – Wiegand, *Fachsprachen*.

Just some very obvious examples: bus timetables, letters of recommendation, parking tickets, food labels, instruction manuals, election posters, or commercial advertisements. We are all familiar with these text types, in fact so well-acquainted with them that we do not normally realise we are dealing with them – unless something unexpected happens. Then they immediately require attention and cause hesitation and / or confusion. A parking ticket, written for a change on an A3-sized pink piece of paper, with a garland of flowers surrounding it, written in a feminine handwriting, and smelling of perfume, would still be a parking ticket. Yet it would not fulfil our expectations of a certain text type, and may cause us wonder if either a parking attendant has gone crazy, or if it is just a nice practical joke.

Apart from a specific lexicon (the technical language) one of the foremost requirements for the constitution of a technical text type is, as was said previously, the isomorphy of the texts.⁴⁶ This means that for each text type, there is a specific, typical, limited, and almost invariable number of formal or functional macrostructural patterns. The individuality of a text is constituted by:

- inclusion / omission,
- sequence / order / arrangement, and
- individual filling of these macrostructural patterns.

As far as the wall inscriptions of Pompeii and Herculaneum are concerned, there are several technical text types to be found. The most prominent cases are the electoral *programmata*⁴⁷ and the advertisements for gladiatorial games.⁴⁸ We will exemplify the point focussing only on the former.⁴⁹ Here is a very typical example:⁵⁰

[7] *P(ublium) Paquium | Proculum Ilv(irum). d(ignus) r(ei) p(ublicae). o(ro) v(os) f(aciatis). | dignus est.*

Publius Paquius Proculus as duumvir. He is worthy of public office. I entreat you to elect him. He is worthy.

⁴⁶ This elaborates an aspect which has been dealt with only very briefly in Kruschwitz, *Romanes eunt domus* [forthcoming].

⁴⁷ More recent general studies on this subject include Mouritsen, *Elections* and Chiavia, *Programmata*.

⁴⁸ A useful basis for the study of these texts is provided by Sabbatini Tumolesi, *Gladiatorum paria*.

⁴⁹ On ancient advertisements more generally see Kruschwitz, *Werbeinschriften*.

⁵⁰ *CIL* IV 7208.

There are five basic macrostructural patterns to be determined:

- Name of the candidate;
- office applied for;
- name of the supporter;
- appeal to elect/support the candidate; and (optional)
- remarks regarding the worthiness of the candidate.

An extensive examination of all the *programmata* would show that these macrostructural patterns recur in almost every single text, and even in the very same sequence. (Hence even reconstructing fragmentary ones is, to a certain degree, quite easy.)

In each specific case the name of the supporter must be ascertained from the context. Normally the supporter is the inhabitant of the house where the *programma* has been painted on the wall, but in quite a few cases they are also explicitly mentioned. The name of the candidate is archetypically put in the accusative, the supporter in the nominative. The typical recommendation phrase is, in abbreviation, O. V. F., *oro vos faciatis*, sometimes also *rogo* – but rarely anything else. Names of additional supporters may have been supplied in form of *X rogat* or similar acclamations. (However, the variety of verbal phrases is very small.)

In the following example, the verb was exceptionally *fave* (which regularly would be construed with the dative):⁵¹

[8] *Ti. Claudium Verum | Ilvir(um) Obelli(us?) cum patre fave scis Vero favere.*

Since in electoral *programmata* the name of the candidate in the first position of the text (and often also written in larger letters so that it was the most visible part of the text) was invariably in the accusative, this is the way it appears here as well. It should *not* be taken as the object of *fave*, erroneously put in the accusative instead of the dative (*favere* with the acc. in this meaning is unattested) for two reasons:

- A structure such as *Ti. Claudium Verum | Ilvir(um) Obelli(us?) cum patre* alone is widely attested.
- Also, the final part of the text, *scis Vero favere*, shows the same verb used correctly with the dative.⁵²

⁵¹ *CIL* IV 3828.

⁵² Cf. Solin, *Storia* 32 n. 177 ("Vota per Claudio Vero, favoriscilo").

Certainly, the accusative was used in Pompeii (and other non-literary texts) in a wider range of functions than in literary texts – but that clearly is not the reason why it is used here.⁵³ A dative would have been totally out of place in the beginning of an electoral advertisement, as this text type always had the name of the candidate in the accusative. So, the text should be understood as follows: *Ti. Claudium Verum | Iivir(um)* considered as independent (whether or not we want to say that there is an ellipsis of *ovf* in this type of structures or not), then *Obelli(us?) cum patre* as the recommenders, after which independently follows the verb *fave*. This text shows nicely how technical texts work: only a minimum of information is needed, as the reader will be familiar with the macrostructural patterns and understanding will be possible even with much of the information left unexpressed.

Conclusions

We hope to have made a strong case for several methodological changes, adjustments, and refinements in the study of Pompeian wall inscriptions – and also more generally in the study of non-literary texts. All of our points could easily have been exemplified by many texts from the walls of Pompeii, but we deliberately decided to limit the number of examples, in order to make room for the methodological discussion which is urgently needed. Our most important claims are:

- It is important to include as much context and data in the study of these texts as possible, as only consideration of the macro- and micro-context will allow for a proper, just, and adequate appreciation and interpretation of the texts. (One may wonder if there is actually a very genuine difference between literary and non-literary material – or if, in the end, this applies for the literary texts as well.)
- A new and more appropriate understanding of the Pompeian wall inscriptions, and the Latin language, will become possible after abandoning the term vulgar Latin with its implications, and futile discussions on whether a linguistic phenomenon, or a whole text, is to be classified as vulgar or not.
- Only with an adequate interpretation of the language will it then be possible to attempt to deduce information concerning the sociological background of the writers of Pompeian wall inscriptions.

⁵³ See Väänänen, *Latin vulgare*³ 115–117 for accusatives in Pompeii.

- Virtually everything remains to be done in the field of technical text types and technical language, as far as the Pompeian material is concerned. It should now be clear that research in this field will yield useful results – and will also allow for a proper understanding of synchronical variation and diachronical change in specific text types.

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