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The Wall Inscriptions of Ostia

HEIKKI SOLIN

This chapter discusses the wall inscriptions, or graffiti, of Ostia, including the few surviving *dipinti*, depicted inscriptions, in other words inscriptions made with a brush. I will leave out here the graffiti consisting only of drawings.

There has long been a need for a new and complete edition of the scratched and painted wall inscriptions brought to light during excavations at Ostia. The history of research on this material is short and can be summarized in a few words. Some inscriptions were published in the excavation reports, like the graffiti in the Casa di Bacco Fanciullo, in that of Giove e Ganimede, in the Caserma dei Vigili or the central corridor of the complex of four temples, the Quattro Tempietti, excavated towards the end of the 19th and the first decades of the 20th century by, among others, Vaglieri, Lanciani, Paribeni and Calza. These were later included in the Ostian supplement to *CIL* XIV, where the graffiti and dipinti were republished more accurately by Lothar Wickert in 1930 (*CIL* XIV 4509-4530, 5289-5296). Few other sets of graffiti were published after Wickert's supplement, like those of the Terme dei Sette Sapienti edited by Guido Calza.¹

The first to deal somewhat more extensively with this material was Matteo Della Corte, who in 1937 transcribed a quantity of wall graffiti at Ostia, later published with Pio Ciprotti in 1961.² Unfortunately, the result is a confused and unscholarly publication, full of serious reading errors that provides for each graffito only a transcription in capital letters followed by a few modest observations by Ciprotti. The most serious issue is the total lack of topographical information, not to mention the exact positions on the walls; during the 1960s and 70s I was forced to waste days at a time attempting to find the graffiti transcribed by Della Corte, a very tiring and distressing process.

After the Second World War, in 1946, the Istituto di Paleografia of Rome University, now La Sapienza, began work to prepare a long-awaited edition of the wall inscriptions of Ostia, entrusting the task to a young collaborator of the Istituto, Giovanni Muzzioli, who was sadly prevented from completing his studies and the Ostian edition by his untimely death. After Muzzioli's death it was passed on to Armando Petrucci, whom I joined in 1966 as a partner and collaborator. Following the withdrawal of Petrucci, who later became a famous palaeographer, the whole edition was entrusted to me. I began work in earnest in 1966, continuing the recording and research *in situ* on various occasions in the 1970s. Subsequently, due to other pressing tasks, I was unable to work on the project for a long time; it is now awakening from its long sleep. A fine scholar, my former student and current collaborator Pekka Tuomisto, who already knows the material, has declared his willingness to take on the task. If the edition is published during my lifetime, it will be dedicated to the memory of my dear friend Armando Petrucci, who died on 23 April, 2018.

¹ CALZA 1939.

² DELLA CORTE – CIPROTTI 1961.

Of the subsequent publications it is worth recalling the graffiti in the *Insula delle Ierodule* expertly published by Carlo Molle in 2014;³ these include some very interesting texts.

Hitherto over 1000 graffiti have been found at Ostia. Chronologically they date from the proto-Augustan period to the end of the 3rd century CE, but most belong to the first three centuries. The oldest graffito that can be dated with precision is of 23 BCE (*CIL* XIV 5289, 1), from the central corridor of the Quattro Tempietti. Some other graffiti from the same room may be somewhat older, some even from the late Republican period. As concerns the language in which the graffiti were written, there is a significant number of Greek texts, unsurprising in a port city. Many of these are of interest from various points of view. I discussed some of the most important unpublished ones in *Arctos* 1972 in the framework of the *Analecta epigraphica*;⁴ others followed in 2008.⁵ Unfortunately I cannot dwell on this interesting group here. As concerns the contents and substance of the graffiti, they do not differ significantly from the graffiti of Pompeii; however, the exuberance of Pompeii's revellers, filling the walls of the Vesuvian town, is more restrained at Ostia; for example, the erotic texts characteristic of Pompeian graffiti are certainly not lacking at Ostia, but are less obscene.

Though they are often of great interest and enormous importance, this chapter focuses not on the well-known graffiti, but instead on some that have already been published and discussed by various scholars, but that have been wrongly read or interpreted, to show that a new *Bestandaufnahme* might be useful to promote their understanding; I will then briefly present some unpublished graffiti.

I will start with the graffiti and depicted inscriptions from the Caserma dei Vigili (II 5, 1). Our future edition comprises 127 texts. The majority came to light during the great excavations of LANCIANI in 1888-1889 and VAGLIERI in 1909-1912, and were published in the respective excavation reports. All the inscriptions published by LANCIANI and VAGLIERI were reprinted, in part on the basis of first-hand examinations, in a considerably improved form by L. WICKERT, *CIL* XIV 4509-4529. It is worth noting only that WICKERT failed to find some of the graffiti published by LANCIANI or VAGLIERI, though they were still clearly visible. WICKERT's work on site must therefore have been brief and somewhat hurried.

All these collections present gaps and so only our future corpus will offer a complete overall edition of the graffiti and dipinti. I studied the inscriptions in November 1967 and reviewed some texts in December 1978. Unfortunately, some of the inscriptions have been destroyed and many of those that survive are in such appalling conditions that only some letters remain. It is also certain that even when they were excavated many inscriptions had become illegible or were already destroyed. Indeed, the conservation of the wall inscriptions of the barracks is worse than average; this is mainly because the whole lower part of the walls is covered with a coarse layer of *cocciopesto*; this material is unsuited to the scratching and conservation of graffiti. Equally, the fine plaster running from the *cocciopesto* socle to the ceiling has generally fallen off and the few remaining patches are so ruined and corroded by salts and damp that the strokes of the letters have become more or less illegible. I will briefly discuss two inscriptions. The first is very interesting.

1 = *CIL* XIV 4509, with previous bibliography. Painted in red on a whitened *tabula ansata*. Auxiliary lines. 64 × 24; letter height 2 (line 1), 1 (remainder). Room 2, NW wall. Now in the storerooms, inv. no. 10956.

³ MOLLE 2014.

⁴ SOLIN 1972, 190-98 = SOLIN 1998, 32-39.

⁵ SOLIN 2008, 117-21.

- F() bri() coh. III v(igilum) (centuria) Max[i]mi:
 se(cutor) Iulius Baccius, m<i>les coh(ortis) III v(igilum), (centuria) Maximi,
 frumentu accipit; Titus Aelius Sara-
 pio mīle(s) coh(ortis) III v(igilum), (centuria) Maximi, miles factus VII*
- 5 *Idus Iuaelias praefecto) Aemiliano, suppraefecto Senecione);
 M. Atteius Primit[ivu]s miles factus VII Iulias
 Umbricio Emil[ia]no praefecto), suppraefecto Seneci-
 one, accipit frum[e]ntu accipit die primo ostio XVI.
 Descidimus contibernales su(b) cura tribuni*
- 10 *Vari Flori tri(buni) coh(ortis) pri(mae) v(igilum), <i>dem Cassio Longino tri(buno)
 coh(ortis) VII, Aurelio Senecione tribuno coh(ortis) IIII v(igilum),
 (centurione) coh(ortis) III Iulio Maximu, tesserario Iuli-
 o Proculo.*

The letters seen by VAGLIERI, but now vanished, are underlined. – 3 *Aelius*: *Afrius* VAGLIERI, WICKERT, but our reading is certain: the third letter is an L whose second stroke is detached and in an inclined position, and thus represents the normal form for L in this painting; there is no trace of the loop of the R. As for the preceding letter, the last cross-stroke of the E cannot be made out, but is concealed beneath the auxiliary line. – 4 *MILES* VAGLIERI. – 5 *IVLELEAS* VAGLIERI, but the third letter looks to me like an A without the cross-stroke (and this is also the opinion of WICKERT); an irregular spelling *Iuaelias* cannot be ruled out. – *SIIN* VAGLIERI. – 10 *V[]ri* WICKERT, but the A, of which the feet of the two verticals remain, is certain. – 11 *SENIXIONE* VAGLIERI.

A recollection of three *vigiles* – probably all from the century of Maximus of the third cohort (for M. Atteius Primitivus this is not explicitly stated) – who had descended (*descidimus* 9) from Rome to Ostia to serve for four months. The company to which they belonged was under the command of Varius Florus, tribune of the I cohort, whilst the other commanders of the whole detachment were the tribunes of the VII and of the IV cohort – this is how I would explain the ablatives at the end of the inscription. Like other Ostian inscriptions by *vigiles*, it also shows that there is no trace of a central command and that the centuries of Ostia were forces made up of various Roman units. The inscription indicates, albeit somewhat clumsily, when those receiving grain were made soldiers, as in the Roman laterculus *CIL* VI 220, where, however, consuls are named rather than praefect and subpraefect of the *vigiles*.

Some details. 1 A. VON DOMASZEWSKI proposed (see *CIL*) expanding *f(eliciter) pri(dianum)*, but VAGLIERI states that the B is certain. – 2 *se(cutor)* explains VAGLIERI, rightly it seems. – 3 the space after *frumentu accipit* has been left blank, perhaps so that the day could be added later as below in line 8 and in other Ostian inscriptions; if this is the case, the writer did not have exact information on this event, which had probably already happened in Rome. – 8 *ostio*, in other words in the Porticus Minucia in Rome. – 9 *descidimus* is clearly the perfect of *descendo* and represents an interesting morphological change. – 10 *DEM* is certainly *idem* (perhaps the dot preceding the D may stand for I, as may also be the case in *miles* in line 2); it stands for *item*. This *idem* = *item* connects what precedes to the ablative absolutes indicating the other tribunes of the whole detachment. Given that three tribunes are named, VON DOMASZEWSKI assumed that during their time the command of this detachment was changed three times, but judging from what is said on the wall all three tribunes seem to have arrived together: after the name of Varius Florus, the tribune of their own company, the other two tribunes, their centurion and the *tesserarius* are named. Given the lack of a general command, I do not know if we can rule out the possibility that there were simultaneously three *tribuni cohortis* in the detachment sent to Ostia.

2⁶ = *CIL* XIV 4521, with preceding bibliography. North entrance, right-hand post, row 25. Graffito. 26 × 2,7-3.

Mani Murrius(?)

The interpretation of this graffito, which has been read in various ways by previous editors, is difficult, and our reading is also far from certain. The greatest difficulty lies in the fact that next to the regularly incised letters there are numerous finer irregular signs whose meaning is unclear. The problems begin already with the first letter. The others have read V, but to judge from WICKERT's transcription he seems to have thought it was an M (or perhaps a combination of V and A). The decision is not easy: the fourth stroke of the presumed M is finer, but this may be due to the slight depression in the surface of the tile exactly in the groove of the stroke. On the other hand, the space for the first upright of the M seems insufficient for a normal shape (cf. the certain M that follows); if this is an M, the first upright must be located exactly on the edge of the tile and is straight and not oblique. The problems continue: the next upright has a cross-stroke at the top that would make it a T, but there is also the lower part of the loop of a P (indeed the letter was interpreted by WICKERT as a P, judging from his transcription). The line of the presumed loop and the following oblique stroke are finer and incised with a more uncertain hand. I would propose reading the whole, very hesitantly, as an A, the first stroke of which is vertical and not oblique, the middle stroke is oblique (as is usual in cursive scripts), whilst the presumed cross-stroke of a T is a more or less extraneous sign or a continuation of the right-hand stroke of the A (a first-hand examination confirmed that no stroke remains in the crack of the tile). This would give us *Mani*.

The second name seems to be *Murrius*. The different execution of the two Rs poses no difficulty in the writing of someone semi-literate. However, the negligent execution in the central part of this word raises some questions; furthermore, the strokes of the first R are very unclear. We could suggest, instead of RRI, something else such as SCRI, SCN, SIN, SEN, etc. but the other readings do not provide positive results.

In any case, we must say that even our reading *Mani Murrius*, though it does provide a meaning, does not really satisfy the needs of a genuine interpretation. In addition to the difficulties relating to the writing (which seem unsurmountable), there are obstacles relating to the contents. Both *Manius* and *Murrius* are names known mostly in the earliest period (but a Q. Murrius Sabinus does appear in the laterculus of the *vigiles CIL* VI 1058 VI, 61 of the year 210). Above all, a *Mani(us) Murrius* lacking a *cognomen* would be chronologically problematic. *Mani* could also be a genitive, in which case it might be the name of the centurion to whose century Murrius belonged. But *Manius* as a *cognomen* is not particularly common and in addition, based on a quick survey, it seems to have fallen into disuse already in the 1st century. For its part *Murrius* is a known *gentilicium* that in and by itself could be used as a *cognomen*, but I do not particularly like even this solution. In short, we can say that the graffito is the writing of a semi-literate person who was clearly unable to concentrate sufficiently to obtain a good result. It is thus pointless to prolong our conjectures. Videant fortunatiores.

3. We will end with an unpublished example. It is found on the south entrance, on the left post as you enter, row 17. Graffito. 7 × 0.8-1.2.

Comin(i) Alexandri.

The *gens Cominia* is well attested at Ostia.

⁶ Cf. <https://www.ostia-antica.org/graffiti/regio2/caserma-dei-vigili/caserma-dei-vigili.htm>, G0089, for drawing and photographs (2020, July 8).

As regards the dating of the inscriptions in the Caserma dei Vigili, the majority seem to belong to the first half of the 3rd century. The only precisely dated text, *CIL* XIV 4526c,⁷ is from the period of Severus Alexander. This date should be ascribed at least to the inscriptions in the rooms to the right and left of the main entrance and the rooms surrounding the Augusteum. In addition to internal criteria (inconstant use of the *praenomen* which is mostly omitted; the cohort's nickname *Severiana* in *CIL* XIV 4526c; an *Aurelius* in no. 1 above also lacking the *praenomen* [in this inscription the use of the *praenomen* oscillates as in other similar documents of the Severan period: the 'protagonists' generally have a *praenomen* whilst the various commanders of the detachment who appear either in the genitive after *sub cura* or in the ablative absolute do not]). Also supporting this date are the wall paintings in the room to the right of the entrance, which are of the Severan period; since the rooms surrounding the main entrance are symmetrical, we can assume that their wall paintings were executed contemporaneously; this would give us a *terminus post quem* for the graffiti of rooms 2 and 3. [I will deal with the dating of the first inscription more thoroughly elsewhere.]

The graffiti written on the tiles of the barracks' doors also seem to date mainly to the first half of the 3rd century, as suggested for example by the rarity of the *praenomen*, the presence of Aurelii, the sometimes alarming decline of the writing etc. Unfortunately, we cannot identify with certainty any individual with those attested in the urban inscriptions of *vigiles*: there are some identical names in the laterculi *CIL* VI 1056-1058 of the years 205-210, but they are too common to allow a certain identification.

For the graffiti on the posts of the north entrance we have a *terminus ante quem*. The entrance was closed at the time of Septimius Severus, and its graffiti must therefore date to the period before this; obviously the *vigiles* did not come to draw their names on the posts after making a long detour to a place where no-one spent time any more.

The inscriptions tell us little about the purpose of the various rooms in the barracks. We can assume that a large majority of those who wrote them were soldiers and their contents are generally restricted to the sphere of the life of the *vigiles*. A pair of women's names (*Primigenia* in *CIL* XIV 4526b⁸; *Bull. com.* 23 [1895] 211 no. 343; the very uncertain *Matusa* in *CIL* XIV 4528⁹ and *Monna* in *CIL* XIV 4527a¹⁰) do not change the overall impression. Despite their restricted nature the inscriptions are of interest for the establishment of the unit. Above all, the depicted laterculi provide a window into the mindset of the *vigiles*. Thus, for example, they very carefully record the most tangible mark of their full citizen rights, the concession of grain. They also clearly demonstrate – as do the inscriptions on stone – that the detachment of *vigiles* in Ostia did not have a central command and that the centuries of this city were made up of various Roman units.

Let us leave the Caserma dei Vigili to examine an important graffito from the Mithraeum of the Casa di Diana (I 3, 3) hitherto wrongly read in several editions:

4¹¹ = *CIL* XIV 5293, with previous bibliography (add DIEHL, *PWV*² 1008). On the outer face of the base of the shrine, above the little Bacchic herm to the left of the lip of the altar. 18 × 17; letter height 0.8-2.

⁷ Cf. <https://www.ostia-antica.org/graffiti/regio2/caserma-dei-vigili/caserma-dei-vigili.htm>, G0097, for drawing (2020, July 8).

⁸ Cf. <https://www.ostia-antica.org/graffiti/regio2/caserma-dei-vigili/caserma-dei-vigili.htm>, G0096 (2020, July 8).

⁹ Cf. <https://www.ostia-antica.org/graffiti/regio2/caserma-dei-vigili/caserma-dei-vigili.htm>, G0108, for drawing (2020, July 8).

¹⁰ Cf. <https://www.ostia-antica.org/graffiti/regio2/caserma-dei-vigili/caserma-dei-vigili.htm>, G0101, for drawing and previous interpretations (2020, July 8).

¹¹ Cf. <https://www.ostia-antica.org/graffiti/regio1/casa-di-diana/casa-di-diana.htm>, G0015, for photos and previous interpretations (2020, July 8).

Calza/Wickert:

	I I E M	
	V L A S	M X V
	B A B E N V S	S M A X S
	B E C T O N	B I N V X I I
5	P R O C L V S	B I N V X I I
	E R M E S	D V X X I I I
	F O R T V N I V	A D A N D A
	M A X I M V S	B I N V X I I

Solin:

[A]cilleus

Ulas carne X V

Baberius sam(psam?) X S

Bictor binu X II

5 *Proclus binu X II*

Ermes binu X III

Fortunius ADA

Maximus binu X II

The *mithraeum* is of the late 2nd century, which thus represents the *terminus post quem* for the graffito. Probably it is somewhat later, of the first half of the 3rd century. It is a list of people's names, apparently followed by the names of foodstuffs and by numbers probably preceded by the sign for a *denarius*. The structure of the graffito is unique of its kind; in the similar graffito lists of Pompeii, reported below, each name of a foodstuff is not preceded by a personal name as it is here; the Pompeian lists must be accounts by a single individual on the ration of a *familia*. This list, by contrast, seems to record the ration of each individual separately, which might appear strange. However, it might be a list of foods for a single day, and the servants would not have received the same ration every day. The names are all individual, and the majority – if not all – of those who bore them must have been slaves. It is true that from the 3rd century onwards the *gentilicium* lost its significance to such an extent that its absence does not compromise the free status of the person in question, but in any case, a large proportion of these names are clearly of servile origin, and even *Baberius*, the only *gentilicium* in the list, could suggest a slave when used on its own since at the time *gentilicia* were often used as slave names. But what kind of document is this? According to CALZA, the names are followed by those of the offerings made by worshippers, the names of foodstuffs with their prices. By contrast, WICKERT thinks that this is a list of household slaves and the rations to be distributed to each. If this is the case, this humble graffito would represent a valuable document on the rations of slaves in the early 3rd century, and should be read alongside the similar lists from Pompeii already mentioned, like *CIL* IV 4422; 5380;¹² 8566.¹³ Another possibility, modifying CALZA's hypothesis, is to interpret this as a banqueting inscription, listing the foods offered by worshippers for the shared banquet and their prices. In this case a

¹² On this long list of foodstuffs, see SOLIN – CARUSO 2016.

¹³ These instances should be added to those reported by MROZEK 1975, 15 ff.

comparable instance would be the two graffiti from the Mithraeum of Dura Europos,¹⁴ also with the names of foods and their prices, but without the names of people.

The foodstuffs consist mostly of wine, usually written *binu* in the accusative (as is also the case in line 6, where CALZA read DVX, explained by DIEHL as *du(pondium)* or *du(plum)*). – 2 In line 2 I have proposed *carne* (= *carnem*), whose reading is uncertain but probable and which I have checked several times on the wall. The C is very fine, like the preceding S (perhaps due to wear on the surface), whilst the other letters are clear even in the photograph. DIEHL proposes *Hylas m(odios)* based on the reading given by CALZA. – 3 *sampsā* was olive pulp (cfr. Colum. 12, 51, 2), a rustic foodstuff; however, we know from Diphilus (Ath. 55d) that merchants sold it on the streets of Athens. Therefore, it might well have been the ration of a servant in Ostia. It is true that the reading remains uncertain, but I cannot think of a better interpretation. Another expansion as *Sam(iam)*, a sort of flat bread (Tert. *adv. Marc.* 3, 5) is certainly less credible. – 7 the letters ADA seem certain, but I have found no trace of the subsequent NDA seen by CALZA. DIEHL expands *a(s)danda*. Non liquet. – It is difficult to say to what monetary units the numerals refer; at a first glance we could suggest the sign for the *denarius*, since the X has the horizontal central stroke (described by CALZA as vertical; only in line 6 is it vertical and in line 8 there are both short vertical and horizontal strokes). WICKERT has doubts and proposes a number X written in an unusual way (and in this case we must be dealing with asses). Indeed, we can ask how a wine ration for one person could be so expensive, given that up to the early 3rd century mediocre wine does not seem to have cost more than 7 asses per litre (*CIL* VIII 4508, of 202 CE, gives the price of 3.3 asses for a *sextarius*). But we may already be in the mid-3rd century and we may also be dealing with a ration for several days.

Some details on the names. *Achilleus* is a common name, still well-documented in the 3rd century and not typically servile. *Ulas* must stand for *Hylas* (as already noted by WICKERT), also well documented in the 3rd century, clearly servile, but not exclusively so. *Babenus* does not exist. *Baberius* is a fairly well documented *gentilicium* at Ostia as well, probably used here as a slave name. I read the following name as *Bictor* (instead of BECTON), not *Bictori*: the fine stroke after the R continues further down and is therefore extraneous. *Hermes* is common everywhere, particularly among the lower classes, though its use drops noticeably in the 3rd century. By contrast, *Fortunius* first appears in the 3rd century; the earliest precisely dated attestation is of 251 CE (*CIL* X 3699, 2, 28), but the epigraphic documentation may begin even earlier, in the early 3rd century (e.g. *CIL* VI 15902; 26921; X 2535; 2561a; V 3172; 7751; VIII 26735; 26795 are not thought to date, or at least not all of them, to after mid-century; of these, *CIL* VI 26921 seems fairly old, perhaps even of the 2nd century). The name is thus an example of the development of the new suffix *-ius* for *cognomina*, which becomes more common at the start of the 3rd century.

5¹⁵ = *CIL* XIV 4530. Graffito in a *tabula ansata*. 11 × 5; letter height 0.5 - 1. From the shrine of Silvanus (I 3, 2), SW wall, left corner, in the fresco with the figure of Silvanus. Now in the Ostia Museum, room XI 16. First-hand examination 1966.

coh(ortis) VI (centuria) Ost(iensis) imp(erante)
An(tonino), co(n)s(ulibus) Leto et Ce-
riale sebarius
Calpurnius.

¹⁴ VERMASEREN 1956, 64-65.

¹⁵ Cf. <https://www.ostia-antica.org/graffiti/regio1/sacello-del-silvano/sacello-del-silvano.htm>, G0011, for a photograph and previous interpretations (2020, July 8).

In the right-hand handle of the tabula:

x = votis decennialibus.

Of the year 215 CE. Graffito inexpertly drawn by a *vigil*, with numerous abbreviations not in keeping with the epigraphic style. Calpurnius (it is unclear whether *Calpurnius* here is a *gentilicium* used on its own or if it is acting as a *cognomen*) was a *sebarius*, a soldier who made night inspection rounds with tallow torches. The word *sebarius* is a unique occurrence; hitherto the category of soldiers destined for this purpose was known only from the graffiti of the guard chamber of the VII cohort of the *vigiles* in Rome, in the form *sebacarius* (cfr. *CIL* VI 2998-3091; 32751). Despite the lack of further documentation and the type of testimony, there is no doubt as to the duties they performed. *Sebarius* must be an independent form, derived directly from *sebum* ‘tallow’, and not a spelling mistake for *sebacarius*, as stated by WICKERT;¹⁶ the latter is derived from *sebacii* ‘tallow candles’ (Apul. *Met.* 4,19). *Sebarius* is also known as a personal name, probably a *cognomen* (*AE* 1999, 1153 from Germania Superior: *Cerecotes Sebari*). Perhaps the term *sebacarius* was used in Trastevere and the shorter word *sebarius* at Ostia. In any case *sebarius* should not be considered an error, nor a variant, but simply another word with the same meaning (that *sebarius* was a possible form is conclusively demonstrated by the anthroponym *Sebarius* that can only be derived from *sebarius*). COH VI is certain: WICKERT suggests COH VII as an alternative, but the line after V is just a wrinkle. *Ostiensis* is probably the *cognomen* of the centurion, if not the *gentilicium*. For *votis decennialibus* cfr. *CIL* VI 428; 2999; 3012.

In the same room, on the NE wall, are two unpublished graffiti: *Scamandri*¹⁷ and *Ceriale*¹⁸; these are two names well attested in Roman onomastics; the latter is found at Ostia (*CIL* XIV 329; 4141; 4565 II, 13; 4569 dec. VIII, 17; X, 10; *EpOst* 247; *LatSignOstienses* App. 1). Slightly to the right of the signature of Scamander is a modern graffito MARIUS / E ANNA / VII KAL MAIAS.¹⁹ The two unpublished graffiti may also arouse suspicion for the way they are drawn; however, they seem ancient to me despite the ‘Italian’ form *Ceriale*, which could be explained as an accusative written without the final *m*; alternatively, it is a repetition of the name of the consul in 5.

6²⁰ = *CIL* XIV 5291, 3c, 1, with drawing and with previous bibliography (add DIEHL, *PWV*² 1095a). Graffito executed with a forked object. 67 × 35; letter height 4-6. Casa di Giove e Ganimede (I 4, 2), room at the back of the ambulatory, E wall, on the left. First-hand examination 1978.

Hic ad Callinicum

futui orem, anum.

amice mi, amari noli ter;

inde n[on] vene [---]

5 *donor[---]*

¹⁶ Similarly SABLAYROLLES 1996, 384.

¹⁷ Cf. <https://www.ostia-antica.org/graffiti/regio1/sacello-del-silvano/sacello-del-silvano.htm>, G0014, for photographs and previous interpretations (2020, July 8).

¹⁸ Cf. <https://www.ostia-antica.org/graffiti/regio1/sacello-del-silvano/sacello-del-silvano.htm>, G0013, for photographs and previous interpretations (2020, July 8).

¹⁹ Cf. <https://www.ostia-antica.org/graffiti/regio1/sacello-del-silvano/sacello-del-silvano.htm>, G0012, for photographs and previous interpretations (2020, July 8).

²⁰ Cf. <https://www.ostia-antica.org/graffiti/regio1/casa-di-giove-e-ganimede/casa-di-giove-e-ganimede.htm>, G0033 [1], for drawings, photographs, and previous interpretations (2020, July 8).

The previous editors have read wrongly in more than one place (see the critical apparatus in *CIL*). Our new reading, at least for the first three lines, is certain. The first sentence (l. 1-2) poses no difficulties. WICKERT rightly noted that *ad Callinicum* refers to the place where the author of the graffito had sex. There may thus have been a statue of *Hercules invictus*, of whom *καλλίνικος* was an epithet, in this place (cf. the well-known epigram from Pompeii *CIL* IV 733 and further evidence from the Greek and Roman worlds).²¹ The accusative *orem* of *os* is attested in late Latin: Ps. Theod. *Prisc. simpl. med.* 80. Visio Pauli 28 rec. Sang. p. 140, 14 S; see also the acc. *ore*: Chiron 354. Diosc. 1, 50 p. 28, 17 M. Oribas *eup. syn.* 3 add. p. 908,38. *os* ‘opening’ used in an obscene sense to mean vulva as in *cunni os* Mart. 3, 72, 6. It may also refer to the mouth, in the obscene sense, as illustrated forcefully by Horace *Epod.* 8, 20. *anus* may be either *anus* ‘old woman’ or *ānus* ‘anus’; both meanings may be present here. The third line is more problematic, but I will not abandon the new reading. The author may have wished to give advice to a friend (*amice* is thus a vocative, not an adverb, and *amari* a secondary spelling for *amare*, not the passive infinitive) of the dangers of too much sex. This context would also be in keeping with *inde* and our completion of the lacuna. *vene* for *bene* also appears elsewhere at Ostia.

722 = *CIL* XIV 5291, 3c, 2; with previous bibliography (add DIEHL, *PWV*² 1095b). Graffito superimposed on the first two lines of the preceding graffito. 46 × 16; letter height 3-9.

Livius Mercurius (palm)
lincet Tertulle cunnu quam

The previous editors have read wrongly in several places (see the critical apparatus in *CIL*). Our new reading does not present doubts (note for example RI instead of N: the N in this graffito is not written with the cross-stroke rising to the left, like the loop of the R) and eliminates the problematic *me cunus*.

After *quam* there follows, written in another hand (the M is also larger than the first three letters of the word and may therefore not belong to the graffito), something, perhaps *Ursus*; were this the case *quam* might refer to *Tertulle*: Tertulla whom Ursus loves, for example. Perhaps Livius Mercurius and Ursus were rivals. Or *quam* was used to strengthen a superlative, as in *quam avidissime*, *quam cupidissime*, *quam libentissime*. – *lincet* stands for *lingit*.

I will conclude with some unpublished graffiti.

8. Thermopolium (I 2, 5), to the left of the right-hand entrance. On the fragment of plaster that became detached and was replaced, on the top left. 3.5 × 1. First-hand examination 1967 and 1978.

ne fuge.

If the reading is correct and nothing is missing, we can ask what is meant by *ne fuge*. In the absence of any context, the meaning must be left open. Either *ne* is affirmative (*ThLL* IX 1, 279-282), ‘truly’ so ‘you are truly fleeing’, or it is an adverb of negation in an independent proposition, a prohibition with the imperative (*ThLL* IX 1, 285-287), ‘do not flee’.

9. The Casa di Giove e Ganimede (I 4, 2) has provided us with a quantity of graffiti, some of which are of great interest. A selection is in *CIL* XIV 5291; two graffiti listed there are republished here, above nos.

²¹ Cf. SOLIN 2017, 250, with a collection of examples both from Pompeii and from Thasos, Kios, Erythrai, Mylasa, Bottiaia, Odesos, Salamis, Smyrna, Koptos.

²² Cf. <https://www.ostia-antica.org/graffiti/regio1/casa-di-giove-e-ganimede/casa-di-giove-e-ganimede.htm>, G0033 [2], for drawings, photographs, and previous interpretations (2020, July 8).

6-7. Here I will add two unpublished examples. The first is in the same room as graffiti nos. 6-7, on the E wall, to the left. 33 × 5; letter height 1-1.5. First-hand examination 1978; but the graffito is easier to read in the photo taken in 1966, when the text was less ruined.

[Al?]cimedede Nico e(t) Proclion.

The reading is very uncertain, not just due to the constant wear on the plaster but also the writer's habit of inclining the strokes towards the right. The advantage of my proposed reading is that it least provides a meaning.

As concerns the names: the completion of the first name seems certain, since there are no other ancient personal names in *-cimedede* -κιμέδης -κιμήδης. *Alcimedede*, a regular Greek name, though rarely attested (Ἀλκιμήδης),²³ is found once in the West, in Hispania Citerior, at Palma (*CIBal* 9, c. 2nd century). As for the letter before M, I had considered an I, since the remains visible in the photo lead us first of all to an I, for which reason I had ruled out the common *Nicomede*s. Given the writer's aforementioned habit, the preceding letter, which at first sight looks like a C, might be various others. We could therefore have, for example, *Antimede*s (in *CIL* VI 23375, 27953; XII 4595) or *Archimede*s (in *CIL* VI 19851, 35279; *NSA* 1992, 412 no. 14), both known in Rome. Nor is *Nico* particularly certain, but it is in any case a common name in the West and well known at Ostia too (five times in *CIL* XIV, and also the unpublished inv. 6113). As for *Proclion*, the reading is very uncertain; the ending *-on* suggests the Greek Προκλίων rather than the Latin *Proc(u)lio*. *Proclion* is known in Rome (*CIL* VI 13194) and in the Greek world. – *Alcimedede* (if this is the correct reading) is a dative (datives in *-e* are not particularly rare in Greek words with the ending *-es*). The meaning would thus be: Nico and Proclion greet Alcimedede.

10. Scratched above nos. 6-7. Graffito. 27 × 3-6. First-hand examination 1978.

Excire mone[o?]

The reading remains somewhat uncertain. The spelling *cx* instead of *x* is not very common in inscriptions, but it is nonetheless attested.

11. To the right of the above. Graffito. 23 × 4-6. First-hand examination 1978.

Habbebat.

The spelling *habb-* is found in many instances of the *instrumentum inscriptum*, but reproducing the same text; cfr. *ThLL* VI 2395, 40-42.

12. Insula del Soffitto Dipinto (II 6, 6), room 2, NE wall, on the left, under the window. Graffito. 37 × 3-10. First-hand examination 1973.

[---]+urius, M[-]risca.

The V remains very uncertain, but despite this I venture to propose [*Merc*]urius, which is in any case not contradicted by the rest of the letters. The second name is more problematic. If we read [*P*]risca the preceding M would be impossible to explain. A cognomen *Mariscus* is known,²⁴ with the female counterpart *Marisca*;²⁵ however, their diffusion is very limited. A third possibility would be to read *Mercurius Mari Sca*[---] (sc. *servus*). But this is unsatisfying, in part because the marks after SCA do not provide any positive results. Non liquet.

²³ *ARV*² p. 1563 (Attica, 5th century BCE); *SNG München Jonien* 755 (Miletus, c. 200 BCE).

²⁴ *KAJANTO* 1965, 334 with two attestations; further attestations in *SOLIN* 2009, 169.

²⁵ Of the female name only a fairly uncertain attestation is currently known: *IG* XIV 2450 (Massilia); cf. *SOLIN* 2009, 169.

13. Foro delle Corporazioni (II 7). Fragment of plaster with a graffito, found in the test excavation on the NW side, beneath the mosaic, in 1966. Plaster 9×7 ; graffito 6×5 ; letter height 0.5 - 4. Brought to my attention by Fausto Zevi.

*Carm[---]
campo ins[---].*

The two lines may have been written by two different hands. – 1 might conceal a form of *carmen*, perhaps referring to a quotation from Virgil, so fashionable in the graffiti of Pompeii, or of *Carminius* or of some other name. – 2 it is difficult to imagine the meaning: what could *campus insulae* be? – A coin of Claudius was found with the graffito. Therefore, the graffito could be of the Claudian period or slightly later. In any case the mosaics, of the late 2nd century, represent the *terminus ante quem*.

14. Shrine (III 2, 11). Graffito written on the N wall of the left-hand room of the shrine, on the right part of the wall. 25×17 ; letter height 3-10. First-hand examination 1967.

*Pri(die) Non(as)
Novenb(res).*

It is worth noting the secondary spelling *Novenb-*, common in vulgar inscriptions. The shrine is of the period of Antoninus Pius, which thus represents the *terminus post quem* for the graffito. There are no other elements for a more precise dating.

15. Insula delle Volte Dipinte (III 5, 1) In addition to the numerous depicted writings in room 10 (*thermopolium*) and in part already published by FELLETTI MAJ 1961 and DELLA CORTE – CIPROTTI 1961 (but in an acritical fashion) I will publish here two graffiti which I read in room 11. The first is on the E wall, on the left. 20×6 ; letter height 1.3 - 2.3. First-hand examination 1967.

φησί(?) τεσσάρων ἢ
μετάβασις.

With the exception of the first words, the reading of the graffito seems fairly certain. But the meaning remains very obscure. *μετάβασις* must have the concrete meaning here of ‘move, transfer’ known from the Egyptian papyri (I think a personal name **Μετὰβασις* can be absolutely ruled out). But *τεσσάρων*? The move of four friends to Ostia from the east? But in that case who is the subject of *φησί*? Or “one of the four says: ‘the transfer’”. The word order militates against the first alternative, unless the author was being deliberately obscure.

16. On the right-hand part of the same E wall. $13 \times 0.7 - 3.8$. First-hand examination 1967.

Vitalis ic fuit.

The spelling *ic* for *per hic* is common. *Vitalis* is a popular *cognomen* both as a masculine and as a feminine and is also common at Ostia (in *CIL* XIV alone it is attested 35 times).

17. Terme Marittime (III 8, 2). Room 5, SE wall, on the right. Graffito, appears scratched onto the fresh plaster. $26 \times 1.5 - 4$. First-hand examination 1971.

Omnibus vene.

We have already seen the spelling *vene* for *bene* at Ostia, above no. 6.

18.²⁶ To the right of the preceding graffito. 39,5 × 2,5 - 5. First-hand examination 1971.

cinedus pedicatur.

‘The *cinaedus* is sodomized’. Both terms are common in erotic-obscene language; for example, on the walls of Pompeii they are found countless times. In the first word we have the secondary spelling for *cinaedus*,²⁷ whilst *pedicatur* is the correct and official form (in the scientific literature it is often assumed that *paed-* is the original spelling); cfr. *ThLL* X 1, 974, 62-67.

19. Beneath the preceding graffito. 23 × 6; letter height 1-2.5. First-hand examination 1971.

Κεκώνδα+ οίφ[---]

KAT

Of somewhat uncertain reading. What does seem clear is that the graffito begins with the name *Secunda* (whose normal Greek transcription is Σεκόνδα), though the tangle at the start of the name is unclear, as is the letter after the final A. After the name I have identified ΟΙΦ; if I have read correctly, we would probably have the verb οίφω ‘to fuck’ here. – The significance of the KAT in the second line is impossible to determine.

20.²⁸ Near the preceding graffito. 39 × 3-7. First-hand examination 1971.

Cesar, ecrota.

Of uncertain reading and interpretation. The first two letters are finer than the others, and the S is also uncertain. However, this does not prevent us from considering CE to belong to the rest; the writer may also have changed instrument and incised the rest onto the fresh plaster (as it seems) with a thicker groove. After the graffito are the letters PV, whose attribution is not certain. *Aegrota* and *aegrotas* in acclamations are common in Pompeian graffiti (*CIL* IV 762; 2960; 3775; 4507; 5339), but refer to intimates, whilst here *aegrota* must refer to *Caesar*. But an insult such as *Caesar, aegrota* cannot be ruled out.

21-23. The walls of the Casa degli Aurighi (III 10, 1) contain a quantity of graffiti, of which only a few have been published in a satisfactory manner;²⁹ unfortunately the aforementioned publication by DELLA CORTE and CIPROTTI of 1961 includes numerous graffiti with unprecedentedly corrupt transcriptions.³⁰ Here I will publish two of those that do not seem to have been published previously:

21. Room 2, right wall, on the far right (at the same height as graffito no. 2 of DELLA CORTE – CIPROTTI) Graffito. 9 × 1 - 9. First-hand examination 1966.

Quinque irru[matores?].

²⁶ Cf. <https://www.ostia-antica.org/graffiti/regio3/terme-marittime/terme-marittime.htm>, G0445, for photograph (2020, July 8).

²⁷ For *cinaedus*, see also WILLIAMS 2010, 191-218, 230-39; KAMEN – LEVIN-RICHARDSON 2015, 453-55.

²⁸ Cf. <https://www.ostia-antica.org/graffiti/regio3/terme-marittime/terme-marittime.htm>, G 0445, in the lower part of the photograph representing no. 18 (G0445) (2020, July 8).

²⁹ SOLIN 1972, 193-97 = SOLIN 1998, 35-38. Cf. also GUARDUCCI 1965, 255, who improves the reading and interpretation of DELLA CORTE – CIPROTTI 1961, no. 14; SOLIN 1977, 166, who corrects DELLA CORTE – CIPROTTI 1961, no. 1 *lubet* to *iubet*, followed by LEBEK 1981, 59-61, who in turn emends *quarta dolet* to *quarta docet*; but on the wall we clearly read DOLIIT; the possible reasons why the writer might have scratched L instead of C are set out by LEBEK.

³⁰ DELLA CORTE – CIPROTTI 1961, n. 1-19, 62, 63, 71-74.

The last three letters RRV remain uncertain but are possible; the Rs have a cursive form and R and V may be linked. The noun *irrumator*,³¹ ‘oral rapist’, coined by Catullus (10, 12), also appears in Pompeii (*CIL* IV 1529; 8790). [This may be the same as DELLA CORTE – CIPROTTI 1961, 6 VITIA SVA.]

22. Fragment of plaster, from the Caseggiato degli Aurighi, now in the storerooms (inv. no. 10017). Graffiti, repeated on the same wall 5 times:

recte futui.

‘I fucked well’. One specimen adds *X V[---]* after *futui*, that is to say *denariis V[---]*. In another it is written *fitui* which should be judged a writing mistake and not a secondary spelling.

We publish another text already published, but erroneously, in DELLA CORTE – CIPROTTI 1961, no. 74, as it is of great interest from the onomastic point of view:

23.³² Corridor, left-hand room. Graffito. 97 × 32; letter height 5-18. First-hand examination 1966.

Colonio

lingit, set quit

lingit? nescio; cunnu[m sc. lingit?].

‘Colonio licks, but what does he lick? I don’t know; perhaps he licks a cunt’. Alongside the overall form of the erotic text the principal interest of this graffito lies in the name *Colonio*, which in DELLA CORTE – CIPROTTI is read COLONIA, but a personal name **Colonia* was not in use. *Colonio* is a new suffix derivative from the well-known *cognomen Colonus* (KAJANTO 1965, 321), and a plausible name alongside other suffix derivatives such as *Colonianus*, *Colonicus*, *Colonilla* (KAJANTO, *ibid.*) and Κολωνίς *IGLS* 1331 (Apamea). – 2-3 *set, quit = sed, quid*: in such proclitic words the final voiced dental stops are often rendered with *t*, like *ad, sed, quid*; this is discussed by Roman grammarians and the phenomenon can be observed in Pompeian inscriptions (VÄÄNÄNEN 1966, 70). – 3 *nescio*: the doubling of the *s* after a short vowel is found on other occasions in vulgar texts (see for example VÄÄNÄNEN 1966, 60).

24. The Caseggiato degli Aurighi has an under-stair space full of interesting graffiti often with an obscene content, some of which are published in an acritical and corrupt fashion in DELLA CORTE – CIPROTTI.³³ Many noteworthy graffiti remain unpublished. They will not be discussed here; instead I will provide only the improved form of some of the published graffiti. I collated these in 1966 and 1972.

a) DELLA CORTE – CIPROTTI no. 22 QV SECVNDA FORMOSA / BINII QVII BINTVA / FACIIS AGITANTI PRASINI / CRISPI.³⁴ Must be read *Secunda formosa / qui libenter prasino(?) / agitante crisas*. The only problematic point in the reading is the end of line 2. Della Corte – Ciprotti give PRASINI, but the last letter remains very uncertain, since the plaster is extremely worn; what we see now does appear to be an I, but the syntax requires *prasino*. – QV given by the first editors in front of the rest of the text exists, but is in another hand and is a separate graffito; BINII FACIIS (*bene facis* or *facies*) is an independent graffito. – The principal interest of the graffito lies in the final verb. *Criso*, ‘to waggle one’s hips’, used of women, belongs

³¹ For the verb *irrumare*, see also ADAMS 1982, 125-30; KAMEN – LEVIN-RICHARDSON 2015, 450-51.

³² Cf. <https://www.ostia-antica.org/graffiti/regio3/caseggiato-degli-aurighi/caseggiato-degli-aurighi.htm>, G0313, for drawing, photographs, and previous interpretations (2020, July 8).

³³ DELLA CORTE – CIPROTTI 1961, nos 20-24, 26-29, 34, 36, 40-61. Some revisions in SOLIN 1972, 195-96 = SOLIN 1998, 36-37.

³⁴ Cf. <https://www.ostia-antica.org/graffiti/regio3/caseggiato-degli-aurighi-17/caseggiato-degli-aurighi-17.htm>, G0270, for photographs and previous interpretations (2020, July 8).

to the obscene vocabulary,³⁵ already attested at Ostia, at Portus, in a distich of the pseudo-sepulchral genre (*IPO A 348*), known with variants in other epigraphic poems (*CLE 1810* [Roma], *Suppl. It. 25 Brixia 66*). Also worth noting is a sort of etymological figure in *prasino agitante*, since *prasinus* is the charioteer, *agitor*, of the Greens. Finally, note the gender synesis in *qui* for *quae*, common in Late Antiquity starting from the 4th century but rarely attested in the Principate (though it is present at Pompeii: *CIL IV 1806*; *AE 1992, 280*).

b) DELLA CORTE – CIPROTTI no. 49 CRVSEOS AMAS ADAMA / APELLA CRVSEOS. IVSTVS IANVAR...VS / PLVRIMA,³⁶ which should be *C(h)ryseros amas adama(s) | Apella C(h)ryside(m). Iustus Ianuar[i]us | plurima(m) (salutem?)*. In fact we are dealing with three different graffiti, two of which may have been written by a single hand but which in any case contain two different greetings: *Cryseros*,³⁷ *amas Adama[---]* and *Crusides, Iustus Ianuar[i]ae suae / plurima salutem*. The APELLA of the previous editors is clearly by another hand, but the reading remains uncertain and is definitely not *Apella*. Standing out in the first graffito is the last word, interpreted by the first editors as the verb form *adamas*. This cannot be ruled out, in which case it would intensify the message of the preceding *amas*: ‘Chryseros loves, loves passionately’. Equally acceptable would be the accusative of the name of the person loved by Chryseros. Of names beginning in *Adama-* *Adamas* and *Adamastus* are attested, both known in the Greek world, at Rome and in the provinces; *Adamatus* also recently appeared at Corduba (*CIL II² 7, 631*).³⁸ Only male names are attested, but a woman’s name *Adamata* is not impossible; it is therefore not certain that we are dealing with a homosexual situation. In the second graffito it is worth noting the name *Chrysides*, new for ancient naming conventions but easy to postulate alongside the popular women’s name *Chrysis*. *Chrysides* and *Iustus* must be two rival lovers of Ianuaria (*Iustus* need not to be the second *cognomen* of *Chrysides*).

c) DELLA CORTE – CIPROTTI no. 52 AVE AVLO SQUILLA GALLICANO / XXI ANNO VIIVRII,³⁹ with an imprudent note. In fact, we read *AV(?) Cavio Squilla Gallicano, / Sex. Carminio Vetere* on the wall, and thus the names of the ordinary consuls of 150 CE. – It is uncertain what *AV(?)* at the start of the graffito means; the writer might have had in mind the *praenomen* of the first consul, *Marcus*, but became confused when writing the M.

d) DELLA CORTE – CIPROTTI no. 58 MVLVS AMET PATICAM should be read *cum laxsam et paticam*. If I have read the beginning correctly (C and M are somewhat uncertain), we have *cum* governing the accusative, a phenomenon well known in popular and late texts (present already at Pompeii: VÄÄNÄNEN 1966, 121). The attributes *laxus* and *pathicus* are often found on the walls of Pompeii in obscene contexts (*CIL IV 9120*; 10004 *laxa*; 2360 and 4008 [reproducing the same verse] *pat(h)icus*).

³⁵ Cf. ADAMS 1982, 136-37.

³⁶ Cf. <https://www.ostia-antica.org/graffiti/regio3/caseggiato-degli-aurighi-17/caseggiato-degli-aurighi-17.htm>, G0293, for the previous interpretation (2020, July 8).

³⁷ The lower part of the third letter is damaged, making it hard to decide if it is a Y or a V. I believe I have identified a small remnant of the vertical line of the Y.

³⁸ *Adamatus* is also known as a name for racehorses: *DefTab 275, 276, 278, 282-84* from Hadrumetum.

³⁹ Cf. <https://www.ostia-antica.org/graffiti/regio3/caseggiato-degli-aurighi-17/caseggiato-degli-aurighi-17.htm>, G0296, for the previous interpretation (2020, July 8).