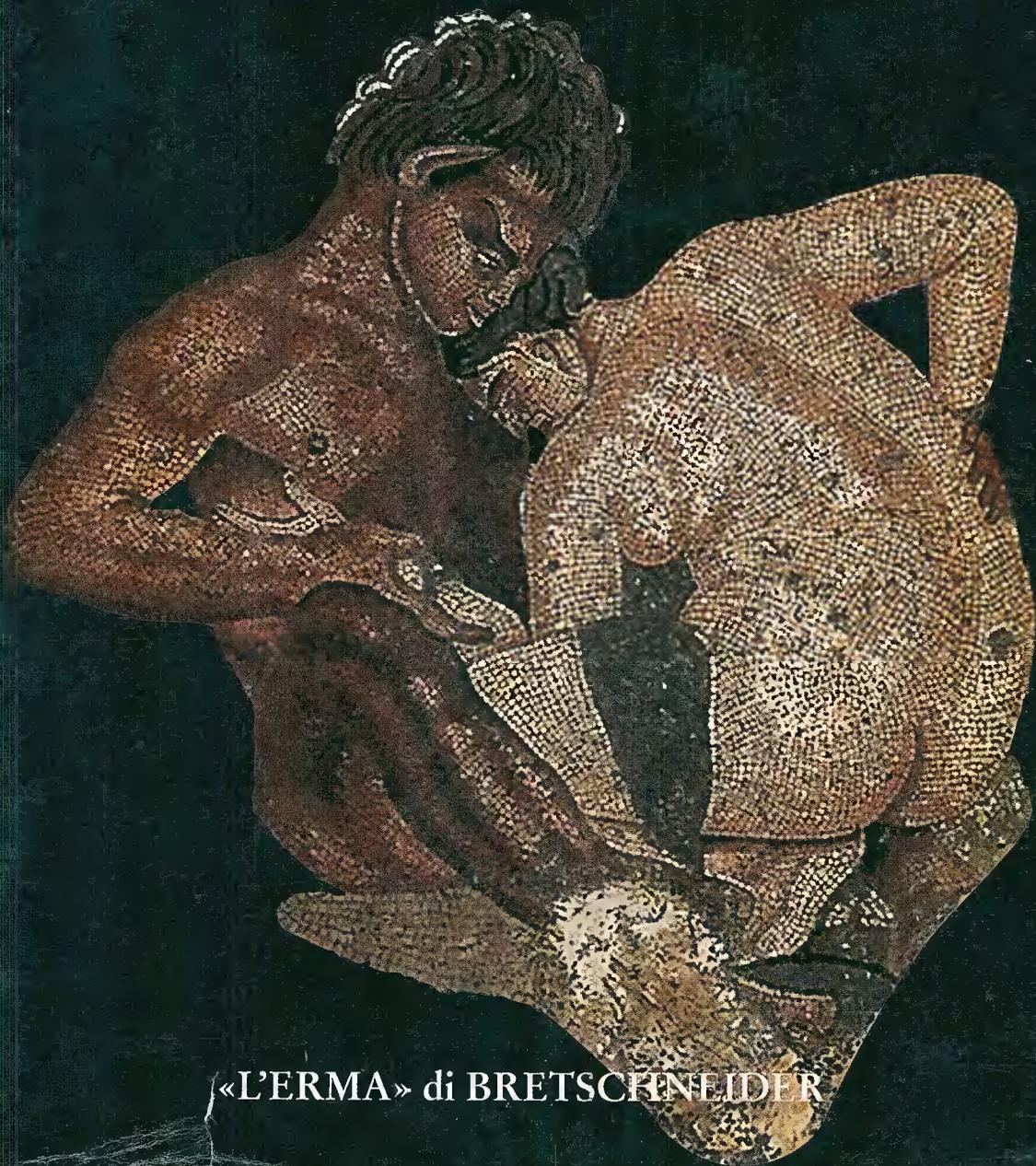


Antonio Varone

# *EROTICA POMPEIANA*

Love Inscriptions  
on the Walls of Pompeii



«L'ERMA» di BRETSCHNEIDER

ANTONIO VARONE

*EROTICA*  
*POMPEIANA*  
Love Inscriptions  
on the Walls of Pompeii

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ANTONIO VARONE  
*Erotica pompeiana*  
Love Inscriptions on the Walls of Pompeii

Translation by Ria P. Berg,  
with revisions by David Harwood and Roger Ling

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*To my daughter Valentina,  
born "in the course of work"*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Pompeian wall inscriptions are often written in a spontaneous, popular language which differs notably from the Ciceronian Latin taught to us at school.

These written documents, rich in expressions of the *sermo rusticus*, often follow phonetically the pronunciation of spoken language, and are therefore crucial to our understanding of the transition from Latin to the Romance languages.

For this reason I have preferred to quote the inscriptions just as they were written, but always referring to the critical apparatus in the notes for explanations of the forms that deviate from classical Latin grammar and morphology. These might otherwise render the texts incomprehensible to those skilled in Latin but not familiar with this kind of colloquial language. The translations aim at conveying the meaning, not producing a word-for-word rendering of the text.

Leaving aside some special cases, our bibliography omits literature published before, and cited and discussed in, the fourth volume of *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*. This volume with its various supplements remains the basic text and constant reference point for the epigraphical study of Pompeian wall inscriptions. We do not generally take into account the variant readings suggested by different editors but not accepted by later critics or not consistent with the available transcript or transcripts. The reader who wishes to pursue these debates further will, however, find all the necessary bibliographical references in the notes.

The abbreviations used for the most frequently cited books are listed at the end of the present volume. The abbreviations of journals are the standard ones found in the *Archäologische Bibliographie*, published by the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut of Berlin. For the inscriptions quoted in the notes, rather than a full bibliography, we give only a reference to *CIL* or, where applicable, to the more representative anthologies (*ILS*, *CLE*, *DIEHL*).

The select bibliography of the volume does not include all the works cited in relation to individual texts, but concentrates on a restricted number of more general works. A detailed updating which I have undertaken of the bibliography on Pompeii, organized by themes and covering the years 1971-1992, is forthcoming as a supplement in the series *Corpus Topographicum Pompeianum. Pars IV*, which is being edited in the University of Nijmegen under the editorship of Jos de Waele.

The present study draws its material and inspiration from a larger and more wide-ranging work on Pompeian wall inscriptions which I am preparing, with financial support from C.N.R. and in close collaboration with the editors of *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*. In this context the present work has more limited aims, but it will hopefully be useful both in giving a wider cultural currency to this patrimony of knowledge, still the exclusive preserve of too restricted a number of devotees, and in affirming the great contributions that the study of the graffiti - often underrated even by the scholars occupied with it - can bring to our knowledge and understanding of the ancient world.

The more general work to which I refer purposes to track down and document graphically and photographically the whole stock of wall inscriptions surviving in the Vesuvius area; various texts will as a result be revised, many unpublished ones will be published, eventually forming a supplementary fascicle of *CIL* IV, and computerized indices will be prepared for the whole of *CIL* IV.

At present the campaign of documentation, conducted in the context of the scholarly activities of the Soprintendenza Archaeologica di Pompei, is nearly finished, and has yielded numerous interesting discoveries. I have also completed a manuscript relating to the unpublished wall-inscriptions of Stabiae. I am currently working on the edition of the unpublished texts found in Pompeii in the excavations of the last fifteen years.

While working on this demanding project I have been able to benefit from the valuable help and vigilant and attentive collaboration of Hans Krummrey, director of the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*, and its editors Volker Weber and Karin Iffert. The time that I spent in Berlin at the headquarters of *CIL*, situated in the then Academy of Sciences of the DDR, which I was able to visit while holding a research award of the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut in the spring of 1989, played a decisive part in the development of this scholarly project and was one of the most profitable and intensive periods in my programme of research.

I have also profited greatly from the advice and suggestions of Heikki Solin and Jana Keparová, both equally involved in the thorny field of

Pompeian graffiti and preparing new supplementary fascicles for volume IV of *CIL*.

Luciana Jacobelli, who is working on an in-depth study of the erotic paintings of the Suburban Baths, has provided me with some bibliographic references. Ennio Gallo has taken care of the reproduction of the transcripts of *CIL*; Alfredo Foglia has provided me with the photographic illustrations used in the volume.

To all these people go my heartfelt thanks, but above all, and with much affection, I thank Baldassare Conticello, who has always encouraged my epigraphical studies and who, as Soprintendente Archeologico di Pompei, despite the countless duties of his and my offices, has given much practical help in enabling me to pursue them. Finally I thank my wife Lina and my children Alessandra, Vincenzo and, now, Valentina who have always shown exceptional understanding for a husband and a father who was short of time to give them - but never short of love.

Pompeii, December 1993

ANTONIO VARONE

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS FOR THE SECOND EDITION

Seven years after its first publication the book appears in a revised and enlarged edition, written directly in the English language in response to the many requests received by the publisher. The revision of the text has allowed me to make some corrections and to enhance the bibliographical notes and the references to ancient authors, without altering the structure of the work. I have added a whole new chapter, Love and Magic, as well as writing some other parts *ex novo* and adding some new inscriptions. The result is that this new English version is considerably amplified.

In my revision I have naturally been supported by the assessments and observations offered by the numerous scholars who have kindly expressed their opinions in the reviews of my work: L. Franchi dell'Orto (*RStPomp* VI 1993-4, pp. 282f.), Italo Gallo (*RassStorSalern*, n. s., nr. 22 -XI 2, 1994-, pp. 205-210), J. Kepartová (*LF* 122, 1999, 1-2, pp. 119-122), W. Krenkel (*Gnomon* 6 / 1997, pp. 552-554), Alfonso Leone (*Lares* LXII 1996, pp. 487-490), Roger Ling (*CLR*, n. s., XLV 1995, pp. 485f.), Ph. Moreau (*AntiCl* LXIV 1995, pp. 434f.), S. Moscati (*Archeo* dic. 1994), L. Savunen (*Arctos* XXIX 1995, p. 203) are those known to me. I apologize for possible unintentional omissions.

To all of these people I direct my most sincere thanks for their help, which is greatly appreciated.

I must also thank my colleague Ria P. Berg, a scion of the solid Finnish school of philology, who agreed to undertake the complex task of translation.

I address an even more special thanks to Roger Ling, who, assisted by his student David Harwood, not only accorded to undertake the scrupulous revision of the translation, enriching it with idiomatic expressions and improving its style, but was also willing to discuss in numerous cases with me the interpretation of the individual inscriptions.

Finally, I thank Roberto Marcucci, the publisher of the work, who has once again shown his faith in it by consenting to the enlargement of the volume and thus bringing it to the attention of a potentially much wider readership.

Pompeii, November 2001

ANTONIO VARONE

## INTRODUCTION

*Pompeios defer, ubi dulcis est amor*

«Take me to Pompeii, where my sweet love lives.»

With these words an impatient lover, eager to reach Pompeii and join his beloved, urges the coachman to hurry. Extracted from their original context, the words obtain an additional evocative force: they seem almost to epitomize the mystical aura which in our contemporary imagination has grown up around love in the city of Vesuvius:

«Take me to Pompeii, where love is sweet».

The modern visitor, who approaches Pompeii two thousand years later, coming not only from another region but from quite another world, can still sense the subtle magic of love that emanates from the wall-paintings of the houses, from the bas-reliefs along the streets, from the graffiti scribbled on the walls of the buildings among which he wanders. One can almost breathe in the impalpable atmosphere of unbridled sensual desire intimately linked with dark melancholy – a paradigm of the indissoluble bond between love and death. This spirit seems to be the last of the gifts that Venus, her tutelary goddess, wanted to bestow on the city - a city that was left as a legacy to another era, still alive, after a cruel destruction and centuries of oblivion.

*Rogo, punge, iamus*

«Please, spur the horses, let's get on»

urges the lover, no longer able to restrain his passion, pleading with the driver to quicken the pace of the horses.

Let us too approach Pompeii to unlock the secrets of its houses, sensitive to all the various nuances that tinge the feeling of love - at times delicate, at times tender and sensual, sometimes disrespectful and mocking, sometimes fiercely passionate, sometimes openly vulgar, but always carrying that plain and unfettered flavour of total humanity which is their greatest value and which forms the object of study of these pages.

In a society that knew neither the sense of guilt nor the prudishness or the hypocrisy of much modern literature, love became man's worldly domain; the obscene did not exist, or was transformed. Indeed the love which radiates from the walls of Pompeii never appears sick, even in those expressions that our sense of morality would incline to regard as indecent. Perhaps - what is the other important aspect of the question - even the concept of eroticism was unknown. On the other hand, anxiety, torment, jealousy, joy, sensuality, passion and serene happiness were certainly familiar to Pompeians. In no other age as in classical antiquity has love so rejoiced in all the worldly spirituality that is inherent in its nature; never have feelings merged so intimately with the flesh. Nowhere as in Pompeii is it possible to recover, from messages and signs left by the people who lived there, the codes and meanings that this civilisation, whose mentality is so different from and yet so similar to ours, found and experienced in love.

*Omnia vincit Amor; et nos cedamus Amori.*

The verse of Virgil (*Bucol.* X 69) sums up in a few words all the overwhelming power of love. The Pompeians themselves demonstrate to us the role that this Force, disarmingly simple but frighteningly powerful - as the story of Medea reveals - played in the daily life of a society that we too easily label sexually "liberated" or morally dissolute.

Their morality was different from ours, though equally based on solid values, and it differed - this is a constantly recurring phenomenon - from one social stratum to another. For example, female adultery, though punishable by death, was actually, at least among the upper ranks, widely tolerated. Divorce, like marriage itself, could take place for political reasons. A bronze collar with the inscription "adulterous whore" has been found in Tunis (*ILS* 9455), with the further instruction that the woman who wore it should be taken back to Bulla Regia, if she had attempted to escape. The Vestals were always virgins, and as such sacred. Among some peoples of antiquity, however, even prostitution was sacred. In Rome, prostitution was expressly recommended by the austere Cato as a means of distracting young men from seducing married women (*apud* Hor.

*Serm.* I 2,31-35), and it was the supreme amusement that an empress, mistress of the world, could grant herself. It is not easy to interpret such moral views without abandoning one's own morality and stripping oneself of all prejudice. Roman society assuredly had few prejudices, and these were mainly of a formal nature. Nonetheless, this society played the role of a protagonist in Roman history. It was merely inspired by different values - a fact that it will be well to keep in mind, in order to avoid misunderstanding, while reading these pages.

*Iamus, prende lora et excute*

«Let's go, take the reins and crack the whip!»,

our insistent lover imperiously demands, urging the driver finally to spur on the horses to get him to Pompeii, to the house of his beloved.

Let us likewise enter the Pompeian labyrinth of love, without malice and without inhibitions, trying to recover, if possible, the innocence of a world that does not need circumlocutions or mental veils to hide the bare flesh of its humanity; that does not know our perversions, but persistently practises them - a world, in short, whose forthright crudity prompts us to reflect on one of the deepest and most intimate aspects of the reality we experience, one that in its various manifestations has a major impact on our lives, and one that society or our beliefs often lead us to disown or suppress, or even to cut out or sublimate: the yearning to love.

## YEARNING FOR LOVE

*Amoris ignes si sentire, mulio,  
magi(s) properares, ut videres Venerem.  
Diligo <<iuvenem>>, Venustum; rogo, punge, iamus.  
Bibisti: iamus, prende lora et excute,  
Pompeios defer, ubi dulcis est amor  
meus es[- -]*

«Driver, if you could only feel the fires of love, you would hurry more to enjoy the pleasures of Venus. I love young Charmer; please, spur on the horses, let's get on! You've had your drink, let's go, take the reins and crack the whip... take me to Pompeii, where my sweet love lives»<sup>1</sup>.

On an ancient street, two thousand years ago, the irrepressible yearning

<sup>1</sup> *CIL* IV 5092 with add. on p. 705; *CLE* 44; Wick 66, p. 35f.; Diehl 581; E. BIGNONE, *L'epigramma greco. Studio critico e traduzioni poetiche*, Bologna 1921, p. 79; MAGALDI, p. 122; DELLA VALLE, p. 162 and n. 89. VÄÄNÄNEN, p. 62; DELLA CORTE, p. 42; PISANI, p. 123 (B 32); KEPARTOVÁ, p. 194; GEIST-KRENKEL, 65, p. 64f; KRENKEL, p. 45; GIGANTE, p. 220f.; SOLIN, *Pompei* 79, p. 28f.; MONTERO CARTELLE, p. 120; BALDI, p. 100f.; CANALI-CAVALLO, p. 30f.; GIORDANO-CASALE, p. 13; I. GALLO, in *RassStorSalern* 22 (XI 2, 1994), p. 207f.

The inscription was found in the peristyle of house IX 5, 11 and is now in the Museo Nazionale of Naples.

In the third line *Venustum* should be interpreted as a *cognomen*. This name, typical also of the love poetry of Catullus (cf. R. SEAGER, *Venustus, Lepidus, Bellus, Salsus: Notes on the Language of Catullus*, in "Latomus" XXXIII 1974, pp. 891-894; L. GAMBERALE, *Venuste noster. Caratterizzazione e ironia in Catullo*, in *Studi... Traglia*, I, Roma 1979, pp. 127-148, especially p. 137), refers to the beauty of a young person. Also in the third line, as well as in the following one, *iamus* (cf. the Neapolitan "jammo") stands for *eamus*. Still in the third line, *iuvenem* has replaced *puerum*, favouring the view that the writer is a man, not a woman. On the *Musa puerilis* see *infra*.

for the love of a girl (or was it really a girl at all?) forced the coachman to make as rapid progress as possible to get to the desired goal of Pompeii, the city consecrated to *Venus Fisica*<sup>2</sup>, to find there the joys of passion.

Venus, the enchantress, goddess who made all living creatures drunk with the generative power of nature - *hominum divumque voluptas* as Lucretius, the most famous of the supposed sons of Pompeii, defined her - seems to have been tied to her city by a mysterious bond, a fact of which the inhabitants made no secret.

It seems that they even boasted of their availability for love, just as much as their desire for it:

*Amplexus teneros hac si] quis quaerit in urbel,  
Expect[at ceras] nulla puella viri*

«If anyone's looking for tender embraces in this town, he  
should know that here all the girls are available»<sup>3</sup>.

The yearning for love is present everywhere in Pompeii, and sometimes assumes forms and aspects that are extreme or discordant. In a famous picture in the House of the Vettii it is presented in the guise of a myth.

We see [Pl. 1] the aged Daedalus presenting Pasiphae with the replica of a cow, in which the woman, prey to her beastly passion, would shut herself up to submit to the advances of a bull.<sup>4</sup>

Quite different in tone and certainly more direct in its appeal is the

On the meaning of *Venerem*, discussed by several authors, cf. simply HOR. *Serm.* I 2, 119, cited *infra*, p. 158.

<sup>2</sup> For the epithet cf. *CIL* IV 1520 (DIEHL 785=*CLE* 354), 6865 (=DIEHL 473); X 928 (see also 203). On the uncertain meaning, cf. VÄÄNÄNEN pp. 55, 99 and the bibliography *ibid.* n. 1, where F. RIBEZZO, in *RIGI* XVIII 1934, fasc. 3, p. 23ff. may be added.

Already in the official name of the city, *Colonia Cornelia Veneria Pompeiana*, there is an explicit reference to the traditions of the Sullan family cult of Venus, to whos protection it was entrusted by the founder of the colony.

<sup>3</sup> *CIL* IV 1796 with add. on p. 464; *CLE* 941; WICK 50, p. 31; DELLA VALLE, p. 167; DELLA CORTE, pp. 60f., 107; A. BALDI, in "Latomus" 25 (1966), pp. 291-294; MONTERO-CARTELLE 46, p. 110; CANALI-CAVALLO, p. 62f.

The graffito was found inscribed in the Basilica.

The restorations in the first line, which are not certain, are taken from BÜCHELER (ad *CLE* 941).

In the second line the literal translation would be: «no girl waits for letters from her man». Most editors have understood the text as indicating that the girls are unavailable, since they would surely not look forward to receiving letters from potential lovers. I interpret the meaning in exactly the opposite sense. Cf. MART. IV 71, 1-4. My interpretation has been accepted by L. FRANCHI DELL'ORTO, in *RStPomp* VI 1993/4, p.282.

<sup>4</sup> In this case, as well as in other cases of pictures with an extensive bibliography, I

disarming simplicity - so different from some of our intellectual elaborations - with which a Pompeian confides to a wall the yearning that he feels for his woman. For her, *hic et nunc*:

*Vibius Restitutus hic  
solus dormivit et Urbanam  
suam desiderabat*

«Vibius Restitutus slept here alone, longing for his Urbana»<sup>5</sup>.

The consuming passion of desire is elsewhere brought out by a poetic composition with a tone of erudition. This was dedicated by an anonymous Pompeian to Novellia Primigenia, a woman from Nuceria, who won several hearts in Pompeii, and whom we shall meet again on our journey. These sophisticated and sensual verses are composed in the form of an elegiac couplet by a poet who was well versed in the recurring themes of Hellenistic poetry<sup>6</sup>:

*Primigeniae  
Nucer(inae) sal(utem)  
Vellem essem gemma ora non amplius una  
ut tibi signanti oscula pressa darem*

«Greetings to you, Primigenia of Nuceria!

Would that I were the gemstone (of the signet ring I give you), if only for one single hour, so that, when you moisten it with your lips to seal a letter, I can give you all the kisses that I have pressed on it»<sup>7</sup>.

refer only to books of a general character, e.g. in this case SCHEFOLD, p. 145, or, where appropriate, HELBIG, or *Le collezioni*, etc.

<sup>5</sup> *CIL* IV 2146; DIEHL 727; MAGALDI, p. 115; DELLA VALLE, p. 170; DELLA CORTE, p. 50; BALDI 123; MONTERO-CARTELLE 200, p. 150; CANALI-CAVALLO, p. 202f.

The graffito was found in a *cubiculum* of the inn VII 12, 35.

Note the juxtaposition of the imperfect tense *desiderabat*, expressing continuous action, and the perfect tense *dormivit*, denoting a single act.

<sup>6</sup> One can compare them with the verses of Virgil (*Aen.* I 683) and Ovid (*Am.* II 15, 9; II 15, 15-18), even if their interdependence is still under debate.

<sup>7</sup> *CIL* IV 10241; DELLA CORTE, p. 92f.; A.W. VAN BUREN, in *AJPb* LXXX 1959, pp. 380-382 (= *AE* 1960, no. 32); O. HILTBRUNNER, in "Gymnasium" LXXVII 1970, pp. 283-299; SOLIN, p. 274; L. PEPE, *Poesta latina in frammenti*, Genova 1974, pp. 223-234; GIGANTE, in *PP* CLVII

The same yearning for love, finally, draws from another poet a lament for the happiness that he has never experienced - a lament expressed in two hexameters whose delicate tone is reminiscent of the poems of Catullus [Pl. 4]:

*Felicem somnum qui tecum nocte quiescet?  
Hoc ego sic facere, multo felicior esse*

«Who is it that spends the night with you in happy sleep? Would that it were me! I would be many times happier»<sup>8</sup>.

1974, p. 290; W. D. LEBEK, in *ZPE* 23, 1976, pp. 21-40; GIGANTE, pp. 88-99; SOLIN, *Pompei* 79, p. 287; O. HILTBRUNNER, in "Gymnasium" LXXXIIX 1981, pp. 45-53; BALDI 133; VARONE, in *RSIPomp* II 1988, p. 274.

The text was inscribed on the funerary monument no. 20 EN in the necropolis outside the Nuceria gate. Cf. D'AMBROSIO, *Porta Nocera*, file 20 EN. The first part of the inscription, with the variant *gemma velim fieri bora non*, was already known from an example in Via degli Augustali. Cf. *CIL* IV 1698 with add. on pp. 463, 704; *CLE* 359; WICK 25, p. 21f.; DIEHL 679. Another version has recently been found in the House of Fabius Rufus. Cf. GIORDANO, *Fabio Rufo*, 42, p. 83f.; SOLIN, *Fabio Rufo*, 61 and comment on p. 253f.; SOLIN, *Pompei* 79, p. 287; VARONE, in *Rediscovering Pompeii*, Roma 1990, 14 e), p. 152; CANALI-CAVALLO, p. 34f.; GIORDANO-CANALE, p. 7. It presents the following text: *Vellessem gemma bora non amplius una / ut tivi signanti oscula pressa dare*. In our inscription, the *ora* of the second line stands for *bora*. The inaccurate reading (*b*)*ora nona melius una* was corrected by VAN BUREN, *loc. cit.* In the third line the reading *pressa* instead of *missa* is due to SOLIN, *loc. cit.* Now that the reading of the text has been confirmed, the question whether the form *gemma velim fieri* in the couplet is the original one or a later variant is still under discussion (cf. LEBEK and SOLIN, *loc. cit.*). As is well known, gemstones with engraved figures were set into rings for use as signets. Worth notice, furthermore, is the conceptual and semantic connection between the *imprimere gemmam* and the *oscula pressa* on the gem made by our author.

On *Novellia Primigenia* cf. DELLA CORTE, p. 83ff. and see also *infra*, p.151 .

<sup>8</sup> GIORDANO, *Fabio Rufo*, 45, p. 84; SOLIN, *Fabio Rufo*, 59 and comment on p. 254; V. TANDOI, in "Atene e Roma", n. s., XXII 1977, p. 86; G. GIL, *Nugae Pompeianae*, in *PP* 188-189 (Sept.-Dec. 1979), p. 416: exclamation; GIGANTE, p. 218f.; SOLIN, *Pompei* 79, p. 286; VARONE, in *Rediscovering Pompeii*, Roma 1990, 14 c), p. 152; CANALI-CAVALLO, p. 64f.; GIORDANO-CASALE, p. 5.

The text, inscribed in the House of Fabius Rufus (VII, *Ins. Occ.*, 19), is now in the archaeological stores at Pompeii.

In the first line *qui* stands for *quis*; in the second, *facere* and *esse* respectively for *facerem* and *essem*.

Another possible interpretation is to read *felicem* as an exclamatory accusative, meaning: «Lucky he who sleeps by your side in the night! If it were I, it would make me much happier».

## UNDER THE AUSPICES OF VENUS

Venus appears to us, triumphant in all her splendour, in a painting in Via dell'Abbondanza. She stands in a chariot in the form of a ship's prow, drawn by four elephants, her royal sceptre in one hand and in the other a rudder [Pl. 3].

Lucretius addresses Venus in the following words (I, 21):

*Quae quoniam rerum naturam sola gubernas*

«since you are the only ruler of nature»

and Venus, pilot of the generative forces of nature, was undoubtedly in the thoughts of sailors approaching Pompeii, when they spotted the outline of the marble temple that the city, called by Martial *Veneris sedes*,<sup>9</sup> had erected in honour of its tutelary goddess on the rocky promontory overlooking the harbour.

We find images of Venus all over the town, sometimes precious, like the numerous pictures of Venus fishing, sometimes quite solemn, like the famous painting<sup>10</sup> which depicts her pacifying Mars with love [Pl. 2], sometimes endowed with plebeian sensuality, as in the large-scale mural [Pl. 5] which occupies the rear wall of the garden of the House of Venus in the Seashell (II 3, 3), where the goddess, reclining languidly in a shell, smiles radiantly upon life.<sup>11</sup>

However, Venus is to be found most frequently in the hearts of the Pompeians, who manifest their sincere devotion to the goddess by

<sup>9</sup> MART. IV 44, 5.

<sup>10</sup> *Mus. Naz.*, inv. no. 9249. From house VII 2, 23. Cf. *Le collezioni*, p. 49 and p. 132f., no. 72. Numerous other variants of the motif are found in Pompeii.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. SCHEFOLD, p. 53.

asking her favours and making her promises *ex voto* at moments of crisis in their lives:

*Mansuetus provocator  
victor Veneri par-  
mam feret*

«Mansuetus the *provocator*,  
if victorious, will bring Venus the gift of a shield»<sup>12</sup>.

She is a saviour goddess. This is stated in a Greek inscription painted in black letters to the left of the entrance of the shop I 13, 10, under a picture representing a boat with open sails and Venus at the rudder acting as helmsman for the sailors:

ΑΦΡΟΔΕΙΤΗ ΚΩΖΟΥΣΑ

«Venus the Saviour»<sup>13</sup>.

She could therefore safeguard anyone placed under her protection, as the following wish of a friend attests:

*Tu, pupa, sic valeas,  
sic habeas  
Venere Pompeianam  
propytia  
MUNN [- - -?]  
[... - - -?]*

«May you always be in good health, my girl, and may Pompeian  
Venus always be well disposed to you»<sup>14</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> *CIL* IV 2483, add. p. 466; DIEHL 29; VÄÄNÄNEN, p. 155; GEIST-KRENKEL 13, p. 24f.; LEBEK, *ZPE* 57, 1984 p. 68; MONTERO CARTELE 6, p. 98; VARONE, p. 34; MOREAU, p. 66.

Inscribed on a column in the *Ludus Gladiatorius* (VIII 7).

The *provocatores* were a category of gladiators who did not stand their ground but circled around the adversary and attacked him by provoking him (cf. Cic. *Sext.* 134).

<sup>13</sup> *CIL* IV 9867; A. MAIURI, in *RendNap*, n. s., XXXIII 1958, p. 15f. and the reproduction of the painting in PL. IV (cf. p. 14f. and PL. III); BALDI 82.

<sup>14</sup> *CIL* IV 4007; *CLE* 233; WICK, p. 8; DIEHL 31; G. DELLA VALLE, *La Venere di Lucrezio e la Venere Fisica Pompeiana*, in *RIGI* 18, 1934, p. 131, IDEM, p. 165; VÄÄNÄNEN, pp. 55, 126; DELLA CORTE, p. 76; GEIST-KRENKEL 3, p. 50f.; MONTERO CARTELE 8, p. 99; J. KEPARTOVÁ, in *LF* 106, 1983, p. 187f.

The graffito was found on a column in the peristyle of house I 3, 30.

In the third line *Venere* stands for *Venerem*; in the fourth, *propytia* for *propytia*. For the term *pupa* cf. KEPARTOVÁ, p. 195, and, earlier, in *LF* 106, 1983, p. 187.