

Patterns of text layout in Pompeian verse inscriptions¹

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1. INTRODUCTION

Aspects of formal layout of Roman documentary texts, more commonly referred to as *ordinatio* when dealing with professionally crafted stone and metal inscriptions, have been studied in some detail over the last decades.² This may seem a fairly obvious theme to study in an age in which information and media are both ubiquitous and generally designed to maximise effectiveness for specific communicative purposes. Surprisingly enough, though, these aspects, the effectiveness and communicative functions of text layout, have by no means been key questions to Classical scholars:³ much rather questions of (i) the development of ancient palaeography and stonemasonry as well as (ii) forms of propaganda

¹ I wish to thank my former research assistant, GUJA BANDINI (Reading), who helped me create a database of Pompeian verse inscriptions (project funded by the UROP scheme of the CETL-AURS at the University of Reading in 2008). I also wish to thank VIRGINIA L. CAMPBELL (Reading) who again kindly corrected the language. For all remaining flaws and mistakes I alone am to blame. – Unless otherwise stated, all images in this article are reproduced from the volumes of *CIL* IV. While drawings are generally considerably less useful than photographs, it must be admitted that (a) photographs of Pompeian graffiti (if available at all) are normally of rather poor quality and (b) drawings at least will represent the line division accurately.

² It is next to impossible to list all relevant publications here, especially as this is often done in discussions of actual texts; among the most important and influential general studies are MALLON 1955 and, still unsurpassed, SUSINI 1973.

³ Classicists, however, are not the only scholars interested in this material: also typographers, for example, occasionally deal with this, cf. e. g. OHLSEN 1981.

and self-representation were pursued. And while many interesting forerunners of professional information design have been discovered (in some cases scholars were able to come to some very detailed conclusions regarding the stone-cutters, their aims, interests, and abilities), linguistic implications remain widely unexplored to this day.

Consequently, a large amount of texts of ancient origin that never underwent any manuscript tradition and therefore are still shaped as the ancient writer had originally intended have not received much attention in terms of formal layout. And in fact, even when approaching Roman inscriptions from what ought to be a genuinely linguistic perspective, e. g. when discussing text types and their formal appearances, scholars thus far have more or less exclusively concentrated on the shape and layout of monumental inscriptions (as opposed to different types).⁴ This is remarkable, but hardly surprising, as research in formal aspects of Latin texts is usually neither carried out by Ancient Historians nor by Latin linguists, since neither of these groups normally seems to think there is much to be gained from the formal appearance of any given text.⁵

In this paper it shall be argued that in fact the formal layout of ancient texts must be studied in detail in all cases from a linguistic perspective, and it shall be demonstrated for one specific group of texts what kind of answers one can expect from this type of research; the chosen group of texts will be the Pompeian graffiti composed in verse.

a) *Why does the formal aspect of text layout matter?*

It has been pointed out before that study of text typology (with all its implications) must become a key theme in linguistic research of non-literary Latin texts. In an earlier article (with HILLA HALLA-AHO) it was made clear that the formal appearance of a text is an important aspect with regards to the recipient's expectations:⁶

«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

⁴ See for example, despite some methodological issues with his approach, SAASTAMOINEN 2002.

⁵ There are of course some exceptions, like BOWMAN 1975 or ADAMS 1996.

⁶ See in detail KRUSCHWITZ – HALLA-AHO 2007, 43–46, here: 45.

with these text types, and 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.»

Just how powerful force of habit in this respect really is, becomes clear with great immediacy whenever one encounters forms of subversion of a genre, i. e. when the content of a text does not at all turn out what one expected it to be from its physical appearance. And, to be sure, Roman epigraphy provides some striking examples.⁷ Among the most striking ones is an advertisement for a workshop of stone-cutters. The text is straight-forward in its content in lines 2 ff.; however, the layout at first glance suggests a funerary inscription, clearly indicated by the textual marker *D(is) M(anibus)* in the first line:⁸



Fig. 1: CIL VI 9556.⁹

⁷ In this context one might also refer to the epigraphic ‘revolution’ of the age of Augustus, which comes along with a substantial change both in the general epigraphic habit of the Romans and the formal design particularly of public inscriptions, cf. ALFÖLDY 1991.

⁸ CIL VI 9556 = ILS 7679.

⁹ Image taken from DI STEFANO MANZELLA 1987, 268 fig. 43.

D(is) M(anibus).
Titulos scri-
bendos uel
siquid op[er]
 5 *ris marmor-*
ari opus fu-
erit hic ha-
bes.

There cannot be much doubt that this feature has been employed in this inscription in order to cause confusion of some sort, in order to catch the reader's attention: an advantage in case of competing advertisements, as this can result in hesitation, interest, and eventually a second reading of a text (as opposed to a single reading of other texts that do not cause similar effects).¹⁰ The general principle that operates here and underlies these observations is so strong that virtually anything can be presented in a way that leads to spontaneous assumptions regarding the text type. Just look at the following two items from a 1–2 metres' distance and consider what these might be:

¹⁰ Useful discussion in ALFÖLDY 1989, 174–175.

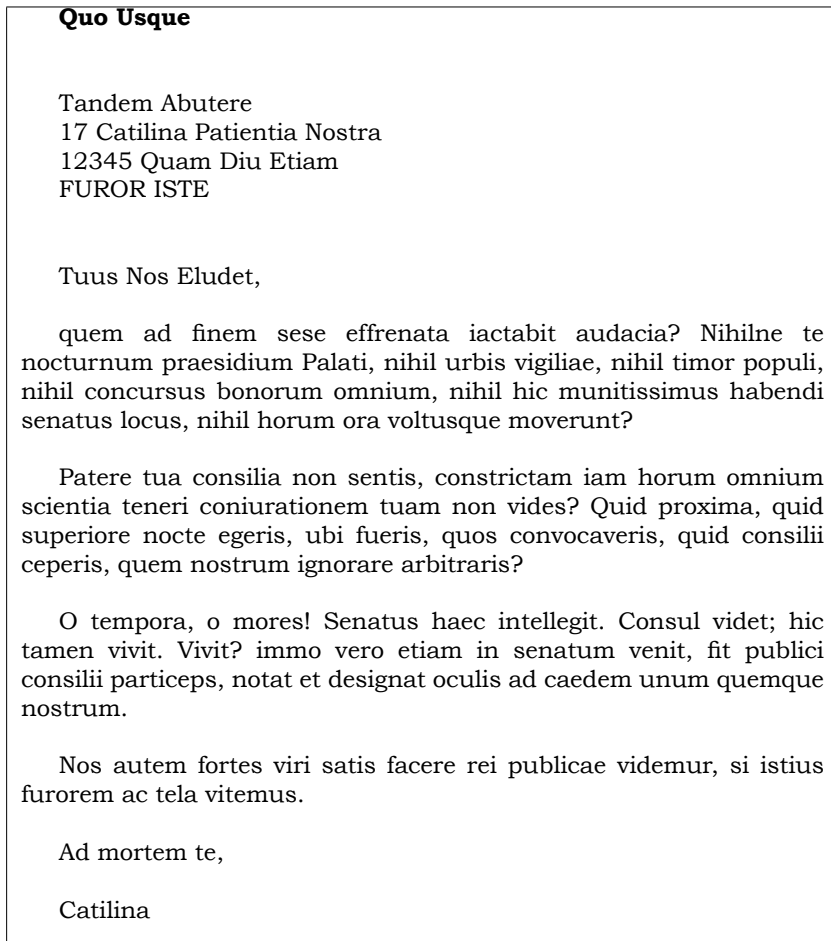


Fig. 2: Letter-shaped layout of Cic. *Catil.* 1, 1-2.

One can be confident that the average reaction of a superficial reader to the text box above will be: ‘oh, that’s a letter’, even though it is in fact the opening of Cicero’s first Catilinarian speech, with some added numbers. The very same text, however, could from a distance also pass for the type ‘lemma in a dictionary’, if presented in a different ‘costume’:

Quo usque tandem abutere: §1. *Catilina*. patientia nostra quam diu etiam furor iste tuus nos eludet, quem ad finem sese effrenata iactabit audacia? §2. Nihilne te nocturnum praesidium Palati, nihil urbis vigiliae, nihil timor populi, nihil concursus bonorum omnium, nihil hic munitissimus habendi senatus locus, nihil horum ora voltusque moverunt?

Patere: (1) Tua consilia non sentis. (2) constrictam iam horum omnium scientia teneri coniurationem tuam non vides. (3) Quid proxima, quid superiore nocte egeris. (4) ubi fueris, quos convocaveris, quid consilii ceperis, quem nostrum ignorare arbitraris?

Fig. 3: Dictionary-shaped layout of Cic. *Catil.* 1, 1.

The reasons that lead to these spontaneous assumptions, are clearly visual, yet extra-textual ones (even though not at all unrelated to the actual text). They have been studied by linguists when discussing the question of what constitutes a so-called text type. Quite obviously non-textual, formal constituents such as (i) the stereotypical disposition of (ii) certain macro-structural patterns or components on (iii) a roughly defined area of (iv) a typical writing material can be meaningful.¹¹ All this is related to certain modes of perception, the way people look at texts before actually reading them in detail. There seem to be almost standardised directions that the human eye follows when glimpsing any given piece of text, and it is beyond doubt that people judge texts (and therefore have certain expectations towards them) before they read the actual content. Following common practice in the layout of certain text types therefore is not only a matter of convenience for the composer (giving guidance for the composition of texts), but also for the recipient whose structural knowledge can be employed for quicker orientation and understanding of complex technical and non-technical texts.¹²

¹¹ For further general discussion see ROELCKE 2005, cf. also KRUSCHWITZ-HALLA-AHO 2007, 43–46 (on the relevance of this observation for the discussion of Pompeian wall inscriptions).

¹² A very obvious feature, for example, is the common practice to set out the first line of a (new) paragraph to the left, so it can easily be found; for further discussion of this feature see e. g. PANCIERA 1995, 334 n. 97.

b) *But what about handwritten texts?*

One might now argue that modern developments of print media and related forms have radically changed paradigms in terms of how texts are perceived nowadays and is relevant for Roman antiquity. However, this opinion can be refuted easily with reference to two observations:

(i) Even handwritten texts of modern times, most likely never to be genuinely subject to a printer's professional considerations, can bear very clear traces of formal layout: a list for grocery shopping would look remarkably distinct (one would hope) from, say, a love letter.

(ii) It has already been pointed out that in Antiquity undoubtedly in many cases a good deal of consideration was given to shape and appearance of monumental texts, which means that people were in fact well-aware of these principles of text layout.

Moreover, there is good evidence for patterns of formal layout in ancient handwritten non-literary texts as well, despite the fact that to the inexperienced reader the cursive handwriting in some cases might seem to be so difficult to decipher that it seems hard to believe that these texts once formed part of an act of communication. Among the more obvious examples are the hundreds of painted political posters and advertisements for gladiatorial games preserved on the walls of the Vesuvian settlements, written with paint in a style close to the monumental script of Roman stone inscriptions:



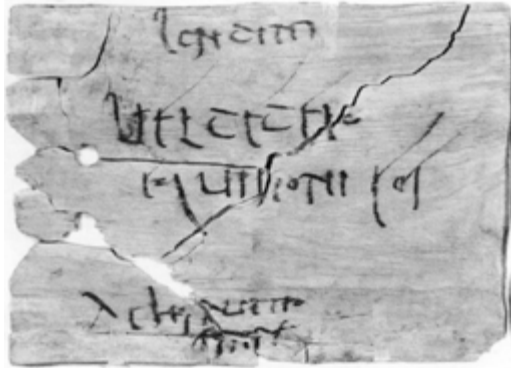
Fig. 4: Advertisements for elections and gladiatorial games on the wall of house III 2, 1.¹³

A similar degree of text layout can (in many cases, though not consistently, it appears) be found in ancient non-literary letters. This may be illustrated by a famous piece that was discovered in Vindolanda, a Roman army site near Hadrian's Wall in Britain. The

¹³ Image taken from WARD-PERKINS-CLARIDGE 1976, 39.

letters are roughly dated to A. D. 100, and a letter of this collection might for example look like this:¹⁴

verso:



recto:

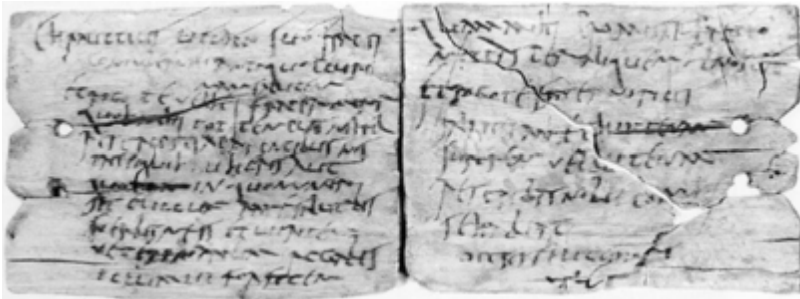


Fig. 5: *tab. Vindol. II 310*

This letter looks rather different from the fictive, nonsensical letter given above (fig. 2), and the handwriting at first glance might even suggest that this text is almost entirely unorganised.¹⁵ This

¹⁴ For further reference see BOWMAN 2003, esp. 170 (from where the images are taken).

¹⁵ The formal layout of ancient letters would deserve a full-scale study of its own rights; cf. however BOWMAN 2003, 79–96 with further references.

immediate impression, however, is false, as there are clearly defined blocks in this text (regardless of the actual message): it is only just the arrangement of the text that differs from what one would expect in a modern letter (but not necessarily from e. g. a postcard!). The verso contains the address and name of the recipient as well as the sender's name; the recto contains in its first three lines a more or less formalised *salutatio*, followed by the main body of the text, and then the standardised farewell formula *uale* in the very last line (obviously letters were not signed then). Which means: the macro-textual constituents that make a text a letter have not generally changed much over the last 1900 years (both in terms of the sequence of macrostructural patterns and their content), even though the organisation of the writing space, the writing materials themselves, and modes of transportations did change considerably.

c) *And just how exactly does poetry fit into this pattern?*

Thus far the focus has exclusively been on non-literary text types. There is, however, at least one¹⁶ substantial category of textual production, both on literary and sub-literary levels, for which physical appearance of the text could seem to matter to an equal degree: poetry. A humorous definition of poetry (of unknown authorship) is: «poetry is when every line begins with a capital letter and does not reach the right margin of the page.» Although this is a seemingly simplistic definition, it does have a certain appeal, even to the specialist; and this is for a good reason: (at least nowadays) there are certain expectations in the formal appearance of a poetic text –and these expectations are in fact neatly summarised in the above definition.¹⁷ Going back to the example of Cicero's first Catilinarian speech, the text would (formally) look like poetry if presented thus:

¹⁶ It might be an interesting question to consider if there are further text types of literary level that could be included, e. g. mathematical or philosophical treatises that at some stage might have contained drawings?

¹⁷ And in fact this notion (though put differently) is sometimes used in defining what is to be a 'poetic' text and what is not, e. g. in the case of the so-called *commatica*, cf. KRUSCHWITZ 2002, 45.

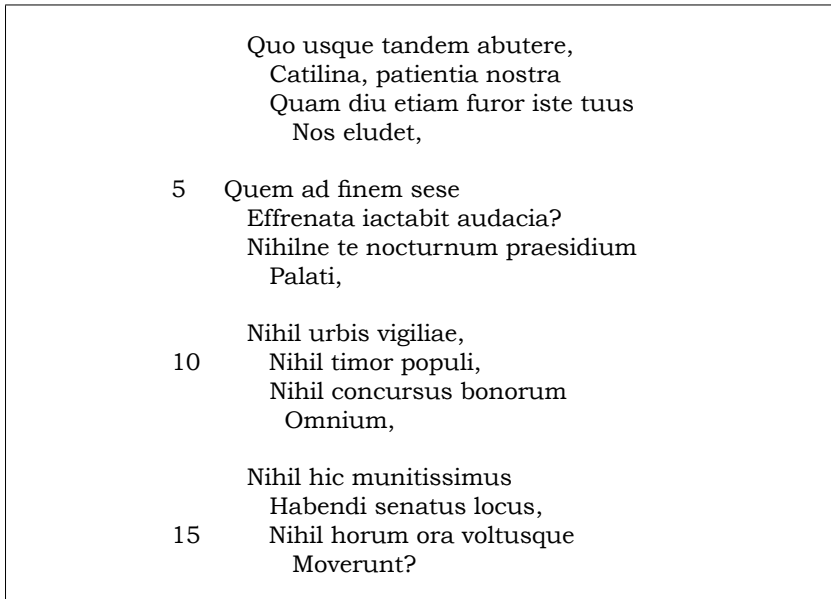


Fig. 6: Poetry-shaped layout of Cic. *Catil.* 1, 1.

Once again it appears to be the formal layout of the text that pre-determines the reader's expectations, just like in those instances mentioned in the previous section: only a closer look at the actual words and rhythmical patterns can reveal that this is not a poem. (Although, from a modern literary perspective, it might in fact just have become a poem, due to the specific mode of presentation in this case.)

Very few poetic Latin papyri or manuscripts date back to Antiquity, and there are hardly any papyri or similar materials giving us much of an idea of what ancient Latin poetry really looked like as autographa: the famous Gallus papyrus or the so-called *Alcestis Barcinonensis* at least take us close to the time of the origin of these texts, and some further findings of similar quality might still be expected from places like Herculaneum. One branch of Latin scholarship that with some success has made extensive use of, and drew conclusions from, the text layout as found in manuscript is the Urbino school of Plautine and Terentian studies, arguing that some ancient and medieval manuscripts preserve sophisti-

cated ways of text presentation that were meant to facilitate the underlying metrical structure.¹⁸

Latin poetic inscriptions, on the other hand, abound, and they can potentially contribute a lot to an advanced understanding of the formal considerations of those who had to present poetry in written form in Roman antiquity. It is, however, only fairly recently, that the formal layout of metrical inscriptions became an issue in the study of both Latin epigraphy and the study of the history of the epigrammatic genre.¹⁹ Previously these texts were, if at all, just considered part of the broad mass of Latin inscriptions and dealt with in very general terms. In the heavily outdated and rather incomplete, yet still unreplaced, general study of Latin punctuation, E. OTHA WINGO stated:²⁰

«Although we are here interested in the use of punctuation to make meaning more perspicuous, we must notice the use of Latin of the same kinds of punctuation to show metrical structure. In both inscriptions and in texts written with a pen the normal usage in Latin was to show the metrical units of *carmina* by writing each verse as a separate line. This was, I believe, the invariable practice when verse was transcribed on papyrus and parchment, and it is the usual practice in inscriptions. In the latter, however, limitations of space sometimes made other arrangements of verses necessary or desirable.»

Poetic texts written on papyrus or parchment, as well as stone and metal inscriptions, however, share one feature that is not normally emphasised at all: they are written on a material that has been designed or prepared in order to accommodate these texts.²¹

¹⁸ Useful account in RAFFAELLI 2007 (with further references).

¹⁹ See MORELLI 2000, 75 ff., furthermore DEL HOYO 2002 and GÓMEZ PALLARÉS 2007; very minor additional points with regards to Roman Republican practice in VINE 1993, 352–353.

²⁰ WINGO 1972, 140.

²¹ This is a noteworthy addition to an only recently redeveloped perspective in Latin epigraphy, by the way. It must be acknowledged that one of the major achievements of Latin epigraphy in the twentieth century was the insight that (especially monumental) inscriptions are parts of a monuments (i. e. monuments happen to be inscribed) rather than the only relevant feature of a monument (i. e. texts that just happen to be transmitted in an inscribed form, as it had been perceived by scholars of previous times). However, it must also be clear that in virtually all cases due consideration has been given to the question of how a textual element

This means: none of these texts represent a (more or less) spontaneous poetic outburst, they are the result of the wish to present a poetic text in an acceptable and comprehensible way (even though some texts clearly fall short of that aim).

One group of verse inscriptions that neither E. OTHA WINGO nor anyone else seems to have bothered to look at in this respect, is fundamentally different: the metrical inscriptions scratched into the walls of Pompeii.²² Failure to consider these texts is quite remarkable, given that there are quite a few bold general assumptions statements about ancient «invariable practice» as far as layout of poetic texts is concerned. And a look at this material will reveal that, even though WINGO's statement does not appear to be fundamentally wrong, the actual situation in the Latin inscriptions is much more complex than one might originally have expected.

2. THE CASE OF THE POMPEIAN VERSE INSCRIPTIONS

Already at first glance, when considering Latin verse graffiti, one can see that things are not at all that simple on the walls of Pompeii. One reason for that is the aspect that has just been mentioned: here in fact there is a certain amount of spontaneity that comes with the act of inscribing (not necessarily the urge to inscribe a certain text, of course: this can be planned long in advance), and one needs to accept any surface for that type of inscription just the way it is. Does this have an impact on the way texts are written on walls, then?

In order to deal with the material in a meaningful way, it seems wise, then, to look at a both representative and conclusive sample of evidence. Of course, one can think of several ways to organise

should enhance the general idea of any such monument, and therefore there (normally) is a plan of how to accommodate any such (monumental) inscription.

²² There is a distinct lack of general studies of the Pompeian verse inscriptions. In addition to the useful study of WICK 1907, one ought to mention a series of studies by WOLFGANG DIETER LEBEK (cf. e. g. LEBEK 1978), GIGANTE 1979, CUGUSI 1985, and FELE 1986; for a survey and discussion of methodological issues see KRUSCHWITZ 2004 and 2006, further useful discussion of Pompeian graffiti in COURTNEY 1995, VARONE 2002, and HERNÁNDEZ PÉREZ 2002–2003.

and group the Pompeian verse inscriptions. RUDOLF WACHTER, for example, claims:²³

«Die pompejanischen Carmina epigraphica sind bisher, was ihre Entstehung betrifft, in folgende zwei Hauptkategorien eingeteilt worden: (1) «Dichterzitate» und «Schulreminiszenzen» (...), (2) «Gelegenheitspoesie» bzw. «Lokaldichtung» (...). Dichterzitate und Schulreminiszenzen auseinanderzuhalten ist freilich oft schwierig.»

This division, however, is not particularly useful for the purposes of this paper, as the categories (if they are of any use at all) do not coincide with any categories that would help to make discoveries about skills and motivations for scribblers to present their texts in any given way. To remedy this, the sample of texts to be considered shall much rather consist of these types:

- texts that demonstrate how one would write poetry on public walls,
- texts that allow for a contrast between public and private space,²⁴ and
- texts of literary quality or with a literary attitude.

And now for the main question of this paper: how are verse inscriptions presented on the walls of Pompeii?

a) *A representative sample of texts: the Basilica of Pompeii*

One of the places in Pompeii that abounds with graffiti is the Basilica, one of the oldest structures of the town (VIII 1, 1. 2. 6).²⁵ Among the many graffiti that have been discovered in this busy place, there is a decent-sized sample (consisting of thirty-four items) of inscriptions of undoubtedly metrical quality.²⁶ These are

²³ WACHTER 1998, 73.

²⁴ The concept of 'public' vs 'private' is in fact far more problematic than it might seem at first glance, as of course some parts of private houses were accessible to persons beyond the 'inner circle' of inhabitants at certain times, i. e. even private houses consist of public and private areas, cf. e. g. WALLACE-HADRILL 1994. For this article it shall, however, suffice to distinguish between genuinely public and principally private spaces, hoping that this will not considerably distort the findings.

²⁵ For a general discussion of this building cf. OHR 1991.

²⁶ Pace FELE 1986, 16–18, I do not include *CIL* IV 1819 and 1831, as I fail to see any metrical nature of these texts; the 'lines', as constituted by the words' prosody, are incomplete, faulty, and atrocious (to say the least).

of particular interest, as the Basilica must be regarded (a) public space and (b) a building that was crowded and in use for the better part of the day. The question, then, is: how does one, under these conditions, write poetry on walls? And in what ways would one highlight the underlying metrical structure?

One might think that, in a public space, the way of presenting the text might depend on the actual amount of text one intends to write (and, consequently, the amount of time this is going to consume), as graffiti-writing might at least hypothetically be considered as an act of vandalism. It therefore makes sense to arrange the patterns of findings by the number of verses the poetic texts comprise (as opposed to the number of inscribed lines on the walls).

The evidence, then, shows the following patterns:

No. of verses	Layout	Evidence
1 (or less)	Line and verse structures coincide	<i>CIL</i> IV 1811. 1856. 1863. 1870. 1882. 1883. 1884. 1927. 1943. 1949
	Line and verse structures coincide, additional prose part not separated	<i>CIL</i> IV 1880
	'Random' (?)	<i>CIL</i> IV 1841
2	Line and verse structures coincide (alignment: left)	<i>CIL</i> IV 1791 [much more might be lost in the end]. 1796. 1830. 1891. 1895. 1896. 1898. 1899. 1928. 1941 (?)
	Line and verse structures coincide (alignment: left; even lines indented)	<i>CIL</i> IV 1860. 1893. 1894. 1902 [does this actually belong here?]. 1950
	Line and verse structures coincide in first line; second verse split over two lines (alignment left)	<i>CIL</i> IV 1877
	Line and verse structures coincide in first line; second verse split over two lines (alignment left; text indented after first line)	<i>CIL</i> IV 1820
	'Random' (alignment: centre) (?)	<i>CIL</i> IV 1904

No. of verses	Layout	Evidence
3	Line and verse structures coincide (alignment: left)	<i>CIL IV 1939</i>
4	Line and verse structures coincide (alignment: left; even lines indented)	<i>CIL IV 1824. 1921 (?)</i>
5	'Random' (alignment: left) (?)	<i>CIL IV 1837</i>

Some statistics:

- 29 of 34 texts show coincidence of line and verse structures.
 - o 11 of these 29, however, consist of one verse only.
 Looking at texts of more than a single verse, only 17 of 24 show this coincidence.
 - o 7 of those 17 cases that consistently show coincidence of line and verse structures, give the even lines indented, i. e. (slightly) more commonly the texts show left alignment.
- 4 of the texts covered here are direct quotations of elegiac distichs from known literary poets. In all these cases line and verse structures coincide, in 3 cases the text layout shows indentation of even lines.

Having thus gained a general overview of the material, it is worth looking at some of the oddities within this material. It seems worth beginning with those cases that have been labelled 'random'.

The first case is this:²⁷

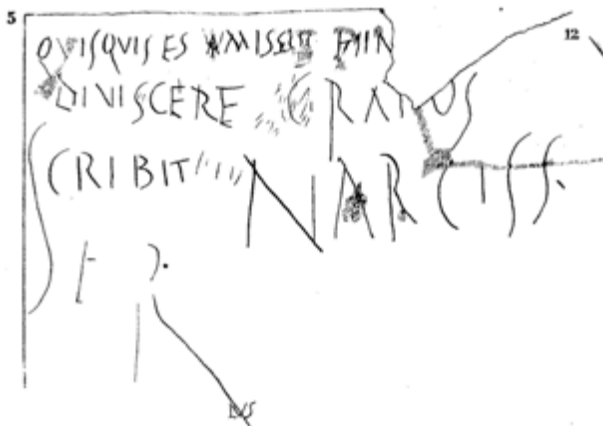


Fig. 7: *CIL IV 1841* (tab. XXIII 5).

²⁷ *CIL IV 1841* (cf. p. 212) = *CLE 1785adn.*

*Quisquis es amissos hin[c iam ob]-
liuiscere Graios.
Scribit Narciss(us)
ser(uus) (?).*

The first two lines of the text are an (accurate) quotation of Verg. *Aen.* 2, 148, with a rather remarkable line and word division in *[ob] | liuiscere*.²⁸ The two remaining lines of the text, giving the (alleged)²⁹ name of the scribbler, seem to be united by one overly large letter S that appears to constitute the initial letter for both lines of the inscription; the meaning of the second line is not exactly clear, but one might be tempted to believe that this was supposed to read *ser(uus)*. An apparent motivation for the text layout does not seem to exist; however, the way lines 3–4 are presented, with one over-sized letter serving as initial letter for both lines at the same time, one is led to believe that the scribbler must have done at least some advance planning before actually scratching his text into the wall.

The second case is even more interesting, at least to the expert in Pompeian graffiti, as this text arguably represents the best-known Pompeian graffito altogether:³⁰

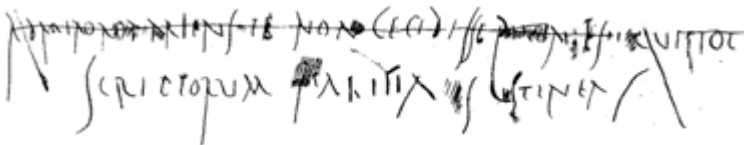


Fig. 8: *CIL* IV 1904 (tab. XI 10).

*Admiror o (?) pariens te non cecidisse ruinis qui tot
scriptorum taedia sustineas.*

²⁸ On the presence of Vergil in the Pompeian verse inscriptions see FERRARO 1982 (p. 29 ad loc.) and BALDI 2003, on Vergil in the Latin inscriptions more generally HOOGMA 1959 and SOLIN 1985 (1986).

²⁹ The authenticity of names used in the Pompeian graffiti is not normally questioned. There are, however, good reasons to doubt at least some of them: first of all, one might wonder if it actually was a smart thing to write one's own name on an ancient wall (certainly nobody would leave his or her full details nowadays, unless being a very silly person); moreover, some of the combinations just seem odd, cf. e. g. *Prima* and *Secundus* in *CIL* IV 8364. Further research seems required.

³⁰ *CIL* IV 1904 (cf. p. 213. 465) = *CLE* 957.

The way the text is presented is remarkable, as this distich is laid out over two lines, but, surprisingly enough, without coincidence of line and verse structures; instead of introducing a line break in between the hexameter and the pentameter, the first two words of the pentameter (*qui tot*) are left at the end of the first line, thereby putting *scriptorum* in a line-initial position.³¹ What at first glance might appear to be an oddity, is in fact a phenomenon that can be observed more often in the Pompeian *carmina*, and shall be looked at in greater detail below.

There is another remarkable aspect about this inscription: the attestation that has been published as *CIL* IV 1904 is not the only instance of this text's occurrence in Pompeii; apart from the single word *admiror* in *CIL* IV 1906 (discovered in the Basilica as well), there is further evidence for the same distich in *CIL* IV 2461 (discovered in the *Theatrum maius*) and *CIL* IV 2487 (discovered in the Amphitheatre).³² The former instance has the hexameter only, laid out in two lines (with a line break at the penthemimeres caesura!):³³

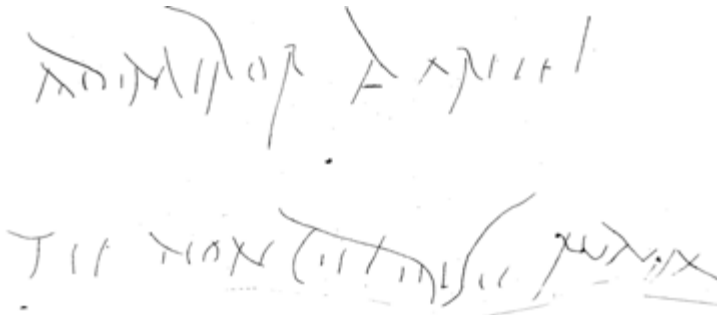


Fig. 9: *CIL* IV 2461 (tab. XI 4).

³¹ Interestingly enough, this feature remains unmentioned by BALDI 2002, 236 who points out that «[t]hese lines were obviously devised by someone who had a knowledge of Latin metrical conventions» (which is not true, as the *o* of the first line destroys the rhythmical flow; however, *CIL* IV p. 233 indicates that it is difficult to decide if this actually is supposed to be a letter or just a rather pathetic punctuation), but fails to see that the lines clearly are not divided by metrical conventions.

³² COPLEY 1939, 348 had argued that the last line of *CIL* IV 5296 would be another instance of the same poem; however, this can be dismissed with certainty (see below, p. xxx on that inscription). For more general discussions of the text cf. COURTNEY 1995 92–93. 300 no. 77

³³ *CIL* IV 2461 (cf. p. 466) = *CLE* 957.

*Si potes et non uis cur gaudia
differs, spemque foues et
cras usque redire iubes?
[er]go coge mori quem
5 sine te uiuere coges:
munus erit certe non
cruciasse boni. quod spes
eripuit spes certe reddijit amanti.*

The text, as has been pointed out by several scholars before, is a pastiche of an elegiac poem, consisting of a potpourri of quotes from literary poets, and as KARL ZANGEMEISTER's drawing clearly shows, has triggered a certain amount of comments in antiquity.³⁶ Only the poetic part shall be of interest here. The metre, clearly aiming at elegiacs, is anything but perfect; the text has thus been given in what comes closest to some sort of underlying metrical structure:

*Si potes et non uis cur gaudia differs,
spemque foues et cras usque redire iubes?
[er]go coge mori quem sine te uiuere coges:
5 munus erit certe non cruciasse boni.
quod spes eripuit, spes certe reddijit amanti.*

When displayed this way and compared to the actual graffito, it turns out that the text layout of the inscription is less random than one might originally have expected; for

- the first 'distich' (v. 1–2) is written over three lines (verse and line ends coincide in line 3),
- the third (viz. middle!) line of the poem (v. 3) is written over two lines (verse and line ends coincide in line 5), and
- the last 'distich' (v. 4–5, with the 'pentameter' preceding the 'hexameter' line), like the first one, is again written over three lines (verse and line ends coincide in line 8).

There can be very little doubt that the writer was anything but a metrical genius. As the lettering suggests a certain haste, one might assume that the writer wanted to conceal the act of writing behind his body, therefore breaking down the verse structure into

³⁶ Most notably, of course, the quotation of Verg. *Aen.* 6, 460 (*inuitus regina tuo de litore cessi*), in *CIL* IV 1837a, for which cf. LEBEK 1978, 220 and CUGUSI 2007, 33–34. For further discussions of this text cf. COURTNEY 1995, 96–97. 305 no. 91 and VARONE 2002, 103–105 with n. 163 (with further references).

shorter lines of text. When looking at the result of the process of inscribing, however, it can be pointed out with no little certainty that the distribution of the text should not be considered as 'random' at all. And there is even more to it. The observation that metrical units are spread over more than only just one inscribed line seems to relate nicely to the practice that can be seen from two further peculiar cases in the above statistics, namely *CIL* IV 1877 and 1820. Both cases contain distichs that are laid out over three lines (with a subdivision of the second line); the difference between those two: in the former case, the whole text shows left alignment, whereas in the latter case the text that follows the first line is indented. In the first case, the inscription comes with a headline (l. 1: *zetema*, 'riddle') and a comment by another scribbler (l. 4).³⁷ The whole ensemble reads thus:³⁸

3 Z ETEMA
 MULIER FEREBAT FILIUM SIMILEM SUI
 NEC MEUS EST NEC MI SIMILAT SED VIG
 UELLEM ESSET MEUS ET

Fig. 12: *CIL* IV 1877 (tab. XXIV 3).

Zetema.

mulier ferebat filium similem sui.

nec meus est nec mi similat sed

uellem esset meus.

et 'ego' uoleba(m) ut meus esset.

EDWARD COURTNEY has argued (plausibly) that the poem that served as model for this riddle was composed of two iambic senarii (in the inscription the second one has gone awry) and (possible, yet less compelling) the alleged model's second senarius ended in

³⁷ COURTNEY 1995, 279 claims that in line 4 «the writer adds a comment of his own». The different lettering, however, proves that line 4 was an addition by another person.

³⁸ *CIL* IV 1877 (cf. 465. 704) = *CLE* 42. – The *VIG* or *VIC* at the end of line 3 cannot be part of this inscription and is consequently left out from the transcribed text.

uellem meus.³⁹ The latter assumption might lead to the claim that the line break was meant to be of metrical relevance (as *uellem meus* constitutes an iambic metrum), but that would mean pushing it: what seems much more likely is that the scribbler delayed the punch line through yet another line break, as *uellem esset meus* certainly comes as a surprising twist after everything that preceded it.

The second case is a veritable insult:⁴⁰

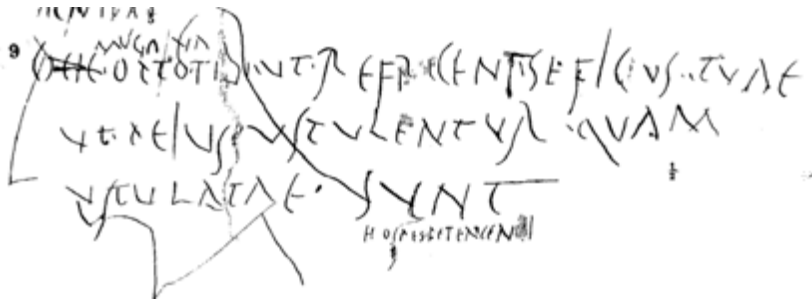


Fig. 13: *CIL* IV 1820 (tab. XXIII 9).

*Chie, opto tibi ut refricent se ficus tuae
ut peius ustulentur quam
ustulatae sunt.*

The rhythmical pattern underlying this text, once again, seems to be iambic, even though there are some minor imperfections and there was some dispute with regards to the question whether the second verse might in fact be choliambic.⁴¹ Be that as it may, the very layout and presentation of the text are rather remarkable. This becomes clear when considering the cascading flow of the insult as a whole: first, there is a naughty wish to the disadvantage of some Chius in the first line of the poem (with an obvious pun on Chius' name when it comes to the *ficus* part); secondly, there is a specification of how the *ficus* situation shall deteriorate (l. 2 = first half of v. 2), ending in *quam* – raising the expectation that some horrendous comparison is about to occur. This expectation, however, is not met by the wit of the scribbler: instead of 'something

³⁹ COURTNEY 1995, 78–79. 279 no. 57 (here: 279).

⁴⁰ *CIL* IV 1820 (cf. p. 704) = *CLE* 50adn.

⁴¹ K. ZANGEMEISTER ad *CIL* IV 1820. For a further discussion of this text cf. COURTNEY 1995, 94–95. 302 no. 83.

that burns horribly' he (rather than 'she'), delayed by an effective line break, just writes 'previously' (thereby implying *cum paedicularere*, as EDWARD COURTNEY has put it).⁴²

As these two cases seem to provide good evidence for the use of line breaks for content-related effects, one might now re-consider those three cases that have been discussed before: is there anything similar to be seen? The answer is: apparently not in the case of the Vergil quote; maybe in the case of the *admiror* inscription, as the unmetrical line break sets apart (and therefore might place particular emphasis on) the notion *scriptorum taedia sustineas* (but, once again, that might just be pushing it too far); most certainly in the case of the tripartite lament of the lover in *CIL IV 1837*: here in all cases line breaks are used to give operative words of the sentences a (technically rather than syntactically) powerful position, supported by the time it takes for the reader to locate the place where the sentence continues:

- *differs* and *cras* clearly stand out in the first distich, and one cannot but notice the irony that it is the very word *differs* that is delayed by the first (untimely) line break that detaches the last word of the first hexameter from the remainder of that unit;

- *sine te* is a central aspect of the middle line, clearly highlighted by its physical location in the inscription, even more powerfully as the line break occurs immediately after a relative pronoun that of course demands content;

- *cruciasse* and *eripuit*, then, are main themes of the last distich, suffering and lack of hope and love.⁴³

⁴² COURTNEY 1995, 302. Cf. also HALLETT 1981, 343 and ADAMS 1982, 113.

⁴³ COURTNEY 1995, 97 and 305 obviously struggles to explain the notion of *munus erit certe non cruciasse boni*, arguing that it «presumably means 'at any rate to have refrained from torturing me will be the gift of a kind man', which implies that this was written by a woman». In times of strong feminist tendencies in Classical scholarship any attempt to salvage even a single line for a male writer might incur wrath. However, *cruciare* also has intransitive facets (cf. *OLD* s. v. *crucio*, 461, esp. § 2 ['to be in agony'] and § 3 ['to suffer mental anguish, be distressed or tormented in mind']), so CONCHA FERNÁNDEZ MARTÍNEZ is entirely justified (and probably entirely right) to translate «en todo caso una persona de bien no debe hacer sufrir» (FERNÁNDEZ MARTÍNEZ 1998–1999, 449 no. 949).

To conclude this first section,⁴⁴ then, one can now justifiably point out that

- there generally is a strong tendency to follow metrical structure in the text layout (even though, for example, indentation of even lines in elegiac distichs is optional rather than compulsory),
- there is surprisingly little evidence (if any evidence at all?) for any urgent need to cover up the scribbles during the process of writing,
- there is no conceivable difference in practice between shorter and longer texts, and
- factors outside the metrical structure, especially syntactic ones, obviously can override the default solution of a metrical disposition of the text.

b) *Public vs private space: a case study*

The results of the preceding subsection may make one wonder if these in one way or another are influenced by the fact that the writing took place in a public space. Would the results be different if one had a comparable sample of texts from ‘indoors’?⁴⁵ It therefore seems appropriate to counterbalance those findings by a study of a revenant-type text that is attested both in public and private space, and the text of choice is the recurring motive *uenimus huc cupidi eqs.*⁴⁶ The case has been dealt with in greater detail elsewhere, but since the physical shape of the text at that earlier time has not been taken into account, this exercise will hopefully be excused as not too tedious.

Generally, there are two versions of this poem to be found in Pompeii,⁴⁷ one that only consists of one line (or parts thereof) and one that consists of two lines (made up *ad hoc*, therefore no ‘standard’ second line exists). The origin of this poem is arguably the *caupona* of Euxinus (I 11, 10–11), where it (according to MATTEO DELLA CORTE’s report in NSA 1958, 84 n. 30) was found «a destra

⁴⁴ Some of the material covered here will be dealt with below, section c).

⁴⁵ But see above, n. 24.

⁴⁶ For a more detailed discussion of this text, its attestations all over Pompeii (and beyond), and images see KRUSCHWITZ 2006 (2007), esp. 10–12.

⁴⁷ I skip the attestations from Herculaneum (*CIL* IV 10640) and Narbonne (*AE* 1997, 1068), even though these would not at all contradict the evidence from Pompeii.

della porta di comunicazione, al disotto di una *figura di Bacco*, sulla zoccolatura della parete (l'inizio era perito perche tracciato sull'antepagamentum ligneo); this poem belongs to the former group, yet the text (that certainly was not written in a great hurry) was arranged in two lines (with centred alignment):⁴⁸

*[Venimus h]oc cupidi, multo magis ire
cupimus.*

There are two more attestations of that poem in a space that could be considered genuinely public (or at least semi-public), namely *CIL* IV 2995 («in theatro maiore in membro ad septentrionale latus orchestrae aditus orientalis posito, in parietis septentrionalis albo tectorio carbone scriptum») and *CIL* IV 8891 (III 5, 3, club house of the *sodalitium Paridianum* [?]). In both cases the text is presented as a single line.

In more private settings then, there is a similar variation: *CIL* IV 8231, 11065a, and *SOLIN* 1975, no. 17 have the text arranged in a single line, whereas *CIL* IV 6697 and 8114 have the text scribbled in two lines. However, in these cases the text is not arranged in the same way as in case of the aforementioned inscription of the *caupona* of Euxinus (see above), but with respect to the so-called bucolic caesura with a line break between *magis* and *ire* (and of course one might wonder if this was intentional or not).

Finally, there are two cases (both from private settings) where a second line has been added. These show distinct differences, and these differences very clearly relate to something that has been mentioned at the very beginning of this section: even though it is of course at the scribbler's liberty to deliberately choose the surface for the verbal effusion, the surface in no case was meant and prepared to accommodate and present such scribblings; in other words: either one has to accept the surface as is, or one should not write at all. How this simple and obvious rule necessarily affects the text layout can then be seen from *CIL* IV 1227. This text has been written on a column, therefore the whole text is displayed with only one or two words per written line (rather than allowing the text to run around the entire column, which would have been inconvenient both to the writer and the reader):⁴⁹

⁴⁸ *CIL* IV 9849.

⁴⁹ *CIL* IV 1227 (cf. p. 205. 436. 704) = *CLE* 928=2060.

Venimus
huc cupidi
multo
magis
 5 *hire (!) <cupimus> ut*
 liceat
 nostros
 uisere
 Roma Lares.

By contrast, SOLIN 1975, no. 57, discovered written on a wall in the house of Fabius Rufus, is just arranged by metrical structure (without indentation of the pentameter line):

Venimus h/oc c/jupidi, multo magis ire cupimus,
set retinet nostros illa puella pedes.

How do these findings enhance or modify the results of the previous subsection? All conclusions can stand, it appears, and one may now justifiably add that

- the question whether a text has been written in public or private space does not appear to have had any major impact on the text layout of poems on the walls of Pompeii, and
- obviously (and hardly surprising) the very nature of the surface that was used for the inscription may determine the text layout as well.

c) *Texts of literary quality*

Some of the Pompeian metrical graffiti stand out due to their literary quality (and sometimes also length), be they either direct quotations of literary authors (or modifications of literary quotes) or aspire to the lofty heights of literature themselves.⁵⁰ In some cases it seems almost accidental that these texts are preserved on walls rather than in a book.⁵¹ As these texts, due to their quality,

⁵⁰ In some cases one may of course wonder if texts of the latter kind in fact also represent literary quotes, quotes of works that are now lost in the literary tradition. However, without strong evidence it does not seem wise to just assume any such background. Cf. also KRUSCHWITZ 2004, 51–58.

⁵¹ I do not wish to imply that these texts should actually be considered to be literature proper; for this notorious problem, as far as the *Carmina Latina Epigraphica* are concerned, see CUGUSI 1996, important observations (with regards to the subgenre of erotic poetry and the Pompeian graffiti) also in RODRÍGUEZ-PANTOJA 1999.

could represent a relatively high standard (or standards) of formal layout as well (which is just a working assumption, not an *a priori* here), it is an interesting question whether these texts by the same time show any fundamental differences in their text layout: differences that would set these texts also formally apart from other metrical wall inscriptions. Quite surprisingly, then, the practice is by no means consistent or even self-explanatory: there are texts strictly following the verse structure of the poem, but there are quite a few odd and awkward cases as well.

Already in the very first subsection of this chapter four instances of literary quotes from the Pompeian Basilica have been mentioned in passing. In all cases these graffiti show coincidence of verse and line structures. However, even though all cases represent elegiacs, only three out of four also show indentation of the pentameter line. *CIL* IV 1893 and 1894, written by the same hand (which actually makes it one example rather than two) and in sequence (as a combination of *Ov. Am.* 1, 8, 77–78 and *Prop.* 4, 5, 47–48), are examples for the indentation of the pentameter lines.⁵²

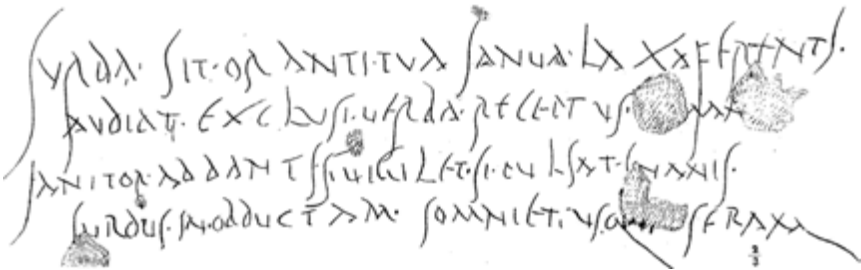


Fig. 14: *CIL* IV 1893. 1894 (tab. XXV 7).

Written right below *CIL* IV 1894, however, there is *CIL* IV 1895 = *CLE* 1786adn., clearly written in a different hand, a quote of *Ov. ars* 1, 475–476, and this inscription does not follow the practice of indentation of the pentameter line:⁵³

⁵² The remaining example is *CIL* IV 1950, but there is no image available to illustrate the text layout. – For further discussion of *CIL* IV 1893 and 1894 (both = *CLE* 1785adn.) cf. VARONE 2002, 43–44.

⁵³ For the sake of completeness it must be mentioned that this writer obviously tried to write the inscription twice, as next to the first line of *CIL* IV 1894 the opening *Quid pote tan (!)* was discovered one more time.

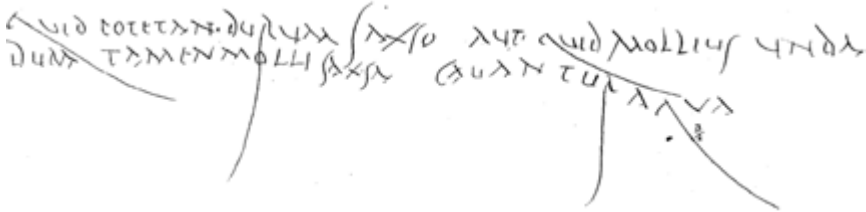


Fig. 15: CIL IV 1895 (tab. XXVI 1).

All this goes to prove (if anything at all, given the small sample of texts that can be considered for this practice) that there was a tendency to aim at what might be regarded best practice of text layout of literary editions, however there was no urgent need to do so.⁵⁴

Arguably the single most outstanding poem, or array of poems, on the walls of Pompeii is a series of texts that has been discovered at the *Theatrum minus* and was signed *Tiburtinus epoese*.⁵⁵ This is not only the longest poetic effusion on the walls of Pompeii, but also the most sophisticated with regards to the text layout. The whole complex set of text(s) cannot easily be displayed; ALFREDO MORELLI recently published outstanding photographs of the text, but even these only manage to convey punctual insights into the shape and arrangement of the text(s).⁵⁶ The various parts of the inscription, all written by the same hand, are arranged thus:⁵⁷

A	signature	
B		
C ₁	C ₂	C ₃

⁵⁴ On the other hand there is an example of a poem consisting of four pentameters (!), and in this case the even lines indented anyway (just like one would expect in case of elegiacs): CIL IV 9123 = CLE 2292adn. (cf. VARONE 2002, 109–110).

⁵⁵ CIL IV 4966–4973 (cf. p. 705) = I² 2540 (cf. p. 1017) = CLE 934–935. Recent, yet problematic and rather pretentious new edition (with a plethora of new conjectures and presentation as a single, long poem rather than a sequence of shorter epigrams) by LIEBERG 2005. More useful MORELLI 2000, 237–257; see also COURTNEY 2003, 79–81. 506 and KRUSCHWITZ 2004, 52–54 (with further references).

⁵⁶ MORELLI 2000, 104–107 fig. 6–9.

⁵⁷ The layout as given by COURTNEY 2003, 80 is incorrect.

A *[Quid ffit? Vi me, oculi, pos(t)quam deducxstis in ignem
[no]n ob uim uestreis largificatis geneis.
[Vst]o non possunt lacrumae restinguere flam(m)am,
[hui]c os incendunt tabificantque animum.*

B *[Iamque om]nes ueicinei incendia participantur
[sei faciam] flammam tradere utei liceat.*

*[Noct]ibus peruigilans totis ego propter a]morem
[se]i detur deiu[am posse uidere meam].
[congl]acio s[ub sideribus, sed pectus] in aestost
[- -] huc [- -]t.*

C₁ *[- -]n ore ap[- -]
[- -]sumat aut ea ua[- -]
[- -]sumpti opus est a[- -]
[- -]judam aut ei [- -]judae*

*[Nil sibi] habere Eum[am totum]que locare.
[Q]uid tum? [Plus a]deo condere uti liceat.*

C₂ *Sei quid amor ualet nostei, sei te hominem scis,
commiseresce mei, da ueniam ut ueniam.
Flos Veneris mihi de [- -]*

C₃ *Caesia sei n[ummen uitai proferat annos],
sei paruom p[ost]hac tempus tibi dederit]
es, bibe, lude l[ubens: non semper - -]
nec semper qu[im]us - -].*

*Solus amare u[ale]t qui scit dare multa puellae]
multa opus sunt s[- -]
quod nesceire dare [- -].*

This means: basically the text has been arranged in three columns (A–C₁, C₂, C₃, as indicated above). Right next to part A, there is aforementioned signature of the artist (whatever his role in the history of this text may have been), *Tiburtinus epoese*, with an interesting use of Greek.⁵⁸ At the bottom end, then, there are two further ‘columns’ of text, C₂ and C₃. Line and verse breaks coincide throughout. Pentameter lines are not (normally) indented, as far as

⁵⁸ Cf. ADAMS 2003, 85. 360.

one can tell from the fragmentary state of the text:⁵⁹ the alignment of the whole text is to the left (also within the three columns at the bottom end), but the left margin is not always kept as a straight line very well.

The next case that needs to be considered is the well-known address of the mule-driver, which originally was discovered in the peristyle of house n. IX 5, 11. The poem is written in iambic senarii:⁶⁰

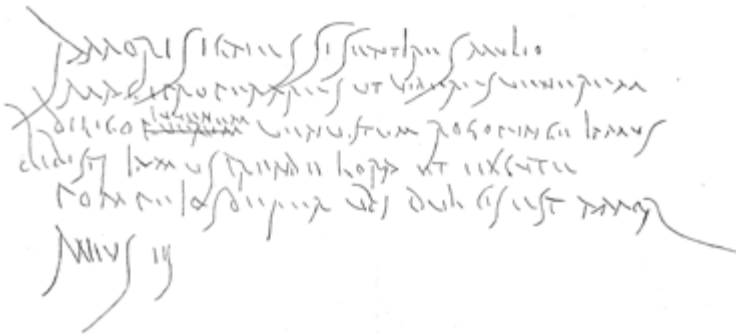


Fig. 16: CIL IV 5092.

*Amoris ignes si sentires, mulio,
magi(s) properares, ut uideres Venerem.
Diligo 'iuuenem', Venustum; rogo, punge, iamus.
Bibisti: iamus, prende lora et excute,
5 Pompeios defer, ubi dulcis est amor
meus es[- -?].*

The fascinating⁶¹ text shows a correction of the second word of line 3 and has verse and line structures coincide. What nobody seems to have noticed thus far is the remarkable fact that lines 1

⁵⁹ However, some of the now commonly accepted restitutions for A seem to suggest an indentation of the pentameter lines. In those cases where the beginning of a line is preserved (parts C₂ and C₃), no such practice appears to exist.

⁶⁰ CIL IV 5092 (cf. p. 705) = CLE 44; for further discussions of this text cf. COURTNEY 1995, 92–93. 300 no. 78 and VARONE 2002, 19–20.

⁶¹ The text, apart from arguably written by a female, is pretending an outside setting (both in terms of 'outside of a private house' and, even more importantly, 'outside of Pompeii'), despite obviously being found within a private house in Pompeii.

and 3 equally stick out to the left, which means that according to common Roman epigraphic practice they indicate beginnings of paragraphs.⁶² This is reflected nicely by the content: the first half of the poem contains the address to the *mulio* who, in the eye of the scribbler, is dilly-dallying, as he does not get on with his business: but as the scribbler is in love with young Venustus, (s)he asks (*rogo*) the mule-driver to hurry up. Whereas this first paragraph is about *si sentires*, the second paragraph is about *bibisti*: you are done already, so why the stall? This part then, stronger in its exhortation: rather than asking, this is now plain demanding, as the list of imperatives demonstrates (*prende, excute, defer*).

Very different, then, is the next example that equally has yielded remarkable interest among Latinists, a text that bears striking similarities to a sub-genre of Roman love elegy, viz. the so-called *paraklausithyron*.⁶³ The text, a bizarre mixture of bits and pieces derived both from dactylic and elegiac poetry (perhaps partly written from memory?),⁶⁴ is presented thus:⁶⁵

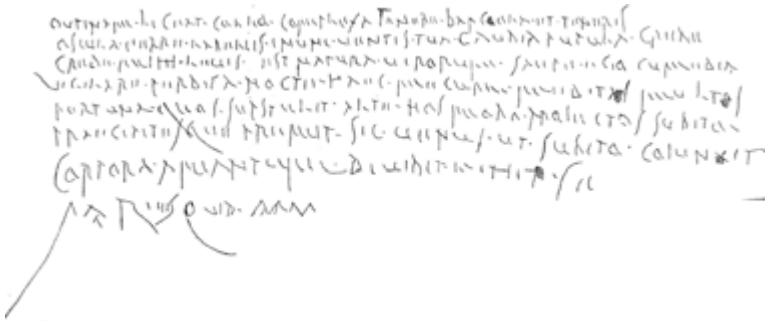


Fig. 17: CIL IV 5296.

*O utinam liceat collo complexa tenere brachiola et teneris
oscula ferre labellis. I nunc, uentis tua gaudia, pupula, crede:
crede mihi, leuis est natura uirorum. Saepe ego cu(m) media
uigilare perditā nocte haec mecum meditas: multos*

- 5 *Fortuna quos supstulit alte, hos modo proictos subito
praecipitesque premit. Sic Venus ut subito coiunxit*

⁶² See above, n. 12.

⁶³ See e. g. GOOLD 1998.

⁶⁴ Thus COURTNEY 1995, 306.

⁶⁵ CIL IV 5296 (cf. p. 705) = CLE 950.

*corpora amantum, dividit lux et se-
parees qui{d} amant.*

At first glance, the text is written in *scriptura continua*, despite being in fact composed in dactylic hexameters. However, this is not quite true, as a closer look reveals. It appears that at least two different features were employed to point out metrical breaks:

- End of line 1 coincides with *caesura* of v. 2; end of line 2 coincides with end of v. 3; end of line 3 coincides with *caesura* of v. 5 (same could technically be said for end of line 4, coinciding with what might be seen as an internal break of v. 6); end of line 5 coincides with *caesura* of v. 7; end of line 6 coincides with bucolic *caesura* of v. 8.

- There are long dashes where there seems to be the transition of vv. 6/7, 7/8, and 8/9 (to be seen in lines 5-7 of the actual inscription: *alte – hos, premit – sic, amantum – diuidit*).

Is one to assume that all these (and in particular: the dashes) are coincidences? Some severe doubts may arise, and it seems more appropriate to say that in fact the (female?) writer of this text took metrical aspects into consideration when writing these lines; these, however, were not biased by a strong concept of line = verse (or, alternatively, syntactic notions).

Whoever was tempted to argue that all phenomena of representations of verse inscriptions on walls were more or less exclusively due to the fact that the texts considered were graffiti (rather than, say, dipinti), can be proven wrong by the next case, again on a rather high literary level. One of the most disturbing, yet fascinating findings from Pompeii is a carefully crafted dipinto representing a scene in which a young girl (Pero) nurses an old man (Mico):⁶⁶

⁶⁶ *CIL* IV 6635 c = *CLE* 2048. Obviously, this is a contamination of two (cognate? similar?) ancient myths, namely the Pero – Kimon myth (as reported by Valerius Maximus) and the Xanthippe – Mykon myth (reported by Hygin). Image, originally published in NSA 1900, 199 fig. 1, taken from DEONNA 1955, planche III fig. 4. For further discussion cf. COURTNEY 1995, 76–77. 277–278 no. 56.



Fig. 18: CIL IV 6635 c.

Quae paruis mäter nātis alimenta
 parabat, fortuna in patrios uertit
 iniqua cibos. aeuo dignum opus est
 tenui ceruice seniles, as[pice, ia]m
 5 uenae lacte +++[- -]q(ue)
 simul uultu fri<c>at ipsa Miconem Pero:
 tristis inest cum pietate pudor.

It is very obvious here that the inscription is meant to be part of the whole ensemble and not just a scribbler's addition to something that was deemed to require comment. Even though the inscription must have been part of the original design of the image, then, it is remarkable that the text – written in elegiacs – is not given according to its metrical structure. Much rather it is presented in a way that makes best use of the room available for a chunk of text within a painting, reflecting the fact that the writing space was not particularly accommodated to receive the text.

Finally a brief look at the single most extraordinary piece from Pompeii as far as the presentation of the text is concerned – a short poem written in elegiacs that was discovered in the via Nolana. It loses most of its original appeal when transcribed as required for

an epigraphical edition, as it would require presentation as just one lengthy, continuous sequence of words:⁶⁷

[Ser]pentis lusus si qui sibi forte notauit, Sepumius iuuenis
 quos fac(i)t ingenio, spectator scaenae siue es studiosus
 e[qu]orum: sic habeas [lanc]es se[mp]er ubiq[ue] p[ro]p[ri]as.

Presenting the poem in its metrical shape, as elegiacs, would not help much, either, for what makes this text stand out as it is presented on the wall is the fact that this is one of the earliest examples of the so-called *carmina figurata* in Latin;⁶⁸ this is what it looks like:

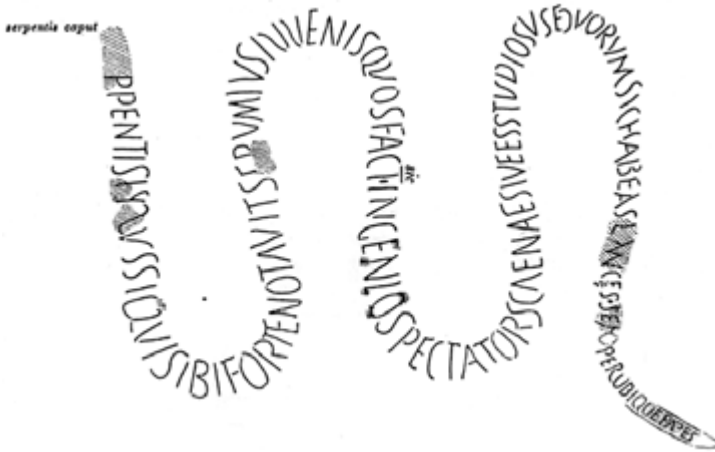


Fig. 19: CIL IV 1595.

While drawings of all sorts are by no mean uncommon feature on the walls of Pompeii, and words presented in the shape of various things (most notably ships), this text stands out due to (a) the sheer amount of text that illustrates itself by its very layout and (b) the quality of the poem.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ CIL IV 1595 (cf. p. 209. 463) = CLE 927. For brief discussions of the text cf. also COURTNEY 1995, 118–119. 328–329 no. 120 and KRUSCHWITZ 2004, 56–57.

⁶⁸ See WOJACZEK 1988, 248–252.

⁶⁹ For general reference on graffiti drawings and figurative texts from Pompeii see the rather glossy collection of MAULUCCI VIVOLO 1993 and, more importantly, the authoritative study by LANGNER 2001.

3. CONCLUSIONS

Time for some conclusions, based on the limited, yet representative amount of material that has been presented here.⁷⁰ If one would like to consider ‘strict coincidence of line and verse structures’ and ‘entirely random arrangement’ as extremes of formal text layout of the Pompeian verse inscriptions, one has to acknowledge that coincidence of line and verse structures indeed could be seen as a default solution; however, it occurs far less frequently than one might have expected, particularly in those cases where the text actually is longer than a single verse,⁷¹ and the spread of the evidence can by no means be described in terms of ‘rule vs. exception’.⁷² Moreover, entirely random text layout hardly ever occurs at all.

What is interesting, then, is, what happens in between the range as defined by the two extremes. What cannot reasonably be covered by any category, of course, is forms of fancy design (as for example the snake poem), as these cases are highly individual.⁷³ Apart from that, there are a number of phenomena that appear to stand out:

- The nature of the surface that has been chosen for the scribbling can, under certain conditions, have a major impact on the text layout: a poem written on a column might just for that very reason look remarkably different from a poem written on an even

⁷⁰ I have checked further random samples of the remaining poetic material from Pompeii and did not come across any general trend that would not have been covered by the material here; I therefore am positive that the material covered in this article is in fact representative.

⁷¹ The one aspect that cannot satisfactorily be considered about this, even though it would have been highly desirable, is how a set of consecutive lines from a literary poem would have been transcribed on a wall. The inscriptions of Pompeii, however, do not provide us with useful evidence in this respect.

⁷² In fact, quite a few inscriptions remain below the level of a single line, e. g. those many quotes of, and allusions to, literary poems (such as the ubiquitous *arma uirumque*).

⁷³ There are further examples for fancy layouts, such as e. g. the poem *CIL* IV 1517 (inscribed in a drawn *tabula ansata*), commemorating the event *hic [ego] nu(n)c futue formosam | fo[rt]e puella(m)* in a monumental shape. (In fact it might be worth pursuing reflections of monumental shapes in Pompeian graffiti as a whole.)

surface that does not have much restrictions with regards to the space available for the actual writing.

- Under certain circumstances, it appears, other metrical (sub)divisions than line breaks have been utilised. If this turns out to be the case, this would by the same time shed further light on the question how important the (genuinely rhythmical) *caesurae* were for (at least popular) versification and composition.⁷⁴

- There is sufficient evidence to support the claim that in fact sentence structure and focalisation can overrule metrical structures in the text layout on the walls of Pompeii.⁷⁵

One might be surprised that one category is missing here, which might be obvious if one chose an *a priori* approach: there does not seem to be much cogent evidence at all for a need to cover up the writing of longer texts, e. g. by hiding the scribbling behind one's body (and choosing the line lengths accordingly): content and/or form seem to prevail.⁷⁶

All in all, these findings seem to make it rather hard to come up with a coherent idea of as to what degree formal text layout mattered to those who wrote Latin poetry on the walls of Roman Pompeii. If one is to assume that generally the evidence may tell us how native speakers, yet non-professional designers of poetic texts thought about the importance of layout in case of poetry (cutting out the middle man, so to speak), one would have to admit that,

⁷⁴ If one wanted to pursue the notion of «mündliche Dichtungstechnik in den pompejanischen Wandinschriften» (WACHTER 1998), this aspect could in fact be (another?) key to an understanding.

⁷⁵ One may wonder if this reflects principles of Roman colometric line division and the fact that the first position within syntactic cola carries particular emphasis within the Latin sentence. At any rate, further poetic texts that have been dismissed as insufficiently laid out, should be reconsidered. *CIL* IV 4957 = *CLE* 932, the famous chamber-pot poem for example, has thus been dismissed e. g. by KRAMER 2007, 110: «Die Zeilenaufteilung des Graffito respektiert nicht die Versgrenze zwischen dem Hexameter und dem Pentameter des Distichons»: this is true, but then the actual line division puts the operative words *miximus* and *hospes* in line-initial positions.

⁷⁶ This could be an(other) indicator for the question whether in Roman Pompeii graffiti writing was considered an act of vandalism or rather just as common practice. However, much reasonable research is still to be carried out towards a sound and fully fledged answer to this question.

while coincidence of line and verse structures was preferred, it did not matter to an absolute, or in fact even a very high, degree.⁷⁷

This last conclusion, however, sheds some interesting light on aspects that have been discussed in the first section of this article. Although poetry on the walls of Pompeii, just like in books, seems to favour a layout that shows coincidence line and verse structures, the many exceptions to the rule prove that, even on a decidedly subliterary level, poetry is a genuinely artistic, not a technical genre, and poetic content is ready to overrule the rigid formats of default text layouts.

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⁷⁷ It might be worth asking, if similar patterns can be found in stone inscriptions that were laid out by professionals (in most cases, though perhaps with very concrete instructions given by the dedicants?), but this would be the topic of another article entirely.

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ABSTRACT

This article explores patterns of formal text layout of the metrical graffiti of Pompeii. After a brief discussion of the importance of formal text layout for linguistic research in general (and its relevance for poetic texts), a representative sample of poetic graffiti is discussed and analysed in detail. It is argued, then, that nature of the surface and sentence structure in particular can take precedence over the 'default solution' (coincidence of verse and line structures).

KEYWORDS: Metrical inscriptions, Pompeii, linguistics, text layout, verse structure.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Dieser Aufsatz befaßt sich mit dem formalen Textlayout metrischer Graffiti aus Pompeji. Nach einigen kurzen Vorüberlegungen zur Relevanz des formalen Textlayouts für die linguistische Forschung allgemein (und der Relevanz für poetische Texte) wird ein repräsentatives Segment metrischer Graffiti diskutiert und einer detaillierten Analyse unterzogen. Es zeigt sich, daß mit gewisser Regelmäßigkeit sowohl die Gestalt des Untergrundes, auf welchen Graffiti aufgetragen werden, als auch syntaktische Strukturen zu Darbietungen führen, die von der 'Standardlösung' (d.h. den Zusammenfall von syntaktischer und metrischer Struktur in der graphischen Repräsentation) abweichen.

STICHWÖRTER: Metrische Inschriften, Pompeji, Linguistik, Textlayout, Versstruktur.