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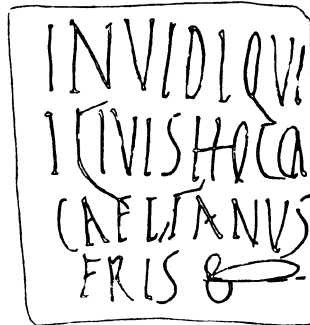
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‘Cure Offered to Rival’:
IMS 2.228

Apstrakt. Autor predlaže novo čitanje i tumačenje za jedan rimski grafito nađen u Kostolcu početkom XX veka i u međuvremenu izgubljen.
Ključne reči: rimski grafiti, latinska epigrafika, vulgarni latinitet.

A facsimile is all that remains of an inscribed brick (28.5 × 27 cm) which was found in 1901 on the site of the ancient city of Viminacium in Moesia Superior:¹



Soon after the discovery the inscription was published as follows: *Invidi qui | {i}civis hoc (= huc) ca|cafit (= cacabit) anus: | eris (fututus).*² Remarkably, the sketch that comes after *eris* was taken as a virtual word concluding the text. On the whole, however, this reading, while it dis-

¹ The brick was transferred to the Grammar School of the city of Požarevac, but was later lost. Not even the first publishers (see n. 2 below) were able to examine the object itself; in addition to the facsimile, though, they had a paper squeeze of the graffito.

² F. LADEK, A. VON PREMIERSTEIN and N. VULIĆ in *Jahreshefte des österr. archäol. Institutes in Wien* 4, 1901, Beibl. 151–2, no. 68 (facsimile reproduced here); also in *Spomenik SKA* 39, 1903, pp. 80–1, no. 65. They described the script as the ‘Cursive des 2. Jahrhunderts, der Lapidarschrift sehr nahekommend, h. 0.06–0.035 m.’ CIL 3.14599¹ is fully based on the *Jahreshefte* edition.

closed an obviously abusive bit of Vulgar Latin, yielded no clear sense; the publishers³ went about as far as one reasonably could in thinking it probable that the brick had originally been laid against a wall—so the text would have been just one of those reminders saying that This Is No Toilet.⁴

Another reading was attempted in IMS 2:⁵ *Invidi qui | I livis hoc ca | cafis ānus | eris*. The editor makes several useful remarks *ad loc.*: the main departure from the old reading, *2 livis* rather than *civis*, is to be understood as Vulgar Latin for either *lives* or *livens*; for the obvious connexion between *livor* and *invidia* an excellent parallel is given, *[omni]bus invidias, livide, nemo tibi* (from an Algerian inscription). Other vulgarisms would be *invidi* for *invide*, *hoc* for *huc* (also attested in an epigraph from Dalmatia), and *cacafis* for *-bis* ('spirantization'). All these details seem acceptable in themselves, but the text as a whole is still left with no elucidation as to its formal structure and exact meaning. What precisely are we to make of either *huc cacabis* or *anus eris*, unless we are ready to take any ineptitude on the account of filthiness? On the other hand, in an attempt to explain the sketch beneath the text, the editor of IMS 2 made another important remark: 'Pour le *phallus*, comme *medicus invidiae*, cf. Plin. *n.h.* XXVIII, 2,9.'⁶ This may provide us with the key to the sense.

As we examine the facsimile, the third letter in line 3 appears to be at least as obvious an *E* as the one at the beginning of line 4. With this in mind, we have good reasons to read 2–4 *hoc caca et sanus eris*,⁷ which

³ Followed in this by P. PETROVIĆ, *Paleografija rimskih natpisa u Gornjoj Meziji / Paléographie des inscriptions romaines en Mésie Supérieure*, Belgrade 1975, p. 36.

⁴ See e.g. E. DIEHL, *Pompeianische Wandinschriften und Verwandtes*, Bonn 1910, p. 41, nos. 696–8 ("Strassenverbote").

⁵ *Inscriptions de la Mésie Supérieure, 2: Viminacium et Margum*, par M. MIRKOVIĆ, Belgrade 1986, p. 182, no. 228.

⁶ MIRKOVIĆ *ad loc.* The correct reference to Pliny is *n.h.* 28.39; the Algerian inscription cited above is CIL 8.2524. See also P. CUGUSI's 2004 paper 'Invidia e coppa d'amore. Due temi presenti nei carmi epigrafici', available at clasica10.us.es/c/cilxviii_a/coloquio/material/cugusi.pdf.

⁷ By a further implication, everything which, in line 4, comes between the fourth letter (which I reckon to be a narrow *T*, so the line begins *CAET*) and *ANVS* (at the end of the line) would amount to an *S* executed in three strokes and with some difficulty. The

would make perfect sense as it stands. In fact, *hoc caca*, with *hoc* referring to what is graphically depicted at the end of the text, would be an instance of *mentulam cacare*, an offensive phrase famous for its occurrence in the *Priapea* (69.4), with the closest of parallels in CIL 10.8145, where a similar sketch is followed by the words *hanc ego cacavi*.⁸ As to what follows, *et sanus eris* would be the sarcastic application of a formula often found at the end of medical recipes: cf. e.g. Garg. Mart. *Curae boum*⁹ 8 *salis pugnum et cepae capita X pariter conterito et in offae modum reficito, eam in anum bovis inicito et fac eum arare continuo folli, et sanus erit*, or *Anecd. med.*¹⁰ 146 *ad perniones: cerotum et pulpam sardinae calefacito et frica loca, et sanus erit*.

Back to the opening part of the inscription, the crux is located at the beginning of line 2. The initial *I* has never been accounted for—and it certainly does not look like an accidental scratch. Next to this, a letter which by itself could be a *C* all right, but still looking very different from the three other *C*'s that we have in 2–3 *hoc caca*, and not making enough sense in the context.¹¹ We may, therefore, prefer to follow IMS 2 in disregarding the rightward stroke over what believably is an *L*. As already observed, 2 *lvis* (for *lives*) would be very satisfying in the context of *invidia*,¹² and there is more in favour of this reading, since *lives* could be the pivotal term for a clever double entendre. At the point where it comes in, it just means “you are jealous”, but a moment later the offer of ‘medical treatment’ makes the reader realize that it also meant “you are lead-pale”, “you look unhealthy”.¹³ Further along these lines, the part re-

upper stroke of this *s* would be the horizontal trait that all the editors were careful to reproduce by printing *anus* or *anus*.

⁸ J. N. ADAMS, *The Latin Sexual Vocabulary*, London 1982, pp. 171–2. Another important parallel is AE 1976.709 *curiosos pedico, invide cacas*, cited already by MIRKOVIĆ.

⁹ Ed. by E. LOMMATZSCH in his edition of Vegetius, Teubner 1903.

¹⁰ Ed. S. BRICOURT (2004): see www.forumromanum.org/literature/anecdotum_medicumx.html.

¹¹ This must be the reason why in CIL 3.14599¹ no letter is given for it, but only a wide semicircular line vaguely representing the actual shape.

¹² Another parallel is found in CIL 8.23131 (mosaic from Cululis Theodoriana, Byzacene) *invide livide eqs.*; see CUGUSI (above, n. 6), p. 2.

¹³ *Livere* is also reminiscent of *pallere* “be pale” > “be ill”. For *pallor* coming hand in

maining between *invidi* and *livis*, 1-2 *qui*||I, is best made out as *quit* (for *quid*).

To sum up: IMS 2.228 will probably read *invidi qui*||*t livis* (=‘*Invide, quid lives?*’) *hoc ca*||*ca et sanus* || *eris*, that is, “Why look so unhealthy, you jealous git? Stick this into your anus and you’ll be well.” This offensive jest was most likely aimed at a *rivalis*—several Pompeian graffiti show that such scribbling could easily escalate into a heated exchange of messages between rival lovers.¹⁴ Doubts will remain, however: the imperfect record of the inscription makes it impossible ever to be sure about any decipherment.

hand with *livor*, cf. e.g. Cels. 5.28.2.A, Mart.10.12.10. For another disapproved sexual practice viewed ironically as the ultimate way of recovering from an unhealthy paleness, cf. Mart. 1.77.

¹⁴ The best example is perhaps CIL 4.8259.

Sadržaj sveske 35 (1/2007)

Od Uredništva	5
ЕЛИЯ МАРИНОВА (ELIA MARINOVA) Palamedes: The Victim and the Hero of Letters	7
DRAGANA DIMITRIJEVIĆ References to Epicurus in Cicero's <i>In Pisonem</i>	19
VESNA DIMOVSKA Teorijski i praktični aspekti ironije kod Cicerona	29
ВИОЛЕТА ГЕРДЖИКОВА (VIOLETA GERJKOVA) Looking (at) Ariadne: Vision and Meaning in Catullus, Ovid and Hofmannsthal	39
VOJIN NEDELJKOVIĆ 'Cure Offered to Rival': IMS 2.228	55
GORANA STEPANIĆ Potresna pjesnička svjedočanstva: Latinsko pjesništvo o dubrovačkom potresu 1667.	59