



# An Introduction to Wall Inscriptions from Pompeii and Herculaneum (From Pompeii and Herculaneum)

By Rex E. Wallace

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

THE STATED AIM of this book is 'to provide Latinists with a reasonably comprehensive introduction to wall inscriptions from Pompeii and Herculaneum.' Wallace succeeds in this aim. His intended audience is [American] undergraduates and more advanced students. Though Wallace selects the most interesting texts from an historical point of view, these will be students of linguistics, rather than of Roman history, since the notes on the texts are largely philological. Technical terms (clearly explained in the introduction) abound, 'monophthongization' being particularly common. (One can imagine Wallace as the centurion in *The Life of Brian* shouting 'How many times have I told you not to monophthongize?' at some hapless innkeeper writing *copo* for *caupo*)

Wallace is a reliable guide to what the people of Pompeii wrote on their walls and to how we should interpret it. He reminds us that Latin was an everyday language, full of variations in spellings, even when the graffiti is a quotation from Ovid or Virgil, and colloquialisms. My favourite is *da fridam pusillum* which, with the help of the accompanying drawing, we can translate as 'Give me a drop of cold water'. The book contains a full vocabulary list though this does not really do justice to some colloquialisms. *Secundus hic cacat* does rather lose its impact if translated (in accordance with the vocabulary list) 'Secundus defecates here'.

Wallace is also reliable in historical notes, though he seems not to realize that annual magistracies in Pompeii ran from July 1, rather than January 1, (as can be shown from Caecilius' wax tablets) so a set of games announced in February (his no. 65) is misdated by one year, thus missing an important connection with the earthquake of AD 62. Some facsimiles of inscriptions are included, taken (with due acknowledgement) from the drawings in *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum IV*, though without the measurements provided there. --M. G. L. Cooley, King Henry VIII School, Coventry

The newly published *An Introduction to Wall Inscriptions from Pompeii and Herculaneum* by Rex E. Wallace offers several opportunities for teachers use in the classroom, at any level, for a variety of courses: • college: elementary Latin to the reading level, undergraduate or graduate; Classics Civilization or Introduction to Language • high school: all levels of Latin; world history • middle school: Latin language, introductory Roman civilization or the Roman culture of ...Populusque Romanus. • elementary: language, culture, or College for Kids classes

The inscriptions provide instruction in two major areas: • Reading: The book is written for the intermediate college or advanced high school levels and provides a useful glimpse into both the daily life of the Romans and the colloquial use Latin by the lesser known half of Roman society. The dialect and changes in the language also show to the upper level reader how varieties of Latin developed. • Culture: The inscriptions would be an excellent component of a course about ancient Roman society, in which both the culture of well-known personages as well as that of citizens and slaves on the street is discussed. The examples show real Latin in real contexts. Knowing the language is not necessary in order to understand the topics addressed, or even the linguistic changes.

The book contains 351 different illustrations, 24 of which are reproduced as facsimiles as well. The teacher would probably want to put an example on an overhead for the class, in order to point out the abbreviations, typical structure and style, variations in forms (loss of --m ending, orthographic changes in vowels), and then demonstrate a reading or interpretation, and follow with elaboration on the cultural interest.

The facsimiles especially bring the students closer to the Roman writer and the wall, by showing various styles, artistic flourishes, and the actual style of writing, not entirely legible until compared with the reproduction or with the help of the notes or teacher. By presenting on an overhead some of the facsimiles or the reproduced illustrations, the teacher can explore linguistic or cultural topics, to enrich students acquaintance with the Romans about whom they are reading or studying.

The illustrations are organized by categories. The electoral announcements; advertisements for rentals and sales; lost and found notices; public acclamations and salutations; and curses and insults reflect everyday, commercial, and romantic life of the Romans, specifically those in Pompeii and Herculaneum. The gladiator advertisements can be used to demonstrate different forms of dress, winning and losing, styles of fighting, as well as understanding of this form of entertainment. Some of the miscellaneous entries (I.95, a birth announcement; I.107, found in a room next to a latrine with a picture of a man defecating and with cacator inscribed; I.109, cacator appearing again in a sign near a water reservoir) reflect other daily activities and remind students of the humanness of the people using the language they are studying.

The short sentences illustrated cases and declension endings with the pungent intent of an insult; the other graffiti showed how both soldiers and gladiators wanted to proclaim their presence.

Culture will be easily introduced through reading the inscriptions, but understanding a little Latin can also be readily introduced through looking at the inscriptions for cultural purposes. --Vicki Wine, Lecturer, Department of Classics, Monmouth College

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