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TYCHE

Beiträge zur Alten Geschichte
Papyrologie und Epigraphik

HOLZHAUSEN
DER VERLAG

Band 27, 2012



**Beiträge zur Alten Geschichte,
Papyrologie und Epigraphik**

T Y C H E

**Beiträge zur Alten Geschichte,
Papyrologie und Epigraphik**

Band 49

2234

H O L Z H A U S E N
D E R V E R L A G

Impressum

Gegründet von:

Gerhard Dobesch, Hermann Harrauer, Peter Siewert, Ekkehard Weber

Herausgegeben von:

TYCHE – Verein zur Förderung der Alten Geschichte in Österreich

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Georg Rehrenböck, Patrick Sängler, Kerstin Sängler-Böhm

Zuschriften und Manuskripte erbeten an:

Redaktion TYCHE, c/o Institut für Alte Geschichte und Altertumskunde, Papyrologie und
Epigraphik, Universität Wien, Universitätsring 1, 1010 Wien, Österreich.

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Richtlinien unter <http://www.univie.ac.at/alte-geschichte>.

Bei der Redaktion einlangende wissenschaftliche Werke werden angezeigt.

Auslieferung:

Verlag Holzhausen GmbH, Leberstraße 122, A-1110 Wien
office@verlagholzhausen.at

Online Bestellungen & TYCHE-Digital:

<https://shop.verlagholzhausen.at/hhshop/buch.wissenschaft/Tyche.htm>

Umschlag: Militärdiplom aus Carnuntum (ZPE 172, 2010, 271–276; Photo: P. Böttcher),
Inscription aus Ephesos (ÖJh 55, 1984, 130 [Inv. Nr. 4297]; Photo: P. Sängler), P.Vindob. G 2097
(= P.Charite 8).

Bibliografische Informationen der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek und der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek

Die ÖNB und die DNB verzeichnen diese Publikation in den Nationalbibliografien; detaillierte
bibliografische Daten sind im Internet abrufbar. Für die Österreichische Bibliothek:
<http://aleph.onb.ac.at>, für die Deutsche Bibliothek: <http://dnb.ddb.de>.

Eigentümer und Verleger: Verlag Holzhausen GmbH, Leberstraße 122, A-1110 Wien

Herausgeber: TYCHE – Verein zur Förderung der Alten Geschichte in Österreich
c/o Institut für Alte Geschichte und Altertumskunde, Papyrologie und Epigraphik,
Universität Wien, Universitätsring 1, A-1010 Wien.

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Gedruckt auf holz- und säurefreiem Papier.

Verlagsort: Wien — Herstellungsort: Wien — Printed in Austria

ISBN: 978-3-902868-84-8 ISSN: 1010-9161

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PETER KRUSCHWITZ — VIRGINIA L. CAMPBELL
— MATTHEW NICHOLLS

Menedemerumenus:^{*}
tracing the routes of Pompeian graffiti writers

1. Introduction

The walls of Pompeii, abounding with graffiti of all sorts, have brought to light a number of oddities which are hard to account for, many of which are not at all easy to comprehend. Among the more cryptic items features a series of graffiti, located all over the city, containing a number of variants of the verbal monstrosity *Menedemerumenus*.

Several aspects of these inscriptions have been discussed before, most notably their obvious relation to the character Menedemus in Terence's play *Heauton timorumenos*: the phrase *Menedemerumenus*, and its variants, appear to be a playful merger of *Menedem(us)* and (*Heauton tim*)*orumenus*, with a sound shift in the first syllable of the latter (from *Menedemorumenus* to *Menedemerumenus*).¹ Whether or not one should go as far as calling it a deliberate tongue twister (as a technical term for verbal expressions that are particularly difficult to pronounce, as a result of their morphology) is hard to determine;² it is somewhat difficult, too, to see this coinage in exactly the same light as some of the other Pompeian verbal games, such as the Sator-Areopos square and related pieces.³

At any rate, the individual tokens for the *Menedemerumenus* tag line,⁴ their spread across the town, and their internal variation have never systematically been studied. The following article aims to remedy this situation, aiming to establish the (potential) story behind this highly awkward feature of the Pompeian epigraphic record.

* We wish to thank Dr Antonio Varone (Pompei) for his generous help and supply of the three photos incorporated in this article.

¹ Wallace 2005, 86 claims that it is 'not clear what this Greek-sounding word refers to, if anything'. He further includes it in his list of vocabulary (p. 128) as being 'of unknown meaning (nonsense?)'. This view is unnecessarily pessimistic.

² Guarducci 1965, 262 calls it a puzzling tongue twister ("un curioso rompicaposcio glilingua"); similarly Solin 1979, 284, Varone 1979, 68, and Varone 1996, 199.

³ Examples of which have been discussed by the aforementioned authors (cf. nt. 2).

⁴ For a similarly modern approach to ancient graffiti see now Keegan 2011.

2. The Evidence

As a first step, it is important to gain a complete overview of all relevant evidence. The following catalogue provides a list of all instances that are currently known, adhering to their order within the volumes of the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*, volume IV. In addition to the text and, wherever possible, a drawing of the inscription, the catalogue will gather relevant information concerning the inscriptions' handwriting, letter shapes, and actual position within public or private space.

CIL IV *100

In his preparations for the first volume of *CIL* IV, Karl Zangemeister carefully examined previous scholarship on the subject of Pompeian epigraphy. One particularly important publication in this respect was, and still is, Raffaele Garrucci's *Graffiti de Pompéi*.⁵ While being very important as a collection of texts, Garrucci's edition also proved to be notoriously unreliable.⁶ For this very reason, Zangemeister decided to give all graffiti that were attested by Garrucci only under the rubric of *falsae vel suspectae*. This applies to the first item on the list of inscriptions to be discussed here, too. The findspot is not reported, and Garrucci only claims that the text was in the *Museo Borbonico*, i.e. the museum that now is the Museo Archeologico Nazionale of Naples. This does not say anything about the text's authenticity — it may well have been authentic, even though it is factually dismissed as forgery due to the unfortunate collocation within *CIL* IV. What Garrucci reports is this (in Zangemeister's rendering):

100* Neapoli in museo Borbonico GARR.

IIIIINIIDIIIIII

Garrucci pag. 1, cf. comm. ad tab. VII princ.

Menedeme; cf. n. 1616. 1211 etc.

(1) *Menedeme*[- -?]

As far as one can tell from this rather unsatisfactory documentation, both the letters M and E were given in their cursive forms (IIII for M, with an oblong first line, and II for E), and also the D appears in its peculiar cursive shape. It is unclear whether this text is unfinished or originally existing parts were lost due to physical damage to the wall. In its execution, the text looks reasonably close to the beginning of item (6), below, which indeed is kept in the Museo Archeologico Nazionale of Naples. If it is

⁵ Garrucci 1856.

⁶ Cf. K. Zangemeister's verdict in *CIL* IV p. IX no. 27.

not the same text altogether, it might at least have been discovered in the same space, i.e. the basilica, and been written by the same hand.

CIL IV 1211 (cf. p. 205)

This inscription was discovered in the *via dei sepolcri* outside the Herculanean gate in the so-called Villa of the Mosaic Columns on the walls of a part of the building that has been described as ‘stables’ (room 23 of Kockel, Weber’s map), “pariete, in quo sunt duae portae, ad dextram eius portae, quae dexterior est intranti” (i.e. ‘on that wall that has two doors, to the right of that door which is closer to the right end when you enter the room’).⁷ According to Karl Zangemeister’s description of this graffito, the inscription was written with letters just 0.6 cm high. The text is now lost, and no further documentation exists.⁸ Zangemeister himself, in the tables of *CIL IV*, gives the following drawing of the inscription:⁹

5 MTRVHDII·MII·RV·MII·NVST
 ½

On the basis of Zangemeister’s edition, it seems wise to represent the inscription thus:

(2) *Meredemerumenus S+[- - -?]*

+ fuit litt. A aut M aut N. Num sa[l(utem)] vel simile quid?

If this rendering of the graffito is reliable at all, it would appear that all letters E were written in the typical cursive form of two vertical lines (II). There is a small range of variation in the execution of the letter M. Syllabic punctuation seems to have been used throughout. If the rendering of the text by Zangemeister is correct, note that the third letter is an R (not an N, as one would expect); this is supported by the text of the following entry.

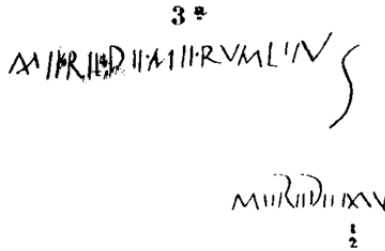
⁷ On the Villa of the Mosaic Columns in general see Kockel, Weber 1983, on this room (which is now no longer accessible) in particular *ibid.* p. 87.

⁸ In *CIL IV* p. 205 Zangemeister claims to have ‘edited’ the text in “Bull. Inst. 1867 p. 53” (= Zangemeister 1867, 53). However, this is nothing but a rough-and-ready collection of this and a few related texts — no additional useful information is given for this item.

⁹ *CIL IV* tab. XX 5.

CIL IV 1212 (cf. p. 205)

In the same findspot as the previous example (2), just a little bit lower and slightly to the left from (2), two further attestations came to light. If the tables in *CIL* IV are trustworthy, the letters of (3) were 3 mm (S: 1 cm) high, those of (4), on the other hand, just 2 mm (R and D: 5 mm). Both examples are now lost, and no photographs seem to exist. Zangemeister represents the inscriptions thus:¹⁰



- (3) *Meredemerulinus*¹¹
 (4) *Meredemu[- - -?]*

Consistent syllabic punctuation and similar letter shapes suggest that (3) was written by the same hand as (2). Note that at the end of this text the letters seem to have been written in greater haste and therefore are executed less carefully. The complete lack of punctuation and the distinctly diverging shape of the letters R and D in (4) on the other hand do suggest that this piece was written by another hand. The decision to publish these two separate items under a single number in *CIL* IV therefore is arbitrary and probably less than plausible. Note, however, that both examples share the awkward spelling *Mere-* instead of *Mene-*.

CIL IV 1616

The following case was discovered in the place known as *vico(lo) storto*, i.e. the street between the insulae VII 4 (on the W side) and VII 2 and 3 (on the E side). The precise findspot cannot be established, and the inscription appears to be lost now. However, Theodor Mommsen (in Zangemeister's *CIL* entry)¹² seems to suggest that it was found where the dipinto *CIL* IV 529 and the graffito *CIL* IV 1615 were discovered. This would mean that the text was discovered on the long stretch of

¹⁰ *CIL* IV tab. XX 3a. No useful further information in Zangemeister 1867, 53–54.

¹¹ Thus Zangemeister, noting this peculiar spelling specifically in *CIL* IV p. 205 *ad loc.*, points out that this also should be corrected in his drawing: the original edition did not show the letter *-u-* at the penultimate position.

¹² Zangemeister (1867) 54 makes it clear that he was unable to locate this item. It would seem that his edition therefore is based on (a) Garrucci's version of it and (b) Mommsen's autopsy and drawing, as reported in *CIL* IV, see above.

outside wall between entrances VII 3.38 (a dwelling house) and VII 3.37 (a shop).¹³ Mommsen's apographon gives the text thus:¹⁴

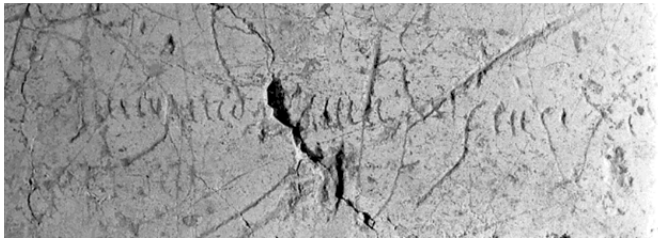
6

(5) *Menedemeruminus.*

The graffito shows the text in a consistent cursive handwriting — all letters M, E, N, D, and R appear in their distinctive shapes.¹⁵ No forms of punctuation are to be seen. The handwriting looks somewhat similar to that of item (1). Raffaele Garrucci (1856, tab. XXI b) has *Menedemerumenus* (with an E rather than the cursive variant II which one would expect in this context, given that all other Es are represented by a double vertical line) rather than *Menedemeruminus*, which is to be preferred if it was not for the very execution of that letter. Mommsen's apographon, however, is unambiguous, therefore the text stands as it is given above.

CIL IV 1637 (cf. p. 209)

The following attestation was discovered in the street known as *vico dei soprastanti*, among a whole range of graffiti discovered “in pictura, quae exabat inter undecimum et duodecimum ostium a *vicoletto delle terme occidentem versus*” (...).¹⁶ This suggests that the wall between the brothels of VII 6.34 and VII 6.35 was the original findspot. The height of the letters vary, the smaller ones are about 4 mm, the larger ones up to 2.6 cm high. The inscription itself is now kept in the Museo Archeologico Nazionale in Naples.¹⁷



¹³ Point of reference for several subsequent entries' localisations in *CIL IV* is entry no. 1611 which gives “in lat. orientali post tertiam ianuam venienti a via Fortunae”, i.e. on the E wall after the third door to those coming from the *via della Fortuna*, as findspot indication.

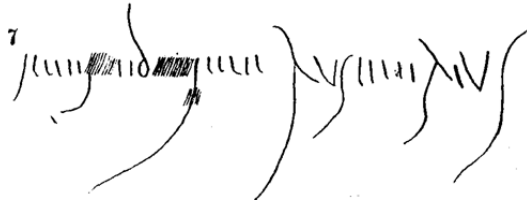
¹⁴ *CIL IV* tab. XX 6.

¹⁵ Note, however, that the second N appears in its capital rather than a cursive form.

¹⁶ Same information in Zangemeister 1867, 53.

¹⁷ Inv. no. 27683. Photo (inv. no. D/110865) kindly supplied by Antonio Varone.

Zangemeister's drawing gives the text thus:¹⁸

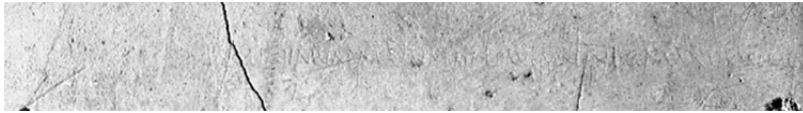


(6) *Mened[e]merumenus.*

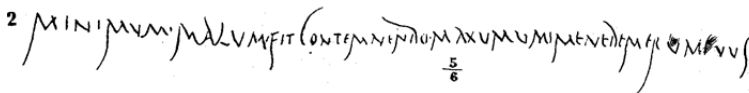
As in case of the previous item [see above, (5)], the graffito shows the text in a consistent cursive handwriting — all letters M, E, N, D, and R appear in their distinctive shapes, and no forms of punctuation are to be seen. It would seem entirely possible that this attestation is actually the same as item (1), see above; if it is not, it may have been written by the same hand.

CIL IV 1870 (cf. p. 464) = *CLE* 35

Two further attestations of the text — *CIL* IV 1870 (discussed here) and 1913 [see below, item (8)] — were discovered on the north wall of the Pompeian basilica (VIII 1.2). In 1841 major parts of the plaster of the north wall of the Pompeian basilica were detached from their original findspot, cut into several more manageable sections, and shipped to the Museo Archeologico Nazionale of Naples, where this inscription still exists.¹⁹



Zangemeister's rendering of the inscription looks thus:²⁰



(7) *Minimum malum fit contemnendo maxumum. Menedemerum[e]nus.*

¹⁸ *CIL* IV tab. XX 7. — This text has been reproduced in Guarducci 1965, 262 fig. 6, even though Guarducci actually does not mention this particular entry in her random collection of attestations *ibid.* in nt. 137.

¹⁹ Photo (inv. no. D/110645) kindly supplied by Antonio Varone.

²⁰ *CIL* IV tab. XIV 2. — Brief discussion also in Zangemeister 1867, 54; cf. Wallace 2005, 86 no. 174 for a brief commentary on this item.

Even though its exact original findspot as well as the actual use of the Pompeian basilica are problematic to determine,²¹ it is clear that this space must be considered ‘public’ (or at least: easily accessible to the public), given the overwhelming amount of graffiti discovered in this very locale.²² As it has been suggested that part of the building had been used as a school at some point, one might wonder if that is the background of a good number of the graffiti discovered here — this, however, must remain speculation.²³

This inscription itself consists of two distinct parts, apparently written by the same individual in a single act of writing, as the letter shapes and the *scriptura continua* suggest. The first part consists of a maxim that Franz Bücheler chose to liken to Publilius Syrus’ line R 390: *necesse est minima maximorum esse initia*. However, with the exception of the simultaneous use of the superlatives *minimus* and *maximus*, these texts have nothing in common,²⁴ suggesting either a different literary model or a more folksy nature of this notion.²⁵ As this former part of the line is not only attested in Pompeii, but also in Herculaneum (where it appears in an extended format), there is considerable room for speculation.²⁶

Although the text, arranged in a single line, appears to be written in *scriptura continua*, there are traces of punctuation to be seen: all words of the first part are separated by little dots, and there appears to be a vertical line, clearly separating this first sentiment from the second part of the inscription.

CIL IV 1913

The second occurrence from the Pompeian basilica has also been preserved on a panel that was detached from the north wall of this place, now stored in the Museo Archeologico Nazionale of Naples:²⁷

²¹ On the Pompeian basilica see in general Ohr, Rasch 1991.

²² See Benefiel 2008 for an interesting case study.

²³ On the Basilica as a potential space for a school see e.g. García y García 2005, 84. On schools in Pompeii in general see Harris 1983, 109–111 and, in more detail (albeit less critical overall), García y García 2005. At any rate, there is next to no evidence for a wider reading of Terence in Pompeii, in schools and beyond; cf. generally on that matter Gigante 1979 and, with a particular view on this inscription, Jocelyn 1988, 60 with nt. 29 claiming that this text “remains a puzzle”.

²⁴ Bücheler’s suggestion seems to have been accepted by Wallace 2005, 86 (without any justification).

²⁵ There is no obvious point of reference within the body of the Terentian comedies, either.

²⁶ Cf. CIL IV 1811 (cf. p. 464; Pompeii). 10634 (Herculaneum). This item is conspicuously absent from the otherwise most useful discussion of Cugusi 2003; cf. also Gigante 1979, 149 with nt. 257. For a similar case of an inscription that appears in different formats in Pompeii and Herculaneum cf. Kruschwitz 2006a and 2006b.

²⁷ Photo (inv. no. D/95832) kindly supplied by Antonio Varone.



(8) *Menideme[- - -?]*²⁸

Like item (7), this inscription must be considered as written in public space. The letter-shapes are reasonably close to those of item (7), suggesting that this may have been written by the same hand. Note, however, the fourth letter of this word which here is an I rather than an E (as the letters of this text are *litterae quadratae minores* and not of the cursive type, where I and II are more easily confused, this mistake stands out even further).

CIL IV 2100

The next item to be considered here was discovered on the frame of the south window of room Q of the so-called Stabian Baths.²⁹ The exact use of this room is unclear, but it has been interpreted as the bath's manager's office (or the office of the supervisor of the bath's palaestra), as it has a window overseeing the bath's palaestra. The text itself, written in miniscule letters (of about 1 cm height), reads thus:

(9) *Menedem[- - -?]*

The letter shapes, according to the description given by the editors of *CIL IV* resembled — at least in part — that of cursive writing.³⁰ Whether or not the location inside the office is telling in terms of authorship is hard to say: the bath was severely damaged during the earthquake of A.D. 62, and it is not entirely clear what this means

²⁸ From the photo the text appears to be unfinished rather than damaged. Note that from the photo the text is unambiguous, unlike what has been discussed in *CIL IV* ad loc.

²⁹ For a plan of the bath complex cf. volume III of *Pittura e Pavimenti a Pompei*.

³⁰ It would thus be comparable to items (1). (5). (6).

as regards the spread of graffiti on these premises. However, the placement of this tag inside this office seems to suggest that one should classify this space as potentially restricted in access.

CIL IV 4555

The following attestation was discovered on an outside wall between the entrances VI 14.38 and VI 14.39 (but apparently closer to 39, a workshop), i.e. in public space; the text has been rendered as follows by August Mau in *CIL IV*:

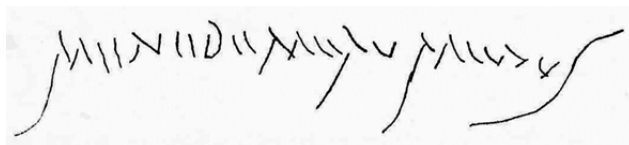
IIIIIIINIIDIIIIIIIIIVIIIIINVS

(10) *Menedemerumenus.*

It is thus clear that the text, now lost, was entirely written in a cursive with its distinctive letter shapes for the letters M, E, R (and possibly D), with an oblong form of the letter S. This suggests a handwriting very similar to that of items (1). (5). (6). (9).

CIL IV 5189

The same handwriting as in item (1). (5). (6). (9). (10) can also be seen in the next occurrence of the text. Mau, in *CIL IV*, gives the following apographon:



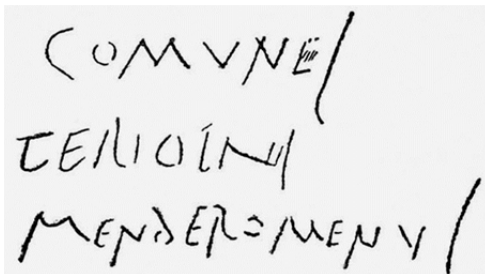
(11) *Menedemerumenus.*

The graffito was discovered on the outside wall of a building, possibly a brothel, to the left of entrance IX 6.8. The findspot must thus be classified as ‘public space’.

CIL IV 5417

The following instance was, strictly speaking, discovered outside the city walls of Pompeii, but nevertheless belongs to the corpus of Pompeian inscriptions. It was discovered on the outer wall of tomb no. 6 in the (now re-buried) Fondo Pacifico burial district outside Pompeii’s Porta di Nocera. August Mau decided to give the text within a cluster of three graffiti, but — considering the peculiarities of the hand-

writing — these three texts are unrelated and, by the look of it, probably even written by different hands:³¹



We are only interested in the last line which appears to read thus:

(12) *Menderomenus.*

The handwriting is largely consistent with that of items (7) and (8), but note that the spelling is inconsistent: the writer has shortened the ‘word’ by two syllables: *Men<e>de<me>rumenus*, thereby eliding the original point of the word. If the scribbler is different from the person who produced the aforementioned graffiti, one may of course wonder if the writer was aware of the original form but unable to grasp its proper meaning or the reason for its unusual shape — as if it has taken on a life of its own, such that it is able to be (mis)quoted by would-be emulators of the original graffiti.³²

CIL IV 7102

The next instance to be considered here was discovered to the right of entrance VI 16.28, i.e. the entrance to the so-called *Casa della caccia di tori* or ‘House of Coponii’, an old dwelling-home. The inscription, now lost, was published as follows by Antonio Sogliano.³³

MIINIIDI

(13) *Menede[- -?]*³⁴

³¹ A. Mau, *CIL IV* ad loc. states that the version published in the *CIL* is a ‘merger’ of his and Zangemeister’s apographa.

³² The only other majorly faulty instances are items (2)–(4), see above.

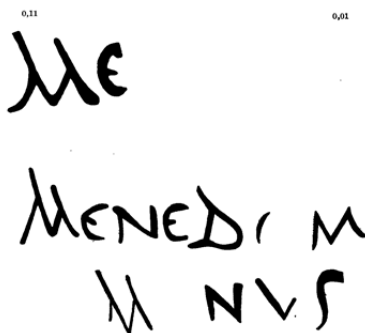
³³ A. Sogliano, *NSA* 1908, 279 n. 4. The representation of this text in *CIL IV* disregards the more prominent letter forms of the text in favour of a standardised transcription MIINIIDI.

³⁴ Or *Menedi[- -?]*?

The findspot of this inscription must be classified as ‘public’. The inscription itself, was executed in cursive writing — the letters E and D appear in their distinctive shapes (but not M and N).

CIL IV 7310

The following instance is an oddity among the attestations for this type, as it is the sole instance of a dipinto (rather than a graffito, as all other instances). Matteo Della Corte describes this particular occurrence, found in 1938 on the east side of the north pilaster in the vestibulum of the so-called *Casa dei Quattro Stili* (I 8.17) as ‘del titolo tante frequente’,³⁵ but fails to emphasise its peculiarity. Only faint traces of the lettering, in red, remained; these were edited in *CIL IV* as follows:³⁶



(14) ME

(15) Menedem[- -]|m[e]nus

The shape of the letters of this inscription shows that, while the writer was able to write, he did not normally write dipinti.³⁷ In particular the shapes of the letters E, D, and S do not coincide with the typical script of Pompeian dipinti — so what the writer in fact was doing here is executing his (or her) ordinary every-day script in paint.³⁸ Unfortunately, the inscription is now lost altogether. The findspot of this text in the vestibulum places the text in a semi-public space, but as one would not normally take paint and brush to another place, one can feel safe to assume that this was indeed written by one of the permanent dwellers of the *Casa dei Quattro Stili*. Given the appearance of item (14) one may wonder if the writer got interrupted at least once.

³⁵ NSA 1946, 120 n. 322.

³⁶ Cf. Gallo 1989, 88 (who does not add anything new).

³⁷ This inscription has been referred to by Harmatta 1968, 263 for an usual shape of the letter F. However, there is no letter F in the Pompeian inscription.

³⁸ It seems comparable to the script of items (7). (8). (12).

CIL IV 8322f

Like the previous items, the next attestation to be considered here is from the interior of a private dwelling, the *Casa del Menandro* (I 10.4), where the text was found in a semi-public area — in a groove on the third column in the peristyle amongst a number of short graffiti. The representation of the text in the *CIL*, as given by Matteo Della Corte, is not fully satisfactory:

f) 0,052 MIINIIDIIMRW 0,002—0,006

By contrast, the same text was edited in *Notizie degli Scavi* as follows:³⁹

MIINIIDIIM(e)RV(*menus*)

(16) *Menedem(e)ru[m - - ?]*

Based on its publication in *NSA*, it is possible to identify this occurrence as a representative of the type of hand-writing that is also manifested in items (1). (5). (6). (9). (10). (11). and (13) etc.

CIL IV 8564a

The following instance, and in fact all remaining cases, were discovered in Pompeii's palaestra (II 7), sometimes referred to as *campus ad amphitheatrum* — an obviously public space. They all were inscribed on columns of the porticus, and none of the texts survive. The item to be considered first in this context has been published as follows:⁴⁰

JIII II JII II ΔII JIII II RV(*menus*)

(17) *Menedemeru(menus)*

The transcription proves this example to be part of that group of graffiti that shows the text in a consistently and markedly cursive handwriting.

CIL IV 8564b

The following item has been labelled as written 'alia manu' [different from (17), that is] in *CIL IV*:

b) *Alia manu* 0,062 |III II |II II λII |III II RV|IIIIINVS 0,001—0,025

³⁹ *NSA* 1933, 285 n. 91.

⁴⁰ *NSA* 1939, 251 n. 55.

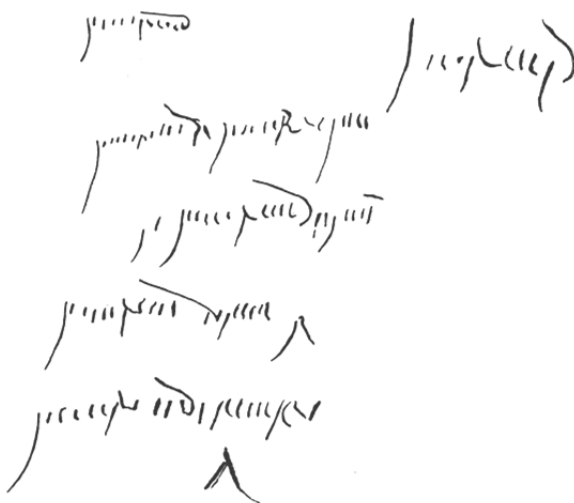
However, the text's reproduction in *NSA* gives no indication of any good reason for this assumption.⁴¹

J III II J III II D II J III II RV J III II NVS

(18) *Menedemerumenus*

CIL IV 8581

In the same location as items (17) and (18), but on another column, a cluster of no less than six attempts of writing the well-known tag was discovered. All of them show the same handwriting of the well-established cursive form. None of the attempts has the phrase in its entirety. The cluster was reproduced as follows by Matteo Della Corte in *CIL* IV:



(19) *Mened*

(20) *Mened*⁴²

(21) *Menedimerume*

(22) *Menedeme*

(23) *Menedemer*

(24) *Menedimeru|+(?)*⁴³

⁴¹ *NSA* 1939, 251 n. 56. Note that the shape of the D is slightly different in the *CIL* version of the text.

⁴² This is assuming that the second letter is in fact a circular E (instead of the cursive form used otherwise). If that is incorrect, the text would have to read *Mined*.

⁴³ Unless the sign in the last line — resembling a cursive R — does not actually pertain here.

While the handwriting itself looks consistent with the form that has been discovered elsewhere, it is noteworthy that the various attempts frequently confuse E and I (in addition to their incompleteness) — all of this may be indicative of a certain haste in production.

3. Discussion

Having gained a general overview of the material, it is now possible to address a couple of further, related questions. These are: (i) how many writers were there, and (ii) are there any significant cases among the various occurrences and how (if at all) can the spread of instances be accounted for?

3.1. How many writers were there?

The first question is perhaps the most obvious one: how many writers were there? If the same graffito text is repeated over and over again, there are several potential scenarios; the three most obvious ones are: (i) one person is responsible for all of them, (ii) the text is common knowledge or part of popular culture and therefore was written by a plethora of people, and (iii) the text appears to be some form of running gag or tag line and was written (and understood) by only a small, restricted group of people.

When it comes to ancient Roman handwriting, individual hands sometimes are relatively difficult to distinguish. However, in the present case, three solid groups of instances can be determined on the basis of the letter-shapes they employed:

Distinctive letter-shapes	Relevant inscriptions
A. Cursive lettering: III for M II for N II for E ∂ (vel sim.) for D	(1). (5). (6). (9?). (10). (11). (13). (16). (17). (18). (19–24)
B. Capitalis-type lettering: M for M N for N E or ε for E D or ∂ for D	(7). (8). (12). (14). (15)
C. Mixed lettering: Generally like capitalis, but with II for E.	(2). (3–4)

No two or more types of handwriting occur in any one space at the same time, and nothing within the respective groups of inscriptions for each category seems to suggest a multitude of writers using the same lettering. This implies that all texts could have been written by a maximum number of three people (assuming that nobody resorted to more than one script), but at least as regards group A one might

consider two parties resorting to a similar script. Be that as it may, alternative (iii) seems to apply here — a view which sits nicely with the odd nature of the text itself.

3.2. The spread of instances

The actual spread of instances must not be considered only in terms of the letter-shapes, however. Equally interesting and revealing is a consideration of instances that were discovered in public and restricted spaces (be they semi-public or private). In current research, generally speaking, considerable attention has been paid to inscriptional texts that are found repeatedly across the empire on the one hand,⁴⁴ and textual communication within the corpus of Pompeian graffiti (within certain, restricted local contexts) on the other hand.⁴⁵ In the case of the *Menedemerumenus* tag, however, due to the locally restricted nature, the peculiar nature of the text, and the small amount of responsible writers a different question must be asked: are there any obvious peculiarities in the spread of tokens?

A first observation affects the spread of instances in public and private(-ish) spaces: each of the three types — A, B, and C as in the above table — is found in precisely one more or less private (or semi-public) space:

Type	Private/Semi-Public	Public
A	(9?). (16)	(1). (5). (6). (10). (11). (13). (17). (18). (19–24)
B	(14). (15)	(7). (8). (12)
C	(2–4)	–

As regards the private/semi-public instances for type B, it has already been pointed out that these were executed in paint (i.e. as *dipinti* rather than graffiti) — in other words, one can be reasonably certain that one of the scribblers of the tag in fact lived in the *Casa dei Quattro Stili*.⁴⁶ It is tempting, if less certain, then, to assume that the scribbler of type A in fact lived in the *Casa del Menandro* (at least he or she must have been associated with it).⁴⁷ Type C is restricted to the stables (?) of the Villa of the Mosaic Columns — whatever that means regarding its producer.⁴⁸

The writers of both types have left their marks in lively spaces: type A is to be found in the palaestra [(17). (18). (19–24)] and — presumably — in the Stabian Baths

⁴⁴ See e.g. Cugusi 2003.

⁴⁵ See e.g. Benefiel 2008, 2010, and 2011.

⁴⁶ See above, on items (14) and (15).

⁴⁷ To find a reference to Terence's *Heauton timorumenus* in the so-called *Casa del Menandro* is neat insofar as Terence's play was, of course, based on a play of Menander's. Whether this allows one to delve even deeper into speculations of the theatrical interests of the inhabitants is a different matter entirely.

⁴⁸ One may, of course, rule out that it was written by a horse.

[(9)];⁴⁹ type B is to be found in the basilica [(7). (8)] and on a tomb in the Fondo Pacifico area [(12)].

As the three people who are visible through their distinctive handwriting happen to inscribe the same highly peculiar text, one must assume that they either knew each other or were ‘inspired’ by each other. If one were to push the idea of the basilica being used as a school at some point,⁵⁰ this would be an obvious place for exchange — but other solutions to this riddle (like for example the Palaestra as a public space) are possible. More importantly, however, one must ask if there were any relations between the (presumably junior) inhabitants of the *Casa dei Quattro Stili* and the *Casa del Menandro*.⁵¹ If we are right that the number of perpetrators was small, then our catalogue provides interesting evidence for the urban experience of a small number of (maybe young, certainly educated and literate) writers: the whole city, including its major thoroughfares and public spaces, and in one case its extramural necropolis, is their ‘playground’, and they use public facilities across the city and not just near their own presumed houses near the centre of the town; there is also an apparent relationship between residents (or at least visitors) to two central houses and one suburban villa.

A final observation affects instances (5). (6). (10). (11). and (13), all of which can be attributed to type A. They all have in common that they were discovered on outside walls of Pompeii. In particular, items (5). (10). and (13) all lie on the same route (from *vicolo storto* to the Vesuvian gate), and in fact they all are inscribed on the very same side of the street. If one were to include item (6) in this list, one could construe a story whereby writer A left the basilica with the idea for the tag, produced item (6) first, then went further north and inscribed (5). (10). and (13).⁵²

All this information can now be incorporated in a comprehensive overview on the following map.⁵³

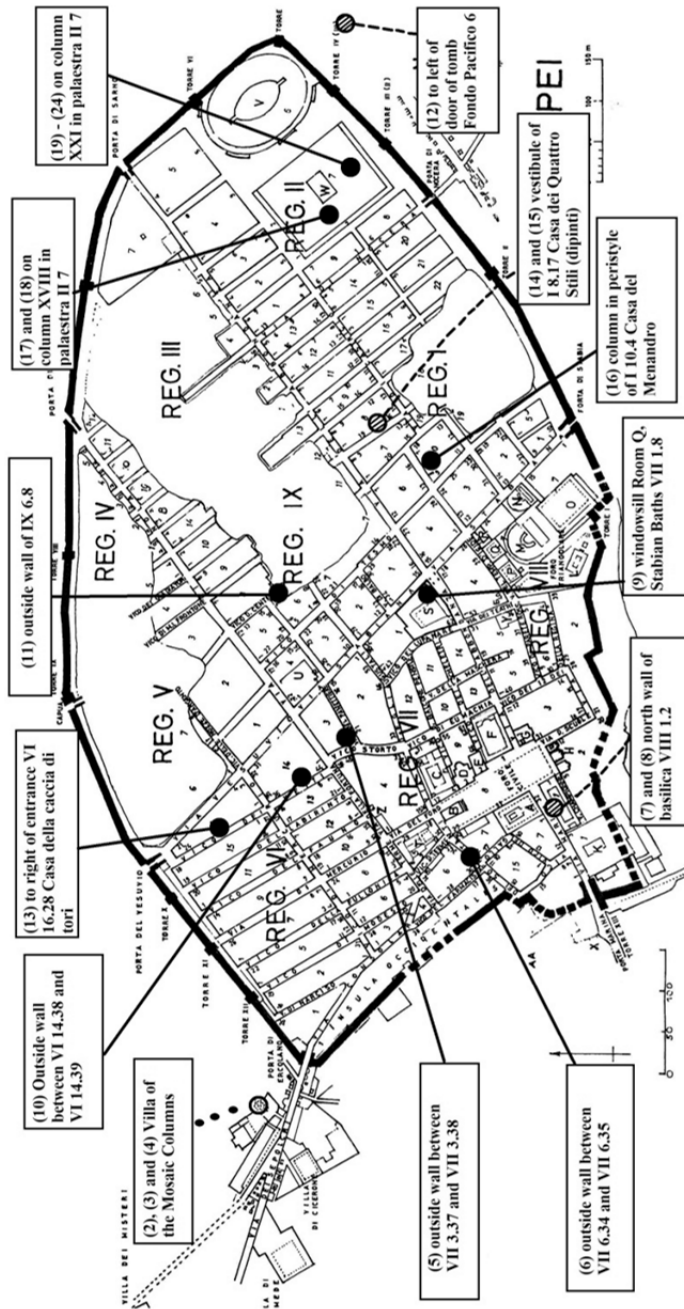
⁴⁹ Note, however, that within this complex, item (9) was discovered in what potentially was a room of restricted access.

⁵⁰ See above, on items (7) and (8).

⁵¹ No substantial, verifiable connections between the two places have been made as of yet.

⁵² We resist the temptation to argue that this happened while the writer was on his way to the Villa of the Mosaic Columns, taking a left turn as soon as he had reached the Vesuvian gate, where he had contact with writer C.

⁵³ The map, taken from Eschebach 1993 (‘Plan 1’), is out of date (especially as regards the alleged existence of a Porta di Capua, which has been refuted). We chose this map regardless for mere reasons of convenience. It does not affect the accuracy of the collocation of the findspots.



Legend — solid line: type A; dashed line: type B; dotted line: type C

If it is true that inhabitants of the *Casa dei Quattro Stili* and the *Casa del Menandro* in particular were responsible for this peculiar tag, then one could with some justification, assume that further attestations await discovery in the hitherto unexcavated parts of regio IX [with item (11) foreshadowing another potential route of the two scribblers].

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