

DIGNITAS AND INFAMIA: RETHINKING MARGINALIZED MASCULINITIES IN EARLY PRINCIPATE

Dignitas e Infamia: repensando masculinidades marginadas en el inicio del Principado

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ABSTRACT: This paper focuses in excluded masculinities during the beginning of the Principate. Two interrelated topics will be discussed: first we will focus in two concepts, *dignitas* and *infamia* and then we will discuss different types of evidence to understand Roman masculinities. The main idea is to explore how Epigraphy —the graffiti from Pompeii— can contribute to discuss more pluralistic approaches to the Roman masculinities. The Epigraphic evidence is used in this paper to help us to rethink social relationships and Roman identity in a less normative experience and to study excluded past.

Keywords: excluded masculinities, graffiti, Roman identity.

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RESUMEN: Como desde hace algunos años hemos venido estudiando los estratos populares romanos, imaginemos que sería muy interesante el discutir brevemente sobre las experiencias de la masculinidad en el Principado Romano. Optemos entonces por organizar este artículo en dos partes: en la primera parte destacamos las principales discusiones en los cuales se debate sobre las ideas de *dignitas* e *infamia* entre los romanos para, en la segunda, enfocar la atención en el caso de Pompeya, a través del estudio de los grafitis escritos en las paredes que quedaron en pie. Lo que buscamos con esta reflexión no es establecer juicios de valor a partir del contraste de las representaciones de la masculinidad popular y erudita, sino trazar caminos alternativos para ampliar las formas de percibir la experiencia de los hombres durante el inicio del Principado romano.

Palabras clave: masculinidades marginales, grafitis, Identidad Romana.

INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, the study of the Greco-Roman past has undergone significant transformations. Many interpretations, which were previously only of interest to a minority, have begun to gain ground and scholars are making new proposals regarding our understanding of Antiquity, in particular studies that rethink the different types of evidence and the relationships between them. A number of scholars have stressed the partiality of the written sources and emphasized the contribution of material culture as an independent source, which can provide its own discourse regarding the classical past¹.

These discussions do not limit themselves to the empirical study of the data itself. Many scholars, especially those inspired by postcolonial approaches, have encouraged theoretical and methodological discussion,

1. See for instance: ALLISON, P. M.: «Using the Material and Written Sources: turn of the Millennium approaches to Roman Domestic Space», in *American Journal of Archaeology*, 105, 2001, pp. 181-208; FUNARI, P. P. A.: *La cultura popular en la Antigüedad Clásica*. Spain: Editorial Gráficas Sol, 1989; FUNARI, P. P. A.: «Arqueología, História e Arqueologia Histórica no contexto sul-americano», 1998, in *Cultura Material e Arqueologia Histórica*, Campinas: IFCH/Unicamp, pp. 7-3; FUNARI, P. P. A.: «The consumption of olive oil in Roman Britain and the role of the army», in *The Roman Army and the Economy* (ERDKAMP, P.[ed.]), Amsterdam: J. C. Gieben, 2002, pp. 235-263; JONES, S.: «Historical categories and the *praxis* of identity: the interpretation of ethnicity in Historical Archaeology», in *Historical Archaeology – Back from the Edge* (FUNARI, P.P.A. et alli [eds.]), London: Routledge, 1999, pp. 219-232; STOREY, G. R.: «Archaeology and Roman Society: Integrating Textual and Archaeological data», in *Journal Of Archaeological Research*, 7, 3, 1999, pp. 203-248.

emphasizing the urgency of revising interpretative concepts created in the nationalist and imperialist environments of the late 19th and early 20th centuries that continue to influence the study of the ancient world today. These scholars suggest the possibility of rethinking the daily lives of common people in a less normative way, encouraging debates that are not restricted to the political and economic field, but that also consider sexual, ethnic, cultural differences and excluded pasts. In this context, the interest in understanding the socio-cultural diversity of the Roman Empire has encouraged scholars to analyze daily experiences in their multiple facets. In this sense, such notions as the masculine and the feminine have taken a special place in these studies, being considered as socially-constituted practices within groups, at certain periods of time and in defined historical spaces.

The possibility of understanding masculine social practices as different from feminine ones or from the ones called third gender (*cinaedus*), implies that each gender organizes itself socially in a particular way, building its own interpretation of its actions and exclusions². This happens because in different cultural traditions the concepts related to being male or being female are varied and might, or might not, be related to their biological aspects. There are societies that construct the meaning of each gender in a direct association with biological sex, a fact that, not long ago, was accepted without further questioning and, it has to be said, is still strongly present in the minds of societies like our own. But the attributes that define what is masculine and feminine are not and were not always identical³.

Taking this perspective, we will discuss in this paper the concept of masculinity among the Romans. First we will analyze the meanings ascribed to the concepts of *dignitas* and *infamia*. Then, comparing different types of evidence, especially literary sources and inscriptions found in Pompeii, our intention is to emphasize the construction of one or more meanings of masculinity in the Roman world of the first century A.D., as well as to propose less normative interpretations regarding masculine identities. Or, as Gilchrist has pointed, deconstructing essentialist views of the male and understanding it as a multi-dimensional qualities adopted by men and sometimes women can help us to challenge monolithic theories of masculinity that excluded diversity in the past⁴.

2. RAGO, M.: *Entre a história e a liberdade. Luce Fabbrì e o anarquismo contemporâneo*. São Paulo: Editora Unesp, 2000, pp. 19-20.

3. SENA, J.: *Amor e outros verbetes*. Rio de Janeiro: Edições 70, 1992, p. 31.

4. GILCHRIST, R.: *Gender and Archaeology—contesting the past*, London: Routledge, 1989.

DIGNITAS AND INFAMIA

If we were to conduct an initial survey of how Roman masculinity is interpreted in modern historical analyses, we would perceive the predominance of two distinct types of masculine identities: one which highlights the noblemen, aristocrats and righteous as the ones who commanded and held power, and the other which defined their clients, men hailing from the common or dependent class, those who served the first group and could be marginalized. This interdependence between noble and client, also known as *amicitia* (patronage), articulated by members of the Roman aristocracy who, as a rule, belittle the activities of the common people, in the surviving literary texts. In this sense, two fundamental concepts for the formation of the Roman *ethos*, *dignitas* and *infamia*, have been interpreted mainly as the first one refers to members from the elite, while the second almost always is associated with the lower classes.

In much modern historiographical discourse, grounded in a perspective of analysis that emphasizes the way of life of the elite and that disregards or marginalizes the common people, the terms *dignitas* and *infamia* have become expressions of static masculinities, limited to a single social groups. It is very common to find references to elite men as warriors and dominant, while the common people are referred to as dependent, idle, parasites of the elite. Freedmen, freemen and slaves, from the most distinct ethnic origins and professional calling were constantly considered ambiguous and *infamia* figures by these interpretative models⁵.

Indeed, *dignitas* and *infamia* constitute two Latin terms that played an important role in the distinction between male individuals. This notion of moral and legal character turns up in different sources, especially written ones, and diluted in several contexts. The notion therefore warrants careful and close analysis. *Dignitas* is almost always used to designate

5. Regarding the decadent or ambiguous image of the Roman *plebs* see, for instance, FRIEDLÄNDER, L.: *La sociedad romana. Historia de las costumbres en Roma, desde Augusto hasta los Antoninos*. Madrid: Fondo de la Cultura Económica, 1947; MOMMSEN, T.: *El mundo de los Cesares*. Madrid: Fondo de Cultura Económica (both authors published the first edition of their works in the 19th century), 1983; CARCOPINO, J.: *Roma no apogeu do Império*, São Paulo: Cia das Letras, 1990; GRIMAL, P.: *A vida em Roma na Antigüidade*. Lisbon: Publicações Europa-América, 1981; ROBERT, J. N.: *I piacere a Roma*. Milan: Rizzoli, 1994; EYNE, P.: «A vida de Trimalquião», in *A Sociedade Romana*. Lisbon: Edições 70, 1990, pp. 11-48; VEYNE, P.: «O Império Romano», in DUBY, G. et ARIÈS, P. (Eds.): *História da vida privada*. São Paulo: Cia. das Letras, 1, 1990, pp. 19-223. For a critical reflection regarding this subject, see GARRAFFONI, R. S.: *Gladiadores na Roma Antiga: dos combates às paixões cotidianas*. São Paulo: Editora Annablume/ FAPESP, 2005.

one with prestige, dignity, honor, virtue, while *infamia* was its opposite, the mark of the dishonored, of ill repute, the discredited, the criminal. However, even among ancient authors, this *dignitas*/elite and *infamia*/common people relationship is not always explicit. Very often these two concepts take distinct shapes and functions according to the contexts they are occur in. An example of the fluidity of these notions is found in the writings of Seneca regarding the issue of public displays. Some scholars, in recently published works⁶, state that Seneca admitted the importance of the gladiators' performance as a pedagogical element for the Roman soldier in order to prepare him for death⁷. In this context, the gladiators, considered *infamous* due to their profession, are constantly evoked by the philosopher as powerful metaphors to teach the virtue of disdain for death, an important aspect for *ethos* of a warrior. This example from Seneca, who constantly moves between the notions of *dignitas* and *infamia*, is of great interest to understanding how the philosopher establishes the moral values that should be taught to the members of the elite. Such values overlap in different perceptions of what is worthy for the formation of the *ethos* of a man of virtue, while a man of *infamous* profession would express virtue under different circumstances.

Here Seneca paves the way for us to work out these complexities, and as we look at the legal field we can identify how the notion of *infamia* is much more flexible than some modern interpretative models make it out to be. The main laws that deal with the subject are the *Digest*, the *Lex Iulia Municipalis* and the *Lex Acilia Repentударum*. These laws indicate that the individual, for instance, as he is punished for crimes such as theft, insult, usury, and bigamy, among others, could be considered *infamous*. Broadly, the condition of infamy depended on a legal sentence and its first result was the person's loss of some public rights. The application of the condition of *infamia* depended on legal interpretation. The *Digest*, itself, gives evidence of this flexibility, for in describing the punishments that should be applied for specific crimes, we find references and comments on which transgressions could be punished in distinct ways according to the local laws of the towns where the crimes were

6. Barton, C. A.: *The sorrows of the Ancient Roman; the gladiator and the monster*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993; CAGNIART, P.: 'The philosopher and the gladiator', in: *Classical World*, 93, 6, 2000, pp. 607-618; WISTRAND, M.: *Entertainment and violence in ancient Rome – the attitudes of Roman writers of the first century A.D.*, Sweden, 1992.

7. Such reflections appear in different writings, for instance, the letters to Lucilio or in Seneca's text *On the Brevity of Life*, especially on chapter 13.

committed⁸. Furthermore, the intensity and method of punishment should be different according to the legal status of the transgressor: free citizens, freedmen, non-citizens and slaves did not receive the same punishment when they broke the law⁹, but they all could be considered infamous. Some professions were also considered *infamous*. The fact of being a gladiator, an actor, a prostitute or a pimp therefore implied legal and political restrictions¹⁰. These two aspects foreseen in *Digest* (punishment for a crime or participation in certain professional activities) indicate that the legal status of *infamia* was not restricted to the lower classes, but could also reach members of the elite, if they were convicted of certain types of crimes or practiced stigmatized professions. This is an important consideration, because it leads to the possibility of the existence of many other *infamous* people which the previous models of *infamia* omitted.

In this complex universe we need to reconsider the notions of masculinity based on material and written sources, avoiding a consideration of these as hermetic categories restricted to an association with the ideas of *dignitas* and *infamia*, and seek a more plural reading, focused on the construction of concepts and based on the distinction of how these meanings played fundamental roles in the constitution of different forms of Roman masculine identities.

LITERATURE AND MASCULINITY

In reconsidering the concepts of *dignitas* and *infamia* and proposing less static interpretations we present a reading in which the ancient sources are regarded as discourses produced by some members of the elites. These elite groups have particular perceptions of the world, but very often these particular perceptions have been interpreted by modern scholars as unique model for all within Roman society. So, the proposal here is to analyze elements of this aristocratic construction of masculinity and establish a counterpoint with epigraphy in order to also understand the views of the common people. The point is not to seek strictly binary, opposed points of view between elite/non elite male, but to reject masculine essentialism, stressing the diversity ambiguities of subjectivities of

8. About this subject, see Justinian *Digestum*. 48, 19.

9. ALFÖLDY, G.: *Römische Sozialgeschichte*. Steiner: Franz, 1984.

10. It is worthy of note that there are professions related to public displays that are not considered *infamous*, for instance, musicians and chariot racers. See Justinian, D. 3, 2.

men drawn from different classes and ethnical origins in the Roman world.

Among the countless Roman texts which deal with masculine activities, we begin with the well-known fragment from Cicero that is often used by scholars when establishing the opposition between *dignitas* and *infamia*. In a specific passage from *De Officiis*, written in the 1st Century BC, Cicero presents his reflections on the economic activities considered appropriate for the members of the Roman elite:

First, those means of livelihood are rejected as undesirable which incur people's ill-will as those of tax-gatherers and usurers. Unbecoming to a gentleman, too, and vulgar are the means of livelihood of all hired workmen whom we pay for mere manual labour, not for artistic skill; for in their case the very wage they receive is a pledge of their slavery. Vulgar we must consider those also who buy from wholesale merchants to retail immediately; for they would get no profits without a great deal of downright lying; and verily, there is no action that is meaner than misrepresentation. And all mechanics are engaged in vulgar trades; for no workshop can have anything liberal about it. Least respectable of all are those trades which cater for sensual pleasures: fishmongers, butchers, cooks, and poulterers, and fishermen ... perfume makers, dancers and all types of gambling (De Officiis, 1, XLII, 150)¹¹.

This list of economic activities disapproved by Cicero led modern authors¹² to link the Roman elites lifestyles to traditional agrarian activities. So land, tradition and wealth would be the characteristic elements of the aristocratic styles along with withdrawal from activities considered vulgar, such as those mentioned above¹³.

11. (We used Loeb's English version): *Primum improbantur ii quaestus qui in odia hominum incurrunt, ut portitorum, ut feneratorum. Illiberales autem et sordidi quaestus mercennariorum omnium, quorum operae, non quorum artes emuntur: est enim in illis ipsa merces auctoramentum seruitutis. Sordidi etiam putandi qui mercantur a mercatoribus quod statim uendant; nihil enim proficiant, nisi admodum mentiantur; nec uero est quidquam turpius uanitate. Opificesque omnes in sordida arte uersantur nec enim quidquam ingenium habere potest officina. Minimeque artes eae probandae, quae ministratae sunt uoluptatum: cetarii, lanii, coqui, fartores, piscatores...unguentarios, saltatores totumque ludum talarium.*

12. FINLEY, M. I.: *A política no mundo antigo*. Rio de Janeiro: Zahar, 1985; FINLEY, M. I.: *The ancient economy*. London: Cambridge, 1985; GARNSEY, P.; SALLER, R.: *The Roman Empire. Economy, society and culture*. Great Britain: Duckworth, 2001; WHITTAKER, C. R.: Trade and the aristocracy in the Roman empire. *Opus*, 4, 1985, pp. 1-27.

13. We stress that this thesis has been criticized by several scholars. [Cf. DELLA CORTE, M.: *Case ed abitanti di Pompei*. Roma: L'Erma, 1954; ÉTIENNE, R.: *La vida cotidiana en*

If, on the one hand, economic performance played an important role in defining *dignitas* and *infamia* in modern historiography, on the other hand, the social aspect was also considered a differential for worthy men, starting with their own identification. According to Walters, the Latin word *uir* was used to characterize an aristocrat as a man in his fullness. Various other terms were used to present individuals of the same gender (in this case, the males), but of different ages and social categories such as, for instance, *puer* or *iuuenis* for children of aristocracy still underage and *homines* or *puer* for adult slaves, freedmen, non-citizens and even lower class citizens¹⁴. Furthermore, the integrity of *uir* would consolidate itself through a particular treatment of the body and from given sexual practice:

1. Physical integrity was guaranteed by not violating one's body. When a member of the aristocracy broke a rule, he would be punished by way of a fine or exile, but not with physical punishment, which would be an insult to his *dignitas*¹⁵. The body of an *ingenuus* should not be violated, and not an object of pleasure or satisfaction for others;
2. Sexual integrity would ensure the *uir* played the role of the active party in any sexual intercourse, since «licit» or «normal» activity would be that in which his role was that of the one penetrating. This activity is explicit in a passage of Seneca, in the *Controversiae*

Pompeya. Madrid: Aguilar, 1971; FUNARI, P. P. A.; HALL, M.; JONES, S. (Eds.): *Historical Archaeology. Back from the edge*. London: Routledge, 1999; GUARINELLO, L. N.: Análise especial de um edifício rural de época romana – a *villa* da localidade de *Setti Termini* no *ager pompeianus*. *Dédalo*, 24, 1985, pp. 207-235; LAURENCE, R.: *Roman Pompeii. Space and society*. London: Routledge, 1994; REMESAL, J.: «Política e regimi alimentari nel Principato di Augusto: il ruolo dello stato nella dieta di Roma e dell'esercito», 1999, in VERA, D. (ed.): *Demografia, sistemi agrari, regimi alimentari nel mondo antico*. Bari.] *There is countless material evidence of the participation of members of the elite in urban trade and manufacturing activities, showing a complex interprovincial trade of in natura and manufactured products. However, as Hervas emphasizes, in a State of agrarian proportions as the Roman, that admires the tradition of mos maiorum, the aristocratic value of land owning would mean, besides a source of wealth, a measure of social differentiation as well* (HERVÁS, J. M. R.: *Historia de Roma. La Republica romana*. 4.^a ed. Madrid: Cátedra, s/d.); *hence the esteem for agricultural tradition and the scorn regarding other activities, as cited by Cicero*.

14. WALTERS, J.: Invading the Roman body: manliness and impenetrability in Roman thought, 1977, in HALLETT, J. P., SKINNER, M. B. (Eds.): *Roman sexualities*. New Jersey: Princeton, p. 30.

15. In the case of serving capital punishment, which could occasionally be applied, death should be quick, by the sword.

(IV, 10), on which several modern authors draw in order to corroborate the point: *impudicitia in ingenuo crimen est, in servo necessitas, in liberto officium* [indecenty is a crime for the free, necessity for the slave and obligation for the emancipated]. If active sexual practice with men as well as with women was accepted, it was still necessary to respect the social standards set for the aristocrats, which denied them access to other citizens, young or old, and to aristocrat women, married, single or widowed.

Being the active partner came to be interpreted as an essentially masculine activity, as penetration takes place with the penis; whereas *felatio*, as well as *cunilingus*, would be considered as a violation of licit practices. According to Parker¹⁶, in this attitude towards sexual behavior had an inherent «humiliation scale». In this being vaginally penetrated, which put all women in an inferior condition was least offensive while being anally penetrated and receiving the penis orally were respectively more humiliating.

Those ideals found in different written sources make it clear that it is not just the physical aspect that defines elite masculinity, but a set of prerequisites that makes him stand out from the rest of society. The idealization of his sexual activity would be linked with a projection of social practice, which gave him the command and the maintenance of order, as well as the prerogative of conquering, dominating and exercising authority over other individuals. In this way, performance in a warring and conquering society would consolidate an image of virility related to physical strength, warlike superiority, and the correct sexuality of the Roman aristocratic citizens. This idealized discourse of masculinity did not mean that everybody obeyed and respected such ideas. One significant example of breaking with this sexual code is Julius Caesar who, according to Suetonius in *De vita duodecim Caesarum* (I, L), *was a man for every woman and a woman for every man*¹⁷. Despite this, Caesar was still to be one of the most powerful men in the History of Rome.

While literary sources are indispensable for understanding ideas of Roman masculinity, they also encourage modern scholars to produce a very negative view of the lower social groups. This derogatory connotation ascribed to the common people and its relation to *infamia* can be interpreted as a kind of moral censorship, established by the Roman

16. PARKER, H. N.: The teratogenic grid. In: HALLET, J. P.; SKINNER, M. B. (Eds.): *Roman sexualities*. New Jersey: Princeton, 1997, p. 51.

17. *omnium mulierum uirum et omnium uirorum mulierem*.

elites¹⁸. This can be perceived, for instance, in Cicero's disapproval of loan sharking, profiteering, manual labor and things related to the pleasure of the stomach, the soul and the flesh. This aristocratic moral censorship towards professions of the common people has led many modern scholars to rate them as degrading, likening the life of the lower social groups to the condition of *infamia*. Post-colonial theory is very important to rethink this approach. Richard Hingley¹⁹, for instance, has pointed out that the focus of Classical studies has been on elite male writings and material culture. Hingley argues that although some scholars may have discussed different male identities and contributed to a more pluralistic understanding of the relationship between Roman and native people, the fundamentally elite male centered approach was not challenged. He suggests that the predominant modern idea of the Roman Empire as a political and cultural unit is based on a Roman colonial image derived from literary sources, and tends to obscure differences. This image created an idea of the Roman Empire based upon elite male power, disregarding local variety.

Hingley did not develop a gender-focused approach, his main focus was to rethink the idea of Romanization, regarding it as a concept conceived within a modern colonialist context. But his scholarship enables us to seek alternative models with which to construct a more critical and balanced interpretation of the Roman Empire and its people.

Based on Hingley's idea we do not think the derogatory connotation mentioned above was shared by common people themselves, whatever their status. When we look at the graffiti on the walls of Pompeii, we see thousands of entries, in their own handwriting, which point to perceptions distinct from those expressed by Cicero regarding the work they performed. Among many inscriptions we find references to owners of taverns, workshops and bakeries²⁰; to the independent activities of teachers, tailors, clothings and jewelries sellers²¹, to associations such as fruit sellers, coachmen, goldsmiths, bakers, woodcutters, garlic and fowl sellers, weavers, perfumers, kitchen assistants, barmen men and agricultural workers²². These graffiti show us the value these professional activities for

18. GARRAFFONI, R. S.: *Gladiadores na Roma Antiga: dos combates às paixões cotidianas*, op. cit., 2005, p. 184.

19. HINGLEY, R.: *Globalizing Roman Culture. Unity, diversity and empire*. London: Routledge, 2005.

20. See CIL, IV, 368, 4472/3 (workshop of Atti), 7749.

21. CIL, IV, 275 (teacher); 3130, 7669/71/74 (jewelers).

22. Pomari, CIL, IV, 180, 183, 202, 206; Muliones, CIL, IV, 97, 113, 134; Aurificis, CIL, IV, 710; Pistori, CIL, IV, 429, 4227, 4888, 5380; Lignari, CIL, IV, 485, 951, 960; Aliarii, CIL, IV, 3485; Galinari, CIL, IV, 241, 373; Fullones (those who prepare the cloth after weaving),

the people that practiced them, as well as their writers' will to perpetuate an image of success and victory among those who shared this universe. If these activities were vile and despicable to some members of the elites, such connotations lose that meaning among the epigraphical evidence. The graffiti help us to understand the masculinities of these non-elite groups were modeled by the experience of sexuality. Drawing on them we can create approaches to Roman masculinities observing not only some ideals of being a man, but details and personal experiences of different types of Roman masculinities rarely mentioned on scholar discourse.

Epigraphy and Marginalized Masculinities

There are lots of wall inscriptions that mention the sexuality of these men of humble origin. Even supposing that many of them emphasize the common people's virility, one must question the meaning of this concept in this environment.

In Pompeii there are many examples with the verb *futuere*, which, in polished English, means «to have sexual intercourse with» and in colloquial terms means «to fuck». The point is to define the connotations that these representations might have in the urban environment. On the walls of Pompeii there are many citations regarding this practice, as is shown in the examples below.

Hic ego puellas multas futui (CIL, IV, 2175)

Here I have taken many girls.

Hic ego cum veni futui deinde redei domi (CIL, IV, 2246)

While I was here, I fucked then I returned home.

Placidus hic futuit quem voluit (CIL, IV, 2265)

Placidus fucked here whomever he wished.

And the same was said by Solenes, Vitalis, Hermerus, Phosphorus, Criserus and Successus (CIL, IV, 2186/ 87/ 95; 2241 and 4816).

CIL, IV, 998, 2966, 3478, 3529, 4100, 4102/03/07/09/12/18/20; Unguentari, CIL, IV, 609; Culinari, CIL, IV, 373; Caupones, CIL, IV, 336; Agricolae, CIL, IV, 480, 490.

There is much discussion and controversy about the meaning such graffiti might have had in Roman society. For Varone, these frequent citations are part of the erotic pulse and express an uncontrollable need to write about the sexual encounter and to share with others the pleasure they felt in the relationship. So, to write about the encounters would be the continuation of pleasure itself²³. Adams considers that the most frequent meaning of these graffiti was the demonstration or enhancement of the author's virility²⁴. The graffiti could also be written by prostitutes or women in love, who advertise success of such seduction:

Fortunate animula dulcis perfututor
Scribt qui nouit CIL, IV, 4239

Fortunate, small sweet heart, big fucker!
 Write it the one who knows it²⁵

Besides the term *futuere*, there is also the expression *cunnum lingere*, i.e., the act of cunnilingus. Would such citations be offensive allusions towards particular individuals, as Adams states²⁶? In this universe would such an act be considered a sign of weakness and lack of self-control, as Parker suggests predominated in aristocratic circles²⁷? Some inscriptions may suggest, indeed, that the scribbler sought to make a moral attack on the person mentioned (CIL, IV, 2081, 4304, 1331, 3925).

There were, of course, those who practiced prostitution as expressed by the indication of the price of the «service» in some entries. Were this male prostitutes for female satisfaction? Who would be the purchaser of this service? Difficult questions to be answered, but interesting because they demonstrate different possibilities regarding the sexual encounter.

Besides sexual practices, esteem and consideration for the loved woman were also frequently recorded in Pompeii. Effusive announcements can be found, like this one for Taine, on the wall of a house:

23. VARONE, A.: *L'erotismo a Pompei*. Rome: L' Erma, 2000, p. 79.

24. ADAMS, J. N.: *Il vocabolario del sesso a Roma. Analisi del linguaggio sessuale nella latinità*. Tradução de Maria Laetitia Riccio Coletti e Enrico Riccio. Rome: Argo, 1996, p. 161.

25. Verse maybe written by another person, but there is no consensus on this. This observation was presented by editor Mau beneath the inscription.

26. ADAMS, J. N.: *Il vocabolario del sesso a Roma, op. cit.*, 1996, p. 114.

27. PARKER, H. N.: *The teratogenic grid, op. cit.*, 1997.

Dulcis amor, perias eta (pro ita)
Taine bene amo dulcissima /
Mea / Dulc (CIL, IV, 8137)

May it perish, sweet love. I love Taine so much,
my sweetest love.

Yet in the inscription CIL, IV, 4858 it is possible to know the value that Valentina had upon the life of Amethusthus, entered by him upon one of the walls:

Amethusthus nec sine sua Valentina (CIL, IV, 4858)

Amethusthus cannot live without his Valentina, and Restitutus, possibly a trader who happened to be passing through the town, expressed on a bedroom wall how he missed his dear Urbana:

Vibius Restitutus hic solus dormiuit et
Urbanam suam desiderabat (CIL, IV, 2146)

Vibius Restitutus slept here alone and remembered
ardently his loved Urbana.

The walls also hold records of many supplications for love, made by men who, in a simple and straightforward language, beg for the love of their dear women. This is how Secundus expressed himself, in the atrium of a house:

Secundus Prim(a)e suae ubi/que isse salute(m).
Rogo, domina, ut me ames (CIL, IV, 8364)

Secundus to his dear Prima, a candid salutation.
I beg you, madam, love me!

To Grata an entreaty was recorded inside a house:

(Grat)ae nostrae feliciter (perp)etuo
rogo domina per (Venere)m Fisica
te rogo ni me (...) us habeto mei memoriam (CIL, IV, 6865)

To my dear Grata, with never-ending happiness. I beg you, madam, for Venus Fisica, that you forget me not. Always hold me in your thoughts.

And on one of the walls of the small Theatre a poet begs for acknowledgement and attention from his beloved woman:

*Sei quid amor ualeat nostei sei te hominem scis
 Commiseresce mei da ueniam ut uenia
 Flos Veneris mihi de ...* (CIL, IV, 4971)

If you know the power of our love, and human nature, have pity on me, please grant me your favours.

Flower of Venus, unto me...

The strong warrior-like quality and conquering mentality attributed to the «Romans», here concerns those who are far from the battlefields or who were sometimes even the conquered, by means of a love relationship. Ovid's verse inspired the writing of this graffiti:

Militat omnes amans (CIL, IV, 3149)

Every enamored is a soldier²⁸!

Here the battle is fought in the sex-affection field; after all, to conquer a partner also involved cunning and tactics. Possibly these had been the «weapons» that induced Restitutus to seduce several girls, as mentioned in a dining room:

Restitutus multas decepit sepe puellas (CIL, IV, 5251)

Restitutus seduced, in many occasions, so many girls.

Fortunatus' victory in the love combat with Anthusa, meant so much to him that it deserved to be celebrated with a paraphrase of Caesar's proclamation upon the conquest of Gaul:

*Fortunatus futuet t.
 hinc vine veni vide Anthusa* (CIL, IV, 230)

28. See Am. I 9, 1, indicated on CIL itself.

Fortunatus fucked. Here I came, I saw and I won over Anthusa²⁹.

Fortunatus' phrase, when related to the set of inscriptions under analysis, not only indicates the satisfaction of a lady-killer, but also manifests a love game set upon affection, desire, obstacles and agreements between lovers. It is in this universe that the inscription:

*Amplexus teneros hac si quis quaerit in ur(be),
expect(at ceras) nulla puella viri* (CIL, IV, 1796)

If somebody in this town seeks love embraces, knows that no girl waits for a man's letter

acquires its dimension by showing taking the initiative could also be part of feminine action: «no girl waits for a man's letter». That is, she would not be waiting for the male initiative; the love battle also belonged to her and demanded mobilization, as Calpurnia and Romula:

*Suavis uinaria sitit rogo uos et ualde
Sittit Calpurnia tibi dicit. Val(e)* (CIL, IV, 1819)

I tell you: I desire your sweet wine and I desire it so.
Calpurnia tells you. Greetings.

Romula hic cum Staphylo moratur (CIL, IV, 2060)

Romula, here, with his dear Staphylo, calmly.

These graffiti are examples that show the construction of sexual affection experienced by men and women who argued, interacted in the workplace, in leisure and also through the walls of the city! These graffiti show us different life experiences and values and stress the diversity of ways of understanding masculinities³⁰.

From this sample of texts and graffiti we can infer masculinities and male sexualities are socially constructed, a product of cultural and historical relationship. If some written sources present us the concept of

29. Caesar: ueni, uini, uidi. Suetonius, Diius Iulius, 37. Inscription found at the House of the Surgeon, at Via Consolare.

30. FEITOSA, L. C.: *Amor e sexualidade: o masculino e o feminino em grafites de Pompéia*. São Paulo: Fapesp/Annablume, 2005.

masculinity as a badge of authority and power, according to an idealized image of social and sexual stance that sought balance between pleasure and moral acts, the graffiti show us a sense of equality between those who shared labors, fate, misfortunes and sexual affection. These ambiguities indicate that sex and gender should not be understood as stable points of references, but in their variability in past. Our point here is to stress, as Voss already did, that sexual and gender hierarchies embedded within scholars' cultural background can hinder us from seeing diversity in the past³¹. To conclude, the emphasis here is on diversity: the differences among men and women of contrasting sexualities or social classes. This perspective can re-examine masculinities, consider them a relational construct and rethink marginalized identities.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

We started the paper by commenting on the importance of recent theoretical and methodological discussions to produce innovative approaches to important themes, especially the need to think out alternative ways of establishing a profitable dialogue between literary sources and Epigraphy. In discussing *dignitas* and *infamia* we emphasized the role of material culture, depicted here by wall inscriptions, to review canonical interpretations.

By recovering sexual affection in graffiti, we stress the role of Epigraphy not as «handmaid» to History, but as a specific discipline capable of developing new viewpoints to build more flexible categories for the analysis of daily experiences. Inspired by arguments by Peter Ucko³², by which material culture allows one to capture particular aspects of the past and to construct less excluding theoretical models, our intention was to attract attention to the possibilities of different forms of masculinity, exposing the complexity of human relations in the Roman past. So the dialogue between texts and inscriptions that we built should not provoke a dichotomy between an erudite elite and a common people's perception, but the opposite: the plurality of sensibilities and experiences. The graffiti of Pompeii, though concise and fragmented, challenge us to think about

31. VOSS, B. L. and SCHMIDT, R. A. (eds.): *Archaeologies of Sexuality*. London: Routledge, 2000.

32. UCKO, P.: *Archaeological interpretation in a world context in: Theory in Archaeology – a world perspective*. Londo: Rotledge, 1995, pp. 1-27.

the diversity of masculinity within Roman society and to insert marginal lives in scholar discourses.

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