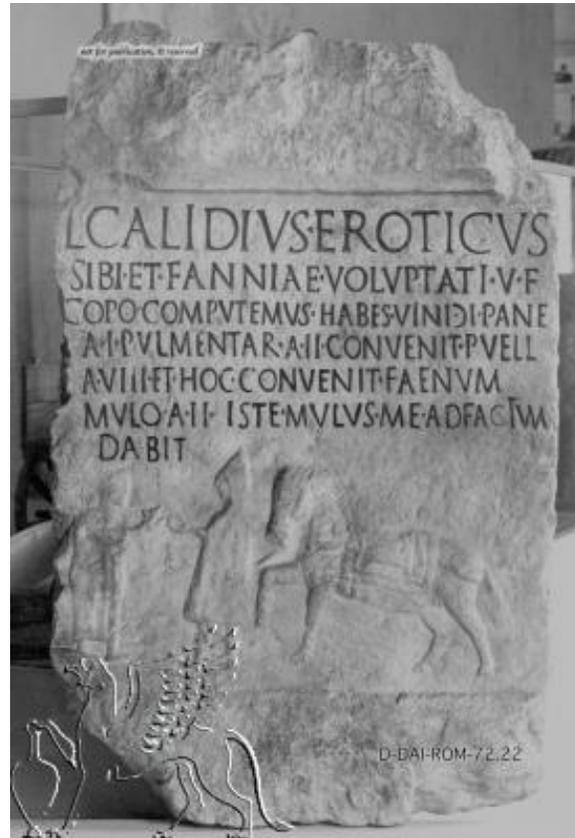
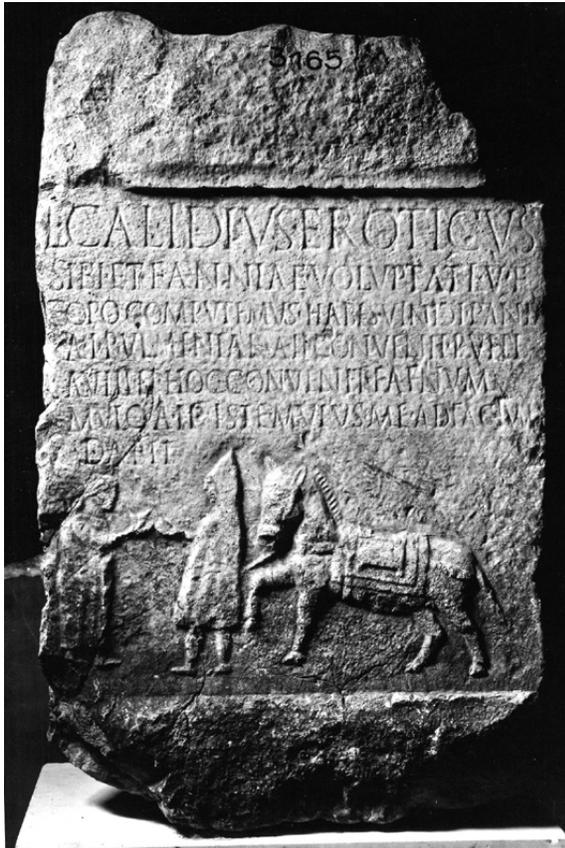


L. Calidius Eroticus and Fannia Voluptas  
CIL IX.2689

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CIL IX.2689 (Aesernia: late 1<sup>st</sup> C. AD)

<http://cil.bbaw.de/test06/bilder/datenbank/PH0004549.jpg>

<http://arachne.uni-koeln.de/drupal/>

L. Calidius Eroticus | sibi et Fanniae Voluptati v(ivus) f(ecit). |

copo, computemus.

habes vini O I, pane[m] | a(ss)e I, pulmentar(ium) a(ssibus) II.

convenit.

puell(am), | a(ssibus) VIII.

et hoc convenit.

faenum | mulo, (assibus) II.

iste mulus me ad factum | dabit.

This monument, found in Aesernia (modern Isernia — a Samnite hill-town some 175 km E/SE of Rome), takes the form of a grave memorial set up by one L. Calidius Eroticus for himself and his wife Fannia Voluptas. But the particulars of this memorial are far from typical.

The names of the deceased suggest a pair of freedmen: a former slave (Eroticus) of one L. Calidius, and a woman named Voluptas who once belonged to a member of the *gens Fannia*.<sup>1</sup>

But there is a surprise. Rather than dilating on the couple's devotion to one another, on Voluptas' virtues as a wife, or on his own career, the deceased Eroticus instead tells a joke, in the form of a dialogue between an innkeeper (*caupo*) and a traveler who is settling accounts before departing with his mule.<sup>2</sup> The scene is illustrated at the bottom of the stone, where we see the hooded traveler with his mule<sup>3</sup> engaged in totting up the bill with a second person (see below).

The joke follows a pattern that is familiar even today:

- the traveler asks for his account
- the *caupo* responds with a standard list of items (wine, bread, sides), all priced according to the norm
- the traveler agrees
- the *caupo* then mentions the cost for the “girl.” While it was not out of the ordinary for *cauponae* to offer such services, the reader likely did not see this coming (esp. in the context of a gravestone!). Still more surprising is the price: at eight *asses*, the girl's company is quite dear (cf. below)
- but the traveler is unfazed: that too is acceptable
- then comes the cost for stalling and feeding the man's mule — again, the *caupo* cites what must be taken to be a standard fee
- it is at this point that the traveler loses his patience — not with the *caupo* but with the alleged extravagance of the mule: “That damned animal will be the death of me!”<sup>4</sup>

For an ancient audience, the joke would have been humorous for the curiously inconsistent and arbitrary nature of the traveler's response but also for the way it connects with a comic tradition involving the dining habits of donkeys (and mules?), whose feasting is consistently portrayed as occasioning merriment or annoyance.<sup>5</sup>

Based on this curious scene, the common assumption has been that Eroticus and Voluptas ran an inn/tavern/brothel (*caupona*).<sup>6</sup> The thinness of the slab leads Fagan (2012 — cf. 2015: 509-10) to suggest that this is actually an advertisement to be inserted in the front wall of the *caupona*, perhaps above a lintel.<sup>7</sup> Terenzi also considers the

<sup>1</sup> On the names of freedmen, see <http://homepage.usask.ca/~jrp638/CourseNotes/RomanName.html> (ad fin.) and §Funerary Stele of Aurelius Hermia and his Wife, Aurelia Philematium.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Viti 119. n. 7, who contrasts *CIL IX.2692* (also from Aesernia) — memorial for the freedman C. Aebutius Iucundus and his wife Cincia that presents a man in the act of harnessing a mule but displays elements of a traditional memorial as well.

<sup>3</sup> The similarity between horse and mule poses challenges for sculptor (Bannert 205 n. 6) and modern interpreter alike. For the physical characteristics of mules, see Padgett 51.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Viti 119.

<sup>5</sup> See Beard 176-84 (donkeys); cf. Padgett 62-67 for scenes on Attic vases depicting satyrs feeding donkeys. (Note in particular *Philogelos* no. 9 and cf. below.) It is true that mules occupy a higher rung on what Gregory has termed the “equine hierarchy” than do donkeys, but see, e.g., Aesop 285 (mule who forgets his true nature when feeling his oats); Aelian, *De natura animalium* 6.49 (a retired mule fed by the Athenians at public expense like an elderly athlete being dined at the Prytaneum). Mules are presented as sturdier and harder working than are donkeys, and not so stupid, but the two animals are often equated in contrast to the aristocratic horse. (Cf. Padgett 43: “Just as satyrs were considered antiparagons in relation to humankind, donkeys and mules constituted the negative countermodel to the noble race of horses.” As Padgett goes on to note [55-56], “In the real world, donkeys and mules ... had a particularly bad image: Braying in the marketplace, publicly lascivious at all the wrong moments, stupid, stubborn, recalcitrant, and above all, ‘lazy.’ They were considered good for nothing but menial tasks and were the subject of unflattering jokes, anecdotes, and parodies.”)

<sup>6</sup> Viti 126-33. On the unreliability of Viti's specific conclusions, see Terenzi 2.

<sup>7</sup> This argument is problematic. According to Terenzi (4), the monument is 95 x 58.5 x 31 cm in dimension and weighs some 440 kg — thin enough to be fitted into a wall, perhaps, but also quite capable of standing on its own. The damaged

possibility that the stone is meant in some fashion as an advertisement: she moots the possibility of confusion on the part of stone-mason regarding the function of the piece (Terenziani 8-9).

Commentators have been struck, in particular, by the apparent aptness of the *cognomina* borne by these two individuals as owners of a *caupona*/brothel. It is possible that these names were selected by the couple in order to promote a positive impression of an establishment that they actually owned. But the names are not nearly so overtly curious as Fagan 2012 and others have suggested (“Lucius Hotstuff Lover” and “Fannia Fuck”),<sup>8</sup> while the couple’s association with a *caupona*, although not impossible, is far from certain. (See my concluding remarks below.)

As for the vignette itself: the influence of ancient comedy/mime has long been posited on the basis of Philemon F 66-67 (*Pittocopoumenos*).<sup>9</sup> Bannert 211-12 goes so far as to suggest that the monument presents a “signature” scene in which the actor Calidius Eroticus played a comic miser.<sup>10</sup> But our text seems to draw upon a distinct tradition of joke-telling reflected most conveniently for us in the anonymous Greek work, *The Philogelos*,<sup>11</sup> where humorous dialogues involving some sort of buffoon (an “egghead” [σχολαστικός], Abderite, Cymaeon, Sidonian, stupid teacher, etc.) often lead to a punchline (e.g., nos. 22, 69, 74, 103, 132, 137, 171; cf. 56).

- 1 *L. Calidius Eroticus* — see Terenziani 10 and 11, who identifies potential local candidates for Eroticus’ former master. [Individuals by the name of L. Calidius are mentioned in *CIL* IX.2645, 2647, and 2659 (all from Aesernia) and tend to support a late 1<sup>st</sup>-C. date. A much more particular, but problematic, history is pieced out by Viti (130-33).] [Kajanto 268 associates the *cognomen* *Cal(i)dus* with others indicating a daring or rash character rather than lechery. For the suffix in *-ius* and its early association with the *nomen gentilicium*, see Kajanto 115-18.]

*Eroticus* — Terenziani 4 notes that the *cognomen* *Eroticus* (originally limited to patricians) began to be appropriated by freedmen in the 1<sup>st</sup> C. AD. Like the similar *venustus* (also employed as a *cognomen*: Kajanto 73), it likely suggested, not randiness, but sophistication.<sup>12</sup> [Kajanto deals only with those *cognomina* of Latin origin.]

[As Terenziani 10 notes, Eroticus’ formal name would have been *L. Calidius L. l. Eroticus* [*Lucius Calidius Luci libertus Eroticus*].

*sibi et Fanniae Voluptati* — the dat. is regularly employed to name the principal occupants for whom the tomb is intended

*Fanniae* — Terenziani 10 notes that the Fannii are associated with Aesernia. [Women with the *cognomen* *Fannia* are also mentioned in *CIL* IX.2686 (Aesernia) and in 1260 (from the neighboring Aeclanum). Cf. Viti 120 n. 8.]

*Voluptati* — Terenziani 10 notes that *Voluptas* is a well-established *cognomen*. As such it is to be classed with such *cognomina* as *Amor*, *Felicitas*, *Hilaritas*, *Laetitia*, and *Lepos* (listed at Lawlor 80).<sup>13</sup> These sorts of names were assigned with such frequency, esp. in the case of slaves, that their original meanings likely came to be ignored unless they were specifically signalled by a particular context: cf. Kajanto 66-68.

projections above and below the worked section (Flobert 122) do not seem suited to a wall-insert, esp. given the amount of unnecessary weight they add to the memorial.

<sup>8</sup> Re *Voluptas*, see the cautionary advice at Evans 135-36 (re the very similar Hedone of *CIL* IX.1679) and cf. modern misrepresentations regarding the significance of Fanny Hill’s name: P. Spedding and J. Lambert, “Fanny Hill, Lord Fanny and the Myth of Metonymy,” *Studies in Philology* 108 (2011) 108-32.

<sup>9</sup> Bannert 206-09; Terenziani 8. (For a translation, see Rusten 609.) Bannert notes the iambic lilt of the traveler’s final response: ~ - ~ ] *iste mulus me ad factum dabit*. This would seem to be fortuitous, however.

<sup>10</sup> See below ad line 8.

<sup>11</sup> For the broader tradition, see Baldwin’s introduction; Bremmer; Beard 185-209. Text of *The Philogelos*: Dawe.

<sup>12</sup> The name *Eroticus* appears in *CIL* IX.1321, 5470, 5471. The fem. *Erotice* is found at 1422, 4651, 5471. (It is true, however, that such terms tend to be double-edged. On *venustus*, see B.A. Krostenko, *Cicero, Catullus, and the Language of Social Performance* [Chicago and London, 2001] 285.)

<sup>13</sup> Wives by the name *Voluptas* are commemorated in two epitaphs in *CIL* IX (1874, 2558) and a daughter by the name of *Voluptas* joins her sister in commemorating their mother in 3584. In 2715 (from Aesernia) the name is associated with a *conserva*. Cf. Wilson 28-29, who points out that many of these names are Latin translations of traditional Greek *cognomina* (*Voluptas* = Hedone). (Kajanto 269 finds 22 instances of this *cognomen* in *CIL* and associates it with others that indicate weakness of character or sensuality, with one instance [*CIL* XIV.1737] where this connection would seem to be overt. At 364 he associates it with other *cognomina* that consist of abstract nouns.)

*vivus fecit* — standard formula employed to indicate that the funerary monument was set up in the person's lifetime (*vivus* — pred.)

- 2 *copo* = *caupo* — inn/tavernkeeper (voc.) [Mommsen (*CIL IX*) argues that the traveler in the relief is portrayed as negotiating with a young girl (cf. Treggiari 74). This view is rejected by Flobert 123, Bannert 205 n. 5, Terenziani 9.] Whatever the sex of the individual on the left, both figures are clearly employing their fingers to compute the final amount of the tab (Mommsen; Flobert 123 [citing Pliny, *Epistles* 2.20.3]).<sup>14</sup>

*computemus* — jussive subj. (“let’s settle up”)

- 3  $\text{O}$  = *sextarium* (Terenziani 4-5) — a liquid measure about the size of a typical bottle of soda in North America (around 550 ml)

I — either to be taken with *sextarium*, or sc. *asse* (cf. below): the former is perhaps suggested by the placement of the interpuncts. (As today, wine came in a variety of vintages and prices: cf. §*CIL IV.1679.7-13a*.) Flobert 125 n. 16 adopts the former reading but follows Saglio in arguing that the allusion is to a type of *vin ordinaire* which sold at a standard price (cf. Bannert 209, Terenziani 7).

*panem* — no indication of the number of portions would seem to be provided: cf. J. Bodel (*HSCP* 92 [1989] 359-63 and n. 42) ad *CIL* 4.10674, who suggests that bread was sold *prix fixe*. (For a list of bread prices, see Duncan-Jones 244-45 and 380-81, with Bodel loc. cit.; cf. Bannert 209) Others take the reading here to be *pani* and understand the nominative (*panis*) in this listing as well as in those below (hence *puella* in line 5): see Flobert 124-25.

*asse* — here and below: abl. of price

*pulmentarium* — in general, anything eaten with bread to fill out the meal: cheese, olives, “ratatouille,” hard-boiled egg, small portions of cured meat or dried fish (a “deli” meal) [Terenziani 7-8]

[All of the above prices would seem to fall within a standard range: Duncan-Jones 46, Terenziani 7-8. Flobert 124 cites the reasonableness of the prices as the principal grounds for regarding Eroticus as the *caupo*: “Au fond, sur quoi porte exactement le dialogue? sur l’honnêteté et la modicité des prix du gargotier ...”]

- 4 *convenit* — “that is acceptable”
- 5 *puellam* — commentators often identify this figure with Fannia Voluptas (e.g., Flobert 124 and n. 14; Terenziani 10). This interpretation can only stand if one reads the notice, from the beginning, as alluding to an actual inn/brothel owned by Eroticus and Voluptas, whose lives are somehow reflected here, and if one then makes the further assumption that Voluptas prostituted herself.<sup>15</sup> Such a reading does rather muddy the joke, however, the entire premise of which would seem to require the notion that the traveler is being charged an exorbitant fee (see below).

[On *cauponae*, and the women who worked in them, see DeFelice 2001.]

*assibus* VIII — a rather steep price compared to what we find in contemporary Pompeii, where two *asses* is a standard charge.<sup>16</sup> While one cannot be certain, it is tempting to think that this is a premium fee (esp. for a hill-town approx. 1/5 the size of Pompeii) at which the traveler might be expected to balk:<sup>17</sup> this serves to set up the eventual punchline.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>14</sup> See, further, Williams/Williams.

<sup>15</sup> As Evans notes (135-37), many *cauponae* were run by husband-wife teams. As he also notes, however, it does not necessarily follow that the women involved in such relationships also served as prostitutes.

<sup>16</sup> See McGinn 40-49, who assesses the epigraphic evidence. 66 documents cite prices (not all of them real): 34 cite 2 *asses* or less; another 21 cite 2.5-7 *asses*; 3 (including ours) cite 8 *asses*; 8 (some of them clearly fantastical) cite fees of higher than 8 *asses*. Out of a total of 65 documents, then, 55 cite prices lower than that demanded by our unnamed *caupo*. (As McGinn notes, however, it is difficult to control for differences in setting [a back alley vs. a crib vs. a *caupona*], nature of services offered, professional reputation of the woman, etc.)

<sup>17</sup> Such comparisons can be tricky, but fees in Rome ca. AD 50-140 seem to reflect much the same pattern as in Pompeii: Evans 163 n. 144; *contra* McGinn 45 and n. 220. For more on the history and nature of Aesernia, see Terenziani 3.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. McGinn 44-45, who notes that “the joke seems to depend on taking 8 *asses* as a realistically high-end price for a prostitute and a room.” Santamato 327-28 suggests that the price of 8 *asses* includes the traveler’s lodging. While this provides a realistic explanation for the fee, it spoils the joke, which quite deliberately plays off the rhythm generated by the carefully articulated list of particulars presented by the *caupo* (wine — bread — *pulmentum* — *puella* — hay).

6 *et hoc* — this too (i.e., contrary to the reader’s expectations, the traveler is altogether unperturbed by such a fee). [There is no foundation here for Bannert’s assertion (207) that the inscription presents a comic scene of complex mutual negotiations in which each party attempts to do the other down.]

7 *faenum* — hay

8 *mulum* — cf. my introduction

*ad factum dabit* — “will be the death/ruin of me” (Flobert 126-27, Terenziani 7, who follow Büchler in noting in particular, the parallel, in funerary contexts, between *noli dolere, mater, factui meo* [CIL X.5153] and *noli dolere, mater, eventum meum* [CIL VI.6932 Add., 8023 Add., 17196 Add., 20182 Add.]). [Other readings are canvassed by Flobert, Terenziani and (in particular) Bannert (207-09). Mommsen’s, “will condemn me to hard labor” (like a Plautine slave sent to the farm), is unfounded. The same holds for Fröhner’s *dabit adfactum (adfectum)* = “*rendra malade*.”<sup>19</sup> Bannert presents a rather jumbled discussion of this issue, but translates: “wird mich fertig machen /wird mir noch den Rest geben / wird mich arm fressen” (“will be the ruin of me / eat me out of house and home”). He posits that this was a famous comic non-sequitur in a scene for which Calidius Eroticus came to be renowned.]

It is possible that the focus here is meant to be, not on a connection between Eroticus’ supposed profession and that of the innkeeper, or the scene per se, but on the casual metaphoric allusion to death in the last line, reminiscent of Oscar Wilde’s famous allusion to the wallpaper. Grave-markers in antiquity routinely attempt to engage the passers-by and encourage them to pause and share a kindly thought for the deceased (Carroll): Eroticus’ humorous vignette likely represents a variation on this well-established ancient tradition — a funny scene, reminiscent of our “a man walks into a bar” jokes, that has nothing at all to do with Eroticus’ actual life but does encourage the passerby to stop in order to engage with the monument and points, in a quirky and oblique fashion, to the expected theme of such inscriptions.<sup>20</sup>

This memorial is not elaborate: it is fashioned from a local porous limestone of modest quality;<sup>21</sup> the text is crammed within a limited field with little attention to achieving a striking visual impression beyond that conveyed by the *titulus*; and the text itself is prosaic and rustic.<sup>22</sup> Two features, however, have clearly been designed to catch the eye. The first is the vivid scene carved with a fair degree of care in the lower zone, which presents an interpretative challenge that encourages one to stop and examine it. The second is the opening of the text, which calls out with a vocative addressed, not to the reader (*hospes, viator*), but to an inn-keeper, who is accosted in the language of the lower classes (*copo* — vulgar Latin for *caupo*). The reader begins to peruse this text in a casual fashion, expecting the tropes that are common to the genre, but then gets drawn into to a vivid vignette that builds, unexpectedly, to a marvelous joke. The passerby leaves with a chuckle and with good thoughts toward the couple here commemorated: the monument has fulfilled its purpose.<sup>23</sup>

It is, in any case, better to take this artifact at face value: otherwise, it is so idiosyncratic as to leave us without resource, esp. since we can say nothing certain regarding where or how it was displayed or with what type of structure(s) it might or might not have been associated.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>19</sup> It is true that no interpunct separates *ad* and *factum*, but there are signs that the mason was concerned about the lack of space for the conclusion of his line. (Note the treatment of the T and of VM.) An interpunct would also seem to be missing between *copo* and *computemus* (Bannert 207).

<sup>20</sup> Cf. the stipulation of Petronius’ Trimalchio (*Satyricon* 71.11) that his elaborate memorial include: *horologium in medio, ut quisquis horas inspiciet, velit nolit, nomen meum legat*. The sundial both attracts the passerby’s engagement and at the same time, like the broken urn that is being cried over by a boy (*ibid.*), presents a lugubrious suggestion of the fleeting nature of human existence.

<sup>21</sup> Terenziana 4.

<sup>22</sup> Terenziana 6.

<sup>23</sup> It would be nice to be able to point to a broader moral or, to use Viti’s term (133), paraenetic theme in, e.g., the contrast between the mute, hard-working mule and his foolish master or the general notion of settling accounts before departing. (Again, one thinks of Petronius’ Trimalchio.) Such readings, however, reflect a modern rather than an ancient sensibility.

<sup>24</sup> If a biographical connection with the deceased is to be sought in this vignette, it is much more likely to be found in the figure of the traveler, who has by far the more interesting role and who dominates the attendant image (although in that case, the traveler’s foolishness and, as Flobert 124 notes, the liaison with the *puella* become something of an embarrassment!). On no reading is much account taken of Voluptas.

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<sup>25</sup> By far the most useful account is that of Terenziani (who, however, displays repeated uncertainty about how to deal with a text that presents such overtly comic features yet is meant to commemorate an actual couple whose names, given to them in accordance with traditional onomastic practices, happen to suit the biographic account ascribed to this couple in such a tidy fashion). Further bibliography: Bannert 206 n. 13.