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FROM VIENNA WITH LOVE:  
REVISITING *CIL* III 6016.3 = *CLE* 1812 ADN.

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I.

In the collection of Vienna's Kunsthistorisches Museum, there is a small, square sheet of gold leaf (a lamella aurea), inscribed with a pierced Latin inscription (inv. n. VII b 352):<sup>1</sup>



This piece has commonly been included in editions of inscriptions from Pannonia, including in the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*, but this is likely to be a mistake. The museum record notes that the item was part of the 'Sammlung Wuttky', which almost certainly means that this item pertains to the sizeable collection acquired by the Austrian painter Michael Wuttky, also spelled Wuttky, in Italy (in Rome and Naples in particular). The item in question was first published, accompanied by a drawing, by Joseph Calasanz, Ritter von Arneth in his edition of gold and silver antiquities from the K. K. Münz- und Antiken-Cabinett.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Photo © Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien (author: P. K.).

<sup>2</sup> J. v. Arneth, *Die antiken Gold- und Silber-Monumente des k. k. Münz- und Antiken-Cabinettes in Wien*, Vienna 1850, 29 n. 82.

Von Arneth's publication of the item was immediately noted by Eduard Gerhard in the 1851 volume of *Archäologischer Anzeiger*, where he signals the item's existence in the context of a list of rings (though he does not specifically identify the piece in question as one), adding that the inscribed text – which, on the basis of von Arneth's drawing, he read as TERO FVGIA AMOR – still awaits explanation.<sup>3</sup> This, in turn, was immediately noted by Johann Wilhelm Joseph Braun, now firmly identifying the piece as a ring. Braun explained that the engraver (!) had made a mistake and had, in fact, meant to write SERO FVGIAT AMOR, 'may love flee late' (i. e. ideally never).<sup>4</sup> Delighted that the Viennese collection and its publication by von Arneth had been noted abroad, and commenting on the need to publish antiquities to prevent them from potentially getting destroyed in revolutions (citing the one of 1848!) without hope for them to be recovered subsequently, the 1855 *Notizenblatt* of the Historische Kommission of the Kaiserliche Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien reported Braun's reading, turning Braun's 'engraver' into a Steinschneider ('stonecutter').<sup>5</sup>

The academic game of Chinese whispers came to a screeching (albeit brief) halt through the edition of the second fascicle of *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* III, in which Theodor Mommsen, based on Emil Hübner's report, described the item as a lamella from Vienna (without noting the piece's way into the collection), adding that Braun's explanation was an altogether bad one ('male omnino'). The text was edited as TER | FVGI | AMOR, explaining any additional traces that are visible in the item's first line as hederæ. Next, Franz Bücheler listed the item – duly preserving the information of it being a lamella aurea – in his *Carmina Latina Epigraphica* without, however, elevating it to the status of a text deserving of its own entry, adding that it might be a curtailed way of saying *fugia(tis) amor(em)*, *fugia(t) amor*, or *fugia(s) amor*.<sup>6</sup> When Daniela Basso edited the *Carmina Latina Epigraphica* of Pannonia, she preserved most of Bücheler's information, but falsely ascribed the reading *sero fugiat amor* to Hübner (who was merely Mommsen's authority for his actual exemplum, as opposed to Braun, who had come up with this 'correction').<sup>7</sup> This was 'corrected' by Paolo Cugusi and Maria Teresa Sblendorio Cugusi in their subsequent edition of the Latin verse inscriptions of Pannonia, who ascribe *sero fugiat amor* to Mommsen instead, and suggest that the item may have been a binding charm between lovers.<sup>8</sup>

At this point it seems of the essence to return to what we actually know.

## II.

Following our autopsy of the item in February 2020, we can confirm that the item in question is an almost square piece of (relatively, but not especially) thin gold leaf, measuring approx. 2.5 × 2.5 cm, and it may reasonably be called a lamella aurea. The inscription consists of three lines, and it was pierced into the sheet with a fine needle or nail ('gepunzt'). It was never folded, however, but clearly, as dents in the top, bottom, and on the left-hand side show, sewn or wired onto or into another object. It was incorporated into the Viennese collection from Michael Wutky's collection of antiquities, which makes it likely that it originates

<sup>3</sup> E. Gerhard, *Museographisches: Gold- und Silberantiken zu Wien*, AA 30–31 (1851) 63–69, esp. 66: 'wartet noch auf seine Deutung'.

<sup>4</sup> J. W. J. Braun, *Versuch einer Deutung einer lateinischen Inschrift aus dem k. k. Antikenkabinette zu Wien*, JVA 20 (= 10.2) (1853) 177–178.

<sup>5</sup> *Notizenblatt* (Beilage zum Archiv für Kunde österreichischer Geschichtsquellen. Herausgegeben von der historischen Commission der kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien) 5.1 (1855) 7, referring to 1848 as a 'Taumeljahr' ('year of tumbling').

<sup>6</sup> F. Bücheler ad CLE 1812: 'In lamella aurea Vindobonensi CIL. III 6016, 3 ter: | fugia | amor pro ut de usu pristino iudicabitur, aut nomen significari proprium putabimus ac deinde *fugia(tis) amor(em)*, aut si pro amuleto fuit bratteola, ter praecantatum hoc *fugiat* siue *fugias amor*, φεῦγε μισούμενε ἀπὸ τοῦ φοροῦντος.'

<sup>7</sup> D. Basso, *Carmina Latina Epigraphica panthonici*. Saggio di edizione e commento, *Ann. Fac. Lettere Cagliari* n. s. 8 (45) (1987) 1–61, esp. 38, 60 n. 40.

<sup>8</sup> P. Cugusi – M. T. Sblendorio Cugusi, *Studi sui carmi epigrafici. Carmina Latina Epigraphica Pannonica (CLEPann)*, Bologna 2007, 17.

from Italy, not Austria, and was purchased in Rome or, perhaps more likely still, in Naples (where Wutky famously explored and painted Mt Vesuvius and its eruption, as Vesuvius was active at the time).

The surviving text reads, beyond any doubt, as follows:

chedera▷ TERO  
FVGIA  
AMOR

Following our autopsy of the item, we are also confident that the surviving piece is, in fact, incomplete, and that approx. 33%–50% of its original width are lost: the right-hand side of the piece was either broken or cut off at an unknown point in time. The right-hand edge is significantly sharper and more clear-cut than the remaining three sides (which preserve the original edge). What is more, one must note that, in order to attach the piece to its original context, thread or wire was used to fix the lamella. The thread left dents on the respective opposite ends at the top and bottom of the lamella, and a similar dent exists on the left hand side. Across the metal, traces of wear-and-tear indicate the existence of threads that ran across its length and width, respectively. There are two further dents, however, identical in nature, and these coincide with the (present-day) top and bottom corners on the right hand side, meaning that today the piece is broken (or cut) off at the exact spot where originally a second vertical thread had been used to attach it. This means that the piece was once rectangular (not square), and that it was attached with two vertical and one horizontal runs of thread.

The discovery that the item itself is, in fact, a fragment, means that the assumption of text loss on the right-hand side is not merely a possibility, but, considering the amount of material that is missing, effectively a requirement. Bearing in mind the available space, we therefore – tentatively and cautiously – wish to propose that the original design of the text on the lamella was something along the lines of<sup>9</sup> –

chedera▷ *Te ro[go ne]*  
*fugia[s me]*,  
*Amor [chedera▷ (?)].*

‘I ask you, Amor, not to abandon me.’

A dactylic rhythm appears to be underlying this text, especially if one were to scan *mē<sup>H</sup> amor*.<sup>10</sup> Considering the space available (and thus the scope for a balanced *ordinatio* of the lines), one must doubt, however, that the text originally amounted to a full metrical line.

### III.

Our proposed reading of the text, combined with what can be said about its original form of attachment, might be taken to suggest that the piece once served as a good-luck charm, designed either to protect its bearer from being deserted by love, or from being deserted by their lover. We are unaware of any direct parallels for this text. We note, however, that there is, in fact, a sufficiently close expression of the same sentiment in a Pompeian graffito (without wishing to imply that the lamella for this particular reason must necessarily come from the same region, even though Wutky visited the area). Discovered in structure IX

<sup>9</sup> We alternatively considered reading *te ro[go ne] | fugia[s] | amor[em]*, ‘I ask you not to flee love’, but this results in a slightly less balanced layout of the original text and scans less acceptably than the reading above (though there is no absolute need, of course, to maintain a dactylic rhythm). W. D. Lebek, *per epistulas*, suggested *te ro[go ne] | fugia[s] | Amor* as an alternative, which certainly is another option to be considered (though resulting in the same layout-related issues as the other option that we have considered for line 2). Furthermore, Professor Lebek very kindly and helpfully alerted us to the possibility that what was inscribed here might have been part of a more substantial (though not fully inscribed) sentiment such as *rogo, ne fugias. amor est qui corpora iungit*.

<sup>10</sup> For identical scansion of *mē*, followed by hiatus and *amor / amare* cf. Hor. *sat.* 1.9.38. In iambo-trochaic poetry, especially in Plautus and Terence, this pattern is much more common still.

5.11 at Pompeii, a lavishly decorated dwelling at the via di Nola, a fragmentary graffito, now lost, has been read and partly restored as follows:<sup>11</sup>

[- - -]ae nostrae feliciter.  
 [Perp?]etuo rogo, domina, per  
 [Venere]m Fisicam te rogo ni me  
 [- - -]  
 5 [- - -]us. Habeto mei memoriam.

... Best wishes to our [- - -]a!  
 Ceaselessly, my lady, I beg – I beg you, by Venus Fisica, not to [forget?] me:  
 [- - -]us (?). You shall remember me!

(CIL IV 6865)

Beyond the supporting evidence of the Pompeian graffito, it is worth noting that already the museum record for the lamella tentatively (and ultimately sceptically) suggests that the inscription on the lamella, though not directly related, would seem to an extent to be evocative of phrase *tene me ne fugiam*, ‘apprehend me lest I flee’, that have been found in a number of variations on Roman slave tags.<sup>12</sup>

The (loose) association with slave collars and tags is of interest, not just for the wording as such, but also for functional and topical reasons related to the lamella itself. On a purely practical level, the slave tags, too, were designed to be carried on one’s body (though not sewn into a garment), making the portability and attachability of a lettered object close to one’s body the point of comparison: just as the text and the human body begin to form a unit physically, thus the sentiment of the text and its bearer coalesce and become indissociable, forming a bond to last, unless a certain level of premeditated force is exerted. On a thematic level, the pleading tone (*te rogo*) and the reference to a potential *fuga* that invoke the coercive element of the relationship between a slave and their owner, might, with a stretch of imagination, be regarded as yet another manifestation on the elegiac topos of *seruitium amoris* – whether this subjects the bearer to *Amor*, the deity, or to *amor*, their love interest.

The idea of a good-luck charm, to be sewn into a garment, is by no means the only viable explanation for the piece’s original use, especially with a view to the precious material that has been used. It seems eminently possible that the item, together with whatever object it once was attached to, was a votive, left behind in a shrine with the desire to seek divine blessing for a love relationship.

With that, however, we have reached the very limit of what one may reasonably adduce towards an interpretation of the lamella’s re-established text and context.

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<sup>11</sup> Further on this piece see A. Varone, *Erotica Pompeiana. Love Inscriptions on the Walls of Pompeii*, Rome 2002, 41 (with discussion and ample bibliography at nt. 41). Varone suggests that l. 4 contained a phrase like *reicias*. Others have suggested that line 5 once read *[obliiscar]us* (for *obliiscaris*). Although the original wording is lost, the sentiment is unambiguous. Dwelling IX 5.11 is the same structure in which the famous piece CIL IV 3691 = CLE 951 (*Non [e]go tam | [d]uc[o] Venere | [d]e marmore | factam eqs.*) came to light; cf. Varone (*ibid.*) 29–30.

<sup>12</sup> Further on these items see for example G. B. de Rossi, *Dei collari dei servi fuggitivi e d’una piastra di bronzo opistografa che fu appesa ad un siffatto collare testè rinvenuta*, *Bullettino di Archeologia Cristiana* ser. 2, 5 (1874) 41–67, G. G. Pani, *Note sul formulario dei testi epigrafici relativi ai ‘servi fuggitivi’*, *VetChrist* 21 (1984) 113–127, and D. L. Thurmond, *Some Roman Slave Collars in CIL, Athenaeum* 82 (1994) 459–493.