GRAPHIC CARICATURE AND THE ETHOS OF ORDINARY PEOPLE AT POMPEII

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FROM THE POPULAR TO THE SATIRICAL: IN SEARCH OF PEOPLE'S ETHOS

From its inception in the nineteenth century, popular culture studies have been torn by epistemological discussions on the specificity of its subject. The 'learning of the people', or folklore as it was to be referred to from the 1840s, was sometimes identified with oral tradition (Sebillot 1973:6) and produced mostly by illiterate peasants ignoring the rules of the so-called official or elite standards (*Est populaire tout ce qui n'est pas officiel*, would define Marcel Mauss). Perhaps the best example of this standpoint is the overall emphasis put on compositions like the counting rhymes:

> One, two, come buckle my shoe;
> Three, four, shut the door;
> Five, six, pick up sticks;
> Seven, eight, lay them straight;
> Nine, ten, a big fat hen;
> Eleven, twelve, dig and delve;
> Thirteen, fourteen, boys are counting;
> Fifteen, sixteen, girls are fixing;
> Seventeen, eighteen, girls are waiting;
> Nineteen, twenty, girls aplenty.

A comprehensive critique of this approach only developed in this century, and Croce's writings, particularly his 'People's poetry and art poetry' dating to the late 1920s, challenged some accepted features of early folklore studies (Croce n.d.:342), e.g. the stress on the opposition between *Volkslied* and *Kunstlied*. Mikhail Bakhtin (1970:19, 21, 25 and *passim*) proposed that popular culture was characterised by jokes, comic rites (*nordnii cmekh*) as well as magic and incantatory insults (cf. Burke 1989a: 103). But only later would 'history from below' (Hill 1989:12) begin to produce monographs on medieval (Rosenberg 1980), modern (Burke 1989; Hoggart 1986), and contemporary popular culture (Golby and Purdue 1984) and on theoretical and methodological implications (cf. Wollen 1991:72). A 'cultural history of the poor' (Howkins 1990:120) implies the recognition of the potentially subversive and revolutionary effect of popular culture (Browne 1989:14) but also the plurality of both popular and

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Journal of European Archaeology (1993) 1.2:133–150.

elite cultures (Burke 1989b:20–21) and their mutual interdependence. However, I do agree with Carlo Ginsburg (1986:108) that 'bipartition between popular and learned culture is more useful than a holistic model' which does not take full account of the specificity of people's expressions and thus considers them as derived from the 'dominant culture' (Trigger 1989:786).

It seems to me though that there is still some uncertainty on what would be characterised as popular culture. The negative definition as non-elite cultures (Burke 1989b:15) is good enough in sociological terms but is it possible to define it ontologically? Croce's (n.d.:345) metaphysically challenging remarks are worth quoting in this respect:

> *la poesia (o la cultura) popolare esprime moti del'anima che non hanno dietro di se, como precedenti immediati grandi travagli del pensiero e della passione; ritrae sentimenti semplici in corrispondenti semplici forme. L'alta poesia (o cultura) muove e sommuove in voli grandi masse di ricordi, di esperienze, di pensieri, di molteplici sentimenti e gradazioni e sfumature di sentimenti; la poesia (o cultura) popolare non si allarge per cosi ampi giri e volute per giungere al segno, ma vi giunge per via breve e spedita.*

Croce's opposition between elite experience, thought, and feelings with different expressive degrees and people's brief and direct ways perhaps is not completely plausible but at least his interpretation raises some important questions on their ontological differences. As class cultures are historically determined, any ontological definition depends on understanding the specific historical and social contexts through a microscopic analysis (Nicolet 1988:40). Pompeian wall drawings are particularly appropriate to such a study. Before that though, we must consider how popular culture has been viewed in the context of the classical Roman society.

PEOPLE'S CULTURE AND THE ANCIENT SOCIETY

When Mikhail Rostovtzeff (1911:141) wrote his lengthy and scholarly paper 'Hellenistic and Roman Architectural Landscape', it seemed only too natural for him (cf. Brunt 1983:95) to quote Vitruvius' (7.5) well-known description of wall painting in rich houses without taking account of his upper class bias (cf. Hahn 1991:364 and *passim*; Bulford 1972:25):

> *ambulationes vero propter spatia longitudinis varietatibus topiorum ornarent ab certis locorum proprietatibus imagines expreiments: pinguntur enim portus promuntoria litora flumina fontes euripi fana luci montes pecora pastores*

Ordinary people's dwelling (Hobson 1985; Scobie 1986) had no place in the discourse. R. Bianchi Bandinelli (1970:64), although explicitly not dealing with 'popular' expression, proposed a class analysis distinguishing 'senatorial' and 'plebian' trends (Bandinelli 1981:45; earlier he had preferred to call it 'popular trend' 1961:231–232). This 'crude popular realism' (Brendel 1979:9) referred, however, to late working and middle classes and provincial standpoints (Rodenwaldt 1939:547) and not to ordi-

nary people's expressions. Nevertheless, as early as the 1930s E. Lissberger (1934), in his inaugural dissertation at Tübingen, remarked that epigraphical evidences suggested a high level of literacy and creativity among ordinary people (cf. Guillemin 1935:404).

Despite the pessimism of some scholars concerning our accessibility to common people's evidences (cf. MacMullen 1990:186) or the characterisation of these as coarse and vulgar (Cebe 1966:372, referring to wall drawings), there has been an increasing awareness that commonly held views such as the so-called 'ancient contempt for any manual activity' could not be applied to people's *Weltanschauungen* (cf. MacMullen 1974; 120, 202, with discussion of earlier studies; Wood 1989:137 and *passim*). A high state of literacy among ordinary Romans, recognised thanks to case studies of epigraphic evidences (Gichon 1983:585; Funari 1989), would strengthen the impression that, although there were different popular classes (De Martino 1988:233) and cultures (Mattews 1990:339), romanisation (Orsted 1985:11) lead to the constitution of an ordinary *koine* comprising mostly slaves and free wage labourers (Harris 1988:603). Pompeian graffiti enable us to highlight class-related ways of speaking and ways of being in the world (cf. Diaz 1990:449). In this paper I will only deal with caricatures, leaving thus aside written inscriptions, for two reasons: firstly, to try to approach popular ethos through graphic representation, particularly through exaggeration; and secondly, to limit the evidence, at this research stage, to not too large a corpus.

SATIRE, CARICATURE: THE CHARGED SYMBOLISM

Aristotle, in his 'The Art of Poetry' (5,22,1449–1452) stressed that comedy represents the 'worse types of men'; worse, however, not in the sense that the ridiculous is a species of ugliness or badness. For the ridiculous consists in some form of error or ugliness that is not painful or injurious (*anodinon kai ou phthartikon*, that is, *kharan ablabe*, harmless joy). Moreover, harmless, laughable situations often offer odd opportunities to the expression of criticisms otherwise hardly set forth openly. 'What harm can there be in presenting the truth with a laugh?' (*ridentem dicere verum quid vetat?* Hor. *S.*1,1,24). 'Humour is often stronger and more effective than sharpness in cutting knotty issues' (*ridiculum aeri fortius et melius magnas plerumque secat res*, Hor. *S.*1,10,14–15). Through mockery it is possible to speak out and thus to challenge current ideas and authorities. Therefore laughing (*rictus* or *risus*, Quint. 6,3) implies a particular openness in criticism, enabling ordinary people to safely reproach people in power.

How could one define what is laughable? It seems that the answer is to be found in the fact that most, even though not all (cf. Bergson 1940:95), ridiculous situations are characterised by exaggerated features. The overstatement is at the root itself of *satira* or *satura*, a Latin specific genre (Quint. 10,1,93: *satira quidem tota nostra est*), connected to the *lanx satura* (plate full of fruits) and to *satura* (a kind of sausage) in the sense that plentitude is the common feature of these mixed and charged (cf. **sa* root) different subjects. Although completely unrelated, *caricature* also draws its meaning from the overloading (*caricare*) which characterises ridiculous representations. Even

though the overcharge is not the only comic device used to 'make the listener bare his teeth in a grimace', in Horace's words (*S.* 1,10,6), it is nonetheless the more popular thanks to its terseness (*brevitas*). Clear-cut exaggeration enables an easier understanding, avoiding lengthy decoding processes by ordinary people. If this was true for literary satire, after Horace's warning (*S.* 1,10,8–9) that 'you need terseness, to let the thought run freely on without becoming entangled in a mass of words that will hang heavy on the ear', it was even more so in relation to the vulgar wall scratches. Exaggeration is a common feature of verbal messages at Pompeii, as it is clear in the Floronius inscription (*CIL* IV 8767):
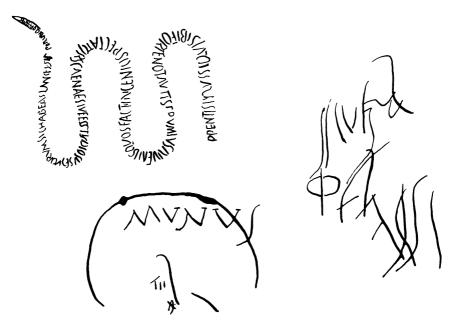

Floronius,
bine ac miles
leg.(ioni) vii hic.
fuit, neque
mulieres
scierunt, nisi
paucae, et
ses, erunt

Figure 1. *Floronius inscription (CIL IV 8767) and transliteration.*

Early transcriptions of the graffito by Della Corte (1939; *CIL* IV 8767) and Herescu (1969:133) could not explain palaeographically the proposed readings of *binet* as *benef(iciarius)* (Della Corte), nor *ses.eruni* as *se de(de)runt* (Della Corte) or *sederunt* (*CIL* IV 8767 and Herescu 1969:126) *sensu obsceno* (cf. Petr. *Sat.* 126,10: *ego etiam si ancilla sum, nunquam tamen nisi in equestribus sedeo*). Pisani's (1973) interpretation enables us to explain *binet* as *binetas* (cf. Lucianus, *Pseudologista* 27, that is, 'fucker') and thus it is possible to understand the statement as a boast: 'Floronius, fucker and soldier of the seventh legion, was here [sc. an inn] and no woman realised the fact . . . but they were only six and so they would be too small a number [sc. for this boastful male].' Exaggeration could also induce the laugh through mockery as in this case (Della Corte 1954:329, no. 85id-m):

> (*ded*)*uxisti octies, tibi superat ut habeas sedecies coponium fecisti; cretaria fecisti; salsamentaria fecisti; pistorium fecisti; agricola fuisti; aere minutaria fecisti; propola fuisti; laguncularia nunc facis, si cunnum linxseris, consummaris omnia.*

The anonymous person is said to have been waiter, potter, dealer in salted fish, baker, husbandman, bronze trinket dealer, retailer, and now dealer in small bottles and to complete all possible activities there is left only one job: the cunnilingus professional (on the long-standing currency of the practice, cf. Adams 1987:135; Johns 1982:141; contra Foucault 1986:23–4; Veyne 1986:47).

Graphic caricature (Bergson 1940:20–21) as a specific art form, although sharing some general features of 'low' art exaggeration, depends on unique symbolic popular frameworks related to wall drawing and human representation, themes I turn to in the next section.

Figures 2, 3, and 4. *CIL IV 1595 (top left), CIL IV 8031 (bottom left), and CIL IV 8329 (right).*

SYMBOLIC AND STYLISTIC IN POMPEIAN POPULAR GRAPHIC ART

Comparing popular images like *CIL* IV 1595 (Fig. 2), 8031 (Fig. 3) or 8329 (Fig. 4) with the few *carmina figurata* (Haeberlin 1886) or *technopegnia* by erudite authors like Theocritus (Wendel 1920:159–164) and others in the *Palatine Anthology*, we are struck by the difficult and abstruse scholarly word play they use (Wilamowitz 1899:51). In contrast to modern pop art, which recognised 'that the barrier erected between "high" and "low" art could no longer be maintained' (Wollen 1991:72) and particularly in opposition to the concrete (Teles 1977:22; Crespo and Bedate 1963), machine (Pignatari 1965:151) and constellation poetry (Gomringen 1953) or popcrete art (Santiago 1977:46), ancient elite figurative poems were very much out of ordinary people's reach. But, if it is true that 'the place of symbolism in everyday life has tended to be neglected by both cultural historians (concerned with "works of art") and social historians (concerned with social "reality")' (Burke 1989:3) – and we must add literary historians to the list (MacDonald 1991:238) – one must recognise that popular graphic symbolism remains almost completely unexplored (cf. Gigante 1979: 18). Unfortunately, studies of 'elite' wall painting (Rostovtzeff 1919), wall drawing (White 1957), table picture (*tabulae*; Perris 1989:316), regional art (Dentzer 1962), Pompeian styles (Schefold 1972), and even comprehensive overviews on ancient painting *imaginaire* (Rouveret 1989) are difficult to use when dealing with popular scratchings. Is it possible to understand, reading only Parliament speeches, the actual people's mind expressed in a graffito like 'don't vote vomit'? (Melley 1976:104).

Table 1. Conceptual framework of a semiotic reading of physical features by Romans.

Physical appearance	possible adjectives	connotation
calvities (baldness)	*calvus* (bald)	*senectus* (senility)
capillus (hair) "	*passus* *prolixus* *reiectus*	*negligentia* (carelessness) "
barba (beard)	(if young) (if old)	youth wisdom
supercilium (eyebrow)	*superciliosus*	disdainful
labra (lips)	*similem lactugam* (sc. thin lips)	laughable
maxilla (jaw)		power
nasus (nose)	*nasutus* (large-nosed)	sarcastic
auris (ear)	*auricula* *auritus*	effeminacy attention

To approach graphic stylistic expression we must consider three points. In the first place, 'style is power . . . [and] to create style is to create an illusion of fixed and objective relationships. Style embeds event in interpretation but fixes that interpretation as event. It provides the potential for the control of meaning and thus for power' (Hodder 1990:46). Thus style means power through patterns of the regular repetition of meaningful traits (Davis 1990:29). This process is not necessarily a conscious act, for 'style can usually be passive but it nonetheless functions iconically because people automatically react symbolically without prodding . . . thus it may be said that ethnic messages are far more often read than deliberately sent' (Sackett 1990:37). Furthermore, styles are not only ethnic but also social in character (Battisti 1949:42; Cândido 1976:169), directly related to social stratification (Lagopoulos, unpublished typescript: 22; Lagopoulos 1985:266). Although direct evidence of popular ideas is absent in the surviving ancient sources on art subjects (Politt 1989), we can use the available data in order to reconstruct the graphic rhetoric (cf. Wallace-Hadrill 1990: 147).

As caricature deals primarily with human facial appearance, we must try to define how the Romans considered the different physical features meaningful and how they can be semiotically set in a defined, oppositional, conceptual framework (Table 1). The written sources refer to different meanings attached to hair, beard, eyebrow, lips, jaw, nose, ear and neck. Baldness (*calvities*) was associated with age (Petronius *Sat.* 27; Suet. Galb. 20) and thus to both seniority and senility while neglect was

Table 2.

Features connotating power or authority	ambiguous features	features connotating absence of power/authority
	baldness	
	old age	
age ⟶ power		physical powerlessness
	beard	
grown ⟶ wisdom		young ⟶ youth
up physical power		powerlessness
maxilla prognata		absence of jaw
collum		absence of neck
large ears		small ears
large nose		small nose

Table 3.

Physical feature	Connotation	
capilius	*passus*	*negligentia*
	prolixus	*negligentia*
	reiectus	*negligentia*
superciliosus		disdainful
labra (similem lactugam)		laughable
nasutus		sarcatic
auricula		effeminancy

ascribed to excessive and undressed hair (*capillus passus, prolixus, circum caput reiectus negligenter*, Ter. *Heaut.* 2,3,49). The beard was usually identified as a teenage feature (cf. Cic. *N.D.* 1,30: *quos aut imberves aut bene barbatos videtis*), although bearded grown-ups were tied to honourable images like that of philosophers (Pers. 4,1) or Romans of olden time (C. Coel. 14,33: *barbula horrida* or rough small beard). Therefore, baldness and a beard produced mixed feelings stressing the contradictions associated with age: youth/beard/hair meant greater physical power, but less status and authority, old age/shaved face/baldness implied senility (both in physical and in intellectual terms) but also seniority and the power associated with it (Table 2).
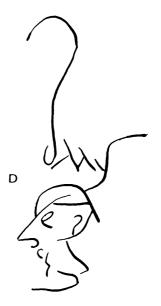
Abundant eyebrows meant someone haughty, disdainful, even censorious and severe (Sen. *Ep.* 123,ii); thin lips were laughable (cf. Hier. *Ep.* 7,5: *similem habent labra lactugam*) (Table 3); the jaw was associated with power (cf. Suet. *Tib.* 21). A large nose meant someone sarcastic in character (cf. Mart. 2,54,5: *nil nasutius hac maligniusque*; cf. Mart. 12,37,i), while small ears denoted softness and effeminacy (cf. Cic. *Q. Fr.* 2,14, 1,4) and absent mindedness in opposition to a long-eared attentive connotation. The neck produced ambiguous feelings, being associated with power, freedom and life (Plaut. *Trin.* 2,4,194) but also with submission (cf. Prop. 2,10,85; *dare colla triumpho*). These physical features can be divided considering their connotation in relation to laughter, power, and authority (Tables 1, 2, and 3).
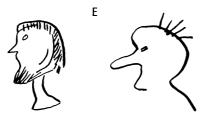
Figures 5, 6, and 7. *CIL IV, 10222 (A), 9008 (B), 9226 (C), 10205 (D), 10008 (E).*

Table 4.

Reprovable features connotating absence of power or authority, laughable	praiseworthy features connotating power or authority

CIL IV 1022 Promus felator

feature	connotation
capillus passus reiectus	carelessness
auricula	effeminacy
absence of nose	naivity
absence of jaw	powerlessness
written message (as a drawing component *felator*	effeminacy

CIL IV 9008 Sum Max(imus)

feature	connotation
auris	attention
jaw	power
written message (as a drawing component *maximus*	power

Table 5.

Subversive features connotating absence of power or authority, laughable	praiseworthy features connotating power or authority

CIL IV 9226 Rufus est

feature	connotation		
baldness	senility		seniority
nasutus	mordacity		intelligence
auricula	effeminacy		
maxilla prognata			power
superciliosus	disdainful		
thin lips	laughable		
absence of neck	unruly		unruly

CIL IV 10205 Decius Mvs

		feature	connotation
	mordacity	*nasutus*	intelligence
		auris	attention
	unruly	neck	unruly

Table 6.

Features connotating absence of power or authority, laughable		Features connotating power or authority
CIL IV 10008 (unbearded man)		
feature	connotation	
half baldness	senility	seniority
capillus passus reiectus	carelessness	
maxilla prognata		power
nasutus	unruly	unruly
	CIL IV 10008 (bearded man)	
	feature	connotation
	dressed hair	carefulness
	long ears	attention
youth	beard	youth
mordacity	*nasutus*	sarcastic
unruly	long neck	unruly

POMPEIAN CARICATURES AS A SOCIO-SEMIOTIC SYSTEM

Architectural styles in Pompeian wall painting (Rostovtzeff 1919:150) were very much an individual decorative device (Wheeler 1989:12) and at the same time collective in character and private in expression (Perrin 1989:341); the false window expressing perfectly this kind of upper-class conscious illusionism (Rouveret 1989: 299). The Neronian period, although short (cf. Segal 1991:81), was particularly distinguished by strong trends, in particular in the culture of nouveau-riche freedmen (Stockton 1990:145; cf. Petronius' *Satyricon*) and introspection by local elites (Wilson 1990:379). It was in this context that caricatures developed on Pompeian walls in opposition to these upper-class expressions (cf. Petr. *Sat.* 29). Graphic engravings followed their own inner logic (cf. Schefold 1972:251 on erudite painting), subjected to intra-systemic stimuli (Walicki 1991:101) and structured like literary language in terms of *compositio, inuncutura,* or *synthesis* (Freudenburg 1990:197). As this system was never made explicit, 'knowledge should be used that is 'dispersed' among different graffiti, following Hayek's (1940:530) suggestion when referring to economic systems analysis (cf. Blackburn 1991:34–5). Self-portraits and *imagines ridiculae* enable us to note how the drawing enhances physical traits that would be interpreted as ridiculous and as signs of powerlessness or otherwise as praiseworthy. Let us compare three couples of figures (Figs 5, 6, 7; Tables 4, 5, 6).

The same analytical scheme can be applied to other graffiti (cf. *CIL* IV 1464; 7309;

Figure 8. *Man and animal fighting, CIL IV 8017.*

7669; 7671; 8119; 8185; 10005; 10239). We note that self-portraits tend to stress features associated with power, authority, attention, intelligence (cf. Table 4), with the ambiguous features probably being represented as their praiseworthy side (cf. Tables 5, 6). On the other hand, *imagines ridiculae* stress censorious connotations, probably also important for the ambiguous features. We must conclude then that, although not explicitly, there was a choice of defined traits framing a meaningful drawn structure (Lists 1, 2, 3). It should be noticed that the syntactical composition depends on exo-semiotic (cultural) connotations, that is, on specific associations of physical looks and implied behavioural meanings. Furthermore, these pictures show that ordinary people not only did criticise people in power (cf. *CIL* IV 9226, Fig. 6) but also used their own stylistic and symbolic creativity to carry on this critique. Therefore, we must not 'overestimate the power of ideological formations to control and manipulate people and underrate the ability of the lower classes to see through the ideologies by which elites seek to dominate them' (Trigger 1989:786; Rowlands 1983:111).

Graphic caricature enables us also to understand how ordinary people's ethos was deeply affected by contradictions, thanks mainly to the inhumanity of slavery as a social institution. Slavery was at the heart of human oppression and the fact that 'all men are free or slave' (*omnes homines aut liberi sunt aut servi*) in Gaius' words (1, 3, 9) implied a process of human dispossession which reached popular strata. Differentiated from gladiatorial shows, represented in erudite paintings (Pl. *N. H.* 35, 51–52), graffiti expressed ordinary supporters feelings about their heroes (Funari 1989:40–42, 63–66). While within the elite there were mixed feelings about *munera* (Ville 1981), these shows of gladiators and hunting spectacles were very much at the heart of popular perceptions of life. Free or slave gladiators proved that men could be put to death (cf. Sen. *Ep.* 87: *comparare homines ad gladium*) for people's pleasure. Ultimately, the private submission of men to men, as slaves to masters, was justified in the popular mind through the collective possession of men (gladiators) and their destruction

Table 7. Data lists relating to tables 4, 5, and 6, and Figures 8 and 9.

	Praisworthy	ambiguous	subversive
data in Table 4			
CIL IV 10222	0	0	5
CIL IV 9008	3	0	0
data in Table 5			
CIL IV 9226	1	3	3
CIL IV 10205	1	2	0
data in Table 6			
CIL IV 10008 (unbearded)	1	2	2
CIL IV 10008 (bearded)	3	2	0

	strokes	percentage	
data in Figure 8[1]			
human body features	7	21.2%	
ambiguous features (legs)	2	6.0%	
fight related features	24	72.7%	

	features	(face strokes per human)	
data in Figure 9[2]			
gladiators	3.5	(100)	
flute players	7	(200)	
two upper gods	20	(571)	

[1] The few body strokes, essential to characterise Venustus as a fighter, do not carry any human features (as facial expression), and his drawing is thus much like the representation of the lion.

[2] The figures in the table refer only to the two upper gods, the two lower drawings are not clearly representations of idols.

for people's entertainment. Gladiators' work and their death were to people what private slaves' work and death were to private masters. This process of men's dispossession of their humanity is expressed clearly in supporters' engravings (cf. *CIL* IV 8055–6; 10221; 10236). Two examples will be enough to distinguish different levels of human figure representation according to social standing (*CIL* IV 8017; 10237; Figs 8, 9).

In *CIL* IV 8017 (Fig. 8) man and animal are represented as equals, as they actually were as a magnificent public spectacle in the *venatio* (*apparatus*, Cic. *Off.* 2,16,55), the human face of Venustus being clearly not represented. Most of the lines used to carry out Venustus' drawing refer to weapons and clothes relating to the fight: he is a faceless fighter for people's amusement (Fig. 8, List 4). In *CIL* IV 10237 use of the increasing human traits from the gladiators to the flute players up to the two visible upper gods (Fig. 9, List 5) is easily seen. We must conclude thus that people's perception of social standing was expressed unconsciously through their graphic semiotic system and that it contributed to the reinforcement of social bonds.

Caricature at Pompeii was very much abstractionist in character, sometimes seizing in the same picture three interrelated levels: verbal, phonic, and iconic. A case in

Figure 9. *Gladiators, flute players, and gods, CIL IV 10237.*

Figure 10.

point is *CIL* IV 8329 (Fig. 10) at the same time a written message (*SSevera phelassss = severa felas* = Severa, you suck), a phonic expression of the act thanks to the repetition of the letter S, and a caricature of bother partners (Fig. 10). The high degree of abstraction in this caricature shows that people's *aisthesis* and expression, far from being unsophisticated, crude and direct, could reach high systemic levels of complexity and subjectivity (Funari 1987).

TOWARDS THE SPECIFICITY OF THE PEOPLE'S ETHOS

We can sum up our study of graphic drawings stressing three interrelated aspects:
1. There was a specific semiotic system relating to graphic wall drawing;

2. This system was at the same time symbolic and social in character. It was symbolic in so far as it developed in opposition to erudite painting as an open air engraving technique with specific rules of composition. It was also social, for this symbolic system expressed, through social contradictions, people's feelings. Particularly clear are class and status differences at the basis of both popular perception and expression;

3. As a consequence, through autonomous symbolic devices, caricature served at the same time to criticise people in power (cf. *CIL* IV 9226), to reinforce social exploitation and distinction (cf. *CIL* IV 10237), and to express people's self-esteem (*CIL* IV 9008), interests (*CIL* IV 8017), and passions (cf. *CIL* IV 8329).

But perhaps ancient caricatures should simply be enjoyed. If so, I should finish quoting Greene's very apropos dialogue:

> Said the bishop, 'There is no bird this year in last year's nests.'
> 'It's a beautiful phrase,' father Quixote said, 'but what did he mean by it?'
> 'I have never quite made it out myself,' the bishop replied, 'but surely the beauty is enough . . .'

> – Monsignor Quixote

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ABSTRACTS

Graphic caricature and the ethos of ordinary people at Pompeii

The graphic symbolism of Pompeian caricatures is approached through a semiotically defined, oppositional framework, in which possible adjectives and connotations attached to various physical features are listed. These in turn are grouped either as those associated with power and authority or as those associated with their absence.

Although scholars have often ignored popular culture or characterised it as coarse and vulgar, the caricatures are found to have a sophisticated semiotic system that stood in opposition to erudite upper class painting and served to criticise people in power. Nevertheless, caricatures of slavery as an institution reveals that ordinary people's ethos was affected by social contradictions and thus social bonds were unconsciously reinforced.

Graphische Karikaturen und das Ethos gewöhnlicher Leute in Pompeji

Der graphische Symbolismus pompeischer Karikaturen wird beleuchtet anhand eines semiotisch definierten Gerüsts, in welchem mögliche Adjektive und Konnotationen aufgelistet sind, die verschiedenen physischen Grundzügen zugeordnet wurden. Diese sind abwechselnd zusammengestellt, entweder als solche, die im Zusammenhang stehen mit Macht und Autorität, oder als solche, die mit deren Abwesenheit im Zusammenhang stehen.

Obwohl Gelehrte häufig Volkskunst ignoriert oder als derb und vulgär charakterisiert haben, wird den Karikaturen ein anspruchsvolles semiotisches System unterstellt, das in Opposition zur Malerei der gebildeten Oberschicht stand und dazu diente, Leute im Besitz der Macht zu kritisieren. Nichtsdestoweniger offenbaren Karikaturen von Sklaverei als Institution, daß sich soziale Gegensätze auf das Ethos gewöhnlicher Leute ausgewirkt haben und soziale Fesseln daher unbewußt verstärkt wurden.

Caricatures graphiques et la morale des gens du peuple à Pompéi

Le symbolisme graphique des caricatures de Pompéi est abordé à travers une structure de défini-tions sémiotiques et d'oppositions dans laquelle d'éventuels adjectifs et connotations en relation avec les différents caractéristiques physiques sont énumérés. Celles-ci à leur tour sont regroupées en étant associées soit au pouvoir et à l'autorité soit à leur absence.

Bien que les érudits aient souvent ignoré la culture populaire ou l'aient caractérisée comme grossière et vulgaire, on a trouvé dans les caricatures un système sémiotique sophistiqué qui s'opposait aux peintures d'érudits de la classe supérieure et qui servait à critiquer les personnes au pouvoir. Cependant, les caricatures évoquant l'institution de l'esclavage révèlent que l'ethique des gens ordinaires était influencé par les contradictions sociales et par conséquent des liens sociaux étaient inconsciemment renforcés.