



**Roma Tre**

DIPARTIMENTO DI  
STUDI UMANISTICI

**RES PUBLICA LITTERARUM**  
STUDIES IN THE CLASSICAL TRADITION

QUADERNI

6

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*In re publica litterarum liberi nos sumus*

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2025

## RES PUBLICA LITTERARUM • QUADERNI

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# PPRET INSCRIPTIONS

INSCRIPTIONS PERTAINING TO THE PRAETORIAN  
PREFECTS FROM 284 TO 395 AD.

PAPER EDITION

PIERFRANCESCO PORENA,  
ELEONORA ANGIUS, ANDREA BERNIER,  
GIORDANA FRANCESCHINI, IRENE VAGIONAKIS

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INSCRIPTION IN HONOUR OF THE DECEASED PRAET.  
 PREFECT VETTIUS AGORIUS PRAETEXTATUS  
 FROM ROME (PAL. MASSIMO ALLE COLONNE)<sup>1</sup>

EDITIONS: *CIL* VI 1777 (p. 4757); *ILS* 1258; Niquet 2000, p. 248 = *AE* 2000, 102; Kahlos 2002, p. 221

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LINKS: *EDCS* 18100591; *EDR* 128718; *LSA* 1472; *TM* 570240

PLRE: I, pp. 722-24

PRAETORIAN PREFECTS: Vettius Agorius Praetextatus

DATE OF THE INSCRIPTION: 384/450 AD

PROVENANCE AND LOCATION

Ancient city: Roma. Modern city: Rome (Italy). Province: Urbs. Diocese: Italiciana. Regional prefecture: Italia Illyricum Africa.

Provenance: found in the 16th Century in Rome on the Aventine hill, near the church of S. Alessio. Current location: Roma, Palazzo Massimo alle Colonne, Scala nobile. Ancient location: private building, *domus*.

TYPE AND MATERIAL OF THE SUPPORT AND TEXT LAYOUT

Type of support: statue base. Material: marble.

Reuse of the inscribed field: yes. Reuse of the monument: no. Epistographic: no.

Dimensions of support: Height: 79 cm. Width: 61 cm. Breadth: unknown. Dimensions of letters: 2.5/3 cm.

Inscribed field: One inscribed field (*frons*). Undamaged.

Writing technique: chiselled. Language: Latin. Rhythm, prose. Palaeography: late Roman capitals.

TEXT CATEGORY: Honorary inscription for the praetorian prefect Praetextatus

1. The author would like to thank I. Tantillo for reviewing the inscribed monument with him and for providing him with important suggestions.

## LATIN TEXT

Vettio Agorius Praetextato, v(iro) c(larissimo) et inl(ustri),  
 correctori Tusciae et Umbriae,  
 consulari Lusitaniae, proconsuli  
 Achaiae, p̄r̄āēf(ecto) ūrb(i), p̄r̄āēf(ecto) praetorii  
 5 Illyrici Italiae et Africae, cōns(uli) designato,  
 legato amplissimi ordinis septies  
 et ad impetrandum reb(us) arduis  
 semper opposito (vac.)  
 parenti publice privatimq(ue) reverendo,  
 10 ut etiam statuae (sic) ipsius domus  
 honoraret insignia constitui  
 (vac.) locarique curavit. (vac.)

## CRITICAL EDITION

Edition based on *CIL* VI 1777 and *SupplIt-Imagines*,  
 1: *inl(ustrissimo)*, *LSA*  
 6-7: *septies et*, *ILS*

## TRANSLATIONS

– English: «To Vettius Agorius Praetextatus, of clarissimus and illustrious rank, corrector of Tuscia and Umbria, consular of Lusitania, proconsul of Achaia, urban prefect, praetorian prefect of Illyricum, Italy and Africa, designated consul, legate of the most ample order (= Senate of Rome) seven times and always confronted by very difficult questions to be submitted (to the emperors), a father worthy of veneration in public and in private, so that through his statue the *domus* would also honour the insignia (?) took care that (this) was set up».

– French: «Au clarissime et illustre Vettius Agorius Praetextatus, correcteur de Tuscie et d'Ombrie, consulaire de Lusitanie, proconsul d'Achaïe, préfet urbain, préfet du prétoire d'Illyricum, d'Italie et d'Afrique, consul désigné, légat de l'ordre le plus ample (= Sénat de Rome) sept fois et toujours placé devant des questions très difficiles à poser (aux empereurs), père digne de vénération en public et en privé, de sorte que même de sa statue la *domus* honorait les insignes, (?) s'est chargé de réaliser et de placer».

– Italian: «Al chiarissimo e illustre Vettius Agorius Praetextatus, correttore di Tuscia e Umbria, consolare di Lusitania, proconsole d'Acaia, prefetto urbano, prefetto del pretorio dell'Ilirico, d'Italia e d'Africa, console designato, legato dell'amplissimo ordine (= Senato di Roma) per sette volte e sempre posto di fronte a que-

stioni molto difficili da essere esaudite, padre degno di venerazione in pubblico e in privato, affinché anche di una statua dello stesso la *domus* onorasse le insegne, (?) curò di realizzare e di collocare».

#### THE INSCRIPTION AND ITS PREFECTS: CRITICAL COMMENTARY, UPDATING, OVERVIEWS

The inscribed base was found in Rome, on the Aventine hill, in the vineyard near to the church of S. Alessio in the 16th Century, probably after 1533 and before 1568 (see *CIL VI 1777* introduction and apparatus). Between 1532 and 1536, Pietro Massimo had the Palazzo Massimo alle Colonne (Corso Vittorio Emanuele II, 141; on the palace see Cafà 2007) built in the rione Parione in Rome by the architect Baldassarre Peruzzi (1481-1537). The inscription found on the Aventine hill was placed in this large building, which was located along the Via Papalis and became part of the collection of antiquities of Fabrizio Camillo Massimo (1536-1633); the collection was later expanded by Cardinal Carlo Camillo II Massimo (1620-1677). In the manuscript inventory of the cardinal's epigraphic collection, compiled in 1677, the inscription is listed as exhibited «in palatio Columnaru(m)» (in the Codex of the Biblioteca Angelica in Rome nr. 1684, f. 46, nr. 92; cf. Buonocore 1996, pp. 196 and 200; on the epigraphic collection that was brought to Palazzo Massimo alle Colonne cf. Cerrone, Crimi 2016). The inscription is currently mounted in the wall of the Palazzo's Scala Nobile (noble staircase).

The monument was probably located originally in a *domus*, but it is not certain whether the house was one of the properties of Vettius Agorius Praetextatus or his wife Fabia Aconia Paulina (on whom see PPRET 20), or other Roman aristocrats. At line 10 the inscription recalls the location in a *domus* (see below).

#### STRUCTURE AND PROBLEMS

The monument is a statue base in honour of Vettius Agorius Praetextatus. The great pagan senator was probably born between 310-320 AD, and more likely towards 320. He held four public priesthoods in the city of Rome and, together with his wife Fabia Aconia Paulina, he was a priest and initiate in various foreign and mystery cults in Greece and Rome. He pursued a long and successful senatorial *cursus honorum* between 350/355 and 384 AD and died in Rome while he was the ordinary consul designated for 385 AD (on Praetextatus and his career, see in brief Seeck 1883, pp. LXXXIII-XC;

Nistler 1910; Ensslin 1954b; *PLRE* I, pp. 722-24; Kuhoff 1997; for an in depth study, see Kalhos 2002; see also PPRET 77 and below). The text of the inscription in Palazzo Massimo alle Colonne is structurally traditional: it comprises the senator's complete onomastics and rank (l. 1), the senatorial *cursus honorum* in chronological order (ll. 2-5), a long eulogy of his qualities as an ambassador on behalf of the Senate of Rome (ll. 6-8), the motivation for the construction of the monument (ll. 9-11) and finally the person behind the construction of the monument (ll. 11-12).

Four inscriptions celebrate Praetextatus and record his *cursus honorum* (besides our monument, see the funerary altar PPRET 77, a public monument from the Roman Forum PPRET 78, a large monument now in Palazzo Altemps PPRET 79). Although they are alike, they do reveal some differences.

The inscription on the front (side a) of the funerary altar gives the couple's perspective on their lives. The monument was conceived and commissioned by husband and wife, and created by Paulina. Since Praetextatus was the first to pass, his memory is celebrated first. Both in the inscription on the front of the altar (see PPRET 77, side a, ll. 3-8 and ll. 8-18) and in the Palazzo Altemps inscription (see PPRET 79, col. I and col. II) – which lacks the dedicator's name and which was probably placed in a private setting (the tomb is also a private setting) – the priestly offices precede the civil offices. This is precisely the order of importance that Praetextatus and Paulina gave to the two careers. In these two inscriptions, the senator's intense traditional religious activity is greatly exalted (for that of his wife, see also PPRET 20).

The *cursus honorum* of the altar is identical to that of the Palazzo Altemps inscription: at the beginning they list the two magistracies of Rome (*quaestura* and *praetura*), but only in the altar (side a, l. 15) are the senatorial diplomatic missions commemorated. These two very large and elegant monuments fail to name their dedicator. In the case of the altar this was because it was commissioned by the couple who are celebrated on the front (side a), while in the case of the base at Palazzo Altemps, it is because such a dedication would have been superfluous, given that the monument would have been placed in the couple's *domus*.

The fragmentary inscription from the Roman Forum (PPRET 78) does not indicate the ancient Roman magistracies, and although the presence of the senatorial embassies is uncertain, we know that it certainly had the name of the dedicator (now lost). This public monument is similar to the inscription in Palazzo Massimo alle Colonne. Both do not indicate the magistracies of Rome (*quaestura* and *praetura*), but the second inscription glorifies

the senatorial embassies (ll. 6-8): seven ambassadorships are cited instead of the five listed in the funerary altar (side a, l. 15), and these are placed after the praetorian prefecture, even though they ought to have been inserted between the urban prefecture and the praetorian prefecture. It is likely that the two inscriptions that mention the magistracies of Rome (the funerary altar and the Palazzo Altemps inscription) were placed in private settings (sepulchre and *domus*) and that they were commissioned by the family; the two inscriptions that do not mention the magistracies of Rome (in the Roman Forum and our base in Palazzo Massimo alle Colonne) were (at least originally) set up in public places. To sum up, the inscription from Palazzo Massimo alle Colonne, in the form in which it has come down to us, appears to unite certain characteristics of the other three monuments in honour of Praetextatus in Rome. Although the Palazzo Massimo alle Colonne text passes over the senator's religious activity completely and offers a *cursus* that is void of the city's traditional magistracies, it exalts Praetextatus' role as defender of the Senate's interests and claims that the monument was erected in a *domus*. It also claims that it had a dedicator, even if the latter's identity is never mentioned outright.

Concerning the chronology, it is certain that the inscription was made after the death of Praetextatus, which occurred between October and December 384 AD (on Praetextatus' death, see Vera 1983a, pp. 140-42, who dates the death between December 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> 384 AD; Cecconi 2002, pp. 266-81, who dates it between October and the first half of November 384 AD; see also Kahlos 2002, pp. 151-71; on Praetextatus' funeral, see Matthews 2009, pp. 131 f.). The designation to the ordinary consulship (l. 5) proves that the inscription was chiselled when Praetextatus was dead (thus the *terminus post quem* is the end of 384 AD). Concerning the *terminus ante quem* see below.

The inscription raises many questions about how we interpret the monument and the text upon it. The following examination commences with the text's physical characteristics, before analyzing its content line by line.

The base is of medium size and the writing has the usual alignment to the left that alternates, however, between lines containing a few letters (l. 6: 24 letters; l. 10: 25 letters; l. 11: 26 letters) and lines containing many letters (l. 1: 30 letters; l. 4: 29 letters; l. 5: 37 letters; l. 9: 32 letters). The text does not perfectly correspond to the size of the epigraphic field and lacks the elegance of the senator's other inscriptions. A long and conspicuous space is left blank in the right half of l. 8 for no syntactic reason. The palaeography is, however, reminiscent of inscriptions of 5th Century AD Rome: the letters F, L, T are taller than the guidelines in ll. 1-5; the letters I, L, T are taller than the guide-

lines in ll. 9-12. But in ll. 6-8, which is the only section dedicated to glorifying the senator as a defender of the Senate of Rome, these letters are all of the same height; ll. 6-8 almost appear to be an insertion of another text within the main text of the inscription. The horizontal lines above the office abbreviations (ll. 4 and 5) are classical short supralineations of the 5th Century AD (according to Gordon 1948, p. 90 the supralineated abbreviation *praef(ecto) urb(i)* is attested only in the 5th Century AD). The same short supralineations can be seen in the inscription rehabilitating Virius Nicomachus Flavianus senior in Trajan's Forum dating to September 13<sup>th</sup> 431 AD (see PPRET 93, ll. 1, 2, 4, 5, 37). A comparison with other honorary senatorial inscriptions in Rome found on the Aventine hill, where our inscription comes from, and which date to the 5th Century AD (between ca. 402 and 450 AD), shows that they have many similar characteristics: these include the palaeography and the short supralineature, the exaltation of the honoured senator's legations on behalf of the Senate to the emperors and the location of the monument in the aristocratic *domus* on the hill (cf. for example *CIL* VI 41383 = *LSA* 1521 = *EDR* 073082; *CIL* VI 1192 = *ILS* 796 = *LSA* 1309 = *EDR* 122363; the same recipient *v(iro) c(larissimo) et inl(ustri)* in *CIL* VI 1735 = *LSA* 1438 = *EDR* 134903; *CIL* VI 1659 = *LSA* 1343 = *EDR* 122886; regarding the Aventine as an aristocratic hill in the late empire, cf. Andreussi 1993, in particular p. 150; archaeological updates by Capodiferro, Mignone, Quaranta 2017; concerning the resident christianized elite, see Testard 1996; Mazzucco 2006). In terms of the analysis of the palaeography and the epigraphic field, the three other inscriptions from Rome in honour of Praetextatus fit well into the capital's high-level epigraphic production in the second half of the 4th Century AD (see PPRET 77, 78, 79), the inscription in Palazzo Massimo alle Colonne appears to be an inscription of mediocre quality dated to the 5th Century AD, probably after 410 and before 450 AD.

In l. 1 the rank of Praetextatus is anomalous. In five inscriptions from Rome Praetextatus is styled only as *v(ir) c(larissimus)* (see PPRET 20; 78; 79; also *CIL* VI 102; 2145). It is only in our inscription that he is referred to as *v(ir) c(larissimus) et inl(ustris)*. In the years between 372 and 382 AD, the rank of *vir illustris* was introduced into the titlature for the praetorian prefects, the prefect of Rome, the ordinary consuls and the *magistri militum*. The rank of *vir spectabilis* is reserved for the proconsuls, the vicars, the *magister officiorum*, the *quaestor sacri palatii*, the palatine counts and the *comites rei militaris* (on the imperial regulations on the structuring of rank gradations in the *ordo dignitatum*, cf. Chastagnol 1992, pp. 293-96; Näf 1995, pp. 20-22; Schmidt-Hofner 2010; concerning the genesis of this process, cf. Oppedisano 2019). The rank

of *illustris* is never indicated in the address of the constitutions compiled in the Law Codes: it appears occasionally in the later laws of the Theodosian Code (*CTh* VI 23, 4 to the praetorian prefect of the East on 437 AD, the last constitution of this Code; *CTh* VII 4, 32 to the praetorian prefect of Illyricum on 412 AD; *CTh* VI 27, 17 and *CTh* VI 27, 20 to the *quaestor* and the *magister officiorum* on 416 and 426 AD). The adjective *illustris* in the texts of the constitutions is found in expressions such as *illustris praefectura tua* or *illustris igitur auctoritas tua*, or in generic references to the office, the praetorian prefecture (*CTh* IX 2, 2, on 365 AD; *CTh* X 19, 9, on 378 AD; *CTh* VIII 4, 17, on 389 AD), but it is possible that it is an editorial update by the compilers of the Code assembling the texts in the years 435/438 AD. The rank *vir illustris* is associated with the prefect's name in the text of the Theodosian constitutions in *CTh* XI 1, 6 (354 AD), 16, 12 (380 AD, anonymous), I 6, 8 (382 AD), X 10, 19 (387 AD), IX 38, 9 (396 AD) (a prefect of Rome styled *illustris* on 368/369 AD, cf. *Coll. Avell.* 9, 3); henceforth the rank is only regularly associated with the office holder in the constitutions issued in the 5th Century AD. It is therefore very difficult to establish precisely when, in the second half of the 4th Century AD, the rank of *illustris* began to be used with regularity in official documents.

In the epigraphy of Rome, the rank of *vir illustris* is a regular feature of the later period (cf. Niquet 2000, pp. 129 f.; according to Gordon 1948, p. 99, the non supralineated abbreviation VC ET INL is first attested around 440 AD): the inscription on the altar of the Magna Mater and Attis in Rome, made by Ceionius Rufius Volusianus (*PLRE I*, Volusianus 3, p. 976), the son of the praetorian prefect C. Ceionius Rufius Volusianus *signo* Lampadius (see *PPRET* 36), is the first inscription to list this rank and can be dated to May 23<sup>rd</sup> 390 AD. However, in this particular inscription the word *illustris* is not abbreviated and may not be a rank, but an epithet. In the years 400/408 AD in the inscriptions of Fl. Stilicho, the *magister* is referred to as *vir clarissimus et illustris* (upon the gates of the Aurelian Wall reinforced by Honorius: Portuensis *CIL* VI 1188 = *LSA* 1306 = *EDR* 115043; Praenestina *CIL* VI 1189 = *LSA* 1307 = *EDR* 104281; Tiburtina *CIL* VI 1190 = *LSA* 1308 = *EDR* 105399, cf. Dey 2011, pp. 32-48; 137-55; Orlandi 2021; followed by the inscription by the Roman corporations *CIL* VI 41382 = *LSA* 1587 = *EDR* 073007, which can be dated to the period 400/405 AD; finally his bronze tablet *CIL* VI 1732 = *CIL* VI 31914 = *CIL* XV 7134 = *EDR* 111529, which first presents the abbreviated form). The first inscription which shows the abbreviation VC ET INL is probably the dedication in honour of Iunius Quartus Palladius, praetorian prefect of Italia Illyricum Africa in the years 416-421 AD and ordinary con-

sul in 416 AD (*CIL* VI 41383 = *LSA* 1521 = *EDR* 073082; see *PLRE* II, pp. 822-24). Between the 5th and 6th Centuries AD many Latin inscriptions refer to senators with the rank of *illustris*. In epigraphy, the rank of *illustris* establishes itself in the first half of the 5th Century AD. The way in which the first line of the inscription in Palazzo Massimo alle Colonne was structured offers further evidence, since the title *et inl(ustri)* seems to have been forcibly added to the far right of a line that only included the abbreviation *v(iro) c(larissimo)*, which is the only abbreviation of rank to appear in other inscriptions honouring the senator.

In ll. 2-5, Praetextatus' *cursus honorum* is listed in chronological order. As already stated, it does not list the traditional magistracies of Rome, *quaestor candidatus* and *praetor urbanus* (above). According to all of Praetextatus' inscriptions, the senator was *corrector Tusciae et Umbriae*, then *consularis Lusitaniae* in the decade 350/360 AD, before 362 AD. Between 362 and 364 AD, he led a long proconsulate of Achaia at the behest of the emperor Julian (Grogan 1946, pp. 45-48). He became prefect of Rome between the Summer 367 and the Summer 368 AD (Chastagnol 1962, pp. 171-78; Kalhos 1995). He was also active in improving the monumental and sacred buildings of Rome (see *CIL* VI 102 = *ILS* 4003 = *LSA* 1503 = *EDR* 135295; *CIL* VI 41378 = *EDR* 073920). He governed the city impartially (*Amm.* XXVII 9, 8-9) particularly during the clash between the Christian supporters of Damasus and Ursinus (Kahlos 1997 and 2002, pp. 115-23; Lizzi Testa 2004, pp. 159-69; Reutter 2009, pp. 31-56). Fifteen years after the end of his prefecture of Rome, in 382/383 AD, Praetextatus was honoured by a monument in the statue cycle of Gortyna that celebrated some great contemporary Roman senators. The monument was put up in the local *Praetorium* by the provincials of Crete under the aegis of the *consularis Cretae* Oecumenius Dositheus Asclepiodotus (*ICret.* IV 316 = Bigi Tantillo 2020, pp. 192 f., nr. 3): the inscription in Greek records him as an urban prefect, but it is likely that the beginning of his praetorian prefecture of *Italia et Illyricum* was imminent (see Tantillo 2020b, pp. 69, 74 f.; Porena 2020a, pp. 103-5; 113-17; 119 f.; Porena 2020b, p. 156; cf. Porena 2023a, pp. 118 f., 164-66, 182-87, 190-91, and below). After his urban prefecture ended in September 368 AD, fifteen years of *otium* followed that were rich in cultural and religious activity. In this period he carried out numerous senatorial diplomatic missions to the courts of the emperors Valentinian I and Gratian, a prestigious and difficult task which is listed later in the inscription (see below, ll. 6-8). In Summer 383-Autumn 384 AD he held the praetorian prefecture of *Italia et Illyricum* (ll. 4-5), followed in the Autumn of 384 AD by the designation to the ordinary consulate for the

year 385 AD (*CLRE*, pp. 304 f.); but the senator died suddenly, as already stated, in December 384 AD at the latest (above). In all the inscriptions made in his honour after his death, he is remembered as the appointed consul because it was the most prestigious office of his career. The monuments in his honour in Rome all seem to have been created after Praetextatus' death, which shocked the city.

At ll. 4-5 the Palazzo Massimo alle Colonne inscription differs from the other three inscriptions extolling the senator's *cursus*. In 383 or 384 AD, shortly before or just after the assassination of the emperor Gratian, Praetextatus was, according to scholars, appointed praetorian prefect of Italia Illyricum Africa. In 384 AD Praetextatus held a single praetorian prefecture, shortly after the conclusion of which (September/October 384 AD), he died. His death probably occurred in the first half of December at the latest (above). Unfortunately, the *cursus honorum* on the inscription from the Roman Forum is fragmentary and so after the lacuna we can only read (PPRET 78, l. 4): [*praef(ecto) praet(orio) II*][*lyr[i]ci et Italia[e]*]. In the inscription on the front of the funerary altar (PPRET 77, side a, ll. 16-17) and in the inscription in Palazzo Altemps (PPRET 79, *frons*, col. II, ll. 11-12) – two inscriptions written at a later time, but very close chronologically to Praetextatus' praetorian prefecture – the prefecture has a numeral 'two', *II*, between the post of *praefectus praetorio* and the area of jurisdiction designated *Italiae et Illyrici*. Scholars have considered the insertion of the numeral 'two', *II*, to be a stone cutters' mistake, considering only the Palazzo Massimo alle Colonne text to be correct (ll. 4-5): *praef(ecto) praetorii / Illyrici Italiae et Africae*. In 1934 Palanque speculated that in the inscription on the front of the funerary altar (PPRET 77, side a), the stone cutter had mistakenly confused the lines. According to the French scholar, the stone cutter divided the original number seven (*VII*) of the inscription in the Palazzo Massimo alle Colonne (l. 6), and attributed a *II* to Praetextatus' praetorian prefecture, and a *V* to his senatorial embassies in the inscription chiselled on the front of the funerary altar (side a, resp. l. 16 and l. 15). From the inscription of the funerary altar the wrong iteration (*II*) of the praetorian prefecture would have been copied onto the later honorary inscription of Palazzo Altemps. Although unlikely, this interpretation has been universally accepted (see for example Niquet 2000, pp. 242 f., and transposed in *CIL* VI, pp. 4757-59). However, Palanque's theory is weakened by perfection of the funerary altar and the great size of honorary base from Palazzo Altemps, particularly when compared to the small base from Palazzo Massimo alle Colonne, the text of which is unfinished and difficult to understand (below). The two splendid monuments put up in

Rome for Praetextatus – the great posthumous honorary base which probably once stood in a rich *domus* (now in Palazzo Altemps) and the famous magnificent funerary altar from a noble mausoleum (now in the Capitoline Museums) – are independent of each other in terms of workmanship, chronology, location and destination. Both inscriptions record Praetextatus as *praefectus praetorio II Italiae et Illyrici*, and this formula is accurate and chronologically very close to the senator's prefectorial office (end 384/beginning 387 AD). The high quality of the chiselling in two different places of two magnificent epigraphic fields with their studied, clear and tasteful layout decisively contradicts the hypothesis of a stone cutter's mistake. Such a possibility becomes even more remote in the case of the magnificent funerary altar, which shows fifty-nine iambic senaries engraved on three sides without an error. A repeated mistake in chiselling on several epigraphic texts of such high quality, both of which were destined to embellish structures (a *domus* and a mausoleum) belonging to powerful and successful aristocrats, is inadmissible, particularly since the senator in question had now attained the very peak of his career.

During the crisis following the catastrophe of Adrianople (August 9<sup>th</sup> 378 AD), the emperor Gratian separated the prefecture of Illyricum from the prefecture of Italy and Africa. It is likely that some senators held two prefectures simultaneously, which might explain the 'strange' numeral 'two', *II*, chiselled on the inscriptions upon Praetextatus and Paulina's funerary altar and upon the base from their *domus*, now in Palazzo Altemps, and which seems to pertain to the period from late 381 to late 384 AD (see Porena 2020a, pp. 113-17 and Porena 2020b, p. 156; 2023a, pp. 182-89, 118 f., and see PPRET 77). In our opinion, in the inscriptions in honour of Praetextatus that were made soon after his death, the numeral 'two', *II*, was chiselled between the title of praetorian prefect and the area of jurisdiction to indicate a single prefectorial mandate that would have covered two related but distinct regional prefectures thanks to the conjunction *et: Italiae et Illyrici* or *Illyrici et Italiae*. Although the Palazzo Massimo alle Colonne inscription has no iteration, the formula *praef(ecto) praetorii / Illyrici Italiae et Africae* (ll. 4-5) suggests that it is probably a late (5th Century AD) update of the original titling engraved at the time of Praetextatus' death. When the Palazzo Massimo alle Colonne inscription was carved, the original titulature (the numeral 'two' followed by two regions only) had become incomprehensible and was therefore updated in a monument of lower quality, whose inscription has been engraved long after the senator's death. After the death of Theodosius I, in 395 AD, the praetorian prefectures were definitively divid-

ed between Milan and Constantinople: the prefecture of Italia, Illyricum (the western one, i.e. Pannoniae) and Africa, and the prefecture of Gaul in the *pars Occidentis*; the prefecture of the East, and the prefecture of Illyricum (the eastern one, i.e. Dacia and Macedonia) in the *pars Orientis*. This arrangement features in the 'Notitia Dignitatum' (*occ.* II and III, pp. 107-11 Seeck; *or.* II and III, pp. 5-10 Seeck) and lasts throughout the entire 5th Century AD. Concerning the administrative area of the western prefecture of Italia Illyricum Africa, this is confirmed by the epigraphic titling of *Illyrici Italiae et Africae* in the inscription of Iunius Quartus Palladius, prefect in the years 416-421 AD (*CIL* VI 41383 = *LSA* 1521 = *EDR* 073082; see *PLRE* II, pp. 822-24). It is also found in the title *Italiae Afric(a)e et Inlyrici* in the inscription of Anicius Acilius Glabrio Faustus, prefect in the years 437/438 AD (*CIL* XIV 2165 = *ILS* 1283 = *LSA* 324 = *EDR* 144089; see *PLRE* II, pp. 452-54) and in the title *praef(ecto) praet(orio) Italiae [Illyrici et Africae]* in the inscription of Petronius Maximus, prefect in the years 433/437 AD (*CIL* VI 41398 = *LSA* 1525 = *EDR* 093620; see *PLRE* II, pp. 749-51). Rome's early 5th Century AD stone cutters were accustomed to this title, which indicated the three administered areas for the prefecture in which Rome was located. The illustrious office was usually held by the ancient capital's aristocrats to whom inscribed monuments were erected. In contrast, in the 4th Century AD the vast central prefecture of the West, including its five dioceses (Italiciana, Africa, Pannoniae, Dacia, Macedonia) could be sub-divided into either one, two or three praetorian prefectures. Illyricum was an autonomous praetorian prefecture in the periods 344/361 AD and in 376/(?)395 AD. Thus the epigraphic titulatures of the praetorian prefects could include the three areas, Italia Illyricum Africa (see *PPRET* 46, 59, 93 two times), which in themselves were made up of several prefectures, as in the case of Petronius Probus (*PPRET* 63, 65, 66), which included only two areas (*PPRET* 49), or only one prefecture (*PPRET* 70, 95). In our opinion, Praetextatus held a 'two-seat' praetorian prefecture in 383/384 AD, styled *II, Italiae et Illyrici*, an arrangement that only lasted, as mentioned, for a short period from the end of 381 to the end of 384 AD. If, as we believe, the inscription in Palazzo Massimo alle Colonne is a 5th Century AD copy of an inscription on a monument for the senator made immediately after his death (385 AD), the original titulature of Praetextatus' praetorian prefecture was incomprehensible to the 5th Century AD stone cutter. In our opinion, the chiselling of ll. 4 and 5 of the inscription is evidence of this adaptation of the senator's office as praetorian prefect in a more comprehensible way: the letters are numerous, because the original titulature (*praef. praet. II Italiae et Illyrici*) was shorter, 29 letters,

than the new titlature containing three praetorial areas (*praefecto praetorii Illyrici Italiae et Africae*), which was longer, 38 letters. Furthermore, on l. 4 the praetorial titlature is characterised by the very rare noun PRAETORII, engraved in full, which is usually abbreviated to PRAET in Latin epigraphy. For us the 5th Century AD stone cutter did not include the numeral two, *II*, after the abbreviation PRAET – i.e. the PRAETII that can be read in the inscription on the front of the altar (PPRET 77, side a, ll. 16-17) and in the inscription in Palazzo Altamps (PPRET 79, *frons*, col. II, ll. 11-12). It was rare in epigraphy and completely obsolete in administrative terms in the 5th Century AD, so the stone cutter interpreted it as PRAETORII, after which he added the regional indication in three areas, the only one that existed in his time.

In ll. 6-8, three lines are reserved for Praetextatus' activity as ambassador on behalf of the Senate of Rome to the courts of the emperors Valentinian I and Gratian. This aspect was very important to the author of the inscribed text: he extolled the great delicacy with which the senator went about negotiating with the Augusti (ll. 7-8). These were thorny issues, requiring all the diplomacy, political culture and rhetoric that Praetextatus had in order to defend the interests of the aristocracy of Rome. The diplomatic missions probably took place between the time of his urban prefecture (367/368 AD) and that of the praetorian prefecture (383/384 AD). However, in our inscription they are placed after the *cursus honorum*, whereas in the funerary altar (PPRET 77, side a, l. 15) they are in the correct place. On the altar only one line is dedicated to this task. The number of embassies is uncertain: while there are seven in the inscription from Palazzo Massimo alle Colonne, the funerary altar has only five. In our opinion, five were led by Praetextatus as head of delegation, while in two delegations he was only a member. Thanks to Ammianus, one of Praetextatus' embassies on behalf of the Senate of Rome is known, that of 371 AD to Valentinian I in Trier to denounce abuses of the *vicarius Urbis* Maximinus (Amm. XXVIII 1, 24-25; cf. Lizzi Testa 2004, pp. 247 f.).

Immediately after the celebration of his role as a senatorial ambassador, the inscription in l. 8 presents an abrupt interruption, marked by a deliberate gap in the inscription. From this point the text becomes more obscure and reveals ineffective syntactic and expressive reworking.

In l. 9, immediately after the suspension of the engraving, a very peculiar expression appears, which is unique in the Latin epigraphy: *parenti publice privatimque reverendo*. O. Seeck (1883, p. LXXXVI, n. 386) thought that the noun *parens* corresponded to *pater* and assumed that the monument was dedicated

by a son of Praetextatus to his father. All subsequent scholars have accepted this interpretation (according to Al. Cameron 2011, p. 158, the absence of priesthoods indicates that the son «was either a Christian or a moderate pagan who did not want visitors to assume that (s)he shared father's obsessive religiosity»; for a similar view, see Hillner 2003, pp. 131 f.). However, the urban prefect Symmachus, in an important official document, the first *Relatio* to Valentinian II, in which he announces the death of Praetextatus to the emperor, defines him with a similar expression: *vir omnium domi forisque virtutum* (Symm. *rel.* 10, 1; similarly Symm. *epist.* III 34: Magnillus *vicarius Africae* in 392/393 AD is called *publice privatimque conspicuus*). The relationship between pagan and Christian senators in Rome in the years 382/384 AD was particularly strained, creating tensions that spilled out from the private domain into the public one. In 384 AD, during the dispute over the altar of Victory in the senatorial Curia, Bishop Ambrose of Milan reminded the emperor Valentinian II that as early as 382 AD, when Praetextatus argued for the altar to be relocated in the Senate house, the Christian senators «had protested both publicly and privately (*publice privatimque*) that they would not come to meetings of the Senate if such a decision was made», that is to say if the altar was placed there. Ambrose's expression is identical to the expression in l. 9 of our inscription. In his letter, the bishop of Milan emphasised that his supplication to the emperor Gratian in 382 AD proved that the legation of the Senate of Rome to the emperor's court (in Milan) was invalid and had not been authorised by the assembly (Ambr. *epist.* X 72 [17], 10; cf. Symm. *rel.* 3, 1; see Lizzi Testa 2015). The choice and the attitude of the senators, pagans and Christians, was then manifested in public and in private in Rome: the expression in our inscription, like that in Ambrose's letter, was not neutral. The bishops of Rome (Damasus) and Milan (Ambrose) had got involved in the Christian senators' dispute, and Ambrose was able to prove to the emperor Gratian that the senatorial embassy of 382 AD was not legitimate, because it had not been sent to Milan by the unanimous will of the Senate. The ambassadorship of 382 AD is perhaps the one in which Praetextatus excelled, since he is praised in the inscription (ll. 6-8). Perhaps the phrase *rebus arduis oppositus* (ll. 7-8) evokes the difficulties and then the failure of that diplomatic mission. The words in ll. 6-9 of the inscription in Palazzo Massimo alle Colonne need to be read in their correct context, that is to say in an atmosphere of increasing rivalry between pagan and Christian senators, a rivalry that saw the pagan Praetextatus in 382/384 AD defending both in public and in private the demands of the traditional cults of the ancient capital. The two dimensions could not be separated, and the inscrip-

tions concerning Praetextatus and Paulina show this clearly. Furthermore, in epigraphy the formula *publice privatimque* is really quite rare. Although it is found in public dedications to benefactors of the community (cf. *ILS* 5491a and b; *AE* 2018, 1912), it does not normally occur in honorary and funerary inscriptions.

The noun *parens* can denote a parent, but is an epithet for public dignitaries at the highest level (*ThLL* X, coll. 359-361), such as the praetorian prefects in the official correspondence of emperors (see PPRET 28, l. 8: *Philippum parentem*; PPRET 53, l. 25: *Secundus parens*; PPRET 56, l. 18: *Probe parens carissime*; *parens* accompanied by the epithets *carissime* and *amantissime* addressed to dignitaries is customary and widespread in the correspondence and legislation of emperors, already in *CTh* XI 1, 6, on 354 AD; see for example *Frg. Vat.* 35, 1; *Consult.* 9, 1; from *Sirm.* 1, on 333 AD, to *Sirm.* 2, on 405 AD; almost all the post-Theodosian Novellae, in the West, for example *Nov. Val.* 1, 1, on 438 AD and *Nov. Val.* 2, 4, on 454 AD; concerning the praetorian prefects *parentes* in the late antique laws, see Ensslin 1954a, coll. 2448-2449). Cassiodorus (*Cassiod. var.* IV 4, 5) states that the senators of Rome are *parentes publici de clementia nominati* by virtue of their paternal involvement in the management of the *res publica* (cf. *Cassiod. var.* III 21; *parentes publici* in VI 8, 3; VIII 2, 2; X 13, 4; *publici patres* in VI 14, 3). The same expression occurs in Symmachus who defines Stilicho *parens publicus* (*Symm. epist.* IV 12, 1). Thus the expression in l. 9, extolling Praetextatus as «father worthy of veneration in public and in private», has even greater meaning when placed in the context of the city of Rome that was still mourning his death. For us the expression in l. 9, immediately after the long exaltation of Praetextatus as an ambassador of the Senate (ll. 6-8), was intended for a public monumental inscription and was composed by some civil or religious body: the text evoked the recent disputes (years 382/384 AD) in the political and religious life of the capital, and was not written for a private family monument (the opposite thesis of C. Machado in *LSA* 1472). The inscription in Palazzo Massimo alle Colonne preserves a text that would have had a strong impact in the current events of those years (for the use of *parens*, see also below).

In ll. 10-11 the text of the inscription, although complete, presents problems of syntax and is unclear: while the subject of the final sentence with the verb *honoraret* is hard to grasp, a main sentence with two subordinates, *constitui locarique curavit*, lacks the subject. In addition, the relationship between the nouns *statua*, *domus* and *insignia* are obscure. The editors of *CIL* VI 1777, W. Henzen or E. Bormann (apparatus) hypothesised: *ut etiam statua ipsius honoraret insignia domus* («so that a statue of the same would also honour the

illustrious parts of his *domus*»). H. Dessau did not revise the text (*ILS* 1258, nn. 5-6): «Haec confusa videntur. Deesse in fine aliquid non traditur sed probabile est (periisse nomen filii coniecit Seeck)». G. Alföldy, F. Mitthof, H. Niquet (*CIL* VI, p. 4757) proposed: «*ut eum etiam statua{e} ipsius domus* i.e. in domo ipsius posita *honoraret, insignia* i.e. statuam insignibus eius ornatam» (similar to *CIL* VI, 1722, l. 11: *voto statuae ornamenta locavit*) «*constitui locarique curavit*» (which we would translate: «since a statue in his *domus* would also honour him, he took care to make and place the statue with *insignia*»). According to the latter, the anonymous dedicator would be a civil servant and not a son of Praetextatus, and his name would have been written, according to Alföldy, on another base that would have stood in the same space (criticised by Niquet 2000, pp. 250 f.). C. Ferro (*EDR* 128718, on 2013) thinks that ll. 10-12 are «da interpretare come: *ut eum etiam statua in domo ipsius posita/honoraret, statuam insignibus eius ornatam constitui/locarique curavit*» (which we would translate: «so that a statue in his *domus* would also honour him, he took care to make and place the statue with *insignia*»). C. Machado (*LSA* 1472) translates: «so that even now (this) statue that was honouring his own house, (...) took care that this distinction (*insignia*) be set up and arranged». Actually ll. 10-12 remain controversial.

Niquet has hypothesised that the Palazzo Massimo alle Colonne inscription was a monument dedicated, not by the senator's son, but by the Senate of Rome in a *domus* of Praetextatus on the Aventine hill (2000, pp. 247-52). His hypothesis resides upon the use of the extended rank, *vir clarissimus et inlustris*, the lack of mention of *quaestura* and *praetura*, the absence of the numeral *II* for the praetorian prefecture, and the absence of the senator's priesthoods. The final formula *constitui locarique curavit* would prove this. However, she is unable to explain the disappearance of the name *senatus* as dedicator, and argues that the formula SPQR had become illegible and was perhaps painted in the space of l. 8. In our opinion, this hypothesis is weak for at least two reasons: there are no honorary monuments commissioned and put up by the Senate of Rome in the private *domus* of senators (or Roman citizens) (Niquet 2000, pp. 249 f., refers to *CIL* VI 1735 = *LSA* 1438 = *EDR* 134903 as a dedication by the Senate in a *domus*, but the monument was erected in a public place); honorary monuments, and other types of inscriptions in Rome, requiring the permission of the emperors to be erected in public spaces, even at the suggestion of the Senate, do not have the verb *curare*, but *iubere*: see for example PPRET 27, l. 11; PPRET 28, l. 33; PPRET 37, ll. 4-5; PPRET 41, ll. 9-10; PPRET 51, ll. 12-13; PPRET 75, l. 12; similarly PPRET 31, ll. 26 and 33 (*decernere* is related to the golden statue in honour of

the prefect Philippus); see similarly for example *CIL* VI 1175 = *CIL* VI 31250 = *EDR* 103848; *CIL* VI 1698 = *EDR* 123515; *CIL* VI 1710 = *EDR* 111227; *CIL* VI 1749 = *EDR* 122364; *CIL* VI 1725 = *EDR* 136330; *CIL* VI 1727 = *EDR* 137769. The inscription made by the Senate in honour of Aetius (*CIL* VI 41389 = *LSA* 1434 = *EDR* 073749) uses *conlocavit* (l. 14), but also *iussu principum* (l. 11) and *in atrio Libertatis* (l. 12). It is important to note the final formula of the honorary inscription of Iunius Quartus Palladius that was put up by his brother in a *domus* on the Aventine – like that of Praetextatus – in the years 416-421 AD (see *CIL* VI 41383 edd. cit. above, ll. 10-15; full text, see below). In the Palazzo Massimo alle Colonne inscription, the verb *curare* excludes a *senatus consultum* and an order of the Augusti, since *constituere statuam* is ordinarily associated with dedications made by private individuals and corporations, not by high public authority in Rome.

#### IN SEARCH OF A DEDICATOR: A RELATIVE

The inscription in honour of Praetextatus from the Palazzo Massimo alle Colonne may be a monument made in the first half of the 5th Century in a *domus* on the Aventine hill. It shows clear common characteristics with the inscription in honour of the praetorian prefect and ordinary consul of 416 AD Iunius Quartus Palladius. It was inaugurated not later than 421 AD by the prefect's anonymous brother in his own *domus* on the Aventine, and was intended to embellish the family portrait by virtue of the *ius imaginum* (see *CIL* VI 41383):

(*corona*)

Iunii Quarti Palladii v̄(iri) c̄(larissimi).

(*frons*)

Amplissimorum honorum magnitudi-  
dine et nobilitate conspicuo,  
Iunio Quarto Palladio, clarissimo  
et inl(ustri) viro, avorum honores super=  
gresso et diu in rēp(ublica) perseveranti,  
5 praet(ori) et quaest(ori) candidato, not(ario) et trīb(uno),  
cōm(iti) sacrār(um) lārg(itionum), praef(ecto) praetorii  
per annos sex Illyrici, Italiae et  
Africae, consuli ordinario, legato  
10 senatus amplissimi quarto, eius  
statuam ob egregiam propinquitatis affectionem ad decorem  
domus germanus eius inter se

15                    ac suos locari constituique  
                       ius habuit.

transl. (C. Machado, *LSA* 1521 with minor differences): «(Statue) of Iunius Quartus Palladius of clarissimus rank. To a man distinguished in the greatness and nobility of his most outstanding honours, Iunius Quartus Palladius, of clarissimus and illustrious rank, who surpassed the honours of his ancestors and was continually abiding by the *res publica*, praetor and quaestor candidate, notary and tribune, count of the imperial treasury, praetorian prefect of Illyricum, Italy and Africa for six years, ordinary consul, legate of the most outstanding Senate four times, because of the strong affection of their kinship, and for the adornment of his house, his brother had the right to place and erect a statue of him along with others depicting both himself and his family».

The inscription for the consul Palladius shares several common elements with the inscription of the Palazzo Massimo alle Colonne. Firstly, the provenance from a building atop of the Aventine hill. Secondly, the complex rank of the honoured senator and his ascending *cursus honorum*, not to mention the prefectorial office in the genitive case (*praetorii*), and the regional trimembre determination of the praetorian prefecture (*Illyrici Italiae et Africae* in both texts). Thirdly, the celebration of the honoured man's diplomatic missions conducted on behalf of the Senate of Rome and the placement of the statue in a *domus*. Fourthly, the final formula for the achievement of the monument, which features the same verbs *constitui* and *locari*. And lastly, the absence of the name of the dedicator, probably the owner of the *domus* (and who here is generically *germanus eius*), and various palaeographical aspects (the two inscriptions from the Aventine appear to have been produced by the same workshop). In terms of content and palaeography, the comparison between the inscription in honour of Palladius and the inscription from Palazzo Massimo alle Colonne confirms that the monument for Praetextatus conforms to the typology of honorary dedications that one would expect to find in a *domus* on the Aventine hill in the first half of the 5th Century. The Aventine inscription in honour of Praetextatus could therefore be a very poor copy of a previously inscribed monument, which, originally, would have been made shortly after the great senator's death (end 384 AD). The copy was placed in a *domus* – maybe of a member of Praetextatus' family or his wife's relative, for whom the great senator was *parens* (l. 9) – no less than twenty years later, and probably a long time after that. In this epigraphic text several inconsistencies remain, for which an explanation must be sought: the exaltation of senatorial legations in no less

than three lines (ll. 6-8), the qualification of *parens* (l. 9), the absence of the dedicator – even though the epigraphic field provides space to insert his name –, and the motivation for the honorary achievement expressed in lines 10-11. Given all these elements, there are sufficient grounds for the formulation of a different hypothesis.

#### IN SEARCH OF A DEDICATOR: A VESTAL

In order to propose a different interpretation of the Palazzo Massimo alle Colonne inscription, one has to understand that its text was not conceived immediately after Praetextatus' death. It represents rather a very poor 5th Century AD copy of an inscription written on a monument made shortly after the great senator's death. Lines 10-12 contain some key words: at l. 10 the conjunction *etiam* and the noun *domus* and at l. 11 the rare noun *insignia*. These words suggest that there were three realities in the motivation and description of the monument: firstly the monument did not stand alone, but was added to other monuments in honour of the senator (*etiam*); secondly it was related to a *domus* and thirdly it celebrated *insignia*. *Insignia* is an important noun, because on the rear of Praetextatus and Paulina's funerary altar (PPRET 77, side d, ll. 36-37: *Optant probantque nunc viri nunc feminae / quae tu magister indidisti insignia*, «Men and women alike both seek after and acclaim the honours which you, my teacher, have given me») the word is used to indicate Paulina's priestly clothing (cf. *ThLL* VII, coll. 1899-1900; cf. Liv. II 39, 9: *sacerdotes suis insignibus velatos*; Liv. X 7, 9: *pontificalia et auguralia insignia*; for other examples in late antique texts, see *CTh* XII 1, 21, on 335 AD; Claud. Don. *Aen.* 1, 3, p. 274 Georges; Firm. *math.* I 4, 14, 5; II 8, 24, 1; III 5, 18; for a reference to the *ornatus* of the *domus*, see Tert. *idol.* 8, 1; *CTh* XVI 2, 27, on 390 AD). The noun could be interpreted in two senses: either as the attire of the statue of Praetextatus or the magnificent decoration of the room in which the statue was placed (e.g. an accessible space containing a portrait gallery?). If it refers to his attire, then he could have been portrayed either as a civil dignitary, since his career is mentioned in the inscription, or as a priest. A second element links the inscription in Palazzo Massimo alle Colonne to the dossier of the inscriptions of Praetextatus and Paulina. In Rome, the only two late antique inscriptions under statues that associate the verb *locari/collocari* with the verb *curare* in the dedication formula are the inscriptions under the statues in honour of Coelia Concordia made by Paulina and this one in honour of Praetextatus. In 385 AD, immediately after the death of her husband Praetextatus, Paulina supported the decision of the

chief Vestal (*Virgo Vestalis Maxima*), Coelia Concordia (*PLRE I*, pp. 218 f.; Frei-Stolba 2003; Conti 2003, p. 217; Rüpke 2005, II, p. 901; Lizzi Testa 2015, pp. 256 f.), to erect a monument to Praetextatus in Rome on behalf of the college of the Vestal Virgins. Since the monument's erection was a novelty that did not adhere to the *mos*, Symmachus objected to it, but his protests were in vain (Symm. *epist.* II 36, with Cecconi 2002, pp. 266-81). While the Senate was petitioning the emperor Valentinian II for monuments to be put up in honour of Praetextatus, the chief Vestal erected one herself to him in a public place (Symm. *rel.* 12 and 24). The monument by the *Vestalis Maxima* was probably the first to be erected in Rome in a public setting after the death of Praetextatus: the Senate had to get permission from Valentinian II in Milan to honour the dead senator in a public place, while for Coelia Concordia a favourable decree of the College of Pontiffs in Rome was sufficient. The procedure to authorise the priestess' request was faster than that launched by the Senate. The *Vestalis Maxima* was the first, therefore, to erect a statue to Praetextatus in Rome. Paulina thanked the chief Vestal, Concordia, dedicating a monument to her in turn, the inscription of which was found on Paulina's property on the Esquiline hill (concerning this *domus*, see PPRET 20; regarding the possible remains of Concordia's statue, see *LSA* 1296 and Rebaudo 2006; *CIL VI* 2145 = *ILS* 1261 = *LSA* 1510 = *EDR* 151259):

Coeliae Concordiae, virgini  
 Vestali maximae, Fabia Paulina,  
 c(larissima) f(emina) statuam faciendam  
 conlocandamque  
 5 curavit, cum propter  
 egregiam eius pudicitiam insignemque  
 circa cultum divinum  
 sanctitatem, tum quod  
 10 haec prior eius viro  
 Vettio Agorio Praetextato,  
 c(larissimo) v(iro), omnia singulari  
 dignoque etiam ab huius  
 modi virginibus et sacerdotibus coli,  
 15 statuam conlocarat.

transl.: «To Coelia Concordia, chief Vestal virgin, Fabia Paulina, of clarissimus rank, oversaw the creation and placement of the statue, on the one hand because of her exceptional purity and her radiant devotion to the cult of the deities, and on the

other because she (Coelia) had first placed a statue to her (Paulina's) husband, Vet-tius Agorius Praetextatus, of clarissimus rank, unique in everything and worthy of being venerated even by these particular virgins and priestesses».

Paulina had a monument to Coelia Concordia made in her *domus* on the Esquiline hill that possesses many similarities of expression with the inscription in Palazzo Massimo alle Colonne. In the first part (ll. 1-9) the verbs *curare*, *facere* and *conlocare* correspond to *curare*, *constituere* and *locare* at the end of the inscription in Palazzo Massimo alle Colonne (ll. 11-12). In the second part (ll. 9-16) Paulina evokes the inscribed monument that was first put up by Coelia Concordia so that the deceased Praetextatus could be venerated by virgin priestesses like her. Then, in l. 13, the conjunction *etiam* appears, which appears in l. 10 of the other inscription. This conjunction is important: Paulina states that the chief Vestal's monument is one of those created in memory of Praetextatus in Rome and that it was the first to be put after the senator's death, and that it was reserved for the Vestals. In essence, the late Praetextatus was admired and honoured in Rome by several public statues (erected or planned), which were requested by the Senate of Rome and are referred to by Symmachus the urban prefect in *Relatio* 12. However, the first monument to be erected was put up by the chief Vestal for the Vestals in Rome. In our opinion, the origin of the monument to Praetextatus commissioned by the Vestal Concordia is rooted in a dispute with the emperor Gratian who had suppressed subsidies to Rome's priestly colleges, including the Vestals (see Lizzi Testa 2007c and 2010). And since Praetextatus had opposed the emperor in one of the Senate's embassies of 382/384 AD, an act celebrated in ll. 6-8 of the Palazzo Massimo alle Colonne inscription, the chief Vestal was moved to manifest her devotion to the memory of the late pagan senator by creating a monument. Paulina mentions the monument in the Esquiline inscription. Presumably the statue was placed in the house of the Vestals in the Roman Forum (located in a place accessible from the outside; concerning this priestly residence see Scott 1993 and 2007; Caprioli 2007). The chief Vestal was only able to put the monument up by forcibly and controversially obtaining permission from the College of Pontiffs. Conceived exclusively for and by the Vestals in 385 AD, its inscription was meant to celebrate not only Praetextatus' piety with regard to the cults of Rome, to the Vestal Virgins and his civil and religious integrity, but also his clashes with the Christian emperors Gratian and Valentinian II in defence of the traditional cults of the city of Rome (on the extinction of the priesthood of the Vestal Virgins of Rome, certainly after 394 AD, see Conti 2003;

Lizzi Testa 2007c and 2010; Mahieu 2015; the Christian polemic against the Vestals was fuelled by the bishop Ambrose himself, see Palumbo 2009; Zos. V 38, 2-3 speaks of Vestals in Rome in 408 AD: the fact that the cult of Vesta was indoors and void of public ceremonies with bloody sacrifices, may have ensured its survival for two or three decades after 394 AD). In our opinion, the Palazzo Massimo alle Colonne inscription could be a 'revised' 5th Century AD copy of the original monument made by the *Vestalis Maxima Coelia Concordia* in honour of Praetextatus. This hypothesis fits well with the expression in line 9, in which Praetextatus is exalted as *parens*: the *pontifex Vestae*, a priesthood held by the senator, had *potestas* over the Vestals (see Gell. *NA* I 12; cf. Bätz 2012, pp. 287-99) and was their *parens* in particular after the emperor Gratian detached himself from the traditional duties associated with the pagan priestly colleges of Rome (cf. van Haeperen 2002, pp. 102-5; Cameron 2007 and 2016). We conjecture, albeit cautiously, that the original text that was adapted in the 5th Century AD in the Palazzo Massimo alle Colonne inscription, was perhaps displayed in a pedestrian precinct near the house of the Vestals in the Roman Forum, and that it probably portrayed Praetextatus as *pontifex Vestae* (Rebaudo 2006 identified the portrait of Praetextatus with the *insignia* at the house of the Vestals, and that of Coelia Concordia the *Vestalis Maxima* on the Esquiline; the *Atrium Vestae* was open every year from the 7<sup>th</sup> to the 15<sup>th</sup> day of June for the *Vestalia*; for a restoration of the sanctuary in the early 5th Century AD cf. Goddard 2006, p. 304). It seems possible that the epigraphic text was as follows:

Vettio Agorio Praetextato, v(iro) c(larissimo),  
 correctori Tusciae et Umbriae,  
 consulari Lusitaniae, proconsuli  
 Achaiae, praef(ecto) urb(i), praef(ecto) praet(orio) II  
 5 Illyrici et Italiae, consuli designato,  
 legato amplissimi ordinis septies  
 et ad impetrandum reb(us) arduis  
 semper opposito, pontifici Vestae,  
 (vac.) Coelia Concordia (vac.)  
 10 (vac.) virgo Vestalis maxima (vac.)  
 parenti publice privatimq(ue) reverendo,  
 ut etiam statua ipsius Vestalium domūs  
 honoraret insignia, constitui  
 (vac.) locarique curavit.

transl.: «To Vettius Agorius Praetextatus, of clarissimus rank, corrector of Tuscian and Umbria, consular of Lusitania, proconsul of Achaia, urban prefect, 'twice' praef-

torian prefect of Illyricum and Italy, designated consul, legate of the most ample order (= Senate of Rome) seven times and always charged with very difficult questions to be submitted (to the emperors), pontiff of Vesta, Coelia Concordia, chief Vestal Virgin, took care to make and place (a statue) to the father worthy of veneration in public and in private, so that a statue of him would also honour the *insignia* of the house of the Vestals».

Another possible reconstruction of the text at ll. 12-13 is: *ut etiam statuæ ipsius Vestalium domū honorarent insignia* («so that the [priestly] *insignia* of one of his statues would also honour the house of the Vestals»). The connection between *insignia*, as the clothing of the priest, and the statue portraying Praetextatus is thus closer, but this reading requires a more drastic editing of the epigraphic text that has come down to us and is syntactically cumbersome (on the use of the word *domus* instead of *Atrium Vestae*, see Mart. *epigr.* I 70, 4; Pseudacronis scholia in Horatium, *epist.* p. 302 Keller, but the nexus *Vestalium domus* is never attested).

This reconstruction is hypothetical, but it does at least have the merit of explaining how Praetextatus and Paulina ended up with a monument that had such a remarkably low quality inscription placed upon it. Perhaps in the first half of the 5th Century AD before the Vandal sack, it is possible that a descendant or admirer of Praetextatus had decided to make a copy of the monument, which may well have been damaged or removed from the place where it stood. Such a decision might have been influenced by a re-purposing of the College of the Pontiffs and the house of the Vestals. The copy was then placed in a *domus* on the Aventine, which was one of the hills still inhabited by the senatorial aristocracy. Such a scenario is highly plausible: once the public funding of the priestly colleges and traditional pagan cults in the city of Rome had been cut from about 382 AD onwards, the maintenance of the colleges, priesthoods and buildings became the private responsibility of the pagan aristocracy. The statue of Coelia Concordia was preserved in the private property of Praetextatus' wife Paulina. After 394 AD the statue of Praetextatus put up by Concordia in the house of the Vestals was also probably transferred for safe keeping to a private *domus*. The characteristic of that sanctuary and cult, moreover, was that it housed the hearth of the city, so any other small domestic environment would have been sufficient to preserve its rites. But once that area of the Roman Forum had been re-purposed, someone must have wanted to reproduce Praetextatus' monument in a *domus* on the Aventine hill, endowing it with the inscription now preserved in the Palazzo Massimo alle Colonne. The name

of the original dedicator and its titulature together with Praetextatus' priestly titles were not included in the updated inscription. This might be because they had been erased from the original at some point (for the erasure of a head Vestal Virgin in a monument in the *Atrium Vestae* in 364 AD, see *CIL* VI 32422 = *ILS* 4938 = *LSA* 1508 = *EDR* 135407). This is only a hypothesis, but it is likely that in the 5th Century AD, when the epigraphic text that has come down to us was copied and chiselled on the base of Palazzo Massimo alle Colonne, the dedicator's name and the missing titulatures in the original inscription (engraved in 385 AD) were illegible. The polemical section of ll. 6-8 concerning the difficult negotiations conducted by the senator as an ambassador was preserved because it was a topical subject in the 5th Century AD. Otherwise, the inscription was devoid of any references to Praetextatus' pagan religious activity, it could have been adapted by a 5th Century AD senator. In any case, the inscription bears witness to the posthumous celebration of a leading figure in the life of the city of Rome and the Empire in the second half of the 4th Century AD. The inscription in the Palazzo Massimo alle Colonne was probably prepared and engraved in the years in which Macrobius made Praetextatus the protagonist of his *Saturnalia*.

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