

An epitaph found at Cumae and datable to the late Augustan or early Julio-Claudian period provides evidence not only of the penetration and acceptance of Epicurean philosophy but of Lucretius's role in the transmission of these ideas. The inscription, no. 234 in the recently published *Latin Inscriptions in the Kelsey Museum* (2006), is a white marble slab containing a five line epitaph in small and shallow *scriptura capitalis*, which can be divided into a metrically irregular six line elegy. The elegy for a young girl includes several familiar topoi including the themes of cruel fate, the deceased being wrested away from parents, and the immature years of the deceased. The first line, however, ends with the phrase "ut noscere possis." The importance of this phrase has been unremarked in previous editions of the inscription. Lucretius uses the phrase to end two lines, 3.418 and 3.588, in his book with the central theme of the rejection of the fear of death. In the first instance, the phrase appears in a line stating the fact of the mortality of the minds and spirits of living creatures. The second use of the phrase is a passage on the understanding of the diffusion of the spirit upon death. The context of these in Lucretius is in passages relating notions of mortality and the passage of the spirit. Together both passages reinforce the natural process of death and the separation of the soul and therefore the ending of misery and pain as the soul passes out of the body. The reader is instructed to draw the conclusion that death should not be feared or mourned, but accepted.

The use of the phrase may be intended to mitigate the suffering felt by the bereaved parents as well as onlookers by invoking Lucretius and his presentation of Epicureanism. Evidence that the quote is deliberate comes from its context within the original and is supported by the appearance of graffiti on the walls of Pompeii that also quotes Lucretius. Although the Pompeian graffiti shows the penetration of Lucretius along the Bay of Naples, the epitaph from Cumae provides evidence that Lucretius was understood and used in a powerful context to transmit not only the words but the message of his poetry. The result is a funerary elegy that transcends the established themes usually found in the genre and displays an awareness and acceptance of the poetry and philosophy of Lucretius.