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**Cunnilingus in an Ostian Bath**

In the mosaic pavement from the Terme della Trinacria in Ostia there is an inscription which reads *statio cunnulingiorum*. Although it has attracted relatively little attention, the inscription is an interesting piece of evidence for the history of ancient sexuality. The placement of the inscription in front of a bench and the fact that it was planned as an element of the mosaic pavement raise the possibility that it was intended not in a humorous vein, but instead had a serious purpose. It is proposed that the inscription marks a place in the bath where men who offered cunnilingus as an act of prostitution could be found.

A survey of literary sources, especially Martial, reveals that Roman society (in particular Roman men) loathed the idea of cunnilingus and consequently the possibility that the inscription was some sort of practical joke is remote. The graffiti from Pompeii reveal a similar bias. Yet, in theory, certainly from a Roman woman's point of view, cunnilingus would have had much to recommend it. It provides great pleasure, very little chance of disease, no risk of pregnancy, and it would have been quite affordable, if we use the asking price for fellatio in Pompeii as comparison. Indeed, three men are said to provide cunnilingus for a fee in Pompeii. Two of them may be invective, but one of them, involving a certain Isidore, appears legitimate.

Finally, I return to the bath in Ostia and the argument is put forth that in an era of mixed bathing the inscription was not only a marker of the place where the *cunnilingi* could be found, but also a warning to respectable Roman men not to sit down in that corner of the bath.