is not just a guess, but is plausible from remaining traces and context.[44] Consequently, if the letter in question is of importance for an argument, it should be checked on a photograph, squeeze, and ideally on the inscription itself. There also remains the problem that some editorial supplements within square brackets can be virtually guaranteed, whereas others represent rather more imaginative speculation.

Diacritic signs

Abbreviations:

a(*bc*)	=	An abbreviated word, which the editor has written out in full.
a(−−−)	=	An abbreviated word, which cannot be completed.
a(*bc*−)	=	An abbreviated word, which the editor has written out in full, but only the stem of the word is evident.

Damage suffered by the inscription:

ABC	=	Letters which can be read, but whose meaning and context is unclear. Could belong to the start, middle, or end of a word, or to more than one word.
[*abc*]	=	Letters which have been lost through damage to the inscription, but which the editor has supplied. If there is damage both at the end of one line and at the beginning of the next, the brackets should be added in both places.[45]
[*abc*−]	=	Letters which have been lost through damage to the inscription, and which the editor has supplied, but only the stem of the word is evident.
aḅc̣	=	Letters which are so damaged that they could not be recognized outside their context in the inscription, but whose identification is possible from context.
+++	=	Traces of letters which are so damaged that they cannot be recognized; each cross represents one letter.
[⋯]	=	Letters which have been entirely lost, and which the editor could not supply; each dot represents one letter.
[·10·]	=	Letters which have been entirely lost, and which the editor could not supply, but the precise number of missing letters can be calculated.
[−c.5−], [−5?−]	=	Letters which have been lost, which the editor could not supply, but whose approximate number can be calculated.

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[44] Salutary warnings about dotted letters are given by W. K. Pritchett, 'Dotted letters in Greek epigraphy', *AJA* 59 (1955) 55–61.

[45] Example: *[hoc sepulcrum si quis] vend[ere aut]*
　　　　[alienare voluerit in]feret ae[rario]
The same applies for other types of brackets.

[−]	=	Small lacuna where a *praenomen* (of one, two, or three letters) has been lost.
[−?]	=	Possibly a small lacuna where a *praenomen* has been lost.
[−−−]	=	Lacuna on a single line, whose extent cannot be determined.
[−−−?]	=	Possibly a lacuna on a single line, whose extent cannot be determined.
[− − − − − −]	=	A lacuna of one whole line.
[− − − − − −?]	=	Possibly a lacuna of one whole line.
[−−−⏐−−−]	=	Lacuna over two lines, whose extent cannot be determined.
− − − − − −	=	A lacuna of whole lines, whose original number is unclear.
− − − − − − ?	=	Unclear whether there is a lacuna, at start or end of a text.
abc	=	Letters read by a previous editor, but that have since disappeared.

Letters erased in antiquity:

[[*abc*]]	=	Letters erased in antiquity, but which can still be read clearly or probably.
[[*aḅċ*]]	=	Letters erased in antiquity, which could not be recognized outside their context in the inscription, but whose identification is possible from context.
[[[*abc*]]]	=	Letters erased in antiquity, which have been supplied by the editor.
[[[···]]]	=	Traces of letters erased in antiquity, but which cannot now be read; one dot stands for each letter.
[[[−5?−]]]	=	Traces of letters erased in antiquity, but which cannot
[[[−c.5−]]]	=	now be read; original number of letters can be roughly estimated.
[[[−−−]]]	=	Traces of letters erased in antiquity, but no estimate of their original number is possible.
[[[−−−−−−]]]	=	Traces of letters erased in antiquity, which cannot now be read, extending over a complete line.
[[[−−−−−−?]]]	=	Possibly traces of letters erased in antiquity, which cannot now be read, extending over a complete line.
[[−−−−−−]]	=	Traces of letters erased in antiquity over whole lines, which cannot now be read, and whose original extent cannot be determined.
[[−−−−−−?]]	=	Unclear whether letters have been erased.
<<*abc*>>	=	Letters inscribed on top of other erased letters, and which can be read clearly.
<<*ABC*>>	=	Letters inscribed on top of other erased letters, and which can be read but not contextualized.

(cont.)

(*Cont.*)

<< a̤b̤c̤ >>	=	Letters inscribed on top of other erased letters, and which are not clearly legible, but which can be identified from context.
<<[*abc*]>>	=	Letters inscribed on top of other erased letters, and which cannot be read and have been supplied by the editor.
<<[. . .]>>	=	Letters inscribed on top of other erased letters, but which can no longer be read; each dot represents a letter.
<<[−5?−]>> <<[−c.5−]>>	=	Letters inscribed on top of other erased letters, but which cannot now be read; original number of letters can be roughly estimated.
<<[−−−]>>	=	Letters inscribed on top of other erased letters, but which cannot now be read; no estimate of their original number is possible.

Errors in the inscribed text:

`` `abc´ ``	=	An ancient addition to correct or supplement the text. Details of where this has occurred are added to app. crit.
{*abc*}	=	Letters included by mistake in the inscription, which the editor has removed.
<*abc*>	=	Letters omitted by mistake from the inscription, which the editor has added.
⌈*abc*⌉	=	Letters corrected by the editor. This is not used of non-standard orthography or grammar, but of definite errors. App. crit. should state what is on the inscription. For example, *C.* ⌈*f.*⌉ in text; E *pro* F *lapis* ('stone has E instead of F') in app. crit.
(*a*)*bc*	=	Letters added by the editor to comply with standard orthography.
(scil. *abc*)	=	A word that is not included in the text, but which is understood and which the editor adds.
<−−−>, <−w−−−−−>	=	Inscription not completed.

Appearance of letters and monument:

á, é, í, ó, ú	=	Marks showing that vowels are long in quantity.
ì	=	I *longa* (i.e., taller than other letters around it). Other taller letters are indicated in app. crit. only.
a̅b̅c̅,	=	Letters and numerals indicated by a line added above them.
⊂ *abc* ⊃ ((*abc*)) (*abc*)	=	Letters or symbols represented differently on the inscription (such as inverted or backwards letters, numerals, or symbols), but which are not in need of correction or supplement. For example (*mulieris*) stands for the symbol of a backwards C. Large numbers over 1000 that are difficult to understand can also be written

(*Cont.*)

	=	out in words rather than reproducing the symbols. For example, (*quattuor milia centum nonaginta unus*) stands for the numeral IIIICLXXXXI; this numeral is then given in the app. crit.. Cf. also ⊂ *Manius* ⊃ = M'; ⊂ *y* ⊃, ⊂ *v* ⊃ = 'Claudian' letters.
⊂ crux ⊃ ((crux))	=	Describes a picture inserted into an inscription.
âb	=	Letters joined in a ligature (each letter which is joined to the next letter is indicated by circumflex accent).
a ° bc	=	Interpunct.
(vac.)	=	Space left deliberately blank within the inscription.
(vac. 3)	=	Space left deliberately blank within the inscription, corresponding to the space of 3 letters.
(vac.c.3) (vac.3?)	=	Space left deliberately blank within the inscription, possibly corresponding to the space of 3 letters.
(vac.?)	=	Unclear because of surface damage whether or not a space has been left deliberately blank within the inscription.
abc|abc abc / abc[46]	=	Line division, for inscriptions written out continuously, not line by line (i.e., as in *AÉpigr*, not *CIL*).
abc ‖ abc	=	Distinguishes different sides or parts of a monument; these may be specified as being *in fronte* ('on the front'), *in latere intuentibus sinistro* ('on the left side'), *in latere intuentibus dextro* ('on the right side'), *in postica* ('on the rear'). It marks off letters not inscribed in their proper place.
(!)	=	An editorial note advising that the reader should examine something carefully.
sic	=	An error which the editor has not corrected.

3.2.3 'History from square brackets'

It is vital, therefore, to take careful note of the various editorial markings when reading epigraphic publications, and in particular to acknowledge the uncertainties inherent in letters supplied by editors within square brackets [like this]. Although such supplements can often be unproblematic within the context of a common formula, such as *[dis] manibus*, at other times, the impression can be falsely given that a key historical conundrum can be securely resolved by editorial supplements, thereby producing what E. Badian has aptly dubbed 'history from square brackets'.[47] For

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[46] Panciera, 'Struttura dei supplementi e segni diacritici' (above, n.42) 19 proposes a distinction between marking line-ends / and verse-ends ‖.

[47] E. Badian, 'History from "square brackets"', *ZPE* 79 (1989) 59–70, discussing inscriptions relating to Philip II and Alexander; cf. Bodel, *Epigraphic Evidence* (above, n.1) 52–5.