

# Notions of Barbarians and Barbarian Lands in the Latin Verse Inscriptions

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Notions, as well as realities, of foreignness, alienness, and not-belonging in the Roman world have received ample treatment, from a broad range of perspectives, in recent scholarship. An important aspect that has not been covered thus far is the question of how these experiences inscribed themselves in the history of the mentality, especially (but not only) of those affected, and how these deeply subjective and personal experiences extended into poetic environments beyond the literary canon. The present paper addresses this matter through a full-scale discussion of the terminology directly related to the terms *barbarus* and *barbaricus* as they are found in the Latin verse inscriptions. The body of evidence is of especial importance in this regard, as it reflects a cultural practice that spans the geographical, chronological, and social dimensions of the Roman empire. Starting with the earliest evidence of the term in the verse inscriptions of Pompeii, the paper then examines the remaining evidence which can be grouped in three main clusters: (i) mentions of barbarians as worthy opponents, (ii) references to barbarians as those who lack civilisation and refinement, and (iii) instances in which the term *barbarus* has been used in self-representation and self-description.

*Keywords:* Latin verse inscriptions, *Carmina Latina Epigraphica*, barbarians, *Barbaria*, history of mentality, ancient discourse analysis

## Introduction

Encounters with foreign people, foreign places, and foreignness in general, even if and when they happen altogether peacefully and with the best of intentions on both sides, can be unsettling, somewhat daunting experiences. One may find it difficult to connect, to relate, or to gain access – socially, culturally, linguistically, and otherwise. Throughout his exile poetry, the Augustan poet Ovid, Rome's expatriate extraordinaire, creates a vivid picture of his immersive experience in foreign lands.<sup>1</sup> A striking description of that experience is the following section from the third book of the *Tristia*:

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Translations of ancient literary sources are from the *Loeb Classical Library* series. All remaining translations of ancient texts are my own.

1 Further on the poetics of Ovid's exile, see, e.g., Nagle, *Poetics of Exile*; Williams, *Banished Voices*; and Helzle, *Ovid's Poetics of Exile*.

*barbara me tellus et inhospita litora Ponti  
cumque suo Borea Maenalis Vrsa uidet.  
nulla mihi cum gente fera commercia linguae:  
10 omnia solliciti sunt loca plena metus.  
utque fugax avidis ceruus deprensus ab ursis,  
cinctaue montanis ut pauet agna lupis,  
sic ego belligeris a gentibus undique saeptus  
terreor, hoste meum paene premente latus.*

A barbarous land, the unfriendly shores of Pontus, and the Maenalian bear with her companion Boreas behold me. No interchange of speech have I with the wild people; all places are charged with anxiety and fear. As a timid stag caught by ravenous bears or a lamb surrounded by the mountain wolves is stricken with terror, so am I in dread, hedged about on all sides by warlike tribes, the enemy almost pressing against my side.

*(Ovid, Tristia 3.11.7-14, transl. Wheeler and Goold)*

In his description of isolation and angst,<sup>2</sup> Ovid resorts to powerful and relatable imagery which he draws from notions of a life in the wilderness.<sup>3</sup> Imagery of this type continues to be in use in narratives about foreign experiences, right down to the present day: similar notions and verbal images can be found employed by displaced people and tourists just as much as, curiously, by those who find migrants (and, increasingly, even tourists) in their midst. This is especially true when it comes to the sound of foreign languages: an eerie world, similar in many ways to what one is used to, and possibly even quite relatable, yet so incomprehensibly, unpredictably different and irrational, an ultimately primordial landscape in which unspecified dangers lurk everywhere, ready to pounce on the unsuspecting at any time.

Experiences of exclusion and not-belonging bring to the fore, with great immediacy, some basic tenets of one's own existence when what is normally regarded as a certainty, taken for granted, begins to disintegrate in the distorted mirror image presented through the confrontation with an "other". Even if such strangers are sympathetic, rather than hostile, to one's own predicament,<sup>4</sup> they can only do so much to accommodate a new arrival, whether they come as individuals or in rather more substantial numbers.

At the receiving end of the same scenario, experiences perceived as unsettling are also common, as the arrival of alien elements, even if, when, and where they come with the best of intentions and in a peaceful manner, may be deemed threatening, unwelcome, and, with a view to the element of foreignness, a profound disturbance of what may be regarded as elementary to one's own identity.

Most of all, perhaps, encounters with outsiders – aliens, foreigners, "others": whatever one may wish to call them – spark self-reflection. Encounters with lives and identities that are similar (we are all human, so we inevitably share a set of basic needs and emotions), but not altogether the same, make us behold something quite uncanny.<sup>5</sup> We witness the presence of something that – or rather, someone whom – we might have become, or been, ourselves (but have, or are, not), something that, in turn, and depending on one's nature and inclinations, either makes us reflect critically on our own identity, puts us on the defence about

2 On ancient fear narratives in the context of the discourse about foreigners, cf. Kapust, Ancient uses.

3 Further on this matter, see, e.g., Grebe, *Rom und Tomis*.

4 Further on this tension, see Dummer and Vielberg, *Der Fremde*.

5 For a focus on the aspect of encounters, cf. the (thematically broad) edited volume by Schuster, *Begegnung mit dem Fremden*.

what we regard as our true, unnegotiable self,<sup>6</sup> or triggers humour and abuse.<sup>7</sup>

There are a number of ways, of course, in which one may reasonably approach the subject of foreignness, alienness, and not-belonging when it comes to their nature in the Roman world. One such approach would be the study of their legal nature and the relevance of citizenship and legal and political integration.<sup>8</sup> Another one would be to consider aspects of ethnicity, ethnogenesis,<sup>9</sup> and ethnocentrism in the Roman period – a subject to which the concept of “barbarians” is of central importance.<sup>10</sup> A third one would be to investigate the impact of foreignness as a concept on geographic, ethnic, religious,<sup>11</sup> and political abstractions in the writings and discourse of Roman authors<sup>12</sup> (and beyond),<sup>13</sup> as well as the relevance of the archaeological record (broadly conceived).<sup>14</sup> A fourth option, significantly less commonly pursued in current scholarship, and perhaps deemed of lesser historical value, would be an investigation into the poetics and, related to that, the broader history of mentality that comes with such notions (beyond ideas of Roman identity formation in Vergil’s *Aeneid*):<sup>15</sup> after all, as can be seen in present-day discourse, legal matters and “official discourse” are one thing; popular notions and frames of mind, however, are another, and they may prove to be rather powerful substrates to a more restrained, abstract conversation that occurs in certain societal quarters.

The concept of someone being alien or foreign to certain parts or aspects of their world was not unknown to the Romans, either, of course. Even a quick glance at a map of the Roman Empire reveals that, considering its vast territory and the number of diverse peoples that it incorporated (and bordered on), experiences of foreignness, of not-belonging, and of being dislocated were inevitably ubiquitous and virtually omnipresent, from those of “mere” travellers,<sup>16</sup> to those of economic migrants, soldiers, or individuals who entered the Roman Empire (or were forced to enter it).<sup>17</sup>

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6 On the dialogue between the “self” and “the other” in the context of foreignness, studied from a historical perspective, see the papers collected by Pülz and Trinkl, *Das Eigene und das Fremde*.

7 Cf. Halsall, Funny foreigners, as well as Halsall, Use and abuse of immigrants.

8 See, e.g., Mathisen, *Peregrini*; Coşkun and Raphael, *Fremd und rechtlos*; and Mercogliano, *Gli stranieri*.

9 This includes aspects of migration, mobility, and settlement, on which, see, e.g., Goffart, *Barbarians and Romans and, more recently (and importantly), Halsall, Barbarian Migrations*.

10 Much useful material in that regard has been assembled by the contributors to the volume of McInerney, *Companion to Ethnicity*.

11 See, e.g., Clark, Pilgrims and foreigners.

12 Important work in this regard was done e.g. by Woolf, *Tales*. Useful collections of papers, especially on the Late Antique period, can be found in Mathisen and Shanzer, *Romans* and Rubel, *Barbaren Roms*. For an encyclopaedic, cross-cultural approach, see, e.g., Opelt and Speyer, *Barbar* (replacing an outdated earlier contribution to the *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*).

13 See, e.g., the diachronical approach taken in the conference volume of Boletsi and Moser, *Barbarism Revisited*. Cf. also Dumézil, *Les barbares (with chapters on classical and late antique Rome, respectively)*.

14 On the archaeological record, see esp. Eckardt, *Roman Diasporas*.

15 This, to a degree, was done e.g. by Thomas, *Lands and Peoples*; cf. also Doblhofer, *Exil und Emigration*.

16 On ancient travellers and the notion of foreignness (especially in the context of a death abroad), see, e.g., Handley, *Dying on Foreign Shores*.

17 Further on this, see, e.g., Dauge, *Les Barbares* and, more recently, Noy, *Foreigners at Rome* and Conti and Scardigli, *Stranieri a Roma*. On migration processes in the Roman world, see, e.g., Olshausen and Sonnabend, *Trojaner sind wir gewesen* and de Ligt and Tacoma, *Migration and Mobility*.

The Latin language provides a number of terms that describe degrees and configurations of foreignness.<sup>18</sup> Some of these terms are more or less purely descriptive, such as *peregrinus*. Others are significantly more emotive, most notably, of course, the term *barbarus*, borrowed from the Greek, as well as the adjective *barbaricus* that has been derived from it.<sup>19</sup> As a fragmentary inscription from the city of Rome, datable to the fourth century AD and apparently originally composed in a dactylic rhythm, puts it –

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*barbara*<sup>20</sup> [- - -]  
*gens inf[anda - - -]*  
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. . . barbarian . . . unspeakable folk . . .

(*ICUR VII 17724*)

The experience of, and the response to, those matters in the Roman world – the concept of “being barbarian” in particular – have, with some success, been approached, intellectually, from a number of different angles. This includes work carried out on cultural contacts (coerced and otherwise) and cultural transformations as a result of them, on mobility, on imperialism, on geographical conceptions,<sup>21</sup> on depiction of foreignness, minorities, and forms of “otherness”, as well as on notions of, and attitudes towards, barbarians in surviving literature. Last, but certainly not least, there is important work on forms of (proto-)racism in the Roman world.

The poetics of being barbarian, however, have largely been excluded from this portfolio, and they have remained altogether unexplored for there is only one body of poetic texts that encompasses the Roman society as a whole: the so-called *Carmina Latina Epigraphica*, the Latin verse inscriptions, which document a shared cultural practice of the Roman Empire in its regional, ethnic, and social diversity beyond the discourse of an urban aristocratic elite.

Though ultimately entirely anecdotal in nature, the Latin verse inscriptions merit consideration if one wishes to gain a broader understanding of the popular experiences in which any upper-class discourse was embedded, and from which it was distilled. What is more, in addition to forms of aristocratic self-representation in several instances, these sources are unique in that they also provide an almost unobstructed view into the experiences of “the other”, giving a voice to those who experienced the impact of being foreign, dislocated, and – potentially – marginalised. In that, they provide us with an important corrective to the more abstract, intellectual ruminations of Roman literature.

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18 For a lexical study, see Ndiaye, *L'étranger*; for semantic-conceptual issues in a diachronic perspective, cf. also Wiele, *Aspektwandel* and, more recently, Ohnacker, *Spätantike und frühmittelalterliche Entwicklung*.

19 For a re-evaluation of the scholarship on the concept of “the barbarian” on the Greek side, see now Harrison, *Reinventing the barbarian*.

20 The textual design of the text, spread out over two small fragments, makes it implausible that *Barbara* was a female first name in this particular case; cf. *ICUR ad loc.*: “*carmina esse uidentur, ita ut barbara sit potius appellatiuum quam feminae nomen.*”

21 See, e.g., Klein, *Das Eigene*.

### *Pompeian Departures from the Literary Tradition*

Like many Roman trading towns in the mid-to-late first century AD, Pompeii, prior to its destruction in AD 79, was a place that evidently provided a home, permanent or transitory, voluntary or coerced, to individuals from across the Roman Empire (and, presumably, beyond): the epigraphic evidence from Pompeii, in addition to the archaeological remains, leaves no room for reasonable doubt about the multicultural and multilingual composition of Pompeii's society. There is not much reliable evidence to gain an understanding of how the native population, or specific segments of it, responded to this experience on the broad spectrum from "not even aware of it", to "indifferent", to "appreciative and feeling enriched", to "accepting for the benefit of prosperity (however defined)", to "averse and resentful". It is not unreasonable to assume, of course, that all of these sentiments were represented somehow, somewhere, and at least to some extent. It is important to bear this in mind before approaching the evidence for statements about foreign elements at Pompeii – and evidence for the use of the term *barbarus* in particular: the evidence is scattered, random, of uncertain authorship, and representative of nothing but the fact that someone, at some point, in Pompeii chose to write these things, usually for unknown reasons. They may be representative of a certain attitude and frame of mind, but it is safer not to generalise.

Looking at the evidence with that in mind, one must acknowledge four graffiti from Pompeii that have come to light thus far that mention the term in question: *barbarus*. Two of these come in the guise of literary quotations or adaptations, and, intellectually, coming from the world of literature and immersing oneself into the lettered world, it may make sense to take them as a point of departure.

The more extensive of the two, discovered on wall plaster in Pompeii's basilica (VIII 1.1),<sup>22</sup> is a quotation of Propertius' distich 3.16.13-14:

*Quisquis amator erit Scythiae licet ambulet oris  
nemo adeo ut feriat barbarus esse uolet.*

Whoever will be a lover, let him walk Scythia's shores: no one will wish to be a barbarian of such kind as to inflict injuries (*sc.* on the *amator*).

(CIL IV 1950 = CLE 1785)

Propertius is reasonably well attested in quotations on the walls of Pompeii of course, and this piece forms part of a larger corpus.<sup>23</sup> Propertius' elegy 3.16 is a peculiar item, however: it is a deliberation of Propertius' poetic "I", following the delivery of a letter of invitation from

22 The item is preserved on tab. XXX in the collection of the National Archaeological Museum of Naples; it was reproduced in Varone, *Titulorum ... Imagines*, 391 (neg. D/110659).

23 Cf., e.g., Gigante, *Civiltà*, esp. 191.

his *domina*, as to whether he should go to Tibur for an encounter. He is torn between going or not: not going might result in future rejection (the *domina* has form on that); yet the journey is presented as dangerous – especially at night, with bandits waiting for their victims.<sup>24</sup> Yet, he opines, lovers will travel safely, protected by Venus and Amor themselves. It is in this context that Propertius has his elegiac lover say that –

*quisquis amator erit, Scythicis licet ambulet oris,  
nemo <a>deo ut noceat barbarus esse uolet.*

(Propertius 3.16.13-14, ed. Fedeli)

The Pompeian epigram differs in two places: it reads *Scythiae* rather than *Scythicis* in the first line, and it gives *feriat* rather than *noceat* in the second. While the first reading is not commonly considered as relevant to the editors (even though the Pompeian version is substantially older than any of the Propertian manuscripts), the second one was at least labelled “fortasse recte” by Paolo Fedeli (though still not adopted in the main text of his Teubner edition).<sup>25</sup> Textual considerations aside, the meaning of the lines in Propertius is perfectly clear: under the divine tutelage of Venus and Amor, a lover is protected even in the most adverse setting – with Scythia, in the remote north-east, serving as the paradigm for a dangerous, threatening environment: even there, it is implied, one would not find anyone who would wish to be such a *barbarus* as to inflict harm upon a travelling *amator*.

The frame of mind behind this piece, certainly behind Propertius and thus, most likely, also behind his Pompeian commemorator, is one that imagines threatening environments on the margins of the Roman world: Scythia is far away, wild and dangerous – usually –, a barbaric place in most regards.<sup>26</sup> But even there no one would be that outrageously barbaric

24 Propertius’ considerations on the way in which roadside tombs were desecrated by traffic, concluding the elegy, merit being brought to the attention of epigraphists in this context (Propertius 3.16.22-30, ed. Fedeli, trans. Goold): *quod si certa meos sequerentur funera casus / talis mors pretio uel sit emenda mihi. / afferet haec unguenta mihi sertisque sepulcrum / ornabit custos ad mea busta sedens. / di faciant, mea ne terra locet ossa frequenti, qua facit assiduo tramite uulgus iter! / post mortem tumuli sic infamantur amantum. / me tegat arborea deuia terra coma, / aut humer ignotae cumulis uallatus harenae: / non iuuat in media nomen habere uia* (“but if my journey were to result in certain funeral, death would even be worth procuring at such a price. She will bring me unguents and deck my grave with garlands, seated as guardian o’er my tomb. God forbid that she should bury my bones in a busy spot, where the crowd travels along an unsleeping thoroughfare! Thus are the tombs of lovers desecrated after their death. Let secluded ground cover me with leafy trees, or let me be buried where I am enclosed in an unmarked mound of sand: I like it not to have my name recorded on a highway.”)

25 A curious decision, considering that, unlike some (or in the latter case: all) of the manuscripts, the Pompeian piece faithfully preserves the subjunctive *ambulet* (rather than *ambulat*) and reads *adeo* (rather than *deo*). The merit of *feriat* was discussed by Hubbard, *Propertiana*, esp. 318-319. The reading of *Scythicis* was maintained over *Scythiae* based on the observation that Propertius more frequently has hyperbata of the kind “geographical adjective ... feature of landscape” in grammatical agreement; cf. Fedeli, *Properzio*, 503. The logic of adopting the *lectio difficilior*, however, would thus require an editor to follow the Pompeian epigram. Labelling it as a “banalizzazione”, related to the psychology of writing errors (with reference to Timpanaro, *Il lapsus freudiano*, 20-21), is a classical *petitio principii*, suggesting, without good evidence, that a corruption “adjective in agreement” > “noun in the genitive” is more likely to occur than the opposite.

26 Whether or not the reference is to be regarded as specific (to Scythia) rather than generic (to an ominous Barbaria), has been subject to debate, cf., in addition to Fedeli, *Properzio ad loc.*, Dauge, *Les Barbares*, 163. Isidorus, *Origines*, 14.4.3 specifically links Scythia (inferior) and Barbarica.

(*adeo ... barbarus*) as to inflict harm on someone who is visibly in love and travelling for that particular purpose. The *Barbaria* is thus imagined as a threatening, harmful place – but even barbarians are imagined to be capable, and perceptive, of some of the most basic and powerful expressions of the human condition: true love and passion.<sup>27</sup>

The horrors of *Barbaria* are also captured in a second item, discovered at IX 1.22, 29, the so-called house of M. Epidius Sabinus, on the west wall of room 21, leading to the dwelling's second (northern) peristyle:<sup>28</sup>

*Barbarus aere cauo tubicen d[ed]it [horrida si]gna*

The (*or*: a) barbarian trumpeter sounded terrifying signals with the hollow brass.

(*CIL* IV 1069a (cf. p. 199, 461, 1305-1306) = *CLE* 350 = *EDR* 160283).

The text, now lost, is reported to have been ascribed to a painting depicting Hercules and Telamon in an effort to rescue Hesione (with Cetus, the sea-monster, lying dead by Telamon's foot). The record does not make it possible to determine whether the text was once executed in a more casual manner or whether it was painted and thus potentially part of the imagery in whose context it was found.<sup>29</sup>

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27 On this piece in the context of love-related inscriptions from Pompeii, see Varone, *Erotica Pompeiana*, 59 (with n. 77).

28 Further on this piece, see, e.g., Milnor, *Graffiti and the Literary Landscape*, 268.

29 Drawing: Nicola La Volpe (1866). The painting itself is now lost. La Volpe's drawing is kept in the National Archaeological Museum of Naples (inv. N. ADS 964).



Fig. 1: Telamon and Hercules rescuing Hesione. Drawing of the painting at house IX 1.22 Pompeii, room 21, as seen by Nicola La Volpe (1866), photo © ICCD

*Prima facie*, the piece would seem to interact with the painting, and it has certainly been argued that the line might come from a(n otherwise lost) literary work around the Hercules myth, for which there is no corroborating evidence.<sup>30</sup> The line has also been explained as having a certain Ovidian or Vergilian<sup>31</sup> ring to it (though these are, of course, very loose categories at best). The painting, however, leaves very little scope for the mention of a *tubicen*

30 Cf. Ehwald, *Curae exegeticae*, esp. 640-643.

31 See Hoogma, *Einfluß Vergils*, esp. 250 with n. 23; cf. also Milnor, *Graffiti and the Literary Landscape*.

as a meaningful reference to anything in the painting or the story itself, and whoever the mentioned *barbarus* might be in this context is anybody's guess: in short, it would seem much safer to assume that the line was written there without connection to the painting that it "embellished".

Whether or not it refers to the painting, and whether or not it originated in a work of a literary nature (or was at least inspired by one), the sentiment expressed in the Pompeian line is perfectly in keeping with the qualities and sensations invoked by the Propertian piece above: *Barbaria* is imagined as a threatening place, dangerous to peace and well-being, and as such it comes with a terrifying, violent soundscape, too.

There are two further items from Pompeii that must be considered, and intellectually, these belong to different categories of sentiments than both previous pieces. Nevertheless, they would seem to supplement and expand the picture that has been forming rather than to contradict it. Staying within the realm of sound, the first item has often been explained as the model line of a well-formed hexameter, albeit executed in complete gibberish, that was discovered at dwelling V 2.c:<sup>32</sup>

*Barbara barbaribus barbabant barbara barbīs.*

(CIL IV 4235 = CLE 351 = EDR 071661)

The piece remains mysterious to an extent, but one may wish to note the (often made) connection between gibberish and unintelligible language on the one hand and barbarians on the other – an aspect that is thus etymologised by Strabo.<sup>33</sup>

More significant in terms of displayed attitude and frame of mind, however, is a piece that, like the initial piece with its Propertian quotation, was discovered in Pompeii's basilica (VIII 1.1), also still preserved in the Archaeological Museum of Naples:<sup>34</sup>

*L(uci) Istacidi at quem non ceno barbarus ille mihi est*

Lucius Istacidius: at whose I do not dine, that man I regard a barbarian.

(CIL IV 1880 = CLE 933)

There are a number of ways in which one might consider construing the syntax of this; the most commonly accepted and plausible one, however, is to take the beginning of the graffito as a vocative, referring to a member of one of Pompeii's ancient and renowned families (in

32 A fragment of what is evidently a version of the same text has recently come to light at Castellammare di Stabia: see *AE 2013.227*.

33 Strabon 14.2.28; cf. Fögen, *Patrii sermonis egestas*, 41-43.

34 For an image, see Varone, *Titulorum ... Imagines*, 373 tab. XXII inv. n. 4706 (img. D/95788, D/95786, D/95790). – Texts such as this one, above, support the view that Christ, *Römer und Barbaren* might have been mistaken in his impression that the clear distinction between "Romans" (= us) and "barbarians" (= them) only emerged in the later empire: the relevant frame of mind would appear to have existed already at a significantly earlier stage, and it would seem to have been utilised for specific, even polemic, purposes.

fact, one of their freedmen, Lucius Istacidius Zosimus, appears to have been the last proprietor of the Villa of Mysteries), followed by a pentameter line that would appear to seek to guilt-trip the text's addressee into an invitation to a free meal. Refusing to do so, according to the logic of this, would make Istacidius a *barbarus* – a man who, one may infer, lacks civilisation and humanity, but treats potential visitors and guests with contempt and cruelty.

While the number of relevant texts is low overall, one cannot but note that the walls of Pompeii do not have many positive things to say about *barbari*. What is more, already rusticity itself, as opposed to urban lineage,<sup>35</sup> would appear to have provided a means to mock and insult individuals, even Roman citizens, as the following item, mocking an individual with an apparent fake name, proves:<sup>36</sup>

*G(aius!) Hadius Ventrío  
eques natus Romanus inter  
beta(m) et brassica(m)*

Gaius Hadius Ventrío, Roman knight, was born between a beetroot and a cabbage.

(CIL IV 4533 = CLE 41 adn. = ILS 1319)

At any rate, the informal writing on the walls of Pompeii, when it comes to the spectrum of meaning(s) and sentiments associated with the term *barbarus* and the *Barbaria*, bring a small, but distinctive number of aspects to the fore: barbarians are cast as “the other”, scary, uncivilised, and only partly capable of civilised human interaction, to be encountered in battle or other altercations, lacking culture and refinement.

Moving away from the literary tradition and its literary reflexes on the walls of Pompeii even further, evidence for the use of the term *barbarus* can be encountered in three distinct (and distinctive) areas in the Latin verse inscriptions: (i) mentions of barbarians as worthy opponents, (ii) references to barbarians as those who lack, and urgently need, civilisation and refinement, and – remarkably – (iii) instances of individuals who fashion themselves as barbarians, or somehow related to the *Barbaria*, in the context of their monumental commemoration.

All three aspects warrant fuller documentation and analysis.

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35 Thus the etymological understanding supplied by Cassiodorus, *Psalms 113.1 l. 28 A.: Barbarus a barba et rure dictus est, quod numquam in urbe uixerit, sed semper ut fera in agris habitasse noscatur* (“the barbarian is named after his beard (*barba*) and the land (*rus*), as they never lived in towns, but, as is known, inhabited the countryside, like wild animals”), as noted by Maltby, *Lexicon of Ancient Latin Etymologies*, 75.

36 The lack of context makes the piece difficult to appreciate, but cf., e.g., Milnor, *Graffiti and the Literary Landscape*, 120, discussing the political tone and implication of this iambic graffito. For a comment on the piece's socio-economic context within the equestrian order, cf. Klingenberg, *Sozialer Abstieg*, 26, and Davenport, *History of the Roman Equestrian Order*, 243.

*Worthy Opponents in War and Otherwise*

While the evidence for the use of the term *barbarus* from the walls of Pompeii is comparatively early vis-à-vis the remaining evidence in the Latin verse inscriptions, there is at least one instance that predates the destruction of Pompeii by well over half a century. The oldest surviving mention of *barbarus* in the *Carmina Latina Epigraphica* comes from an inscription safely datable to 20 BC, discovered at Eryx (Erice) in Sicily, a well-established centre of worship for Astarte-Aphrodite-Venus. The monument, commemorating Lucius Apronius' exploits in the war against Tacfarinas and the Gaetulians,<sup>37</sup> is now badly damaged, and not all of the text that was once recorded survives to the present day; both the supplements and substantial parts of the translation must therefore be regarded as speculative:<sup>38</sup>

[L(ucius) Apronius L(uci) f(ilius) Caesian]us VIIuir e[pulonu]m  
 [- - - Vene]ri Erucinae [d(onum)] d(edit). ||  
 - - - - -  
 [a patre hic missus Libyae procon]sule bella  
 [prospera dum pugnat cecidit Maurus]ius hostis. ||  
 5 Felicem gladium [tibi qui patrisque dicauit]  
 Aproni effigiem [natus belli duce] duxque  
 hic idem fuit hic i[usto certamine ui]ctor  
 praetextae posita[e causa pariterque re]sumptae  
 septemuir puer han[c genitor quam rite r]locarat (!)  
 10 Caesar quam dedera[t uestem tibi sancta rel]icui[t]. ||  
 Diuor[um - - -]  
 mut[ua - - -]  
 filius Aproni mai[or quam nomine factis]  
 Gaetulas gentes q[uod dedit ipse fugae]  
 15 effigiem cari genitor[is diua locauit]  
 Aeneadum alma paren[s praemia iusta tibi]  
 armaque quae gessit: scuto [per uolnera fracto]  
 quanta patet uirtus! ens[is ab hoste rubet]  
 caedibus attritus consummatque [hasta tropaeum]  
 20 qua cecidit f[os(s)]u[s] barbar[us ora ferus].  
 quo nihil est utrique magis uener[abile signum]  
 hoc tibi sacrarunt filius atqu[e pater]  
 Caesaris effigiem posuit p[ar cura duorum]  
 certauit pietas su[mma in utroque fuit] ||  
 25 [- - - curante] L(ucio) Apronio [- - -]

Lucius Apronius Caesianus, son of Lucius, VIIuir epulonum . . . gave (this) as a gift to Venus of Eryx.

. . . sent here by his father, the proconsul of Libya, while he fights successful wars: the Moorish enemy has fallen.

He who dedicates an auspicious sword to you, as well as an image of his father Apronius, himself a commander, born of a military commander, he was the very same who, victorious in fair fight, as a young septemvir leaves for you, saintly goddess, this garment of the praetexta that his father had prayed for on his behalf and which Caesar had given, for it was taken off and taken back simultaneously.

. . . of gods . . . mutual (?) . . . the son of Apronius, greater in deeds than in name, as he

37 Cf. Tacitus, *Annals*, 3.21.

38 For a recent discussion of the piece's editorial history and reading, see Muscolino, Mommsen (= *AE* 2013.636 *adn.*); cf. also Manganaro Perrone, Tacfarinas e la Sicilia.

made the Gaetulian tribes flee, erected an image of his dear father, o divine, life-giving parent of the Aeneads, as a rightful gift to you – also the arms that he carried: just how apparent becomes his brave achievement through the shield shattered by the blows it sustained! The enemy has made his sword glow red, and the spear, worn by slaughter, crowns the trophy – the spear by means of which the wild barbarian fell, stabbed in his very face.

There is no display more worthy of worship for both of them than this: both son and father have dedicated this to you. Their shared, equal regard had Caesar's image erected here: there was a contest of dutifulness, and they both came first.

. . . under the supervision of Lucius Apronius . . .

(CIL X 7257 = CLE 1525 = ILS 939 = EDR 092733)

There are many interesting aspects about this piece, from its wording and original layout down to content-related matters. One may also wish to note that this is a rare early instance for upper-class engagement with inscribed verse (though decidedly not in a funerary context, but in religious self-representation and ostentatious display in a choice location).

More strictly to the point, however, it is interesting to see where the term *barbarus* appears in the narrative (namely in l. 20): whereas previously in the text ethnographic labelling was precise (*Gaetulas gentes*, l. 14; perhaps also *Maurusius hostis*, l. 4, if restored correctly), the rather more blunt term *barbarus* appears, potentially linked to the quality of ferocity (*ferus*, l. 20, if restored correctly), when it comes to explaining the emotional significance of one of the items consecrated to Venus in relation to the dedicants. *Barbarus ferus* signifies the archetypical, primordial, wild barbarian on attack – the name does not even matter: this is not about an individual, but about a stereotype, cast in this very role for a single reason, namely, to be a veritable challenge for the Roman hero, yet ultimately inferior and not enough of a match. The only role the *barbarus* plays here is to elevate the *uirtus* of a Roman official through death or at least horrific mutilation in battle at the hand of the valiant Roman soldier.

The *barbarus* as “the other” and “the outsider” whose sole role it is to determine the *uirtus* of a Roman also features in the next item, datable to the first half of the second century, sometime during or just after the reign of Emperor Hadrian. The piece, commonly (though probably falsely)<sup>39</sup> believed to be from Aquincum (Budapest), is a commemoration of a soldier's dexterity and valour in activities that are distinctly unrelated to military achievements in battle:<sup>40</sup>

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39 The manuscript tradition was carefully re-examined by Kovács, *Eques super ripam Danuvii*. Kovács argues – convincingly – that the piece was most likely from Sora in Italy. The question of the stone's actual origin has no impact on the present argument, however.

40 Further on this piece, see Courtney, *Musa lapidaria*, 124-125, 334-335 n. 126; Cugusi and Sblendorio Cugusi, *Carmina Latina Epigraphica Pannonica*, 121-123 n. 59; and Cugusi, *Per un nuovo corpus*, 104-105 (each with further bibliography).

*Ille ego Pannoniis quondam notissimus oris  
inter mille uiros primus fortisque Batauos  
(H)adriano potui qui iudice uasta profundi  
aeuora Danuuii cunctis transnare sub armis  
5 emissumque arcu dum pendet in aere telum  
ac redit ex alia fixi fregique sagitta  
quem neque Romanus potuit nec barbarus umquam  
non iaculo miles non arcu uincere Parthus  
hic situs hic memori saxo mea facta sacraui  
10 uiderit an ne aliquis post me mea facta sequatur  
exemplo mihi sum primus qui talia gessi.*

Once very well known on Pannonian shores, I am he who was the first among a thousand Batavians, brave ones at that! I, who was able to swim across the deep Danube's vast waves in full armour, with Hadrian in attendance to judge,<sup>41</sup> and who pierced and broke a missile, shot off my bow, as it was mid-air and about to come down again, with another arrow and whom neither a Roman or a barbarian Parthian soldier was ever able to outperform with a javelin or an bow: buried here I have consecrated my deeds here on this unforgetting stone. We shall see whether someone after me will be able to follow my deeds; I had to be my own role-model, as I was the first to achieve such things.

(CIL III 3676 = ILS 2558 = CLE 427)

As in a number of previous instances, the term *barbarus* does not appear independently in this inscription: similar to earlier examples introducing specific peoples (Scythians, Gaetulians) which were identified as barbarian in nature, this piece mentions a range of geographical and ethnic names: Pannonians (indicating the environment to which the piece belongs), Batavians (stating the speaker's identity), Romans (fellow soldiers whom the dedicant would outperform) and – finally – the barbarian Parthian (*barbarus ... / ... miles ... Parthus*, ll. 7-8, whom he would also outperform), the outsider who requires an additional adjective to stand out from everything that was mentioned before.

The Batavian braggart carefully designed a map of (relative) inferiority with himself as the sole positive elevation – a man who, surrounded by one-thousand Batavians in Pannonia, outperformed both Romans (setting himself apart from them, to an extent, as well) and any *barbarus ... Parthus* – foreigners from the north-east (as previously seen in the case of the Scythians), whose assigned role it is to be both challenging opponents and losers whose defeat brings credibility and honour to those who succeed against them. The glorious achievements, the *facta* (and *uirtutes*), are thus validated by the barbarians' inability to achieve the same (and if they cannot do it, then presumably no one can).

41 Note, however, Courtney's objection: "It must not be assumed that "Soranus" actually performed the feat under the eyes of Hadrian, as if *iudice* meant *teste*; surely the Latin can only mean I who, in Hadrian's judgement, could have swum across the Danube, a report of a compliment paid by Hadrian to the soldier at some time" (Courtney, *Musa lapidaria*, 335). This remains doubtful, however, as *iudex* is used precisely to denote a (judging) witness present at artistic and skilful performances: cf. *ThLL* s. v. *iudex*, 602.53-69.

Two more items fall into the same category of texts exploiting the fearsome connotation of the term *barbarus* for the benefit and praise of the opponent.<sup>42</sup> The actual danger behind the barbarians' force in battle, threatening lives and civilisation as a whole from a Roman perspective, is described in a sixth-century inscription from the crypt of Hippolytus at Rome's via Tiburtina, reporting the restoration of the space (which had been turned into an underground basilica), under Pope Vigilius:<sup>43</sup>

- (crux) nec +[- - - i]terum summot[a plebe precantum]  
 [priscum] perdiderant antra [sacrata decus],  
 n[ec tua iam ma]rtyr poterant u[enerande sepulcra]  
 [huic mund]o lucem mittere q[ua frueris].  
 5 [lux tamen ista t]ua est quae nescit [fu]ne[ra, sed quo]  
 [perpet]uo crescat nec m[i]nua[tur ha]bet.  
 [nam nigra nox t]rinum stupuit per s[ae]cula lumen  
 [admittunt]q[ue] nouum conc[au]a saxa diem.  
 [frustra ba]rbaricis [fremuerunt] ausib(us) hostes  
 10 [foedarunt]q[ue] sacrum [tela cr]uenta locum:  
 [in]clyta] sed meli[us splendescit ma]rtyris aula  
 [au]ctoremque p[remunt imp]ia facta suum.  
 [pr]aesbyteri Vigilio sump[serunt] antra decorem  
 praesbyteri Andreae cur[a pe]regit opus (crux)

Neither . . . anew, as the praying folk had been dispelled, the sacred grottoes had lost their old splendour, nor, venerable martyr, had your tomb been able to bestow upon the world that light that you enjoy. Yet it is that very light of yours that does not know death, but has the power to increase, not decrease, eternally. For, over centuries, dark night has stifled that threefold light,<sup>44</sup> and now the hollowed rocks admit new light! In their barbaric endeavours, the enemies have growled in vain, as have their bloodied missiles defaced this sacred place! Instead, the martyr's famous hall shines even more beautifully (*sc.* than before), and the wicked deeds haunt their perpetrators. Under the pontificate of Vigilius the grottoes obtained their splendour: the care of Andreas, the priest, completed the work.

(ICUR VII 19937 = ILCV 1994 = IScM II 115)

While it is unknown which precise fifth-century event (if any one in particular) resulted in the need for the restoration works, the way in which the incursions are described as hostile (*hostis*, l. 9), defacing (*foedarunt*, l. 10), and – vitally – as bold (*ausib(us)*, l. 9!), life-threatening and dangerous (*[tela cr]uenta*, l. 10) are remarkable. Moreover, a threatening soundscape (*[fremuerunt]*, l. 9, if restored correctly) has been added to the mix. Interestingly, it is not so much the group of perpetrators (*hostes*) or the havoc that they wreaked, but the undertaking (*ausus*) of it which attracts the label *barbaricus* in this context: the violation of sacred space,

42 One must exclude a potential third item, *AE 1978.716 = AE 1988.994*, cf. *Cugusi and Sblendorio Cugusi, Carmina Latina Epigraphica Moesica*, 119-120 n. 63, which, though epic in its language, is certainly not a verse inscription.

43 Images are available at <http://www.edb.uniba.it/epigraph/21710> (last accessed April 2020).

44 This refers to the clerestory of the basilica.

the lack of respect for the dead in general, and the Christian saint in particular, were thus imagined as an act that lacked basic civilisation, a frenzied, wild attack with gory sounds and optics (*[tela cr]uenta!*). Importantly, however, as seen otherwise in this context, it is the resilience and civilisation's ability to overcome the attack of the uncivilised in particular that prevail in this message: as they necessitated the basilica's restoration (*[au]ctoremque p[re]munt imp[er]ia facta suum*, "the wicked deeds haunt their perpetrators", l. 12), the hostile act was not only overcome, but resulted in an ability to demonstrate resilience and superiority in the long run.

The second piece for this category, dating slightly later still, namely to the sixth century AD, comes from Cartagena on the Iberian peninsula and commemorates extensive building works carried out by one Comenciolus, patrician and magister militum of Hispania, installed by the Byzantine emperor Mauricius to fight *contra hostes barbaros*:<sup>45</sup>

*Quisquis ardua turrium miraris culmina  
uestibulumq(ue) urbis duplici porta firmatum  
dextra leuaq(ue) binos porticos arcus  
quibus superum ponitur camera curia conuexaq(ue)*  
5 *Comenciolus sic haec iussit patricius  
missus a Mauricio Aug(usto) contra hostes barbaros  
magnus uirtute magister mil(itum) Spaniae  
sic semper Hispania tali rectore laetetur  
dum poli rotantur dumq(ue) sol circuit orbem*  
10 *ann(o) VIII Aug(usti) ind(ictione) VIII.*

Whoever you are, beholding the towers' high rooftops and the city's entrance, fortified with a double gate and double porticoes and arches to the right and to the left, above which there is placed a vaulted assembly hall: these had thus commanded Comenciolus, the patrician, sent by orders of Mauricius Augustus against the barbarian enemies, the magister militum of Spania, great by his valiantness. May Hispania always be able to prosper under such a leader while the earth is spinning and while the sun is on its circuit.

In the eighth year, in the eighth Augustan *indictio*.

(CIL II 3420 = CLE 299 = ILS 835 = ILCV 792)

The main purpose of this text, at first glance, would appear to be the celebration of the completed building works, yet its author seizes the opportunity to celebrate both the emperor and his local dignitary in charge, Comenciolus. The need for, and effectiveness of, the defensive structure is all the more apparent with the mention of barbarian opponents – a reference to the Arian Goths in this particular context (another north-eastern threat, to be added to the mention of Scythia and Parthia in previous pieces).<sup>46</sup> Once again, the role of the threatening, strong, and dangerous "other" is thus to determine the worth of the self, and once again one must note the presence of the term *uirtus* in the immediate vicinity of the reference to the *barbari*: Comenciolus is a *magnus uirtute magister mil(itum) Spaniae*, of course, not just any *magister militum*.

45 See also IHC 176, ICERV 362, and Hep 1997.444, and cf. AE 1998.694 adn. and AE 2012.16 adn.

46 The same people are also referred to as *barbari* in the epitaph of Sidonius Apollinaris, on which, see below, section Foreign Elements Devoid of Civilisation and Refinement (with n. 48).

*Foreign Elements Devoid of Civilisation and Refinement*

The items assembled in the previous section share a concept of *barbarus* that implies a distinctive otherness that is characterised by its threatening, confrontational nature – antithetical to one’s own existence, but in that also always a yardstick of one’s own worth and *uirtus*. While the element of confrontation seems unavoidable, and even beneficial to an extent (from the viewpoint of the self-professed non-barbarian), the main focus is placed on respect and fear, not contempt and a desire to proselytise one’s own way of life. The transition from respect to contempt, however, is quickly made, and there is sufficient evidence for a derogatory use of the term *barbarus* in the Latin verse inscriptions as well. The monumental material discussed in the previous section implied no fundamental lack of culture and refinement to render barbarians dark, ominous elements of danger, even though some of their bolder undertakings (such as in the case of the Hippolytus inscription) might imply them. This is taken to a different level in the subsequent texts, which paint the *barbarus* as a cause for debasement, causing the desire, if not the actual need, to impart improvement and spread one’s own civilisation on an “other” that is conceived of as (to an extent) feral and not subject to basic rules of human interaction (not entirely dissimilar to the way in which *barbarus* was used in the Istacidius graffito from Pompeii, above).

The notion that *barbari* are the cause of corruption and debasement of what once was good about Romanness comes out very clearly in a funerary inscription from Aquileia, dated to the second half of the second century AD, commemorating a military man who was a proud member of a praetorian cohort, not of the (as is insinuated, now debased) “barbarian” legions:<sup>47</sup>

*Hic situs est iusti iu[dex (?)]  
laudator et aeq[ui]  
Sassina quem genuit  
nunc Aquileia tenet  
5 septimae qui cohortis  
centuriam reg{u}it  
praetoriae fidus non  
barbaricae legioni[s]  
C(aius) Manlius hic Valeri-  
10 anus nomine dictus  
Sentilius fratri quia  
meritus posuit.*

Here lies the judge (?) of what is right and the bestower of praise upon what is fair, whom Sassina bore and whom Aquileia now holds in possession, who led a century of the cohorts VII praetoria, not that of a barbarian legion: Gaius Manlius Valerianus he was called by name. Sentilius had (sc. this monument) erected for him, for he had earned it.

(CIL V 923 = CLE 1320 = ILS 2671 = I. Aquileiae II 2842)

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47 For a detailed discussion of this piece, see now Masaro, *Iscrizioni metriche*, 77-80 n. 13.

While it is unclear as to whether *barbarus* is merely an expression of disrespect towards a specific legion, or more than one legion, stationed at Aquileia that had added Sarmates to its recruits or a more significant expression of disdain for all legions, it is obvious that the speaker perceived the praetorian cohort(s) as units that were still “pure”, not disgraced and debased by the addition of *barbari*. To an extent, this is in direct opposition to notions of barbarians as exceptionally skilled warriors, the image that was seen in operation before, but the good thing about standards is, of course, that one may always have double (or even triple) standards, depending on the circumstance.

The obvious question that arises from this frame of mind is, of course, whether it is possible to address the lesser value of the *barbari* in any way if confrontation cannot be avoided: can barbarian nature be “fixed” or “cured”? This cynical, chauvinistic view is expressed at least thrice in the Latin verse inscriptions, and, remarkably, in all three instances this happens both late, in the context of individuals of elevated status, and with an expressly Christian background.

The first and possibly earliest of the three instances in question is the epitaph for Sidonius Apollinaris from Augustonemetum (Clermont-Ferrand), datable to the late fifth century:<sup>48</sup>

*Sanctis contiguus sacroque patri  
 uiuit sic meritis Apollinaris  
 illustris titulis potens honore  
 rector militi(a)e forique iudex  
 5 mundi inter tumidas quietus undas  
 causarum moderans subinde motus  
 leges barbarico dedit furori.  
 discordantibus inter arma regnis  
 pacem consilio reduxit amplo.  
 10 haec inter tamen et philosophando  
 scripsit perpetuis habenda s(a)ec(u)lis,  
 et post talia dona Gratiarum  
 summi pontificis sedens cathedram  
 mundanos soboli refudit actus.  
 15 quisque hic cum lacrimis deum rogabis  
 dextrum funde preces super sepulchrum .  
 nulli incognitus et legendus orbi  
 illic Sidonius tibi inuocetur  
 XII K(a)l(endas) Septembris Zenone Imperatore.*

In immediate proximity to the saints and the sacred father, thus lives Apollinaris in his merits. Noble through his titles, mighty in honour, a leader of the military and judge in the forum, calm amidst the billowing waves of the world, then controlling the turmoil of lawsuits, he gave law to barbarian fury. When the realms were at loggerheads in armed conflict he restored peace with his profound advice. In all this he still managed to write works, philosophising, to be held as a possession by centuries on end, and after such gifts of the Graces, occupying the highest pontiff’s chair, he emanated worldly acts for his (*sc.* spiritual) offspring. Whoever you are, seeking god in tears, pour out your prayers over the propitious tomb. Unknown to no one, and to be read by the entire world, Sidonius shall be invoked here by yourself.  
 21st of August under the reign of Zeno.

(*ILCV* 1067 add. = *CLE* 1516 = *RICG* VIII 21)

48 Further on this piece, see Cugusi, *Aspetti letterari*, 95, 111-113, 323-324 (cf. Cugusi, *Per un nuovo corpus*, 130, 177); Wierschowski, *Fremde in Gallien*, 198-199 n. 254; and Montzimir, *Nouvel essai*.

The epitaph for Sidonius Apollinaris, holder of the bishopric of the Auvergne at Clermont from the early 470s, commemorates, among other things, Sidonius' engagement with the Arian Goths<sup>49</sup> who had captured Clermont in AD 474 and imprisoned Sidonius in that context. Originally an important organiser of late antique western Roman resistance to the Goths, Sidonius himself arranged with the Gothic ruler Euric to seek diplomatic solutions for mutual benefit in the context of the emerging and expanding Gothic rule in Gaul. It would appear to be this very element of arrangement in the interest of mutual benefit, allowing for the survival of traditional Roman<sup>50</sup> elements and structure in the newly forming and developing Gothic realm, that is described here as *leges barbarico dedit furori* (l. 7) – a bold statement, presenting Sidonius as “civiliser”, in the tradition of Vergil's famous *pacique imponere morem* as the Romans' noble responsibility and evocative of Horace's *Graecia capta ferum uictorem cepit* (“captured Greece gained control of its wild capturer”).

While the line of Sidonius' epitaph may have been more of a disgruntled poetic rectification of a historical injustice (thus perceived in certain quarters of the local society, at least) than a summary of historical goings-on, it is clear, however, how – talking to a Roman-oriented audience – the imagery of the feral, wild *barbarus* was employed to cast an image of the honorand: Sidonius thus advanced to be an unlikely tamer of the wild, a civilised, civilising winner against the factually victorious, war-like, uncivilised barbarians, a shepherd who not only protected his flock against the attack of wild quasi-animals, but even rendered said feral creatures tame.

Datable to a time around, or just after, the dedication of Sidonius' epitaph, another inscription from Gaul – namely from Lugdunum (Lyon) – introduces another motif, namely the ability to change one's inferior barbaric nature through baptism.<sup>51</sup> The text, which survives through its manuscript tradition, reads –

*Hic gemini fratres iunctis dant membra sepulchris  
quos iunxit meritum consociauit humus.  
germine barbarico nati, sed fonte renati  
dant animas celo dant sua membra solo.*  
5 *aduenit Sagile patri cum coniuge luctus  
defungi haud dubie qui uoluerunt prius  
sed dolor est nimis Chr(ist)o moderante ferendus:  
orbati non sunt, dona dedere deo.*

Here twin brothers give their mortal remains a joint tomb: those whom merit joined, soil has made companions. Born of barbarian seed, but reborn from the baptismal font, they give their souls to heaven, they give their limbs to the ground. Sorrow has come for Sagila (?), their father, with his wife, both of whom, no doubt, wished to die before (*sc.* their offspring), but excessive pain one must bear guided by Christ: they have not been bereft, they gave gifts to God.

(CIL XIII 2402 = ILCV 1516 add. = CLE Engström 353)

49 The same people are also referred to as *barbari* in the epitaph of Comenciolus, on which, see above, section *Worthy Opponents in War and Otherwise* (with n. 45).

50 The appropriateness of the notion of “Romanness” in late antique Gaul has been challenged, cf. e.g. Drinkwater, *Un-becoming Roman*. While this captures an important aspect of local identity, it seems apparent from texts such as the above, that the old, traditional world view and its related narratives still served a purpose in documents intended for the public.

51 This is at odds with the romanticising view that the early Christian church was, in fact, more inclusive and more appreciative of barbarians than pagan Rome, considering barbarians equally Adam's children, as expressed by Maas, *Barbarians*, esp. 67-68.

With this text, a member of the local population, Sagila,<sup>52</sup> and his wife mourn the loss of their twin sons (whose names do not survive). Their ethnic belonging appears to be asserted through the phrase *germine barbarico* (“of barbarian seed”, l. 3), and that, when taken on its own may not seem problematic as such. Remarkably, however, their barbarian birth (*nati!*) required rebirth (*renati!*) through baptism – purification and refinement designed to overcome what now, in retrospect, was a blemish, namely their being *germine barbarico*.

The same principle and imagery, though with a shift in perspective, persists in the epitaph for King Cædwalla of Wessex, datable to the 7th century, from the city of Rome, which partly survives and is also reported in the *Historia ecclesiastica* (5.7) of the Venerable Bede as well as in Paulus Diaconus’ *Historia Langobardum* (6.15). Its text may be read as follows:<sup>53</sup>

*Culmen opes subolem pollentia regna triumphos  
 exubias proceres moenia castra Lares  
 quasque patrum uirtus et quae congesserat ipse  
 Ceadual armipotens liquit amore dei  
 5 ut Petrum sedemq(ue) Petri rex cerneret hospes  
 cuius fonte meras sumeret almus aquas  
 splendificumque iubar radianti carperet haustu  
 ex quo uiuificus fulgor ubiq(ue) fluit.  
 percipiensq(ue) alacer rediuiuae praemia uitae  
 10 barbaricam rabiem nomen et inde suum  
 conuersus conuertit ouans Petrumq(ue) uocari  
 Sergius antistes iussit ut ipse pater  
 fonte renascentis quem Chr(ist)i gratia purgans  
 protinus albatum uexit in arce poli .  
 15 mira fides regis clementia maxima Chr(ist)i  
 cuius consilium nullus adire potest.  
 sospes enim ueniens supremo ex orbe Britann(us)  
 per uarias gentes per freta perque uias  
 urbem Romuleam uidit templumq(ue) uerendum  
 20 aspexit Petri mystica dona gerens.  
 candidus inter oues Chr(ist)i sociabilis ibit,  
 corpore nam tumulum, mente superna tenet.  
 commutasse magis sceptrorum insignia credas  
 quem regnum Chr(ist)i promeruisse uides.  
 25 hic depositus est Ceadul qui et Petrus rex Saxonum  
 sub die XII K(a)l(endarum) Maiarum indict(ione) II qui uixit annos pl(us)  
 m(inus) XXX  
 imperante d(omi)n(o) Iustiniano piissimo Aug(usto) anno eius consulatus IIII  
 pontificante apostolico uiro domno Sergio p(a)p(a) anno II.*

Highness, riches, lineage, thriving realms, triumphs, spoils, chieftains, city walls, fortifications, the homestead he had inherited by his forefathers’ achievement and which he had accumulated himself: Cædwalla, mighty in war, abandoned all these for the love of God, so that he would behold, as a traveller, Peter and the seat of Peter, from whose font he would propitiously receive pure waters and catch the gleam-bestowing splendour with shining draughts whence life-bestowing brightness emanates everywhere.

52 Thus Holder, *Alt-celtischer Sprachschatz* II 1288 s. v. *Sagila*.

53 Cf. also *AE 2001.179 add.*

As he eagerly gained sight of the prize of the new life, he put aside his barbarian rage, as the next step, his name, he also rejoiced to convert, and Pope Sergius commanded he be Peter, with (*sc.* Sergius) himself as his (*sc.* god)father, cleansing him over the font by the grace of reborn Christ, then elevated him, clad in white, to the heights of heaven.

Wondrous to behold, the faith of a king; the greatest, however, is the mercy of Christ into whose counsel nobody may enter: for the Briton, arriving in safety from the margins of the world and travelling through many a people, over many a sea and many a road, saw Romulus' city and, bearing mystic gifts, gained sight of the awe-inspiring church of Peter.

Dressed in white he will walk in fellowship among the sheep of Christ, for with his body he inhabits this tomb, with his soul the realms above. One might believe that he, whom you see having gained the realm of Christ, readily exchanged those insignia of (*sc.* worldly) sceptres.

Here was buried Cædwalla, also known as Peter, king of the Saxons on the 20th of April in the second indiction, aged approximately thirty years, in the reign of the most pious emperor Justinian, in the year of his fourth consulship, in the second year during the pontificate of our apostolic lord, Pope Sergius.

(*CLE* 1394 = *ILCV* 55; cf. *ICUR* II 288-289)

Cædwalla's epitaph presents an astonishing conversion narrative for a king who, as it is presented here, chose to reject all worldly power and all worldly goods that were available to him in his earlier life in exchange for a spiritual life in accordance with Christianity (and with submission to the Christian church and the pope). In doing so, he also granted to the church and its consolidating establishment the opportunity to narrativise his own spiritual and religious journey (alongside the actual one, coming from Britain to Rome).

The epitaph capitalises on classical narratives that saw Britain at the margins of the civilised world and Rome at its centre, and in that vein, the epitaph fashions Cædwalla's conversion not only as a journey through time and space, but also as a cultural one: with everything else, Cædwalla abandoned his *barbaricam rabiem* (l. 10), his barbarian rage, once he had arrived in the church's fold and seen the light of its blessings. His journey has thus become one from the feral margins of the world to the world's centre of civilisation – Cædwalla has been cultivated and domesticated by the teachings of Christ and its worldly assistants.

Intellectually and conceptually, even though the text falls just outside what one may reasonably regard as "Roman antiquity", Cædwalla's epitaph is fully within the continuum of thought that had presented itself as emerging in the ancient sources – it is a continuation and extension in a way that is entirely organic and consistent with the direction of travel that could be seen in the making in the texts from Apronius' Sicilian dedication to the epitaph of Sidonius Apollinaris.<sup>54</sup>

### *Barbarian Experiences, or: The Importance of Changing One's Perspective*

As diverse as the range of the evidence considered so far may be, one must note two important aspects of it: (i) it is an unusual composition of Latin verse inscriptions to anyone familiar with the *Carmina Latina Epigraphica*, as it draws largely from (relatively) less frequent

54 The next logical step in this narrative was, of course, to take the initiative and spread "civilisation" among "barbarians" proactively – and to spread Christianity in the wake of it –, rather than to wait for them to come and better themselves.

text types (the vast majority of the Latin verse inscriptions are funerary in nature) as well as related to social strata below the elites, and (ii), unsurprisingly, they exclusively give a view from the inside out on those deemed *barbari* and the *Barbaria*. There are a small number of texts, however, that can provide some counterbalance to this picture – texts in which individuals refer to themselves as barbarians or of barbarian descent.<sup>55</sup> Already the inscription for the sons of Sagila, above, told one such story. There are more, however, and the stories that the relevant inscriptions have to tell are not cheerful ones. And in these instances it is particularly interesting to see the way(s) in which the notion of being a *barbarus* has been employed to create emotions in poems for consumption and digestion in a Roman, Latinate context.

The first item to be considered in this context is an inscription from first-century AD Narbo (Narbonne) in the province of Gallia Narbonensis:<sup>56</sup>

- C(aius) Of[illi]us C(ai) l(ibertus)  
Pal(atina) A[eimn]estus  
uiuos [sibi] et  
Mindiae M(arci) f(iliae) Primae  
uxori et  
5 C(aio) Ofillio C(ai) f(ilio) Proculo  
filio et  
(uac.).  
Barbara quem genuit tellus  
hunc tradidit urbi seruitio,  
10 ingenium ut flec[t]eret  
inmerit[o]. quaesitum ex pat[re]  
ut potuit s[i]bi nomen adaux[it]  
et pretio [obtin]uit quod prec[e]  
non ualuit. officiis uicit  
15 [d]ominum nec uerbera sens[it].  
[p]raemia non habuit, pignor[a]  
quae potuit. quid properas  
[h]ospes, requies tibi nota parat[a]  
[es]t. hospitium hoc populo  
20 semper ubique patet horaru[m]  
numerum quem suspr[- - -]V[- - -]  
quoque senti summam [- - -?]  
[- - -] securum [- - -]  
- - - - -  
nec duro iam doleas obitu.  
25 nec tibi nec nobis aeternum  
uiuere cessit: quod pueri  
occidimus, fata quaerenda  
putas? dum sis in uita, dolor est  
amittere uitam; dum simul  
30 occidimus omnia despicias.  
orbem sub leges si habeas [d]um  
uiuus, ad Orchum quid ualet?  
hic nulla est diuitis ambitio.  
[H(oc) m(onumentum)] h(eredem) n(on) s(equitur).*\_\_\_\_\_

55 This is evidence to the contrary of a view expressed by Maas, *Barbarians, 61* that “no non-Roman group used those terms” (i.e. the term *barbarian* and its derivations).

56 Belloc, *Carrière d'affranchi* noticed that the two fragments, *CIL XII 5026* and *XII 1276*, previously published independently, were, in fact, part of the same inscription. Cf. *AE 2008.887 adn.*

Gaius Ofillius A[eimn]estus,<sup>57</sup> freedman of Gaius, of the tribus Palatina, while still alive, (*sc.* has erected this monument) for himself and his wife Mindia Prima, daughter of Marcus, and his son Gaius Ofillius Proculus, son of Gaius, and [*empty space follows*]. The barbarian land that had given birth to him handed him over to the city of Rome in slavery, so that he unduly changed his character. He made every effort to enhance the status of the name given<sup>58</sup> to him by his father on his own part, and at a price he obtained what he was denied at his request. He won over his master by his attentiveness, and he did not experience beatings. He did not receive any rewards, promises [*sc.* of rewards? *or*: privileges?]<sup>59</sup> within his ability.

Why do you rush, stranger, see, there is a place prepared for you to relax. This resting area is open to the people always and everywhere for as many hours as . . . [*the remainder of the text here is too fragmentary for it to be rendered in a meaningful way; a gap follows*].

. . . nor feel pained by a dire death. Neither you nor we have been granted to live forever. You believe fate is to blame, because we die as young boys? While you are still alive, to lose one's life seems like pain; but as soon as we die, you spurn everything. If you have the entire world under control while you are alive, what difference does it make to Orcus? There is no rich people's canvassing for favours down here.

This monument does not go to the heir.

(CIL XII 5026 (cf. p. 853) = CLE 1276 + CIL XII 5272 = CLE 1202)

The text gives an astonishing, in many ways unique first-hand account of an individual who, purportedly born in *barbara ... tellus* (l. 8), soon found himself in slavery in the city of Rome – a profoundly traumatic and transformative experience (*ingenium ut flec[t]eret | inmerit[o]*, ll. 10-11) – and eventually managed to escape this predicament. Many aspects of this text deserve further consideration. But the point that is of particular interest here is the way in which this individual, who had this inscription and the monument made while still alive, presented his own path of life.

The *barbara ... tellus*, the “barbarian land”, plays an ambiguous role in this piece. It quite literally stands at the beginning of everything. The poem's very first word, following the prose *praescriptum*, is *Barbara*. This *barbara ... tellus* is the giver of life (*quem genuit*), but at the same time she is a cruel mother: the very same *tellus* that is introduced as the sentence's lifegiving subject is the one responsible for the man's being handed over (*quem genuit tellus | hunc tradidit*) into slavery – and that is the point of departure for the man's difficult journey.

There is little point in speculating which part of the Barbaria was Ofillius's native land. He clearly prides himself on his familial origins, drawing attention to the name that was forced upon him by his father, and at the same time seeks to promote the additional standing that came out of his status as a freedman with Roman nomenclature (though the main purpose of that is likely to have been his desire to gain acceptance in the context of the Roman Empire following his personality-altering experience of servitude). Thus in his narrative he draws on notions of Barbarian lands as cruel places that lack vital elements of a life-affirming culture

57 The supplement of this name was proposed to me by Georg Petzl, *pers. comm.*, *The common restoration is A[rimn]estus; Belloc, Carrière d'affranchi preferred the reading A[phrod]isius, which, at least on the basis of the photo, seems out of the question.*

58 The meaning of this phrase is somewhat unclear. Arguably, the *quaesitum nomen* is the name that the father “sought out” for his son by selling him into slavery.

59 The Latin term *pignora* is ambiguous and has sometimes been taken to mean “offspring” (cf., e.g., Eck and Heinrichs, *Sklaven und Freigelassene*, 25), which is possible, but seems less likely in the context of the present discourse.

and civilisation. At the same time, however, he does not dissociate himself from his origins: the change to his *ingenium* that the experience of slavery caused remains a point of upset, it was something that was forced on him and something that remains an act of injustice (*flec[t]eret | inmerit[o]*, ll. 10-11). Thus the Barbarian origin was renarrativised productively in the context of a Roman(ised), Latinate public, presenting Ofillius as someone who, going through hardship, became a better person – someone who even invites his readership and offers hospitality; the undertones, however, are bitter and speak of trauma, barely concealing the culprits for what he had to endure.

Personal suffering and endurance of unspeakable, personality-changing hardship are also the themes of a second long inscription that introduces a *barbarus*. The monument that preserves the text belongs to the late second century (or early third century AD?), and it was discovered in Sulmo (Sulmona). The inscribed text comprises extensive iambic runs and occasional senarii.<sup>60</sup>

- C[- - M]urranus et Decri[a]  
 Se[- - S]ecundae l(iberta) Melusa sibi et [suis].  
 sal[ue u]iator qui istac iter facis,  
 saluo tuo corpore consiste et lege:  
 5 iniquitate Orchi qui perperauit saecula  
 quod debuerant facere filii patri et  
 matri fecerunt miseri{s} pater et mater  
 fili(i)s dulcissimis suis, quoniam non  
 potuerunt exsorare deos ut [- - ]  
 10 suis, neque ipsi retinere potuerunt, neque  
 etiam restituere. hoc quod [p]o[t]ju[erunt]  
 nomina suorum restituerunt ad superos  
 Primigeni Seueri Pudentis Casti Lucillae et  
 Potestatis et miseris derelictis [a fi]li(i)s  
 15 quoniam sperabant se citius [- - ] suos,  
 uiuis nomina eodem adiecerunt dum  
 malo fati nati et iniqua fortuna  
 qui non potuerunt antecedere suos  
 neque etiam persequi tam cito quam  
 20 ipsi cupiunt. at nunc miseris desertis  
 a natis nostris rogamus deos superos  
 atque inferos ut liceat nepotulum  
 nostrum Thiasum qui est nobis derelictus  
 ex Pudente filio inmaturo qua[li]s scintilla  
 25 quae de igne exierit, memoria nostrorum,  
 exsuperet nos: uiuat ualeat sint illi quae  
 ipse expetet. et nunc te rogamus nepotule  
 noster per tuorum maiorum misericor-  
 diam ut tu pietati seruias et hoc sephul-  
 30 crum tuorum tutaris et  
 si qui(s) te roga(ue)rit qui hoc comporta(ue)rit  
 dicito auus meus Murranus, nam ipsa  
 miseria docet etiam barbaros scribere  
 misericordias. et nunc rogo uos omn-  
 35 es natos nascentesque ut si quid la(p)sus  
 me praeterit hominem barbarum natu

60 The inscription was recently published as *CIL IX 7164* by Marco Buonocore (with images). For an earlier publication of the text, see *Suppl. It. 4* (1988), *Sulmo 58* = *AE 1989.247*.

*Pannunium multis ulceri(bu)s et malis  
 perturbatum ignoscatis. rogo at nu[nc]  
 inprecamus deos ut si quis hoc sephulcr[um]  
 40 aut hunc titulum laeserit in[tulerit illi?]  
 fortuna mala et quod mer[itu]m sit [hunc]  
 titulumque quicumque legerit aut lege[ntem]  
 auscultae)rit alleuet illos for[tuna]  
 superior et ualeant semper [in aeterno?]  
 45 quicumque in hoc titulo scrip[ta legerit]  
 quietis sit uobis terra leuis et [- - -]  
 desperatum qui superant [- - -]  
 tempore obito sit [- - -].*

Gaius (?) ... Murranus and Decria Se ... Melusa, freedwoman of Secunda, for themselves and theirs.

Greetings, wayfarer, making your way around here, free from physical afflictions, pause for a moment and read this: through the injustice of Orcus, who ruined generations, father and mother had to do for their wretched, sweetest children what had been the children's duty towards their father and mother,<sup>61</sup> for they could not persuade the gods to (save them for) them, nor could they retain them themselves, nor bring them back.

What they could do is to restore the names of theirs to those who inhabit the world above, the names of Primigenius, Severus, Pudens, Castus, Lucilla, and Potestas. Those wretched, abandoned by their offspring, since they had hoped to [die?] sooner [than?] their children, added their names in the same place, still alive, while, born under ill fate and unjust fortune, unable to leave before their offspring, now cannot even follow them themselves as quickly as they were hoping to.<sup>62</sup>

But now, we, wretched, abandoned by our children, ask the gods above and below to permit our little grandson, Thiasus, who is left to us, by our son Pudens, of immature age, like a spark that jumps from a fire, heir of our line, to outlive us: may he live, be strong, may he have whatever he himself desires. And now we ask you, our little grandson, to serve filial duty and to look after the tomb of your ancestors, and, if someone asks you who is contained in here, you shall tell: it is Murranus, my grandfather, for misery teaches even barbarians to express compassion in writing.

And now I ask you all, born in the past or more recently, if some mistake or other escaped me, a barbarian man, Pannonian by birth, hurt by many a wound and evil, to forgive me. I ask: let us implore the gods that, if anyone damages this tomb or this inscription, they may thrust ill fate on such a person and whatever else is deserved; but whoever reads this inscription or listens to someone reading it out,<sup>63</sup> may a more desirable fate comfort them and may they flourish forever and ever (?): whoever reads what is written in this inscription, may you find peace and may earth be light on you.

.....

(CIL IX 7164)

61 The reversal of the natural order of death for parents and children is a common topic in the Latin verse inscriptions; cf., e.g., Hernández Pérez, *Poesía latina sepulchral*, 1-8 and cf. Antolini, *Le iscrizioni latine rupestri*, 102 with n. 246 (on this specific case).

62 A thinly veiled reference to Murranus' contemplation of suicide.

63 This is a vital clue as to how Latin verse inscriptions were (re-)enacted (re-enacted after an initial performance in the context of the actual burial, that is) and performed; further on this, see now Kruschwitz, *How the Romans read funerary inscriptions*. This passage thus provides an important clue as to how an audience in the ancient world may have accessed written poetry – an aspect not often included in considerations about literacy in the Roman world (but see Bodel, *Literacy*).

Similar to the previous piece, Murranus' inscription preserves an extraordinary tale of human suffering. Casting himself as an outsider of Pannonian descent, Murranus reports of his being repeatedly wounded (mentally and physically), his loss of all six of his children, his inability to end his own life, so as to be able to take care of his grandson (whom the piece not only addresses, but also presents as the family's sole hope in adversity, employing the remarkable poetic image of a spark shooting off a flame: detached from its origins it still holds the power to rekindle the original fire).

The text introduces the term *barbarus*, referring to Murranus' origins, on two occasions. It first occurs in l. 33, following an admonishment directed at Thiasus, the surviving grandson, to remind future generations of his own origins and the cause for the long epitaph: *nam ipsa | miseria docet etiam barbaros scribere | misericordias*, even a barbarian (!) will express his misery (*miseria*) in the shape of written expressions of suffering and anguish (*miseri-cordiae*), if the pain is intense enough. Murranus had thus far, following the chronology of events of the text, only introduced himself as a freedman – his origins had remained unclear up to this point. In the backwaters of Sulmo in the second century AD, the displaced arrival from far-away Pannonia clearly felt compelled to justify his less than stoic text: there is only so much one can take, and – now drawing on the idea that barbarians are generally deficient in their range of human(e) emotions, as had already been seen in other contexts before – this applies even to *barbari* under such truly exceptional circumstances.

Once the b-word is used, Murranus immediately builds on it: he introduces a mention of his native Pannonia (l. 37), he presents himself as a hardened individual who sustained many, manifold injuries – and, extraordinarily, seeks forgiveness for any artistic shortcomings his text may display. He thus anticipates prejudice and belittlement at the hand of the local population, potentially blaming him for his linguistic barbarisms, and he seeks to mitigate that through the adoption of a subservient position: he may be a *barbarus*, the text seems to suggest, but at least he is aware of his failings and deficiencies, and thus merits a more lenient treatment. Unlike Ofillius in the previous piece, Murranus does not turn *Barbaria* into the culprit for his predicament when he presents his origins in a Roman, Latinate environment; instead, he is seeking to turn his (arguable) weakness and vulnerability into a strength, seeking particular understanding in a potentially hostile, certainly alien environment, accepting a position of social inferiority and exclusion to elicit understanding and compassion from his audiences – an obvious requirement for him with Thiasus surviving and needing to build a future for the family after catastrophic experiences for two generations of his family.

There is one more verse inscription that employs the term *barbarus*, and this item may be a third item to be adduced in this particular context. The item in question is a highly peculiar text, clearly in verse originally employed in a funerary setting, though not a funerary inscription in a traditional sense: much rather, it is a legal text, written by an individual of some influence and standing, boasting his legal training, who promotes his achievements in this sector, for the benefit of his family, in a poem that discusses the burial, inheritance, and a “perfect” testament. Reported for Nemausus – Nîmes in the province of Gallia Narbonensis, probably datable to the second century AD, the text of the (now lost) monument has been constituted as follows on the basis of a manuscript tradition:<sup>64</sup>

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64 For a detailed discussion of this piece, see Champlin, *Miscellanea testamentaria*, esp. 203-206 no. VII.

----- ?  
 [- - - p]atroni famam barbar[- - -]  
 cuius Roma libris adserit [ipsa fide]m].  
 amissos ornat titulis, en (!), aspice iunctos.  
 quos habet incolumes fouit amore pari.  
 5 supremas error ne posset rumpere ceras  
 arte sua cauit, clausit operta fide.  
 excipiet Manes sua qui sine lite reliquit  
 laudabit studium cui sua cura cauet.

. . . the patron's . . . acclaim . . . barbarian . . ., to whose books Rome herself adds credence. The ones he has lost he adorns with inscriptions, lo!, behold them, united (sc. here). Those whom he retains safe and sound, he cherishes with equal love. Lest some error might break his final seals,<sup>65</sup> he took precaution by means of his skill, locked his secrets faithfully. He who left his matters behind without quarrel will await the Spirits of the Departed (sc. calmly), and he whom his care protects will praise his effort.

(CIL XII 4036 = X \*357e = CLE 1112)

Regrettably, the opening line(s)<sup>66</sup> of this inscription is (are) reported in damaged condition, and is thus partially lost, which makes it difficult to appreciate the exact wording of the piece. It would seem clear, however, even on the basis of what has been transmitted, that there was some kind of contrast created between *Roma* in l. 2 and whatever had originally been said about *barbar[- - -]* in l. 1. If the city of Rome is, as relatively plausibly restored, the entity that adds *fides*, credence and trustworthiness, to the *libri* of the dedicant of this inscription, then *barbar[- - -]* by contrast may either have reduced said *fides* or, more positively spun, laid the foundations for whatever Rome specifically amplified and aggrandised – the *fama*, perhaps, of the patron (of those buried and commemorated here), of a man of barbaric origin?

While the dedicant of this inscription ultimately remains unknown, E. J. Champlin argued – plausibly – that the person behind this was Q. Cervidius Scaevola, the influential *iuris consultus* of the latter half of the second century AD.<sup>67</sup> As strongly suggested by the so-called *tabula Banasitana*, Cervidius Scaevola was of African (Carthaginian?) descent. Even though unambiguously a Roman citizen (he is referred to, with *tria nomina* and filiation, as Q. Cervidius Q. f. Scaevola and noted as inscribed in the *tribus Arniensis*), Cervidius Scaevola may have presented himself in the context of this Gallic burial setting as someone who, coming from some “outside”, Rome’s long-term rival, infamous for its *fides* (sc. *Punica*), was even endorsed by the city of Rome herself, providing him not only the training, but with actual *fides*, trustworthiness, in his legal writings. If this chain of assumptions is correct (and the identification of Cervidius Scaevola as the person behind the text is by no means certain), then – though on a higher social level – Cervidius is effectively doing the same as Murranus: Cervidius deliberately casts himself as an outsider, at least initially, who through hard work and (to an extent) subservience seeks to establish an incontestable position within a (provincial!) setting – a setting in which even a Roman citizen, if originating from certain, far-away parts of the empire, will still be regarded as *barbari*.

65 *I.e. invalidate the intentions of his sealed testament.*

66 There may, in fact, not have been any text loss at the top of this inscription.

67 Thus Champlin, *Miscellanea testamentaria*.

It is certainly possible to restore the text of the first line, following Otto Hirschfeld's suggestion in *CIL* ad loc., as [*extollit p]atroni famam barbar[a tellus*], "barbaric land extolled the patron's acclaim", though this is by no means the only way to restore the damaged line. But, in contrast to what E. J. Champlin suggested, this should not be mistaken for evidence that Cervidius was a patron in any official function:<sup>68</sup> he may very well merely have acted as the *patronus* for the *amissi* and the *incolumes* mentioned in this inscription – an acclaimed, and trustworthy, Punic patron and *iuris consultus* in a provincial setting who wished to promote, rather than to hinder, the case of his *clientes* in life and beyond in a province that was not his own.

### *Some Final Observations*

While the evidence that emerges from the Latin verse inscriptions may, to an extent, be considered slim, anecdotal, and composed in isolation rather than in communication with one another, one must note two things: (i) ultimately, the same applies to literary sources (and the number of their authors), and (ii) even so, there are some peculiarities in the spread and overall spin they put on the matter at hand.

In all instances of *barbarus* being used in the Latin verse inscriptions, it is obvious that *barbarus* is not merely a descriptive term, but an emotionally charged one, designed and employed to raise certain expectations, fears, and dispositions. Invariably, *barbari* are outside threats, not merely an "other" but an opponent, to be met in confrontation.<sup>69</sup> Almost invariably, they are lacking vital characteristics of civilised, rational behaviour. And yet, they are needed – as an "other" to define and measure one's self and one's *uirtus*. Building on this basic outline, more complex depictions see barbarians as quasi-feral entities that are causes for deterioration and decline, as a lesser form of existence that needs improvement through confrontation with, and re-education and taming through exposure to, Roman and – in a couple of particularly noteworthy cases – Christian values and training.

When and where barbarians are mentioned in the Latin verse inscriptions, as far as they have come to light so far, this exclusively happens in Europe, not in Asia or Africa. Of the seventeen relevant texts that were assembled here, twelve come from Italy (Rome: 3; Latium et Campania: 6;<sup>70</sup> Samnium: 1; Venetia et Histria 1; Sicilia: 1), four from Gaul (Aquitani(c) a: 1; Gallia Narbonensis 2; Gallia Lugdunensis: 1), and one from Hispania. Where specified or implied, the "barbarians" to whom these texts allude typically come from the north and north-east (Scythians, Goths, Parthians, Britons, Gauls), less commonly from the (north African) south (Gaetulians; Carthaginians?), and – according to the evidence available thus far – never from the east (which is not altogether surprising, considering the overall low number of Latin verse inscriptions from that part of the Roman world).

68 Champlin, *Miscellanea Testamentaria*, 204.

69 It is worth noting that while this seems accurate within the context of the evidence discussed in the present paper, this distinction of *barbari* = *outsiders* is not strictly accurate in more general terms. Note, e.g., Woolf, *Tales*, esp. 89–117 (on "enduring fictions") and also, on a somewhat more abstract level, Delogu, *Transformations of the Roman World*.

70 This includes the four Pompeian examples, introduced above, the item from Castellammare di Stabia, noted in n. 32, and – assuming that Kovács, *Eques super ripam Danuvii* was correct, *CIL* III 3676 = *CLE* 427.

An aspect unique to the evidence assembled here is the use of the term *barbarus* to refer to oneself, or one's origins, in a small number of cases from those who, for a variety of reasons, felt it to be an advantage to draw attention to their own existences as (perceived or factual) outsiders of their respective local or spiritual / religious communities. This goes significantly beyond Ovid's imagination of himself as a barbarian in his exile life:<sup>71</sup>

*exercent illi sociae commercia linguae:  
per gestum res est significanda mihi.  
barbarus hic ego sum, qui non intellegor ulli,  
et rident stolidi verba Latina Getae;  
meque palam de me tuto mala saepe loquuntur,  
40 forsitan obiciunt exiliumque mihi.  
utque fit, in se aliquid fingi, dicentibus illis  
abnuerim quotiens adnuerimque, putant.*

They hold intercourse in the tongue they share; I must make myself understood by gestures. Here it is I that am a barbarian, understood by nobody; the Getae laugh stupidly at Latin words, and in my presence they often talk maliciously about me in perfect security, perchance reproaching me with my exile. Naturally they think that I am poking fun at them whenever I have nodded no or yes to their speech.

(Ovid, *Tristia* 5.10.35-42, transl. Wheeler and Goold)

The individuals whom one gets to encounter in the inscriptions consistently draw on more widespread connotations of the term *barbarus*. They do so in keeping with the overall use and generally emotionally charged set of negative connotations of the term while aiming to derive a reputational advantage from it – either in terms of deflecting blame (psychologically or in factual terms) or to anticipate potential attacks, verbal or otherwise, directed at themselves and their offspring or clients in scenarios of displacement and isolation.

This strategy was not, however, a mode of “reclaiming” the term (as is seen nowadays with expressions that advance from derogatory terms to generally unusable terms to terms that may only blamelessly be used by members of certain social or ethnic groups): much rather, it gives the appearance of subservient survival strategies of those who were unable to rely on other group support.

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71 On this passage and the poetic “I” created in it, see Michalopoulos, *Barbarus hic ego sum*.

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*CIL* *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* (Berlin, 1863 ff.)  
*CLE* *Carmina Latina Epigraphica*, ed. Franz Bücheler and Ernst Lommatzsch (Leipzig, 1895-1926).  
*EDR* *Epigraphic Database Roma*: <https://edr-edr.it/>  
*HEp* *Hispania Epigraphica*; <http://eda-bea.es/>  
*I. Aquileiae* *Inscriptiones Aquileiae*, ed. Giovanni Battista Brusin (Udine, 1991-1993).  
*ICERV* *Inscripciones cristianas de la España romana y visigoda*, ed. José Vives, (second edition), (Barcelona, 1969).  
*ICUR* *Inscriptiones Christianae Urbis Romae*, ed. Giovanni Battista de Rossi (Rome, 1861-1888), nova series ed. Angelo Silvagni (Rome, 1922ff.)  
*IHC* *Inscriptiones Hispaniae Christianae*, ed. Emil Hübner (second edition), (Berlin, 1900).  
*ILCV* *Inscriptiones Latinae Christianae Veteres* ed. Ernst Diehl (Berlin, 1925-1931).  
*ILS* *Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae*, ed. Heinrich Dessau (Berlin 1892-1916).  
*IScM* *Inscriptiones Scythiae Minoris Graecae et Latinae*  
*RICG* *Recueil des inscriptions chrétiennes de la Gaule, antérieures à la Renaissance carolingienne* (Paris, 1975 ff.)  
*Suppl. It* *Supplementa Italica* (Rome, 1981 ff.)  
*ThLL* *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* (Munich, 1900 ff.)

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#### List of figures

Figure 1: Telamon and Hercules rescuing Hesione. Drawing of the painting at house IX 1.22 Pompeii, room 21, as seen by Nicola La Volpe (1866), photo © ICCD; accessed on 22 June 2022: <https://www.catalogo.beniculturali.it/detail/HistoricOrArtisticProperty/1500573431>.