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MURRANUS THE PANNONIAN AND THE SORROWS OF THE IMMIGRANT[1]

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the third-century funerary inscription of Murranus the Pannonian (CIL IX 7164) as evidence for the transformation of identities within the Roman provinces in the period on either side of Caracalla's Constitutio Antoniniana. It argues that Murranus was the son of a Pannonian drafted directly into Legio II Parthica who grew up at Alba and eventually settled near Corfinium in what is now the Abruzzo.

KEYWORDS: EPIGRAPHY; PANNONIA; MIGRATION; ROMAN CITIZENSHIP; LEGIO II PARTHICA.

RESUMO

Este artigo examina uma inscrição funerária do século III de Murranus, o Panoniano (CIL IX 7164) como evidência para a transformação de identidades dentro das províncias romanas no período em ambos os lados da Constitutio Antoniniana de Caracalla. Argumenta-se que Murranus era filho de um panoniano recrutado diretamente para a Legio II Parthica que cresceu em Alba e acabou se estabelecendo perto de Corfínio, onde hoje é Abruzzo.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: EPIGRAFIA; PANONIA; MIGRAÇÃO; CIDADANIA ROMANA; LEGIO II PARTHICA.

[1] I have presented papers on the subject of Murranus and his funerary inscription in many places, among them the University of North Carolina—Chapel Hill, Duke University, and the University of Edinburgh. I learned a great deal from the audiences there and elsewhere, and my particular thanks, for advice and inspiration, are owed to Tolly Boatwright, Richard Burgess, Laurent Cases, Lucy Grig, Gavin Kelly, and Richard Talbert.

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The Paeligni once lived in central Italy, east of Rome beyond Alba Fucens, in what is now a rather remote part of the Abruzzo. Deep in the central Apennines, north of Samnium and just on the Adriatic side of the Tyrrhenian-Adriatic watershed, the Paelignian heartland lay between parallel high mountain chains broken into three smaller regions by lower dorsal ridges, between which lay the main centers of population.3 The Paeligni feature in early Latin sources alongside the Marrucini, the Marsi, the Vestini and other speakers of Oscan or Sabellian languages – "hardy, independent and martial peoples," as Syme called them – and Paelignian resisted encroachment from Latin longer than did neighbouring languages.[4] Roman allies since at least the time of Pyrrhus, the Paeligni remained loyal during the Second Punic War, but were second only to the Marsi among the rebel Italians during the Social War: in fact, Corfinium, the principal town of the Paeligni, was briefly the Italic capital.[5] Although the Paeligni were granted the franchise along with the other *populi dediticii* at the end of the War, and assigned to the *tribus Sergia* for voting purposes, there is no immediate evidence for municipalization, and unlike other elites in the once rebellious south, the Paeligni failed to produce a senator until the reign of Augustus.[6]

In the civil wars, like the neighbouring Piceni, the Paeligni had sided with Caesar, the town of Sulmo with the greatest enthusiasm, its rival Corfinium only reluctantly and after a siege. It was

[3] VAN WONTERGHEM, F., *Forma Italiae, Regio IV, vol. I*, Florence, Olschki Editore, 1984, pp. 19-22. The Gran Sasso-Monte Morrone-Maiela chain lies to the east, the Monte Terminillo-Monte Sirente-La Meta chain to the west, with the old Paelignian towns of Corfinium and Sulmo in between. The south of the Paelignian region was entirely mountainous and seems to have had no settled communities in the pre-Roman period. No *municipia* were created there under Augustus and the whole sector remained a pastoral no-man's land. In the northwest, in the high valley from which the river Aternus flows northwest into what was once Sabellian territory, lay another relatively populous region, which was gathered together into the *municipium* of Superaequum (now Castelvecchio Subequo) during the Augustan municipalization. East of Superaequum and separated from it by a low massif lay Corfinium (now Corfinio), to the south and east of which, across the river Sagittarius, lay the heart of the Paelignian territory, centered on Sulmo (now Sulmona), both *municipia* before the end of the Social War. The mountains that surround the territories of Corfinium and Sulmo on three sides had boasted several Bronze and Iron Age hillforts – especially along the southern rim of the valley, at Colle Tassito, Piano della Civitella, Castiglione and Colle Mitra, flanking an ancient transhumance route to the south, but the lowland sites of the future *municipia* were already native towns by the time of the Hannibalic wars.

[4] SYME, R., *The Roman Revolution*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1939, p. 86. Livy 8.29.4 is the main source for the Paeligni and their neighbors. For language, see briefly BISPHAM, E., *From Asculum to Actium: The Municipalization of Italy from the Social War to Augustus*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007, pp. 4-5.

[5] Florus 2.9.28 for Sulmo, with HINARD, F., "La proscription de 82 et les italiens," in *Les «bourgeoisies» municipales intaliennes aux IIe et Ier siècles av. J.-C.*, Paris, 1983, pp. 137-50. The basic history of the Paeligni is sketched in *RE* 18.2, pp. 2227-71; see also NISSEN, H., *Italische Landeskunde*, 3 vols., Berlin, Weidmann, 1883-1902, vol. 1, pp. 508-22; vol. 2.2, pp. 445-50. That such early scholarly accounts remain fundamental speaks to the relative poverty of the source base.

[6] BISPHAM, *Asculum to Actium*, pp. 183-4, is rightly cautious in pointing out how ill-suited groups like the Paeligni and Marsi, enfranchised as ethnic *populi* rather than as city-states, were to rapid municipalization. Even if Corfinium and Sulmo were relatively developed nucleated settlements, the Graeco-Roman model of a*polis* plus its dependent territory was alien to the Central Apennines. On the tribal distribution, and the way it disadvantaged the more dispersed *populi* regardless of intention, see MOMMSEN, Th., "Die römische Tribuseintheilung nach dem marsischen Krieg," in *Gesammelte Schriften*, 8 vols., Berlin, Weidmann, 1905-1910, vol. 5, pp. 261-67, with BISPHAM, *Asculum to Actium*, pp. 195-99 who reaffirms, in my view correctly, the deliberately punitive effect of assigning all the *populi dedicitii* to just eight of the rural tribes, something Mommsen conceded only for the Marsi and Paeligni.

only under Augustus that men from the *domi nobiles* of the Central Apennines finally began to enter the senate in numbers and we then find ethnic names like Marsus, Picens, Marrucinus, and Paelignus being used as *cognomina*.[7] Q. Varius Geminus is documented as *primus omnium Paelignorum senator factus*.[8] The young P. Ovidius Naso, from Sulmo, could have been the first had he not chosen poetry and celebrity over both senatorial ambition and equestrian *quies*. Throughout the triumviral and early imperial period, Corfinium remained the chief town of the region and was for many years the terminus of the via Valeria. Along with Corfinium and Sulmo, a new *municipium* was founded at Superaequum, probably under Augustus, while the rural *pagi* and *vici* of the late Republican period were all assigned to one or another of the three *municipia*. In Augustus' administrative division of Italy, the Paelignian towns belonged to Regio IV, eventually becoming part of the late Roman province of Samnium.

In the early empire, the Paelignian lands were a sleepy, moderately prosperous backwater, like the rest of Regio IV. This was in part a function of geography – the high valleys were fertile but remote, land transport notoriously expensive, and waterborne trade impractical. That same topography made impossible the vast *latifundia* of the southern Regiones II and III, which channelled their riches into the Roman metropolis but impoverished the urban landscapes of the south. In some ways, in fact, the Paelignian towns were a laboratory of Italian romanization, their municipal institutions attenuated and locally flavoured versions of the Roman model.[9]Sulmo and Corfinium had *quattuor viri iure dicendo*, *quattuorviri quinquennales*, and *quattuorviri aediles*. Superaequum, a younger foundation, was governed by *duoviri*, and men from the dependent *pagi* held curial office in all three towns. The region shows lively cults of Ceres and Venus and of Isis, while several rural shrines of Hercules are likewise well attested.[10] A large number of women are attested as priestesses, continuing a long regional tradition of women religious going back to an era when the Paelignian dialect of Oscan was still in use.[11] A temple of Rome and Augustus is known at Superaequum, while

[7] WISEMAN, T.P., *New Men in the Roman Senate*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1971, remains the essential discussion of how first New Latium and the Sabine country, then Etruria and Campania, and finally the Apennine communities were incorporated into the Roman ruling class. For the Apennine region, see FARNEY, G.D., *Ethnic Identity and Aristocratic Competition in Republican Rome*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007, pp. 178-228 and DENCH, E., *From Barbarians to New Men: Greek, Roman and Modern Perceptions of Peoples from the Central Apennines*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1995.

[8] Q. Varius Geminus, *primus omnium Paelignorum senator factus* (*ILS* 932) – in part because P. Ovidius Naso, known to us as the poet Ovid, declined to use Augustus' gift of the *latus clavus* to pursue a career in politics rather than in poetry.

[9] See the discussion of DUNCAN-JONES, R., "The social cost of urbanisation," in *Structure and Scale in the Roman Economy*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990, pp. 159-73.

[10] VANWONTERGHEM, *Forma Italiae*, p. 96, no. 14a.

[11] See CONWAY, R.S., *The Italic Dialects*, 2 vols., Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1897, vol. 1, pp. 233-52. 'Priestess' was *anaceta* or *anceta* in the Paelignian form of Oscan.

Corfinium furnishes one of the rare references to Augustales as an *ordo*.[12] All three sites were market towns and we know that the auction house at Superaequum was erected bya T. Pompullius Lappa, probably the town's first *eques*. None of this is remarkable. It can be paralleled everywhere in the non-metropolitan regions of Italy, as well as in much of southern Gaul and the urbanized parts of Spain.

Into this cosy landscape there obtruded, in the course of the third century, a unique and puzzling monument, one that gives us sudden and surprising insight into a singular moment in Roman history. It is a long funerary inscription, discovered in 1926 near the Abruzzese village of Prezza, during works to electrify the rail line from Rome to Anversa degli Abruzzi.[13] The site of the village would, in the Roman era, have belonged to the *pagus Lavernae*, an unincorporated rural territory that fell under the municipal jurisdiction of Sulmo. The inscription, on a limestone block about four feet long and two feet wide, consists of 48 lines of text with perhaps two or three missing from its conclusion. It is addressed to passers-by in the voice of the dead man, a Pannonian named Murranus.

> *C [---] Murranus et Decria Secunda et Secundae libera Melusa sibi et suis.*
>
> *Salue, uiator, qui istac iter facis saluo tuo corpore, consiste et lege: iniquitate Orchi, qui perperauit saecula, quod debuerant facere filii patri et matri, fecerunt miseri pater et mater filis dulcissimis suis. Quoniam non potuerunt exorare deos ut [---] suis, neque ipsi retinere potuerunt, neque etiam restituere, hoc quod potuerunt: nomina suorum restituerunt ad superos Primigeni, Seueri, Pudentis, Casti, Lucillae et Potestatis, et miseris derelictis a filis, quoniam sperabant se citius [---]suos, uiui nomina eodem adiecerunt dum malo fato nati et iniqua fortuna qui non potuerunt antecedere suos neque etiam persequi tam cito quam ipsi cupiunt. At nunc,miseri deserti a natis nostris, rogamus deos superos atque inferos, ut liceat nepotulum nostrum Thiasum, qui est nobis derelictus ex Pudente filio inmaturus qualis scintilla quae de igne exierit, memoria nostrorum exsuperet nos, uiuat, ualeat, sint illi quae ipse expetet.*
>
> *Et nunc te rogamus, nepotule noster, per tuorum maiorum misericordiam, ut tu pietati seruias, et hoc sephulcrum tuorum tutaris. Et si quis te rogauerit qui hoc comportauerit dicito: "Auus meus Murranus; nam ipsa miseria docet etiam barbaros scribere misericordias."*
>
> *Et nunc rogo uos omnes natos nascentesque, ut si quid lapsus me praeterit hominem barbarum natu Pannunium, multis ulceribus et malis perturbatum, ignoscatis rogo. At nunc inprecamus deos ut si quis hoc sephulcrum aut hunc titulum laeserit, intulerit, sit illi fortuna mala, et quod meritum sit, hunc titulumque quicumque legerit,*

[12] Rather than a *corpus*, which they were in legal terms: CIL IX: 3181. See ABRAMENKO, A., *Die munizipale Mittelschicht im kaiserzeitlichen Italien. Zu einem neuen Verständnis von Sevirat und Augustalität*, Frankfurt-am-Main, Peter Lang, 1993, pp. 243-53.

[13] Now CIL IX, Suppl. 1, 2: 7164 and EDR 114466.Previously published *Supplementa Italica* 4 (1988), 78-84, nr. 58 = *AE* 1989: 247 (pp. 72-74).These editions are all the work of Marco Buonocore. The *editio princeps* is MANCINI, G., in *Atti del Convegno storico Abruzzese-Molisano* 2, 1935, pp. 449-52.

> *aut legentem auscultaverit, alleuet illos fortuna superior, et ualeant semper in aeterno quicumque in hoc titulo scripta legerit (scil. verba)quietis: 'sit uobis terra leuis' [---ca. 10---] desperatum qui superant [---ca. 10---] tempore obito, sit [---ca. 15---].*
>
> *C…. Murranus and Decria Secunda, and Melusa, freedwoman of Secunda, for themselves and for their family.*
>
> Greetings, traveller. You who pass this way sound in your body, stand and read: By the iniquity of Orcus, who batters the ages, the duty that children owe to their mother and father, a poor father and mother did for their children, their sweetest ones. Because they were unable to persuade the gods to […]their children, and because they themselves could not preserve them, nor still less restore them, this is what they were able do: they restored to the world of the living their names -- Primigenius, Severus, Pudens, Castus, Lucilla and Potestas. And miserable and deserted by their children, because they hoped that they would rapidly join them, they have now added their names in the same place, still living, but born of an evil fate and an iniquitous fortune, because they could neither predecease their own children nor even follow them on as quickly as they desired. And now, miserable and deserted by our children, we beseech the gods above and below that our little grandson Thiasus, who was left behind for us as a child from our son Pudens, unready as a spark which flies from the fire, may be allowed to survive and to remember us, to live, and to prosper, and to have everything he desires.
>
> And now we ask you, little grandson of ours, by the mercy of your ancestors, that you observe your familial duty and care for this sepulchre of your family. If anyone asks you who built it, say: 'My grandfather Murranus: for sorrow itself teaches even barbarians to write pitiable things'.
>
> And now I ask all you, born and being born, to forgive my tomb if I, a barbarian man, Pannonian by birth, and disturbed by many wounds and ills, have allowed an error to slip through. And now, we call upon the gods that ill fortune and what is proper fall upon anyone who defaces or damages this sepulchre or this inscription, and that an improved fortune lighten those who read this inscription or listen to the one reading it, and that they prosper always and forever whoever should read the words of repose written on this inscription: that the earth may lie lightly upon you, and …..hopeless, those who are still alive….at the time of death, may it be…"

This is not a normal funerary inscription, still less a normal sort of literary text. Though funerary monuments with inscriptions addressing the passerby – sometimes called 'speaking stones' -- were a long-standing genre, they were no longer much in fashion by the middle of the third century, when this example was erected. Even in the early empire, when such texts were more in vogue, they were rare in the central Apennines by comparison with Latium and wealthy Campania, where the style tended to be favoured by freedmen and others of middling rank.[14] Only a couple of other speaking stones of this sort are known from *regio IV*, and only one from the Paeligni, in the *pagus*

[14] See CARROLL, M., "'Vox tua nempe mea est'. Dialogues with the Dead in Roman Funerary Commemoration," in *Accordia Research Papers* 11, 2008, pp. 37-80, with the excellent catalogue of speaking stones at pp. 68-80.More limited, but interesting, are the essays in CRINITI, N., ed., *«Lege nunc, Viator...». Vita e morte nei carmina Latina epigraphica della Padania centrale*, Parma, La Pilotta Editrice, 1996.

Interpromium at the border of Paelignian and Marrucinian territory.[15]But while our example strives for both literary and emotional impact, both are undermined by weak Latinity and labored, repetitive conceits. So who was this self-styled barbarian and what can his odd self-presentation tell us?

Murranus writes in the name of himself, his wife Decria Secunda, and Decria's freedwoman Melusa. Murranus' *praenomen* is uncertain: although one editor prints a 'C' at the start of the inscription (hence perhaps Gaius), it is not visible in any published photographs.[16] Murranus itself is not a common name, and while it is probably his *nomen gentilicium* -- an old and rare *nomen* Murranius is found in Cisalpine Gaul -- it might possibly be a *cognomen*. Both Murranius and Murranus are linguistically Celtic, and names with the root form in Murr- are known throughout the great arc of territory from Slovenia to Britain to northern Spain, in which Celtic onomastics are commonplace.[17] The Pannonian origin that Murranus discloses is thus perfectly consistent with his nomenclature.

Decria Secunda, by contrast, is a local.[18] As early as ca. 125 BC we find a Paelignian inscription of a Pacius Decrius.[19] In the imperial period, there was a C. Decrius Rufus at nearby Corfinium and a C. Decrius Crispus at Aesernia, just outside Paelignian territory, from a perhaps related branch of the family belonging to the *tribus Tromentina*, which was common in Samnium. Our Decria's branch of the family had done well and produced good soldiers. Early in the second century, a L. Decrius Longinus had an impressive career as *praefectus fabrum* and *primus pilus*, serving in no fewer than three legions, before crowning his cursus as *praefectus castrorum* of Legio IX Hispana. We learn this from an inscription put up by his son, L. Decrius Iulianus, who went by the nickname Numisianus, and was serving as a *princeps* (which is to say, a member of one of the

[15] CIL IX: 3071 = 7086, from the pagus Interpromium, previously known only from antiquarian transcription and now rediscovered in Torre dei Passeri, is perhaps a generation or so older than the Murranus stone. CIL IX: 3122; 3193, which also appear in CARROLL, "*Vox tua*," are simply tombstones that ask the reader to read the name of the deceased. See for comparison a newly published *siste viator* inscription from Samnium: CIL IX: 6888 and another from Peltuinum Vesitnum: CIL IX: 7566.

[16] I intend to publish a complete commentary on the inscription after examining it in situ, so the text I print here, along with any conclusions, is provisional.

[17] For Roman naming practices in general, SCHULZE, W., in *RE* 16.2, pp. 1611-70 is fundamental. In Italy, Murranus is a *nomen*, most frequently found among freedmen in the early empire: see EDR 005350; 072026; 077188; 123809; 124618; 130233; 148442; 169995. EDR 085122; 124433 may or may not refer to freedmen. There is of course also the Latin king Murranus of *Aeneid* 12. 528ff. For Murranius see CIL 5: 541; 5: 8125,8. CIL 5: 5586 = *AE* 1999: 751 might be either a Murranus or a Murranius. For the root form see HOLDER, A., *Alt-celtischer Sprachschatz*, 3 vols, Leipzig, Teubner, 1896-1913, col. 658.

[18] She will have been the second daughter of a local Decrius. CHASE, G.D., "The Origin of Roman Praenomina," in *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*8, 1897, pp. 103-84 at pp. 168-74, had already established that ordinal *praenomina* retained their function of denoting birth order for women (even though they followed the *gentilicium*), whereas they had lost that function for men by republican times.

[19] CRAWFORD, M., et al., *Imagines Italicae. A Corpus of Italic Inscriptions*, 3 vols, London, Institute of Classical Studies, 2011, vol. 1, pp. 321-2.

middle centuries of his cohort) in the Legio XI. That father and son haled from the Paelignian Decrii is shown by their Sergian tribe.[20] In light of the distinguished careers of these second-century Decrii, it seems likely that the gallant Decrius of Tacitus' *Annals* -- leading his cohort out of its fort by the river Pagydas in Africa to confront Tacfarinas' men and dying in action with an arrow in his eye – likewise belonged to the Corfinium branch of the family.[21]

Melusa's name is elusive, the sort of generic single name often held by former slaves. It is probably originally Greek. Though the personal name *Mellousa* or *Melousa* is rare, a freedwoman named Baebia Mellusa is known from Canusium.[22] Given her prominence at the beginning of the inscription, alongside Murranus and Decria, Melusa may have been a slave *nutrix* freed in later life. Regardless, she does not reappear in the text, which carries on from the perspective of the parents.

The inscription begins with a greeting to the passing traveler (*Salue, uiator*), asking him to stop and read the inscribed words (*consiste et lege*) since the traveler, unlike the speaker, is alive and well (*saluo tuo corpore*). In other words, like most of the extant speaking stones this one was meant to function as a kind of *memento mori*.[23] As one might expect in the marking of a premature death, we are here introduced to the "injustice of Orchus" (*iniquitate Orchi*), who either deforms the course of time, batters and beats down the ages, or hastens the centuries along (*perperauit saecula*). The uncertain meaning is a function of the linguistic ambiguity. The aspirated form Orchus for the more correct Orcus is not unusual, but *perperauit* is bizarre, either a unique form related to the adverb *perperam* (mistakenly, amiss), a peculiar spelling of *uerberare*, or simply a mistake for *properare*.[24] This opening sentence thus reveals the promise and the limitations of Murranus' text. He has tried to

[20] The L. Decrius Abascantus of CIL VI: 200 = ILS 6049 (dedication to Vespasian, and see also his epitaph CIL VI: 16795) belongs to the *tribus Succusana*, so is not a relative, nor is the Julio-Claudian P. Decrius Prothymus of CIL VI: 5097. There is no way of knowing if the Decria Vitalis of CIL VI: 24461/2) is a relation.

[21] Tacitus, *Ann*. 3.20: *Praeerat castello Decrius impiger manu, exercitus militia et illam obsidionem flagitii ratus. Is, cohortatus milites, ut copiam pugnae in aperto faceret aciem pro castris instruit. Primoque impetu pulsa cohorte promptus inter tela occursat fugientibus, increpat signiferos quod inconditis aut desertoribus miles Romanus terga daret; simul excepta vulnera et, quamquam transfosso oculo, adversum os in hostem intendit neque proelium omisit donec desertus suis caderet*.

[22] Baebia Mellusa is CIL IX: 363. A search of the *Lexicon of Greek Personal Names* (http://www.lgpn.ox.ac.uk, retrieved 5 February 2020) shows only one other occurence of a Mellousa, Melousa or Melusa.

[23] See CARROLL, "*Vox tua*".

[24] The aspirated 'c' in Orchus might as easily be a stone-cutter's error as the author's. See MACKAUER, W., in *RE*18, pp. 908-28 for distribution of aspirated vs. unaspirated spellings.For *perperavit*, Mancini read *perdiravit*, which is both meaningless and not what one sees on the stone. Buonocore prints *perperavit* and takes it for a *hapax* related to the adverb *perperam* (mistakenly, amiss) and thus meaning 'make something go wrong' and to the Italian word *sperperare* (to squander or fritter away). But it may be a stonecutter's error for *verberare*, to batter or strike (cf. Jerome, *Comm. in Ezech*. 8.27: *saeculi...verberantur*; ibid. 11.39: *saeculi…verberantur* and *verberanti saeculis*); or it is perhaps best read as mistake for *properavit* (hasten), with its Silver Age parallels in Sen., *Troades* 386ff.: *Quo bis sena volant sidera turbine, /quo cursu properat volvere saecula / astrorum dominus, quo properat modo / obliquis hecate currere flexibus* (cf. also Auson., *Parent*. 26.5-6; Claud., *In Eutrop*. 2.40ff.)

create a monument of a known type, but an archaic one with a long pedigree, and he strives for poetic effect. In Latin, Orcus can serve either as synecdoche for the underworld as a place, as an alternative name for Pluto, judge of human souls, or, finally, as a hostile demon who drives men to their graves.[25] We can see Murranus playing with the latter two images, Orcus the judge, who deforms or renders mistaken the judgements of time (the *perperam* reading), and Orcus the demon who assaults and batters it (the *uerberare* reading; *properauit* would fit either version). The imagery is not unsophisticated, but the Latin is so odd that we question what is intentional and what might simply be error.

That same uncertainty pervades the entire text. The rest of the first sentence is relatively straightforward -- the unhappy mother and father must do for their beloved children what children would normally do for their parents, i.e., bury them.[26] But what follows is a jumble of clauses that tax the reader's understanding: Although they were unable to pray to the gods to save their children (one must restore a verb like *parcere* in the lacuna)... and although they were still less able to keep their children alive...and were unable to resurrect them...this one thing they could do...restore their names to those still living. The rhythm of the *quoniam...neque...neque* structure is caught up short with *hoc quod*; as with the triple repetition of *potuerunt* and double repetition of *restituerunt*, the sense is apparent, but the copiousness of language unnecessary. One feels Murranus' striving for the artistic, trying to convey the weight of his grief by the weight of his verbiage, the repetition aiming for the sonorous, the *hoc quod* forcing a momentary pause for contemplation; it is as if he thought prose would become verse through the application of fine sentiment.[27]

The names of the dead children are revealing in their very non-descriptness. The first-born son would naturally enough be named Primigenius. Severus, Pudens, Castus: traditional, even conventional, virtues. Potestas is somewhat strange, but Lucilla is a good Antonine woman's name. Bizarre collections of names – geographical pairs, or Greek and Latin synonyms like Lupus/Lykos --are well-attested in the Antonine and Severan periods, but the names of Murranus' children are a random miscellany united only in being unimpeachably Latin rather than Pannonian or Celtic.[28]By

[25] Servius on Verg., *Georg*. 1.277 is the locus classicus for Orcus as judge of souls.

[26] The theme of untimely death is well-discussed in CUMONT, F., *After Life in Roman Paganism*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1922, pp. 128-47.

[27] One can therefore sympathize withthose. e.g., BUONOCORE, *Supplementa Italica*, p. 83, who have looked for poetic metre in the inscription. But there is none.

[28] See in particular SOLIN, H., *Namenpaare: Eine Studie zur römischen Namengebung*, Helsinki, Societas Scientiarum Fennica, 1990, pp. 55-57, for the the bizarre geographical names (Rhenus, Danuvius, Euphrates) of CIL 10.2872, and ibid. 61-63 for assigning Latin/Greek synonyms in sequence, e.g. Lupus and Lycos, or Didymus and Geminus. Because Solin confines his comprehensive coverage to CIL VI, the city of Rome, with its unparalleled onomastic richness, he also harvests a disproportionately large number of servile or libertine names, as would be expected. There is, however, no

contrast, the grandson Thiasus has a very rare name, obviously Greek, almost a hapax in Latin. One wonders whether the boy's father Pudens was repudiating the ostentatious conservatism with which his own father Murranus had named his children: a *thiasos* is the leader of a Bacchic dance, which brings joyful abandon and more frightening ecstacy.[29] In three generations, the family's nomenclature went from rustic provincial to normative metropolitan to mannerist and *recherché*.

Or perhaps not so much rustic as barbarous, for so the man himself tells us.The words the inscription puts in the mouth of Thiasus seem unambiguous: *Et si quis te rogaverit qui hoc comportaverit dicito: "Avus meus Murranus, nam ipsa miseria docet etiam barbaros scribere misericordias." Et nunc rogo uos omnes natos nascentesque, ut si quid lapsus me praeterit hominem barbarum natu Pannunium, multis ulceribus et malis perturbatum, ignoscatis rogo*. Wretchedness teaches the barbarian mercy, Murranus tells us, and follows up with a conventional humility topos. Here again there is Murranus' effortful sonority, the *ipsa miseria* with *misericordias*, the *natos nascentesque*. But it is the ventriloquized self-identification as a barbarian, not once but twice, that is unprecedented in Latin literature. Or almost so. Ovid, of course, says *barbarus hic ego sum*, but his words are bitter irony, shouted from his exile in far off Pontus.[30]Though there is no direct quotation, the fact that Ovid came from Paelignian Sulmo makes Murranus' allusion here as certain as such things can be. Unlike the poet, Murranus was not a native of the region, and by juxtaposing *barbarus* with *natu Pannonius*, he equates his ethnic or regional origin to barbarism – a barbarism that he escaped when taught the civilized virtue of mercy by his sorrows. In the fourth-century empire, Pannonians were a by-word for rustic stupidity. Ammianus Marcellinus mocks the emperor Valens as a *Pannonius degener* and delights in the Chalcedonians taunting him as a Sabaiarius, a drinker of *sabaia*, cheap Pannonian barley beer.[31]But that was after the third-century crisis had fundamentally remade the basic social and institutional structures of empire, and after *barbarus* had come primarily to mean someone from outside the imperial frontiers.[32]Murranus' empire was very different, and whatever else Murranus is telling us, he is saying that he was born a non-citizen *peregrinus* in Pannonia, where the franchise was very rare prior to the *Constitutio Antoniniana*. And after a life of afflictions, he died a Roman citizen.

reason to doubt that onomastic habits learnt in the generation of emancipation were not carried on into the first generation (at least) thereafter.

[29] DODDS, E.R., *The Greeks and the Irrational*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1951, pp. 76-78, remains a perceptive reading of this appeal: "join the *thíasos* and you will be happy today."

[30] *Trist*. 5.10.37.

[31] Amm. Marc. 26.8.2.

[32] KULIKOWSKI, M., *The Triumph of Empire: The Roman World from Hadrian to Constantine*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 2016.

The final portion of the inscription, before it becomes too damaged and fragmentary to read, has the same literary and linguistic characteristics as the beginning. First there is the conventional: the imprecation against those who would damage the tomb or its inscription, and pious hopes that those who read the inscription, or have it read to them, will prosper in eternity. The juxtaposition of those who might read the text and those who would have it read to them is unusual (one should understand *ausculta<ve>rit* for the stone's *auscultarit*).[33] It certainly tells us something about expectations of literacy in the region and period, and has received considerable scholarly comment in that respect: it is the only example of a speaking stone that explicitly addresses not just readers but listeners.[34]As we shall see, it can also contribute to how we understand the life of Murranus more broadly. The syntax in this final section is badly tangled and it is not altogether clear how we are meant to get from the "words of repose" to the conventional *sit vobis terra levis*. The phrase *in hoc titulo scripta legerit quietis* is particularly puzzling. One must clearly supply *verba* with the *scripta*, but whether this represents a stonecutter's error, an authorial error, or an authorial attempt at poetic flourish is unclear. Likewise puzzling is why the text goes on so long after the *sit vobis terra levis*, the phrase that would normally conclude a funerary inscription of this sort. Enough is more or less legible – *desperatum, tempore obito* – to infer that this would have been a further lamentation over the unkindness of fate, and perhaps a further exhortation to the living to pay attention. If so, it has the same kind of reach exceeding grasp as much of the rest of the text: the attempted solemnity and grandeur undermined by the shaky execution, the assertion of an archaizing but normative cultural expression, yet one betrayed by the anomalous deployment of old conventions.

We might make sense of all of this internal evidence if it were possible to discover just how it was that Murranus became a Roman and ceased to be a Pannonian *barbarus*. It is unlikely to have been as a result of Caracalla's edict of 212. If the damaged first letter of the inscription really is a 'C', then his *praenomen* was not Marcus, and if Murranus is taken as a *nomen gentilicium*, then he was not an Aurelius. Either of those things would entirely rule out the possibility of his enfranchisement by that path. However, if Murranus is a *cognomen*, as it is sometimes treated, then there are enough missing letters at the start of the inscription to accommodate the AVR abbreviation for Aurelius.[35] All the same**,** the balance of the evidence is heavily against Murranus' having become a citizen in 212. Nor is there much to be said for the possibility that he had been an auxiliary recruit who received

[33] BUONOCORE has published the inscription with both readings.

[34] In general, CARROLL, "*Vox tua*," pp. 40-46, but it is cited in epigraphic handbooks precisely for this rare locution, e.g. COOLEY, A., *The Cambridge Manual of Epigraphy*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2012, p. 309, which wrongly locates the stone in the Alps rather than the Apennines.

[35] *AE* treats all occurrences of Murranius as *nomina*, all of Murranus as *cognomina*, but that is too rigid a distinction.

the franchise upon discharge. There is not the slightest hint of a military career in the inscription, which is almost exaggeratedly civilian in its affect. That leaves a third and final possibility: that Murranus' parents were both Pannonian *peregrini*, and that his father was recruited not as an auxiliary but as a legionary who received the citizenship upon enlistment.[36] Murranus had already been born at that point, as a legitimate child according to *ius gentium*, but not according *ius civile*. With Severus' relaxation of the barriers to the marriage of soldiers, there would have been no impediment to the continuation of his parents' peregrine marriage. And upon discharge, his citizen father would have received the *ius conubii cum peregrinis*, thereby enfranchising his legitimate child.[37]

In that scenario, the fact that Murranus wound up in Italy, married to a Decria from a decent bourgeois family with a tradition of military service, has just one obvious explanation: his father was recruited into one of the three *legions Parthicae* that Septimius Severus ostensibly raised to fight a Parthian war and that were actually meant to confront his rival Pescennius Niger.[38] There is some controversy over the precise date at which these legions were constituted: Severus ordered a *dilectus* or levy in 193 after he had marched on Rome and these Italian recruits may have formed the core of one or all three of the Parthian legions. Recruitment continued in Pannonia, Moesia and Thrace as the emperor marched east against Niger in 193, while vexillations from existing Pannonian and Moesian legions were probably used as core units around whom *tirones* could be trained.[39]All three *legiones Parthicae* saw action in Severus' first, abortive Parthian war, and the II Parthica accompanied him on his march against his British rival Clodius Albinus. Having fought at the bloody battle of Lugdunum, and perhaps though not certainly in the second Parthian war, the II Parthica took up

[36] Unlike auxiliaries, who received the citizenship upon discharge, volunteer *peregrini* recruited directly into the legions won the citizenship at once: MOMMSEN, Th., *Römisches Staatsrecht*, 3rd ed., 5 vols., Leipzig, Herzel, 1887, vol. 3, pp. 740-1; HIRSCHFELD, O., *Die kaiserlichen Verwaltungsbeamten bis auf Diocletian*, Berlin, Weidmann, 1905, pp. 345-46; KROHMAYER, J. and VEITH, G., *Heerwesen und Kriegführung der Griechen und Römer*, Munich, Beck, 1928, pp. 479-81; PARKER, H.M.D., *The Roman Legions*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1928, pp, 169-72;FORNI, G., *Il Reclutamento delle legioni*, Milan, Fratelli Bocca, 1953, pp. 105-7; SHERWIN-WHITE, A.N., *The Roman Citizenship*, 2nd ed., Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1971, pp. 321-22. For the majority of recruits being volunteers, see*Dig.* XLIX.16.4, Arrius Menander).

[37] TREGGIARI, S. *Roman Marriage.* Iusti Coniuges *from the time of Cicero to the Time of Ulpian*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1991, pp. 43-51; KASER, M., *Das römische Privatrecht*, 2 vols., Munich, Beck, 1955, vol. 1, pp. 241-44. Note that, *pace* the otherwise excellent HAYNES, I. *Blood of the Provinces: The Roman* Auxilia *and the Making of Provincial Society from Augustus to the Severans*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013, pp. 89-91, a diploma of AD 206, newly published in 2011 (see ECK, W.,"Septimius Severus und die Soldaten. Das Problem der Soldatenehe und ein neues Auxiliardiplom," in *in omnis historia curiosus. Studien zur Geschichte von der Antike bis zur Neuzeit. Festschrift für Helmuth Schneider zum 65. Geburtstag*, Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz Verlag, 2011, pp. 63-77), does not invalidate the well-grounded assumption that Severus allowed soldiers to marry: a grant of *conubium cum peregrinis* was still necessary to render legal in the *ius civile* the marriage of a citizen to a *peregrina femina*. The 206 diploma merely proves for the first time that this remained true for auxiliaries as well for praetorian guardsmen, *equites singulares*, and *classici*. That had already been in ferred by analogy (correctly, we now see) in the best discussion of the subject, CAMPBELL, B., "The Marriage of Soldiers under the Empire," in *Journal of Roman Studies* 68, 1978, pp. 153-66 at p. 164.

[38] BIRLEY, A.R., *Septimius Severus: The African Emperor*, 2nd ed., New Haven, Yale University Press, 1988, p. 107; FORNI, *Reclutamento*, pp. 97-99.

[39] We know the career of one such man in considerable detail: CIL VI: 2579.

residence, in 202 at the latest, at what would become its permanent base, Castra Albanum just thirteen miles south of Rome. The site had been part of a large villa constructed by Domitian at the end of the first century, at the highest point on the Via Appia connecting Latium with Campania. It was a dominant position, close enough to Rome for speedy military intervention, far enough away to respect the prohibition on quartering legionaries within the *pomerium*. Nevertheless, the legion formed the core of a garrison near Rome that also included the urban cohorts, the new praetorian guard Severus had recruited from the frontier legions, and the *equites singulares*.

The II Parthica came to be so closely identified with Castra Albanum that Dio calls its soldiers *Albánioi*.[40] While the site has not been thoroughly excavated, inscriptions from its cemetery are of primary importance for understanding its regional role, supplemented at times by those of the Albanii who died elsewhere, especially in Syrian Apamea.[41] Men of the II Parthica had the peculiar habit of identifying their unit not by the number of their cohort, but rather by the number of their *centuria* and the rank of their centurion. This probably reflects the legion's origin as a mixture of raw recruits and vexillations drawn from diverse legions, but the practice became a mark of the legion's distinctiveness. Another peculiarity was the II Parthica's command structure: rather than a senatorial legate, it was commanded by an equestrian prefect who himself reported to the prefect of the praetorian guard. So close was the relationship between the guard and the legion that men often served in both units during the course of their careers, while relations with the *equites singulares* were very nearly as close.

[40] RITTERLING in *RE* 14.2, pp. 1476-83 has been supplemented but not corrected by new evidence. Dio 55.24.4 and notes the original creation of the legions, Herodian 2.14.5-7 attests the *dilectus*, as may CIL X: 1127. Moesian troops under Marius Maximus (CIL VI: 1450 = ILS 2935) and Pannonians under Claudius Candidus (CIL II: 4114 = ILS 1140) may have provided vexillations; Pannonians under Fabius Cilo (CIL VI: 1409 = ILS 1142; AE 1926: 79) are known to to have been adlected into Severus' new praetorian guard units. For *Albánioi*, Dio 78.34.2; 79.2-4. The unpublished 2002 Glasgow dissertation of Ross Cowan ("Aspects of the Severan Field Army"), pp. 78-84 is a useful summary that disposes of conflicts among the various standard accounts. RICCI, C., "*Legio II Parthica*. Una messa a punto," in Y. Le Bohec, ed. *Les légions de Rome sous le Haut-Empire*, Paris, Boccard, 2000, pp. 397-406, at pp. 402-3 shows that of the nearly fifty soldiers of II Parthica whose ethnic origins can be definitively or almost certainly identified, there is a preponderance of men from Thrace, followed by Pannonians and Italians, with only a smattering of other provincial origins. The same thing has been shown for the praetorian guard, where the new Severan recruitment practices substantially raised the number of foreign *cognomina*: KAJANTO, I., "The significance of non-Latin cognomina," in *Latomus* 27, 1968, pp. 517-34 at 530-2.

[41] The legion always kept *remansores* at Alba, under the command of a *praepostitus reliquationis*, but a substantial number of its legionaries traveled with the emperor during the third century and were regularly stationed at Apamea when serving in the East. The funerary inscriptions and other evidence for the legion in Italy are at CIL VI: 3367-3410; XIV: 2253-2296, and in MARCHETTI, M., "Iscrizioni inedite del sepolcreto di Albano," in *Rendiconti della Reale Accademia dei Lincei* 25, 1916, pp. 399-414, with the additional texts cited in LUGLI, G., "La legione II Partica e il suo sepolcreto," in *Gli archeologi italiani in onore di Amedeo Maiuri*, Turin, 1965, pp. 221-42 and in RICCI, "*Legio II Parthica*." New evidence has not altered the basic picture in Ritterling. The Historia Augusta demonstrates the permanence of the garrison at Castra Albanum: *pars militum apud Albam* (*VCarac*. 2.7-8, of which the *Geta* 6.1-2is purely derivative). For the *praepositus reliquationis* see AE 1981.134 = AE 1989.62.

Moreover, most of the women buried in the camp cemetery bear local names, suggesting that the foreign-born legionaries did indeed settle into the local population.[42]

This is the milieu from which Murranus will have sprung, a member of the last generation in which people could recall there being lots of non-Romans inside a Roman empire. The Severans, with their African and Syrian origins, accelerated an existing cultural transformation inside the empire, and then supercharged it with Caracalla's grant of nearly universal citizenship. Within a generation of 212, the main distinction marking social position ceased to be that between Roman and non-Roman and became instead status within the single category of Roman citizen, what simplistic shorthand would call the *honestior*/*humilior* distinction. Murranus' lifetime straddled the period of transition from one to the other, and his inscription is a belated sort of monument, more of the past than of the future. Inscriptions, especially this type of speaking stone, address a future world to which the dead person will by definition no longer belong corporeally. They assume both that the future society will exist more or less as it existed when the monument was inscribed, and that their message will retain its value within that future society. The belatedness of Murranus' inscription lies in his advertisement of conversion – from Pannonian *peregrinus* to cultured Italian – in a manner that would already have been hard to recognize by the time of his death.

To go further than this requires a willingness to take the kind of imaginative leap that is surely permissible in a volume that honors Peter Brown, whose bold use of psychoanalytic scholarship in his studies of Augustine and early Christian sexuality caused a justifiable sensation. When faced with something like Murranus' monument, its physicality, its local rootedness, its textual complexity, its apparent offer of access to a third-century mind, we need to appeal to something like Dilthey's concept of *Verstehen*. Wilhelm Dilthey (d. 1911), now little read, is perhaps best known for his careful delineation of the *Geisteswissenschaften*, or "human sciences" in its standard English translation.[43] As he groped towards his more general theory of human understanding, he developed the argument that history, art, culture, and society, past and present, can only be understood with reference to the individual and collective human psychology that produced them – in other words, that we cannot explain the actions and productions of the human past without reference to the psychological

[42] See LUGLI, "Legione II Partica," 228.

[43] One obstacle to engaging with Dilthey's thought is its lack of system. There are common themes running through it – those about art, psychology, and epistemology more generally are of the greatest interest to the historian – but the grand synthesis he envisioned never emerged. Instead, much of his *Gesammelte Schriften* is cobbled together from drafts and notes, which necessarily means a lot of repetition, incremental change, and *retractatio*. The five volumes of *Selected Works* in English translation (Princeton, 1985-2010)are judiciously chosen, but the editors have hewed unfortunately close to the syntax of the German originals, at times rendering the translation more opaque than the primary text. HODGES, H.A., *Wilhelm Dilthey: An Introduction*, London, Routledge, 1944, remains a good route into the huge corpus.

workings of the human mind, not just the way we think, but also the way we feel. *Verstehen*, or empathic understanding, as the Diltheyan method is translated into English, is a common part of the historian's toolkit, even if it is rarely explicitly embraced.[44] Perhaps a more methodologically acceptable statement of the same principle is R.G. Collingwood's description of historical method as the mental re-enactment of past events and experiences inside the mind of the historian.[45] The question of where imaginative and empathic inference about a historical figure's past experience becomes too speculative will never have a definitive answer. Imaginative non-fiction, like Javier Cercas' *Anatomía de un instante*, or robustly researched historical fiction in the manner of Hilary Mantel or Antonio Scurati, is predicated on a type *Verstehen*, anda historian's more restrained deployment of the same approach is justified inasmuch as it makes explicit the thought process many historians already deploy unconsciously.

So let us look at Murranus with an attempt at empathic understanding, and see what emerges. Before the Marcommanic wars of Marcus Aurelius, Pannonia had been little more than a large, rural breadbasket for the legions safeguarding the central European frontiers. Marcus' wars brought with them a vast upgrading of the provincial infrastructure, raised the profile of frontier towns, and triggered the growth of places like Cibalae, Sirmium, Siscia and other important road junctures in the provincial interior. But it did little to alter the character of Pannonia as *viro fortis et solo laeta*, a land strong in men and rich in farmland, as Solinus put it.[46] Urban centres remained few and far between, and where there were few urban centres, there few vectors for the diffusion of Roman legal culture or civic institutions. Likewise, without civic institutions and government – magistrates, *curia*, priesthoods – there were few opportunities for individual provincials to become citizens through participation in local government. That meant the vast majority of first- and second-century Pannonians were *peregrini*, living by local law and custom, and interacting with the imperial state mainly through the occasional encounter with soldiers. And yet things Roman were everywhere on display, the imperial image on coins, the emperor's name and titles on the milestones along the great military roads, the overwhelming scale of the public architecture on those rare occasions when a peasant went to the city. There could be no doubting where privilege and power lay, and for the Pannonian peasant to change his condition, the quickest path was through the army.

[44] As argued by KOHUT, T.A., "Psychohistory as History," in *American Historical Review* 91, 1986, pp. 336-54.
[45] COLLINGWOOD, R.G., *The Idea of History*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1946, pp. 205-315, esp. at pp. 213-17; 231-49.
[46] Solinus 21.2.

In normal times that path wound through an arduous twenty-five years of service as an auxiliary, at the end of which the veteran gained citizenship with his *honesta missio*.[47]But the 190s were not normal times, especially in Pannonia. The murder of Commodus, the short-reign of Pertinax, and the almost simultaneous risings of Pescennius Niger, Clodius Albinus and Septimius Severus, put a premium on able-bodied men for the civil conflict that was inevitable. The imperial rivals could not afford to be choosy about the background of their new recruits just so long as they looked capable of fighting. Perhaps Murranus' father seized a long-awaited opportunity, perhaps he was swept up in Severus' *dilectus*, but he was now a soldier, socialized into the total institution that was the Roman army of the high empire, a society in many ways sufficient unto itself. The young Murranus will have grown up in the camps, learning to be a soldier's son and a Roman, whether the formal grant of citizenship came with his father's enlistment or, more likely, when his father was granted the right of *conubium* with his mother under *ius civile*, enfranchising the young man though not his mother. A camp-follower in a time of active warfare, he might well have seen the landscapes of Syria and Asia Minor as well as the Rhône Valley, or perhaps he, his mother, and any siblings were parked in a *cannaba* somewhere in the Balkans until the II Parthica was done with helping Severus win and hold the purple. Either way, his education was eclectic and catch as catch can: the Roman army was a highly literate institution, with a mania for record-keeping rarely matched in antiquity, but it neither required nor offered a very advanced sort of literacy: hence the signs of the autodidact that mark the elderly Murranus' inscription – the miscellaneous affect, the occasional phonetic or regional spelling, the reaching for a grandiosity that remained tantalizingly beyond his grasp.

It may be that Murranus' untutored intellect was better catered for after the II Parthica settled at Castra Albanum. For all the inscription's awkwardness, its command of verb tense is that of a writer, not a speaker. Be that as it may, Murranus had clearly seen enough of army life to know that it was not for him. As a citizen himself, he did not face the choice that confronted young men his age whose fathers had served in the auxiliaries. For them, enlistment remained the path to gaining the privileges of citizeship that their discharged fathers enjoyed. For Murranus, the doors were open, and the obligation to serve that was placed on soldiers' sons in the fourth-century did not yet exist. What trade or profession he took up is unrecoverable, but he did well enough to marry a *petite bourgeoise* from humdrum Sulmo. Maybe his father had known a Paelignian Decrius in the legion or one of its sister units. Or perhaps Sulmo and Corfinium were a refuge from being sucked into the life of a soldier, far enough away from his relations to escape the camp, but not so far as to lose the family

[47]Before the reign of Antoninus Pius any children born while he was in the ranks were enfranchised after a soldier's *honesta missio*, but that ceased to be the case after ca. 140. See CAMPBELL, "Marriage of Soldiers."

connection. He and Decria had a large family and a household capable of sustaining it in some style. He gave his children thoroughly respectable names, with the immigrant's determination that his offspring assimilate in a way he never can.[48] They would have had traditional Roman educations, with a slave tutor at home, and then a *grammaticus* at school, though we need not imagine that familial ambitions ran as far as further study with a *rhetor*. Pudens, at least, had some Greek and, if Melusa's name is anything to go by, there were probably Greek-speakers among the household slaves.

At some point, Murranus and Decria acquired property in a country *pagus* some distance from the *pomerium* of Sulmo, or perhaps it came into the family with Decria. It was there, on the road into the *municipium*, that Thiasus would one day erect his grandfather's tomb. For all his evident prosperity, however, Murranus never played a leading role in his community, never held a priesthood or curial office. What prevented him, we cannot say, perhaps a diffidence occasioned by a sense of his own foreignness and inadequacy, or perhaps the snobbery of local worthies who wanted nothing to do with a jumped-up Pannonian newcomer in their Oscan valleys. Those same worthies, or their children and children's children, were the audience for Murranus' funerary performance, which may explain still more of its peculiarities. Along with the anguished sense of loss, there is the rhetoric of transformation and its evocation of Ovid, whose *patria* was Murranus' adoptive home. Murranus not only echoes the favourite Ovidian theme of metamorphosis, but also the sense of self-metamorphosis present in the exilic poetry. But whereas the cultured Italian had been undone, transformed into a voiceless barbarian by the experience of exile among barbarians, the Pannonian barbarian has been rendered civilized, which makes his unique deployment of *quicumque legerit aut legentem ausculta<ve>rit* all the more telling. Murranus, the Ovidian barbarian from Pannonia, is suggesting that the Romans among whom, transformed, he finds himself might themselves not be able to read the words that he, the barbarian convert, had composed. They might instead need to have his text read out to them. Murranus, a Pannonian whose franchise was of recent vintage, found himself in a cultural backwater in the Apennines, among men like his in-laws the Decrii, whose claim to status in the wider empire had long been their possession of Roman citizenship in a world of *peregrini* and slaves. Murranus would have felt his immigrant status, his difference, particularly harshly in Sulmo, where he might have passed unnoticed in a more cosmopolitan part of Italy. Exaggerating his own barbarism while impugning the literacy of his neighbours was, among other things, a type of posthumous revenge.

[48] Within an enormous literature, the key text is SAYAD, A., *The Suffering of the Immigrant*, D. Macey, trans., Cambridge, Polity Press, 2004.

If the foregoing seems to stretch the imaginative too far, we can still interpret Murranus and his epitaph as important witnesses to the third-century transformation of the Roman world.[49]In the empire of his birth, the internationalism of the Antonine elite was predicated upon the adoption of a single rhetorical and literary culture acquired through education, and on the ability to display that same culture publicly at the highest level of competency one could master. Murranus and his inscription belong to that world. It was one in which the aspirant to social position -- to a conversion to civilization from barbarism -- had to demonstrate his conversion in a form that was normalized towards traditional, classicizing displays of literary and cultural prowess, and had to be able to do this in his own voice and his own person. By the later third century, the time of Diocletian's accession, the assumptions reflected in Murranus' inscription no longer obtained. One could now be a consumer of traditional, classicizing culture but lack any ability to produce it oneself, without limiting the possibility of participation in the political culture of the empire. An Illyrian soldier-emperor was neither less Roman nor less *capax imperii* simply because he was himself incapable of participating as a producer in the traditional cultural mode. These new Romans had, instead, taken on the role of cultural consumers, as most fourth-century emperors continued to be. It is that separability of cultural consumption and cultural production which is so characteristic of fourth-century elite civilization. Classical or classicizing forms remained the universally accepted and normative cultural taste. Yet, in contrast to the earlier imperial centuries, the capacity to govern, and the right to participate in imperial governance,was not dependent upon an individual's ability to produce classical cultural forms. All that was needed was to be seen to consume the normative with approval. Murranus documents an intermediate stage in these developments. He looks back to a pre-Severan empire in which to become a Roman properly meant becoming a producer and user, as well as a consumer, of a traditional culture: the *faux naif* pride that Murranus takes in his cultural conversion, with its veiled aspersions on his Italian neighbours, only makes sense within that mental landscape. The point he was making would be lost on future generations. All around him, while Murranus still lived, his Pannonian and Balkan compatriots were creating a late imperial world in which his kind of cultural conversion was entirely unnecessary.

[49] And let us here remind ourselves that Murranus' inscription is dated solely by its letter forms, and though BUONOCORE's judgement on such matters is exquisitely refined, were the stone to in fact be second-century, we could throw out our entire interpretation – and probably assume that Murranus was a freedman. Some of our effort at*Verstehen* would still hold good.