

Ita valeas, scriptor, hoc monumentum praeteri. Cursing Trespassers, Preserving Monumentality in the Carmina Latina Epigraphica

Introduction. Numerous epitaphs request the reader not to physically outrage the tomb and curse potential trespassers with a set of colourful invectives. While angry divinities are invoked to punish those who illegally appropriate tombs and bury bodies where they are not permitted, physical uneasiness and painful deaths may be threatened to those who do not respect the grave. As early as the Republican period, epitaphs voice genuine concerns about the protection of the tomb. Occasional intruders are warned to stay away from the private space of the tomb with highly formulaic expressions. Formulae such as *h(uc) m(onumento) d(olus) m(alus) a(besto)* not only demarcated the legal character of the grave, underscoring ownership and right to burial, but also prevented the passer-by from dishonouring it. Prohibitions against excretions, written defacement and illegal appropriation underscore the importance ascribed to the physical existence of the tombstone. As evidence from Pompeii suggests, the surfaces of many sepulchral monuments host game or electoral notices signed by professional *scriptores*. *Four metrical inscriptions shed new important light on the identity of scriptores and further our understanding of the relationship between the reader/viewer, the material layout of the tomb and its physical context.*

FOCUS

Anxiety about contamination, competition and distributed authorship constitutes a quintessential feature of the epigraphic discourse. Monumental epitaphs, votive inscriptions and wall graffiti can all be equally written over, misplaced and erased. By being (actually and metaphorically) on display in public spaces, they are repeatedly exposed to unwanted readerly engagements, engendering responses from readers-viewer. A particular category of intruders is represented by potential writers or scribblers, who were prevented from writing over inscriptions or deploying their surfaces for games and electoral notices.

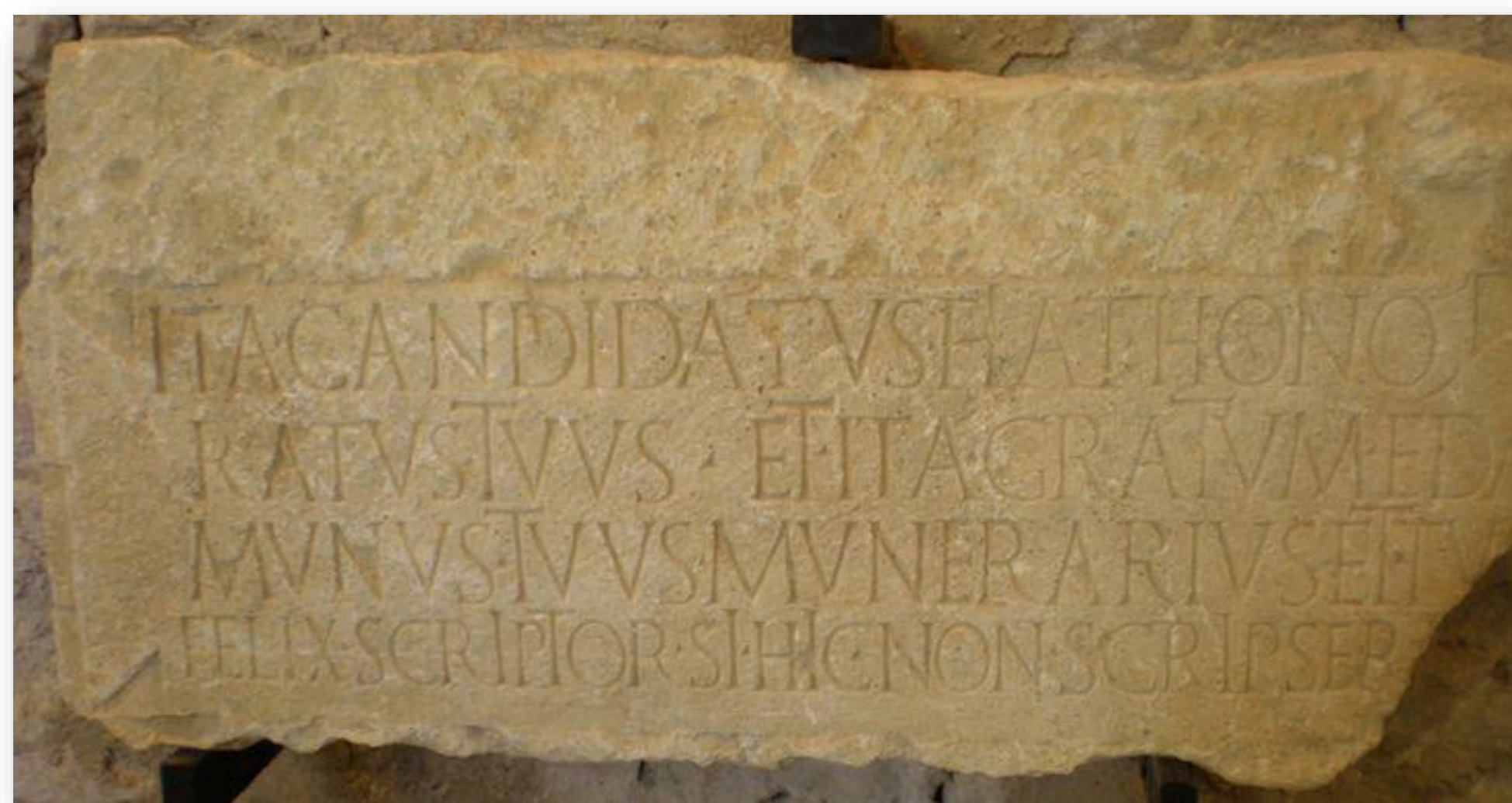
*Quisq(ue) in eo vico stercus non posu/erit aut non cacaverit
aut non m/iaverit habeat illas propitias. si neglexerit viderit.*
CIL III 1966, Salona.

Let whoever will not defecate or urinate here be favoured by the gods. Shall he neglect this, he shall see the consequences.

Relief representing
Hecate on a funerary or
votive monument,
Salona. Photo from the
Wien - Kunsthistorisches
Museum website.



Prohibitions against bill-posters



Slab with inscribed *tabula ansata*, Forum Popilii, 1 cent. AD. Photo from Epigraphik-Datenbank Clauss / Slaby.

*Ita candidatus fiat honoratus tuus
et ita gratum edat munus tuus munerarius
et tu (sis) felix, scriptor, si hic non scripseri[s].*
CIL XI 575, CLE 195, Foro Popilii, 1 cent. AD.

May your candidate gain office and may your games-giver put on a show to please you, and may you, bill-poster, have good luck if you don't write here. (Trans. Courtney 1995).

*haec est quam coniunx condidit atque [pater.
Parce opus, hoc scriptor tituli quod luctibus urgen[t]:
sic tua praetores saepe manus referat.*
CIL X 6193; CLE 1466, Formiae, post-Hadrianic age.

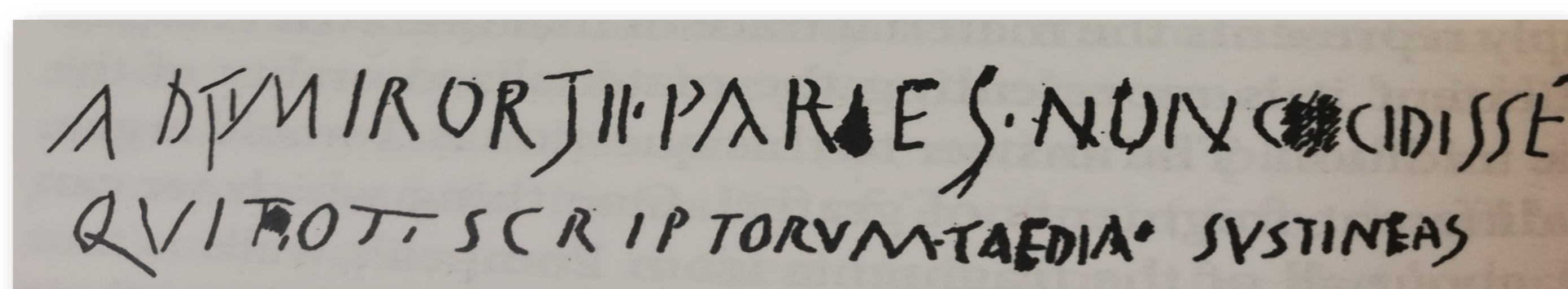
This is she whom her husband and father laid to rest. **Bill-poster, spare this work** which epitaphs weigh down with grief; so may your arms often carry home (newly-elected) praetors (Trans. Courtney 1995).

The typical epitaphic address to the *viator* or *lector*, who is asked to perform acts of sympathy towards the deceased, is transformed into an apostrophe to the *scriptor*.

As these inscriptions demonstrate, there was an expectation that surfaces of epitaphs might be deployed as support for **electoral programmata or game notices** (CLE 195). Although game notices were painted on the walls of Pompeii, *scribere* represents the common way for professional *scriptores* of signing the *edicta munerum: scripsit Celer sing(ulus) ad lunam*. In a few cases, *scriptor* is deployed as a technical term to indicate professional writers of electoral and game notices.

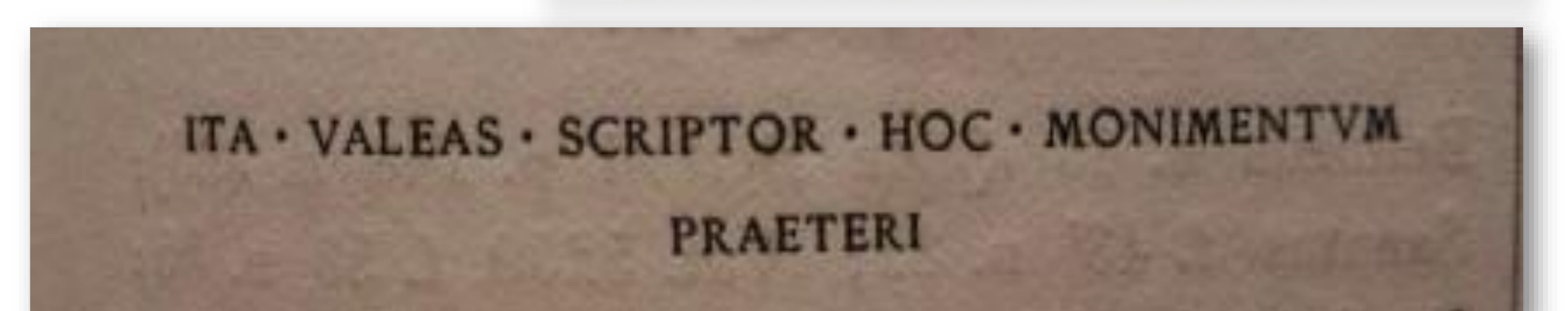
There are, however, instances in which the term *scriptor* refers to a generic reader/viewer. **Threats against potential trespassers, and in particular writers, express a recurring anxiety about violation and contamination not only of the physical existence and material realities of the tombstone, but also of the poetic space demarcated by the monument.**

Un-wanted interactions. Non-professional scriptores



Line drawing of the graffito CIL IV 2487, Pompeii, 1 cent. AD. Picture from from Milnor (2014) 30.

*Admiror, paries, te non cecidisse ruina,
qui tot **scriptorum** taedia sustineas.*
CIL IV 2487; CLE 957, Pompeii, 1 cet. AD
I am surprised, wall, that you have not collapsed and fallen, seeing / that you support the tedious effusions of so many **writers**. (Trans. Courtney 1995).



Inscription CIL V 1490 originally engraved on the pedestal of a funerary monument, Aquileia, date unknown. Photo from CIL volume V.

Ita valeas, scriptor, hoc monumentum praeteri.
CIL V 1490, CLE 196, Aquileia, date unknown.
Farewell, writer, pass this monument by.