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***MALA BESTIA FORAS DATO.***  
**SPELLING MISTAKES AND LOAN PHRASES AS MEANS OF  
INTERPRETATION OF A LATIN MAGICAL TEXT<sup>1</sup>**

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*Abstract.* In 1911, Auguste Audollent received a lead tablet with a Latin inscription on both sides coming from North Africa. It was lying almost undetected and forgotten for nearly one hundred years until the Hungarian visiting professor György Németh rediscovered it in the storage room of the Musée Bargoin in Clermont-Ferrand, France. The recently finished complete reading of the text and its commentary will be published soon by Gy. Németh and the author of the present paper.

This article aims to consider all the word forms and phrases of the tablet which differ from the Latin standard in order to look for an answer if the target, the context and the sources can be identified with the help of linguistic tools.

*Keywords:* lead tablet, protective magic, North Africa, vulgar Latin, language usage, foreignisms

1. More than one hundred years ago, a lead tablet of unusual thickness was found in North Africa and forwarded to Auguste Audollent, the French specialist of curse tablets who had just published his great work on *tabellae defixionum*.<sup>2</sup> He never dealt with it nor carried out any reading of the tablet, and until the last years it passed almost unnoticed among his legacy in Clermont-Ferrand. Apart from two short references on the uncomplete reading made by Pierre-Yves Lambert<sup>3</sup>,

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<sup>2</sup> Audollent 1904.

<sup>3</sup> RIG II 2, 273-274 and Lambert 2010.

it was György Németh, professor of ancient history at ELTE University, Budapest, who drew attention to this tablet after having discovered it in the Musée Bargoin, Clermond-Ferrand during a study tour in 2011.<sup>4</sup>

At first sight it becomes obvious that this one differs from the rest of the tablets in the collection. It was not folded, nor pierced, and it is not as thin as the other tablets are, though it measures as a usual magical tablet does generally: it is 11.5 cm wide and 8 cm tall, but the width is 0.3-0.4 cm. On the base of a recently found correspondence between Audollent and the archaeologist working in Carthage (where the object was obtained), already the few perceivable lines suggested to them that it was a tablet of magical character.<sup>5</sup> During a 2017 study tour, a complete reading was finally attained by autopsy.<sup>6</sup>

### **Diplomatic version**

#### **Side 1**

CAILII·PATIIR·TIIRRA·MATIIR·AV  
SALVTIIM·PIITO·QVACAVSA·VOS  
NOMINAVI·STANTIIM·SIIDIINTIIM  
VOLANTIIM·SIIRPIINTIIM·NIQVI  
BIISTIA·ISTIC·MORARII·POSIT·MIIR  
CVRI·SANCTII·IIRCVLII·QVAII·DIIDISTI  
BONA·CARMINA·MALA·BIISTIA  
FORAS·DATO

#### **Side 2**

TII·ALLIGAVIT·MIIRCVRIVS·SATVRNVS  
APOLLO·[-]IINVS·M[---]IRV[A-]·NON  
SOLVIIT·TANQVAM·BOVIS·INCORNV  
ASINV·INVNGVLA·GIINVS·VMANV  
IN·LINGVA·ADVLIISCIINTVLA·INCRI  
NIBVS·SIIPTII·CAPITA·ANGVORV·OCTO  
NODOS·SCORPIONIS·VBICVNQVIIS·NI  
SII·CONMOVIIRII·POSIT

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<sup>4</sup> Németh 2013, 25, Nr. 1. For more details on the discovery and rediscovery, see Barta, Németh (in prep.). Due to lack of finding circumstances, the exact date when the tablet was made cannot be defined.

<sup>5</sup> Lambert 2010, 643-644 identified it as a protective charm „apparently against snakes/scorpions”. His fragmentary reading was based on only photographs.

<sup>6</sup> For full commentary of the text, see Barta, Németh (in prep.).

**Text arranged in a classical standard version,  
with diacritical marks**

**Side 1**

Caele Pater, Terra Mater au<t?>  
salutem peto, qua causa vos  
nominavi stantem, sedentem,  
volantem, serpentem, n'I=e' qu'I=ae'  
bestia istic morar'E=i' pos<s>it.  
Mercuri sancte, <H>ercules, qu'AE=i' dedisti  
bona carmina, mala<m> bestia<m>  
foras dato.

**Side 2**

Te alligavit/alliga'V=b'it Mercurius, Saturnus,  
Apollo [g]enus m[ulie]ru[m] non  
solvat tanquam bovis in cornu,  
asinu<s> in ungula, genus <h>umanu<m>  
in lingua, adulescentula in cri-  
nibus septe<m> capita angu'ORV<M>=ium' octo  
nodos scorpionis ubicunque <e>s<t> n'I=e'  
se commovere pos<s>it.

The most plausible translation based on the commentary mentioned above runs as follows:

Side 1. *Father Sky, Mother Earth! or rather: I ask for safety (or well-being).*

*The reason I hereby call you the one standing, sitting, flying and crawling is that may any beast be unable to stay here. Holy Mercury, Hercules who gave good chants, cast the bad beast out!*

Side 2. *Mercury, Saturn, Apollo and the womankind - bound (or will bind) you - will not set free - as bull in his horn, donkey in its hooves, the mankind in its tongue, young lady in her hair - seven heads of snakes, eight knots of a scorpion - wherever it is, may it be unable to get move.*

Albeit that the text is not easy to understand and its structure is quite rough mainly on side 2, the first opinion made already in 1911 could not be disproved - it still seems to be a magical tablet. However, the purpose has not yet become fully clear. The phrases "ne quae bestia istic morari possit", "malam bestiam foras dato", "alligabit/alligavit - non solvet" and "ubicumque est, ne se commovere possit" all are indicatives of a protective amulet which was meant to hold off a beast. Strangely enough, what kind of beast it can be and for whom

the tablet was produced is not mentioned in the text. As general rule, when writing a magical text in order to control someone's free will (in curses) or to avert threatening dangers (in amulets), it was essential to identify the person or the calamity which was meant to be applied or quite the contrary, cleared away respectively. Though many amulets from antiquity are fraught with obscure phrases, these characteristics are usually supplied unambiguously. The target of magic should be sharply defined otherwise it could be ineffective for those it was intended. These kinds of concealment can be explained only if the circumstances are self-evident. For example if a curse tablet was found in a sanctuary of a certain deity, and the text itself does not relate to him or her, presumably the deity was summoned and instructed only in words during the ritual, there was not necessary to repeat it on the tablet, but other details were mostly given. In this tablet, at least six deities (*Caelus, Terra, Mercurius, Hercules, Saturnus, Apollo*) were addressed without clearing up the exact reason. Similarly, the persons or places targeted or to be defended are missing. Maybe the placement or other circumstances made it explicit.

2. The lack of exact parallels makes the interpretation doubtful. Although only Roman deities are addressed and the text was written entirely Latin, Oriental and Jewish elements can be detected between the lines.<sup>7</sup> On the following pages I examine whether the identification of both cultural borrowings and the language mistakes can reveal any further information about the target, the context and the sources of the tablet.

On one hand, the scribe wrote all the letters consequently the same way, which refers to a trained person, on the other hand this scribe could not totally conceal his or her language usage which makes itself felt through the few spelling mistakes.

## 2.1 Vowel confusions

### **E ~ I**

This kind of spelling mistakes witnesses the loss of distinction in vowel length accompanied by a reorganization of vowel quality.<sup>8</sup> The pronunciation of the originally long /e/ and short /i/ became so similar that the use of the letters E and I (and even AE and Y) gave the scribes much trouble which to choose, even if the words were pronounced without any "innovations" or changes. This mistake is attested four times in the Clermont tablet. The clause which makes evident that the aim of the tablet is to get rid of some kind of beast was started by the

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<sup>7</sup> See below and Barta, Németh (in prep.).

<sup>8</sup> Herman 2000, 27-32.

conjunction *ne* written as NI (é: > I): ”*may any beast be unable to stay here*”<sup>9</sup>. In the form NIQVI (written in one word, without any word dividing sign) instead of *ne quae* the *ae* must have been pronounced monophthongized as an open ε, but was written as a hypercorrect I (ae > e > I; or it might be an evidence of the confusion between the different types of pronouns<sup>10</sup>). The deponent *morari* with an active infinitive ending might be also the proof of the general simplification in vulgar Latin, but it can be considered as a usual *e-i* confusion.

The fourth instance for *e-i* confusion is not doubtless. A relative clause seems to follow an invocation of two deities (*Mercuri sancte Hercules*)<sup>11</sup> started by a relative pronoun *QVAE* and a second person singular verb *dedisti*. With reference to the mistakes mentioned above, the most obvious interpretation could be an inverse type of the mistake in (*ne*) *quae*, i.e. *qui*<sup>12</sup> referring to *Hercules* and *Mercury* and either a ”more personal” singular or a mistakenly written (with the omission of the final -s) plural verb form. However, in regard to the obscurity of the tablet, the phrase is not necessarily misspelled. The relative clause with the pronoun *quae* can point to even a female deity not mentioned by her name,<sup>13</sup> and the instruction to expel the bad beast ”*malam bestiam foras dato*” could be directed to all three of them. Since it is not yet clear what kind of good chants or spells are meant by *bona carmina*, the subject of *dedisti* cannot be definitely identified.

## 2.2 Consonant mistakes

### -t > 0

In the tablet there are seven final consonants missing. At the end of line 1 the uncertain amendment *au<t>* confirms the general rough style of the text. Nonetheless, on one hand the omission of the final -t in *aut* is attested at least in three inscriptions (CIL VI 14159: *au<t> si quis*, RMD I nr. 73 = AE 1976,

<sup>9</sup> cf. LLDB-74346 *n'I=e`q<u>is pos<s>it*

<sup>10</sup> cf. LLDB-7492 *matri<s> () qu'I=ae`*. Besides *nequae*, the form *nequa* was considered as standard, too. In this case the general confusion might be more plausible interpretation for this mistake.

<sup>11</sup> In literary sources and inscriptions *sanctus* is attested as an attribute of both *Hercules* and *Mercury*, which could stand either before or after the name of the deity. Thus, it cannot be decided whether it belongs to *Hercules* or *Mercury* in this text. However, they complement each other, in mythology *Mercury* is the picture of intelligence and cleverness who advised the brave and strong hero *Hercules* many times. Together they could do any job, solve any problem, ward off any menacing danger. The *sanctus* as an *apo koinu* could stress their inheritance.

<sup>12</sup> cf. LLDB-24052 *Fugilo qu'AE=I`*

<sup>13</sup> Hypothetically, *Diana/Artemis* could match to these deities. She is the goddess of hunt, animals and beast, and she was addressed in amulets, too, eg. the *Antaura* amulet against migraine, Kotansky 1994 Nr. 13.

00794: *au<t> si qui*, RMD IV nr. 93: *au<t> cum iis*), on the other hand the content can explain this peculiar structure, too. The invocation of *Caelus pater* and *Terra mater* is the beginning of a supplication, a call for help, intervention, or a request. What the conjunction *aut* introduces is a more accurate or corrected statement (OLD s.v. *aut* 6b): *oh, Father Sky, Mother Earth!* (in fact, on the base of parallels, the universe, or the omnipotent lord of the universe is summoned by these two deities who represent the two essential parts of the world) I ask you, I hereby make a request to you – this is what is meant by the invocation, and this missing thought is corrected by the clause “*aut salutem peto*” or *rather I ask for safety* (or *well-being*). The reason why the *aut* was used strangely can be originated in the contamination or confusion of the cases what *peto* requires. When saying “ask somebody (to do something)” *peto* requires accusative (*vos volo, vos peto atque obsecro, gerite mihi amanti morem* Pl. Cur. 148), but when the meaning is “try to obtain by asking (from somebody)” the person is marked by a prepositional phrase and the object is an accusative form (*eas litteras, quibus ego a te consilium petieram* Cic., Att. XVI 13a,1).<sup>14</sup>

Another word without the final *-t* is VBICVNQES which is *ubicumque est* in classical Latin. Side 2 is rich in problematical formulations. If we suppose that all the mistakenly written words are identified in the reading given above, some words must be missing, too, otherwise the text is far from being coherent. The subject of *ubicumque est* is not indicated, either. As the main target of the tablet is the *bestia*, probably it must be expected here, too, though it is not mentioned in side 2 at all.<sup>15</sup> *Bestia* is named in a sentence of side 1 in which it is instructed not to be able to stay *here*. *Ubicumque* is another word for place, the demand of side 2 is the continuation of the one in side 1. If the beast has not left the present place by now it should at least remain still no matter in which part of this place it is right now - and maybe that is the reason why the deities representing the whole universe are addressed.

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<sup>14</sup> The curse tablet Aq-2, for example, shows the trouble what the required cases gave to the author (in addition to the word *peto*, the verb *rogo* of similar meaning could increase the embroilment by the double accusative it requires *Claudia, Flavia, Z=S`o/simus <A>eracura<m> rogat et p[e]/t`i=E`t (?) sibi Zosimus <a> <D>it`e=o` Patr`e=I` ea nomina, qu<a>e vobis / do (...) roga/mus <A>eracura<m>, Patr`em=I` eo/ru<m> nomina at (=ut?) stud`e=I`as.* “*Claudia, Flavia, Zosimus* ask *Aeracura*, and *Zosimus* as for himself requests *Dis Pater* <to concentrate on> those names which I am handing over to you: (...) we ask *Aeracura* and *Dis Pater*: do concentrate on their names, (too). Barta 2017). Here accusatives and ablatives instead of prepositional phrases are mixed with seemingly dative endings which clearly reflect phenomena heading for the critical downward period of the Latin declension system (Herman 2000, 52).

<sup>15</sup> Maybe the first word *te* is also directed to the beast. The alternating point of view of the target is not a unique phenomenon in magical texts.

As regards the loss of the final *-t*, there are many instances on inscriptions where the cluster *-st* is marked without the *-t*, mainly before initial consonants (cf. here *ubicumque est ne ...*). The word *pos<t>* is the most problematic word and it is followed by *es<t>* in frequency (eg. LLDB-72926 *Saturn[i]nus vi{c}xit [hic] situs es<t>*). In addition to this, elisions in phrases with *est* are attested even in inscriptions (CIL I 3449i, HEp 18, 2009, 253: HEIC SITAS *hic sita est*). The contracted spelling of *esse* is not a mistake, it occurs generally from the early comedy writers on. The stylistic value is considered to be either colloquial, or poetic and archaic.<sup>16</sup> With reference to Herman's observation,<sup>17</sup> in every period of the Latin language the final *-t* seems to have been unstable causing confusion when to apply. Beside the two above mentioned misspellings (*au<t>*, *ubicunque <e>s<t>*) there are four other instances where the final *-t* was written correctly: *possit* (twice), *alligavit* and *solvet*.

### **-m > 0**

Five words are lacking in final *-m* (*mala<m> bestia<m>*, *<h>umanu<m>*, *septe<m>*, *anguoru<m>*)<sup>18</sup>, while seven words seem to have it correctly (*salutem, stantem, sedentem, volantem, serpentem, m[ulie]ru[m]*, *tanquam*).

Since the loss of final *-m* is attested from the earliest times, the correct spelling of this weakened sound required attention.<sup>19</sup> In the Clermont tablet no order or rule can be detected whether it was marked or not. Due to the general obscurity of the text, the amended reading above is not definite at all. As an extreme example, the *mala bestia*<sup>20</sup> could be interpreted as a vocative form and the object adjusted to the predicate *foras dato* could be the *mala carmina* – but it is less probable because on one hand we are lacking in parallels for this interpretation, on the other hand it would destroy the parallel structure of *bona carmina* and *mala bestia* as accusatives.

Not only the absence, but the existence of the final *-m* can raise questions. The four singular participles after the expression *vos nominavi* "I called you all" (or "I hereby call you"<sup>21</sup>) shows incongruence. In classical Latin accusative

<sup>16</sup> Pezzini 2015, 236: the comedy writers like Plautus, Terence used the contracted forms as sign of colloquial speech, Vergil and Lucretius used it as a tool of archaic and poetic style. In literary sources it fell out of use by the late Latin period.

<sup>17</sup> Herman 2000, 41.

<sup>18</sup> For each word cf. LLDB-6198 *candida<m> vita<m> cole*; LLDB-63259 *Germanu<m>*; LLDB-19693 *annoru<m>*; LLDB-72842 *septe<m> dies*

<sup>19</sup> Herman 2000, 39-40.

<sup>20</sup> *Mala bestia* was a phrase in current use: Pl., *Poen.* 1293 *mala illa bestia est*, Pl. *Bac.* 55 *mala tu es bestia*, Catull. 69, 8 *hunc (odorem hircinum) metuunt omnes ...: nam mala valde est bestia*. Vulg. *Tit.* 1, 12 *Cretenses ... malae bestiae* (κακὰ θηρία).

<sup>21</sup> Barta, Németh (in prep.)

plurals are expected to be agreed to *vos*. Why then may it stand? As regards meaning, a god depicted as standing, sitting, flying and even crawling sounds unfamiliar to Romans, they may be assigned to the *bestia* of the next clause with reason since animals or beasts are classified in similar terms.<sup>22</sup> However, in magical texts coming from Oriental practices and rituals we read invocations which remind us of these expressions used for almighty deities.<sup>23</sup> In curse tablets, in addition, the words *stare sedere* are used when the curse was made for detaining someone from every possible symptoms or forms of existing, of life.<sup>24</sup> This idea is also connected to the universality what *Caelus* and *Terra* represent, the unity of these deities is the universe, they have absolute power above everything which can be found in the world. Thus, the four singular participles may relate to the unity of *Caelus* and *Terra*.

The word *m[ulie]ru[m]* is a part of the only expression in the tablet which can be read with difficulties. The letter fragments obviously can be brought to *genus mulierum*, and not to *Venus Minerva* which actually would fit into the group of three other gods which are mentioned just before. As far as final *-m* is concerned, the ending of genitive plural can be restored. Nonetheless, the reason why womankind is placed next to gods it far from clear, it requires further investigation.<sup>25</sup>

A personal characteristic of the scribe can be discovered in the compound forms of *tanquam*, *ubicunque* and *conmovere*: albeit the versions with *-m* were more frequently used, this scribe preferred the also standard but less common forms with an *-n* at the border of the two word elements. Traditionally the prefix-form *com-* and not *con-* is expected before *m-*, *b-*, *p-* and certain vowels, but

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<sup>22</sup> I am grateful to Daniela Urbanova for sharing her interpretation with me.

<sup>23</sup> Especially PGM II 104-115 which summons a deity who is seated (cf. *sedentem*) upon a lotus, has the shape of a falcon (cf. *volantem*) and at the same time has the form of a crocodile with the tail of a snake (cf. *serpentem*) and is in power beneath the heaven and on earth (cf. *Caele pater, Terra mater*). In latin literature cf. Apul., *Met.* XI 25, here Isis is addressed by similar attributes. For more details, see Barta, Németh.

<sup>24</sup> dfx 3.22/32 *non illis permittas nec stare nec sedere, nec bibere, nec manducare*.

<sup>25</sup> As a nominative it can be the subject of both *alligavit/alligabit* and *non solvet*, belonging to the group of gods: they together bind and do not set free a certain *te* (maybe the *bestia*). In this case, the aim would be to guard against a danger what threatens the sphere of women, a danger against the house or a disease menacing female health (roaming womb). As a nominative it can belong only to *non solvet*, which means the womankind is the enemy or adversary of the supporting gods: gods bound the beast, may no women be able to set it free. Already in antiquity women were considered more superstitious cf. the story of the sick *Pericles* who accepted a protective amulet from old women (referred by Theophrastus in his lost *Ethics* – Frag. L21 Fortenbaugh). As a third interpretation, womankind could be the object of the verbs, but if so, the tablet would be a kind of curse - cursing the entire womankind is hitherto without paralel.



maybe the easier pronunciation, the assimilation before *qu-* influenced the form of *conmovere* alike.

*Alligavit/alligabit* also reflects assimilation, the ending of original prefix was adjusted to the initial sound of the main word. However, the etymologically analysed form (i.e. *adligavit*) would not have been unusual in a text with other vulgar Latin features.

### **B ~ V confusion**

The previously mentioned ALLIGAVIT can be interpreted both as a future *alligabit* and a past tense *alligavit* on the base of the common B-V confusion in vulgar Latin texts.<sup>26</sup> As regards content, each of the interpretations is plausible. If it is considered to be a future form, it would adjusted to the future *non solvet*: if the beast has not yet left the place at issue (though it was instructed to do so on side 1: *ne possit istic morari* and *foras dato*), it will be inevitably bound and will not set free. The past tense would not be as threatening as the future version is: it only reminds the beast that gods have already bound it, they have power above it, there is no need for a struggle.

### **-s > 0**

Besides *vos, Hercules, foras, Mercurius, Satorus, genus, bovis, crinibus, nodos, scorpionis*, the final *-s* is missing only once, at the end of *asinus*.<sup>27</sup> This ratio corresponds to Herman's observation, it is a much less frequent phenomenon than the loss of final *-m* or *-t*. Herman raises the question generally whether the amendment *-u<s>* of words ending in a simple V is always correct or not, since on the base of North African curse tablets even *-u<m>* could be a probable supplement in the function of a nominative form.<sup>28</sup> Although Herman was not entirely sure if this hypothesis can stand fast any time, Adamik recently proved that the V endings of those curse tablets conceal the so-called accusativus enumerationis.<sup>29</sup> However, in the Clermont tablet an accusative of list is not conceivable, but a direct accusative is worth considering. If so, BOVIS is to be interpreted as accusative plural of *boves*, genus could be taken for an accusative, and *adulescentula* can be lacking in a final *-m* representing accusative. The four parallelly structured phrases (*bull in his horn, donkey in its hoove, the mankind in its tongue, young lady in her locks of hair*) seemingly are not governed by any verb. With reference to their content, they are concepts which belong together, the four beings are depicted by their main characteristics, they are inseparable, a

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<sup>26</sup> Recently on the merger /b/ and /w/, see Adamik 2017b.

<sup>27</sup> cf. LLDB-28081 *Valentinu<s> po(suit)*

<sup>28</sup> Herman 2006, 39.

<sup>29</sup> Adamik 2017a, esp. 6-11.

power hold them together. And besides, a bull has great power in his horns, a donkey's kick is strong, mankind is above all living creatures because of the power of speech, a girl can cast spell upon any men with the power of her gorgeous hair. There is an eternal, never-ending, disjoinable connection between these ideas. As they are connected with the power of a disjoinable bond, so the tie what is bound around the *bestia* will not be loosened ever. They are analogously used because of the word *non solvet*, and maybe they are governed by this word itself too: no one can separate these strongly connected ideas.

The next two similar, paralelly structured phrases (a number, a possession and a possessor: *septem capita anguium, octo nodos scorpionis*) stand also quite apart from any verbs. They are morphologically accusative forms, but it is not clear by which predicate they are governed. In addition it is also not obvious what they refer to. They could symbolize extremely threatening danger. At this moment it is undecided whether these horrible snakes and scorpions are the beasts themselves which are to be repelled, or they just represent any horrible danger what threatens the owner of this amulet. This is another point of text which requires further investigation.

#### **ss > S**

The weakening of geminates (*ss, mm, nn*) is attested mainly in late Latin sources.<sup>30</sup> In the Clermont tablet *possit* occurs twice consequently with only one *s*.<sup>31</sup> In epigraphic evidences the word and its derivatives appear often, but only a small amount of them was written mistakenly. These misspelled words can be found mainly in magical texts which were allegedly never checked and corrected.

#### **h- > 0**

The loss of the initial *h-* is the most frequent spelling mistake, because it was not pronounced already in the republican times. For the correct use intensive education was necessary. In the Clermont tablet both words with an initial *h-* was misspelled (<*h*>*unamu*<*m*>, <*H*>*ercules*).<sup>32</sup>

### 2.3 Morphological mistakes

There is only one mistake which is easy to identify as a morphological one. The *-is* ending parisyllaba has got the genitive plural ending *-orum* of the *-o-* stem words, instead of *-ium* (ANGVORV instead of *angium*). It is also a well-known

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<sup>30</sup> Herman 2000, 48.

<sup>31</sup> cf. LLDB-26041 *pos<s>it*

<sup>32</sup> cf. LLDB-556 <*h*>*umana*; LLDB-5658 <*H*>*erculis*

mistake and is well attested in inscriptions (LLDB-38558 *ensorum* instead of *ensium*; LLDB-66710 *omniorum* instead of *omnium*).

3. After having considered the spelling mistakes, we can prove this text bear marks of vulgar Latin or the spoken version of the Latin in imperial times, but the ever changing differences from classical Latin are quite well concealed by the trained scribe. The scribe had great pretensions, he (or she) did not even make any technical mistakes, maybe because he or she was aware of the content and paid attention to the demanding execution.

As regards content, after a linguistic analysis I still consider the tablet as a protective amulet which is deeply affected by similia, analogies, paralelisms, all typical features of magical texts.

The Clermont tablet has no direct source or link to any known ancient amulets, but elements of oriental magic can be identified, always hidden in Roman/Latin context. As if it were important for the author that no foreign traces may be discovered in the text: there are not any foreign deities addressed, even no demons summoned or just mentioned (very common in amulets), no *charakteres* or magical signs were applied to increase the efficiency of the text. The text could be read by anyone but understood only by those whom it may concern.

When scholars defined the type of *magia rurale*<sup>33</sup>, or its subgroup of amulets against hail<sup>34</sup>, the obligatory elements of protective amulets were identified: (1) naming malign powers (in the Clermont tablet that would be *bestia*), (2) naming protective powers (*Apollo, Saturnus, Mercurius, Hercules*), (3) powerful instruments (*bull in his horn, donkey in its hoof, the mankind in its tongue, young lady in her locks of hair*) (4) disposing of ills, dangers (*"ne quae bestia istic morari possit", "malam bestiam foras dato", "alligabit/alligavit - non solvet"* and *"ubicumque est, ne se commovere possit"*), (5) closure (*ubicumque est...*) (6) symbols (missing). Except the last one all elements can be found in the Clermont tablet. And there is one more essential detail missing which makes this tablet unique: the precision, the exactness that defines the person to be guarded and the danger to be averted. Maybe the circumstances and the emplacement made obvious who should be protected from what kind of *bestia*: from a real life beast or animal, or a danger or a power, demon which can cause harm - named often in amulets.

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<sup>33</sup> Maltomini 2008.

<sup>34</sup> Fernández Nieto 2010.

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