

Finding a New Beat: Teaching Latin Poetry with Popular Music

Whenever ancient poetry is assigned in college classes, as teachers, we know we must take extra care to help students engage (and sustain interest) in the material which, for them, is especially difficult to understand. For a Classicist, poetry is a serious cultural art imbued with emotion, power, and beauty, but for our students, it has a reputation for being indecipherable and the purview of intellectuals. Students simply do not know how to read and think about narratives condensed as a poetic text. To bridge these intellectual and motivational gaps, we need to tap into what they do know: popular music. Academics may too easily disregard the cultural value of popular music or see it as inferior to the great art of the past, but these songs are part of our common culture and are here to stay. This panel begins with the provocation that Billboard smash hits bear a cultural and formal potency that echo the same qualities that make Latin poetry great. Not only will this panel explore the parallels between ancient and modern song, but will specifically demonstrate how modern pop music can be used in the classroom to enhance students' engagement with Latin poetry.

Every day, students listen to music, sing along, and relate emotionally to songs. They are more familiar with and invested in their cultural artforms and thus have less distance to travel in grasping abbreviated stories, colloquial oddities, and controlled rhythms that they hear. Using these formal and stylistic qualities as a foundation, we can show them that they do understand things like prosody, meter, or encoded meaning, things they usually struggle to apprehend in the Latin poetry we ask them to decode. By demystifying the ancient poems with modern exempla, we make the art accessible and relatable to a new and perhaps reticent audience. Students can become more invested in this old art form by suddenly seeing it as modern. Music then becomes the medium through which the ancient world is brought to life.

The goal of the panel is twofold: 1) to demonstrate effective and innovative teaching methods in the classroom and 2) to provoke a conversation about the value of popular culture and its relation to poetry of the past. The papers in the panel address a variety of issues including Latin composition inspired by modern lyrics, elegiac echoes in Taylor Swift's music, and parallels found between ancient and contemporary artists' use of allusion and intertextuality. Modern pop and Latin poetry are considered both formally and thematically, and every paper connects students' own worlds with the art of the past.

Paper 1 focuses on the pedagogical use of a modern music video for teaching Latin intertextuality, arguing that music video provides poetic and filmic signposts for intertextuality and that these signposts can help students pick up on Latin intertextuality. Paper 1 concludes with an exemplum from the classroom where a student applied these observations to better discern the allusion and intertext in Propertius 1.12. Paper 2 proposes that the use of popular music provides a productive way to explore students' emotional responses to Medea and other complex characters from Greek and Roman drama. Paper 2 draws on and extends tried pedagogical techniques that make use of the modern musical "playlist" to explore these characters, tapping into students' own generic and cultural familiarities. Paper 3 engages in a formal study of the allusive and intertextual quality of the rock band Queen's music and lyrics in order to draw comparisons between the relationship between the songs of Vergil and Theocritus. Paper 3 seeks to modernize the complexities of Vergil's *Eclogues* and facilitate student understanding of these poetic techniques. Attentive to students' difficulties with learning the complexities of Latin composition, Paper 4 outlines the use of close-reading assignments in a Latin Prose Composition course in a novel way, with contemporary pop music, to overcome the barriers of time and culture for our Latin students. Paper 4 draws on classroom exempla using

Taylor Swift, Miley Cyrus, and Adele to demonstrate techniques that demystify Latin grammar and make the challenges of the language less intimidating. Paper 5 also leverages Taylor Swift's popularity to demonstrate that contemporary pop songs offer a formal and aesthetic parallels to Latin song because they follow recognizable patterns, reflect cultural trends, comment on society, and often focus on love. Paper 5 also reviews classroom techniques that result in a perceptible "mindshift" in students' ability to apprehend better ancient poetic arts.

This panel is comprised of an introduction from both co-organizers, presentation of five papers, then a discussion facilitated by the co-organizers. This panel will be fruitful for the student, teacher, and scholar of Latin song and will demonstrate valuable pedagogical tools informed by trends in Latin philology, pedagogy, and reception.