

TEACHING CLASSICAL LANGUAGES

AN ONLINE JOURNAL OF THE CLASSICAL ASSOCIATION
OF THE MIDDLE WEST AND SOUTH

FEATURES

Student-Created Editions of Latin Texts

Thomas Hendrickson

Anna Pisarello

ARTICLES

Voices from Below: A Multivocal Approach to Teaching Petronius' *Satyrica*

Rhodora G. Vennarucci and Joy Reeber

Teaching Outside the Box of Classical Languages: A Diverse Curriculum for Diverse Learners

Nathalie Roy

The Polis Method: Towards an Integrative and Dynamic Language Teaching Method

Robert Z. Cortes and Christophe Rico

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Teaching Classical Languages (ISSN 2160-2220) is the only peer-reviewed electronic journal dedicated to the teaching and learning of Latin and ancient Greek. It addresses the interests of all Latin and Greek teachers, graduate students, coordinators, and administrators. Teaching Classical Languages welcomes articles offering innovative practice and methods, advocating new theoretical approaches, or reporting on empirical research in teaching and learning Latin and Greek. As an electronic journal, Teaching Classical Languages has a unique global outreach. It offers authors and readers a multimedia format that more fully illustrates the topics discussed, and provides hypermedia links to related information and websites. Articles not only contribute to successful Latin and Greek pedagogy, but draw on relevant literature in language education, applied linguistics, and second language acquisition for an ongoing dialogue with modern language educators. Teaching Classical Languages welcomes articles offering innovative practice and methods, advocating new theoretical approaches, or reporting on empirical research in teaching and learning Latin and Greek.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Welcome to issue 13.1 of Teaching Classical Languages.

This issue's feature story honors the 2022 Winner of the Ladislaus Bolchazy Pedagogy Book Award, *The Passion of Perpetua*. The commentary was written by students at the Stanford Online High School, under the guidance of their teachers, Thomas Hendrickson and Anna Pisarello. We have invited Tom and Anna to share their method and perspectives in this feature story for TCL.

Further, in this issue we offer three articles that argue for making Greek and Latin classrooms more inclusive, whether it be by representing more female voices to students (Vennarucci and Reeber), by using experiential and project-based learning to introduce ancient STEM (Roy), or by immersing students in ancient Greek (Cortes and Rico).

With this issue we also welcome new Editorial Assistant Katie Alfullis-Rayburn to TCL. Katie also works with CAMWS Secretary-Treasurer T. Davina McClain as the Administrative Assistant for CAMWS, in the home office in Natchitoches, Louisiana. Katie's background in professional and technical writing, as well as her Master's in TESOL, make her an excellent fit for this position, and we are lucky to have her with us.

Voices from Below: A Multivocal Approach to Teaching Petronius' *Satyrica*¹

Rhodora G. Vennarucci and Joy Reeber
University of Arkansas

ABSTRACT

This article outlines a multivocal approach to teaching Petronius' *Satyrica* in intermediate Latin at the college level. By blending dialogism and critical literacy with GTM, we demonstrate how to use a standard Latin text to push back on the traditionally negative view of freedpeople in ancient literature and modern scholarship. We facilitate egalitarian dialogue and subversive talk in the classroom to center student voices alongside those of the freedpeople in the novel to challenge the authoritative voices of author, narrator, and editor. Students also complete active learning assignments that are designed to foster their voice and a critical examination of past and present social inequalities from diverse perspectives. This results in a deeper understanding of how different groups in Roman society used language to construct status and identity and prepares students for interrogating power structures in other Latin texts. A multivocal approach to Latin learning is more inclusive of diverse students and successful at improving student engagement and investment in the language, but another goal of this approach is to enhance our students' respect for difference, a concept we hope they carry with them beyond our classroom and into society.

KEYWORDS

intermediate Latin, multivocality, freedpeople, Petronius, translation, epigraphy, composition

¹ Rhodora G. Vennarucci presented a version of this paper at the 116th annual meeting of the Classical Association of the Midwest and South, March 26-30, 2020. The authors gratefully acknowledge their students, with special thanks to those students who agreed to share their work in this article, as well as Daniel Levine and Joey Williams for their encouragement and constructive feedback on an early draft of the manuscript. We also appreciate and thank the two anonymous reviewers for their valuable comments and suggestions, which helped strengthen the quality of the article. The exploration and implementation of the pedagogical approach outlined in this article would not have been possible without the support of our colleagues in Classical Studies at the University of Arkansas, especially David Fredrick, who graciously shared materials from his Roman Comedy class to help emphasize the continuing relevance of our pedagogical method.

INTRODUCTION

The goals of our Latin program at the University of Arkansas are for students to develop proficiency with the Latin language and an appreciation of Roman cultural perspectives, practices, and products (*Standards for Classical Language Learning*). We recognize, however, that language learning is not a neutral or apolitical process (e.g., Freire) and that Latin's history is problematic (e.g., Bostick 2020, Brockliss, Ryan, Churchill, Macewen). If language is a cultural product (Gleason), then Latin has the power to (re)produce social realities and injustices that shape the way its practitioners, both past and present, experience and read the world around them (e.g., McLaren and Giroux; McLaren and Hammer 40). In learning Latin, our students engage in cross-cultural perspective learning that *should* foster a critical consciousness of how linguistic, sociohistorical, and political forces act on their own culture and cultural identities (e.g., Osborn, Omaggio 345-346). As educators, we feel that we have a responsibility to help our students connect the Latin word with their world (Freire and Macedo) through a social justice lens (Gruber-Miller 2017). To accomplish this, we adopt a critical language pedagogy (CLP) in our third-semester intermediate Latin prose course that fosters multivocality by centering marginalized voices throughout our study of Petronius' *Satyrca*.

Within CLP, multivocality focuses on dialogism and the inclusion of multiple voices in language teaching and learning as a means for enacting social

transformation (e.g., Domakani and Mirzaei, Akbari). The Roman Empire was multicultural and multilingual (e.g., Gruen 2) and the Latin language itself encompasses a great deal of “linguistic and social pluralism” (Farrell xii). Be that as it may, the traditional canon of Latin literary texts offers students limited subject positions – freeborn, male, educated, elite or elite-adjacent – that have historically worked to oppress and exclude others’ voices in society (e.g., Bostick 2020, 290-91; Brockliss 129). If curriculum is a symbolic form of representation (Pinar et al.), the structured silences of women, BIPOC, the disabled, and economically disadvantaged in the traditional curriculum negatively impact our most vulnerable students’ conception of self (e.g., Bostick 2020, 295-96; Churchill 89). This lack of diversity also limits our ability as educators to empower all our students to effectively communicate in a multicultural and global society.

Multivocality is more visible in English language teaching where CLP is better established, but the approach is not new to Latin (e.g., Farrell’s model for “polyglossic” Latin), and the *Satyricon* is particularly well suited for a multivocal approach since it is a dialogic work (Bakhtin 1981, 26-27) that includes diverse perspectives, especially from freedpeople. Ultimately, these freedpeople were a literary construct. Their perspectives in the novel must be filtered through the double lens of an elite author (Petronius) and presumably freeborn narrator (Encolpius); and consequently, they do not represent accurate viewpoints of freedpeople in Roman society (Joshel 2010, 13-14, 215). Much to the contrary,

Petronius appropriated the experiences of the formerly enslaved to create entertaining social commentary, which was consumed by an audience of predominantly elite freeborn enslavers (MacLean 81-86). This highlights the difficulty teachers face in promoting an emic approach to studying sub-elite and socially marginalized groups in standard Latin texts (Rankine 271, Chew 59). The *Satyrica* may not record the subjective, historical voices of the enslaved and formerly enslaved in Roman society, but we can use the novel to teach students how to recover the “hidden transcript” beneath the dominant discourse in the text to demonstrate what strategies freedpeople may have employed when negotiating their status (for the application of public transcript theory to Roman slavery see e.g., Joshel and Hackworth Petersen 6-8, 13-17). The high visibility of epigraphy in the text, especially in the *Cena Trimalchionis* section, provides another way “in” to freedpeople culture (for a discussion of freedpeople culture and epigraphy see MacLean and Mouritsen 279-299). By comparing the ways freedpeople used Latin to self-fashion in the epigraphic record to their representation in the *Satyrica*, we can read against the author’s elite rhetoric with the voices of the formerly enslaved from below. As Rose MacLean argues, “Petronian satire is a fairly reliable indicator of what aristocrats in the first century CE knew about freed slaves’ commemorative culture,” and as such, if we read the literary freedpeople as “a composite of historical practices, elite assumptions, and Petronius’ own contributions,” we can

help students discern some of the strategies for status negotiation freedpeople employed that can be corroborated in the material record (81-82).

Our choice to focus on the dynamic intersection of social status, power, and agency is in part dictated by a central theme in the novel reflected in the *Cena Trimalchionis* episode. The dinner party is a satirical exploration of the conflicts and anxieties caused by the social mobility of freedpeople in Roman society. Such an exploration requires us to confront the sensitive topic of slavery with our students, which is inextricably entwined with constructs of race and ethnicity in the American classroom (e.g., Dugan 76, Bostick 2018, duBois). Although ancient slavery was not racialized, it is important for students to understand how contemporary racial ideologies continue to shape the ways in which we interpret the past (McCoskey). Specifically relevant for this course, scientific racism and the institution of slavery in America contribute to lasting negative stereotypes of freedpeople in modern scholarship – stereotypes that seem corroborated, and therefore legitimized, by Petronius' characterization of the group in the past (Mouritsen 1-9). Moreover, the fact that Petronius gave the freedpeople in his novel Eastern origins (e.g., Horsfall 1989a, 75) and included Graecisms in their language, one of the signifiers of their servile origins (Schmeling xxviii), suggests that ethnicity was entangled with Roman conceptions of slavery. In the *Satyrica*, slavery also intersects with subject matter related to gender and sex(uality), prompting

difficult conversations about rape and pederasty (for approaches to teaching these topics see e.g., James).

We appreciate the complexities and risks involved with two heterosexual, cis-gendered white women leading discussions on issues of oppression and marginality that we have not ourselves personally experienced. We risk feeling like imposters, and we risk our own potential discomfort when the topics we teach force us to confront our positions of privilege in the classroom. Our classrooms are mostly comprised of white students from predominantly white suburban and rural areas.² Engaging these students in conversations, some for the first time, about slavery, race, and political power, and asking them to connect these topics to current social issues makes some uncomfortable. We subscribe to the belief that “discomfort is a catalyst for growth,” but as pre-tenured and contingent faculty members, an uncomfortable student could negatively impact our course evaluations, which factor into our annual merit reviews and considerations for promotion. By way of example, after Rhodora Vennarucci started more intentionally implementing CLP in her elementary Latin courses, a student wrote on their spring 2021 course evaluation: “There were a few moments where the lesson took on very political undertones, which I was not super comfortable with.”

² Following the national trend, our Classical language courses lack ethnic diversity. This may be impacted in part by the fact that the ethnic diversity of students at our university is 72.7% white, but it is also an effect of how Latin, and Classics more generally, has been structured as a curriculum of whiteness (e.g., Bostick 2020, Rankine, Kennedy, Barnard, Haley).

By teaching at a public land-grant institution in a state whose legislature has attempted to pass [bills banning the teaching of “divisive topics” in higher education](#), we could also face censure if someone (student, parent of a student, colleague) were to complain to our administration about our courses.

What do we risk by avoiding sensitive topics when teaching the *Satyrice*? Censoring discussions of slavery, race, ethnicity, gender, and rape contributes to the silencing of vulnerable groups in the past and it perpetuates the marginalization of vulnerable groups in the present. An uncritical reading of the *Satyrice* that fails to address the complex, horrific reality of ancient slavery re-exploits the oppression of the enslaved as a form of humorous entertainment (see below) and perpetuates problematic stereotypes of freedpeople alongside a sanitized narrative of ancient slavery and manumission in the minds of the students (e.g., Dugan). Instead, our course attempts to confront the sensitive topic of ancient slavery through a critical reading of the text, discussion, and creative activities that center the voices of the formerly enslaved as a strategy for building cultural empathy for the socially excluded. More, by helping our students understand how modern racial ideologies have shaped our approaches to the *Satyrice*, and the study of ancient slavery and freedpeople culture more broadly, we hope to foster deeper reflection on how power and social structures created and continue to create inequalities and injustices. As a balance to the discussions of victimization, this course also highlights the agency, achievements, and cultural artifacts of freedpeople culture. Discovering that

agency, however, is never an excuse for the violence and exploitation this group experienced in Roman society.

In the first section of this paper, we share our multivocal approach to teaching Petronius in an intermediate Latin prose course. The second section describes three active learning activities designed to center the voices and experiences of freedpeople.³ These activities are designed to highlight the role language has in the construction and negotiation of status and identity. To underscore the reciprocal relationship between improved social awareness and enhanced language skills, our discussion of the activities cites relevant goals and outcomes from the *Standards for Classical Language Learning*. This multivocal approach developed from a five-year collaboration (2015-2020) teaching intermediate Latin together at the college level, as well as our shared commitment to improving equity and inclusion in Latin education. We have adopted CLP as a way of doing, learning, and teaching (Canagarajah 932) in the belief that Latin learning has the potential to empower all students when marginalized voices are elevated both inside and outside the classroom. To this end, this approach is complementary to multicultural (with emphasis on race and ethnicity), anti-racist, feminist, and queer pedagogies. Minor details in our syllabi and classroom

³ The first activity was designed by Reeber; the second and third activities were designed by Vennarucci. We both regularly use assignments one and three in our courses; however, assignment two was recently adopted by both professors.

management styles may differ, but we have streamlined our general course structure, requirements, assessments, and learning outcomes. Original student work as well as links to the three activities under discussion are included in this paper.⁴ Since this is our students' first introduction to reading a piece of Latin literature, this course acts as a framework to prepare them to critically engage with dominant discourse in the texts they encounter in advanced Latin courses.

TOWARD A MULTIVOCAL APPROACH TO TEACHING THE *SATYRICA*

Multivocality does not require a radical revision of teaching methods and materials, but more a shift in perspective of how and what we teach. Although Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theory may be changing how Latin teachers, especially at the secondary school level, approach language teaching (e.g., Carlon 2013 and Patrick), the Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) is still the conventional method at the college level (Piantaggini 92).⁵ Like so many Latin instructors teaching at colleges/universities, we were not taught language pedagogy

⁴ Student work is taken from the intermediate Latin classes taught by the authors between 2015 and 2020. All original student work is included here with the student's permission.

⁵ A lot of innovative Latin pedagogy is happening at the secondary school level, and college instructors would benefit from better communication with their secondary school colleagues. See Traill et al. for models of successful collaborations. Vennarucci has taken an active role in building cooperation between University of Arkansas' Classics Program and Thaden School's Latin and Classics faculty. In 2020 she helped organize a campus visit (canceled due to Covid) and led a two-part virtual archaeology workshop for Thaden's students. Her Thaden colleagues have been generous in offering her advice and teaching materials for incorporating spoken Latin into her elementary classes, and she attended a Spoken Latin group meeting at Thaden in 2021.

in our PhD programs, and our approach to language teaching was largely informed by how we were taught Latin using the GTM method. GTM's focus on teaching grammatical rules and vocabulary quickly also lends itself to one of the big challenges we face in our Latin program: how to prepare students with no prior knowledge of the language to read a complicated Latin text like the *Satyrica* in their third semester.⁶

The GTM method has, however, come under criticism in the last few decades as an exclusionary and ineffective way of teaching languages (L2: esp., Richards and Rodgers 6-7, Brown 26-27, Omaggio 106-108; Latin: Piantaggini, Bracey). To approach Latin learning as a primarily cognitive activity accessible only through the rote memorization of vocabulary, paradigms, and grammatical forms neutralizes and decontextualizes the language, leaving little space for developing personal investment or social and intercultural awareness (see Akbari for a discussion of this in ELT). In defense of a more comprehensive approach, John Gruber-Miller (2016) argues:

Language learning is not just about grammar and vocabulary, reading and translating, or practicing forms, but it is about communicating meaning. Sharing ideas, experiences, stories, beliefs, and values come first. (21)

⁶ Note that our elementary and intermediate Latin classes only meet three times a week for 50-minute sessions, a total of 150 minutes/week.

Teaching Latin as a communicative language requires that communication be at the center of the learning experience. GTM, in contrast, is grounded in the initiation-response-feedback exchange (IRF) that can contribute to a defensive learning environment: the teacher asks questions anticipating correct student responses, correcting students' errors if right answers are not provided (Omaggio 107). In this way, students struggling to master complex grammar rules can feel inadequate, frustrated, or bored. This emphasis on accuracy over fluency also reinforces a monologic and authoritative discourse in the classroom, in which the teacher is the voice of authority, and the students are passive recipients of knowledge ("banking concept of education": Freire 71-73; Latin teaching methods tend to be teacher-centric: Ryan 109-110). Talk is the foundation of literacy, and it is through talk that students are empowered to express their voice in the learning community (Ranson 268). Yet the GTM approach has the potential to sideline student voices, making it difficult for low-income, first-generation, and ethnic minority students to exercise agency in their learning process (see Mehan and Cazden). As a result, the uncritical adoption of GTM in Latin teaching can unintentionally perpetuate the social exclusion of disadvantaged students.⁷

⁷ Lockey has pointed out that "(a)ny pedagogical approach, however, can be exclusionary in the wrong hands, and Classics has traditionally had a lot of wrong hands, reinforcing old messages of white superiority, happy slaves, and rape narratives disguised as love stories."

The aim of dialogic teaching, in comparison, is to democratize student-teacher interactions by using dialogue in effective ways (García-Carrión et al., Alexander 2020 and 2008). According to Neil Mercer and Christine Howe, dialogue refers to a “form of conversation in which the ideas of the various participants are heard, taken up and jointly considered” (14). In dialogic teaching, educators guide the development of student voice and create opportunities for student discourse that lead to the co-construction of knowledge through question-posing (Freire 79-86) and exploratory talk (Mercer and Howe 16). As students find their voice in the classroom, they are empowered to express their diverse perspectives, values, and ideas in egalitarian dialogue, enhancing social inclusion, especially significant for students from groups that typically lack agency in society (García-Carrión et al. 3). Students expand their perspectives and respect for difference through dialogue, which can transfer into social agency in the public sphere (Ranson). Research has shown that a dialogic approach to language teaching increases students’ language and communication skills alongside their critical thinking abilities (e.g., García-Carrión et al. 6-7).

A major restriction in the application of a purely dialogic approach in Latin language teaching is the concern of how to balance teaching students the mechanical and technical aspects of the language, which are important for communication, while also promoting their critical and cultural awareness through discussion of the texts. Following in the footsteps of a growing number of Latin

teachers, especially at the secondary school level, we adopt a combined approach that blends the strengths of GTM (i.e., mental discipline through memorization and logic skills, enhanced reading and writing skills, building vocabulary) and the dialogic method (i.e., enhanced communication skills, student agency and engagement, critical thinking).⁸ We believe in the value of teaching grammar as a key component of Latin literacy, but we also realize that literacy is not just about decoding a text, and that the meaning of a text cannot be understood through a structured set of grammatical rules alone (Alford 2).

We set the groundwork for this combined approach in our elementary courses, which both authors regularly teach. The textbook we use, *Disce!* (Kitchell and Sienkewicz), frames itself as a combination of GTM, Reading Method, and Comprehensible Input Method and has a rich cultural component for opening discussions on aspects of Roman culture, including sensitive topics like the exploitation of the enslaved and freedpeople in Roman society. The textbook also incorporates inscriptions into the connected narrative and cultural sections. Our teaching methods in elementary Latin mix vocabulary and paradigm memorization, grammar lessons and exercises, cultural lessons and discussion, translation, games, and technology to create an interactive introduction to the language. As a result, the

⁸ See van den Arend's recent reframing of the debate between traditional GTM methods and more recent SLA pedagogies as a marriage and compromise between strategies. See also Deagon (esp. 34-36) on the importance of diversifying teaching methods in the Latin classroom.

students who take elementary Latin with us enter our intermediate course with a solid introduction to Latin vocabulary, grammar, and syntax, some grounding in Roman culture and experience talking about sensitive topics with us, and an exposure to epigraphy.

In our intermediate Latin course, we spend part of our class time working through the translation of the assigned reading (ca. 30 lines per class) as a group. This activity does involve some IRF to test grammar knowledge although we try to keep the correction process student-focused by guiding them to the correct answer instead of supplying it (Carlson 2013, 111). The goal of literal translation work is to help our students understand how Latin and English operate, and differ, as modes of communication. This is crucial if we want students to interrogate the role language has in constructing status, power relationships and cultural identities.

Language learning is, however, a discursive and social as well as cognitive practice. To this end, our bottom-up processing at the semantic and syntactic level is grounded in discussion over the meaning of the text, which requires top-down processing (Gruber-Miller 2004, 206-207 and Carlson 2015, 139). Discussion allows for us to introduce challenging sociopolitical issues underlying the main themes and conflicts within the *Satyrica* (e.g., slavery, race and ethnicity, gender, sex and sexuality, sexual and structural violence, death). As stated in the introduction, teaching sensitive subject matter is often complicated and comes with certain risks. To prepare ourselves for these challenges, we do the work. We

continue to examine our own privileges, read scholarship on the topics we tackle, talk with our colleagues and friends about how to teach these topics, participate in teaching workshops, and serve on committees related to diversity, equity, and inclusion. To prepare our students, we provide content warnings in the syllabus as well as in the introduction to our course, and we clearly lay out our expectations for how to discuss sensitive material respectfully. Moreover, we give students content warnings before sections with potentially triggering material to reduce the risk of (re)traumatizing a student. Students are encouraged to reach out to us to talk through any of their concerns about the material in the course, and those that do are given the option to “opt out” of translating passages or discussing material that might be too distressing for them. In our experience, the vast majority of students are willing to participate, and the few who have requested accommodations have done so for content related to rape and pederasty.

We work to establish a safe, inclusive, and collaborative learning environment in the classroom to foster student-initiated questions and participation in group discussions. Getting to know our students, their cultural backgrounds, prior knowledge, abilities, and academic goals is another important aspect of our approach. This work starts on the first day of class when we ask students to provide their preferred name, gender pronouns, and language abilities. Our students’ personal experiences inform how they approach and receive the material we teach, which is why we try to include and affirm their diverse stories in class (McLaren

and Hammer 55-56). This strategy promotes a trusting, egalitarian group dynamic in which students feel comfortable engaging with the challenging topics we confront (Macewen). By virtue of our small Latin program, the majority of our intermediate students have also taken elementary Latin with us, providing us with both personal and academic insights into our students that help us structure and steer discussions for productive dialogue and minimal conflict.

Although we facilitate these classroom discussions, we are self-critical of our own positionality within the dominant culture that Latin has historically legitimized (In Chae). Our perspectives and experiences are often quite different from that of our students, many of whom are economically disadvantaged, veteran, rural, and/or first-generation students. For this reason, a dialogic approach to teaching Latin helps overturn the established hierarchy in the classroom by decentering our voices as authorities to augment the diverse voices of our students so that we can all learn together. Our goal is to treat students as both partners and individuals in the learning process by addressing each of their needs and empowering each of them to maximize their potential. Such investment can be emotional and time consuming, but also rewarding. By situating their language learning in their own personal experiences, Latin becomes more relevant, more meaningful, and more interesting for the students, which has a positive correlation with their language acquisition and our retention rates. In addition to group discussion, students complete four active learning assignments, three of which will

be discussed here, designed to develop student voice by promoting their critical reflection on issues of status and power in Roman society (also see how Churchill uses journals to nurture student voice in the Latin classroom).⁹ These assignments are set beside more traditional translation exams and a diagnostic test that together assess the students' reading fluency.¹⁰

SUBVERSIVE TALK IN THE LATIN CLASSROOM

Part of our multivocal approach to teaching Latin involves critical literacy (McLaren and Giroux 34-38) or critical examination of “the cultural and ideological assumptions that underwrite texts” (Morgan 1) through dialogic problem posing (Freire 79-86) and subversive talk (Alford 2). In our intermediate Latin prose course, we help our students reflect both on how Petronius' novel exhibits social struggles in ancient Rome and how the modern editor's framing of the text via commentary might illuminate contemporary social issues. The course focuses on the translation of the *Cena Trimalchionis* episode in Gilbert Lawall's *Petronius*:

⁹ The fourth activity is not discussed in this paper but involves researching and preparing a Roman recipe to share with the class, as well as composing a Roman dinner menu in Latin. The activity was designed by Vennarucci. The multisensorial activity provides a memorable encounter with Roman culture that helps students contextualize what they are reading in the *Cena Trimalchionis*. Assigned early in the semester, the activity also contributes to establishing a positive, inclusive group dynamic within the classroom, as the students come together to taste test each other's dishes during an in-class feast. See Albright for detailed discussion of *convivium* in the Latin classroom.

¹⁰ See below n. 22.

Selections from the Satyrice.¹¹ The book includes facing vocabulary and generous commentary on grammar and syntax underneath the passages to ease the transition from elementary into intermediate Latin. The notes include, in addition, comments on cultural practices described in the text and often reference comparative passages from other Roman authors. In our experience, the book's design helps our students build confidence in their reading abilities: we start the semester off slow, reading ca. 10 lines per class, and end the semester with 30-35 lines.

The fact that the material in Lawall's edition was compiled with the help of his Latin students at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst in 1974 makes the book an example of dialogic practice, the co-construction of knowledge between teacher and students (Lawall xiv). Even so, Lawall's edition is not without unconscious biases that reinforce the perspectives of elite Roman slaveowners and perpetuate negative stereotypes of freedpeople as "damaged" and damaging to society (see Mouritsen 2-4). He joins a group of scholars, for instance, who view the *Satyrice* as "one of the few works of ancient Roman literature that one reads simply for pleasure" (iv). Victoria Rimell has noted that within this viewpoint "there lurk tones of self-exculpation and denial: in each analysis the 'comic' is made to efface the 'serious', the political, and the problematic, as if laughter were always a barometer of pleasure, not pain" (4). To enjoy the hilarity of social class

¹¹ Lawall's edition is based partly on Müller's and Smith's editions of the *Satyrice*.

stereotypes and ethnic caricatures, students must embody the perspectives of the freeborn narrator Encolpius, elite author Petronius, and assumed elite Roman reader, all likely enslavers who benefited from the oppression of the objects of their laughter (Ramsby 69).

As the editor of the text, Lawall's voice carries authority for the students. This authority becomes problematic when his cultural commentary works subtly to align students with the subject position of the privileged ruling classes in Roman society. For example, at the start of the *Cena Trimalchionis*, he calls attention to "Trimalchio's *uneducated* judgment" (our emphasis) in including a depiction of a gladiatorial show alongside scenes from the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* in his atrium (39, *Sat.* 29.9).¹² The implicit suggestion made to the student is that while Homeric scenes were proper themes for decoration in an "educated" (read "cultured elite") Roman's house, gladiatorial scenes were gauche despite archaeological evidence that confirms their widespread popularity.¹³ Lawall (121 n.37, *Sat.* 48) repeats the

¹² Like Lawall, Courtney's commentary on this passage also seems to reflect traditional attitudes of the Roman elite when he calls the juxtaposition of Homeric scenes with a gladiatorial show in Trimalchio's atrium a "mixture of vulgar enthusiasm and pretensions to culture" (79).

¹³ Horsfall (1989a, 84-85) discusses the multiple examples of gladiatorial imagery within the *Cena Trimalchionis* (fresco: *Sat.* 29.9; embossed cups: 52.3; lamps: 45.11; tomb: 72.6), which have all been attested in the archaeological record and discovered in structures with functions ranging from shops to shrines to elite residences, signaling the popularity of spectacle at all levels of Roman society. At Pompeii, for instance, see the recently discovered realistic fresco of gladiatorial combat in a tavern (V.8), gladiators decorating the tomb of the *aedile* C. Vestorius Priscus outside Pompeii (75-76 CE), gladiators painted on a shrine in the House of the Red Wall (VIII.5.37), and the fresco commemorating the local amphitheater riot in 59 CE in the House of Actius Anicetus (I.3.23, ca. 59 CE). Note that scholars have long assumed that the commissioner of the riot fresco was a freedman

insult later in the text, commenting that “the *uneducated* Trimalchio displays his *ignorance*” (our emphasis) when he claims to have read in Homer how the Cyclops dislocated his thumb in his encounter with Odysseus. Here Lawall invites the “educated” Classics student to join the freeborn *scholastici* at the dinner in snickering at the freedpeople’s literary and linguistic blunders.¹⁴ Such a student may enjoy a sense of intellectual superiority for catching Trimalchio “as he garbles even the most familiar mythological tale” (*ibid*). The joke is on Trimalchio but, of course, the joke is also inevitably directed at any student unfamiliar with Book 9 of the *Odyssey*, who may suddenly feel “othered” or “uneducated” for not recognizing the reference or catching the “mistake”.¹⁵ While understated and likely unintentional, the ignorance shaming – in which we ourselves are guilty of having previously participated – reflected in Lawall’s comments fuels the elitist and exclusionary reputation that plagues Classics as a discipline (e.g., Ryan 99). Such discourse can have a harmful impact on students, especially students already

in part because of passages like this one in the *Satyrical*. Elite biases in the text are adopted by scholars, who then interpret the archaeological record through an elite lens.

¹⁴ Later in the dinner, for example, when the freedman Niceros expresses concern at sharing his ghost story with the guests: *Itaque hilaria mera sint, etsi timeo istos scholasticos, ne me rideant*. (And so, let’s get this party started even though I worry about those liberal elite types sneering at me. Lawall 127, *Sat.* 61)

¹⁵ It is possible that Petronius put an alternative tradition in the mouth of Trimalchio, as are sometimes preserved in Greek vase paintings. Petronius depicts his freedpeople as well versed in parables, folklore, and popular tales that were sub-literary or even part of an oral tradition (Horsfall 1989b). See also Bakhtin 1981 (221-224) on the folkloric bases in the *Satyrical*. Despite Schmeling’s claim that this episode indicates Trimalchio “knows less Homer than an average upper-class schoolchild” (206), the joke, in our experience, is often lost on many of our students, who enter our Latin program with little to no exposure to Homer.

subject to social exclusion, who may develop negative or passive attitudes toward the target language and be less likely to contribute to class discussions (Galmiche).

By encouraging and modeling subversive talk, students feel empowered to challenge the elite viewpoints in both text and editor's commentary that risk reproducing in the classroom the social marginalization experienced by freedpeople in the text. The goal here is not to cancel Petronius or Lawall from our curriculum, whose works we value for sparking critical dialogue. As one of our students so aptly characterized him, Trimalchio is "extra" and his eccentric behavior, however grounded in the realities of freedperson culture it may be (Horsfall 1989a and 1989b), is exaggerated to elicit laughter. So, let's laugh! Then by re-centering on the voices of the socially excluded, we explore "counter-discourses" or "resistant subject positions" to the dominant power structures in the text, producing new understanding (McLaren and Giroux, García-Carrión et al. 5). We ask why Trimalchio, whom we would characterize as semi-educated, chooses to advertise his (unorthodox) knowledge of Homer both in the decoration of his house and through his dinner conversation. Such problem-posing moves us toward a productive discussion about the complex construction of knowledge and issues of access to education and cultural capital in Roman society, issues that find parallels in the gatekeeping and elitism inherent in Classics today. In the process, our students learn to identify – and enjoy – the absurdities in the text while also

recognizing the satirical portrayal of the lower classes as an ideological tool justifying the marginalization of enslaved and freedpeople in ancient society.

“ME TALK PRETTY ONE DAY”: TRANSLATING FREEDPEOPLE

SPEECH

The dialogue at the center of the *Cena Trimalchonis* represents a polyphony of unmerged voices and independent consciousnesses (see Bakhtin 1984 for his theory of polyphony). In this episode, the author Petronius’ voice is decentered, and the narrator Encolpius becomes a passive observer, while the freedpeople almost seem to speak for themselves. When they speak, they frequently use Graecisms, idioms, and colloquialisms that are viewed as linguistic signifiers of their servile background and ethnic origins (e.g., Schmeling xxviii; on the Eastern origins of freedpeople in the novel see Horsfall 1989a, 75). In his introduction, Lawall refers to the Latin dialect spoken by the freedpeople as “vulgar,” not in a pejorative sense, but because it was the language of the common people (v). When he compares freedpeople speech to the “urbane and cultivated” Latin of the educated elite and the “elevated, stylized literary Latin,” it is difficult not to hear the latent judgment in the term – our students certainly do. This judgment is made clearer by Lawall’s commentary, when, for instance, he calls attention to the “colloquial abuse of diminutives” (*valde audaculum*: 147, *Sat.* 63) in Trimalchio’s speech, but not in the narrative told by the educated Eumolpus (*cenulam*, 213, *Sat.* 111). Freedmen

speech that departs from “standard” Latin is flagged by Lawall as “vulgar Latin” (passim) or, sometimes more disparagingly as “vulgar confusion” (*fui...in funus = in funere*: 69, *Sat.* 42) or “incorrect (vulgar) use” (*sibi = ei*: 73, *Sat.* 43). Qualifying freedpeople’s speech as “vulgar” risks invalidating their voices in the text and serves to reinforce harmful colonialist ideas about “correct” and “incorrect” ways of speaking that our students may internalize.¹⁶ The distinction of “vulgar” from “elevated” also reflects the traditional approach to teaching Classical Latin as the golden standard in the classroom, as if the Latin language reached its peak in the second and first centuries BCE and any departure from this style represents a diluted or erroneous version of the language. We do not suggest that these linguistic differences should be ignored – quite the opposite. Petronius’ work is valuable because it characterizes Latin as a dynamic, living language and preserves different, even competing, linguistic histories that reflect the diversity of the languages’ practitioners (e.g., Schmeling xxvi-xxviii). In discussing how dialect diversity constructs social identity in Latin and in English, we use the following translation assignment to push back against viewing freedpeople speech as flawed or lesser, presenting it to our students instead as a valid alternative mode of expression.

¹⁶ See issues of Black linguistic racism in our own society (e.g., Baker-Bell). The promotion of White Mainstream English as the standard for “academic language” and the constant policing of Black Language (and other minority dialects and regional accents) by teachers in the classroom instills the belief in students that there is something wrong or lesser about their native languages.

[Anima in naso or 'spirit loogie?' Direct vs. Colloquial Translations](#)

This assignment is introduced when we arrive at Lawall's "Table Talk" section (66-110, *Sat.* 41-46), a dialogic episode of freedpeople conversations at the dinner party, and aims to do the following:

1. Exercise students' grammar and translation skills by asking them to produce a literal translation of a Latin passage. (*Standards:* Communication-Interpretive Reading)
2. Assess students' reading comprehension by asking them to produce a colloquial translation of the same passage for a modern 21st century audience that reflects cultural understanding of the text and freedman character. (*Standards:* Comparisons-Language; Comparisons-Cultural)
3. Encourage students to reflect critically on the ways in which Latin authors and English translators use dialect to construct social status and identity. (*Standards:* Comparisons-Language; Comparisons-Cultural)
4. Encourage students to consider diverse perspectives on how to interpret and translate Latin texts and communicate meaning between languages and cultures (*Standards:* Connections-Acquiring Information and Diverse Perspectives).
5. Validate student voice by empowering them to use their own individual modes of expression in the classroom: i.e., freedom to depart drastically from standard "academic language."

6. Raise student awareness of the imperialistic influences in the ways we teach dominant versions of Latin and English in the classroom.

In preparing for this assignment, we assign relevant sections in Sarah Ruden's updated translation of the *Satyricon* and we have recently added Johanna Hanink's "The Twists and Turns of Translation." Taken together, these supplementary readings prime students to look at and think about the differences between the grammar-focused 'translations' we produce in class and the polished translations these authors compose for a contemporary audience. We then ask students to select a short passage (8-10 lines) from one of the freedmen's speeches; since we are currently reading these sections together in class, students could revisit a read passage for more in-depth study on their own. The students must provide two translations of their passage: one literal, clunky translation that stays as true as possible to the Latin grammar, and one colloquial translation, usually one crafted for a 21st century audience of their peers. In their colloquial translations, students are welcome to attempt any broadly idiomatic way of speaking, as long as it does not negatively caricature a group in society, and we encourage them to update Latin metaphors and phrasing by using current expressions and their own slang. More recently we have also invited students to create or adapt relevant internet memes, a form of public discourse that is often subversive. This acknowledges that current students' use of language, especially vis-à-vis slang, is not always familiar to us, and that meaning is often conveyed not only textually but visually.

Students enter a dialogic process through this translation assignment that involves the conflation of the student translator's voice, the author's voice, and the character's voice to create new meaning for the text (Kumar 9). It actively engages students in communication between ancient Rome and our own time, or more exactly between the linguistic culture of the freedmen (as represented in the text) and the students' own linguistic communities (Bakhtin 1986, 106), alternatives to the dominant versions of Classical Latin and academic English taught as standard. Additionally, the assignment is designed to get students thinking critically about how or why an author (here Petronius) might choose to use 'nonstandard' speech when creating a character (here freedperson). A better understanding of authorial choice helps our students recognize and question the dominant discourse in the text. One of the great strengths of this assignment is that it empowers student voice by inverting the traditional social hierarchy in the Latin classroom. Students assume the authority of translator but also of teacher since they are explicitly asked to explain new idioms and current slang to us, their professors, who are often out of the language loop. We share the students' colloquial translations with the class, which, when compared to one another, highlights a diversity of approaches to interpreting Latin, textual meaning, and Roman culture (Hanink).

Students thoroughly enjoy this assignment, often commenting on it specifically in their course evaluations. They find it deliciously subversive and refreshing to have permission to use "real life" language (including expletives) in

a college classroom. The colloquial translations we receive are often uproarious and reflect sophisticated cultural awareness of the freedpeople's expressions, meanings, and tone from the text. The following link provides examples of unedited students' translations ([example student translations](#)).

I HEAR DEAD PEOPLE: FREEDPEOPLE EPITAPHS AS COUNTER-DISCOURSE

The *Cena Trimalchionis* contains the largest number of references to writing (No. 31, Nelis-Clément and Nelis), 20 of which can be categorized as epigraphic texts based on the materiality of the text/writing method described or allusions to epigraphy (see Ramsby, Beard, Tremoli). The frequency and variety of contexts in which inscriptions appear in this episode may reflect a rise in literacy and the development of the “epigraphic habit” in Roman culture during the first century CE. It also suggests that socially marginalized freedpeople embraced the “epigraphic habit” because it provided them beneficial new forms of public self-representation (e.g., Nelis-Clément and Nelis 1-2; on “epigraphic habit” see Beltrán Lloris, MacMullen); in a sense this is not unlike the students who study Latin at least in part as cultural self-fashioning. The epigraphic texts in the novel have, unfortunately, been condescendingly dismissed as uproarious parodies of the “self-made, ignorant, rich vulgar” freedpeople’s “shameless” self-promotion (Horsfall 1989a, 74; Ramsby 67), reflecting how deeply rooted this group’s negative image

is in modern scholarship. The links between the epigraphy in the text and the archaeological record authenticates to a certain extent Petronius' depiction of how freedpeople used epigraphy to their advantage in Roman society, a fact that has encouraged a bottom-up reassessment of freedpeople culture within the novel (e.g., Horsfall 1989a, 74-76, Ramsby, Bodel 1994, Skinner) and in Roman society more broadly (Mouritsen). Mary Beard, in fact, in referencing Trimalchio's tomb design, which has been lambasted by scholars as a bougie, outlandish monstrosity, suggests that Petronius' cunning is really in forcing his reader to constantly question how they judge the freedpeople and whether their criticism is justified by fashioning "a Trimalchio who *looks* as if he is getting everything wrong, but in another sense is getting things just right" (97-98, original emphasis). The following two connected epigraphic activities carry these debates from scholarship into the classroom.

[Talking Dead I: Analyzing Freedpeople Epitaphs](#)

This assignment is also tied to Lawall's "Table Talk" section (61-110, *Sat.* 41-46). The assignment aims to:

1. Introduce students to basic epigraphic formulae, abbreviations, and conventions.
2. Exercise language skills by requiring students to expand and translate the Latin text, with particular attention to word endings (see Carpenter,

Beasom and Kvapil for the benefits of introducing epigraphy into Latin learning). (*Standards*: Communication-Interpretive Reading)

3. Contextualize language learning within a cultural analysis of the text that develops student awareness of how freedpeople engaged with the “epigraphic habit” to amplify their voice in Roman society. (*Standards*: Cultures-Relating Cultural Practices to Perspectives; Cultures-Relating Cultural Products to Perspectives)
4. Offer students the opportunity to interact with a historical freedperson, using their voice to critically examine how this group is characterized and traditionally read in the novel. (*Standards*: Connections-Making Connections; Connections-Acquiring Information and Diverse Perspectives)

For this activity, students select one of five funerary epitaphs commissioned for or by a freedperson alive in Rome in the first century CE when, according to general scholarly consensus, the novel was likely composed.

1. Flavia Sabina the Midwife (*CIL* 6.6647)
2. Avidius the Firefighter (*CIL* 6.2994)
3. Bucolas the Imperial Food Taster (*CIL* 11.3612)
4. Philomusus the Cloak Seller (*CIL* 6.09868)
5. Nostia Daphne the Hairdresser (*CIL* 06, 09736 (p 3470, 3895) = *CIL* 06, 37469 = *CIL* 10, *00697,4)

Whereas Petronius's freedpeople are mostly male, independent, and work in urban trades (Skinner 2018, 44), this assignment expands on the subject positions offered in the novel by including a freedman in civic service (#2), imperial freedpeople (#3 and possibly #1) and freedwomen (#1 and #5). The element of choice personalizes the assignment and boosts engagement by allowing the student to select the freedperson with whom they would like to interact. Although all are appropriate for intermediate-level students, the epitaphs do range slightly in difficulty, making the assignment accessible to a variety of skill-levels. The inscriptions contain notes on tough abbreviations or grammar but students also have access to an [epigraphy resource packet](#) designed by Vennarucci that includes, for instance, a list of common abbreviations, conventional naming formulae, and links to online resources. As background reading, we assign "Reading Inscriptions" from Brian K. Harvey's *Roman Lives* and "Epitaphs" in John Bodel's *Epigraphic Evidence*. Even trained epigraphers are sometimes frustrated when deciphering epigraphic texts due to their highly abbreviated and formulaic nature, but we find that, with proper scaffolding and support, our intermediate Latin students can tackle these short inscriptions.

Students are required to expand the abbreviations in the epigraphic text and translate it into English. They are then asked to write a short essay (600-800 words) that discusses how freedpeople's epigraphic self-representation compares to how Encolpius, a "notoriously unreliable narrator" (Rudich 186-87, Gloyd 261), depicts

this group self-fashioning in the novel. For instance, two of the epitaphs in the assignment commemorate freedwomen: Flavia Sabina the midwife (#1) and Nostia Daphne the hairdresser (#5), who worked out of a shop with her own freedwoman on the *vicus Longus* in Rome. Taken together, a successful female medical worker and businesswoman invite a reassessment of the few largely negative depictions of freedwomen in the *Cena Trimalchionis*. Trimalchio's wife Fortunata, for instance, is characterized by Petronius as a largely voiceless, flamboyant magpie (e.g., *Sat.* 37) (see Gloyn and Skinner 2012).¹⁷ Since the focus is on a comparative analysis between the epigraphic and literary texts, we do not require outside research and supply brief cultural notes to provide some helpful context. The following link provides excerpts from students' analyses ([example student analyses](#)).

When students understand how freedpeople may have used epigraphy to challenge, subvert and resist the power structures of their oppressors, they are better equipped to identify and interpret the recurring theme of status anxiety in the novel (Nelis-Clément and Nelis 2; Ramsby 67, 70). Students completing the assignment often find that their freedperson epitaph emphasizes similar values associated with this group in the *Satyrica*, such as pride in occupation; whereas in the novel the professions of the freedpeople are often treated as part of the joke, the epitaphs

¹⁷ Fortunata speaks only three short phrases in the text: *est te videre?* (*Sat.* 67.5), *au au* (*Sat.* 67.13) and *canis* (Lawall 177, *Sat.* 74) – a total of six spoken words in comparison to Trimalchio's 3,021 (Gloyn 266).

instead reflect an unaffected pride in the work.¹⁸ Like Trimalchio, the freedpeople attempted to negotiate the limbo of their social position between success and limitation (Avidius in #2, blocked from military service, joined the *vigiles*), using epigraphy as a way to advertise their contributions to Roman society (Bucolas' bureaucratic career in #3). Somewhat unlike Trimalchio, who threatened to have his wife removed from his tombstone (Lawall 181, *Sat.* 74), they emphasize harmonious traditional familial relationships (Bucolas in #3 included his mother and son in his dedication and Philomusus in #4 provided for his daughter, mother and fellow-freedpeople who were enslaved with him) (Mouritsen 285-287). Although not a requirement, some students take their analysis further to draw comparisons to their own culture and experiences. After turning in the assignment, we discuss the epitaphs as a group in class, giving students an opportunity to share their insights with one another.

[Talking Dead II: Design Your Own Roman Tombstone](#)

The second epigraphic activity is introduced when we arrive at "Trimalchio's Tomb and Funeral" (Lawall 153-205, *Sat.* 71-78). Tombs offered

¹⁸ For instance, Echion, a freedman and *centonarius* (woolen textile dealer) told the dinner party that if his son does not take to the study of law, he will have him trained as a *tonstrinum aut praeconem aut certe causidicum* (a barber, an auctioneer, or certainly an advocate) (Lawall 107, *Sat.* 46). Note also Lawall's derisive commentary on this passage, in which he uses Martial 7.64 and 5.56 and Juvenal 7.105-149 to normalize the elite's low opinion of these occupations (107-108, n. 155).

freedpeople an important opportunity for self-representation (Hackworth-Petersen 84-120) and became an important component of the identity of freedpeople (e.g., Mouritsen 289).¹⁹ Filtered through an elite lens, the literary Trimalchio's tomb and epitaph could be viewed as aspirational symbols of his "pretentious dreams" (Horsfall 1989a, 75) or a "manifesto of sorts" from a freedman who has successfully worked (and subverted?) the system (Ramsby 76, 81). Either way, the commemorative and communicative value of funerary monuments to the formerly enslaved explains why Petronius' Trimalchio takes such care in delivering instructions to the stonemason Habinnas for how his swanky monument should be designed. The assignment aims to:

1. Have students apply basic epigraphy skills in the composition of their own Latin epitaph.
2. Exercise students' language skills through composition, which requires them to approach Latin from a new unfamiliar angle (see Meinking for the benefits of composition activities in Latin language learning).
(*Standards: Communication-Presentational Writing*)

¹⁹ Funerary epitaphs commemorating freedpeople are highly visible in the epigraphic record of the Roman empire (Mouritsen 288). Trimalchio's tomb is a "mishmash of quasi-realistic and fantastical elements," but realistic detail is confirmed in the archaeological record (Horsfall 1989a, 76). In fact, the traditional reading of Trimalchio's tomb through an elite lens has skewed interpretations of freedpeople's tombs in the archaeological record, including, most famously, the Tomb of the Baker outside the Porta Maggiore in Rome (Hackworth-Petersen).

3. Promote a critical interrogation of ancient slavery and manumission that develops student awareness for how freedpeople used language and visual imagery to construct status and identity in their funerary monuments. (*Standards: Cultural-Relating Cultural Products to Perspectives*)
4. Exercise student voice by offering them an opportunity to express their own cultural identities in the target language. (*Comparisons-Language; Comparisons-Cultural*)

This activity asks students to compose a Latin epitaph in the epigraphic habit of freedpeople. Although the “Talking Dead I” acts as scaffolding for this assignment by introducing students to basic conventions and abbreviations found in Roman funerary texts, we still provide them with several templates to help them conceptualize their tombstone: a visualization of Trimalchio’s epitaph, our own fictional Roman tombstone, and a funerary monument located in a cemetery near campus whose Latin epitaph commemorates a university student (d. 1856). Students also have access to the freedpeople epitaphs from the “Talking Dead I” and additional examples from Harvey’s *Roman Lives*. The guidelines list certain components that every student must include in their epitaph:

1. An invocation to the spirits of the dead
2. Student’s name and filiation according to standard Roman *tria nomina* formula

3. Age according to standard Roman formula
4. A list of occupations (e.g., student), jobs (present or aspirational), internships or assistantships, offices, duties, diplomas, awards, etc.
5. Specific virtues (e.g., kind, generous, intelligent, pious)
6. A dedication using standard formulae

Like Trimalchio's epitaph, their content does not have to be strictly factual and can reflect aspirations for their future or embellishments on the present. The following link provides examples of original student epitaphs with their expansions and translations as received with uncorrected errors ([example student epitaphs](#)).

Since this is often the first composition assignment students complete in our Latin program, building confidence is key. The open-ended design of the epitaph invites creativity and makes the assignment accessible for students of differing skill levels. If the student includes the required components and demonstrates a solid grasp on Latin grammar, syntax, and the basic epigraphic conventions of funerary epitaphs (e.g., *tria nomina* formula, age formula), they receive a passing grade. The required components exercise case agreement, common case functions (e.g., indirect object, genitive of possession, accusative duration of time), and simple syntax. Students can challenge themselves to aim higher, however, by embellishing their epitaph with additional information such as including a cause of death and/or tackling more complicated grammatical concepts (e.g., indirect statements,

participial phrases, subjunctive clauses). A student who makes an error while attempting higher-level syntax will be rewarded for the risk over a student who closely adheres to the provided templates.

For future implementation, we have revised the assignment to include a draft phase that requires students to turn in an early copy of their epitaph for feedback so that they have time to work through their mistakes before submitting a final draft. To highlight the integrated nature of self-representation through text and image, the revised assignment also asks students to arrange their epitaph on a tombstone template and decorate it with symbols and icons that represent aspects of their identity, similar to the decoration preserved on Roman freedpeople tombstones. This step opens discussion of how visual imagery and text intersect to communicate meaning in different cultures and looks back to the use of memes in the colloquial translation assignment.

Latin is a second language for us, our students, and Trimalchio, whose assumed Eastern origin would make him a native Greek speaker. The frustrations students feel while trying to express themselves in Latin builds empathy with the freedpeople in the text, whose dialect has traditionally been viewed as “vulgar” and full of grammatical “mistakes” when compared to the “elevated” literary Latin we teach as the benchmark. Trimalchio’s conversational Latin may advertise his non-Italic servile origins but the choice to compose his epitaph in the language and style of his oppressors reflects how (elite people thought) freedpeople used language to

enhance their status in society (Ramsby 71, Nelis-Clément and Nelis 15). A recent study in Latin motivation suggests that students today invest in learning Latin because of a comparable expectation that the language will boost their social capital (Katz et al. 118).²⁰ As mentioned above, many of our students from first-generation, rural, and economically disadvantaged backgrounds pursue Latin for just such a sense of cultural prestige. In composing their own epitaph, students reflect on how freedpeople used language, practices, and products to promote themselves in society, and, in the process, students probe their own concepts of an ideal self as they navigate how to use Latin in the expression of their own identities.²¹

Our class discussions of ancient slavery, which situate the topic within present-day racial ideologies, help provide crucial context for this assignment, but there are risks. While students all identify as their freeborn selves in their epitaphs, asking them to emulate the cultural practices of the formerly enslaved could isolate and/or harm students who have been victims of oppression, especially students of color who have experienced racial trauma (e.g., Dugan 68, Bostick 2018). We are also thoughtful about how the assignment, which some students describe as “fun”,

²⁰ A word of caution here that the perceived prestige of learning Latin is tied to its elitist reputation as a language of the highly educated elite (Katz et al. 118). This motivation creates a complex situation, as we try to dismantle the very power structure that students may be learning Latin in the hopes of joining.

²¹ Studies in L2 motivational research have explored how students use language to self-represent attributes and values they would like to or feel they ought to possess (e.g., Ushioda and Dörnyei 3-4).

may work to trivialize the horrors of ancient slavery, or even perpetuate the negative stereotypes of freedpeople we want to dismantle in this course. We feel, however, the assignment is valuable for promoting a critical interrogation of ancient slavery through a meaningful engagement with freedpeople culture that, we hope, builds our students' cultural empathy for marginalized groups.

With permission, the epitaphs are shared with the class so that the students have an opportunity to read each other's compositions, increasing multivocality. Based on comments in course evaluations, the students responded positively to the epigraphy assignments, often citing the "Talking Dead II" as their favorite component of the course.

BEYOND PETRONIUS: A TRANSFERABLE FRAMEWORK

The critical pedagogy that we have implemented in our intermediate Latin course combines multivocality, inclusive teaching practices, subversive conversations, elements of GTM, and active learning assignments that tie into a number of the *Standards for Classical Language Learning*. Our assessments (diagnostic test, translation exams) and course evaluations (numeric and qualitative) indicate that students leave our course with improved grammar skills and greater confidence and ability in their knowledge of Latin.²² Beyond the

²² Students take a diagnostic test (A) on the first day of class that consists of an unseen passage (~40 words) from the *Satyrice*. Students are asked to translate the passage, parse three bolded words from

diagnostic requirements of the language program, it is also our responsibility as educators to build the cultural competency and social awareness of our students (McLaren and Hammer). Thus, this hybridized approach has allowed us to transform Petronius' *Satyrice*, a standard Latin text in the intermediate classroom, into a tool for challenging systems of oppression. We present the uncomfortable topic of slavery as essential for reading the complex social relationships and status representations that the *Satyrice* explores. We attempt to contextualize discussions of this topic within racial and racist ideologies, prompting our students to consider how present social injustices continue to shape the way we interpret past ones. Our assignments and discussions also encourage students to explore the role of languages in constructing status and identities but also in perpetuating harmful stereotypes. By centering discussions and assignments on freedpeople and giving students an opportunity to interact with the voices and perspectives of freedpeople in the epigraphic record, we foster allyship with this group. While we have no formal methods at this time to assess whether our pedagogical methods enhance students' critical consciousness, we feel confident from informal dialogue, their responses to assignments and our encounters with them in other courses that they

the passage, and identify their grammatical functions. The students retake the same diagnostic test (B) during the last week in the semester, after which their scores on both tests are compared to track their improvement in translation skills and grammar and syntax. When averaged together, the diagnostic scores collected from our intermediate courses between 2016-2019 show a 31% improvement (A: 57%; B: 88%) in translation skills and a 20% improvement (A: 54%; B: 74%) in grammar and syntax.

leave our classroom better equipped to interrogate power structures in other classrooms and contexts.²³

In fact, one of the strengths of introducing this multivocal approach in intermediate prose, when students encounter their first Roman author, is that it builds a theoretical framework for critiquing structures of power and oppression in the Latin texts they read in intermediate poetry (Catullus) and at the advanced level. We provide brief summaries of two advanced Latin classes below to highlight that the multivocal approach used in our Petronius course is part of a larger collaborative effort to intentionally implement critical language pedagogy across our Latin program.

Plautus: Slave Theater in the Roman Republic

Our colleague D. Fredrick offered an advanced Latin course on Plautus in fall 2019 with five students, all of whom had previously completed intermediate prose with Reeber or Vennarucci. The plays of Plautus are well suited for a multivocal approach: they are dialogic in nature, include colloquial Latin and center on enslaved characters, who were performed by actors of low status, some of whom may have even been enslaved themselves (Richlin 13-14). Scholars disagree on the extent to which Plautus' plays can speak to the lived experiences of enslaved people

²³ Vennarucci plans to design a survey to assess how the course has impacted students' social awareness on issues of ancient slavery and manumission when she teaches the course again in fall 2022.

in the late third to second centuries BCE. According to Kathleen McCarthy, for example, the plays most likely reflected and catered to the views of the Roman slaveholding elite because they were performed at state sponsored *ludi* (17-18). Amy Richlin, on the other hand, argues that if we approach theater as social practice with an emphasis on the relational roles of actors and audience in the performance, we can recover the perspectives of the enslaved in the plays as well as expressions of resistance to the Roman system of slavery. Even if the subject positions of the enslaved characters are debatable, an increasing number of scholars agree that Plautus' plays were performed for mixed audiences made up of diverse socioeconomic and ethnic groups, including enslaved and freedpeople as well as free born Romans (e.g., Joshel 2010 14, Richlin 1-2). This allows students to investigate the multilayered nature of the audience's reception to Plautus' plays, complicating the more traditional approach that views the plays through an elite lens.

Students in our colleague's Plautus course read about two-thirds each of *Casina* and *Amphitryo*, and the entirety of both in translation. Each of the five students also had to read and provide a critical summary of three additional plays in English, which they shared with the class, so that each student read in depth a total of five plays in English and had some exposure to Plautus' complete body of work. In addition, in groups of two and three, students developed critical in-class presentations on the Historical and Political context, Festival Setting and

Performance, and Social and Comic Structure of Plautus' plays. As the capstone assignment for the semester, students participated in a group critical reading of the first chapter from A. Richlin's *Slave Theater in the Roman Republic: Plautus and Popular Comedy* and led discussions in class. This chapter addresses the political, social, familial, and performance issues central to the course and includes an assessment of the social and political contexts in twentieth century history, and Classics specifically, that have shaped interpretations of Plautus. Some of the questions students were asked to consider while reading Richlin include: What "silence" does more recent work on ancient slavery aim to fill in? What is the enslaved person's onstage subject position, and how might that shape translation strategies? Why has slavery and the lived experiences of enslaved people been edited out of the discussions of Plautus? What is a primary (if sometimes hidden) motivation for humor, and what does this imply about the homogeneity or diversity of the audience? In short, the students' critical engagement with the representation of enslaved characters in Plautus was active and sustained throughout the course, and our colleague credits the critical framework we introduce in our intermediate course for his students' high level of preparedness for such engagement.

Latin Epigraphy: Ancient Roman Working Lives

Given that epigraphy lends itself naturally to a multivocal approach, Vennarucci designed an advanced-level Latin Epigraphy Workshop, which she

taught for the first time in spring 2020. Five of the seven students had completed Fredrick's Plautus course the previous semester, and all seven students had elementary and/or intermediate Latin courses with Vennarucci and/or Reeber. This meant that the students were practiced in critical inquiry and had basic epigraphic skills in addition to their advanced Latin grammar and syntax abilities. Six of the seven students had also traveled to Italy with Vennarucci either on a study abroad program and/or on her archaeological project, which resulted in an intimate, positive group dynamic grounded in mutual trust, which greatly facilitated discussion, especially on challenging topics.

The course was designed as an introduction to the resources and conventions used by epigraphers as well as a survey of epigraphic categories, with a particular emphasis on exposing students to the voices of those who are typically silenced in Latin literature and modern scholarship. The core element of the course was a semester-long project that asked students to compile an original corpus of ~30 texts relating to an occupational group attested in the epigraphic record in Rome (see list of occupations in Joshel 1992).²⁴ Students had to expand, translate, and analyze each of the texts in their corpus. Their final products were a curated corpus of texts and a 3,000-3,500-word research paper that explored their occupational group's structure, role(s), and strategies of self-expression in Roman

²⁴ This assignment was adapted from a project that Vennarucci completed in a graduate-level Latin Epigraphy course taught by J. Theodore Peña in spring 2008 at the University at Buffalo, SUNY.

society. By focusing on occupation, the students had the occasion to interact with sub-elite and marginalized groups, the enslaved and formerly enslaved especially, who are highly visible in occupational texts and used the epigraphic habit to maneuver within and against Roman systems of power and oppression (Joshel 1992). The four graduating seniors, with whom the co-authors are still in close contact, felt that the course was the perfect capstone to their language learning experience in our Latin program.

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