

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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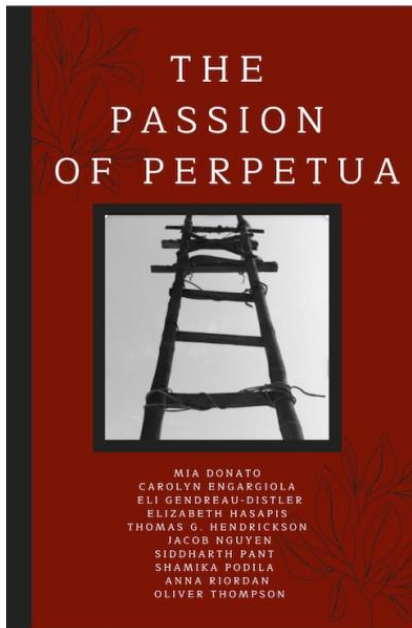
Welcome to issue 13.1 of Teaching Classical Languages.

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.

Special Feature by the Awardees of the 2022 CAMWS Bolchazy Pedagogy Book Award



Student-Created Editions of Latin Texts

Thomas Hendrickson
Anna Pisarello
Stanford Online High School

ABSTRACT

This article outlines the goals and methods for publishing a student-created edition of a Latin text. Our primary goals were 1) to create a more inclusive canon by expanding the number and kinds of texts available to Latin students, 2) to foster a more inclusive classroom by including students in the publication process, and 3) to expand access to Latin teaching and learning resources by making our editions open access. Our method for the project involved four main stages. After assigning every student a portion of the Latin text, they would 1) write a vocabulary, 2) add macrons, 3) write a translation, and 4) write a commentary to explain the Latin.

students and teachers, no matter their financial situation.

The project was such a success that we decided to repeat it annually as the capstone of our Latin program. We started a series (*The Experrecta Series*) which will focus on making student editions of Latin texts written by women.² Our second volume in the series, *Isotta Nogarola's Defense of Eve*, came out in the spring of 2022.³ In order to manage the logistics of these projects, we also started a small non-profit organization to act as our publisher: Pixelia Publishing. Pixelia will focus not only on Latin texts written by women, but on any Latin text that is not already well-served with a student edition. For instance, our most recent volume is Caesar's *Gallic War Book VII*, a canonical work that simply lacks an affordable student edition.⁴

In this article, we begin by explaining our goals and how this project seeks to address current issues in the field of classics (Section I). Then

we outline the details of how, exactly, we have created these editions, and what our own students have learned from the experience (Section II). Finally, we briefly outline the logistics of publication for such an edition (Section III).

I. Goals and Broader Context

Our approach as instructors and project designers takes into account the immediate pedagogical goals of our program and institution, but also takes into consideration the broader scope of ongoing discussions within the field of classics and ancient studies.

Our field is currently engaged in a variety of welcome conversations about the canon in classical and liberal educational frameworks, and about the institutional barriers that limit scholarly conversations to a narrow population. Some of the overarching goals of Pixelia are to expand the canon of elementary and intermediate Latin

² The authors of this present article (Hendrickson and Pisarello) are the series co-editors, along with our colleague at Stanford Online High School, John Lanier.

³ Nogarola was a fifteenth-century humanist, and her *Defense of Eve* is an important text in the history of gender, since it laid out an argument that women were not inherently inferior to men. Our edition, Boyle et al. 2022, is available open-access at <https://pixeliapublishing.org/isotta-nogaras-defense-of-eve/>

⁴ Because *Gallic War Book VII* is too long for a single group of students to edit, we will publish it as a three-volume set. The first volume is Lanier et al. 2023, which is available open-access at <https://pixeliapublishing.org/avaricvm/>. Pixelia will also create some editions of English-language works. Another of our colleagues at Stanford Online High School, Ben Wiebracht, has started a series called *Forgotten Contemporaries of Jane Austen*. The first volume is Wiebracht et al. 2021, available open-access at <https://pixeliapublishing.org/bath-an-adumbration-in-rhyme/>

studies to include the voices of these Latin women authors, while simultaneously expanding the pool of scholars contributing to academic conversations to include the voices of high school students. A significant additional goal is accessibility, both financial and technological: as educators we seek to serve the largest population of students possible; as scholars we hope to help open access to the field to a new generation of thinkers and scholars.

Goal One: Retooling and Expanding the Intermediate Latin Canon

The standard intermediate-to-advanced Latin curriculum in most high school programs is limited to a few canonical authors like Caesar, Cicero, Catullus, Ovid, and Vergil. Undergraduate intermediate Latin courses do range more widely, but they tend to stay within a small group of male-authored texts from the late Roman Republic and early Empire. These are the authors for whom instructors can find a wealth of pedagogical support, from formal textbooks to online commentaries to preformulated curricular materials such as discussion and exam questions. The focus on this handful of authors of such specific demographics and perspectives (male, wealthy, closely connected to the imperial center) can limit early

students' views about the expansiveness of Latin and contribute to the misguided notion of ancient Rome as a cultural and ideological monolith.

The books published through the Experrecta Series, focusing as they do on non-canonical authors and particularly showcasing the experiences and perspectives of women, provide a material contribution towards the expansion of this canon. This series is not intended to replace the rich linguistic and literary legacy of Cicero or Catullus, but rather to complement and enhance it by offering to students a more diversified view of the notion of a classical or Latin author. Perpetua, for example, is at an intersection of identities rarely associated with the voices read and the time periods examined in an intermediate and secular classroom, since she is a woman, an African-Roman, writing during the later Roman empire, and practicing a then-minority religion.

There is pedagogical and scholarly value to this enhanced visibility and representation of ancient authors across lines of gender, race, ethnicity, and religion. In the short term, we have observed the immediate pedagogical effect of boosting engagement and personal interest in the subject matter, as students are more likely to see

something of themselves reflected back at them in the identities of these figures from the past. These personal stakes provide fertile ground for students to reflect on the ancient world with greater nuance and promote a discursive framework of inclusion rather than alienation from a seemingly inaccessible historical past.

Beyond those immediate advantages for an intermediate university or high school course, we believe that introducing these complications of the canon at an earlier entry point offers the possibility of longer lasting scholarly impact. Students from more diverse backgrounds, upon seeing echoes of their personal narratives in the histories of the Mediterranean, may be more inspired to continue their studies in classics and add valuable perspectives to scholarly discussions and innovations in the field. Further, any student continuing on to a scholarly career equipped with this early exposure and framing of the ancient world as a complex and diverse one is likely to bring fresh, innovative ideas to our shared scholarship.

These efforts in Latin classes represent a microcosm of the trend in literary studies at large, as high school English and literature courses endeavor to incorporate works from a broader cultural literary landscape. Curricular

innovations of this kind can be difficult to implement without easily available books and materials; Pixelia hopes to help remedy this concern.

Goal Two: Expanding Scholarly Authorship and Ownership

For someone first encountering one of our Pixelia books, it may seem odd to have such a long list of authors on the cover of such a slim volume.

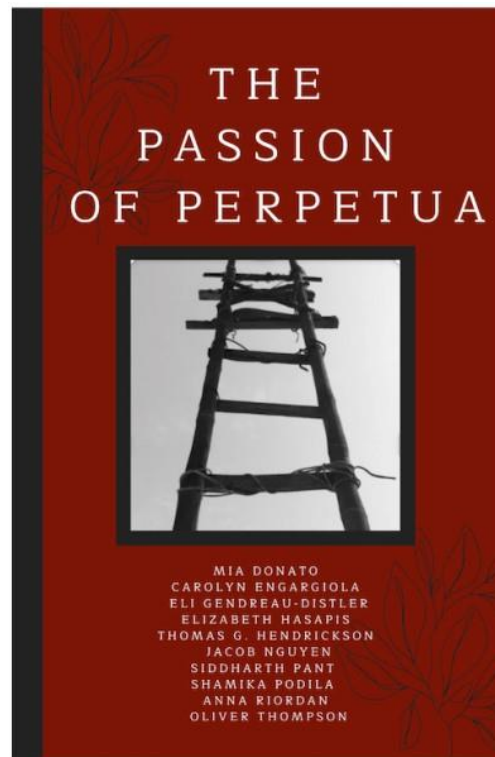


Figure 2. *The Passion of Perpetua* by Donato et. al. cover

It is of particular importance to this project that all students who contribute to the production of these books receive full author credit and appear on the cover, rather than simply being granted

credit as research assistants named in the acknowledgments. This visual display communicates the true academic partnership that takes place during the writing, organizing, editing, and publishing of this material: given the shared labor described in more detail below, a shared byline is the most appropriate way to describe the authorship of this edition. Our student authors continuously exceed our expectations and impress us with their dedication and precision; we have observed that this status as named co-authors, in turn, serves as motivation for the excellence in their work as they take intellectual ownership of and responsibility for this scholarly product. The subsequent adoption of Pixelia books into course book lists across several institutions speaks to the value and success of this population's labor.

This project also solved a specific problem for our school program: what to do about AP (Advanced Placement). The instructors of the Latin department were in unanimous agreement over the need to move away from offering a course in support of the Advanced Placement exam in Latin as the fourth year of the course of study. This too reflects a broader trend in pre-collegiate studies (particularly among the independent school environment and echoed in college admission procedural

changes) of eliminating standardized tests and AP exams in favor of less rigid curricula and greater academic freedom for instructors and students alike. We hoped to develop advanced Latin courses that would be aligned with research interests of our faculty and model more closely a true university experience.

This decision, however, proved to be a difficult one for families in our educational community. In other subjects, a student may be equipped to take the AP exam without following a particular curriculum, as that subject matter exam may test general knowledge or expertise that can be cultivated throughout different course structures with different pedagogical approaches. The AP Latin exam, on the other hand, is based on a highly regimented textual requirement that necessitates focused year-long study and, in our experience, leaves little room for curricular innovations like extensive secondary scholarship or creative projects. By removing the AP course, we were in effect removing the option for students to take the AP exam and, in their view, earn an external reward for their years of Latin work. The development of Pixelia offered students and their families an exciting alternative to AP credit as a badge of their years-long commitment to the study of Latin: the possibility of

graduating from high school as published authors. While we believe this is a wonderful accomplishment in its own right, we acknowledge the competitive nature of college admissions and the desire of our student community to signal in their applications a high degree of achievement in their academic work.

The decision to highlight student authorship and encourage them to participate confidently in conversation with specialized thinkers both past and present goes beyond a question of short-term administrative transaction, however. It is, more fundamentally, ideologically motivated by the effort at large to push against the academic gatekeeping that can lead to stagnation in the field; confining the publication and dissemination of scholarly material only to a narrow band of tenured professors has the potential of cutting off fresh ideas and perspectives that may enrich our entire community of Latin learners and ancient studies scholars. In all of the Pixelia volumes we have published so far, the students' voices have added interpretive nuance.

If we are to move away from these rigid and stifling attitudes, we may consider the role that experience in the field and status on the academic hierarchy play in our conception of diversity of thought. Our stance is that not only is it the duty of older, more

established scholars to guide younger students and to help them develop their ideas, but further to promote and seek visible platforms for their work and contributions, and to give practical, actionable assistance in showcasing their voices. Aside from publishing, the conference circuit is another space where a student of Latin or the ancient world may often encounter the same voices; Pixelia student authors are encouraged and supported in presenting on their work in these academic spaces as well: the 2022 and 2023 CAMWS annual meetings included workshops hosted by Pixelia student authors.

This guiding principle is aligned with Pixelia's endeavors, as explained above, to expand the canon of the ancient authors that students encounter in the course of their studies. We consider it valuable for students and potential scholars across broader demographic swathes to see themselves reflected not only in the material itself but, equally importantly, in the voices responding to, debating, and engaging with this material. Broadening the field of scholars, by expanding who gets to claim ownership and who is conferred authority over conversations with and about the ancient world, can have an inspirational momentum of its own.

Goal 3: Expanding Accessibility to Scholarly Material in Classics and Latin Topics

The books published under Pixelia are available free of charge in PDF form on our website (<https://pixeliapublishing.org>), and available at a low price in hard copy from Amazon: no institutional affiliation is needed to acquire our books. We have taken these steps to address different types of barriers that can occur with academic publications; while we cannot solve all aspects of accessibility and technological inequality from a global perspective, our aim is for our works to be accessible to the largest audience possible. Beyond the issues of paywalls and financial gatekeeping, we are sensitive as well to the problems of educational institutional gatekeeping encountered with certain journals and series. While the primary audience for these books is the classroom (whether pre-collegiate or university-level), we believe these works offer the possibility of readership beyond strictly academic environments. The introductory material for each publication is pitched for readers who may not have the linguistic training in Latin necessary for the commentary portion of the text, but who may have scholarly or personal interest in the historical circumstances of the topic. The particular audiences

will be determined by each book: as an example, the Perpetua volume may appeal to a church reading group or religious studies student, while the Nogarola volume may be of interest to someone researching in the field of feminist studies or the early modern era.

These three considerations in our overarching goals for Pixelia and the Experrecta Series, i.e., the expansion of the Latin canon at the intermediate level, the expansion of visibility of younger scholars in the field, and the expansion of accessibility to Latin educational texts, constitute our response to the critiques of stagnation and gatekeeping in our academic communities. In a broad sense, we may contextualize the development of this project within the recent blossoming of new publications and projects that straddle the divide between formal academic environments and public facing scholarship (e.g., *Eidolon*, *Sententiae Antiquae*, *In Medias Res*, *Pasts Imperfect*, *Antigone*, *Public Books*, *Lupercal's Project Nota* to name only a few), all of which seek to fill a void in the discourse and enjoyment of classical studies and related topics. These efforts have not been without complications and controversy; taken as a whole, however, they paint a picture of a shifting landscape with lasting consequences to the makeup of

the field, the types of conversations being held, and the myriad perspectives contributing to these conversations. Our project does not strictly fall into the category of public facing non-specialist material but does share the motivating factors of changing and diversifying the conversation around ancient Mediterranean cultures and the Latin language. We also share many key practical considerations, including technological and financial accessibility, a reconsideration of authorial gatekeeping, and active promotion and celebration of curiosity for what has yet to be discovered, complicated, and synthesized in the study of the ancient world and beyond.

II. Creating the Book

The two editions of the Experrecta Series published so far have been the culmination of projects undertaken in the capstone Latin course at Stanford Online High School (OHS) in the academic years of 2020–2021 (*The Passion of Perpetua*) and 2021–2022 (*Isotta Nogarola's Defense of Eve*).⁵ Tom Hendrickson taught the courses and organized the projects, with advice

and support from fellow OHS instructors Anna Pisarello and John Lanier. We divided the text into sections of about 300-400 words, and each student became the section editor for one portion of the text. Each year, the project unfolded in four major stages. As a first stage, section editors wrote and revised the on-page vocabulary, making sure that in each case we had the right word with the right definition. As a second stage, section editors checked the macrons in their portions of the text. As a third stage, each section editor wrote a translation for their section. These translations were not meant to be included with the published edition, but rather were a way to iron out any difficulties we were having with understanding the Latin of the text. As a fourth stage, each section editor wrote a commentary for their section, deciding what needed to be explained in the Latin text and how to explain it.⁶ Section editors also provided peer review for each other after every stage of the project, and Hendrickson provided a final round of revisions. Hendrickson wrote the Introduction, which the students then revised in turn,

⁵ While this article was in press, another Pixelia volume was published, *AVARICVM: Caesar's Gallic War VII 1-28 with Running Vocabulary and Commentary*, for which John Lanier taught the course and led the project.

⁶ The stages need not go in this order. In Lanier's edition of Caesar, he is having the students do the translation stage first.

along with Pisarello and Lanier, as well as Ben Wiebracht (another OHS colleague).

These multiple stages of review and revision were necessary to prevent any errors from reaching the final product, yet they were also an important part of the project's pedagogy. We never expected perfection from the students: indeed, we expected them to make constant mistakes. The students were never penalized for mistakes of Latinity: rather, we would workshop and discuss these mistakes, and use them as an opportunity to build and refine the students' knowledge of Latin. The idea was not that they were perfect Latinists going into the class, but that this was a project through which they could improve their Latin.

In the following, we will provide more background about each stage of the process. But first we wanted to explain how the project fit into our Latin class. Our class meets twice a week and continues through the academic year. The fall semester was almost entirely taken up with these four major stages. We took about a month per stage, including peer review. In a typical week, we would dedicate one class to workshoping our projects and one class to simply reading the Latin text together from start to finish. In spring semester we had a more traditional Latin class focusing on a

major author (like Vergil), but we continued to have minor assignments to take care of the editorial tasks necessary to prepare the text for publication.

Stage One: The On-Page Vocabulary

As a first stage in the process, students were responsible for creating the on-page glossary for their portion of the text. From a learning perspective, this meant that they had to *understand* each word of the text in order to create a proper heading (for nouns, verbs, adjectives, etc.) as well as a definition that would be both correct and suitable for the context of the particular word-usage on the page. Section editors did

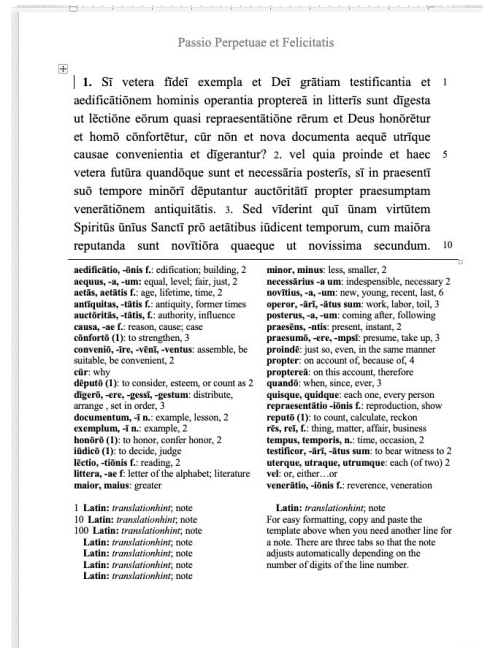


Figure 3. Steadman Perpetua Beta

not start with a blank sheet of paper. In the case of the Perpetua edition,

Geoffrey Steadman generously provided us with the beta-version of an edition he had previously made.

Here, the students' job was one of checking and refinement: was each entry the correct word that appeared on the page (and not, for instance, a similar word), and was it defined in a way that would be helpful for a student reading this particular passage? In the case of the Nogarola edition, one of our students (Eli Gendreau-Distler) created a software program that would automatically generate a vocabulary entry for a given Latin text.



Figure 4. Nogarola Template

Here, beyond refinement and correctness, the student's job involved

an enormous amount of deletion, since the program would put in multiple entries for each word of the Latin text because it could not distinguish the difference between, for instance, *ius* ("soup") and *ius* ("law"), or *ars* ("skill") and *artius* ("narrow"). As peer review, each student was assigned to read the Latin of another student's section, looking at the words in the glossary as they go and making notes on any that seemed incorrect or less helpful than they could be. We kept our draft edition as a Google Doc, which made collaboration easy.

After completing their work, each student then wrote up a report on what they had done and a reflection on what they had learned from it. Students reflected on a number of things that they took away from the project, but two issues that came up repeatedly were the importance of context for understanding a Latin word and the importance of time-management skills in handling a major project. On context, for instance, Eli Gendreau-Distler wrote, "For example, if I am reading a text and cannot make sense of what some passage means, I now know that I could look up some words in a dictionary even if I know their general meanings to check for special meanings that might make more sense in the context. This project also helped me realize that checking multiple

dictionaries can be helpful when the lemma or meaning of a word is unclear.” In regard to time-management, another student, who preferred not to be named, reflected “I have learned how to dole out the time required for long-term projects such as this. I did the bulk of this project within the space of a week, but only by making sure to work on a page per day. Without that kind of regular schedule, I would have had no hope of completing this project to anything resembling acceptable quality.”

Stage Two: Macrons

We decided to include macrons for the Latin in our text because macrons make the Latin easier to read by distinguishing forms that would otherwise be identical (e.g., *poenā* and *poena*). In addition, macrons help to better represent the sounds of the Latin language, and so they are of particular help to students as they learn to read Latin—that is, to say or think the Latin words and understand them, rather than looking at the Latin words and trying to remember their English equivalents. While it is true that ancient Roman texts did not include macrons, it is worth noting that they likewise did not include lowercase letters and punctuation—at least of the sort that modern texts employ. Yet we use lowercase letters and modern punctuation because they

make Latin texts easier to read, and the same rationale should apply to macrons.

We initially added the macrons through a software program called the Macronizer (alatus.com/macronizer), created by Johan Winge. The Macronizer is an excellent program that can usually place macrons correctly even in situations where the grammatical case has to be inferred from the context. Yet there can still be issues, so it was necessary for section editors to check each word in their section,



Figure 5. Student Macron Project

and then to have another student re-check each in our round of peer review. Unfortunately, the two standard Latin-English dictionaries, the *Oxford Latin Dictionary* and Lewis and Short, do not provide uniformly correct macrons. The *OLD* only marks macrons in open-

syllables, while Lewis and Short does not mark the length of word-final syllables. Luckily, macrons are thoroughly marked in Gaffiot's French-English dictionary, which is available free online through [Logeion](#). The work was laborious, though not entirely mechanical since students needed to decide what the correct vowel length should be in all inflected endings.

As before, students wrote up a report and reflection on what they had done and what they learned from it. Many students were aware of how successfully they had internalized the correct length of vowels. Finn Boyle, for instance, wrote "By the end of it, I was beginning to be able to correctly guess where a macron should be, and after checking in Logeion, I found myself becoming increasingly correct."

Stage Three: Translation

After creating the on-page vocabulary and checking macrons, each section editor created a translation of their portion of the text. We had no intention of including these translations in the edition. Rather, they were a tool for taking stock of what we took the Latin to mean. The act of articulating a definite translation helped some students find areas where they had been unclear on what exactly was happening. It helped other students further refine how they defined words in their

vocabulary. For peer review, each student would make a translation of a different student's section, and then they would meet and compare their different translations. There can be many different correct ways to translate the same piece of Latin, but the comparisons also revealed areas where students had fundamental disagreements about what the Latin meant.

Once again, students wrote up a report and reflection on what they had done and what they learned from it. Many students mentioned how it was helpful in refining the vocabulary they had written, or in pinpointing parts of the text that still left them confused. The project also seems to have increased students' sensitivity to the nature of translation and how different translators might have different purposes that lead to different choices. Dhru Goud, for instance, noted "Because I was translating the text for my own sake rather than to be published, I tried to create a 1:1 Latin to English copy of the text as much as possible while still making it comprehensible. As a result, I have reproduced none of the tonal or stylistic flourishes of the original work, whereas *Complete Works* (a published translation) tries to preserve it while not producing as grammatically identical a translation."

Stage Four: Commentary

The most difficult stage for section editors was to write the commentary. The goal of the commentary was not to comment on allusions or compile scholarship, but rather to explain the Latin of the text in a way that would be helpful for other students. On the one hand, this was a serious challenge for the section editors, given that they were students themselves (rather than subject-matter experts). On the other hand, the fact that they were students made them the ideal writers of such a commentary because they were able to spot the issues most likely to give other students trouble, since they probably had trouble with it themselves. All through the semester, section editors kept notes on what parts of their section were most difficult for them: these, in turn, were the areas where they knew the commentary could be most helpful in providing explanations.

In writing commentary entries, students followed some general guidelines. Each entry would start with an idiomatic gloss. There is no need for a painfully literal one, as that will likely be what student readers have already come up with. The gloss would be followed by an explanation of why that particular bit of Latin works out to that translation. In addition, in long sentences it can be helpful just to

specify what is the main verb and how the various clauses relate, and to clarify points that might be ambiguous, especially to a reader going slowly (e.g., what is the subject of a given verb; what does a given pronoun refer back to, and so on). In the peer review, each student would read the Latin of another student's section, using the commentary to help them make sense of it. They would then note down any explanations that seemed unhelpful or incorrect, or any additional difficult bits of Latin that should perhaps have a commentary entry.

As always, this stage was followed by a report and reflection. Many students reported that the process of explaining individual words and phrases gave them a better understanding of the whole. Mia Donato, for instance, explained that "Writing the commentary has not only improved my ability to read deeper into the meaning of certain words or phrases, but it has also given me a greater sense of how important it is to look at the bigger picture. I have come to realize how important it is to consider how everything connects together, not just on a sentence level, but also throughout a paragraph and ultimately the story."

Final Student Revision of Latin Text, Vocabulary, and Commentary

After all four stages were complete, we canceled class for a week while Hendrickson met with the students in one-on-one conferences to go over their sections and provide further feedback. Then in lieu of a final exam the students did a final revision of all aspects of their section, which they turned in along with a final reflection. Hendrickson then provided a last round of revision on the text, vocabulary, and commentary as a whole. Mostly this final revision involved standardizing the various approaches of different students and editing for clarity and concision, though occasionally there were errors that needed to be corrected or entire commentary entries that had to be added or removed. At the end of the process, we had a draft manuscript of our text, translation, and commentary.

Finally, Hendrickson wrote the volume introduction, based largely on the conversations held in class over the course of the semester. In the spring semester, students provided feedback on the volume introduction, and they also performed various copy-editing and proof-reading tasks on the manuscript as a whole. Students could perform these tasks very successfully when they were given very specific directions. For instance, when providing written feedback on the volume introduction, students were asked to answer a series of specific

questions, like “Was there anything that you disagreed with, or that surprised you?” and “Was there anything that seemed unclear, or that you didn’t understand?” For the copy-editing and proof-reading, the work was broken into specific tasks that could be doled out as assignments. (For example, a student might be asked to look at a given page range and check that the on-page glossary words are in alphabetical order, and that the commentary entries are in the order they will be encountered in the text.)

A student who was not in the class, Arhan Surapaneni, volunteered to make the covers for us with Adobe Photoshop.

III. Publishing the Book

We originally considered approaching a traditional publisher. Yet we were not confident that any publisher would want to take on a book co-authored with high school students, much less a book that we planned to make open access. We also wanted to run on a tight timeline: to write the book in fall semester, edit it in spring semester, and print it in time for graduation. Finally, we wanted to have complete editorial control and the ability to repeat the project annually.

Given those considerations, we decided to publish the book ourselves.

Print-on-demand services make it relatively cheap and easy: the only necessary cost is an ISBN. We chose KDP as our printing service, since it seemed to be the cheapest and easiest, though there are also advantages to other companies like Ingram Spark and Lulu. The printing process itself is simple: you just upload a PDF of your final version, and it is available for purchase within a few days. If you find errors in your text later, you can simply upload a new PDF to replace the old. We also created a WordPress website where we could make the PDF itself available for free.

KDP requires a bank account and tax identification number, so we also created a 501(c)3 non-profit organization: Pixelia Publishing. Pixelia allows us to take in the revenue from the books and to pay for our various logistical needs: principally the ISBNs and the website. None of us receive any pay or other compensation from Pixelia; all revenue goes to keeping the project going.

Final Reflection

Throughout the different stages of our edition, not everything went smoothly, and the project encountered several serious difficulties. Many of these difficulties were logistical: it took a substantial amount of time, for

instance, to set up the non-profit organization for Pixelia Publishing. Additionally, because we were self-publishing with a print-on-demand service instead of a traditional press with administrative and editorial support, it fell to us (instructors and students) to care for a multitude of formatting issues, not to mention all the copy-editing and proofing. Beyond these logistical challenges, the students also found that scholarly work can sometimes be tedious, in particular checking macrons and formatting vocabulary entries. Finally, everything about the book took a good deal of time: it took far longer to write this book as a group than it would have taken any one teacher or scholar working on their own.

Yet the end product was better than any one teacher or scholar could have made on their own precisely because the students were bringing their own perspectives to bear. In our *Perpetua* edition, for instance, some students in the class held very traditional Christian views, while others were completely unfamiliar with Christianity: our edition was clearer and more inclusive for having to make sense to both kinds of reader. Some students thought that we were pushing too hard to make *Perpetua* relevant to modern progressive sensibilities, others thought we were underplaying how radical she

was: our debates forced us to keep our interpretations close to the text. Collaborating with students does not speed academic work (quite the opposite), but it does create a stronger final product.

In this article, we have presented an overview of our goals and methods, but

there would not have been room to treat every detail of the process. If any readers would like to find out more, we would be happy to discuss what we have done and what we have learned from it. We encourage readers to reach out to us at editors@pixeliapublishing.org.

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Voices from Below: A Multivocal Approach to Teaching Petronius' *Satyrica*⁷

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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

⁷ 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' *Satyrice*.

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.⁸ 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.”

⁸ 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.⁹ 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

⁹ 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.¹⁰ 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).¹¹ Like so many Latin instructors teaching at colleges/universities, we were not taught language pedagogy

¹⁰ 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.

¹¹ 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.¹²

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)

¹² 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.¹³

¹³ 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).¹⁴ 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

¹⁴ 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).¹⁵ These assignments are set beside more traditional translation exams and a diagnostic test that together assess the students' reading fluency.¹⁶

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*:

¹⁵ 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.

¹⁶ See below n. 22.

Selections from the Satyrice.¹⁷ 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

¹⁷ 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).¹⁸ 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.¹⁹ Lawall (121 n.37, *Sat.* 48) repeats the

¹⁸ 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).

¹⁹ 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.²⁰ 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”.²¹ 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 *Satyrica*. Elite biases in the text are adopted by scholars, who then interpret the archaeological record through an elite lens.

²⁰ 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)

²¹ 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 *Satyrica*. 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.²² 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.

²² 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).²³ 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

²³ 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.²⁴ 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

²⁴ 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).²⁵ 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*)

²⁵ 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).²⁶ 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.²⁷

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”,

²⁶ 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.

²⁷ 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.²⁸ Beyond the

²⁸ 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.²⁹

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

²⁹ 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).³⁰ 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

³⁰ 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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Teaching Outside the Box of Classical Languages: A Diverse Curriculum for Diverse Learners

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ABSTRACT

The author argues that a more diverse definition of classics leads to a more diverse population of classics students. In addition to classes that focus on language acquisition, the field of classics should include courses that center mythology, history, civilization, and material culture. These classes allow for creative pedagogy such as STEM and maker challenges that attract students interested in those areas of classical studies. The author details the curricula of two courses she has developed, Roman Technology and Myth Makers, which have increased the diversity of her classics program, brought awareness to other areas of classical studies, and earned grant money for the program.

KEYWORDS

diversity, material culture, STEM, STEAM, maker movement, mythology

When my previous school (a small, elite, private school) decided to phase out its Latin program and transition me (one of its Latin teachers) into the role of academic technology coordinator, I decided to leave that position³¹. I took a job as a Latin teacher at a public middle school in the same city. The Latin program there was in decline with only ten students enrolled. Since the previous Latin teacher had left two years before, the remaining students had been working on an online Latin program. The administration could not find a teacher willing to relocate to Baton Rouge, LA.

³¹ Thanks to the editors of *Teaching Classical Languages* for their help in bringing this article to fruition. I appreciate their careful suggestions for edits, but most of all, their open minds toward an article that is about teaching outside the box of classical languages, the regular theme of this publication.

East Baton Rouge Parish is the second-largest public school district in the state, serving over 40,000 students, 77% of whom are economically disadvantaged, and 89% of whom are students of color. (Louisiana Believes, Row 24) When I began the Latin position, I was tasked with continuing the Latin program (an elective option for gifted students), and also, with developing and teaching elective classes which could be taken by all students, regardless of the academic program they were enrolled in. There was a particular interest in anything STEM-related because of the national push to teach classes that lead to interest in and preparation for industry careers such as engineering, cybersecurity, coding, and drone piloting. (STEM is an educational acronym that stands for science, technology, engineering, and math. In secondary education, the subject focuses more on the engineering design process rather than instruction in the subjects that make up the acronym.) Because I had taught an upper-level Latin class focused on STEM authors, called Roman Technology, at my previous school, I was able to adapt the course for non-Latin learners easily. (Roy 1) This course and another I developed for this purpose, called Myth Makers, have become the most popular electives at the school. The best thing about them is their diversity.

In this article, I talk about two types of diversity: the first is diversity of curriculum, and the second is diversity of student population. I argue that the first can lead to the second. First, it's important to understand the demographics of my school: in 2018, the student population was 15% white and 85% students of color

(the largest group of which was Black students at 62%). Despite white students being the minority at the school, they comprise 40% of students in the Latin classes. Why don't students of color take Latin? There are two reasons for this lack of diversity: one is an exclusionary practice by the district, but the other is choice. I briefly explain both of these reasons because I don't think that my district is unique. Perhaps readers will see their own districts echoed here.

Over half the students at my school and many more in the wider district are excluded from studying a world language at their middle schools due to low standardized test scores in English language arts. These scores are carefully tracked from year to year, and if they dip below a certain designated benchmark, those students are enrolled in double ELA (English language arts) classes. At most middle schools in my district, students in this situation have a more rigid daily school schedule that focuses on core subjects. For example, on an A/B day rotation of daily classes, on day A of the rotation, students take ELA, math, science, and physical education. On day B of the rotation, they take ELA, math, social studies, and one choice of elective. To compare, a student in a gifted program would only take one ELA class and one math class on the same A/B day schedule. World Language is not an option amongst the lower-scoring population of students; thus, a whole segment of my school's and district's population of middle school students is exposed to the classical world only once in their Kindergarten to 12th grade school experience. In most social studies classrooms across the United States, one unit on

ancient Greece and Rome is taught in 6th Grade. In some states, including Louisiana, this unit is now taught in 4th grade.

Unfortunately, students with low standardized test scores are overwhelmingly economically disadvantaged and classified as students of color. Taking Latin (or any world language) is not an option for these students. Latin is not just far from their minds; it is not allowed to be on their radar.

In addition to students who are excluded from taking Latin are those who see Latin as an undesirable choice. For example, a student named J. is Black and enrolled in both Roman Technology and Myth Makers, but not Latin. As class was ending one day, I learned why he wasn't taking Latin. Since he was enrolled in both elective courses, which I teach, I surmised that he enjoyed learning about the ancient classical world, so I was curious about why he wasn't in my Latin class. When I asked him why, he told me the following story, "Well, I live in an area of Baton Rouge where there are a lot of Hispanic people, and I figured that learning to speak Spanish would be a good way to get to know my neighbors. Plus, I want to become a doctor one day, and if I'm going to be treating immigrants from Central and South America, a growing population in our city, knowing Spanish will be critical." His practical answer did not surprise me. Students list it as the reason for not taking Latin frequently; students want to study languages that are immediately useful outside the classroom in the diverse communities where they live and will eventually work.

However, lucky for classicists, among many of the students mentioned above, those excluded from taking Latin or those who have chosen not to take it, there is an intense interest in classical mythology and civilization gained from reading books by Rick Riordan and George O'Connor, playing video games like *Rome: Total War*, and watching movies like *Wonder Woman* or a Netflix anime series like *Blood of Zeus*. Teenagers want to engage more deeply with the classical world they have learned about through popular culture, but not through the study of its languages. Thus, I set out to create elective courses that meet that need. As I designed these courses to diversify the definition of classics, it became evident that these classes would also allow for much more diversity in the population of students who chose to study classics. Students at my school now have two options.

In the Roman Technology class, students recreate the products and processes of ancient Roman daily life through experimental archaeology and hands-on STEM labs. We cover many expected topics, such as aqueducts, concrete, catapults, and bread ovens, but also some unexpected ones, such as hairstyling, weaving, and mosaics.

To give some examples of the Roman Technology class curriculum, here are a couple of examples with greater detail. The catapult challenge is a favorite among students. Since weapons, even replicas, are not allowed on our campus, the curriculum focuses on mini-models and the concepts that made Roman catapults so effective. The unit starts with a short lecture on the history and development of

catapults in the Mediterranean world, focusing on material remains such as catapult shot at Masada and images of catapults on Trajan's Column. Throughout the lecture, students read short articles and watch videos of replicas in action. They read a passage by Jewish historian Josephus on the damaging effects of catapults on those being attacked (in translation from the original ancient Greek of *The Jewish Wars*, III.7.23). The students also read selections in translation from Vitruvius' Book X of *De Architectura* about the weight, size, and aerodynamic qualities of different projectiles and the construction of a scorpion (Vitruvius himself was a scorpion operator in the Roman army of the 1st century BCE).

Next, the students learned to build three mini-models out of simple materials, such as wooden tongue depressors, rubber bands, and bottle caps.



Ryan tests his catapult (Photo Credit: Author)

After each build, they tested their catapult's performance in three challenges: 1. Distance — the students shot their catapults as far as possible, measured, and recorded data with each different projectile (cotton ball, ping pong ball, and pencil eraser). 2. Accuracy — the students shot each projectile into a bowl and recorded data, and 3. Wall — the students shot projectiles at a wall of plastic cups and recorded how many shots they fired to knock it down. In each of the challenges, there was a variable and a constant for the students to take note of. In the next step of the unit, students used the information they learned in these initial challenges to design and construct their own catapult, constrained by the supplies they were given. Students whose catapults performed best were asked to model their shots and explain why theirs worked so well. Likewise, students whose models flopped had to reflect on why they failed and were allowed to tweak their models for better performance and try again. Surely, the Romans worked in the same way. (Free access to this unit can be found in the Resources section below.)

This next example from the curriculum is a more collaborative one. In this unit, the final product was a permanent twenty-foot analemmatic mosaic sundial on our school's campus. The students began the unit by learning about the science behind a variety of sundials from antiquity including the *horologium Augusti*. The students read (again, in translation) about the analemma explained in Vitruvius' Book IX. An analemma is a visual representation from the vantage point of the earth depicting the path of the sun through the sky as it changes through the seasons

– it looks similar to an infinity symbol. On an analemmatic sundial, the shadow of the viewer becomes the gnomon or indicator of the time. The students used math skills to orient to true north, reviewed and plotted x/y coordinates to place hourly markers on the dial, and practiced using carpentry measuring tapes.

Once the students had mapped out and plotted the sundial, the next step in the process was learning to design and lay mosaics. Having watched videos of modern mosaic artists using this ancient technology, the students cut stone using hardie wedges and hammers, weighed and estimated stone, designed simple mosaics, laid them in mortar, and grouted the stone.



Students cut marble tesserae using mosaic hammers and hardie wedges (Photo Credit: Author)



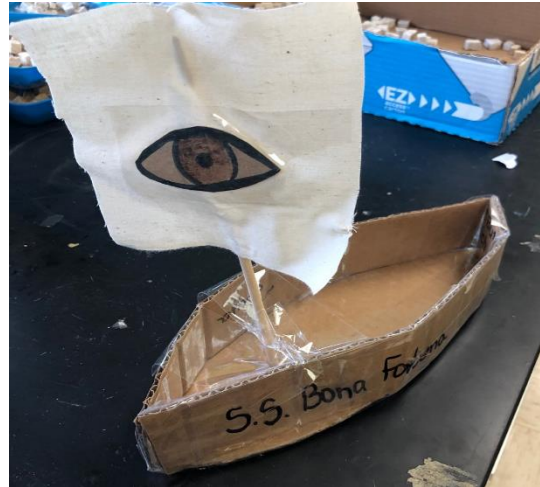
A'Quincy shows off the mosaic he designed and set in mortar (Photo Credit: Author)

Each student was responsible either for a number on the dial or a monthly marker on the gnomon slab. It took a huge amount of collaboration, creative thinking, and engineering to bring this project to fruition, but the students finished it, it works, and it now stands as a testament to the ingenuity of ancient people and the students.



Students demonstrate the finished analemmatic sundial they built in Roman Technology class (Photo Credit: Author)

In the Myth Makers class, the focus is not so much on STEM but on maker education, a cultural movement that encourages students to make things, or tinker with many kinds of materials, in the service of humanity. For example, in a unit dedicated to Jason and the Argonauts, the students listened to the story of the ship *Argo* and then attempted to design and build a boat out of cardboard that would win a race powered solely by their breath.



6. A cardboard boat made by a student for the Argo Challenge (Photo credit: Author)

It was a fun and educational challenge that involved learning a lot about how ancient boats worked. After learning about ancient Mediterranean warp-weighted looms in a unit on Athena and Arachne, the students learned to weave on simple cardboard looms to create a small piece of cloth of their own design.



7. A student learns to weave on a cardboard loom (Photo Credit: Author)

These two courses, developed over the past six years, have become the most popular elective classes at the school. Why? First, kids, especially teenagers, enjoy hands-on experiences which are, unfortunately, not the norm in most schools. In most core classes (math, science, language arts, and social studies), teachers are under pressure to cover the designated curriculum and prepare students for state standardized testing. There is little time for work not related to writing and reading in the subject area. In fact, students often report that the hands-on STEM lessons done in Roman Technology class help them put the math and science skills they learn in those classes to use. They feel “smart” in both classes because they are able to make connections and then proudly announce these cross-curricular connections to their core teachers.

In addition, the hands-on aspect of these classes appeals to learners who do not have strong traditional literary skills. During the first week of teaching Roman Technology a few years ago, D., a Black 6th grader, approached after class one day and said he would be dropping the class because he “was not good at reading and writing.” When promised that he would receive help and accommodations, he stayed. During the year, I noticed that he had innate mechanical knowledge about how things worked — he won the water screw challenge in the hydraulics unit because he was not afraid to experiment, tweak, and then re-experiment with materials. At the end of the school year, he won the Award of Excellence in the class. In fact, D. loved the class so much, he enrolled in it again in 8th grade. His

special education teacher praised the class as being a confidence booster for him. Would a Latin class, so closely focused on language acquisition and literacy, have served this child as well? Perhaps not.

Second, since STEM and STEAM methodology (the engineering design process) focuses heavily on collaboration and cooperation, students in these classes learn and work on projects with students from different programs (gifted, traditional, and special education), different socio-economic groups, and different ethnic groups. Due to concerns about adequate supervision, adequate instructional time, and bullying, many schools have moved away from recess where students have opportunities to socialize. Classes that build in time for students to work together on a common goal help to fill the recess void. In these classes, students make friends and forge relationships that help them build resilience, comfort, and confidence in a school setting.

Last, the focus on material culture, particularly in the Roman Technology class, allows students a diverse view of the classical world not often seen in its literature. Since most classical writers were wealthy and well-resourced, students reading only classical literature do not often hear about the everyday people who made up the classical world. Learning about and recreating the work of skilled craftspeople, such as stone cutters, bread bakers, potters, and hairstylists, in a hands-on way helps to elevate the work and lives of an often-ignored segment of ancient people. It also gives students a window into their lives.

Most importantly, these diverse curricula seem to have sparked an interest from a more diverse segment of my school's population. The demographics of these classes are very different from those of the Latin classes. During the 2020-21 school year (during the first iteration of this article), the Roman Technology classes had the following demographics: 41% Asian, 31% Black, and 7% Hispanic. The white student population was 21%, nearly half of my Latin class percentage of 40%. Overall, in three sections of Roman Technology, 79% were students of color. 84% of my school's population are students of color; thus, my classes lag that average by only 5%. These numbers certainly seem like a win for diversity in classics. This year's numbers are just in, and they are very encouraging: 28% Black (higher than the overall percentage at the school of 25%), 27% Asian, 12% Hispanic, and 33% White (4% lower than the overall percentage at the school).

Even though these curricula may seem novel, the idea of broadening the definition and scope of classics is not an original one. In fact, it has been a trending topic of discussion amongst classicists lately. Recently, Princeton University made news headlines by changing the undergraduate requirements of its classics program to allow for a more flexible route to a degree in classics. In an article defending this change, Dr. Max Leo Goldman and Dr. Rebecca Futo Kennedy, both of Denison University, argued that,

The real story is that classics departments and programs in the United States have been undergoing a steady transformation for many years, often changing the focus of our curricula and scholarship to incorporate the

ancient Greco-Roman world more broadly, to expand the varieties of evidence and methodologies, and to emphasize modern receptions...although we have traditionally shared our annual conference with the Archeological Institute of America, our field has long disproportionately emphasized the ancient Greek and Latin languages. Graduate departments require even bio-archaeologists, who may never use them and need other specialized training, to master both ancient Greek and Latin before they can enter a Ph.D. program. As a result, many undergraduate programs have needed to focus almost exclusively on teaching Greek and Latin languages in order to give their students hope of ever entering the profession, even when this is out of step with their campus needs. (Goldman and Futo Kennedy)

They go on to argue that broadening the scope of classics is good for the field at the university level.

And so, some readers may be asking what schools can do to diversify classics programs. Adding STEM, STEAM, or maker components to already-existing Latin classes is easier than one might think. Having done this for six years, I've written articles about my experience and offer workshops to help teachers envision the necessary methodology (see resources below). Some teachers are unsure of STEM because they do not have the background in those subject areas to feel comfortable teaching them, but remember, the program here at Glasgow Middle can serve as an example. It can be done. One of the most helpful aspects of teaching STEM is the plethora of resources available to STEM teachers. Affordable online learning experiences are available as are grants for classroom projects. Industry supports teachers of the next STEM professionals. STEM classes at Glasgow Middle are sponsored by a local water conservation company which only

asks that students learn about the preservation of the aquifer that supplies our drinking water. This lesson is an easy connection to Roman aqueducts so it's no problem at all. For this small lesson, the company gives Roman Technology classes a renewing grant of \$2500 per year. Just last year, the Roman Technology classes partnered with the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development to build a Roman road to serve as a sidewalk through the school's campus. The professor who assisted with the project found all the funding for it through coordinating companies in the city. Resources abound in STEM industries as do connections to ancient Roman STEM.

Readers seeking to diversify the student population of their classics program but can't imagine making the jump to STEM should consider developing and offering another elective class: the Mythology of Comic Books, Film Theory with Classical Movies, Roman History, etc. Anything that allows diverse students to interact with the classical world will pique their interest. Many schools, especially at the middle school level, are looking for innovative elective courses to offer their students.

Finally, do classical language teachers expect their students to become teachers of those languages? I know that my personal answer is no. In fact, over the course of a decades-long career, I can think of only one student who graduated and became a Latin teacher. The overwhelming majority of my students have fond memories of Latin class, but they are not actively using the language itself in their

careers nor do they read Latin for pleasure in their free time. For my school, a more diverse curriculum that centers material culture, archaeology, history, civilization, art, STEM, reception, mythology, and other connections to the classical world, serves a more diverse population of learners. Thinking outside the box of classical languages has been an adventure, but it has helped diversify the classics program at my school.

RESOURCES

[A Lesson on Catapults](#)

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

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ABSTRACT

This article describes a method for teaching ancient and modern languages, the Polis Method, which was developed in recent years at the Polis Institute in Jerusalem. The method follows two main theoretical principles: Full Immersion (teaching classes entirely in the target language) and Dynamic Language Development (using the order in which the learner internalizes various features of the target language respecting the inner structure and dynamics of the language). Following these principles, the Polis Method has adopted some techniques developed in the field of Second Language Acquisition since the 1970s (TPR, TPRS, Story Building, etc.) As well, instructors at the Polis Institute are currently developing a new technique called Living Sequential Expression (LSE) inspired by the work of François Gouin (1831-1896). These practical techniques are meant to develop the language skills of grammar, vocabulary, conversation, storytelling, speech, reading and writing in holistic fashion.

KEYWORDS

second language acquisition, ancient languages, languages, linguistics, didactics, language pedagogy

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

The Polis Method of language learning and teaching is a dynamically composite, learner-centered, and usage-based method designed at The Polis Institute in Jerusalem originally for the teaching and learning of ancient languages. The characteristics of Jerusalem as a meeting point between the East and the West, the cradle of the Bible and monotheism, and a crucible of the Semitic and Hellenistic heritages have certainly influenced the pedagogical and cultural

approach of the Institute. This school offers students a full immersion in the languages that reflect the history of the city, whether these are ancient (Greek, Latin, Biblical Hebrew) or modern (Modern Hebrew, Modern Standard Arabic and colloquial Palestinian). Thus, the creation of the Polis Method must be understood against the following backgrounds: 1) the limits of the traditional methods applied to the teaching of ancient languages; and 2) the presence in Jerusalem of a team of teachers in ancient languages.

INTRODUCTION

The Polis Institute is one of several independent global initiatives to revive the teaching of classical languages such as Latin (Ørberg, *Lingua Latina Per Se Illustrata: Colloquia Personarum*; Ørberg, *Lingua Latina Per Se Illustrata: Familia Romana*; Desessard v; Foster and McCarthy v), Ancient Greek (Buth, “Koiné Pronunciation” 217; Balme et al. ix), and Biblical Hebrew (Dallaire 13; Buth, *Living Biblical Hebrew* v). In addition, it also promotes the less commonly taught ancient languages such as Classical Syriac, Coptic, and Akkadian. For those who have learned these languages through grammar-translation method (GTM) and have valued their experience, a few have retained this method and have continued to champion it (Lowe). A few more promoters of ancient language teaching now have either modified it (Foster and McCarthy v–vi) or have retained most of GMT practices but have enriched it with humor, passion, and various teaching activities

(Nicoulin 129-33). However, the majority of these initiatives in the last 50 years have already moved beyond GTM altogether, employing and affirming partial or total immersion approaches, in conjunction with other strategies that can be called “communicative approaches.” These are language teaching methods that focus more on interaction and the practical application of communication competencies (e.g. speaking, listening, etc.) rather than on the teaching and mastery of grammar. The underlying principle of communicative language teaching is an “orientation toward language based on a set of assumptions which are radically different from the formalistic views of the structuralist period of influence or the dominant generative model” (Berns 104). Research has found that communicative language teaching methods are more effective than grammar-based ones in engaging students in learning ancient languages (Dircksen 67; Hunt). Nevertheless, unlike other more purely communicative approaches to language teaching, the Polis Method uses a framework that guides a learner’s progress in language acquisition and does not neglect the issue of correct grammar (Rico and Kopf 147).

The method’s development and application began in 2001 when the linguist Christophe Rico started teaching ancient Greek using the full immersion approach (Rico and Daise XIII). The choice was prompted and supported by recent research in second-language acquisition (SLA) that have pointed to the wisdom of actively involving the language learners: encouraging them to “initiate [the] topic and talk, not just react and respond”; considering their “linguistic, extralinguistic, situational,

and extrasituational contexts; etc. (Kumaravadivelu 39) and of giving as many opportunities to learners to use the target language as early as possible and in meaningful ways (Ellis, “Frequency Effects in Language Processing: A Review with Implications for Theories of Implicit and Explicit Language Acquisition” 178; Robinson and Ellis 5; Tomasello 89–90). With the foundation of the institute in 2011 by Rico and his team, the Polis Method found a nursery in which it could be further developed. It continues to be fine-tuned to this day, being adopted for the teaching of modern languages, as well (Rico and Kopf 141; Steinberg).

Definitions and motivations

The Polis Method is "dynamically composite" in the sense that its development has led to the integration-by-design of specific approaches and strategies into one working system. These approaches and strategies complement each other and are aligned to a specific set of principles that are enumerated and explained below. Brown describes this sort of approach to language strategy integration as an “informed eclectic approach” (Brown 40; Brown and Lee 42). The Method is "learner-centered" because it is focused *both* on the use of language and the needs of its learners. It contrasts itself to methods that are "language-centered" (i.e., "concerned with linguistic forms, also called grammatical structures") and "learning-centered" (i.e., "concerned with learning processes") (Kumaravadivelu 26). It is “usage-based” because the method prefers approaches and strategies that expose students to actual and meaningful language use that provides them primarily

with necessary authentic input and, in due time, requires occasions for meaningful output (Verspoor and Nguyen 306–07; Wulff and Ellis 37).

In designing this new method, the Polis Institute’s team was motivated by two main factors. The first was the conviction that Greek and Roman literature, as well as both Jewish and Christian traditions, are the root and source of a key global culture that encompasses both the East and West (O’Brien). If only to help modern men and women gain a deeper understanding of civilization and its literary heritage (Sun), these classical cultural sources continue to be as relevant today as they were in the Age of Antiquity. Consequently, they are worth learning even now and, if possible, in the original languages in which they were written. However, even making space for the acceptability of studying these sources in translation, there is still the fact that an astonishing number of ancient, and more so medieval, texts have been left untranslated into modern languages (Rico, “A New Renaissance of Latin”) or have been translated improperly such that, as a result, the translation – for instance, in the case of Galen – “may [already] reflect a slight misunderstanding...just as easily as [it is] a deliberate attempt to reformulate the original” (McVaugh 120). This means that the actual content of these important documents is accessible only to those with the ability to read them in the languages in which they were written.

The second factor that motivated the Polis team in designing its method is the realization that, while several methods have arisen to improve second or foreign

language (S/FL) learning among modern languages in the last century as a result of modern research and scholarship (Richards and Rodgers 3; Thornbury ix), not one has been systematically developed focusing primarily on the learning and teaching of ancient languages in general. This neglect is ironic considering that theories being used for modern S/FL learning and acquisition today derived a huge chunk of their research from classicists of the past (Nicoulin 5) and the fact that several initiatives have arisen to promote a revival of teaching the classical languages all over the world – from Europe^{32, 33} to Africa,³⁴ and the Middle East³⁵ to North America.³⁶ At least Latin continues to be taught in countries such as Taiwan, China³⁷ and the Philippines (Cortes, “Wanted: Latin - Dead or Alive (Or Why I Choose to Teach a ‘Dead’ Language)” 28–31; Cortes, “Number 153: What Is Its Meaning?”).

It is a truism that the decline of interest in and zeal for studying classical languages has been driven primarily by a perceived lack of its practical utility and application, as is the case of Latin, for instance (Bracke and Bradshaw 1). However, a large part has also been played by the approach to teaching the ancient languages and the framework that justified this approach. This framework is well captured by

³² <https://www.vivariumnovum.net/en>

³³ <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/classics/study/clubs-and-societies/living-latin-and-greek-society>

³⁴ <https://academic.logos.com/teaching-greek-as-a-living-language/?unapproved=346578&moderation-hash=621b4102b050223fcd74a2386b968b7a#comment-346578>

³⁵ <https://www.biblicallanguagecenter.com/>

³⁶ <https://thelatinlanguage.org/>

³⁷ <http://www.latinitassinica.com/>

a comment made by a classics educator in the 60's about his own classics education: "No one ever told us that we should try to do anything with Latin but read and write it... (and) my experience in college Greek was similar" (Levy 224). Views of the sort have justified the dominance of GTM all the way to the 20th century (Bracke and Bradshaw 5). It is true that this method may have its advantages, but research has demonstrated that it also has a tendency to frustrate students (Koutropoulos 58; Richards and Rodgers 7) to the point of abandoning the endeavor to learn the classical languages. More seriously however, it appears that there is "no literature that offers a rationale or justification for [the method] or that attempts to relate it to issues in linguistics, psychology, or educational theory" (Richards and Rodgers 7).

The Polis Method is positioning itself partly as a "pedagogical response to the crisis of classical culture in the third millennium"³⁸ (Ricucci 176). The developers of the Polis Method are aware that a more holistic and dynamic approach to ancient language teaching and learning is needed for the 21st century learner. This includes, among the others, the usage of these ancient languages in day-to-day conversations not necessarily as an end in itself but rather as a necessary means to attain a decent level of facility in reading ancient texts faster and more effectively. The effectiveness of this approach is attested to by several linguists who have tried this approach themselves (Della Casa 2–3; Pettersson).

³⁸ Translated from the original Italian: "*una risposta pedagogica alla crisi della cultura classica nel terzo millennio*"

ELEMENTS OF THE POLIS METHOD

The elements that comprise the Polis Method – enumerated and explained below – encompass a variety of theoretical principles and practical techniques for teaching modern languages that have been validated by well-established research on language in the last half-century in the intersecting fields of psychology (Asher 3.113), language pedagogy (Curtain 3–4; Fortune 9; Krashen et al. 3–7), linguistics (Alagözlü and Kiyamazarslan ix; Thomson; Barclay and Schmitt 811–12), and even neuroscience (Andrews 1–2; Li and Jeong 1–2). The two main innovations of the Polis Method are the precise composition of the elements that comprise the method as a whole as well as a specific understanding of the principle of Dynamic Language Development differs from how it is used by authors such as Verspoor and Behrens (31), for example.

Theoretical Principles

The following theoretical principles determine the practical strategies and techniques that are incorporated by design into the system.

Total immersion. An abundance of research supports the principle that language learning best happens in a fully immersive environment, i.e., where only the target language is heard, read, spoken, and written (Curtain 1–2; Fortune 10). This theoretical principle marks the main difference between the Polis method from

traditional GTM and is the main basis for the inclusion of certain practical techniques into its methodology.

Dynamic language development. The second theoretical principle on which the Polis Method is grounded is likewise one of its distinctive features. It recognizes all language development as a dynamic and iterative process rather than a linear one (Ellis, “The Dynamics of Second Language Emergence: Cycles of Language Use, Language Change, and Language Acquisition” 233; Verspoor and Behrens 27; Verspoor and Nguyen 307). As well, it affirms with Krashen (1) that grammatical structures must be learned according to their natural order of acquisition. For this reason, the Polis Method, recognizes the learner’s advancement much more holistically than on a strictly grammatical scale. While making space for learner specificity in S/FL development, which accrues to the learner’s specific learning circumstances and first language (L1) (Luk and Shirai 721; Verspoor and Behrens 30–31; Murakami and Alexopoulou 396–97), the Polis Method recognizes that for the learner to internalize more effectively the various features of the target S/FL, the inner structure and dynamics of the language concerned must be respected.

Specifically, in applying the method in the early stages, pragmatic communication skills, taught through imitation, are regularly prioritized over grammatical analysis. These skills include making customary greetings, asking for and giving basic information (name, age, provenance, etc.), responding to basic

commands (stand up, sit down, walk to the window, etc.), asking for clarification (what does “x” mean?), and interpreting body language and facial expressions. By using this approach students are then not only able to comprehend more than they can produce on their own, but they are also able to use the target language meaningfully, even if they are not yet able to analyze the phrases or sentences that they are using.

As well, recognizing the dynamic connections among the four basic language skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing, the Polis Method uses the whole language approach in language teaching, and teaches these four “macro” skills in integrative or iterative, rather than linear, fashion (Aydogan and Akbarov 672; Burns and Siegel 2–4; Peregoy and Boyle 162–65). This approach, however, is informed further by usage-based theory to operationalize it according to the following model: a horizontal movement from language reception (input) to language production (output) and a vertical movement from oral-aural language to written language. In other words, imitating the usual order of learning languages (Sisto 324; Jordan and Noda xvii–xviii; Liperote 46–47; Peregoy and Boyle 163–64), learners using the Polis Method ideally hear a word first, then pronounce it,

read it afterwards in certain exercises, and finally write it down (the L-S-R-W or listening-speaking-reading-writing model).

The experience in the Polis Institute of teaching students in the last several



Figure 8. The interaction of the four basic language skills in the Polis Method

years has shown that the “listen-first” approach paradigm is the most effective one in terms of enabling students, even in the beginning stages of language instruction, to use their target language for actual communication. This has been especially true for languages that require learning a new alphabet or writing system (e.g., Arabic, Hebrew, and Greek). Since these languages are difficult to read in the beginning stages, they can be used immediately by the beginning student only through listening and speaking.

Lastly, this theoretical principle is The Polis Method’s underpinning for introducing in progressive fashion the various modes of discourse in language teaching: from dialogue to narration and description, then exposition, and

ultimately, argumentation. Corollary to the preceding idea is that, in the Polis Method, language is taught according to the pragmatic order of acquisition. Thus, students are first taught greetings followed by simple commands, then first and second person pronouns as subject, then deictics, etc.

Practical Techniques

Taking into account the two principles above, the Polis Method then deliberately integrates into itself a wide range of approaches and teaching techniques that have been developed since the 70's in the United States and Canada (Kabat 134–36). The most recent technique developed at the Polis Institute and integrated into the method is the so-called LSE (see below) that is inspired by the research of François Gouin at the end of the 19th century (In Medias Res).

Total Physical Response (TPR). Total Physical Response (TPR) is a language teaching technique first developed by the psychologist James John Asher of San José State University. Attempting to imitate how children learn their parent language, the process relies on physical movement as a way of reacting to and reinforcing the learner's understanding of verbal input. The Polis Method uses this approach from the very first class, during which the student is required only to react physically to a series of commands given by the instructor; no verbal interaction is expected to take place (Dell'Oro and Kolde 80; Encinas Reguero 85; Marcin Loch 147; Ricucci 158).

Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling. TPR Storytelling is a language acquisition technique created in the 90's by Spanish teacher Blaine Ray, inspired by Steven Krashen's theory on foreign language acquisition (FLA) and its emphasis on the role of "comprehensible input," i.e., sentences whose meaning students fully grasp. To provide students with a learning environment where "comprehensible input" could take place, Ray developed a series of stories or narrations that correspond to the students' linguistic level and that actively engages them. Through the narration new vocabulary is introduced (Kiymazarslan 12). In adapting this strategy of storytelling to its system, the Polis Method completely excludes translations and explanations in any language other than the one being taught (Steiner). As well, in the process of navigating the story and grappling with the explanation of the instructor, students are encouraged to ask or respond to questions using complete sentences. It is through this approach that The Polis Method cultivates the internalization of speaking skills.

Story Building. The main idea in Story Building, a technique developed by Greg Thomson (University of Alberta) in 2007 within his Growing Participant Approach (GPA), is to present successive images that, when taken together, form a consistent story. The technique reinforces vocabulary and grammar retention, and permits the teaching of new grammatical structures as students are invited to describe the images presented using the vocabulary they already know (Mas and Baigatova 170–71). Within the Polis Method, the Story Building Technique is

often used to practice the switch from present to past tense (O'Malley 35; Rico and Kopf 145–47).

Images and props. The Polis Method presents new vocabulary using pictures and props in order to enable students to directly associate a new word with a sensorial experience rather than words that are not of the target language (Dell'Oro and Kolde 91). This practice is based on the principle that human memory is largely dependent on sensory experience (Facella et al. 212–13; Wong et al. 2).

Conversation in pairs or small groups. Conversations between students in class is a common and important feature in modern language teaching (Fisher et al. 5–20; Loyola; Speidel 100) which Polis applies to the teaching of ancient languages (O'Malley 35). In more advanced classes involving two to five students at a time, these encounters provide more opportunities for authentic speaking experiences as well as for correcting possible errors.

Living Sequential Expression (LSE). The newest element in the Polis Method is a technique called Living Sequential Expression (LSE) (In Medias Res; López de Tejada Irizo 4–8) and is another of its distinctive features. Inspired by the work of the French educator and foreign language teacher, François Gouin (1831–1896), LSE is a language teaching strategy developed in the Polis Institute to enhance a student's ability for storytelling and narrating experiences. LSE combines Asher's Total Physical Response (TPR) approach with a modified

version of Gouin's Series Method of language acquisition (Gouin, *The Art of Teaching and Studying Languages*) . Two ideas emphasized in Gouin's Series Method have inspired LSE: a) the importance of sequentiality in the learning process, and b) the importance of expressing basic human experience into the language that the learner is in the process of acquiring.

By exploring the crossroads of SLA / FLA research and memory science, LSE intends to enhance the rhythm of the acquisition process by modifying language instruction to accord with how the memory works (Ellis and Sinclair 234; Brill-Schuetz and Morgan-Short 260–61; Wen et al. 1; Corballis 5; Mascelloni et al. 168–69; Mickan et al. 103). For instance, Roger Shank's theory of Memory Organization Packets (MOPs) appears to support the ideas on which LSE is based. If memories, according to this theory, can be found in "scenes" which are then organized into "packets" that, in turn, are made up of "a set of scenes directed toward the achievement of a goal" (Schank, "Memory Organization Packets" 123) and "record the essential parts of the similarities in experience of different episodes" (Schank, "Language and Memory" 273), then it makes sense to put a premium on the use of images, on making reference to day-to-day activities, and on emphasizing sequentiality in language teaching.

LSE is carried out on a practical level by first identifying what might be considered as "regular" tasks and events for the "average" learner. These are then listed down to cover, as far as possible, the whole spectrum of commonly done

activities. The idea behind this approach is that learners who can express as many of the activities they regularly do in the specific target language would have attained a certain degree of fluency in that language.

Regular tasks that cover the average learner's experience are classified into usual (e.g., stand up, walk, stop, etc.), daily (e.g., wake up, take a shower, have breakfast, etc.), weekly, monthly, and yearly tasks. Some rare but significant lifetime events are also included. For each task and event, one or several sequences that consist of four to seven actions – consistently related to one another – are then articulated. For example, the task “taking the bus” could include the following sequence of actions:

1. Walk to the bus stop. Βάδιζε εις τὸν σταθμόν. *Ī ad statiōnem.*
2. Wait for the bus. Ἀνάμεινον τὸ λεωφορεῖον. *Opperīre raedam longam.*
3. Enter the bus. Ἐμβηθι εις τὸ λεωφορεῖον. *Ascende in raedam.*
4. Go towards the driver. Πρόσελθε τῷ ἀμαξεῖ. *Adī ad aurigam.*
5. Buy your ticket. Ἀγόρασον τὸ σύμβολον. *Tesseram eme.*
6. Sit down. Κάθισον. *Cōnsīde.*
7. Get off the bus. Κατάβηθι ἀπὸ τοῦ λεωφορείου. *Dēscende de raedā longā.*

At this point a comment ought to be made regarding neologisms. The dynamism of the Polis Method is shown, among others, by its ready admission of vocabulary referring to concepts that did not exist in the ancient world. On a

pragmatic level, this step is necessary if one were to effectively use an ancient language as a day-to-day language. Such is the case for using λεωφορεῖον in the example above to mean “bus,” which is derived from the Modern Greek word of that meaning, λεωφορείο. In Latin, that modern means of transportation would be rendered as “*raeda longa*,” which literally means “long wagon with four wheels” (Minkova and Tunberg 189). The word for “X-ray” would be “*radiographica imago*,” that is, “image written by rays” – presumably radio waves (Cortes, “Wanted: Latin - Dead or Alive (Or Why I Choose to Teach a ‘Dead’ Language)” 31). A bomb would be “*missile ignivomum*” (Egger and Giannangeli 101) which quite literally means “a weapon for throwing that spews out fire.”

As can be seen, it is not a matter of inventing words in the ancient language from nothing and without basis. The developers of the Polis Method understand that a good number of words for modern concepts, like the ones just mentioned, have their origins in ancient languages like Latin or Greek, while a smaller number come from Arabic and Hebrew (Rico, *La Résurrection des langues anciennes l'enseignement du grec ancien à l'Institut Polis*). Thus, adopting and using these words together with the original lexicon of the ancient languages gives the teacher and students the opportunity to examine the etymologies of these words and to explore the inner sense of the ancient language.

Assuming a total of one hundred and fifty commonly done activities that may be divided into two to five different tasks, and which in turn may each contain

four to seven actions, the LSE compendium would eventually consist of some 2,500 commands and some 3,500 different words. This number of words is what the core vocabulary of any language consists of.

Although LSE is inspired by Gouin's Series Method, there are three differences between the two. First, LSE activities are focused on words more frequently used in the context of the average learner's more practical activities. These are in turn classified according to their frequency (usual, daily, weekly, etc.). In contrast, Gouin's "themes" are more general and not specified to regular practical activities. Second, LSE limits its tasks to 4-7 in contrast to Gouin's 15-20, thus enabling better retention of vocabulary. Third, LSE requires both the use of TPR and total immersion in its activities, which was not the case of Gouin's methodology (Gouin, *The Art of Teaching and Studying Languages*; Gouin, *A First Lesson in French*).

Other activities and techniques. To increase opportunities for more natural immersive experiences the Polis Method encourages students to attend extra-class activities using the target language (O'Malley 35). The Polis Method also employ songs with lyrics in ancient languages as teaching tools (Rico and Daise 14) based on research findings that songs strengthen retention of vocabulary and grammar (Kara and Aksel 2740-41; Delibegovic Dzanic and Pejic 51; Busse et al. 1-2).

THE POLIS METHOD APPLIED

The Polis Method in the Classroom

Contrary to what Krashen advises, the Polis Method deems the explicit teaching of grammar essential to even immersion courses, provided that only the target language is used to this end (Fotos and Ellis 622–23). Greek and Latin offer the advantage of a grammatical vocabulary and phraseology that is almost complete. Nevertheless, grammar is always taught intuitively and made explicit only once the student has internalized it. The principles followed for the assimilation of paradigms are three:

1. Assimilating only one paradigm per lesson
2. Gradual assimilation of the paradigm (from singular to plural or 1st, then 2nd and then 3rd person)
3. Gradual assimilation in terms of the four skills (listening > speaking > reading > writing)

The class must start from what students already know about the paradigm, through a conversation or a story. Almost every lesson becomes then an LSE or TPR session that allows for the discovery and integration of new paradigms or syntactical structures.

These exercises prepare for the discovery of a text where the grammatical feature of the chapter is exemplified. The practice begins with “closed exercises” (i.e., those in which there is only one possible answer) and proceeds to more “open

exercises” (i.e., those that require creative production). The former include practice in changing phrases from the present tense to the past tense, or from the singular to the plural or some fill in the blank drills. The latter are production exercises either oral or written. The essential thing is to respect, to the extent possible during each lesson, the following progression: listening – oral production – reading – writing.

In line with it being a usage-based method, The Polis Method integrates authentic texts written by ancient language authors in the appropriate stage of the student’s language learning. To get to this stage effectively, during the first two years the students approach these texts gradually. In the first phases of instruction, students are introduced to these authentic texts through dialogues and narratives in the target language. The dialogues are easy to understand and are presented through some ten illustrated characters – most of which representing students – that constantly recur throughout the narratives.

Each book used in the Polis Method introduces the same characters albeit with different names, depending on the target language being studied. The illustration captures each character’s peculiar and, often, funny attributes and thus provides a context that creates comic situations and facilitates comprehension while allowing students to anticipate the outcome of a story. Like the portraits of the gallery in *Le Petit Prince* or the main characters in the dramas in Molière, those that appear in the dialogues of the Polis Method possess exaggerated attributes that facilitate the creation of humorous situations or dynamic that in turn becomes the

context for exploring a lexical theme. These stories can easily be acted out by the language learners.

The Main Skills

All the techniques mentioned so far are directed to the acquisition of the following six main skills (not enumerated in chronological order):

1. Grammatical skills – developed in any kind of enunciative situation (conversation, tale, speech, or lyricism);
2. Vocabulary skills – developed in any kind of enunciative situation;
3. Conversation skills – illustrated by dialogue, phone conversation, Skype, WhatsApp and SMS conversations;
4. Storytelling skills – narrating an experience or a dream, telling a joke, teaching a recipe, reporting a robbery or an accident;
5. Speech skills – writing a letter or mail, giving a lecture or presentation, saying a prayer, describing something, tweeting, posting a blog article;
6. Reading and composition skills – reading or writing all kind of texts, whether simple or literary, in the target language.

Conversation skills. During the time allotted to language instruction, conversation skills can be developed through conversational pair and group work. This technique has already become traditional in SLA (Kehe and Kehe v–vi). For the exercise to be fruitful and comprehensive, it is useful to map the components, modalities, and topics which are part of most casual conversations, and to train the

students on how to use or deal with them. Without being exhaustive, the following are examples:

1. usual components of conversation – greetings, assertion and negation, reference to time and place, questions, understanding and misunderstanding, agreements and disagreements, clarifying each other's assertions, taking leave;
2. logical and emotional modalities – opinion, choices and preferences, obligation and necessity, hope and discouragement, projects, likes and dislikes;
3. main conversational topics – weather, buying and selling, friendship, politics, sports, passing of time, etc.

Storytelling skills. Storytelling exercises as a means to enhance comprehension skills have been extensively developed in recent years through TPRS. Storytelling skills among students seem instead to have been paid little attention in SLA. On the contrary, The Polis Method, and LSE specifically, enables the power of the storytelling approach to improve vocabulary and comprehension skills. Each set in the LSE compendium is a mini-story threaded by a simple narrative. The simplicity of the story, its inner logic, and the logical connection among the vocabulary used facilitate the acquisition of the skills mentioned.

Speech skills. As for speech skills, one could draw many ideas from the so called *progymnasmata* of antiquity: the rhetorical exercises that trained the students

to become orators (Kennedy ix; Gibson xx–xxi). In the last few decades there has been a renewed interest in literature for these techniques (Russell v; Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind: Greek Education in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt* 1–12; Cribiore, *The School of Libanius in Late Antique Antioch* 9). In the Polis Institute, students who wish to complete the two-year program in Ancient Philology are trained to give a speech in Biblical Hebrew, Modern Hebrew, Ancient Greek, Modern Standard Arabic, or Spoken Arabic at the end of their studies. Some of these speeches have been recorded and can be watched on the website of the institute.

Reading literary texts and composing within the language. Presenting the students with a literary text without any introduction would certainly mean overloading them. In the Polis Method the instructor employs pre-reading strategies to familiarize the students with the difficult vocabulary and phrases in the text. This can be done in different ways. If the text is a story or an account, for instance, it is always possible to conduct a TPR or LSE session which will allow the students to enact the main points of the plot. The teacher gives commands related to the narrative, and the students soon grasp the meaning through the context.

If, instead, the text is more theoretical and deals, for instance, with education theory, it seems appropriate to have a preparation session in which specialized words and phrases from the fields of education, teaching, and learning are gathered and set in relation to each other. The presentation of these vocabulary

items can be extralinguistic (using images and props or performing verbal actions and little scenes) or linguistic (identifying the root of the different lexical items, the suffixes, the derivatives). These activities should help familiarize the students with around 95 percent or more of the needed vocabulary such that in their first encounter with the text itself, they can already recognize these words, if only passively.

CONCLUSION

For second / foreign language learning, Schmidt affirms that “different learners use different learning strategies” (7). The Polis Method is a way to teach ancient and modern languages that follows best practices and research in foreign language teaching (Sams 36–44), addresses more holistically the different language skills and considers a language’s dynamic development in the learner. Because of its dynamically composite character, the Polis Method is an *opus imperfectum* in the sense of its not being static or “set in stone,” as research in SLA / FLA continues to develop and as Polis teachers gather more feedback and new insights from the classroom. Brown affirms that this open and dynamic approach gives rise to “new insight(s) and more innovative possibilities, and the cycle continues” (Brown 40). What is clear is that, while ensuring the assimilation of grammar in an intuitive way, and then later formalizing and making its contents explicit, the Polis Method is looking to use the best communicative strategies presented by the research, as

they come, to motivate 21st century students to bring the ancient languages back to life (Encinas Reguero 9; Ricucci 176).

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