What can Taylor Swift do for your Latin Prose Composition students? Using popular music to teach Latin poetry analysis skills.[1]

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ABSTRACT

This article presents a method for developing and practicing both close reading skills and compositional skills as used in an undergraduate Latin Prose Composition course. By using contemporary popular music, students can learn how to recognize, comprehend, and use as a basis for analysis rhetorical and literary devices found in Latin poetry as well as poetic compositional style. When students translate popular songs that they know and understand into Latin and then analyze them according to basic philological processes, they are able to remove barriers to understanding deriving from cultural differences between the Roman world and their modern world. Further, this assignment also offers a solution to the critical problem that many students have no facility with poetic analysis of poetry in their native language. In addition to seeing extensive development of philological methods in students performing this assignment, results were also seen in advanced reading Latin courses in the form of better class discussion and more mature term papers.

KEYWORDS

Latin, song, music, composition, literary devices, translation, close reading

One of the singular difficulties that I have had teaching the analysis of ancient poetry in an upper-level undergraduate Latin reading course is getting the students to understand — not just identify, but comprehend on a deeper level — that a poet's various stylistic techniques, especially devices such as *pleonasm*, *tricolon*

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1 This essay began as a presentation at the 2017 CAMWS Annual Meeting in Kitchener, Ontario, and thus retains an informal style. I would like to thank Theodora Kopestonsky, Justin Arft, and the members and audience of the panel "Finding a New Beat: Teaching Latin Poetry with Pop Music," of which this essay was a part, for their stimulating papers and comments. I would also like to thank my Spring 2016 Latin Prose Composition class at Austin Peay State University — Arian Finley, Rebecca Illig, Alexander Kee, Michelle Pletcher, and Etenia Mullins — for their inspiration and willingness to be prose composition guinea pigs. I am also particularly grateful to John Gruber-Miller and the three anonymous referees for their suggestions and advice on this essay.

crescendo, *zeugma*, and *anaphora*, are more than clever verbal games. Rather, they give poems important literary texture and enhance the poem's emotional and intellectual atmosphere. Indeed, I have seen sweat-drenched brows and horror-gaped faces too frequently when I ask a student to explain, for example, what effect *asyndeton* or *metonymy* have on one of Horace's *Odes* or why we care at all about the *chiasmus* in a Vergilian "Golden Line." This exasperation likely derives from the parallel struggle of learning to render Latin poetry into coherent and natural English while simultaneously transmitting Roman literary ideals or social contexts into 21st century ones. There are so many complex literary and cultural hurdles in learning to understand a Latin poem to clear at once that students get understandably flustered. These struggles are exacerbated by the common problem that many students are unfamiliar with or uncomprehending of the process of poetic analysis in their *native* languages; attempting the process first in another tongue certainly is putting the cart before the horse. With unfortunate regularity, we, as Latin teachers, have become the instructors of English grammar in our introductory classes. We should, it seems, get used to teaching basic poetic rudiments as well. The typical pedagogical strategy used in Latin courses for developing these skills — that is, the recognition and comprehension of structural devices like those just listed and their impact upon a poem — is to practice stylistic close reading skills with Latin poets. But the foreignness of these devices and multivalence of Roman poetry seems to intimidate the students too much for retention beyond a semester's end. A better, and ultimately more effective, option would seem to be to bring Roman poetry a bit closer to the comprehensible world of the students. This essay outlines the practice of the close reading of poetry as recently used in a Latin Prose Composition course in a novel way, through the lens of contemporary popular music, to overcome the difficulties of time and culture for our Latin students while also developing an understanding and facility for the most commonly used literary devices of Roman poets.[2] Further, the assignment outlined below demonstrated benefits in Latin reading courses with regard to teaching basic philological analysis skills and receiving more effective and productive literary critical term papers from the students.

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2 The use of song in Latin classrooms has enjoyed a boom of sorts recently, resulting in some excellent articles on its use. See Irby-Massie, 2009; Moore, 2013; and Hallett, 2006 for different approaches to using song and music to dismantle learning barriers in Latin courses of all levels.

A Fortuitous Failure

The strategy for teaching philological analysis for Roman poetry outlined here developed out of a fortuitous failure during the Spring 2016 iteration of my Latin Prose Composition course at Austin Peay State University. I had come to the realization that, outside the Vatican and certain secret societies, composing Latin in good Ciceronian or Livian idiom is no longer the necessary skill that it once was, though Prose Composition courses still have tremendous effect upon a student's development with a language.[3] As such, I planned to use my Latin Prose Composition course to solidify my students' feel for Latin grammar, especially more nuanced features like the intersection of grammar and an author's style, and to help them develop the close reading skills that are the hallmark of our profession and that would be applicable in our Latin poetry and prose reading courses.[4] Interested in breaking the usual tedium of translating English into Latin and grammar review, I decided I would give my students an assignment that forced them to think more deeply about Ciceronian style, hoping that once they did this for Cicero, they could apply the learned strategies, *mutatis mutandis*, to other authors, other genres, and hopefully their own Latin compositions.

This is how that assignment worked: Over the course of two classes, we discussed the basics of rhetorical form, from the parts of an oration and their goals, like the *exordium*, *refutatio* and *peroratio*, to the different rhetorical styles, like "plain" or "grand," to a few specific literary devices, like *recusatio*, *praeteritio*, or *accumulatio*. Once they seemed to grasp these basics, we learned a sound process for analyzing Ciceronian style. As a guideline, I asked the students to use Timothy Moore's excellent "[Latin Prose Stylistic Analysis Checklist]()," which leads the student through a series of analytical questions on issues like diction, syntax, and the effects of rhetorical tropes. I then asked the students to translate the first two OCT pages of the *1st Catilinarian* and build a coherent analysis of Cicero's style therein using the terms and techniques we had learned. The work I received from the students was uniformly successful. For the first time, it seemed, my students understood how Cicero built his narrative to make a persuasive argument. For example, one student,

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3 The bibliography on the usefulness and worth of Latin Prose Composition and various techniques for including it in Latin classes of every level has grown exponentially since Ball and Ellsworth's challenge in 1989. Please see Saunders, 1993 for a coherent defense of Composition. I am firmly in the "Prose Composition is useful" camp.

4 See Davis, 1990 for a useful strategy to teach critical reading that leads to more productive term essays.

applying one of Moore's questions about diction (i.e., "what choices has the author made between synonyms?") noted,

> *"The diction that Cicero uses here emphasizes to the audi-*
> *ence how Catiline's actions are to be condemned. After his*
> *initial interrogation of Catiline, Cicero uses verbs that fit*
> *his persuasive purpose and make others seem more sympa-*
> *thetic than the wrongful Catiline. For example, when Cicero*
> *is questioning which of the men on the senate Catiline*
> *thinks is unaware of his actions, Cicero uses ignōrāre ("to*
> *be ignorant") instead of other options such as nescīre ("to*
> *not know"). The importance of nuance can be seen through*
> *Cicero's use of ignōrāre, which has a stronger implication*
> *of negativity and, importantly, misunderstanding, as he is*
> *accusing Catiline of believing that some of the men on the*
> *senate are possibly blind or even mindless of his actions."*

The students discussed Cicero's vocabulary, the basic structure of his oration, his use of literary devices, and even subtler techniques like humor. I was encouraged enough by their work to try the assignment again with Caesar two weeks later. The students were given the famous opening passage from Caesar's *De Bello Gallico* I, a short conversation on the difference between oratory and historiography, and a week to complete a five-page written analysis. The positive results of the first Ciceronian assignment were repeated. I received comments such as: "[Caesar] also chooses to use the present active indicative with almost all of his verbs – only making a few verbs passive, yet still present – which helps draw the reader into the action of the events" and "[h]ere, clauses are strung together in a paratactic manner, because ideas are often short and placed together without much subordination. Caesar interweaves long and short sentences throughout this first chapter, as the lengthy sentences typically incorporate descriptive subordinate clauses."[5] I was impressed that the students had picked up the philological method we had discussed in class, and that Moore's checklist encourages, so quickly.

The success of these assignments encouraged me to try this same assignment with poetic texts. After all, I thought, would the philological process be that much different for poetry than it was for oratory and historiography? I asked the students

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5 These student quotes are directly responding to questions in Moore's checklist: I.A and III.C.2-4, respectively.

to perform this task one more time, this time with about 50 lines of Vergil's *Aeneid*, from Aeneas' narration of the fall of Troy in Book 2. We briefly discussed a basic list of literary devices often found in poetic contexts, such as *asyndeton*, *metonymy*, *personification*, and *anaphora*, and they went to work. But this assignment, which had worked so well for prose authors, failed catastrophically for poetry. The work turned in barely scratched the surface of the poetic passage — identifying a few devices with little discussion of effects and presenting a general confusion on how to tackle a poetic passage of any complexity; the students showed little of the impressive nuance they had offered in the discussion of the prose texts. I was confused, and the students were disappointed.

With an assignment autopsy having been performed, the failure of the poetry version of this assignment, in light of its success with prose, seems accountable to three things:

1. Poetic structure and word order is different enough from prose to obfuscate the stylistic structure. The students had trouble dealing with the ordered chaos and multivalent nature of Latin poetry, as opposed to the relatively straightforward narrative style of an author like Caesar. Confidence in their translations suffered accordingly and, consequently, they recognized fewer literary devices or at least were unable substantively to link stylistic devices to judgments of Vergil's style.

2. Stylistic analysis is strengthened by a critic's ability to understand an author's "references" or "cultural vocabulary." As one of these students noted later, "the nuances and figures of speech that an unfamiliar poet from an unfamiliar culture uses are the hardest part" because literature can rely upon a shared vocabulary, temporally and culturally located. Poetry is, of course, more dependent on metaphor, intertextuality, and subtlety than prose and, thus, is more foreign to the student whose contact with the Romans is relatively new.

3. It is particularly hard to analyze ancient literary devices when students are not sure if they are able to recognize them in English poetry, let alone poetry written two millennia ago in another language. It became abundantly clear that understanding the mechanics of the

literary devices prevalent in one's own language is a crucial first step to their comprehension in a foreign literary milieu.

Contemporary popular music as a tool for teaching literary devices

As our class contemplated the rubble of the Vergilian philological analysis assignment, the students proposed an activity to revive our class energy: they suggested that we treat Taylor Swift, Miley Cyrus, and a few other singers like ancient poets, put them into Latin, and then decide if their songs are any good. Put more formally, the two-part task to which we all agreed was: 1) to analyze popular songs, such as Taylor Swift's *Bad Blood* (*1989*. Big Machine Records, 2014), Miley Cyrus' *Wrecking Ball* (*Bangerz*, RCA Records, 2013), and Adele's *Hello* (*25*. XL Recordings, 2015) for literary devices that are also common to Latin poetry and 2) translate these songs into construable and attested Latin, as well as they could at their stage of skills development, paying careful attention to reproduce appropriate literary devices for a Roman form.

Originally, I had intended this project to last just one class period; it would serve as a fun respite from tedious grammar discussion. But our class's experience with this task demonstrated a greater pedagogical ideal at work. Allowing the students to learn poetic analysis with poetry they know much better, from a world that they know implicitly, encouraged the students to develop their comprehension of, facility with, and confidence with poetic compositional technique without the stress of translating another culture at the same time. In the end, this activity was wildly successful, as I will explain below, and will now feature prominently in my future Latin Prose Composition courses.

As a teacher attempting to make a learning opportunity out of this ungraded, for-fun activity, I insisted that we go about our task systematically, applying good philological method to our chosen texts. Likewise, I decided that that the students needed to utilize Moore's checklist and experience failure with these concepts. In short, I continually encouraged the students to pay attention to process over product — we were playing the long game of skill-learning after all. What follows is the process I followed with this group of students. I would emphasize that the translations into Latin that follow herein are the actual translations produced by this class on the classroom's whiteboard without extended time or benefit of reference works, such as

Smith and Hall's *Copious and Critical English-Latin Dictionary* or prose composition handbooks.[6] I have reproduced these uncorrected and flawed translations here specifically to underscore the sorts of interactions I had with these students (i.e., promptings like "what other syntactical constructions could you have used here?" and "what might have been a better dictional choice?") and the interactions one who was using this method would need to have with their students to develop the skill under discussion.

Our first step was to examine the lyrics to Taylor Swift's *Bad Blood,* trying to identify literary devices like those used in Latin poetry.

(chorus)
'Cause baby, now we've got bad blood   1
You know it used to be mad love
So take a look what you've done
'Cause baby, now we've got bad blood, hey!

Now we've got problems   5
And I don't think we can solve 'em
You made a really deep cut
And baby, now we've got bad blood, hey!

(verse 1)
Did you have to do this?
I was thinking that you could be trusted   10
Did you have to ruin what was shiny?
Now it's all rusted
Did you have to hit me where I'm weak?
Baby, I couldn't breathe
And rub it in so deep   15
Salt in the wound like you're laughing right at me

Oh, it's so sad to
Think about the good times

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6 I did supply both Lewis and Short's *A Latin Dictionary* and the *Oxford Latin Dictionary* for every class period.

You and I.[7]

      Bad Blood (written by Taylor Swift, Max Martin, Johan Shellback)

As we analyzed the song, the students first recognized that the song's title was a metaphor, with the metaphor of "bad blood" representing conflict between two (former) friends. One student noticed that lines 1-9 were full of *anaphora* emphasizing the key theme of conflict and presenting a poetic flow similar to an emotionally charged conversation. Then we discussed extensively the grammar, syntax, and diction of the song's phrases, using Moore's checklist again. As we took Moore's questions one at a time, the students made the sort of observations that are fundamental and vital for good poetic analysis, like the alternation between first person plural and second person singular verbs in the song's chorus and how that structure affected the emotional dialogue between "Taylor" and her mysterious former friend: the song presents "we" when remembering good times and "you" when remembering bad ones.[8] They also noticed that certain metaphorical phrases were especially fruitful for Swift's representation of emotional entropy, such as lines 11-12, "did you have to ruin what was shiny/now it's all rusted," which answer Moore's questions II.E and II.F (i.e., "To what extent does the author use metaphorical expressions?" and "Are there any expressions particularly effective in their imagery?" respectively). The students even recognized the importance of the repetition of certain lines for emotive emphasis and poetic shaping (i.e., lines 1, 4, and 8 each use the phrase "now we've got bad blood"). Without the stress of translating this song *out* of Latin *into* English — rather they could make their analysis in their native language and time period — the students were surprised how much they noticed.

Our activity's final step was to put the lyrics into a construable Latin construction and diction. In the discussion that follows, I will present examples of the class' translation of *Bad Blood*, unaltered and uncorrected, with the concepts I highlighted as we discussed their process and product. As I noted above, my goal was to teach the process; a perfect translation could be developed with more time and access to the full gamut of reference works.

When dealing with poetry and poetic composition and translation, the concept of translating for sense rather than for exact dictional matching and phrasing is

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7 This is not the whole of the song. There are two more verses and corresponding choruses. The parts of the song shown here are only what was analyzable in one class period.

8 This observation was in direct contemplation of Moore's question III.C.10: "To what extent does the author use parallelism in arranging his clauses."

crucial. This particular song gave us multiple examples to drive this goal home. For example, the name of the song itself, "Bad Blood," a metaphor for rivalry or animosity in English, tempts one to use *sanguis* as the Latin equivalent and my class wished to do so. But, upon closer inspection, *sanguis* is unattested in this sense in Latin. After consulting Lewis and Short (and later Smith and Hall), the class and I recognized this problem and where the class originally had translated the song's title as "*Malus Sanguis*," they now could translate it as "*Simultates*."[9] To be sure, *simultas* rather than *sanguis* was less vivid as a poetic phrase, but as a rule we had to stay within the attestations. The class encountered a similar issue, and learned an important lesson about using reference works, with the concept of rusting metal as seen in *Bad Blood*, lines 11-12: "Did you have to ruin what was shiny?/Now it's all rusted." Originally the students used *robigum* to describe the shiny thing (i.e., their friendship) that had oxidized for "Taylor" and her friend. But *robigus* is only attested as *Robigus*, the Roman god of the rust blight and so could not be used. As a class we discussed the options: do we use, then, *robigo (-inis, f.)* as "rust" or do we use a verb that means "to become rusty" or "to become corroded"? After recognizing that the point of "Taylor's" question was about corrosion and ruination, rather than specifically rust, the students agreed that a verb phrase, with applicable attestations, like *robiginem trahere, torpescere, or tabescere,* would construe the sense far better.[10]

A third example, which the students nailed right away and drove home the concept of getting the dictional sense correct over exact phrasing, dealt with the word "baby" in the first stanza:

Swift:
'Cause baby, now we've got bad blood   1
You know it used to be mad love
So take a look what you've done
'Cause baby, now we've got bad blood, hey!

My Class:
Quod, care, nunc malum sanguinem habemus. 1
Scis id fuisse insanissimum amorem

9 Smith and Hall, s.v. blood suggests *simultas* for the negative state of mind or passions that English refers to as "bad blood." Lewis and Short, s.v. *simultas* 1 corroborates this using the word to represent "a hostile encounter between two persons, enmity, rivalry, hated, etc."

10 See Lewis and Short, s.v. *Robigus, robigo, tabesco, torpesco* and Smith and Hall, s.v. rust for these attestations.

Aspice ad facta a te
Quod, care, nunc malum sanguinem habemus.
Ecce![11]   5

The students specifically chose to translate Taylor's use of "baby" (here, in lines 1 and 4, but also present in lines 9 and 13) as *care,* instead of a more literal word like *infans*, because *carus*, as they had seen in Roman authors previously, most aptly communicated the emotional intimacy of the original. Justifying this choice, they argued that "Taylor's" relationship with her friend was not necessarily a sexual love, but certainly demonstrated deep affection.

Verse 1 (lines 9-16) of *Bad Blood* also proved apt for a discussion of the literary device of *anaphora* and the process for reproducing this in Latin:

Swift:
(verse 1)
Did you have to do this?
I was thinking that you could be trusted   10
Did you have to ruin what was shiny?
Now it's all rusted
Did you have to hit me where I'm weak?
Baby, I couldn't breathe
And rub it in so deep   15
Salt in the wound like you're laughing right at me

My class:
Faciendumne fuit tibi hoc?
Putabam me posse tibi credere.
Delendumne fuit tibi quod lucidum erat?
Iam nunc omnino id est robigum (*sic*).
Pulsandumne fuit tibi in quo infirma sum?
Care, spirare non potui.
Confricandumne fuit altissime tibi,
velut ad me rides, o sal in vulnere est!

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11 Again, please note that this is an uncorrected translation and *malum sanguinem* should be *simultates*.

Here, the students commented specifically on the string of questions and answers about the friend's compulsions to hurt "Taylor" and insisted on placing the gerundive parts of those passive periphrastics first in each line because it would emphasize "Taylor's" worry about her friend's compulsion to hurt her at the forefront, grammatically constructing *anaphora*.

This exercise also showed possible benefit upon later reflection of the assignment in the discussion of identifying the correct syntactical constructions in Latin. For example, at *Bad Blood*, line 6, we see "Taylor" express doubt over whether the problems the pair had with each other could be resolved: "…/And I don't think we can solve 'em." The students produced *[e]t nescio nos ea solvere posse* as their translation of Swift's line that day, rendering it with a simple Indirect Statement. But, in class, one could and should push them on the accuracy of this choice. "Taylor" is expressing doubt here, which is ultimately a question (i.e., "whether or not?"). Thus, in class, a teacher could lead their students to see that this would be better expressed with an indirect question or the use of "-ne" (e.g., *nescio num ea solvere possimus* or *possimusne ea solvere*).

Popular Songs and Latin Poetic Analysis Assignment

This classroom experience was so fun and productive in developing important philological skills that the students and I all agreed that we would do this activity again as a graded final assignment. I asked them to use the same process that we had just performed, but to produce something more formal than our class translation of *Bad Blood*. In essence, I wanted to combine the prose style analysis assignment from earlier in the semester, discussed above, with our impromptu song translation day. The assignment given to the students in lieu of a previously designed final translation assignment asked the students to translate one recent English-language song into construable, attestable, and idiomatic Latin, using the rules and techniques learned during the semester (see Appendix 1). As a final product they were required to offer an essay between 1200 and 2000 words that developed a thorough poetic analysis of their chosen song's structure, theme, and literary devices according to the philological analysis method we had learned. I explained to the students first that this assignment contained several distinct pieces that they would need to consider before beginning: 1) choosing a suitable song, 2) analyzing the structure and diction of the song's English, 3) determining the appropriate Latin constructions needed to construe the English, 4) choosing attestable and idiomatic diction to represent the

English ideas, and 5) analyzing how the Latin constructions intersected with the English ones. My goal with all pre-assignment instruction was to encourage the development of a careful and systematic philological habit. For example, I made it clear to the students that choosing the right song was crucial, as a poorly chosen text could paint the critic into an analytical corner. Specifically, they needed to be familiar enough with the song to understand some of the basic cultural context surrounding its themes. It was also important that they pick a song that gave them enough technical and syntactical material to make an informed and intelligent decision about the quality of the song's formal poetic composition. The specific parameters given to the students for choosing a song to analyze were:

- Your song should not have been translated into Latin before (i.e., not discoverable via internet search engine).

- Your song can be any genre (i.e., hip-hop, rap, rock, pop, country, metal, etc.). However, be aware that some genres are more reliant on music to set atmosphere than others. You must be able to view the song's lyrics as a poem, separate from the music.

- Your song should have at least 10 unique lines or at least two verses and a refrain.

- Your song should be appropriate in material and language. Do not choose a song that uses slurs or explicit sexual descriptions.

- Your song will have at least three recognizable literary devices or distinct syntactical features around which you can organize your analysis.

- Your song should be recent enough for you to understand its historical and social context.

- Your song should be a song that you know and like — it will help immensely both in translating and in discussing the theme and structure of the song.

In their written analyses, I asked that they take a carefully structured approach discussing in turn the song's diction, syntax, how diction and syntax work

together to develop tone and atmosphere, poetical devices and their effects upon the song, and any important cultural knowledge needed to understand the song and how the style of the song reflected that. As an example of the last aspect, I noted that The Guess Who's iconic song "American Woman" (*American Woman*, RCA Victor, 1970) is a Canadian response to the chaos of the 1960s in the USA.[12] This fact drastically affects the way we should interpret this classic anti-Vietnam War song. I challenged them to find similar stories about their chosen song that could offer their interpretation both context and credibility. Finally, I wanted them to make a judgment about the quality of the song — I left this aspect open to their own creativity. I did, however, warn them that their judgment had to be in the form of an argument in which the conclusion had to follow from their previous discussion. In grading this assignment, I used the rubric appended to this essay (Appendix 2), focusing on three skills: 1) the construability and fluidity of their Latin translation, 2) their ability to identify and analyze core compositional techniques in the song and 3) their ability to construct a coherent analysis of their song as a literary artefact.

As final submissions, I received translations and analyses of Adele's *Salve* (*Hello*, on *25*. XL Recordings, 2015),[13] Miley Cyrus' *Pila Perdens* (*Wrecking Ball*, on *Bangerz*, RCA Records, 2013), Simon and Garfunkel's *Sonitus Silentii* (*Sound of Silence* on *Wednesday Morning, 3am*, Columbia Records, 1965)*,* and Nat King Cole's *Puer Qui Vitam Sensit* (*Nature Boy* on *The Nat King Cole Story*, Capitol Records, 1948). Having received this sort of assignment from students for the first time, I was extremely happy with the results. While some of the translating choices made by the students were not quite right and they missed a few of the more obscure literary devices, their attempts were valiant and effortful and their analyses light-years better than I had received for the *Aeneid* assignment. As one illustrative

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12 Jim Kale, the Guess Who's bassist and co-author of the lyrics, made this clear in an interview in 1970: "The popular misconception was that it was a chauvinistic tune, which was anything but the case. The fact was, we came from a very strait-laced, conservative, laid-back country, and all of a sudden, there we were in Chicago, Detroit, New York – all these horrendously large places with their big city problems. After that one particularly grinding tour, it was just a real treat to go home and see the girls we had grown up with. Also, the war was going on, and that was terribly unpopular. We didn't have a draft system in Canada, and we were grateful for that. A lot of people called it anti-American, but it wasn't really."

13 I thank John Gruber-Miller for noting that Adele's *Hello* has been translated and recorded by Keith Massey on YouTube. I also thank him for the fantastic idea to have future students compare Massey's translation with the one produced for my 2016 Latin Prose Composition course. It, as I see it, could lead to significant discussion about word choice and poetic style.

example of the high quality work I received, here is the first stanza of my student Etenia Mullins' translation *Puer Qui Vitam Sensit* (*Nature Boy*):

Cole:	*Mullins*:
There was a boy	*Puer,*
A very strange enchanted boy	*mirabillimus magicusque, fuit.*
They say he wandered very far, very far	*Dixerunt animum pererravisse*
Over land and sea	*terram extremam atque ultimum mare.*
A little shy and sad of eye	*Non solum timidus paulus ac animus*
But very wise was he	*infractus*
	sed etiam maxime sapiens fuit puer.[14]

In her analysis of this translation, Etenia noted that part of the poetic nature of Cole's song was its use of repetition: *boy* at lines 1 and 2; *very far* twice in line 3. She also noted that Cole took advantage of parallelisms to set the imaginative and emotive scene (i.e., the juxtaposition of "land" and "sea" in line 4 to represent the whole world and the use of "but" to connect lines 5 and 6 in an adversative relationship). She made great effort to put these observations into her Latin translation. In her lines 1 and 2, she deals with the repetition of *boy* by means of an apposition and chiasmus which allows *puer* to play double duty and arranges the adjectives (i.e., mirabillimus magicusque) in a more poetic fashion. In her line 3, she ably deals with the repetition of *very far*, with the compound verb *pererro* behaving iteratively and the use of the adjectives *extremam atque ultimum* as a poetic representation of the *very*-ness of the boy's travels. In that same line 4, Etenia successfully used chiasmus to construct a more poetic feel, but also match the parallel construction of Cole's original.

In the end, the students enjoyed the assignment and I was pleased with the growth that they had experienced, specifically in their facility in close reading a poem. It certainly took more time, more lexicographical work, and more thought than a typical Prose Composition assignment, but the students were in agreement that they had not really understood ancient literary devices until they saw them in their favorite songs.

Further Benefits

Not only was this assignment a success in assessing and affirming the semester's lessons, its effects have been felt ever since in other advanced Latin courses. While these students were slogging through their Latin Prose Composition course,

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14 I thank Etenia for her permission to use her work in this article.

they were also taking a reading course on Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (we were reading Book Ten, specifically). In many ways, the Ovid course served as a practicum for the methods and lessons of the close analysis of poetry we had developed. In that reading course and in subsequent semesters, the level of philological analysis offered by students in class discussions has been exponentially more mature. So, why was this?

I believe the Popular Song Translation assignment worked so well primarily because of the innate familiarity the students had with the cultural and linguistic vocabulary used in their respective songs. They, as angsty college-kids, understood "Swift's" friendship predicament in *Malus Sanguis* (or, *Simultates*, more correctly) and "Cyrus'" breakup in *Pila Perdens* implicitly. Because of this more deeply felt comprehension, as one student argued, "we were able to get a grip on the song's defining compositional qualities and the way her song worked so much more easily." Once they were able to pull apart the poem's structure — a poem they have streamed online innumerable times and a message they, perhaps, understood in their bones — and saw what sorts of verbal formulae the songwriter chose and how that strategy affected the literary texture of the song and gave it emotional punch, they could offer better analyses and more reasoned judgments on the quality of the song.

On a procedural level, this assignment allows the students to take the process of understanding and analyzing poetry one level at a time with familiar material: first, translation into construable Latin, then analysis of devices and tropes, then analysis of theme and context, then "putting it all together" into an informed judgment of quality. In this way, they were able to figure out what they were supposed to be doing as poetic analysts and gain confidence in their powers of observation and interpretation before jumping to more difficult poems from Horace or Propertius. I have always tried to teach my students that to truly "get" ancient poetry, you have to spend time with it, walk around in the poet's shoes a little — otherwise something like Horace's profound comments about ships of state in *Odes* 1.14 or the cruelty of his insults hurled at a woman in *Epode* 8 will evade them on an emotional and intellectual level. It is much harder to understand a poem's nuances when you are struggling with poetic idiosyncrasies. This assignment builds faith in the philological process and technique before the difficult questions of ancient aesthetics, especially nuance and context, become an issue.

Since my students spent time developing the skills needed to make this assignment work, I have noticed some important effects: 1) more effective classroom discussion in Latin poetry reading courses and 2) more mature term paper topics. In

their reading course on Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the students' interpretation evolved from "he's quirky, but I don't know how to describe it" to "I like the way he structures his narrative as compared to the *Aeneid*."[15] When developing paper topics, these same students matured to offer much more nuanced studies on the intersection of stylistics and theme. As an illustrative example, I offer the following thesis statement from my student Alexander Kee's final term paper, "Verbs Introducing Speech in Ovid's Metamorphoses X," which displays a more dictionally and syntactically appreciative approach than was the case previously:

> *Ovid incorporates several different words and phrases of speaking that add specific meaning to the passage, such as āiō, dīcō, inquam, and loquor, just to name a few. However, each of these indicators of speech have various nuances that should be studied so that the reader can understand the content to its fullest. The goal of this paper is to fully explain each of these nuances and their effect on the overall meaning by surveying the form, placement, and usage of some of these different verbal expressions of speaking in Book X of the Metamorphoses and by using this information to delve deeper into a few mythological tales in Book X, such as the stories of Orpheus and Eurydice and Pygmalion and Galatea.*[16]

Alex, here, shows a new strategy for understanding the stories that present Ovid's deeper poetic purpose by means of a very close and tedious understanding of Ovid's compositional process. Whereas I used to receive term papers on vague and general topics like "Women in Vergil" or "Humor in Petronius," I have recently received term papers on "Ovid's *Metamorphoses* as Fable in Book 10," "Frequentative Verbs in Livy's Book One," "A typology of chiasmus in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*," and "The deeper meaning of personification in Horace's *Odes* 1."

While I have developed this set of assignments for an advanced university-level course, it seems that with a few adjustments the poetic analysis skills taught here could be adapted for a high school environment as well. And, it would be quite

15 Latin students at Austin Peay State University read selections of the *Aeneid* in the fourth semester Latin course.

16 I thank Alex for his permission to use this quotation in this article.

fruitful, I believe. As I noted above, many students rarely learn the basic rudiments and techniques of poetic composition in language arts classes anymore. While the high school students may not be ready for rigorous composition assignments, the process outlined above would likely help them learn to appreciate more fully what they are reading if they are taught how modern English poets and songwriters use the literary devices the students are encountering.[17]

Any student performing this assignment, of course, would still be developing their depth of erudition on Roman literature, but the manner in which they learn to read and analyze the works is exponentially better. In sum, I knew that Taylor Swift, Miley Cyrus, Adele, Paul Simon and Art Garfunkel, and Nat King Cole were immensely talented musicians and poets, but I never thought they would teach Latin poetry better than I could.

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17 I would like to thank the anonymous referee C for this point.

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APPENDIX 1: POPULAR SONGS AND LATIN POETIC ANALYSIS ASSIGNMENT

TASK

Please translate one recent English-language song into coherent and idiomatic Latin, using the rules and techniques learned this semester, and offer a thorough poetic analysis of its structure, theme, and literary devices according to the philological analysis method we've learned this semester.

GUIDELINES FOR PICKING THE RIGHT SONG

- Your song should not have been translated into Latin before (i.e., not discoverable by Google).

- Your song can be any genre (i.e., hip-hop, rap, rock, pop, country, metal, etc.). However, beware that some genres are more reliant on music to set atmosphere than others. You must be able to view the song's lyrics as a poem, separate from the music.

- Your song should have at least 10 unique lines or at least two verses and a refrain.

- Your song should be appropriate in material and language. Do not choose a song that uses slurs or explicit sexual descriptions.

- Your song will have at least three recognizable literary devices or distinct syntactical features around which you can organize your analysis.

- Your song should be a song that you know and like — it will help immensely both in translating and in discussing the theme and structure of the song.

- Your song should be recent enough for you to understand its historical and social context.

ONCE YOU'VE CHOSEN YOUR SONG…

- Translate the lyrics into idiomatic and construable Latin.

- Spend some time identifying important literary devices and syntactical constructions. Use the list of poetical and rhetorical devices you received in class as a reference, although remember that it is not exhaustive.

- Use the questions in Dr. Timothy Moore's Stylistic Analysis Checklist to guide your discussion of your chosen song; you must focus your discussion on your Latin translation rather than the English words themselves.

- In your analysis, you must discuss: diction, syntax, literary devices, theme, social and historical context.

- At the end of your analysis, please make a considered judgment of your chosen song's quality. Explain why you make this particular judgment.

NUTS AND BOLTS

- Length: Between 1,200 and 2,000 words

- 12 pt. font: Times New Roman or Calibri (NO Courier or Comic Sans)

- 1" margins all around

- Please have a Cover Page with your name and ID number on it. Your text should not start until page 2.

- Cite your sources. Cite whenever you quote the author or paraphrase what the author wrote. Quotes should be cited immediately after they are used and the exact place (e.g., page number) must be included in the citation.

- Citations should be done in the Humanities footnote version of the *Chicago Manual of Style* (16th edition).

- View the rubric used by Dr. Kershner to evaluate your work (posted with the assignment link on Desire2Learn). Consider how you can polish your draft to meet the objectives of the assignment.

- Please attach a file in .doc, .docx, .rtf, or .pdf formatting to the submission page (i.e., please do NOT copy and paste your paper into the text box).

APPENDIX 2: RUBRIC FOR POPULAR SONGS AND LATIN POETIC ANALYSIS ASSIGNMENT

Objective	Excellent	Good	Fair	Adequate	Did not attempt
Logistics: word count, font size & type, margins, spacing, cover page with ID#, submitted on time, according to instructions.	All assignment instructions and parameters were met perfectly. 10	Most instructions and parameters were satisfied. 7	At least half of instructions and parameters were satisfied. 4	Some instructions and parameters were satisfied. 2	No logistical objectives were satisfied. 0
Technical elements of Analysis Essay: grammar, style, organization, and references and citations.	Paragraphs are well structured. Transitions are natural. Paper is free of spelling errors, fragments, colloquial language. Citations are accurate and complete. 10	Most technical elements are well executed according to the assignment instructions. 7	Some technical elements are well executed according to the assignment instructions. Other technical elements are absent. 4	At least one technical element is well executed and according to the assignment instructions. 2	No technical element was satisfied at all. 0
Translation: Syntactical accuracy and construability of Latin translation of chosen song.	There are no grammatical, morphological, or syntactical mistakes. Dictional choices are well chosen and are poetically attested. 40	The translation has one or two grammatical or morphological mistakes. A word or two are poorly chosen. 30	Translation has several mistakes in grammar, morphology, syntax. Most words are well chosen. 20	Most syntax is incorrect or seriously flawed. Morphological mistakes abound. Most words are completely wrong for their usage. 10	The student made no effort to use Latin grammar and syntax to translate this passage. Looks like the student chose words at random. 0

Analysis (syntax and literary devices): Ability to isolate and describe key poetic features in the song (both before and after translation).	All literary devices and key syntactical features in the Latin translation were isolated, and thoroughly, insightfully described. 20	Most literary devices and syntactical features are isolated and described. Description is not complete or particularly insightful. 15	At least half of literary devices and major syntactical features in the Latin translation were isolated and described. 10	Attempts were made to isolate literary devices and syntactical features but were not particularly successful. 5	No attempt was made isolate or describe literary devices or syntactical features in the translation. 0
Interpretation: Ability to discuss the translation as a literary artefact as pertains to its basic poetic structure, literary devices, and themes.	Student develops an insightful argument on how the songwriter structured the poem's various parts to create a message. The student is able to use evidence from the translation as proof. 20	Most of the literary devices, syntactical features, and themes are explained accurately, with some insight. Some evidence used. 15	At least half of the literary devices and basic themes are explained accurately, but are not discussed insightfully. Evidence gestured at, but not discussed. 10	Attempts were made to describe and interpret the basic themes, but not literary devices, of the translation. The student was not particularly successful. 5	No attempt was made to interpret the Latin translation as a literary artefact. There is no evidence of anything, let alone thoughts. 0
TOTAL / 100	+	+	+	+	=