Catullus: A Podcast

Latin 112

Spring 2013

Purpose:
- practice literary translation
- relate a Latin poem to its historical and cultural contexts
- identify and appreciate literary and stylistic features of a Latin poem

Method:
- create an audio recording of a poem by Catullus
- including your own introduction and translation

The finished piece will be posted on the college blog (http://blog.dickinson.edu) and on iTunesU.

The assignment has two parts:
  I. A script for the introduction and translation, with full bibliographic information on the sources you used.
  II. A recording of you delivering your introduction, your translation, and reading the Latin, turned in as an mp3.

I. Write the script.
1. Research your poem in the standard commentaries on Catullus (in addition to Garrison's textbook) and any other books on Catullus that might be helpful (see list below). Take careful notes on what you read, including the bibliographic information of the books or articles you look at, and the exact pages of any quotable quotes. Commentaries and articles on classical texts often use abbreviations. Let me know if there are any you cannot figure out.

2. Here are some questions you may want to ask as you investigate your poem. Time is short, so you may not be able to include all of this in your podcast:
  a. What is known about the people mentioned, if any?
  b. Is there any indication of the exact date of the poem?
  c. What is the structure?
  d. Are there any Roman customs knowledge of which might help make the poem clearer?
  e. Are there any notable images? Why are they there?
  f. What is the tone?

g. What is the poem "about"?
h. How effective is it?
i. Are there any problems or obscurities in it?
j. Do **not** include any general information about Catullus ("Catullus was a Roman poet who lived from 85 to 55 BC" . . .). I will put that into a brief series intro., which will precede your recording. Assume your listener knows who he was.
k. Length: the introduction portion should be no more than three minutes or so, shoot for about 525 words.

3. Write a translation of the poem. Remember this is for an audience who does not know Latin, so make sure the translation is faithful, but not too literal. Try to communicate the essence of the poem in good, clear English.

Tips and advice for creating an engaging podcast:
a. Be creative! Make it enjoyable and entertaining.
b. Think of a catchy lead to grab the listener's attention right away.
c. Interesting factoids or quotations about the poem can color the intro. Don't just give a stuffy, dull description.
d. Say what you like about the poem; give the listener a reason to want to hear it.
e. Use metaphors and colorful language, as appropriate.
f. Pay attention to the quality of the audio.
g. Go online and listen to some podcasts to get a feeling for what works and what does not.
h. Write for a general audience. Avoid using too many technical terms.

Recommended sources:
The commentaries of Quinn, Fordyce, and Thomson. Thomson has lists of articles on each poem. These are also good books on Catullus, and are on reserve:
Julia Haig Gaisser, *Catullus*. Chichester, UK: Blackwell, 2009. PA6276 .G348 2009
Marilyn B. Skinner, *A Companion to Catullus*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007. PA6276 .C66 2007
Amanda Kolson Hurley, *Catullus*. London: Bristol Classical Press, 2004. PA6276 .H87 2004
David Wray, *Catullus and the Poetics of Roman Manhood*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001. PA6276 .W73 2001

II. Record your intro., translation, and Latin reading, then hand it in to me as an .mp3.
Practice reading the poem in Latin until it sounds smooth and convincing.
Learn the meter and scan the poem. Meet with me to work on pronunciation. Most importantly, say it with inflections that suggest you understand what you are reading. Emphasize key words. Pause between clauses, as appropriate, to make the sense clearer. Sounding like you know what you are saying is more important than having perfect pronunciation. Put some emotion into it.