

Call for Papers:

International Conference

„*Cacata Carta* – Poetic Shitstorms in Ancient Texts“

University of Graz

Sept 15-17, 2022

Organizers: Ursula Gärtner, Markus Hafner

In *carmen* 36, the poet Catullus viciously insults a certain Volusius and his poem *Annales*. Not without self-mockery, Catullus assigns Volusius the role of the *pessimus poeta*, whose work is denigrated as *cacata carta* in the first and last verses of *c.* 36. Catullus also makes vituperative and polemical judgments about other poets elsewhere. The meaning and function of such scatological invectives are certainly debatable. Overall, a more comprehensive study remains a desideratum.

Based on this, the Graz conference will address questions of aesthetics, mediality, poetology, and reception of the poetic vituperation of poets or their poetry in antiquity, whether in literary (e.g. iambics, comedy, and satire) or ‘subliterary’ texts (e.g. graffiti) by both well-known and anonymous authors.

The following topics and possible questions should be in the foreground:

General questions

- Which authors or texts were insulted, how and why?
- How can such pejorative judgments be located in a poetic genre or in sociocultural, political, or cultic-ritual contexts?
- Can offensive insults be distinguished from recognized virtuosity?
- Do such judgments characterize only other poets’ works or, indirectly, also one’s own work?
- Do such invectives mark demarcation against rivals or membership to a poetic community?
- What censorious or tradition-securing effect could such judgments have on the reviled authors and works?

Cacata aspect

- What forms of aischrological or obscene speech does the poetic invective exhibit?
- On what kind of *Bildersprache*, comparisons, and metaphors are those judgments based?

- How is the denounced aesthetic itself conceived aesthetically – *ex negativo*, so to speak?
- Which poetic procedures of the reviled text does the reviling text caricature (e.g. *Annales Volusi* in Catullus c. 36 as a poetic sphragis?)?

***Carta* aspect**

- What forms of mediality – for instance between feigned ‘spontaneous’ orality and polished revision – characterize poetic invective?
- To what extent is there a medial play between the intimacy of the insult and the wider circulation of the text?
- Which performative and/or material aspects are involved?

Poetology

- To what extent do poetic vituperations of poets in ancient texts oscillate between poetic avant-garde and literary tradition?
- To what extent do such shitstorms aim at poetic ‘inferiority’ or ‘epigonality’, to what extent at the specific programmatic or design of a work?
- What role do the authorial roles or poetic personae play, which are assumed in the vituperative texts?

Reception

- What impact did the phenomenon of poetic shitstorms unfold in the course of both the ancient reception and the reception of antiquity up to the 21st century?

We would welcome contributions in German or English that deal with the above-mentioned or similar aspects of poetic reviling in antiquity. All submissions, either in English or German, must include an abstract with short bibliography – maximum 250 words (excluding bibliography) – as well as a brief academic CV including the author’s surname, first name, academic email and affiliation and as well as a list of selected publications. For each paper, there will be a time slot of 30 minutes, followed by a discussion. If possible travel expenses will be covered. Selected articles may be published as a special volume.

Deadline: Please send your proposals to one of the two email addresses below by 01/31/2022. Feedback will be provided by 02/15/2021. If you have any questions about the conference in the meantime, please feel free to contact us.

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