

**Title:** The Empire of Heaven Stands on the Shoulders of Titans: Translatio as a Legitimizing Mechanism in Dante's "Inferno."

**Presenter:** Rodrigo Urdaneta Penaherrera, Los Angeles City College

**Mentor:** Danielle Muller

All throughout humanity's history, empires have risen, conquering vast expanses and ruling over countless subjects. But when empires eventually shatter, the institutions that constituted their system of power are prone to disintegrate, too, leading to an erosion of people's faith in those who govern them and promoting a crisis of the legitimacy of power. When this happens, *translatio studii et imperii*—not just the literary topos, but the overarching concept of the continuity of an imperial narrative, as put by Greenwood—is a key strategy in managing the transition of power between empires through a cohesive narrative that attempts to answer any possible legitimacy questions. This article will attempt to shine a light on the mechanism of *translatio* through a literary analysis of several passages in Dante's "Inferno." The constant convergence of Classical mythos and values with the Christian etiological narrative of medieval literature, provides Dante—and Dante's readers—a cohesive justification for admiring and studying the works of Europe's pagan past from the dominating-but-highly-restrictive Catholic cultural and political system. To further the point of *translatio* as a powerful legitimizing device throughout history, the article will also show its previous roots to Dante, as seen in Virgil's *Aeneid*; its presence in Dante's contemporary, Petrarch, exemplified in his relationship with Cicero's letters; and its later appearance in Milton, with his reimagining of both the Greek's Tartarus and Dante's *contrapasso* in his *Paradise Lost*.

## Works Cited

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