

**A Modern Myth in Classical Dress:
The *Titanic* Disaster in Contemporary Latin Verse**

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ABSTRACT

The *Titanic* captured the imagination of poets and artists from a wide range of disciplines as soon as news of the disaster reached the mainland. As such, the story was rapidly represented as a modern myth, fusing fact with fiction and giving rise to (often ideologically) conflicting narratives as to what exactly happened aboard the ill-fated ship that night and which lessons should be drawn from it. As the tale of a 'Titan's' technological hubris, the modern tragedy also evokes a sense of classical mythology, yet surprisingly, this theme was hardly ever fully exploited in contemporary English poetry. It was, however, in contemporary Latin poetry. Although the active use of Latin had become an increasingly marginal phenomenon from the eighteenth century onwards, Latin poetry in particular was going through a remarkable revival at the time of the *Titanic* disaster, which was mainly fuelled by the international success of one poetry competition in particular, the *Certamen Hoeyffianum*. With its propensity to read current events in ancient structures, Neo-Latin poetry thrived in this competition, which was continually flooded by submissions on modern subjects in classical verse. The *Titanic* disaster was no exception. Building on Sacré 1999, which predates the recent rediscovery of the rich *Hoeyffianum* archives, this article offers a contextualised overview of all Latin *Titanica*, dating both from the incident's immediate aftermath and from subsequent waves of interest, while paying particular attention to the way in which these Latin poets mapped modernity onto an ancient template.