

Albert O. Greef Translation Award 2020

The Classics Department announces this year's competition for the Albert O. Greef Translation Award for the best translations of passages from Greek and Latin literature. The competition is open to any student currently enrolled in a Greek or Latin course at the University of Kansas.

Prize competitions and submissions will take place on a special Blackboard page created for this purpose. If you wish to participate, you must contact Paul Touyz (touyz@ku.edu) by **April 17** to be added to the site. **Deadline for submission is Friday, April 24.**

Since we judge these anonymously, please submit as separate documents:

- 1) a cover page with your name, status as undergraduate or graduate student, and the title of your translation
- 2) the title of your translation and your translation, without any reference to your name on the document (this includes headers, footers etc.).

With the news of coronavirus dominating headlines and swelling our inboxes, it is worth noting that this is not the first time that pandemic has gripped our fears and fantasies. One in particular left an enormous scar on the history and cultural memory of the Greco-Roman world: the plague of Athens in 430 BC. The plague laid bare human frailty, and sowed the seeds of the defeat of the Athenian democracy in the decades-long Peloponnesian War. The two texts for this year's A.O. Greef Translation competition are two of the most influential works testifying to the impact of the plague in antiquity.

The Greek passage is taken from the description of the plague in Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War*. His account of the plague is one of the greatest pieces of prose literature to have survived from ancient Greece. Its vividness derives from the fact that Thucydides was an eye-witness to the events in Athens. He even claims to have survived the disease himself.

The Latin passage comes from the philosophical poem *On the Nature of Things* by Lucretius. Lucretius, who lived in the first century BC, came long after the plague in Athens. Nonetheless, he ends his poetic survey of Epicureanism with a harrowing account of the chaos and destruction wreaked by the disease. The discussion of the plague, however, is so abrupt, that some doubt this was the intended conclusion of the work (some claim Lucretius was poisoned by a love potion before he could finish the poem!).

There has in fact been a recent surge of interest in these two works because of the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. To read more, follow these links:

<https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/03/great-plague-athens-has-erie-parallels-today/608545/>

<https://theconversation.com/thucydides-and-the-plague-of-athens-what-it-can-teach-us-now-133155>

<https://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/invisible-bullets-what-lucretius-taught-us-about-pandemics>

Students may compete in either or both categories, and may consult dictionaries, commentaries, and even other translations. Submissions will be judged for originality, literary quality, and overall effectiveness. The aim of the competition is to look beyond classroom translations and to encourage instead a deeper, more creative level of engagement with the selected passages. For a recent essay on the difference between classroom and literary translations, have a look here:

<https://eidolon.pub/the-twists-and-turns-of-translation-33f1272dffa8>

This award includes a modest cash prize.

Lucretius *De Rerum Natura* 6.1138-1173

Haec ratio quondam morborum et mortifer aestus
finibus in Cecropis funestos reddidit agros
vastavitque vias, exhausit civibus urbem.
nam penitus veniens Aegypti finibus ortus,
aëra permensus multum camposque natantis,
incubuit tandem populo Pandionis omni.
inde catervatim morbo mortique dabantur.
principio caput incensum fervore gerebant
et duplicis oculos suffusa luce rubentes.
sudabant etiam fauces intrinsecus atrae
sanguine et ulceribus vocis via saepta coibat
atque animi interpret manabat lingua cruore
debilitata malis, motu gravis, aspera tactu.
inde ubi per fauces pectus complebat et ipsum
morbidam vis in cor maestum confluxerat aegris,
omnia tum vero vitae claustra lababant.
spiritus ore foras taetrumolvebat odorem,
rancida quo perolent proiecta cadavera ritu.
atque animi prorsum <tum> vires totius, omne
languerat corpus leti iam limine in ipso.
intolerabilibusque malis erat anxius angor
adsidue comes et gemitu commixta querella,
singultusque frequens noctem per saepe diemque
corripere adsidue nervos et membra coactans
dissolvebat eos, defessos ante, fatigans.
nec nimio cuiquam posses ardore tueri
corporis in summo summam fervere partem,
sed potius tepidum manibus proponere tactum
et simul ulceribus quasi inustis omne rubere
corpus, ut est per membra sacer dum diditur ignis.
intima pars hominum vero flagrabat ad ossa,
flagrabat stomacho flamma ut fornacibus intus.
nil adeo posses cuiquam leve tenveque membris
vertere in utilitatem, at ventum et frigora semper.
in fluvios partim gelidos ardentia morbo
membra dabant nudum iacentes corpus in undas.

Thucydides *History of the Peloponnesian War* 2.51

Τὸ μὲν οὖν νόσημα, πολλὰ καὶ ἄλλα παραλιπόντι ἀτοπίας, ὡς ἐκάστῳ ἐτύγχανέ τι διαφερόντως ἐτέρῳ πρὸς ἕτερον γιγνόμενον, τοιοῦτον ἦν ἐπὶ πᾶν τὴν ἰδέαν. καὶ ἄλλο παρελύπει κατ' ἐκεῖνον τὸν χρόνον οὐδὲν τῶν εἰωθότων· ὃ δὲ καὶ γένοιτο, ἐς τοῦτο ἐτελεύτα. ἔθνησκον δὲ οἱ μὲν ἀμελεία, οἱ δὲ καὶ πᾶν θεραπευόμενοι. ἔν τε οὐδὲ ἐν κατέστη ἴαμα ὡς εἰπεῖν ὅτι χρῆν προσφέροντας ὠφελεῖν· τὸ γὰρ τῷ ξυνενεγκόν ἄλλον τοῦτο ἔβλαπτεν. σῶμά τε αὐταρκες ὄν οὐδὲν διεφάνη πρὸς αὐτὸ ἰσχύος πέρι ἢ ἀσθενείας, ἀλλὰ πάντα ξυνήρει καὶ τὰ πάση διαίτη θεραπευόμενα. Δεινότατον δὲ παντὸς ἦν τοῦ κακοῦ ἢ τε ἀθυμία ὅποτε τις αἰσθοίτο κάμων (πρὸς γὰρ τὸ ἀνέλπιστον εὐθύς τραπόμενοι τῇ γνώμῃ πολλῶ μᾶλλον προΐεντο σφᾶς αὐτοὺς καὶ οὐκ ἀντεῖχον), καὶ ὅτι ἕτερος ἀφ' ἐτέρου θεραπείας ἀναπιμπλάμενοι ὥσπερ τὰ πρόβατα ἔθνησκον· καὶ τὸν πλεῖστον φθόρον τοῦτο ἐνεποίει. εἴτε γὰρ μὴ 'θέλοιεν δεδιότες ἀλλήλοις προσιέναι, ἀπώλλυντο ἐρῆμοι, καὶ οἰκίαι πολλαὶ ἐκενώθησαν ἀπορία τοῦ θεραπεύσοντος· εἴτε προσίοιεν, διεφθείροντο, καὶ μάλιστα οἱ ἀρετῆς τι μεταποιοῦμενοι· αἰσχύνῃ γὰρ ἠφείδουν σφῶν αὐτῶν ἐσιόντες παρὰ τοὺς φίλους, ἐπεὶ καὶ τὰς ὀλοφύρσεις τῶν ἀπογιγνομένων τελευτῶντες καὶ οἱ οἰκεῖοι ἐξέκαμνον ὑπὸ τοῦ πολλοῦ κακοῦ νικώμενοι. ἐπὶ πλέον δ' ὅμως οἱ διαπεφευγότες τὸν τε θνήσκοντα καὶ τὸν πονούμενον ὠκτίζοντο διὰ τὸ προειδέναι τε καὶ αὐτοὶ ἤδη ἐν τῷ θαρσαλέῳ εἶναι· δις γὰρ τὸν αὐτόν, ὥστε καὶ κτείνειν, οὐκ ἐπελάμβανεν. καὶ ἐμακαρίζοντό τε ὑπὸ τῶν ἄλλων, καὶ αὐτοὶ τῷ παραχρήμα περιχαρεῖ καὶ ἐς τὸν ἔπειτα χρόνον ἐλπίδος τι εἶχον κούφης μηδ' ἂν ὑπ' ἄλλου νοσήματός ποτε ἔτι διαφθαρήναι.