

MÉAI NUCESQUE

A Newsletter for Classics at the University of Dallas

Karl Maurer Translation Contest

By Dr. Teresa Danze

The poem chosen for the Second Annual Karl Maurer Translation Contest is Horace's Ode 4.7. It is a simple, melancholic poem to be sure but there is a tantalizing, sprightly movement to it that is undeniable. It has always reminded me of the late Dr. Maurer. To the scholar Wilamowitz the poem was "insignificant" but to Housman it was "the most beautiful poem in ancient literature." Indeed, the poem rewards readers of Latin who can appreciate such things as the choice and arrangement of words, the pointed use of tenses and the various allusions to legendary and living individuals that Horace uses to develop his images. The weaving of myth and reality together draw his readers in to a constantly shifting world that is both provocative and relentless. Like the progression of one's life, surprises color each stanza yet mortality and the unceasing passage of time remain constant themes. Capturing the simple beauty of this poem in English has been a challenge for many but I hope it is a challenge our students will embrace. Bonam fortunam!

Support the Classics Department!

A critical element of the Karl Maurer Translation prize is its funding; this prize is completely funded by donations. Several alumni and faculty have committed to contributing to the fund but it will need sustained giving over the years to keep it alive. Your donations to the **Karl Maurer Translation Fund** would be greatly appreciated. In addition, a **Karl Maurer Scholarship** has been set up by an anonymous donor for graduate students pursuing the Masters in Classics or MA in Classics to which you can contribute. We have several graduate students now who would greatly benefit from the partial aid this scholarship provides. And finally, you can always designate your gift directly to the **Classics Department** to be used for the department's greatest needs. Gifts to Classics would currently be used to support departmental socials and visiting speakers. Should you wish to donate to any of these entities, please visit udallas.edu/classics and select the "GIVE NOW" button.

Like us on Facebook for more updates – our page is University of Dallas Classics.

We also have a new departmental email, classicsdepartment@udallas.edu.

Classics Departmental News

Congratulations to our new Eta Sigma Phi members, who were inducted on October 18: Morgan Flottmeier, Madeleine Hanna, Anastasia Heiser, John James, Mary Katherine Johnson, Abigail Lyons, Gabriela Sanchez, Lydia Walters, and Zane Williams!

On November 13th, the **Classics Club** held a recitation night complete with well-memorized poems and orations, delicious pizza, and thoughtful conversation.



Pictured, left to right: Thomas Hogan, Elizabeth Hanson, and Irene Carriker at the Classics Recitation Night.

Classics Student Spends Summer at Harvard Library

By Benjamin Yates, Guest Contributor

I spent this summer at the Center for Hellenic Studies in DC. The CHS is a library founded and funded by Harvard for classicists, specifically classicists studying ancient Greek civilization and literature. At the CHS I wore many hats, but one of my primary duties was maintaining and updating the First Thousand Greek Years of Greek Project, a free-to-access database of nearly the entire corpus of ancient Greek literature. I designed software to clean the database and remove errors, as well as add new texts and make these texts easily accessible. The CHS campus is unbelievable; onsite are living arrangements, a cafeteria, walking trails, a garden, and, of course, a first-rate classics library. The Center houses its interns for free on campus, and the central location allowed me to explore the Capital's abundant museums and monuments. The internship was an amazing opportunity, and I encourage other Classics majors to apply next year.

Alumna Spotlight

Rebekah Spearman received her BA in Classical Philology (Greek focus) from UD in 2014. She is currently a PhD student at the University of Chicago and intends to write her dissertation on politics and violence in Pindar. Rebekah is also interested in ancient agriculture and the reception of classical poetry in Russia. In the event of societal breakdown, she intends to start a self-sustaining farm and teach Latin and Greek to post-apocalyptic starvelings.



Reading the Georgics in New York

By Rebekah Spearman, Guest Contributor

Every now and again, particularly during midterms and finals, or when the sirens blare especially loudly and the university walls seem to close in, a strange urge comes over me; I want to throw everything away and start a farm. This past spring, I was at a particularly difficult crossroads and decided to take my first step on that path. I sold, donated, or put into storage the possessions that could not fit into my car and moved halfway across America to work on a non-profit organic farm. Most of my friends scoffed at the plan. Rebekah on a farm? Preposterous! Her nose is always in a book. But, there I was at the beginning of lambing season clutching a tremulous, damp body in my arms, thigh-deep in dew-soaked clover and wild carrots. A few feet away the mother bleated furiously while Alyssa, another farm worker, wrestled a granny ewe (a female who tries to steal another female's young to replace her own). At last, we managed to isolate the kidnapper, weigh the newborn, and return the terrified lamb to her panicking mother. That was my first day, and I never wanted to leave.

I watched the rest of the flock diligently in the ensuing weeks, sitting tired under the cedars after long days of moving fences, dragging chicken tractors, planting, weeding, harvesting, tilling, feeding, tending, husbanding. Sometimes, I'd bring a beer and from a distance observe a ewe in labor. Each new lamb was a tiny miracle, each unassisted birth a mystery. Yet, for all its idyllic splendor, there was a tension at work in flock and field. Among all the healthy, thriving sheep was one granny ewe who starved her own lamb and tried to steal those of other ewes. Baby chicks viciously pecked weaklings to death. Purslane grew faster than peas. In the fields, one day, I found a fawn, curled as if in sleep, perfect in its death. Its mother had been hit by a car on the road beside our farm. I suppose she'd left it there to wait for her, and she never came.

In many ways, I'd left behind my books like the fawn, moldering away in boxes at my parents' house. But, there were some I couldn't leave: Vergil, Pindar,

Homer, Horace stacked upon a shelf with Wendell Berry and Robert Frost. The strange thing about being a student of the classics is they follow you even when you give them up.

On the farm, I kept coming back to the *Georgics*; our very way of life was like the one Vergil described: *quid faciat laetas segetes, quo sidere terram....* It could be a litany of my days. In a very tangible way, the farm showed me why I'd become a classicist in the first place. Two millennia later, Vergil's advice is just as accurate as the day he wrote it (though it's taken the environmental devastation of the 20th century for us to return to the regenerative and sustainable practices he advises).

In a less tangible way, however, the farm also showed me how to be a classicist. In the *Georgics*, Vergil comments that Jupiter created work "*ut uarias usus meditando extunderet artis / paulatim, et sulcis frumenti quaereret herbam, / ut silicis uenis abstrusum excuderet ignem* [so that by contemplation, use might beat out various arts / little by little, and in furrows find stalks of grain, / and squeeze out hidden fire from veins of flint]" (I.133-135). From contemplation art is born. Contemplation of what? Vergil clearly has in mind the natural world; scarcity leads humans to learn what makes the crops happy and when to plant. But, contemplation teaches us many other things as well. Waiting for the seed to sprout, you realize that all work takes time. You also realize that for all the life abounding, there is death, chaos. Order takes work; knowledge takes work. Knowing Greek or Latin, understanding a beautiful poem, everything takes work. Nature's inclination towards death gives us an obligation to care for her. The same is true of texts. The books we read are not corpses rotting in sodden fields; they are living seeds that sprout within our souls.