at nox felicis Magno pars ultima uitae
solicitios uana decepit imagine somnos.
nam Pompeiani usus sibi sede theatri
innumeram effigiem Romanae cernere plebis
attollique suum lactis ad sidera nomen
uocibus et plausu cuneos certare sonantes;
qualis erat populi facies clamorque fauentis
olim, cum iuuenis primique actate triumphi,
post domitas gentes quas torrens ambit Hiberus
et quaecumque fugax Sertorius inpulit arma,
Vespere pacato, pura uenerabilis acque
quam currus ornante toga, plaudente senatu
sedit adhuc Romanus eques; seu fine bonorum
anxia mens curis ad tempora laeta refugit,
siue per ambages solitas contraria uisis
uaticinata quies magni tulit omina planctus,
seu uetito patrias ultra tibi cernere sedes
sic Romam Fortuna dedit. ne rumpite somnos,
castrorum uigiles, nullas tuba uerberet aures.
Winner of the Translation Contest

Corey Scannell ’18

In rendering Lucan’s verse into English, I had to strike a careful balance between artfulness and literalness. Of course, a literal translation is rarely touched with art, just as artful translations must concede its literal sense at times. Achieving this balance becomes all the more difficult when one tries to translate into meter, and even harder when that meter rhymes. This is what I have done here. As Lucan wrote the Pharsalia in his epic meter, the dactylic hexameter, I translated it into ours, the heroic couplet. In doing so, I tried my very best to maintain the literal sense everywhere I could, but of course, I couldn’t maintain it everywhere. I like to think Lucan would appreciate my artistic license; his poetry is much more than the literal meaning of his words, so I conceded these literal meanings where I think artfulness should take precedence. Wherever I judge the literal meaning to be more important than the art, my meter breaks down, and “couplets” actually extend to three rhymed lines at times. With that said, I hope you agree with the concessions I had to make, and I hope any disagreements foster discussion in the future.
The final part of Pompey’s happy lot
was a night that roused his sleep with faulty thoughts:
He deemed he saw the countless Roman masses,
while seated in his theater as they passed him,
and by their joyous voices was his name
lifted to the stars in high acclaim,
as booming benches battled with their praises…
So well disposed were people’s cheers and grins
as in his youth, the first of all his wins –
He tamed the tribes that Iberus includes
plus other forces Pompey had subdued:
whatsoever arms Sertorius hurled in flight,
and in the west, then, all was made aright –
So he sat, respected, dressed in white,
his honor matching that of Roman knights,
with the senate’s cheer, his chariot’s purple bright…
Say, at the end of Pompey’s happy days,
does his troubled mind, from ‘morrow, run away
to happy yesterday? Or in round’bout ways,
reverse events his slumber now portrays,
(having forecast some ruinous coup)
with sights, as wand’ring sleep is wont to do?
Or maybe, fortune cast this view of Rome,
thus barring sight of later life at home…
Oh ramparts’ guards, don’t interrupt his sleep!
And upon his ears, no trumpets’ war cries leap!