The Art of Translation: Homer’s Iliad
Continuing Studies, Summer Quarter 2015
Barbara Clayton

Required Texts:
Homer in English, Dykman, Aminadav, ed.
English Translations of Homer, Simeon Underwood
Iliad, Richmond Lattimore, trans.

Course Goals:
This course takes a three-part approach to translation: theoretical, literary historical, and practical. Lectures and readings will present theoretical concerns relating to translation; our translation passages will give us a sense of how literary values have changed through time; comparisons of various passages will show us the kinds of choices translators face, and give us the opportunity to evaluate those choices.

Topics for Lecture and Discussion

Week 1: Traduttore, tradittore (“translator, traitor”)
What is translation?
What problems are specific to the translation of Homer?
Exercise: a close comparison of passages from 20th and 21st century verse translations

Week 2: Chapman’s Iliad
Can a translation so far removed from contemporary English be a viable translation?
How does this early Iliad introduce the problem of translation as interpretation?
How much of Homer is ‘lost’ in an Elizabethan text?

Week 3: Pope’s Iliad
Translator as commentator: do translations pass moral judgment on their source texts?
Why do some still consider Pope’s the greatest of all Iliad translations?
Is it really “more Pope than Homer”?

Week 4: The Iliad in prose, selections
Are there advantages to a prose translation?
Do prose translations stand up to time as well as verse translations?
Exercise: evaluating passages from different translations in prose

Week 5: Christopher Logue’s War Music
When is a translation not a translation?
Can an adaptation be “truer” to the source text than a straightforward translation?
How do such adaptations compel us to rethink the very meaning of translation?
Grading Options:

No Grade Requested (NGR): This is the default.

Credit/No Credit (CR/NC): You must provide evidence that you have attended class (to the best of your ability) and read the assigned material. My suggestion is that you submit a brief response to the assigned material a/o question or two on a weekly basis, either via email or handed to me in class.

Letter Grade: A 4-5 page paper on a topic of your choosing. You might want to do an evaluation/comparison of two or more translated passages from any of the authors we have discussed. Or you could choose to critique one of the many authors in Homer in English we will not have discussed.