LAT240 (W11): Translation report

DUE MONDAY, JANUARY 17

Choose a 10-18 line passage of the *Aeneid*. You will prepare your own *literary* translation of these lines (see below) and explain your translation choices. You will also choose two or three published literary translations of the same lines to study and analyze.

Your goal in both parts of the assignment is to achieve and present insights into how a translation can represent and *interpret* Virgil’s Latin poetry. How can a translation justifiably commit to a particular understanding of the poem, its nuances, its themes, its style, its tone, its aesthetic qualities, its effects, its favorite words and figures, its resonances and echoes, etc., etc.?

"Literary" translation? What’s that? I’m scared!

A “literary” translation simply means that it is not meant for the basic purpose of explaining Virgil’s grammar (how his sentences are structured and construed) but tries to represent the poetic qualities of the *Aeneid* using the full resources of language. Its choices should be justifiable but do not have to be ones that would command universal agreement. In fact, you should focus on choices (in both your own and others’ work) that require some argument, explanation, or defense.

Look well (but prudently) beyond the dictionary translations to word choices that are motivated by more than plain sense. Everything you comment on should contribute to understanding and interpreting the poem’s artistry at a higher level.

Note that the assignment is not to be a great poet. I assume you will write in free verse (or even prose). How you plan and justify your formal and interpretive choices is more important than your verse’s brilliance of execution.

**You will write** (1) your translation, (2) about 250-400 words of explanatory commentary explaining and defending your most interesting or original interpretive commitments, (3) about 400-600 words analyzing the other translators’ most interesting or original interpretive commitments. **Avoid simply stating a translation’s effect (on you), but give a persuasive explanation of how it works and why you analyze it as you do.**

Address fully all the most interesting aspects of the translations, and do not forget to give due consideration to the form (meter and rhythms, rhyme and other sound effects).

**You will present orally** to the class (3-5 minutes, strictly timed):

- the most effective 2-3 lines of your translation;
- the most effective one or two bits of the published translations you studied (2-3 lines or even less);
- a concise explanation of how each of these brief examples makes an interesting commitment to the understanding and interpretation of the Virgilian text.
LAT240 (W11): Translation report

Recommended translations to consider (stick to verse translations unless you have something strong to say about the expressive means of a prose translation):

- Our textbook: Allen Mandelbaum (1971)
- Links provided on wiki: Gavin Douglas (1513), John Dryden (1697), Sarah Ruden (2008)
- Many copies requestable from http://connectny.info/: C. Day Lewis (1952)
- Browse the library stacks: PA6807.A5