Everything Old is New Again

The Enduring Value of Special Collections

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University of Chicago
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Don't throw the past away
You might need it some rainy day
Dreams can come true again
When everything old is new again

Written by Peter Allen in collaboration with Carole Bayer Sager, 1974,
used in *The Boy from Oz* and *All That Jazz*

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b20D_ON2Etc
THE Wrath of Peleus’ Son, the Direful Spring/
Of all the Grecian Woes, O Goddess, Sing!
Achilles’ Wrath, to 

Greece the direful spring/Of woes unnumber’d, heav’nly Goddess, sing!
L’Iliade
D’HOMERE,
Traduite en Français,
Avec
Des Remarques.
Par Madame Dacier.
Tome Premier.

A Paris,
Chez Rigaud, Directeur de l’Imprimerie
Royale, rue de la Harpe.

M. DCCXI.
Avec Privilege du Roy.
Pendant que les Grecs & les Troyens combattient avec tant de furie pour le vaisseau de Protesilaus, Patrocle se présenta devant Achille ; ses yeux pareils à une source, qui du haut d'une roche escarpée roule continuellement ses eaux, inondent son visage d'un torrent de larmes. Le divin Achille, touché de le voir en cet etat, le prévint, et lui adressa ces paroles : Mon cher Patrocle, qu'avez-vous! d'où vient que vous pleurez comme un jeune enfant qui fuit sa mère, et qui la rettenant par son voile, & la regardant...
THE ILIAD OF HOMER, WITH NOTES.
To which are prefix’d, A large PREFACE, AND THE LIFE OF HOMER, BY Madam DACIER.

Done from the French by Mr. OZELL; and by him compar’d with the Greek.
To which will be made some farther Notes, that shall be added at the End of the Whole; by Mr. JOHNSON, late of Eton, now of Brentford.

Illustrated with 26 CUTS, copy’d by the best Gravers, from the Paris Plates design’d by COPPEL.

LONDON: Printed by G. James, for Bernard Lintott, at the Crofs-Keys between the Two Temple-Gates.

MDCCXII.
THE
ILIAD
OF
HOMER.

Book II.

WHILE all the other Gods, and likewise the whole Greek Camp, enjoyed profound Repose, Jove railed not the Sweats of Sleep. He meditated on the speedy Means to raise the Glory of Achilles, and cause the Trojans to...

(a) While all the other Gods, and likewise the whole Greek Camp, enjoyed profound Repose, Jove railed not the Sweats of Sleep. He meditated on the speedy Means to raise the Glory of Achilles, and cause the Trojans to...
Identify mystery text, win $1000

Updated April 28, 2014

Contest to identify mystery script in rare edition of Homer's Odyssey

A researcher has identified the script used for annotations in the 1504 edition of Homer’s Odyssey held by University of Chicago Library. Thanks to all the linguists, classicists, and other amateur detectives who responded to our call.

April 23, 2014

Calling all historians of cryptography and stenography, Sherlockians (see “The Dancing Man”), and mystery sleuths! An edition of Homer’s Odyssey contains, in Book 11 (narrating Odysseus’s return to Ithaca), a mysterious script that has never been identified. The donor of the BHL is offering a prize of $1,000 to the first person who identifies the script, and the volume is available to consult in person in the Special Collections reading room. Please direct submissions to the contest, or questions, to Anne Schrayer, Assistant Librarian for Special Collections, library@uchicago.edu.


Download high resolution page images.

(Note that the unidentified script only appears on these two pages.)
Mystery Text in 1504 Copy of Homer's 'Odyssey' Is Deciphered

BY JAMES ENG

A handwriting mystery involving a rare 1504 edition of Homer's ancient Greek epic poem "The Odyssey" has been solved.

The University of Chicago Library had offered $1,000 to anyone who could decipher some handwritten scribblings found on the margins of multiple pages of Book 11 of "Odyssey," but nowhere else in the volume.

M.C. Lang, the man who donated the Homer collection to the University of Chicago in 2007, suspected when he acquired the book years ago that the strange, unidentified script was a form of 19th-century French shorthand because French words were interspersed with the mysterious script. But he had no evidence to prove it.
Mysterious 150-year-old writing in rare copy of Homer's 'Odyssey' identified

Italian software engineer wins contest that generates worldwide response

By Susie Allen
MAY 5, 2014

An Italian computer engineer has solved a 150-year-old literary mystery found in a rare edition of Homer's Odyssey at the University of Chicago Library.

The case of the mystery marginalia began when the University received a donation of Homer's works from collector M.C. Lang in 2007. The collection included a 1504 Venetian edition of the Odyssey containing handwritten annotations in an unknown script. The annotations were thought to date back to the mid-19th century, but nothing else was known about them.

In hopes of cracking the code, the Library's Special Collections Research Center called on linguists, classicists and amateur sleuths, publicizing a $1,000 prize offered by Lang to the first person to identify the script, provide evidence to support the conclusion and execute a translation of selected portions of the marginalia. The contest generated an enormous online response and submissions from around the world.

The winner of the contest, Daniele Metilli, is currently enrolled in a digital humanities course and aiming for a career in libraries and archives. Working with Giula Accetta, a colleague who is proficient in contemporary Italian stenography and fluent in French, Metilli identified the mystery script correctly as a system of shorthand invented by Jean Coulon de Thévenot in the late 18th century. The annotations themselves are mostly French translations of words and phrases from the Greek text of the Odyssey.

Two runners-up reached the same, correct conclusion: Vanya Visnjic, a PhD student in classics at Princeton University with an interest in cryptography was the second contestant to identify the script and provide translations; Gallagher Finn, a PhD student in linguistics at the University of Chicago, also submitted correct identification and translations.

Based on the mix of French words with the script and a legible date of April 25, 1864, Metilli and Accetta began with the assumption that it was a system of French stenography in use in the mid-19th century.
Comparaison de la Tachygraphie publiée à Paris en 1790, avec cette Sténographie.

Planche XII

Coton. économat, certain, avec dureté

Révolution, conseil, concerter, distingué

République, demander, délibération, traits
The Odyssey Shorthand

On April 24, 2014 the University of Chicago Library announced a contest for the decipherment of shorthand *marginalia* found on two pages of a copy Homer's *Odyssey* printed by Aldus Manutius in 1504.

I was able to identify the code as a French tachygraphic system invented in 1776 by Jean Coulon de Thévenot. The mysterious annotator employed it in 1854 to take notes while translating the Greek text.

The following file contains my report for the contest. I will update it with new information as soon as I am able to translate more annotations. For any corrections, suggestions, or inquiries, please write me an email.

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