

2004

ΙΔΙΛΟΣ Book One 33-52: An Anglo-Saxon Heroic Epic Verse Translation

Glenn Lacki
Oberlin College

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.denison.edu/ephemeris>



Part of the [Ancient Philosophy Commons](#), [History of Art, Architecture, and Archaeology Commons](#), and the [History of Religions of Western Origin Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Lacki, Glenn (2004) "ΙΔΙΛΟΣ Book One 33-52: An Anglo-Saxon Heroic Epic Verse Translation," *Ephemeris*: Vol. 5 , Article 9.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.denison.edu/ephemeris/vol5/iss1/9>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Classical Studies at Denison Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Ephemeris by an authorized editor of Denison Digital Commons.

ΙΛΙΑΔΟΣ Book One

33-52:

An Anglo-Saxon Heroic Epic

Verse Translation

By Glenn Lacki '05

Oberlin College

Editors' Note: Last semester, in intermediate-level Greek, Glenn read and studied the Iliad of Homer. For a final paper project, he translated and discussed Greek passages. The following essay is the result of this assignment. Special thanks go to Professor Thomas Van Nortwick of the Oberlin College Department of Classics for his assistance and valuable input in the completion of his endeavor.

1. Original Greek (from Benner's Selections from Homer's Iliad): [1.33-52]

ὥς ἔφατ , ἔδδεισεν δ ὁ γέρων καὶ ἐπείθετο μύθῳ·
βῆ δ ἄκέων παρὰ θῖνα πολυφλοίσβοιο θαλάσσης·
πολλὰ δ ἔπειτ ἅπάνευθε κιῶν ἡρᾶθ ὁ γεραιὸς 35
, Απόλλωνι ἄνακτι, τὸν ἡύκομος τέκε Λητώ·
“κλῦθί μευ ἀργυρότοξ , ὃς Χρύσην ἀμφιβέβηκας
Κίλλάν τε ζαθέην Τενέδοιό τε Ἴφι ἀνάσσεις,
Σμινθεῦ. εἴ ποτέ τοι χαρίεντ ἐπὶ νηὸν ἔρεψα,
ἧ εἰ δὴ ποτέ τοι κατὰ πύονα μηρί, ἔκηα 40
ταύρων ἠδ αἰγῶν, τὸδε μοι κρήνην ἐέλδωρ·
τίσειαν Δαναοὶ ἔμα δάκρυα σοῖσι βέλεσσιν.”
ὥς ἔφατ εὐχόμενος· τοῦ δ ἔκλυε Φοῖβος
, Απόλλων.
βῆ δὲ κατ Οὐλύμποιο καρήνων χωόμενος κῆρ,
τόξ ὥμοισιν ἔχων ἀμφηρεφέα τε φαρέτρην· 45
ἔκλαγξαν δ ἄρ οἴστοι ἐπ ὥμων χωομένοιο,
αὐτοῦ κινήθέντος· ὁ δ ἦϊε νυκτὶ ἐοικώς.
ἔζετ ἔπειτ ἅπάνευθε νεῶν, μετὰ δ ἰὸν ἔηκεν·
δεινὴ δὲ κλαγγὴ γένητ ἀργυρέοιο βιοῖο.

οὐρῆας μὲν πρῶτον ἐπώχετο καὶ κύνας ἄργούς, 50
αὐτὰρ ἔπειτ αὐτοῖσι βέλος ἔχεπευκὲς ἐφίεις
βάλλ· αἰεὶ δὲ πυραὶ νεκύων καίοντο θαμεῖαι.

2. Lacki Translation, 2003: [1.33-52]

Thus he proclaimed, and the aged cleric was cowed – he
carried out the demand.

He strayed, dumbstruck, along the strand of the deep-
rumbling sea.

This wizened father, forthwith, isolated himself and
fervently petitioned 35

that one delivered of milky-haired Leto – his master,
Apollo:

“Attend me, you sterling-bowed God – you who
shepherd Chryse

and Cil’la, the all-sanctified – who preside in strength
over Tenedos.

If ever skyward, Smintheus, I roofed a sanctuary
agreeable to you,

or if, righteously, I reduced to ashes for you the rich
thigh-pieces 40

of bulls and goats, then bring my appeal to fruition:

may the Danaans suffer the burden of my sorrow by
your bolts.”

So he avowed, prostrating himself, and his overlord,
Phoebus Apollo, remembered him –

He stalked from the highest heights of Olympus, his
heart storm-smoldering,

clutching to his shoulders his short-bow and his close-
capped quiver – 45

the pinioned furies, from their sheaf, shrieked
shockwaves in his swelling ferocity

as he propelled himself on his travels.

He passed in, a
twin to the night,
settled far-off from the ships, and fired off a shaft –
a bestial bellowing sprang from the silver-plated bow.
Commencing, he brought carnage upon the pack-mules
and the quick-coursing hounds. 50
But then he loosed his biting blight-bringers on the
blasphemous men themselves,
relentlessly – and the high-piled pyres of the departed
were illuminated, undying.

3. Lattimore Translation, 1951: [1.33-52]

So he spoke, and the old man in terror obeyed him
and went silently away beside the murmuring sea beach.
Over and over the old man prayed as he walked in
solitude 35
to King Apollo, whom Leto of the lovely hair bore:
'Hear me,
lord of the silver bow who set your power about Chryse
and Killa the sacrosanct, who are lord in strength over
Tenedos,
Smintheus, if ever it pleased your heart that I built your
temple,
if ever it pleased you that I burned all the rich thigh 40
pieces
of bulls, of goats, then bring to pass this wish I pray for:
let your arrows make the Danaans pay for my tears
shed.'

So he spoke in prayer, and Phoibos Apollo heard him,
and strode down along the pinnacles of Olympos,
angered
in his heart, carrying across his shoulders the bow and 45
the hooded
quiver; and the shafts clashed on the shoulders of the
god walking

angrily. He came as night comes down and knelt then
 apart and opposite the ships and let go of an arrow.
 Terrible was the clash that rose from the bow of silver.
 First he went after the mules and the circling hounds, 50
 then let go
 a tearing arrow against the men themselves and struck
 them.
 The corpse fires burned everywhere and did not stop
 burning.

4. Fagles Translation, 1990: [1.38-60]

The old man was terrified. He obeyed the order,
 turning, trailing away in silence down the shore
 where the battle lines of breakers crash and drag.
 And moving off to a safe distance, over and over 40
 the old priest prayed to the son of sleek-haired Leto,
 lord Apollo, "Hear me, Apollo! God of the silver bow
 who strides the walls of Chryse and Cilla sacrosanct—
 lord in power of Tenedos—Smintheus, god of the
 plague! 45
 If I ever roofed a shrine to please your heart,
 ever burned the long rich bones of bulls and goats
 on your holy altar, now, now bring my prayer to pass.
 Pay the Danaans back—your arrows for my tears!"
 His prayer went up and Phoebus Apollo heard him. 50
 Down he strode from Olympus' peaks, storming at heart
 with his bow and hooded quiver slung across his
 shoulders.
 The arrows clanged at his back as the god quaked with
 rage,
 the god himself on the march and down he came like
 night.
 Over against the ships he drops to a knee, let fly a shaft 55
 and a terrifying clash rang out from the great silver bow.
 First he went for the mules and circling dogs but then,
 launching a piercing shaft at the men themselves,

he cut them down in droves—
and the corpse-fires burned on, night and day, no end in sight.

60

"...what we are dealing with is a work of the greatest imaginative vitality a masterpiece where the structuring of the tale is as elaborate as the beautiful contrivances of its language. Its narrative elements may belong to a previous age but as a work of art it lives in its own continuous present, equal to our knowledge of reality in the present time."
--Seamus Heaney, *Beowulf*, introduction ix

In the past semester of translating pieces and parts of the *Iliad* into English I have, just as Seamus Heaney did with *Beowulf*, "developed not only a feel for the language but a fondness for the melancholy and fortitude that characterized the poetry" (Heaney introduction xxii). I have come to healthy terms with some of the roots of the epic tradition and to the poetry which breathes life into it. With this project, I hoped to confront what it requires to assume the position of the mouthpiece – the conduit – of that poetry.

Since my studies have simultaneously led me down two different, though by no means conflicting, pathways – one into the world of Greek, Latin, and Classical antiquity and the other into the realm of Old and Middle English, and the early to late Medieval periods – I determined to investigate the compatibility of those two avenues by bringing them together. To that end, I have translated twenty lines of the *Iliad* into an adapted form of Anglo-Saxon heroic epic, alliterative verse. The result, I believe, is promising, though my motives and inspiration for bringing it into being, I imagine, hardly speak for themselves. In defense of my

purpose, therefore, I will address my meter, my diction, and my poetics, and weigh my interpretation of these lines against the published translations of Robert Fagles and Richmond Lattimore.

The meter into which I chose to render this part of the first book of the *Iliad* is a modified form of Old English alliterative verse. A heroic epic meter which lost track of its roots long ago in a forgotten Indo-European culture, it arrived into the light in the vigorous and compelling lines of *Beowulf* and flourished through the Middle Ages to blossom into the robust, romantic poetry of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* in the fourteenth century. In his preface, Fagles speaks of how “Homer’s work is a performance, even in part a musical event,” (ix) and with this I almost entirely agree. If I had come to no other conclusions from studying Homer, I would say that his work is without a doubt a musical event. When I first started learning Greek, I was immediately struck by the musicality of it – the tuneful consonants and melodious vowels, the mingling of harsh and even guttural sounds with ones mellow and kind to the ear. In Homer I see and hear this elevated to a new level, lifting that musicality to higher and more arresting heights. I find myself wandering around every so often murmuring a)rgure/oio bioi=o and other such choice word-blends to myself under my breath – my own form of poetic appreciation, and a never-ending source of amusement, as I cannot help but think it must surely alarm the uninitiated. It is this same musicality which I found when reading the alliterative verse of *Beowulf* and *Gawain* – a pulse that carries you along like a tide, sweeping you from one line to the next and catching you up in a splendor born from alternating elegance and simplicity. I sensed that these poets possessed a similar gift to Homer’s, “his ‘ear, ear for the sea-surge,’ as Pound describes it” (Fagles, Preface xi). Since a good

translation “must, so far as possible, reproduce both the metrical variety of the original and its cumulative momentum or ‘swing’,” (Borroff, Introduction 13) it is largely on account of this similarity in musicality that I chose to translate this part of the *Iliad* into Anglo-Saxon alliterative meter.

To assist in explaining the nuts and bolts of the verse, I shall draw heavily from Marie Borroff’s information on “The Metrical Forms” (167-168) employed by the *Gawain*-poet, to illustrate the changes I made in my verse to the traditional pattern for Anglo-Saxon epic meter. “The line is divided into two half-lines; this division, called the caesura, is marked by a syntactic break of at least minor importance.” In this, my verse complies with the established conventions. “Each half-line [in standard epic meter] contains two stressed syllables, or, as I call them, chief syllables, for a total of four per line,” but in my meter I opted instead for a line of five chief syllables, three before and two after the central caesura. These chief syllables “may be separated by one, two, or three ‘intermediate’ syllables, most frequently by one or two,” although this aspect of the poetry is largely unregulated, sometimes reaching as high as five intermediate syllables between chiefs. This presents the poet with the capacity to compensate for the transition from an inflected language such as Greek to a language like English, which relies heavily on the use of function words to denote meaning—this is, perhaps, the aspect of the verse which I find most appealing. “Chief syllables are spaced temporally as the downbeats of successive measures are spaced in a musical piece played freely rather than metronomically,” writes Borroff. “That is, we perceive them as recurring in a time continuum at regular, though not at exactly equal, intervals. The line can thus be described as having four ‘measures,’ in the musical sense of that word.” Since

my meter contains five chief syllables, it also has five 'measures', although they still function in the same way as Borroff describes.

"Alliteration is not ornamental," she continues, "as it is in most of the verse modern readers are familiar with, but a requirement of the form." The first chief syllable after the caesura I call the Key, as it determines the shape of the rest of the line. The Key must alliterate across the caesura with at least one chief syllable, but as many as all three, in the first half-line. Except in an attempt to achieve some specific poetic effect—framing a line in a particular manner or simulating a spondaic line, perhaps—the final chief syllable in a line never alliterates with the Key. As long as at least one chief syllable before the caesura alliterates with the Key, the other chiefs in the line are not required to alliterate. Generally, though, at least two of the chiefs in the first half-line will alliterate with one another. Multiple alliterations can occur within a single line as long as the above rules are followed, allowing for many and varied alliterative permutations (i.e. aaa/ab, aab/ba, aba/ab, etc. as examples of lines with two different alliterations; axa/ax, abx/ba, xaa/ax, etc. as examples of lines where one or more chiefs do not alliterate with anything else in the line). In her analysis, Borroff talks at some length about lines which have chief syllables that do not actually coincide with the principal stresses of their words, but in my translation I strove to uphold the rule that only the dominant stress of a word can serve as a chief syllable. I believe this maintains a clarity and precision that a line would lose if one of its chief syllables were misaligned with the primary stress of its word.

Fagles mentions that there is "a kind of tug-of-war peculiar to translation, between trying to encapsulate the meaning of the Greek on the one hand and trying to

find a cadence for one's English on the other, yet joining hands, if possible, to make a line of verse," (Fagles, Preface xi) and I agree with this assertion. "Working from a loose five- or six-beat line but inclining more to six," he writes of his own translation, "I expand at times to seven beats—to imply the big reach of a simile . . . or contract at times to three, to give a point in speech or action sharper stress" (Preface xi). More often than not, however, I find myself looking at one of Fagles' numerous elaborations and wondering if there could have been a better way for him to stay within the line – to hug the Greek a bit more closely.

I feel that if Homer wrote a line of poetry that I want to translate, it should end up as a line of poetry – not half a line, not a line and a half, and certainly not two. The way I accomplished this in my own translation was through the use of what Borroff terms 'compound measures'. In essence, this involves translating in such a way so that some words in the line are subordinated to others, handing over the chief syllable status they would normally hold to words that are either naturally stronger than themselves or acquire that status through specific placement in the line. In other words, the line ends up containing certain words which have 'primary stress' and are, therefore, chief syllables, and other words which have 'secondary stress' and so count simply as intermediate syllables (Borroff 171). The musical nature of the poetry creates "a rhythmical momentum, an ongoing 'swing,' of [five] simpler measures per line to which the reader instinctively accommodates compound measures by accelerating them a little" (Borroff 173). This, combined with the fact that "It is natural to read measures containing two and three intermediate syllables more rapidly than those containing only one," (Borroff 168) keeps the pace moving steadily through the lines of verse. For instance, if one reads lines 34 and 35 of my

translation together, the natural flow of the beat from one line to the next takes the stress of “wizened”, which would receive the stress if one read the line on its own, and instead places it on “father”. The same occurs between “isolated” and “himself”, causing the reader to flow straight through the *s* in the latter, over to the next chief syllable in the line, at

“fervently”, despite the number of intermediate syllables in the measure. Working in this way with my lines, I can contain within the bounds of a single line nearly everything held in a line of Homer’s dactylic hexameter, ending up (for example) with a line such as I have at 35, whereas Fagles creates an entire extra line of poetry to encompass it (lines 39-40).

“It has seemed to me that a modern verse-translation of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*,” says Borroff, “must fulfill certain requirements deriving from the nature of the original style,” (Introduction 12) and I do not believe it is any different with the *Iliad*. When Lattimore states, “My aim has been to give a rendering of the *Iliad* which will convey the meaning of the Greek in a speed and rhythm analogous to the speed and rhythm I find in the original,” (Introduction 55) and then I look between his lines and the lines of the original Greek, a few things become apparent to me. To start with, he does indeed convey the Greek in a speedy manner – more accurately than Fagles, I think, as far as grammar and the written word are concerned. But the speed and rhythm he works in do not at all strike me as being analogous to those of the original Greek. Secondly, he is correct when he says, “My line can hardly be called English hexameter” (Introduction 55). How he can, on the one hand, assert that his lines do not resemble English hexameter and, on the other, claim that he is making a translation alike to the original in speed and rhythm, I fail to understand. Fagles is relatively

straightforward in his metric goals, and I do feel that he “occup[ies] a flexible middle ground, here between [Homer’s] hexameter line . . . and a tighter, native English line.” I do not feel that either of their translations is as faithful to the original Greek, metrically or rhythmically, as they could be. That became one of my primary goals, therefore – to create a translation with a pulse that feels more akin to the original, with lines that carry a similar inflection in verse to the Greek that Homer himself wrote.

Boroff says of the *Gawain*-poet that “such was [his] artistry that, while recounting the events of his narrative in thoroughly traditional fashion, he was able to stamp them with his own imaginative imprint,” (Introduction 6) and that was something that I endeavored to do for my translation of these lines of the *Iliad*. As she cautions, “the diction of the translation must, so far as possible, reflect that of the original poem,” (Introduction 13) and with this in mind, in the style of Heaney, I have “tr[ie]d to match the poet’s analogy-seeking habit at its most original” (Introduction xxix-xxx). Unlike Lattimore, I have not “used the plainest language I could find which might be adequate,” (Introduction 55) nor have I allowed myself the metrical freedom of Fagles, but instead have done my utmost to stretch my wings of profundity, so to speak. I have sought to create a translation of these lines which captures the breadth and spectacle of Homer while getting as close to as many of the layers of meaning – which, I believe, impregnate nearly every line of the poem – as possible.

Heaney writes that he was “reluctant to force an artificial shape or an unusual word choice just for the sake of correctness” (Introduction xxix) in his translation, and I believe I acted similarly. I fell in love with these lines the first time I read them in the Greek,

and the picture they imprinted upon my mind was both vivid and evocative of many mixed emotions – fear, rage, reverence, the desire for vengeance, the thrill of the hunt, and the senselessness of death. Boroff complains that she “constantly had to compromise, sometimes forced away from literal rendition by the exigencies of the meter, sometimes foregoing an attractive phrase or cadence for the sake of a more faithful rendition, sometimes finding [her]self able to have it both ways” (Introduction 13). When the picture in my head came into conflict with the structure of my verse, however, I refused to give in until I had satisfied my desire to “have it both ways,” as she says. Like Lattimore, I knew “I must try to avoid mistranslation,” but unlike him, I did not do so by worrying that I might be “rating the word of my own choice ahead of the word which translates the Greek” (Introduction 55). Rather, I translated the lines into plain English – the sort of rendering which inevitably comes of poring over an *Iliad*-specific dictionary as your source of vocabulary – and then, with a rigid grasp on the grammar of the passage, I assembled the language and phrasing that fit my mental image around this framework.

In line 33, I translated *ge/rwn* as “aged cleric” and in line 35 I rendered *geraio'j* as “wizened father”. This point seemed an important one to me, since this is not simply your run-of-the-mill old man. Both Lattimore and Fagles translate it that way in line 33, though, and Lattimore again in 35. Fagles does seem to pick up a bit of the spirit that I was striving for, however, when he calls Chryses “the old priest” in line 35. To me, the character of Chryses is critical, whether or not the poem dispenses with him after he has served his purpose. I read the lines as he comes to the camp of the Achaeans to ransom his daughter and I get a specific vision in my head of a man bent by age and trampled by

his state of affairs, but who nevertheless preserves a great deal of the inviolability granted to him by his affinity to his god. As he wanders away from the camp, he is at first concerned for his life. When he gets far enough away, however, the confusion sets in – what is he doing? where is he going? who are these people who think themselves powerful enough to spurn him, a venerated priest of Apollo? That was the feeling I hoped to capture when he “strayed, dumbstruck, along the strand of the deep-rumbling sea.” Lattimore’s line does not seem to try to capture any sense of this, whereas Fagles starts off well, with Chryses “trailing away in silence,” but by splitting the line he separates the sea from the man in a way that eliminates the metaphorical quality of the sea that I envision – a sea whose roaring washes over the man as surely as the waves wash upon the shore, leaving him waterlogged with his own jumbled thoughts and emotions.

In the invocation of Apollo (lines 37-42), I continue the compound formations which I began with the “deep-rumbling sea” when I make the a)rguro/toc’ the “sterling-bowed God” and Ki/lla/n te zaqe/hn “Cil’la, the all-sanctified”. Such compounds are extremely common in the descriptive Anglo-Saxon epic tradition from which I took my verse, and the more thought I gave to the idea, the more it seemed to me that by bringing the translation even closer to the form I was emulating I could only enhance its force and vitality. For instance, that Apollo would be the “sterling-bowed God” instead of the “God of the silver bow,” as Fagles and Lattimore would have him, seems entirely natural to me. It is a stronger combination of words – it is faster and speaks to me of an adamant hardness in the Apollo whom Chryses hopes to summon which “God of the silver bow” somehow lacks. Chryses is calling upon him to hearken to his call and wreak divine vengeance upon the

Achaeans – not to come down from the heavens and look pretty. It is this aspect of the Homeric gods which I hoped to capture through the hyper-masculinization of the Apollo figure that pervades my translation – their capacity to be chillingly sinister, even in their sublimely effulgent beauty.

At line 40, I translate *dh/* as “righteously”. This may seem to be a wanton use of poetic license on my part – and perhaps it is. But when I read through this passage, every adverb I come upon seems to carry with it shades of religiosity. In my eyes, it directly follows that *dh/*, usually translated as “indeed” or “truly,” carries with it the sense that what Chryses did he did “rightly” or “in a proper manner”. Therefore, against the religious backdrop before which the adverb stands, it can – and I believe does – mean “righteously” or perhaps even “reverently,” though I felt that using the less patently religious of these two terms might allow my translation to occupy an intermediate and less affected ground. Both Fagles and Lattimore drop the adverb entirely – a crime of which I, myself, am also guilty at times – and thereby miss out on cashing in on its potential.

Given the nature of the invocation that Chryses sends up to Apollo, it seemed fitting to me that Phoebus should “remember” him instead of “hearing” him, which the verb *e)/klue* would normally imply. The priest calls to him, listing out first the god’s central places of power and worship and then the deeds he himself has undertaken on behalf of the god, which he wants Apollo to recall. Neither Lattimore nor Fagles look as if they want to suggest this sense, as they translate the verb literally. The role of memory in the *Iliad*, however, is a pervasive and significant subject, in and of itself – the scope of which extends far beyond the confines of the space and time of this experiment, I fear – and I certainly feel that it is not out of the question to consider the

theme as manifest in this instance. In addition to this, there are also the religious undertones implicit in the word “remember” which I find too enticing to pass up. Almost every religion in the world harbors some sort of desire that the prayers we send up to our gods will one day be considered by those gods. When that happens, they will remember us, remember our prayers, remember our devotion, and accomplish that which we desire. These subtexts are the impressions I hope to evoke by having Apollo “remember” Chryses instead of simply hearing him.

The second half of the passage is definitely the part which I hold most dear and – just as when a newborn baby is brought into the light and put into the arms of her mother, who looks upon her and, while gazing, understands what her name must be – so did I, staring at these last nine lines, come to realize what I wanted to engender from them. Here is Homer, “recounting the events of his narrative,” and here am I, “able to stamp them with [my] own imaginative imprint,” as Borroff suggested an interpreter of a story can do (Introduction 6). The developing imprint in my mind was one of fire and brimstone, of storm-clouds and thunderbolts – of an unearthly huntsman, seeking a quarry upon which he means to visit a revenge so awe-inspiring and portentous that the very weapons he will employ, enlivened by the thought of the black outrages they will get to perform, are inspired with life so as to give vent to the blistering steam of his excess fury.

To emboss this mark of mine on the passage, I employed a number of conventions to call to mind all of these chilling images. When Apollo comes forth from Olympus, he does not simply “stride” as is the norm for translating *bh=*. Instead, he “stalks” down, and as he comes his heart is “storm-smoldering” in much the same way as lightning stirs up the clouds before it strikes to

earth. I take the word compounding to a new level by moving into the realm of the kenning, another poetic device common in the Anglo-Saxon epic tradition. In essence, it is a word-combination which metaphorically suggests its ordinary referent – for instance, “the sea” becomes “the whale-road” and a “shield” becomes a “war-board”. Twice in these lines I create kennings to describe the arrows of Apollo—at line 46 they are the “pinioned furies” in the sheaf upon his back, and at 51 they are the “biting blight-bringers” which he is loosing upon the men in the camps. The “donkeys” and “swift dogs” (which both Fagles and Lattimore translate as “circling dogs/hounds” for some reason) which he assails become “the pack-mules and the quick-coursing hounds” which he “brings carnage upon” in line 50. Finally, I strove for an ironic tone for the ending line, in which the funeral pyres of the dead, instead of “burning always” – the literal translation of *kai/onto ai)ei* – are “illuminated, undying”. I believe this word combination achieves a number of unique effects. First, illuminated brings to mind a tinge of the supernatural, which I think is just enough to conjure up the idea that the burning of the pyres is a sort of magical force which cannot be stopped by mortal men. Additionally, the changing of *ai)ei*, “always”, to “undying”, through the weakening of the adverbial force, instead almost anthropomorphizes the pyres and grants an irony to the line which I see evidenced in the Greek – the pyres consuming the once-living soldiers are now the things that live, fueled by the corpses of the fallen.

“[Homer] is rapid, plain and direct in thought and expression,” writes Lattimore, “plain and direct in substance, and noble” (Introduction 55). On these points I disagree. I do not feel that Homer is rapid, insofar as that term can be used of poetry written in dactylic hexameter. What I would say is that Homer has a

rhythm that cannot be ignored, a beat that will carry you along with it and make you believe it is rapid, when really it is washing over you once more with every new line. Whether or not he is plain and direct in thought and expression is really a matter of individual interpretation of the verse laid out by Homer – it can be plain and direct when it needs to be, but it is also capable of weaving complex webs of images that you must study in order to separate them and see the whole picture. On that note, I do not feel he is at all plain and direct in substance, and I believe that to say so is to turn a blind eye to the myriad layers of depth that fill almost every single line of so-called plain and direct material. Noble, however, I will not dispute, and like Lattimore, the nobility of my interpretation is not for me to decide.

“Poets no longer write alliterative poetry in this technical sense,” Boroff maintains, and I think this is an unfortunate fact since, as she says, “the modern language lends itself as well to the requirements of the form as the *Gawain*-poet’s Middle English” (Introduction 6). I do feel that, in the end, I have created a rendering of these lines into a faithful adaptation of Anglo-Saxon heroic epic verse which, in some respects at least, better approximates the Greek of Homer, though the success or failure of it are, of course, up to others to judge.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Benner, Allen Rogers, ed. Selections from Homer’s *Iliad*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2000.
- Boroff, Marie, trans. Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Patience, and Pearl. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001.
- Heaney, Seamus, trans. Beowulf. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2000.
- Homer. The Iliad. Robert Fagles, trans. New

Literary Analysis

York: Penguin Books, 1990.

Lattimore, Richmond, trans. The Iliad of Homer.
Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951.