PUBLISHED ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS OF HOMER'S ILIAD AND ODYSSEY

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[**Note that in May 2024 I stopped editing, revising, correcting, and adding to this list.**]

The following pages are a work in progress (periodically and sometimes erratically updated), a chronological list of complete English translations of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. The list, for the most part, includes only the first edition of any particular translation and does not include reprints of earlier translations, partial translations, parodies, burlesques, adaptations, or re-workings of the poem.

Where possible, I have provided links to samples of particular translations and, in some cases, to the complete text. And in many cases I have added a few review comments of my own. These comments are, for the most part, quick summary evaluations based on an immediate first impression of the translation, except in the case of the more recent versions, where I have usually made a more judicious (although still quite brief) attempt to deal with the English text. The short samples do not include any footnotes or line numbers present in the original.

The purpose of this list is to permit readers to browse through a selection of English translations of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* in order to compare the different ways in which translators have, over the years, rendered Homer's Greek in an idiom they considered suitable for their contemporary readers.

The list is, I fear, not altogether reliable or complete, mainly because it is sometimes difficult to determine from library records and bibliographies whether a particular book is, in fact, an English translation of the complete poem, rather than a summary, commentary, partial translation, or satire. Given that such titles are very common, I may well have included titles which do not belong here. Also, the precise date of the first publication has often been difficult to ascertain, particularly for translations which came out over a period of years or which went through several editions. I welcome comments and suggestions, especially concerning corrections and additions or subtractions.

The information here comes from a number of sources, most notably Philip H. Young's *The Printed Homer: A 3000 Year Publishing and Translation History of the Iliad and the Odyssey* (Jefferson, North Carolina, 2003), George Steiner, *Homer in English* (Penguin 1996), Finley Melville Kendall Foster, *English Translations from*

the Greek: A Bibliographical Survey (New York: Columbia University, 1918), J. H. Douglas Bush, "English Translations of Homer," PMLA 41.2 (June 1926), and library catalogues for the Bodleian and British Libraries and the Library of Congress.

COMPLETE ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS OF HOMER'S *ILIAD*

[**Arthur Hall**. *Ten books of Homers Iliades*, London 1581] (**Comment and Link to Complete Text**)].

George Chapman (London, 1603-1614), fourteen syllable verse. (**Sample, Comment, and Link to Complete Text**).

John Ogilby (London, 1656), heroic couplets. (**Sample and Comment**)

Thomas Hobbes (London, 1675). Verse translation. (**Sample, Comment, and Link to Complete Text**).

William Oldisworth, **William Broom**, **John Ozell** (London, 1712). "Done from the French . . . and compar'd with the Greek." (**Review Comment**).

Alexander Pope (London, 1715-1720). Rhymed verse. (**Sample, Comment, and Link to Complete Text**).

James MacPherson (London, 1773), prose (**Sample, Comment, and Link to Volume I of the Complete Text**).

William Cowper (London, 1791). Blank verse. (**Sample, Comment, and Link to Complete Text**).

James Morrice (London, 1809) (blank verse) (**Sample, Comment, and Link to Volume 1**).

Graduate of the University of Oxford (Oxford 1821). Prose. (**Sample, Comment, and Link to Complete Text**).

William Sotheby (London, 1831) Heroic couplets. (**Sample, Comment, and and Link to Volume I**).

Author Unknown. Homer's *Iliad* (1841) (listed by Foster, but otherwise no record).

T. S. Brandreth (London, 1846) "Drumming decasyllables." (**Sample. Comment, and Link to Volume I**).

William Munford (Boston, Mass., 1846) (**Sample, Comment, and Link to Volume II**).

Hamilton Bryce (1847), prose (Listed by Foster, but otherwise the record is unclear).

Theodore Alois Buckley (London, 1851) Prose. (**Sample, Comment, and Link to Complete Text**).

William G. T. Barter (London, 1854) Spenserian stanzas. (**Sample, Comment, and link to complete text**).

Thomas Clark (Philadelphia, 1855-8). English-Greek interlinear text. (**Comment and Link to Complete Text**).

F. W. Newman (London, 1856) "Unrhymed English metre" (**Sample, Comment, and Link to Complete Text**).

Ichabod Charles Wright (London 1859-64). Blank verse. (**Sample, Comment, Link to Volume I**)

J. C. Wright (Cambridge, 1858-65). Blank verse. (Ichabod Charles Wright?)

Dr. Giles (London 1861-82) Word for word prose (with Greek) (**Comment and Link to Sample**)

Anonymous. In hexameters (1862).

J. H. Dart (London, 1862-1865). Hexameter verse. (**Sample, Comment, and Link to Complete Text**)

Edward Stanley, Earl of Derby (London, 1864) Blank verse. (**Sample, Comment, and Link to Complete Text**).

Thomas Starling Norgate (London, 1864). Blank verse. (**Sample, Comment, and Link to Complete Text**).

Edwin W. Simcox (London, 1865). Hexameter verse. (**Sample, Comment, and Link to Complete Text**).

Philip S. Worsley, (Edinburgh, 1865-8). In Spenserian stanzas (**Sample, Comment, and Link to Volume I**).

John Stuart Blackie (Edinburgh 1866). In fourteen syllable verse. (**Sample, Comment, and Link to Preview**).

J. F. W. Herschel (London, 1866). Accented hexameters. (**Sample, Comment and Link to Complete Text**).

James Inglis Cochrane (Edinburgh, 1867). Hexameter verse. (**Sample, Comment, and Link to Complete Text**).

Charles Merivale (London 1869). Rhymed verse. (**Sample, Comment, and Link to Volume II**).

J. **G. Cordery**. (London, 1870) Blank verse with Greek facing. (**Sample and Link to Volume I**).

William Cullen Bryant (Boston, Mass., 1870). Blank verse. (**Sample, Comment, and Link to Complete Text**).

W. G. Caldcleugh (Philadelphia, 1870). Verse. (**Sample, Comment, and Link to Complete Text**).

John Benson Rose (London, 1874). Blank verse. (**Sample, Comment, and Link to Complete Text**).

Charles Bagot Cayley (London, 1876). "Homometrically translated" (**Sample and Link to Full Text**).

Mordaunt Barnard (Edinburgh 1876). Blank verse.

Herbert Hailstone (Cambridge, 1881). Literal prose translation (**Sample and Link to Book XXI**).

C. W. Bateman and **Roscoe Mongan** (London: 1881). Literally translated.

Andrew Lang, **Walter Leaf**, **Ernest Myers** (Boston, 1882). Prose. (**Sample and Link to Complete text**).

W. C. Green (London, 1884). Blank verse. (**Sample, Comment, and Link to Volume I**).

Arthur Sanders Way (London, 1886). English verse. (**Sample, Comment, and Link to Volume I**).

Samuel Butler (London, 1888). Prose. (**Sample, Comment, and Link to Complete Text**).

G. Howland. Metrical translation. (Boston, 1889).

John Purves (London, 1891). Prose. (**Sample, Comment, and Link to Complete Text**).

Edgar Alfred Tibbetts (Boston, 1907) (**Sample, Comment, and Link to Complete Text**).

Edward Henry Blakeney (London, 1910-13). Prose.

Arthur Gardner Lewis (New York, 1912). Blank Verse. (**Sample, Comment, and Link to Complete Text**).

George Ernle (London 1922). Quantitative Hexameters. (**Sample, Comment, and Link to Complete Text**).

Augustus Taber Murray (London, 1924). Prose. (**Sample, Comment, and Link to Complete Text**).

Alexander Falconer Murison (London, 1933). Hexameter verse. (**Sample, Link to Review, and Comment**).

William Sinclair Marris (London, 1934).

Robinson Smith (Nice, 1937). "The Original Iliad." (**Comment**)

William Henry Denham Rouse (New York, 1938). Prose. (**Sample, Comment, and Link to Preview**).

Benjamin Smith and **Walter Miller** (New York, 1944). Line for line dactylic hexameter.

Alston Hurd Chase, **William Graves Perry, Jr.** (Boston, 1950). Prose. (**Sample, Link to Review, and Comment**).

Emile Victor Rieu (Harmondsworth, 1950). Prose. (Sample, Review Comment, and Link to Preview).

Richmond Lattimore (Chicago, 1951). Hexameter "isometric" verse. (Sample, Comment and Link).

Robert Graves (New York, 1959) (Sample, Review Comment, Link to longer sample).

Samuel Ogden Andrew, **Michael Oakley** (London, 1955). Verse. (Review Article).

Ennis Rees (New York, 1963). Verse. (Sample, Review Comment, Link to Text).

Robert Fitzgerald (New York, 1963). Verse. (Sample, Comment, and Link to Full Text).

J. P. Kirton (Lowestoft, 1977).

Denison Bingham Hull (Athens, Ohio, 1982). Blank verse. (Sample and Review Comment)

Martin Hammond (London, 1987). Prose. (Sample, Comment, and Link to Preview).

Robert Fagles (New York, 1990). Verse. (Sample, Comment, and Link to Preview).

Michael Reck (New York, 1994). Verse.

Stanley Lombardo (Indianapolis, 1997). Verse. (Sample, Comment, and Preview).

Ian Johnston (e-text, 2002), Arlington, Va (2006) Verse. (Comment and Link to Complete Text).

John Jackson (e-text, 2005). Interlinear Greek-English. (Sample and Comment).

Rodney Merrill (2007): English hexameters (Sample, Comment, Link to Longer Sample).

Tony Kline (2008?) (hyperlinked e-text). Prose (Sample, Comment, Link to Complete Text).

Herbert Jordan (Norman, Oklahoma, 2008): line-for-line blank verse. (Sample, Comment, and Link to Preview).

Frederick Light (New York, 2009). In a sequence of 1823 sonnets. (Sample and Link to Recording).

Anthony Verity (New York, 2011). (Sample, Review Comment, and Link to Preview).

Stephen Mitchell (New York 2011). (Sample, Review Comment, and Link to Preview).

James Muirden (Rewe, Devon, 2012). A new rendering in heroic verse. (Sample and Review Comment).

Richard Whitaker (2012). A Southern African Translation. (Sample, Review Comments, Links to Reviews).

Edward McCrorie (Johns Hopkins, 2012). Verse. (Sample, Review Comment, Link to Preview).

Peter Green (California, 2015). Hexameter verse (**Sample, Review Comment, Links to Reviews**).

Caroline Alexander (New York 2015). Free verse (**Sample, Review Comment, Link to Review**).

William Guy (2015). Free verse. (**Sample and Link to Preview**).

Joe Sachs (Philadelphia 2018). Verse (**Sample, Comment, Link to Preview**).

Sophie Grace Chappell (ResearchGate, 2019). Homer's *Iliad*: a new translation into English verse (**Sample, Preview, comment**).

Emily Wilson (Norton, NY, 2023). Iambic Pentameter. (**Sample, Review Comment, Link to Preview**).

John Prendergast (Independently Published, 2023). Verse. (**Sample and Review Comment**).

COMPLETE ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS OF HOMER'S ODYSSEY

George Chapman (London, 1612?). Rhyming couplets. (**Sample and Link to Complete text**).

John Ogilby (London, 1656). Heroic couplets. (**Sample and Link to Complete Text**).

Thomas Hobbes (London, 1675). Rhyming pentameters. (**Sample and Link to Complete text**).

Alexander Pope (London, 1725-26). Heroic couplets. (**Sample and Link to Complete text**).

William Cowper (London, 1791). Blank verse. (**Sample and Link to Complete text**)

A Member of the University of Oxford [Henry Cary?] (Oxford 1823). Prose.

William Sotheby (Cambridge, 1834). Rhyming Pentameters. (**Sample, Comment, and Link to Complete Text**).

Theodore Alois Buckley (London, 1851). Prose. (**Sample and Link to Complete Text**)

Dr. Giles (London 1861) Literally and word for word. Prose. (**Sample and Link to Books I to VI**).

Henry Alford (London, 1861). Hendecasyllable verse. (**Sample and Link to Volume One**).

Philip Stanope Worsely (Edinburgh, 1861) Spenserian stanzas. (**Sample and Link to Volume II**).

Thomas Starling Norgate (London, 1862). Blank verse. (**Sample and Link to Complete Text**).

George Musgrave (London, 1865). Blank verse. (**Sample and Link to Volume II**).

Lovelace Bigge-Wither (Oxford, 1869). Accentuated Dramatic Verse. (**Sample and Link to Complete Text**)

G. W. Edgington (New York, 1869). Blank verse.

William Cullen Bryant (Boston, 1871). Blank verse. (**Sample and Link to Complete Text**).

Kelly (London, 1872-80) Literal prose. [This title comes from Young; it is not in library records]

Mordaunt Barnard (London, 1876). Blank verse. (**Sample and Link to Complete Text**).

Samuel Henry Butcher, Andrew Lang (New York, 1879). Prose. (Sample and Link to Complete text).

Roscoe Mongan (London, 1879-80). Literally translated.

George Augustus Schomberg (London 1879-82). Verse. (**Sample and Link to Volume I**)

Arthur Sanders Way (London, 1880). English verse. (Sample and Comment)

Charles du Cane. Rhyming fourteeners. (London, 1880) (Sample and Link to Volume I).

George Herbert Palmer (Boston, 1886). English "rhythmic prose" (Sample and Link to Complete Text).

William Morris (London, 1887). Rhyming verse of irregular line length. (Sample and Link to Full Text).

Thomas Clark (London, 1888). Interlinear Greek-English

J. G. Cordery. Iambic pentameter. (London, 1897).

Samuel Butler (New York, 1900). Prose. (Complete text)

John William Mackail (London, 1903). In quatrains. (Sample and Link to Text).

Henry Bernard Cotterill (London, 1911). Line for line isometric translation . (Sample and Link to Complete Text).

Arthur Gardner Lewis (New York, 1911). Blank verse.

Augustus Taber Murray (London, 1919). Prose. (Sample and Link to Complete Text)

Francis Caulfield (London, 1921). Isometric verse.

William Sinclair Marris (London, 1925). Blank verse. (Sample and Link to Preview)

Robert Henry Hiller (Philadelphia, 1927). Prose.

Herbert Bates (New York, 1929) Tetrameter verse. (Sample).

Thomas Edward Lawrence (London, 1932). Prose. (Sample and Link to Preview).

William Henry Denham Rouse (New York, 1937). Prose. (Sample and Review Comment).

Emile Victor Rieu (London, 1945). Prose. (Review Comment and Link to Preview).

Samuel Ogden Andrew (London, 1948). Verse.

Ennis Rees (New York, 1960). Verse. (Review Article and Comment).

Robert Fitzgerald (New York, 1961). Verse. (Sample, Review Comment, and Link to Full Text)

Preston Herschel Epps (New York, 1965). Unabridged school edition.

Albert Spaulding Cook (New York, 1967). Line by line verse.

Richmond Alexander Lattimore (New York, 1965) (Sample, Review Comment, Link to Preview).

Denison Bingham Hull (Greenwich, Conn., 1978)

Walter Shewring (Oxford, 1980). Prose. (Review Comment and Link to Preview).

Memas Kolaitis (Santa Barbara, 1983)

Allen Mandelbaum (Berkeley, 1990). Blank verse. (**Sample and Link to Preview**).

Roger David Dawe (Lewes, 1993). Prose. (**Sample and Review Comment**).

Brian Kemball-Cook (Hitchin, 1993). English hexameter verse.

Michael Reck (New York, 1994).

Robert Fagles (New York, 1996). Verse. (**Preview and Review Comment**).

Martin Hammond (London, 2000). Prose. (**Sample, Review Comment**).

Stanley Lombardo (Indianapolis, 2000). Verse **(Link to Preview)**.

Tony Kline (e-text hyperlinked). Prose (**Sample and Link to Complete text**).

Ian Johnston (e-text) (Arlington, Va, 2006) Verse. (**Complete text**).

Rodney Merrill, English hexameters (2002). (**Sample, Review Comment, Link to Audio**).

Edward McCrorie (Baltimore 2004) Verse (**Review Comment and Link to Preview**).

James Huddleston, line for line, online interlinear English-Greek (**Complete text**).

Charles Stein (Berkeley, 2008). Free verse. (**Review Comment and Link to Preview**).

Stephen Mitchell (NY, Atria Books, 2013). Verse. (**Review Comment and Link to Preview**).

Herbert Jordan (University of Oklahoma Press, 2014) (**Review Comment and Link to Preview**).

Brian Dawkins (Steele Roberts, Wellington, NZ, 2014) Verse, with illustrations by the translator.

Joe Sachs (Philadelphia, 2014) (**Sample, Comment, and Preview**).

Richard Whitaker (Cape Town 2017) Translated into South African English. Verse. (**Comment**).

Emily Wilson (Norton, 2018) Blank Verse (**Sample, Review Comment, Link to Preview**).

William Mann (Amazon, 2022), Infinite (French) Iambic Verse (Sample and Review Comment)

TEN BOOKS of Homers Iliades, translated out of French, By Arthur Hall Esquire.

AT LONDON Imprinted by Ralph Nevvberie. 1581.
Cum Priuilegio.

[Sample from the first book]

I Thée beséech, O Goddesse milde, the hatefull hate to plaine, *
Whereby Achilles was so wroong, and grewe in suche disdaine,
That thousandes of the Gréekish Dukes, in hard and heauie plight,
To Plutoes Courte did yéelde their soules, and gaping lay vpright,
Those sencelesse trunckes of buriall voide, by them erst gaily borne,
By rauening •...rres, and •...rreine soules, in •...ces to be torne.

Gainst Agamemn of Ioue his •...rnth, s•...kindled was the fire,
That he Achil•...o déere, and crosse s•... déeply did conspire.

O Lady shew what God beganne this hateful quarrell thus,
It was the heire of Latona, the gallant gay Phoebus,
Who had to sire that mighty God, who down his lightning throws, *
With stormes of haile, and th•...ercl aps: the God incholler grows,
That Agamemn roughly a suite h•...Chryses Priest res•....
In Gréekish •...p his plages he flings, their state which •...retly bruso.

At that time Chryses did repayre vnto the shippes, that lay
At ancker before Troy besiegde, in the Porte of Sig•...,*
With verdant crown, wherewith Apoll his séemely head had clad,
With scepter eke, with things of price, which he for ransome had,
His da•...ghter captiue helde by Gréekes by worth hir home to buy,

COMMENT

As Young points out (99), the first extensive (but not complete) translation of Homer into English was carried out by Arthur Hall in 1581, who translated ten books of the *Iliad* into Alexandrines (twelve-syllable couplets). Hall did not use the Greek text, however. His translation was based upon the French of Hugues Salel (1555).

For the text of Hall's *Iliad*, please use the following link: Hall *Iliad*.

Homer
Iliad
Translated by George Chapman

[Sample from the Opening of the Poem]

Achilles' bane full wrath resound, O Goddesse, that imposd
Infinite sorrowes on the Greekes, and many brave soules losd
From breasts Heroique—sent them farre, to that invisible cave
That no light comforts; and their lims to dogs and vultures gave.
To all which Jove's will gave effect; from whom first strife begunne
Betwixt Atrides, king of men, and Thetis' godlike Sonne.
What God gave Eris their command, and op't that fighting veine?
Jove's and Latona's Sonne, who, fir'd against the king of men
For contumelie showne his Priest, infectious sickness sent
To plague the armie; and to death, by troopes, the souldiers went.
Occasiond thus: Chryses, the Priest, came to the fleete to buy,
For presents of unvalued price, his daughter's libertie—
The golden scepter and the crowne of Phœbus in his hands
Proposing—and made suite to all, but most to the Commands
Of both th' Atrides, who most ruled. 'Grat Atreus' sonnes,' said he,
'And all ye wel-griev'd Greekes, the Gods, whose habitations be
In heavenly houses, grace your powers with Priam's razed towne,
And grant ye happy conduct home! To winne which wisht renowne
Of Jove, by honouring his sonne (farre-shooting Phœbus), daine
For these fit presents to dissolve the ransomeable chaine
Of my lov'd daughter's servitude.' The Greekes entirely gave
Glad acclamations, for signe that their desires would have
The grave Priest reverenc'd, and his gifts of so much price embrac'd.
The Generall yet bore no such mind, but viciously disgrac'd
With violent termes the Priest, and said: 'Doterd, avoid our fleete,
Where lingring be not found by me, nor thy returning feete
Let ever visite us againe, lest nor thy Godhead's crowne
Nor scepter save thee. Her thou seekst I still will hold mine owne
Till age defloure her. In our court at Argos (farre transferd
From her lov'd countrie) she shall plie her web, and see prepared
(With all fit ornaments) my bed. Incense me then no more,
But (if thou wilt be safe) be gone.' This said, the sea-beate shore
(Obeying his high will) the Priest trod off with haste and feare.
And, walking silent till he left farre off his enemie's eare,
Phœbus (faire-haird Latona's sonne) he stird up with a vow
To this sterne purpose: 'Heare, thou God that bear'st the silver bow,
That Chrysa guard'st, rulest Tenedos with strong hand, and the round
Of Cilla most divine dost walke! O Smintheus, if crownd

With thankfull offerings thy rich Phane I ever saw, or fir'd
Fat thighs of oxen and of goates to thee, this grace desir'd
Vouchsafe to me: paines for my teares let these rude Greekes repay.
Forc'd with thy arrows.' Thus he praid, and Phœbus heard him pray
And, vext at heart, downe from the tops of steepe heaven stoopt: his bow,
And quiver coverd round, his hands did on his shoulders throw,
And of the angrie deitie the arrowes as he mov'd
Ratl'd about him. Like the night he rang'd the host and rov'd
(Athwart the fleete set) terribly; with his hard-loosing hand
His silver bow twang'd, and his shafts did first the Mules command,
And swift hounds; then the Greekes themselves his deadly arrows shot.
The fires of death went never out. . . .

REVIEW COMMENT

Chapman's translation, the first full text of an *Iliad* published in English, has been much praised and much criticized. It is, thanks to Keats's famous poem, among English students of literature the most famous edition ever to appear (other than that of Alexander Pope). Chapman belonged to a tradition which encouraged the translator to add rhetorical flourishes of his own rather than staying closely faithful to the original, and he used that liberty to add all sorts of Elizabethan phrases, sometimes entire lines, a habit that does not sit well with those who insist upon scrupulous fidelity to Homer's Greek. His basic verse form is a line with fourteen syllables and rhyming couplets, but the poem is not unduly heavy; it is, as Matthew Arnold notes, "plain-spoken, fresh, vigorous, and to a certain degree, rapid." Chapman's *Iliad* remains popular today (and in print), justly so, and not merely because he was the first in a long tradition. The translation is a delight to read (or at least to browse through), even if it is not one's first choice for a new reader of Homer.

For a preview of a new edition of Chapman's *Iliad*, please use the following link: Chapman *Iliad*. This edition has a very useful introduction, and no reader should forgo the delight of reading Chapman's introductory poem "To the Reader" in which the vigour of his aggressive assault on the fashionable poetry of his own age is wonderfully presented:

So, in this world of weeds you worldlings taste
Your most lov'd dainties, with such warre buy peace,
Hunger for torment, virtue kicke for vice;
Cares for your states do with your states increase,
And, though ye dreame ye feast in Paradise,
Yet Reason's Day-light shews ye at your meate—
Asses at Thistles, bleeding as ye eate.

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HOMER
HIS ILIADS
TRANSLATED,
ADORN'D
WITH SCULPTURE,
AND
ILLUSTRATED
WITH
ANNOTATIONS,
BY
JOHN OGILBY, Esq
Master of His MAJESTIES Revells in the Kingdom of
IRELAND
London 1660

[Sample from the Opening of the Poem]

Achilles Peleus Son's destructive Rage
Great Goddess, sing, which did the Greeks engage
In many Woes, and mighty Hero's Ghosts
Sent down untimely to the Stygian Coasts:
Devouring Vultures on their Bodies prey'd,
And greedy Dogs (so was Jove's Will obey'd;)
Because Great Agamemnon fell at odds
With stern Achilles, Off-spring of the Gods.

REVIEW COMMENT

John Ogilby, one of the more intriguing characters in this list of Homer translators, began his study of Greek when he was well past his fiftieth year. His *Iliad* was (and still is) celebrated for its outstanding production values (quality of the paper, binding, and so on) and for its many remarkable illustrations. His translation aroused young Alexander's Pope's imaginative interest in Homer. However, the poetry (written in heroic couplets) has never been considered worthy of very close attention, as a later reviewer remarked: "The translation of Ogilby is without even the recommendation of a famous name; and therefore even curiosity is at fault,—that pardonable weakness which has prompted many to inquire after the . . . duodecimo of Hobbes. Alas for Obilby! His bulk and prosiness—his outward and his inner man—are both against him. If anything be said in his favour, it must be of a negative kind: as he raises no expectations, so he causes no disappointment; he excited no cloud of dust in his day;—and why should we in ours disturb that which covers him and his?" *London Quarterly Review* (1858). For an interesting illustrated account of Ogilby and his translation of the *Iliad*, use the following link: Ogilby *Iliad.*

The Iliads and Odysses of Homer
Translated by Thomas Hobbes
London 1675

[Sample from the Opening of the *Iliad*]

O GODDESS sing what woe the discontent
Of Thetis' son brought to the Greeks; what souls
Of heroes down to Erebus it sent,
Leaving their bodies unto dogs and fowls;
Whilst the two princes of the army strove,
King Agamemnon and Achilles stout.
That so it should be was the will of Jove,
But who was he that made them first fall out?
Apollo; who incensed by the wrong
To his priest Chryses by Atrides done,
Sent a great pestilence the Greeks among;
Apace they died, and remedy was none.
For Chryses came unto the Argive fleet,
With treasure great his daughter to redeem;
And having in his hands the ensigns meet,
That did the priestly dignity beseem,
A golden sceptre and a crown of bays,
Unto the princes all made his request;
But to the two Atrides chiefly prays,
Who of the Argive army were the best.
O sons of Atreus, may the Gods grant you
A safe return from Troy with victory;
And you on me compassion may shew,
Receive these gifts and set my daughter free;
And have respect to Jove's and Leto's son.
To this the princes all gave their consent,
Except King Agamemnon. He alone,
And with sharp language from the fleet him sent;
Old man, said he, let me not see you here
Now staying, or returning back again,
For fear the golden sceptre which you bear,
And chaplet hanging on it, prove but vain.
Your daughter shall to Argos go far hence,
And make my bed, and labour at the loom,
And take heed you no farther me incense,
Lest you return not safely to your home.
Frighted with this, away the old man went;
And often as he walked on the sand,

His prayers to Apollo up he sent.
Hear me, Apollo, with thy bow in hand,
That honour'd art in Tenedos and Chryse,
And unto whom Cylla great honour bears,
If thou accepted hast my sacrifice,
Pay th' Argives with thy arrows for my tears.
His prayer was granted by the deity;
Who with his silver bow and arrows keen,
Descended from Olympus silently
In likeness of the sable night unseen.
His bow and quiver both behind him hang,
The arrows chink as often as he jogs,
And as he shot the bow was heard to twang,
And first his arrows flew at mules and dogs.
But when the plague into the army came,
Perpetual was the fire of funerals;
And so nine days continued the same.

REVIEW COMMENT

Hobbes's translation is, as one might expect, clear, vigorous, and fast paced, with iambic pentameter lines and a fixed rhyme scheme (ABABCDCD). But it is also quite careless about including every detail, as Pope (not the most disinterested critic) observes about Hobbes's translation style in general: "but for particulars and circumstance he continually lops them, and often omits the most beautiful. . . . He sometimes omits whole similes and sentences. . . ." The translation probably would not attract very much attention if it had been produced by someone less well known. Hobbes, who translated Homer in his eighties (a few years before his death), does not seem to have been particularly worried about the reception of his translation: "Why then did I write it? Because I had nothing else to do. Why publish it? Because I thought it might take off my Adversaries from shewing their folly upon my more serious Writings and set them upon my Verses to shew their wisdom" (quoted Young 108).

For the complete translation, please use the following: Hobbes Iliad.

For an interesting review of Hobbes's Homer translations as presented by the Clarendon edition of Hobbes's complete works, use the following link: Hobbes Translations (Clarendon Edition).

Homer
Iliad

Translated by Ozell, Broom, and Oldisworth

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, copyd by the best Gravers, from the Paris Plates design's by COYPEL. London 1712.

The Iliad of Homer, translated from the Greek into blank verse, by Mr. Ozell, Mr. Broom, and Mr. Oldisworth. To which are added, A preface, The life of Homer, and notes by Madam Dacier. Illustrated with XXVI cuts, Cop'd by the best Gravers from the Paris Plates, design'd by Coypel.

London 1714-1719

REVIEW COMMENT

This five volume work was based on a French prose translation of the *Iliad* by Mme. Anne Dacier, published in 1711. One curious feature of the English text is that the blank verse (advertised in the second title above) is printed as if it were prose (i.e., in right justified paragraphs). An interesting comment on this feature is as follows:

> The problem with blank verse, to an Augustan ear, was precisely that the endings of the lines were blank; or, as Dr. Johnson said, quoting a contemporary critic, "Blank verse is verse only to the eye." Blank verse, that is, might very well appear indistinguishable from prose to an eighteenth-century ear. So indistinguishable from prose might it appear that, were there to occur even the slightest departures from the iambic pentameter norm, such blank verse might well be printed as prose. And so perhaps because there were some occasional metrical irregularities in it—and perhaps because it was itself a rendition of a prose version—the translation of the Iliad done in 1711 by John Ozell (Books I-VI), William Broome (Books VII-XV), and William Oldisworth (Books XVI-XXIV) was in fact printed as prose. (Steven Shankman, Pope's "*Iliad*": *Homer in the Age of Passion*).

One member of this triumvirate of translators, Mr. William Broom, played a significant role in completing the Alexander Pope's translations of Homer, which appeared shortly afterwards (and John Ozell, after quarrelling with Pope, earned a mention in the *Dunciad*).

The Iliad of Homer
translated by Alexander Pope
London 1715-1720

[Sample from the Opening of the Poem]

THE Wrath of Peleus' Son, the direful Spring
Of all the Grecian Woes, O Goddess, sing!
That Wrath which hurl'd to Pluto's gloomy Reign
The Souls of mighty Chiefs untimely slain;
Whose Limbs unbury'd on the naked Shore
Devouring Dogs and hungry Vultures tore.
Since Great Achilles and Atrides strove,
Such was the Sov'reign Doom, and such the Will of Jove.
Declare, O Muse! in what ill-fated Hour
Sprung the fierce Strife, from what offended Pow'r?
Latona's Son a dire Contagion spread,
And heap'd the Camp with Mountains of the Dead;
The King of Men his Rev'rend Priest defy'd,
And, for the King's Offence, the People dy'd.
For Chryses sought with costly Gifts to gain
His Captive Daughter from the Victor's Chain.
Suppliant the Venerable Father stands,
Apollo's awful Ensigns grace his Hands:
By these he begs; and lowly bending down,
Extends the Sceptre and the Laurel Crown.
He su'd to All, but chief implor'd for Grace
The Brother-Kings, of Atreus' Royal Race.
Ye Kings and Warriors! may your Vows be crown'd,
And Troy's proud Walls lie level with the Ground.
May Jove restore you, when your Toils are o'er,
Safe to the Pleasures of your native Shore.
But oh! relieve a wretched Parent's Pain,
And give Chruseïs to these Arms again;
If Mercy fail, yet let my Presents move,
And dread avenging Phoebus, Son of Jove.
The Greeks in Shouts their joint Assent declare
The Priest to rev'rence, and release the Fair.
Not so Atrides: He, with Kingly Pride,
Repuls'd the sacred Sire, and thus reply'd.
Hence on thy Life, and fly these hostile Plains,
Nor ask, Presumptuous, what the King detains;
Hence, with thy Laurel Crown, and Golden Rod,
Nor trust too far those Ensigns of thy God.

Mine is thy Daughter, Priest, and shall remain;
And Pray'rs, and Tears, and Bribes shall plead in vain;
'Till Time shall rifle ev'ry youthful Grace,
And Age dismiss her from my cold Embrace,
In daily Labours of the Loom employ'd,
Or doom'd to deck the Bed she once enjoy'd.
Hence then: to Argos shall the Maid retire;
Far from her native Soil, and weeping Sire.
The trembling Priest along the Shore return'd,
And in the Anguish of a Father mourn'd.
Disconsolate, nor daring to complain,
Silent he wander'd by the sounding Main:
'Till, safe at distance, to his God he prays,
The God who darts around the World his Rays.
O Smintheus! sprung from fair Latona's Line,
Thou Guardian Pow'r of Cilla the Divine,
Thou Source of Light! whom Tenedos adores,
And whose bright Presence gilds thy Chrysa's Shores.
If e'er with Wreaths I hung thy sacred Fane,
Or fed the Flames with Fat of Oxen slain;
God of the Silver Bow! thy Shafts employ,
Avenge thy Servant, and the Greeks destroy.
Thus Chryses pray'd: the fav'ring Pow'r attends,
And from Olympus' lofty Tops descends.
Bent was his Bow, the Grecian Hearts to wound;
Fierce as he mov'd, his Silver Shafts resound.
Breathing Revenge, a sudden Night he spread,
And gloomy Darkness roll'd around his Head.
The Fleet in View, he twang'd his deadly Bow,
And hissing fly the feather'd Fates below.
On Mules and Dogs th'Infection first began,
And last, the vengeful Arrows fix'd in Man.
For nine long Nights, thro' all the dusky Air
The Fires thick-flaming shot a dismal Glare.

REVIEW COMMENT

Pope is the only major English poetical genius to tackle (with considerable help) a full translation of Homer's epic, and the result is, without any doubt, the most famous, popular, and financially successful rendition of Homer into English. Pope's translation, in fact, became a major English poem in his own age and was, more than anything else, responsible for spreading the popularity of and familiarity with Homer's verse. If one of the major tasks of a translator is to make the ancient poem live for his contemporaries in a very different age, then Pope

clearly achieved this more successfully than any other translator of Homer. This feat is all the more remarkable because the eighteenth century was an age which, in many respects, had little taste for the vision of warrior life in the *Iliad* (disparaging remarks about the poem were common).

It is, of course, easy to criticize Pope's liberties with Homer's text (which are considerable)—the most famous comment is the (perhaps apocryphal) gibe attributed to the great Classical scholar Richard Bentley, "It is a very pretty poem, Mr. Pope, but you must not call it Homer"—to question just how suitable the heroic couplet style is for rendering Homeric hexameters, and to raise other objections about the style. On the other hand, given the influence and continuing popularity of the poem, it is difficult to disagree with Dr. Johnson's evaluation: "It is certainly the noblest version of poetry which the world has ever seen; and its publication must therefore be considered as one of the great events in the annals of learning" ("Life of Pope").

To access the full translation, please use the following link Pope's *Iliad*.

The Iliad of Homer
translated by James Macpherson
London 1773

[Sample from the Opening of the Poem]

BOOK I.

The wrath of the son of Peleus,—O goddess of song, unfold! The deadly wrath of Achilles: To Greece the source of many woes! Which peopled the regions of death,—with shades of heroes untimely slain: While pale they lay along the shore: Torn by beasts and birds of prey: But such was the will of Jove! Begin the verse, from the source of rage,—between Achilles and the sovereign of men.

WHO of the gods was HE? Who kindled rage between the chiefs? Who, but the son of Latona and high-thundering Jove? HE—rouzed to wrath against the king,—threw death and disease, among the host. The people perished before him. The son of Atreus had dishonoured his priest. White-haired, the aged Chryses came—to the swift ships of the Argive powers. He came to redeem his daughter. The high-prized ransom is borne before. In his hands is the wreath of the god,—the golden scepter of far-shooting Phœbus. The aged suppliant, Greece addressed,—but most addressed the sons of Atreus: The two leaders of the nations in war!

"SONS of Atreus!" he said: "Other warriors of Achaia hear! May the gods crown all your desires! May the deathless dwellers of heaven give ear,—and grant to YOU, the city of Priam: With a safe return to your native land. But release my much-loved daughter. Receive her ransom from these hands. Revere the son of thundering Jove: Apollo, who shoots from afar!"

APPLAUDING Greece arose around. The holy man they all revered. They wished to take the splendid prize. But the soul of Agamemnon refused. HIM he dismissed with contempt,—and thus added threats to his rage:—"Take heed, I say, old man! Lest that scepter, that wreath of thy god,—should not in ought avail. HER I will never release,—till age her lovely form invades,—within our lofty halls in Argos,—far from her native land: While she runs o'er the web—and ascends the bed of her lord. Hence! Provoke me not—that safe thou may'st still retire."

HE, frowning, spoke: The old man feared,—and shrunk from his high commands. Sad, silent, slow, he took his way,—along the wide-resounding main. Apart and distant from the host,—he poured his mournful soul in prayer: He poured it forth to bowyer Phœbus,—whom the long-haired Latona bore.

"HEAR, bearer of the splendid bow! Guardian of Chrysa, of Cilla, the divine! Thou that o'er Tenedos reign'st with fame! O Smintheus, hear my prayer! If ever with wreaths I adorned,—O Phœbus! Thy beauteous fane: If ever thine altars smoked with offerings—from the flocks and herds of Chryses: If ME thou regardest in ought—O Phœbus, hear my prayer! Punish Greece for these tears of mine. Send thy deadly arrow abroad."

HE praying spoke. Apollo heard. He descended, from heaven, enraged in soul. On his shoulders his bow is hung: His quiver filled with deadly shafts: Which harshly rattled, as he strode in his wrath. Like Night he is borne along: Then darkly-sitting, apart from the host,—he sends an arrow abroad. The bright bow emits a dreadful sound,—as the shaft flies, unseen, from the string. Mules, first, the angry god invades: Then fleetly-bounding dogs are slain: Soon, on the heroes themselves,—the death-devoting arrow falls. The frequent piles are flaming to heaven.

REVIEW COMMENT

Macpherson is particularly impressed with the "simplicity" of Homer and, in his introduction, observes that contemporary taste in poetry does not allow poetical translators to deliver that aspect of the original: "The best translators have not . . . occupied the whole ground. The simplicity, the gravity, the characteristical diction, and perhaps, a great part of the dignity of Homer, are left untouched. They have rendered the father of poetry, in a great measure, their own: And, in stripping him of his ancient weeds, they have made him too much of a modern beau." By choosing prose, Macpherson hopes he has been faithful to the simplicity of expression and smoothness of language of the original and assures us that he has "translated the Greek VERBATIM."

The result is an English style which must be among the simplest and most straightforward ever offered in a translation of Homer, with no attempt to involve traditional "poetical" effects from the past or the present. Typically, Macpherson keeps the clauses so short (with sentences often broken up by punctuation into even shorter units) that the effect is one of continuously stopping and starting, a technique which, for all its extreme clarity and directness, prevents the Homeric lines from accumulating much momentum as a long sentence unwinds (a common feature of the Homeric simile and some of the battle descriptions) and creates a certain monotony in the sentence structure. But the prose is for the most part accurate, energetic, and free from artifice.

To access the Volume I of the Macpherson translation, click on the following link: Macpherson *Iliad*.

THE
ILIAD OF HOMER,
TRANSLATED INTO
ENGLISH BLANK VERSE.
William Cowper
London 1791

[Sample from the Opening of the Poem]

ARGUMENT OF THE FIRST BOOK.

The book opens with an account of a pestilence that prevailed in the Grecian camp, and the cause of it is assigned. A council is called, in which fierce altercation takes place between Agamemnon and Achilles. The latter solemnly renounces the field. Agamemnon, by his heralds, demands Brisëis, and Achilles resigns her. He makes his complaint to Thetis, who undertakes to plead his cause with Jupiter. She pleads it, and prevails. The book concludes with an account of what passed in Heaven on that occasion.

BOOK I.

Achilles sing, O Goddess! Peleus' son;
His wrath pernicious, who ten thousand woes
Caused to Achaia's host, sent many a soul
Illustrious into Ades premature,
And Heroes gave (so stood the will of Jove)
To dogs and to all ravening fowls a prey,
When fierce dispute had separated once
The noble Chief Achilles from the son
Of Atreus, Agamemnon, King of men.
  Who them to strife impell'd? What power divine?
Latona's son and Jove's. For he, incensed
Against the King, a foul contagion raised
In all the host, and multitudes destroy'd,
For that the son of Atreus had his priest
Dishonored, Chryses. To the fleet he came
Bearing rich ransom glorious to redeem
His daughter, and his hands charged with the wreath
And golden sceptre of the God shaft-arm'd.
  His supplication was at large to all
The host of Greece, but most of all to two,
The sons of Atreus, highest in command.
  Ye gallant Chiefs, and ye their gallant host,
(So may the Gods who in Olympus dwell

Give Priam's treasures to you for a spoil
And ye return in safety,) take my gifts
And loose my child, in honor of the son
Of Jove, Apollo, archer of the skies.
  At once the voice of all was to respect
The priest, and to accept the bounteous price;
But so it pleased not Atreus' mighty son,
Who with rude threatenings stern him thence dismiss'd.
  Beware, old man! that at these hollow barks
I find thee not now lingering, or henceforth
Returning, lest the garland of thy God
And his bright sceptre should avail thee nought.
I will not loose thy daughter, till old age
Steal on her. From her native country far,
In Argos, in my palace, she shall ply
The loom, and shall be partner of my bed.
Move me no more. Begone; hence while thou may'st.
  He spake, the old priest trembled and obey'd.
Forlorn he roamed the ocean's sounding shore,
And, solitary, with much prayer his King
Bright-hair'd Latona's son, Phoebus, implored.
  God of the silver bow, who with thy power
Encirclest Chrysa, and who reign'st supreme
In Tenedos and Cilla the divine,
Sminthian Apollo! If I e'er adorned
Thy beauteous fane, or on the altar burn'd
The fat acceptable of bulls or goats,
Grant my petition. With thy shafts avenge
On the Achaian host thy servant's tears.
  Such prayer he made, and it was heard. The God,
Down from Olympus with his radiant bow
And his full quiver o'er his shoulder slung,
Marched in his anger; shaken as he moved
His rattling arrows told of his approach.
Gloomy he came as night; sat from the ships
Apart, and sent an arrow. Clang'd the cord
Dread-sounding, bounding on the silver bow.
Mules first and dogs he struck, but at themselves
Dispatching soon his bitter arrows keen,
Smote them. Death-piles on all sides always blazed.

REVIEW COMMENT

Cowper's translation, as he explains, is, in part, designed to correct deficiencies he perceives in Pope's translation: first, Cowper rejects rhyming couplets as unsuitable for Homeric verse, second, he wishes to correct Pope's "deviations" from the Greek in order to remain faithful to the Homeric text ("I have omitted nothing; I have invented nothing. . . . My chief boast is that I have adhered closely to my original, convinced that every departure from him would be punished with the forfeiture of some grace or beauty for which I could substitute no equivalent."), and he mounts a stout defence of blank verse as the most suitable English verse form for translating Homer (citing Milton as an example worth following because of the close resemblance of his style to Homer's: "A translator of HOMER, therefore, seems directed by HOMER himself to the use of blank verse, as to that alone in which he can be rendered with any tolerable representation of his manner in this particular."

Cowper's translation received a mixed reception among his contemporaries; they lauded his fidelity to Homer but found his verse lacking in imaginative energy, a view endorsed later by Matthew Arnold, "the translation by Cowper is far superior to either Chapman's or Pope's as an interpretation of the poet, but it lacks a certain fire and swing essential winning great poetic renown." Nonetheless, Cowper's translation has endured, not as an especially popular choice, but one which people seem to consult from time to time (and it was the basis for a sound recording by Naxos Audiobooks).

For access to the complete text of Cowper's *Iliad*, please use the following link: Cowper's *Iliad*.

The Iliad of Homer
Translated into English Blank Verse
by James Morrice
London 1809

[Selection from the Opening of the Poem]

Book I.

SING, Muse, the fatal wrath of Peleus' son,
Which to the Greeks unnumb'red evils brought,
And many heroes to the realms of night
Sent premature; and gave their limbs a aprey
To dogs and birds: for such the will of Jove.
When fierce contention rose between the chiefs,
Achilles, and Atrides, king of men.
  Say first who caus'd this most perenicious feud.—
Latona's son; who, with the king enrag'd,
Sent pestilential sickness through the host,
Avenging the dishonour of his priest
Chryses, a suppliant at the Grecian fleet,
With ransom large his daughter to release:
The sceptre of Apollo in his hand
He bore; and to the Greeks address'd his pray'r;
To Atreus' sons, chief captains of the host.
  "Ye sons of Atreus, and ye Grecian chiefs,
"May the gods favour your victorious arms,
"And grant you safe return! Yet hear my pray'r:
"Restore my daughter, and her ransom take;
"And reverence Apollo, sprung from Jove."
  The Greeks with one consent their wish declar'd
The priest to honour and accept the gifts:
Not such the mind of Atreus' warlike son,
Who with reproach dismiss'd, and threat severe.
  "Let me not find thee loitering at our ships;
"Nor shall thy age, shouldst thou return again,
"Nor sceptre of they god, protect thee here;
"I will not let her go, till worn with age,
"In Argos, in our house, she ply the loom,
"The partner of my bed: hence then, begone,
"Nor wake my anger, wouldst thou safe depart."
  He spake; when Chryses trembled, and obey'd:
Silent, he hast'ned to the boisterous shore,
And thus to Phœbus, from Latona sprung

Bright-hair'd, preferr'd his pray'r: "Thy servant hear,
"God of the silver bow; whom Cylla fair
"And Tenedos obey: if, with pure hands,
"To thee I've paid the grateful sacrifice;
"And with just rites thy sacred altars crown'd,
"Hear me, O hear! soon may the Grecian host
"Deeply regret my unavailing tears!"
  Thus Chryses; and Apollo heard his plaint,
And swift descended from Olympus' height;
His bow and arrows rattled at his side:
Downward he bent his way; as night he mov'd
Baneful, and sent his fatal arrows forth:
Dire was the clangor of the silver bow.
  First the contagion, to inferior beasts
Confin'd, the dogs and mules alone destroy'd;
Then men a prey to his relentless ire
Fell; and incessant burnt the funeral pile.

REVIEW COMMENT

Morrice provides a very gracious and modest Preface, offering no comments on why he has chosen his particular style. His translation is direct, fast, and very clear, qualities that many other nineteenth century translations lack. One can still trace some of the less welcome effects of Milton's style here and there.

For a contemporary review (1805) of Morrice's *Iliad*, use the following link: Morrice *Iliad* Review

Link to Volume 1 the complete text: Morrice *Iliad*.

THE ILIAD OF HOMER
TRANSLATED
INTO
ENGLISH PROSE
AS LITERALLY AS THE DIFFERENT IDIOMS OF THE GREEK
AND ENGLISH LANGUAGES WILL ALLOW;
WITH
EXPLANANTORY NOTES
BY
A GRADUATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD
IN TWO VOLUMES
1821

[Sample from the Opening of the Poem]

BOOK 1

ARGUMENT

Account of a pestilence inthe Grecian camp, and cause it. A council called. Fierce altercation takes place between Agamemnon and Achilles. Achilles renounces the field. Agamemnon demands Briseis. Achilles resigns her. He complains to Thetis, who undertakes to plead his cause with Jove. She pleads it, and prevails. What passed in heaven on that occasion.

Sing, Goddess, the destructive wrath of Achilles, son of Peleus, which brought many disasters upon the Greeks, and sent before their time many gallant souls of heroes to the infernal regions, and made them a prey to the dogs and to all the fowls of the air (for so the counsel of Jove was fulfilled) from the period at which Atrides, king of men, and godlike Achilles first contended.

Which of the Gods then urged them to the contest? It was the son of Jove and Latona; for, being indignant with the king, he excited a violent disease throughout the army, and the people perished; because Atrides had dishonoured Chryses the priest. For he came to the swift ships of the Greeks to redeem his daughter, bringing invaluable ransoms, and bearing in his hands the garlands of the far-darting Apollo, upon a golden sceptre. And he supplicated all the Greeks, but especially the sons of Atreus, the two leaders of the people:

"Ye sons of Atreus, and ye other well-armed Greeks, may the Gods who possess the Olympic mansions grant that ye may destroy the city of Priam, and return home in safety. But give freedom to my beloved daughter, and receive the ransoms, reverencing the son of Jove, the far-darting Apollo."

Then all the other Greeks assented to respect the priest and to accept the rich ransoms. But it pleased not the mind of Agamemnon, the son of Atreus . . .

REVIEW COMMENT

This translation, as the full title and the preface make clear, strives to render the Greek as literally as possible within certain limits. The translator is so concerned about this point, that he supplies numerous footnotes in places where he thinks he may not have been sufficiently literal. Interestingly enough, he complains about the hostility of scholars to literal translations and about the drudgery of translation: "To translate the poetry of one language into the prose of another, is, to say the least of it, an irksome task, and necessarily obliges the translator to lay aside every elegance in his composition. With respect to Homer, in particular, these objectives are peculiarly strong."

What appears to motive his endeavour is a desire to be useful: "Let those who exclaim most loudly against literal translations reflect upon these things, and they will find, that the youth of good talents cannot be injured by such translations; whilst the youth of moderate talents may be greatly assisted by them." If this was his aim, then the result is clearly a success: the English will not inspire anyone, but nor will it confuse or irritate them, and it could be very useful for anyone seeking assistance with Homer's Greek text.

The identity of the translator is not clear. Young lists an *Odyssey* (1797) "translated into English prose, as literally as the different idioms of the Greek and English languages will allow; with explanatory notes; by a member of the University of Oxford" but notes that this is a "burlesque translation." He lists the translator or author as Henry Francis Cary (1772-1844), famous later in life as a translator of Dante. Biographies of Cary, however, apparently fail to mention translations of the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey* and, so far as I can tell, library catalogues include no such translation among the entries for Cary.

In his bibliography Young lists Cary's translation under the year 1821, but earlier in book (128) says the translation appeared in 1841.

For a link to the full text of this translation, use the following link: Graduate *Iliad*.

The Iliad of Homer
translated by William Sotheby
1831

[Sample from the Opening of the Poem]

Book I.

SING, Muse! Pelides' wrath, whence woes on woes
O'er the Achæans' gather'd host arose,
Her chiefs' brave souls untimely hurl'd from day,
And left their limbs to dogs and birds a prey;
Since first 'gainst Atreus' son, Achilles strove,
And their dire feuds fulfill'd the will of Jove.
Why rag'd the chiefs? what god their fury swell'd?
JOVE and Latona's son their wrath impell'd.
Incens'd against the king, Apollo spread
The plague that thickly strew'd the camp with dead:
For Atreus' son, in insolence of pride,
His priest dishonouring, had the god defy'd,
When first, his captive daughter to release,
Time-honour'd Chryses sought the ships of Greece,
With richest ransom came, and suppliant bore
Round his gold rod the wreath the priesthood wore,
And all implor'd, but Atreus' sons the most,
the lords and leaders of th' assembled host.
"Kings and arm'd warriors! may consenting Jove,
"And all the dwellers of the realm above,
"Lay Troy in dust, and, charg'd with Ilion's spoil,
"Guard you in triumph to your native soil!
"But my lov'd child restore: her ransom take,
"Nor the far-darting god's fell wrath awake."
The Greeks applauded: all with willing ear
Bent to receive the gifts, the priest revere;—
All, save Atrides, whose imperious mind
to insolent repluse harsh menace join'd.
"Ne'er may I more, ag'd priest, amid our fleet
"Thee, lingering now, or here returning, meet;
"Lest thou in vain extend thy golden rod
"And sacred fillet of they guardian god.
"I will not free thy daughter from my arms,
"Till age o'ershadow her diminsh'd charms.
"Ere then, far off, they child beneath my roof,
"At Argos, shares my couch and weaves my woof.

"Depart: nor longer here my rage excite—
"Away: so best thy safety find in flight."
  Hoar Chryses, shuddering, back his footstep bent,
And by the sounding deep in silence went,
Till far apart the hapless father pray'd,
And thus invok'd Apollo's veneful aid:—
  "God of the silver bow, whose sov'reign sway
"Thy Chrysa, Cilla, Tenedos obey,
"If e'er I wreath'd thy splendid shrine, or fed
"Thy altars flaming as the victims bled,
"Loose they avenging shafts, bid Greece repay
"Tears of a father turn'd in scorn away!"
  Thus Chryses pray'd: his pray'r Apollo heard,
And heavenly vengeance kindled at the word.
He, from Olympus' brow, in fury bore
His bow and quiver's death-denouncing store.
The arrows, rattling round his viewless flight,
Clang'd, as the god descended dark as night.
Then Phœbus stay'd, and from the fleet apart
Launch'd on the host the inevitable dart,
And ever as he wing'd the shaft below
Dire was the twanging of the silver bow.
  Mules and swift dogs first fell, then far around
Man felt the god's immedicable wound.

REVIEW COMMENT

Sotheby's couplets are not particularly memorable, and the need to maintain the regular rhythm and rhyme leads to some odd phrases (e.g., "immedicable wound"). So the translation offers a good example why couplets and Homer often tend not to go very well together (*pace* Alexander Pope).

Readers who would like to read more of Sotheby's translation (Books I to XII) should use the following link: Sotheby *Iliad*.

The Iliad of Homer
T. S. Brandreth
London 1846

[Sample from the Opening of the Poem]

ILIAD

BOOK I.

ACHILLES' wrath accurst, O Goddess, sing,
Which cause ten thousand sorrows to the Greeks,
And many valiant souls of heroes sent
To Pluto, and their bodies made a prey
To dogs and birds; but Jove's will was perform'd;
From that day, when at first contending strove
Atrides king of men and Peleus' son.
  Who then of Gods in contest made them strive?
Latona's son; he, angry with the king,
Sent evil sickness, and the people died;
Because Atrides Chryses, sacred priest,
Despised; for he unto the Greeks' swift ships
To free his child with boundless ransom came,
And holding in his hands Apollo's wreath
On golden sceptre, all the Greeks he pray'd,
But chief the host's two leaders, Atreus' sons;
  O Atreus' sons, and other warlike Greeks,
To you the Gods, who on Olympus dwell,
Give Priam's town to waste, and home return;
But free my daughter, and the ransom take,
Revering Phœbus, Jove's far-darting son.
  Then all the other Greeks approved the priest
To honour, and the splendid ransom take;
But so it pleased not Agamemnon's mind;
But him with scorn and harsh words he dismiss'd;
  Let me not find thee, old man, by the ships
Or now delaying, or again return'd,
Lest nought thy sceptre and God's wreath avail.
I will not loose her, ere old age comes on,
When in our house, in Argos, far from home,
She tends the loom, and of my bed partakes.
Go, vex, me not, that safer thou return.
  He said; and Chryses trembled and obey'd,
And went in silence by the surging sea.

Much then, apart retired, the old man pray'd
To king Apollo, whom Latona bore;
  Hear, Silver-Bow, who Chrysa dost defend,
And Tenedus and holy Cilla rule,
Smintheus; if e'er thy lovely fane I crown'd,
Or if I e'er to thee the fat thighs burnt
Of bulls and goats, this prayer to me confirm;
May by thy darts the Greeks my tears repay.
  So said he praying; and Apollo heard,
And went down angry from Olympus' tops
With bow and quiver o'er his shoulders slung;
And on his shoulders, as he angry moved,
The arrows rattled; and like Night he went.
He sat apart, and sent a shaft amidst;
And dread the clang was of the silver bow.
At first the mules and white dogs he attack'd;
Then 'gainst themseslves a bitter dart he sent;
And of the dead aye burnt the frequent fires.

REVIEW COMMENT

Brandreth writes in his Preface that the only praise he seeks for his translation is that of fidelity and that he has at times sacrificed poetic quality to attain that end: "I have sometimes been betrayed into writing, what seemed to me fine lines, but they have invariably been sacrificed, if they did not accord with the original. . . ." The desire to be faithful to Homer, he explains, has led him to produce a translation "line for line, and, as far as possible, word for word. There may be no great merit in having merely the same number of lines . . . but my endeavour has been to give the whole, and nothing but the whole. By following my author line by line, I have put it out of my power to add anything."

As far as I can tell, Brandreth is the first to impose this scrupulous linear fidelity onto a full English translation of the *Iliad*. The logic in the argument may be dubious, but Brandreth at least attempts to justify the odd habit (still very much alive) of trying to follow Homer's syntax and lineation as closely as possible, in the belief that this procedure, while having no "great merit" adds something important to the whole (or at least prevents poetic contamination). That said (and putting aside one's strong reservations about Brandreth's diction and syntax), he does a remarkable job writing pentameters which more or less keep pace, line for line, with Homer's longer hexameters.

For a link to the complete text of Volume I of Brandreth's translation please use the following link: Brandreth *Iliad*.

Homer's Iliad:
translated by William Munford
Boston 1846

[Sample from the Opening of the Poem]

THE ILIAD

BOOK I.

The Quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon—Jupiter promises Thetis to punish the Greeks.

BOOK I.

OF Peleus' son Achilles, sing, O Muse,
The direful wrath, which sorrows numberless
Brought on the Greeks, and many mighty souls
Of youthful heroes, slain untimely, sent
To Pluto's dark abode, their bodies left
A prey to dogs and all the fowls of heaven;
(For so accomplish'd was the will of Jove;)
Since first, by fatal discord, sever'd were
Atrides, king of men, and great Achilles.
Which of the deities, their cruel strife
Excited? Jove's and bright Latona's son.
For he, provok'd to anger by the king,
Upon Achaia's host a deathful plague
Inflicted, and in crowds the people died.
Chryses the cause, Apollo's injured priest,
Whom Atreus' son dishonored! To the ships
Of Greece, his captive daughter to redeem,
The suppliant father came: a boundless store
He brought for ransom; in his hands the wreath
And golden sceptre of that god who darts
The radiant shafts afar. He all the Greeks
Solicited, but chiefly Atreus' sons,
The brother kings and rulers in the war.
Ye sons of Atreus, and ye other Greeks,
Renown'd in arms, to you may all the gods,
Inhabitants of high Olympus, grant
To sack the town of Priam, and return
Triumphant home; but ah! to me release

My darling child, and take the wealth I bring;
Revering Jove's great son, Apollo, arm'd
With deadly darts! Then all Achaia's host,
With loud acclaim assented, to revere
The sacred priest, and splendid ransom take.
But such was not the pleasure of their chief,
Stern Agamemnon, Atreus' haughty son.
He, roughly, and with threat'ning speech, repuls'd
The wretched father. Let me now old man,
Catch thee, abiding here, among our ships,
Or daring to return; lest e'en the wreath
And sceptre of thy god avail thee nought.
I will not her relinquish, till old age
Invade her, dwelling in our royal house
At Argos, from her natal shore remote;
There, with her shuttle at the loom employ'd,
By day, the partner of my bed by night.
Begone; provoke me not, that thy return
May be the safer! Sternly thus he spake;
The old man trembled, and his word obey'd.
Silent he went, along the sounding shore
Of loudly-roaring ocean; but, at length,
Remote, he fervently implor'd the king
Apollo, whom bright-haired Latona bore.
Hear me, O thou, with silver bow adorn'd,
Who guardest Chrysa with thy power divine,
And heavenly Cilla! King of Tenedos,
Great Smintheus, hear! If ever I have crown'd
Thy honor'd fane with wreaths, or ever burn'd
The fatted thighs of bulls or goats to thee;
I pray thee now, accomplish my request!
By thy avenging arrows may the Greeks,
For these my tears, atone! So pray'd the priest,
And dread Apollo heard him. He, in wrath,
Descended from Olympus' lofty cliffs,
Arm'd with his bow, and quiver well-encas'd.
His fatal arrows rattled, threat'ning death,
As fiercely he approach'd; and, dark as night,
He came, terrific. From Achaia's fleet
Apart, his stand he took, and sent his shaft.
Shrill twang'd, with direful clang, the silver bow.
First, on their mules and dogs destruction came;
Next, aiming at themselves the doleful dart,
He shot; and funeral fires incessant flam'd.

REVIEW COMMENT

Munford is conscious that he is the first American translator of the poem at a time when poets in England were considered superior: "How far I have succeeded in this difficult enterprise, the public will judge, if not prevented from reading this work by the prejudice unfortunately existing against American poetry." Munford explains in the preface that his basic verse form is derived from Milton but that he has not endeavoured to copy Milton's style. For all that, one does sense some of the more irritating Miltonic stylistic habits creeping in here and there (e.g., "He came, terrific"). In spite of his occasional lapses into odd diction, Munford's translation compares very favourably with those of a number of English Victorian translators, especially for the compression and pace he injects into the poem. The text is remarkable, too, for the very scholarly notes included at the end of each book.

For a link to the Volume I of the Munford translation, please use the following link: Munford *Iliad*.

For a contemporary (1846) review of Munford's translation, use the following link: Munford Review.

THE
ILIAD OF HOMER,
Literally Translated,

WITH EXPLANATORY NOTES.
BY
THEODORE ALOIS BUCKLEY, B.A.
OF CHRIST CHURCH.

Sample from the Opening of the Poem
BOOK THE FIRST.

ARGUMENT.

Apollo, enraged at the insult offered to his priest, Chryses, sends a pestilence upon the Greeks. A council is called, and Agamemnon, being compelled to restore the daughter of Chryses, whom he had taken from him, in revenge deprives Achilles of Hippodameia. Achilles resigns her, but refuses to aid the Greeks in battle, and at his request, his mother, Thetis, petitions Jove to honour her offended son at the expense of the Greeks. Jupiter, despite the opposition of Juno, grants her request.

Sing, O goddess, the destructive wrath of Achilles, son of Peleus, which brought countless woes upon the Greeks, and hurled many valiant souls of heroes down to Hades, and made themselves a prey to dogs and to all birds [but the will of Jove was being accomplished], from the time when Atrides, king of men, and noble Achilles, first contending, were disunited.

Which, then, of the gods, engaged these two in strife, so that they should fight? The son of Latona and Jove; for he, enraged with the king, stirred up an evil pestilence through the army [and the people kept perishing]; because the son of Atreus had dishonoured the priest Chryses: for he came to the swift ships of the Greeks to ransom his daughter, and bringing invaluable ransoms, having in his hands the fillets of far-darting Apollo on his golden sceptre. And he supplicated all the Greeks, but chiefly the two sons of Atreus, the leaders of the people:

"Ye sons of Atreus, and ye other well-greaved Greeks, to you indeed may the gods, possessing the heavenly dwellings, grant to destroy the city of Priam, and to return home safely: but for me, liberate my beloved daughter, and accept the ransoms, reverencing the son of Jove, far-darting Apollo."

Upon this, all the other Greeks shouted assent, that the priest should be reverenced, and the splendid ransoms accepted; yet was it not pleasing in his mind to Agamemnon, son of Atreus; but he dismissed him evilly, and added a harsh mandate:

"Let me not find thee, old man, at the hollow barks, either now loitering, or hereafter returning, lest the staff and fillet of the god avail thee not. For her I will not set free; sooner shall old age come upon her, at home in Argos, far away from her native land, employed in offices of the loom, and preparing my bed. But away! irritate me not, that thou mayest return the safer."

Thus he spoke; but the old man was afraid, and obeyed the command. And he went in silence along the shore of the loud-resounding sea; but then, going apart, the aged man prayed much to king Apollo, whom fair-haired Latona bore:

"Hear me, god of the silver bow, who art wont to protect Chrysa and divine Cilla, and who mightily rulest over Tenedos: O Sminthius, if ever I have roofed 8 thy graceful temple, or if, moreover, at any time I have burned to thee the fat thighs of bulls or of goats, accomplish this entreaty for me. Let the Greeks pay for my tears, by thy arrows."

Thus he spoke praying; but to him Phoebus Apollo hearkened. And he descended from the summits of Olympus, enraged in heart, having upon his shoulders his bow and quiver covered on all sides. But as he moved, the shafts rattled forthwith 9 upon the shoulders of him enraged; but he went along like unto the night. Then he sat down apart from the ships, and sent among them an arrow, and terrible arose the clang of the silver bow. First he attacked the mules, and the swift 10 dogs; but afterwards despatching a pointed arrow against [the Greeks] themselves, he smote them, and frequent funeral-piles of the dead were continually burning.

REVIEW COMMENT

In Buckley's short Preface, he sets down his purpose: "The present translation of the *Iliad* will, it is hoped, be found to convey, more accurately than any which has preceded it, the words and thoughts of the original. It is based upon a careful examination of whatever has been contributed by scholars of every age towards the elucidation of the text, including the ancient scholiasts and lexicographers, the exegetical labours of Barnes and Clarke, and the elaborate criticisms of Heyne, Wolf, and their successors." The English text is certainly clear and accurate, and the many footnotes (most of them relatively short) provide a great deal of useful and succinct information for the scholarly reader interested in the contributions of different editors to the development of our understanding of the Greek text.

Some contemporary reviewers welcomed Buckley "literal" translation of Homer:

> Mr. Buckley has done good service to literature by the production of this volume. Not being harnessed to blank verse, he has succeeded in a translation of the Iliad which presents more of the force and spirit of Homer's matchless work than either Chapman's, Pope's, or Cowper's

> renderings. The work is based upon a careful examination of whatever has been contributed by scholars of every age toward the elucidation of the text. This will undoubtedly become the most popular translation of the Iliad. (*Merchants' Magazine and Commercial Review*, Volume 34 (1856)

For the complete text of Buckley's translation, use the following link: Buckley *Iliad*.

The Iliad of Homer
with notes
W. G. T. Barter
London 1854

[Sample from the Opening of the Poem]

THE ILIAD

BOOK I.

I.

THE wrath of Peleus' son Achilles sing,
O Goddess, wrath destructive, that did on
Th' Achaeans woes innumerable bring,
And many mighty souls of heroes down
To Hades hurl untimely, themselves thrown
to gods a prey and all the birds obscene.
But so in sooth the will of Zeus was done,
Since parted first in strife those chieftains twain,
Divine Achilles, and Atrides king of men.

II.

What god them set in strife contending high?
'Twas Zeus' and Leto's son. Wroth with the king,
A plague through th' host he stirr'd. The people die.
For on priest Chryses did Atrides fling
Contempt. To th' Achive ships he ransoming
His daughter came, and boundless ransom brought.
In's hands did far-dart Phœbus' wreath enring
The golden staff. He th' Achives all besought,
But did th' Atrides chief, the folk's two rulers, court:—

III.

"Ye Atreus' sons, Achæans buskin'd well
"That else be here! Vouchsafe it may to you
"The gods that in Olympian houses dwell,
"Take Priam's town, and home then safe! But do
"My child release me, ransom take, and due
"Respect to Zeus' son, far-dart Phœbus give."
With shouts all Achives else assent thereto,

The priest to rev'rence, ransom bright receive,
But not t' Atrides Agamemnon's mind 'twas lieve,

IV.

But rough dismiss' him, adding speech severe:—
"By th' ships, old man, that I not catch thee see!
"Or ling'ring now, or back returning here,
"Lest not the staff nor god's wreath profit thee.
"Her loose not I till age upon her be
"In Argos' palace our's, far from her land,
"Tending the loom, my counch partaking she.
"But go, provoke me not: so safer wend,"
He said. The sire in fear obey'd the harsh command,

V.

And silent pac'd of mickle sounding sea the shore.
Much as he went the sire apart did pray.
To King Apollo, fair tress'd Leto bore:—
"Hear, Silver-Bow, that Chrysa guardest aye,
"And sacred Cilla, Tenedos dost sway,
"Smintheus! If ever temple lovely one
"I've roof'd to thee, or fat thighs burnt have I
"Of bulls or goats, this wish of mine then crown,
"That with thy darts the Danai my tears atone."

VI.

'Twas thus he pray'd. Phœbus Apollo heard,
And down Olympus' summits wroth at heart,
And should'ring bow and cover'd quiver skirr'd.
Rattled the shafts on's shoulders at each start
As wroth he pac'd. He went like night. Apart
From ships then sat, an arrow shot, and high
Out-clang'd the silver bow to freeze the heart.
Mules first and swift dogs smote, and then let fly
Fell shaft on them. Thick burnt the pyres funereal aye.

REVIEW COMMENT

If it hasn't been done already, some scholar should write a study of the deleterious influence of Spenser on the tradition of translating Homer into English. Such a

work might well begin by taking a close look at Barter's rendition of Homer. Barter pays direct homage to Spenser in his choice of verse form and diction, and he offers an interesting and sincere, if unconvincing, defence of the practice in his introduction ("Another advantage of this form of verse is its compass of vocabulary, giving one the whole range of the language, receiving the oldest gray-worn words side by side with those of the newest mint with equal grace. An unspeakable advantage this to a literal translation and in rhyme, by giving a choice of sound and of syllables to a degree that is denied to the more fastidious and modernising requirements of the couplet . . . . and never, I trust, will the poetic feeling in this country sink so low as to deem a word absolutely inadmissible which has the sanction of Spenser, or the ancient but regal stamp of the father of English poets, the noble Chaucer himself")—to which the best reply is probably Dr. Johnson's famous remark about Milton: "Of him, at last, may be said what Jonson says of Spenser, that 'he wrote no language,' but has formed what Butler calls 'a Babylonish Dialect,' in itself harsh and barbarous, but made by exalted genius and extensive learning the vehicle of so much instruction and so much pleasure that, like other lovers, we find grace in its deformity." Lacking the "exalted genius" Johnson refers to, Barter's style, for all its energy and occasional felicitous phrase, presents too many deformities. And then, of course, there's the stanza form . . . .

Link to complete text: Barter *Iliad*.

The Iliad of Homer
with an Interlinear Translation
for the Use of Schools and Private Learners
on the Hamiltonian System
as Improved by
Thomas Clark
Editor of the Latin and Greek Interlinear Classics
Philadelphia 1855-8

Clark provides an interlinear Greek-English text designed to help inexperienced students learn Homeric Greek.

Clark is a proponent of the method of teaching languages emphasised by John Hamilton (1769-1831), which stressed the importance of focusing the beginning student's attention directly on the texts themselves and on the translation, so that he or she could more quickly learn the meaning of the texts. This ancient form of pedagogy has largely disappeared and been replaced by an initial focus on grammar.

To access the Clark interlinear text, use the following link: Clark *Iliad*

The Iliad of Homer
Faithfully translated
into unrhymed English metre
F. W. Newman
London, 1856

[Sample from the Opening of the Poem]

THE ILIAD

BOOK I

Of Peleus' son, Achilles, sing, oh goddess, the resentment
Accursed, which with countless pangs Achaia's army wounded,
And forward flung to Aïdes full many a gallant spirit
Of heroes, and their very selves did toss to dogs that ravin,
And unto every fowl, (for so would Jove's device be compass'd);
From that first day when feud arose implacable, and parted
The son of Atreus, prince of men and Achileus the godlike.
Which of the gods entangled you in wrathfulness of quarrel?
Jove and Latona's son it was, who, with the king embitter'd,
Sent mid the army sore disease till troop on troop would perish:
Because-that Atrues' royal son disdainfully rejected
Chryses, Apollo's worshipper, who, to release his daughter,
Unto the sharp Achaian galleys came with boundless ransom,
The ensign bearing in his hands of arrowy Apollo
Upon his golden sceptre wreath'd, and sued to all the Achaians,
And most of all, to Atreus' sons, twin marshals of the people:—
"Children of Atreus! And the rest of dapper-greav'd Achaians!
Oh! unto you, may all the gods, who hold Olympian dwellings,
Grant Priam's city for a spoil, and happy voyage homeward:
But my dear child yield up to me, and take my proffer'd ransom,
In homage to the son of Jove, Apollo the far-darting."
Then all Achaia's other folk murmur'd assent well-omen'd,
To pity and revere the priest and take the brilliant ransom;
But Agamemnon, Atreus' son delight in mercy found not,
But sent him off with contumely and words of stern monition:
"Beware, old sire! lest here beside Achaia's hollow galleys,
Or now I catch thee lingering or afterwards returning;
Lest, that thy sceptre save thee not nor yet they sacred ensign.
But her I never will release: sooner shall age o'ertake her,
Far distant from her land of birth within our house at Argos;
For there shall she the shuttle ply and at my bed attend me.
But come! my temper fret not; else less safe they journey homeward."

The old man quail'd before the word, and hastily obey'd him.
Speechless he went along the strand of the much brawling water:
Then many a pray'r in loneliness he pour'd with aged bosom
To prince Apollo, whom to bear, bright-hair'd Latona travail'd:
"Lord of the silver arrows, hear! who overshelt'rest Chrysa,
Who bravely reign'st in Tenedos and in the heav'nly Killa;
If ever pleasant offerings to thee, O god of Sminthus!
I hanged o'er the temple walls, or burn'd upon thy altar
The fatten'd limbs of bulls and goats; this wish for me accomplish!
Cause by thy bolts the Danaï dearly to pay my sorrows."
So uttere'd he the word of pray'r; and bright Apollo heard him.

[The formatting of the above passage does not correspond exactly with the printed layout of the lines in the published book.]

REVIEW COMMENT

Newman's translation is surely one of the oddest ever attempted by any English writer. For some reason, as he explains in the introduction to his translation, Newman concluded that "the English metre fitted to translate Homer's hexameter must be a long line composed of two short ones, having each either three or four beats" (vi) and that "a series of trials showed that it was best to compose the line of four beats added to three" (vii). His argument for the necessity of this odd (and decidedly unfamiliar) verse form is not very convincing. In the same introduction, Newman comments "I ought to be quaint; I ought not to be grotesque" (x). Clearly he had some trouble sorting out the difference.

Of interest to students of English literature is the fact that this translation is one of the main inspirations for Matthew Arnold's essays on translating Homer. Of Newman's translation Arnold remarked: "Mr. Newman joins to a bad rhythm so bad a diction that it is difficult to distinguish exactly whether in any given passage it is his words or his measure which produces a total impression of such an unpleasant kind" (qu. in Young 129).

Newman wrote a long answer to Arnold's scathing criticism. The text is accessible here: Response.

To access the full text of the Newman translation, please use the following link: Newman *Iliad*.

THE ILIAD OF HOMER
TRANSLATED INTO BLANK VERSE
BY
ICHABOD CHARLES WRIGHT

[Sample from the Opening of the Poem]

BOOK I.

THE wrath of Peleus' son, O goddess, sing—
Achilles' baneful wrath—which to the Greeks
Brought woes unnumbered, and to Hades' depths
Hurrying the souls of many valiant chiefs,
Their bodies left a prey to dogs and birds:—
Yet was Jove's will advancing to its end—
From the first hour when, after fierce debate,
Discord arose between the godlike prince
Achilles, and Atrides, king of men.

Which of the gods provoked the deadly feud?
Jove and Latona's son. He, with the king
Indignant, sent a plague that scattered death
Throughout the host, in vengeance for his priest,
The aged Chryses, whom Atrides scorned,
When to redeem his child he sought the ships
With boundless ransom, bearing in his hands
The sacred chaplet of the archer god,
Far-darting Phoebus, twined on golden staff.
Much he entreated all the Greeks, but most
The two Atridae, leaders of the war.
"Ye sons of Atreus," he began, "and ye
Warriors in greaves accountred, may the gods
Who in the mansions of Olympus dwell,
Grant you to overthrow king Priam's city,
And safely reach your homes, as ye restore
My much-loved daughter, and accept these gifts,
Revering Phoebus, Jove's far-darting son."

Then with a shout the Greeks all gave consent
The priest to honour, and accept the gifts.
But pleased not Agamemnon such resolve:
Stern he dismissed the suppliant with harsh speech:
"Let me not find thee near the ships, old man,
Or lingering now, or venturing here again;

Lest nought the staff and chaplet of thy god
Henceforth avail thee. I release her not,
Until old age o'ertake her in my halls
In Argos, far from her dear native land,
Plying the loom, and busied at my couch.
Begone; nor vex me, if thy life be dear."

This heard, the old man trembled and obeyed.
Silent he took his way along the shore
Lashed by the ceaseless loud-resounding waves:
Withdrawing then, he to Apollo prayed,
Son of Latona of the radiant hair.
"God of the silver bow, who dost protect
Chrysa, and holy Cilla, and with might
Rulest in Tenedos, O hear me now,
Smintheus; if e'er I decked thy beauteous fane
Or burnt to thee fat thighs of bulls and goats,
Accomplish this my prayer.—Let they dread shafts
Avenge my tears upon the Argive host."

REVIEW COMMENT

Wright, like many translators before and after him, explains his purpose by setting up a straw-person argument: those who have translated the *Iliad* up to now, no matter how fine their English verses, have not been fair to Homer: "Fully concerring in the opinion recently given by Mr. Gladstone in his 'Homeric Studies,' that Homer is not honoured as he deserves to be in this country, and that every exertion ought to be made to place him 'on his lawful throne' the writer offers the labour of many years as his mite in furtherance of this object . . ." So he has translated the *Iliad* (one assumes) for England. This is a silly argument meant (I suppose) to adorn the real reason, which is much the same as the reason some people want to climb Mount Everest: because it's there.

Wright's translation appears reasonably accurate, but his verse is, for the most part, uninspired, unnecessarily Latinate, and dull; as one contemporary observed (in the *Edinburgh Review*, Vol. 87, No. 121): "words and sentences which have nothing but metre to distinguish them from flat and insipid prose . . . in Mr. Wright's *Iliad* constantly break the flow of passages in which everything depends on perfect smoothness as well as sustained vigour."

To access Volume I of Wright's translation, use the following link: Wright *Iliad*

HOMER'S ILIAD
CONSTRUED LITERALLY & WORD FOR WORD
BY REV. DR. GILES

COMMENT

Giles's prose offers a Greek-English text in which every Greek word or phrase is followed immediately by a straightforward English translation, so that each paragraph is a mixture of Homer's text and the English equivalent. There is no attempt to maintain any uninterrupted flow of Greek or English. Each paragraph begins with a number indicating the appropriate line in Homer's text. There is no critical apparatus or commentary.

The Giles translation is clearly aimed at assisting students who wish to begin reading Homer's text in Greek. And it is admirably suited to that purpose, although there are interlinear translations which provide more assistance with the Greek syntax.

To access the Giles translation, use the following link: Giles *Iliad*.

The Iliad of Homer
in
English Hexameter Verse
by
J. Henry Dart
London 1865

[Sample from the Opening of the Poem]

"Chryses' prayer: — and the pest on the host: — and the strife of the Princes."

SING, divine Muse, sing the implacable wrath of Achilleus!
Heavy with death and with woe to the banded sons of Achaia!
Many the souls of the mighty, the souls of redoubtable heroes,
Hurried by it prematurely to Hades. The vultures and wild-dogs
Tore their tombless limbs. Yet thus did the will of the Highest
Work to an end—from the day when strife drove madly asunder,
Atreus' son, king of men ; and the Godlike leader Achilleus.

Say—from whom of the Gods, at first did the bitter contention
Seize on the chiefs?—From Him:—from the son of Zeus and of Leto!
He, on the leaguering armies, in wrath at the sin of the monarch,
Sent a fell pest:—for the monarch sinn'd, and the people were slaughter'd:
Slain for the crime of the king, who dishonor'd the priest of Apollo.

Suppliant Chryses came, to the swift-sailing ships of Achaia:
Suppliant, seeking his child—with priceless gifts for her ransom;
Bearing aloft his sceptre, the golden staff of his priesthood,
Wreath'd with the sacred fillets:—and much besought all the Achaians
Atreus' sons most of all men, who order'd and govern'd the people.

"Hear me, O Atreus' sons, and ye warrior ranks of Achaia!
Yours be it soon, by the aid of the Gods who inhabit Olympus,
Storming the Trojan wall, to return in peace to your homesteads.
Only restore me my child!—take the ransom I bring to redeem her!—
Take it, and honor the God : — son of Zeus : — far-darting Apollo !"

Thus did the father pray.—Content were the other Achaians,
Both to give ear to the priest, and to take the rich gift of the ransom.
Little, however, did this suit the mood of the King Agamemnon :
Fiercely the elder he drave from the galleys, and sternly rebuked him.

"Never, again, old man, let me find thee here by the galleys!
Linger not mid them now, nor return thou hither hereafter!

Fillets, and sacred staff, perchance will little avail thee!
Whom thou seekest is mine: and mine, be sure, I retain her!
Mine, in my palace at Argos, away from the land of her fathers;
Plying the loom, and sharing my bed, till age come upon her.
Hence then!— tempt me no more!—but begone if thou lovest thy safety!"—

And—in his fear of the King—he obey'd that heavy commandment.
Mourning, he paced by the margin of Ocean eternally sounding—
Mourning, yet silent; 'til far from the galleys—and then to Apollo
Deeply and long did he pray—to the son of the fair-tress'd Leto.

"God of the silver bow—thou that art the protector of Chrysa;
Guardest Cilla divine; over Tenedos mightily rulest;
Smintheus:—list to my prayer!—If e'er on the walls of thy temple,
Flowery wreaths of mine have bloom'd—if e'er, by my offering,
Bulls, and the blood of goats, have nourish'd the flame of thine altars;
Tear for tear that I shed, let a Danaan die by thine arrows!"

Earnestly pray'd his priest; and the prayer rose to Phoebus Apollo!
Down from the peaks of Olympus, in all of the pride of his anger,
Down the avenger came:—and the silver bow on his shoulder,
Clang'd as he rush'd along; and the shafts rattled loud in the quiver,
E'en as alive with the wrath of the God:—as like night he descended.
Planted afar from the fleet, on the fleet flew his terrible arrows.
Dire was the clang of the silvery string as it sounded and bounded!
First upon mules, and dogs swift-limb'd, and then upon mortals,
Hurtled the shafts; and fast thro' the air rose flames from the death-piles.

REVIEW COMMENT

Dart's Preface contains a stout, unapologetic defense of the hexameter as the only English poetic rhythm appropriate in translations of Homer: "In [the Hexameter], and in it alone, is it possible . . . to combine adequate fidelity to the original, with that vigor and rapidity of movement, without which a translation may reproduce the ideas of the poet, and may be an exceedingly elaborate, elegant, and artistic production, but is not Homer, any more than the obelisk of Luxor is the Matterhorn." This argument, dogmatically expressed, is, as I have remarked elsewhere, pointless (though often interesting), since the only sensible judgment of a translation should be pragmatic: What does this particular translation achieve?

The answer to that question in the case of Dart's translation seems to be not very much, certainly not enough to bolster his claims for the potential "vigor and rapidity of movement" of the hexameter, as one of his contemporaries observed in remarks on two partial translations of the Iliad, one by Dart (published before his

edition of the entire poem) and one by J. B. T. Landon: "Now, without questioning the possibility of writing good English hexameters, we are not convinced by these versions of the possibility of producing a translation in that verse which shall be at once valuable and pleasing. That very beautiful verses of that sort can be written has been proved by Mr. Kingsley, whose 'Andromeda' contains lines and passages of great force and effect. But it is one thing to compose an original poem in a particular metre, and another to employ that metre for the purposes of translation. . . . After making due allowance for the difficulties of the task, it must be owned that Mr. Dart and Mr. Landon have made praiseworthy attempts towards solving the problems of Homeric translation. They have contributed to prove that the hexameter metre can be closely imitated, although it cannot be reproduced in English. It has still to be determined whether or not the public will read and admire a long poem in hexameters." *Foreign Quarterly Review*, Volume 77 (1862).

Dart also comments that he has managed to stay very close to the lineation of Homer's text, so much so that, in spite of occasional lapses, "each paragraph of the original is represented by the same number of lines in the translation." Why this feature of a translation should be a matter of such importance to some translators I have never been able to fathom, but Dart's evident pride in his achievement is a sentiment frequently echoed in modern translations.

Readers who would like to see the complete text of Dart's translation should use the following link: Dart *Iliad*.

Homer
The Iliad
by Homer
rendered into English Blank Verse
by Edward Stanley, Earl of Derby
London 1864

[Sample from the Opening of the Poem]

BOOK I.

Of Peleus' son, Achilles, sing, O Muse,
The vengeance, deep and deadly; whence to Greece
Unnumbered ills arose; which many a soul
Of mighty warriors to the viewless shades
Untimely sent; they on the battle plain
Unburied lay, a prey to rav'ning dogs,
And carrion birds; but so had Jove decreed,
From that sad day when first in wordy war,
The mighty Agamemnon, King of men,
Confronted stood by Peleus' godlike son.

Say then, what God the fatal strife provok'd?
Jove's and Latona's son; he, filled with wrath
Against the King, with deadly pestilence
The camp afflicted,—and the people died,—-
For Chryses' sake, his priest, whom Atreus' son
With scorn dismiss'd, when to the Grecian ships
He came, his captive daughter to redeem,
With costly ransom charg'd; and in his hand
The sacred fillet of his God he bore,
And golden staff; to all he sued, but chief
To Atreus' sons, twin captains of the host:
"Ye sons of Atreus, and ye well-greav'd Greeks,
May the great Gods, who on Olympus dwell,
Grant you yon hostile city to destroy,
And home return in safety; but my child
Restore, I pray; her proffer'd ransom take,
And in his priest, the Lord of Light revere."

Then through the ranks assenting murmurs ran,
The priest to rev'rence, and the ransom take:
Not so Atrides; he, with haughty mien,
And bitter speech, the trembling sire address'd:

"Old man, I warn thee, that beside our ships
I find thee not, or ling'ring now, or back
Returning; lest thou prove of small avail
Thy golden staff, and fillet of thy God.
Her I release not, till her youth be fled;
Within my walls, in Argos, far from home,
Her lot is cast, domestic cares to ply,
And share a master's bed. For thee, begone!
Incense me not, lest ill betide thee now."

He said: the old man trembled, and obeyed;
Beside the many-dashing Ocean's shore
Silent he pass'd; and all apart, he pray'd
To great Apollo, fair Latona's son:

"Hear me, God of the silver bow! whose care
Chrysa surrounds, and Cilia's lovely vale;
Whose sov'reign sway o'er Tenedos extends;
O Smintheus, hear! if e'er my offered gifts
Found favour in thy sight; if e'er to thee
I burn'd the fat of bulls and choicest goats,
Grant me this boon—upon the Grecian host
Let thine unerring darts avenge my tears."

Thus as he pray'd, his pray'r Apollo heard:
Along Olympus' heights he pass'd, his heart
Burning with wrath; behind his shoulders hung
His bow, and ample quiver; at his back
Rattled the fateful arrows as he mov'd;
Like the night-cloud he pass'd, and from afar
He bent against the ships, and sped the bolt;
And fierce and deadly twang'd the silver bow.
First on the mules and dogs, on man the last,
Was pour'd the arrowy storm; and through the camp,
Constant and num'rous, blaz'd the fun'ral fires.

REVIEW COMMENT

Derby's Preface takes direct aim at the dogmatism of those (like Dart) who insist that the hexameter is essential in English translations of the *Iliad*: "Numerous as have been the translators of the Iliad, or part of it, the metres which have been selected have been almost as various: the ordinary couplet in rhyme, the Spenserian stanza, the Trochaic or Ballad metre, all have their partisans, even to that 'pestilent heresy' of the so-called English Hexameter; a metre wholly

repugnant to the genius of our language; which can only be pressed into the service by a violation of every rule of prosody; and, of which, notwithstanding my respect for the eminent men who have attempted to naturalize it, I could never read ten lines without being irresistibly reminded of Canning's 'Dactylics call'st thou them? God help thee, silly one!' The only metre suitable for "the flow and majestic simplicity of the grand old Poet" is "Heroic blank verse."

Derby, the most politically prominent translator of Homer (three times prime minister and the longest-serving leader of the Conservative party ever) produced a translation that was generally well received by his contemporaries and has been reprinted many times. Of all the Victorian blank verse translations, it remains the most readable today and is still worth experiencing if one wants traditional blank verse with an ancient flavour: it is accurate, clear, and fast (too fast for the taste of those who demand a weightier hexameter line). His style has not been infected by the often deleterious influence of Spenser or Milton which afflicted so many of his fellow Victorian translators.

For a contemporary review of Derby's *Iliad*, use the following link: Derby Review

To access the complete text of Derby's translation, please use the following link: Derby *Iliad*.

Homer
The Iliad
Or Achilles' Wrath; At the Siege of Ilion
Reproduced in Dramatic Blank Verse
T. S. Norgate

[Sample from the Opening of the Poem]

THE ILIAD OF HOMER

ARGUMENT OF THE FIRST BOOK. A.

INVOCATION TO THE MUSE.—Chrysês, priest of Apollo, comes to the Achaian camp in hope to redeem his daughter. Agamemnon, however, the commander in chief, whose prize she is, spurns his petition. The old priest prays his god to avenge him: Apollo sends a fatal pestilence into the Achaian camp. Achillês calls an assembly for enquiry; at which the augur Calchas declares that Agamemnon is the cause of the plauge: Agamemnon agrees to give up the damsel, but demands an equivalent to be given him. Achillês accuses him of avarice: Agamemnon declares he will take an equivalent by force. Achillês rates him roundly, and threatens to quit and go home. Agamemnon in return threatens to take from him his prize damsel, Brisêis.—Achillês is on the point of drawing his sword on Agamemnon, but Athênè, the goddess of Wisdom, checks him: still they wrangle, till the assembly is broken up. Agamemnon takes Brisêis, as he had threatened. Achillês invokes his goddess-mother, Thetis, to ask Zeus for vengeance on Agamemnon. This she does, and obtains his assent. Thence arise quarrels on Olympus between Zeus and his Queen-wife, Hêrè: their son Hephaistos restores peace between them.

ALPHA: the prayers of Chrysès: plague breaks out aongst the Argive host; the quarrel of their Chiefs.

Goddess! O sing the wrath of Pêleus' son,
Achillès wrath,—baneful,—that on the Achaians
Brought countless woes; and sent untimely down
Full many a chieftain's mighty soul to Hadès;
And gave their bodies for a prey to dogs,
And to all manner of birds: (but Jove's high will
Was on achievement) from the time when first
Atreidès, chief of chiefs, and prince Achillès
Quarreleed and were at strife. And who of the gods,—
Who—brought them to dispute in strife together?
The son of Zeus and Lêto: for enraged
Against the king was He, and he spread sore sickness
Throughout the host; and men began to die;
Because Atreidès treated, yea, his priest,
The venerable Chrysès, with dishonour:
For come had he to the Argives' nimble ships,—
Bearing in hand a wreath on golden sceptre,

A chaplet of Apollo, the Far-shooting,—
And bringing countless ransom, to redeem
His daughter; and he prayed the Achaians all,
But most of all the marshallers of the host,
Atreus' two sons:—"O both ye sons of Atreus,
'And all ye fair-greaved Argives!—may the gods,
'Who dwell in high Olympian halls, give You
'To sack Priam's Town, and to return safe home!
'But O now stand ye in awe of Jove's dread son,
'Apollo, the Far-shooting,—and release
'Unto me my dear daughter; and kindly take
'This for her ransom-price."—Hereat at once
All the other Argives shouted their assent,
Both to revere the priest, and to accept
The splendid ransom: this howe'er pleased not
Atreidès Agamemnon's heart, who harshly
Sent him away, and added this rough speech:
"Let me not here by our hollow ships, Old Man,
'Light upon thee,—or lingering now, or coming
'Again hereafter,—no, for neither sceptre,
'Nor the god's chaplet, should avail thee aught.
'But Her I'll not release; until old age
'Shall come upon her in our house at Argos,
'Far from her fatherland; and she shall ply
'The loom, and share my bed. But hie! begone!
'Provoke me not,—so mayst thou hence return
'Safer and sounder!"—Spake he thus: whereat
That old man feared,—and straight obeyed his bidding;
And silent—went away, along the shore
Of the loud-sounding sea: the reverend sire,
Being come afar, prayed then aloud to his lord,
Apollo, whom the fair-haired Lêto bore:
"Hear me, O Smintheus! Thou of the Silver Bow!
'Who guardest Chrysê, and the sacred Cillè,
'And rul'st o'er Tenedos with mighty sway!
'If e'er I've wreathed thee a graceful temple's roof,
'Or if at any time I've burnt for thee
'Goats' and bulls' goodly thigh-bones, O fulfil me
'This my desire: O let the Danaans pay
'Yea for my tears by taste of thy swift arrows!"
So spake he praying: to whom a gracious ear
Phœbus Apollo gave; and angry at heart
Down from Olympus' tops he came,—with bow
And quiver covered close, upon his shoulders:

Whereat, e'en as he moved along, his arrows
Rattled upon his shoulders in his wrath:
And he,—like unto night he came; then sat him,
Off from the ships, and sent an arrow amongst them:
And of the Silver Bow the twang was fearful.

REVIEW COMMENT

Norgate in his Preface rather airly dismisses earlier English translations of the *Iliad*: "But all these attempts, with failure more or less, will surely prepare the ground for some one eventually to produce a strong and full translation, in racy plain simple English, and in some one metre, without stanzas, that shall have a continuous and rapid flight." He brushes aside the hexameter as a suitable metre and declares his preferance: ". . . the English line adopted for translation of Homer should be such as has an unvarying number of feet, and yet a varying number of syllables . . . The dramatic blank verse, with its five metres (the last metre or foot of the line very frequently having an additional weak syllable)."

Norgate's strictures on the most appropriate metre may be all very well, but he seems to have quite neglected "plain simple English" in favour of an artificially aged diction and often awkward syntax ("damsel," "hereat," "rates him roundly," "Yea for my tears," "of the silver bow the twang was fearful," and so on). Norgate is among the first published translators of the entire poem to use Greek name for the gods, as opposed to their Latin equivalents.

For a contemporary review of Norgate's *Iliad*, use the following link: Review Norgate

For access to the complete translation, please use the following link: Norgate *Iliad*.

Homer's Iliad
Translated from the Original Greek
Into English Hexameters
By
Edwin W. Simcox

[Sample from the Opening Lines]

HOMER'S ILIAD

BOOK I.

THE QUARREL BETWEEN ACHILLEUS AND AGAMEMNON

SING, O Muse, the wrath of Peleidëan Achilleus;
Baleful cause of a myriad woes to the sons of Achaia;
Full many valiant souls did it send, prematurely, to Hades,
Of heroes, whose bodies because a prey to the wild dogs,
And all the birds of the air—(but the counsel of Zeus was accomplished)—
When division arose 'twixt him, that chief, and the king Agamemnon,
And in contention, Atreides vied with the noble Achilleus.
Which of the gods impelled that might pair to contention?
Leto's and Zeus's son; for he, being wroth with the monarch,
Raised 'mid the army an evil disease; and the nations were dying;
For that, a treatment of scorn, had received at the hands of Atreides
Chruses, his pontiff, who sought the swift ships of the Grecians,
Hoping his daughter to free, and bringing vast gold for her ransom,
Bearing the while, in his hands the wreath of far-darting Apollon,
And his sceptre of gold, and for favour besought he the Grecians,
But the Atreidai, chiefly, the two commanders of nations.
"O! ye Atreidai, and the rest of the well-greaved Achaians,
"You, may the deities grant, who abide in Olympian mansions,
"Priam's city to spoil, and to voyage happily homeward;
"Give but to me my daughter dear, and accept of the ransom—
"Fearing the son of Zeus, the distant-darting Apollon."
Then did the rest of the Greeks express their full approbation
Honour to give to the priest, and accept of the glorious ransom;
But this please not the mind of the king of men, Agamemnon;
Shamefully he dismissed the priest and threats superadded:
"Lest, old man, by the hollow ships, my anger should reach thee,
"Linger not now in departure, and thing not again of returning,
"Else right little will aid thee the wreath and the sceptre of Phoibos.
"I will not the daughter release ere old age come upon her;
"She, in my palace at Argos, shall stay, far away from her country,

"Plying the loom and preparing my bed, or else its companion;
"Hence then, and anger me not, for so will thy going be safer!"

REVIEW COMMENT

The final remark in Simcox's Preface describes his translation as well as any other single comment might: "The present translation shows the reader very nearly what 'the blind bard of Chios' rugged isle' really says; but if any man wishes to know how he says it, he must read the lofty-sounding original for himself." Yes, one does get an accurate rendition of Homer's text, but the poetical style is so labored, it makes one appreciate why in some quarters English versions of Homer in hexameter verse were so excoriated.

For a contemporary review of Simcox's translation of the *Iliad*, use the following link: Saturday Review (1865).

For a link to the complete text, please click on Simcox *Iliad*.

THE ILIAD OF HOMER
TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH VERSE IN THE SPENSERIAN STANZA
BY PHILIP STANHOPE WORSLEY, MA

[Sample from the Opening of the Poem]

BOOK I

1

WRATH of Achilleus, son of Peleus, sing,
O heavenly Muse, which in its fatal sway
Thousands of griefs did on the Achaians bring,
And many a hero-spirit ere his day
To Hades hurled, and left their limbs a prey
To dogs and fowls of heaven: so the design
of Zeus meanwhile was working forth its way:
Since to fell strife did at the first incline
Atrides, lord of men, and Peleus' son divine.

2

Who then of the gods did to their feud impel
These twain? Of Leto and of Zeus the son.
Wroth with the king he pour his death-rain fell,
And a dire mischief through the host did run.
For his priest Chryses was by Atreus' son
Spurned, when he came the Achaian barks before,
And with large ransom would his child have won.
There in his hands Apollo's wreath he bore
Twined on a gold staff, and prayed the people sore.

3

Thus came the priest entreating all, but most
The Atridae, the twain chiefs whom all obey:
"O sons of Atreus, and this well-greaved host,
Now may the gods that in Olympus sway
Grant that in dust the Trojan town ye lay,
And a rich spoil in safety homeward bring!
Only release me my dear child, I pray,
Take at my hands this ransom, reverencing
Child of high Zeus, Apollo, the far-darting king."

4

Then all the rest upon the old man's prayer
Breathed with a favouring voice their full consent,
Both to receive the splendid ransom fair,
And the priest hear, and to his suit relent.
But in his mind far otherwise it went
With Agamemnon, son of Atreus. He
Nursed in his soul a bitter fierce intent,
And drave the old man back disdainfully,
And a sharp word spake forth, and bade him haste to flee:

5

"Let me not find thee by the ships, old man,
Now loitering or returning hither again
Lest in mine anger, if thy face I scan,
Thou plead the god's wreath and his wand in vain.
Nor to release thy child shall I be fain,
Ere she wax old in Argos, in my home,
Far from her own dear land, across the main,
Sharing my couch and labouring at the loom—
Hence, ere my wrath take fire, if thou wouldst shun thy doom!"

6

He ended, and the old man, sore afraid,
By the sea's rolling multitudinous roar
Paced away silent, and the word obeyed;
And from afar off did with prayers implore
Apollo, whom the bright-haired Leto bore:
"Hear now and hearken for the wrongs I weep,
Lord of the silver bow, who evermore
Chryse and Cilla the divine dost keep,
And holdest high dominion o'er the sacred steep

7

"Of Tenedos; O Smintheus, hear me now!
If to thee ever a sweet temple fair
I builded, or if ever holy vow
I paid, and fat thighs to thine altar bare
Of bulls or goats, and burned them to thee there—
If ever, if at all, I served thee well—

Hearken, remember, and fulfil my prayer,
And on the Danaans pour thy death-rain fell,
Till, sorrowing with the darts, my bitter tears they quell!"

REVIEW COMMENT

Worsley dedicates the translation to his good friend Edward Lee Childe as a tribute to the latter's uncle, General Robert E. Lee, "the hero, like Hector in the *Iliad*, of the most glorious cause for which men can fight." In his Preface, Worsley surveys the traditional metres available to English translators, reviews their characteristics, and finally declares his preference for the Spenserian stanza, the metre of his earlier translation of the *Odyssey*: "I do not maintain that a reader who takes eight or nine lines of Homer, and then turns to a single stanza of my translation, will be struck with the metrical analogy. But what I hope and believe to be true is this: that the perusal of a whole book of my translation will leave echoing in the ear a voice accordant in its main swell to the voice of Homer. If that sea-like rolling effect which is so characteristic of him comes out in my pages, though not immediately by the succession of single lines, yet at last by the harmonious accumulation of stanzas, I have made out for the magnificent measure I have chosen a claim which cannot indeed be tested rapidly, but which, if true, will gradually recommend itself to favour."

Perhaps the Spenserian stanza works more effectively among people who are thoroughly familiar with it (as Worsley seems to claim) but to any modern reader the problems it presents as a vehicle for translating Homer are obvious enough (and were pointed out by some contemporary reviewers). That "sea-like rolling effect which is so characteristic of [Homer]" (whatever that means exactly) is, so far as I can tell, quite absent, replaced by an irritatingly predictable stanza form, which often interrupts whatever movement the verse is generating. And Worsely's diction compounds the problem for the modern reader. The artificially aged language—especially when it serves to provide the necessary rhyme (e.g., fain/main, fell/quell, and so on)—robs the English of any urgency and tends to turn the poem into yet another "quainte storie." It's almost as if Worsley, like many of his contemporaries, feels that Homer in English requires an artificial language that is no longer relevant to his century.

Of this translation Bush makes the following observation: "Vol 2, containing Books xiii-xxiv, was translated by [John] Connington, with the exception of twelve stanzas of Book xiii, which are Worsley's. Vol. 1 is dated 1865."

For a contemporary review of Worsley's *Iliad*, use the following link: Worsley *Iliad* Review

To access Volume I of Worsley's translation, use the following link: Worsley *Iliad*

Homer
The Iliad
Translated by John Stuart Blackie
Edinburgh 1866

[Sample from the Opening of the Poem]

Book I.

The baneful wrath, O goddess, sing, of Peleus' son, the source
Of sorrows dire, and countless woes to all the Grecian force;
That wrath which many a stout heroic soul from joyful day
To gloomy Hades hurled, and left their mangled limbs a prey
To dogs and vultures: thus the will of mightiest Jove was done;
Since first contention keen arose, and sundering strife begun
Between Atrides, king of men, and Peleus' godlike son.
Which of the gods between them twain the rancorous feud inspired?
Latona's son; for he against the king, with anger fired,
Shot through the camp a sore disease; the people drooped and died;
For that Atrides to his priest the righteous suit denied,
When to the swift sea-ploughing ships came Chryses with a prayer,
And for his daughter's freedom brought the precious ransom rare.
He on a gold sacred staff, with outstretched arm, displayed
The wreath of the far-darting god, and thus to all he prayed,
But chiefly to the kingly pair, whose word the host obeyed:
Ye sons of Atreus, and ye Greeks with burnished greaves, give ear:
You may the gods with conquest crown, and grant with mastering spear
To sack old Troy, and sail with joy to friends and country dear;
But me—my daughter dear restore, and let rich ransom follow,
Fearing the dread, far-darting god, the son of Jove, Apollo.
Whereto the Achæan host replied with loud-consenting cheer,
And bade him grant the old man's prayer, and his wreathèd staff revere;
But ill was Agamemnon pleased, and forth his anger brake;
Away he sent the priest, and thus with fell reproof he spake:
Old man, if near the hollow ships I find thee here again,
Or lingering now with laggard foot if thou shalt dare remain,
Thy hand shall show the sacred wreath, and bear the staff in vain.
The main I'll not restore; no, not till hoary age shall come
To her at Argos in my house far from her father's home:
There shall she tend the loom, and share my royal bed; but thou
Begone! fret me no more! thy speed shall be thy safety now!
He spake; the old man feared; no word of sharp reply gave he,
But silent went to the billowy beach of the vast and voiceful sea.
There from the ships apart he stood, and poured the pleading prayer

To the son of Jove whom Leto bore of the lovely-flowing hair:
Hear me, O god of the silver bow, who rightly claim'st for thine
Tenedos' isle, and Chrysè's walls, and Cilla's towers divine:
Smintheus, if ere the well-roofed pile to worship thee I raised,
If with fat thighs of bulls and goats they sacred altar blazed
From me, fulfil, O archer strong, the hope that now I cherish,
And may the Greeks who worked my wrong by thy sharp arrows perish!
He spake, and Phœbus heard the priest, who called upon his name,
And from Olympus' summit down with wrath-stirred heart he came;
His lidded quiver and his bow he on his shoulder bare,
And fearfully his rattling shafts sounded, as through the air
With rapid swoop he travelled; and he came like glooming night.|
Then, planted close behind the fleet, he shot the arrowy might,
And terribly through the tainted air far twanged his silver bow.
First fell the mules, eftsoons the nimble dogs lie gasping low
And then the men with the bitter barb of his immortal ire
He smote; and baleful blazed around the frequent funeral pyre.

REVIEW COMMENT

Blackie translation is notable for his use of the fourteen syllable line (Chapman's basic line, as well) combined with fairly strong rhymes throughout. The result, however, is not particularly remarkable. The lines, though for the most part clear and accurate enough, are heavy and the rhymes predictable—there's nothing of Chapman's Elizabethan rhetorical flair to inject some imaginative energy into the verse. And the occasional lapse into Medieval idiom doesn't really help matters ("eftsoons," "twain," and so on).

Readers who would like a longer preview of Blackie's translation (which has been recently reissued by Elibron Classics) should consult the following link: Blackie *Iliad*.

The Iliad of Homer
translated into English Accentuated Hexameters
by John F. W. Herschel
London 1866

[Sample from the Opening of the Poem]

THE ILIAD
BOOK I.

BOOK THE FIRST

ARGUMENT.

APOLLO at the prayer of his priest Chryses, whose daughter Agamemnon refuses to release, send a pestilence on the Greek army. At the instance of Achilles a council is called, in which Agamemnon agrees to resign his captive, but declares his intention to seize Briseis the captive of Achilles as an equivalent. A violent quarrel ensues between the Kings. Achilles resigns his captive but withdraws his support from the cause of the Greeks. Briseis is restored to her father, and sacrifice being made, Apollo is appeased. Thetis the mother of Achilles, moed by his prayers, petitions Zeus to avenge on the Greeks the insult thus offered to her son. He consents. Hera remonstrating, receives a rebuke in presence of the assembled Gods. Hephæstus consoles her.

ILIAD. BOOK I.

SING, clestial Muse! the destroying wrath of Achilles,
Peleus' son: which myriad mischiefs heaped on the Grecians,
Many a valiant hero's soul dismissing to Hades;
Flinging their corses abroad for a prey to dogs and to vultures,
And to each bird of the air. Thus Jove's high will was accomplished.
Ev'n from that fateful hour when opposed in angry contention
Stood forth Atreides, King of men, and godlike Achilles.
Say, then! which of the Gods involved these two in their conflict?
JOVE'S and Leto's Son! For he, with the leader offended
Sent on his army a plague, and his people were perishing round him:
For that Atreides his sacred Priest had rudely dishonoured;
Chryses, who suppliant came to the swift-sailing ships of the Grecians
Eager to rescue his daughter, and proff'ring unlimited ransom.
Wreaths in his hands he bore of the bright far-darting Apollo
Circline a sceptre of gold. Then thus besought he the Grecians
All; but th' Atreidæ first, the two great arrayers of nations:
"O ye Atreidæ! and you, ye bright-armed Greeks, to your valour
May the great Gods, who dwell in the lofty Olympian mansions
Grant the destruction of Troy, and a safe return to your country!
Only restore me my darling child, and accept what I offer

Ever revering the Son of Zeus, far-darting Apollo."
Then loud shouted the Greeks in assent: "Let her go! Let Apollo
Glorified be in his priest! Take, take the magnificent ransom!"
But Agamemnon, Atreus' son, disdained his petition.
Roughly he drove him forth, and sternly rebuked him at parting.
"Hence! Let me catch thee no more, old man, in our camp either ling'ring
Here round our hollow keeled ships, or returning again on thine errand.
Scarce should Apollo then, or his wreath, or sceptre, avail thee.
No! Set her free be thou sure I will not! till age overtake her
There in our palace at home, in Argos; far from her country,
Weaving the web, and performing th' accustomed rites of my chamber.
Hence! I say.—Anger me not!—Thy retreat may so be the safer."
Thus spake the King: and the old man feared and shrank from the mandate.
Silent he crept by the loud-roaring sea, till far from the vessels
Then to Apollo supreme, the offspring of fair-haired Latona,
Thus in his anguish he prayed, with earnest and long supplication:—
"Hear me! Thou of the silver bow!—Thou guardian of Chrysa!
Thou who encompassest Cilla the sacred! Thou whose dominion
Tenedos trembling owns!—O Smintheus! Hear me.—If ever
Decking thy temple with festive crowns I have burned on thine altar
Thigh of the bull or fat of the goat—oh! grant my petition:
Let thin arrows requite to the Greeks these tears I am shedding."
Thus, loud sobbing, he prayed; and his prayer reached Phœbus Apollo.
Down from the lofty crest of Olympus he plunged on the instant,
Ire in his heart. On his shoulders his bow was slung, and his quiver
Gorgeously wrought, and the shafts clashed loud as he moved in his anger.
Down he swept, like the presence of night, and approaching alighted
Somewhat apart from the ships, and among them sent forth an arrow.
Dire was the twang of the silver bow! Then spread the contaigon.
First among mules, and the lazy dogs that prowled round the vessels.
Next came a piercing shaft which, winged with bitterer vengeance
Flew through the ranks; and the funeral pyres blazed fast and unceasing.

REVIEW COMMENT

Herschel offers an interesting Preface, in which he mounts a stout defence of the hexameter as the most appropriate metre for translating Homer. He also explains his own approach to the task of translating Homer's Greek: "Though a careful interpretation of the Greek it does not profess to be minutely close, much less a strictly literal translation: while on the other hand it eschews altogether any attempt to clothe the simple and rude majesty of the great original in such amplitude of decorated wording as to conceal its outlines." Of the recurring epithets, he has this to say, "But to be systematical reminded of these particulars almost whenever the persons or things so characterized are mentioned, is

assuredly more in the nature of a blemish than a beauty." Herschel is also one of the very few translators who with the use of italics deliberately calls attention to his additions to the text: "good faith both to the original and the reader requires that expletory words or phrases should be distinguished by some typographical difference." The translation, as a whole, is not particularly inspiring or memorable and does little to demonstrate the poetic superiority of the hexameter, as a contemporary reviewer remarked:

> His translation, too, is rendered by hexameters. This we take to be a thorough mistake. . . .The whole question . . . of English hexameters and quantitative prosody cannot be settled by any edict from Printing-house-square, but must be left to the great body of educated Englishmen. They have long ago, by the acceptance and welcome of Lord Derby's blank-verse translation of the "Iliad," decided against the English hexameter. . . . It would be most unfair . . . not to give Sir John Herschel great credit for his industry, care, and scholarship. Still, regarding his work simply from the mechanical point of view, we do not think that it bears any comparison with Mr. Dart's version, also in hexameters. (*Foreign Quarterly Review*, 1867)

Those who would like to access the full text of Herschel's text should use the following link: Herschel's *Iliad*.

Homer's Iliad
translated into English Hexameters
by James Inglis Cochrane
Edinburgh:
Printed for Private Circulation
1867

[Sample from the Opening of the Poem]

HOMER'S
ILIAD.

BOOK FIRST.

SING, O heavenly goddess, the wrath of Peleides Achilles,
Ruinous wrath, whence numberless woes came down on Achaia,
Many a valiant soul of her sons untimely dismissing,
Sending to Hades; their mangl'd bodies a prey to the vultures
Left, and the dogs:—but the counsels of Zeus meanwhile were evolving—
E'en from the time, when contention arising 'tween King Agamemnon,
Ruler of heroes, and godlike Achilles, they stood disunited.
  Who of the great gods caus'd these heroes to wrangle and combat?
Offspring of Leto and Zeus: he, wroth with the king, had excited
All through the army a baleful disease, and the people by thousands
Perish'd, because of Atreides' dishonour to Chryses the aged,
Priest of the gods; who had come to the swift-wing'd ships of Achaia,
Carrying rich gifts many, his daughter beloved to ransom,
Bearing the wreath in his hands, of the high, far-darting Apollo,
Hung on a sceptre of gold; where thus he entreated the Argives,
Chiefly the brothers Atreidae, the two great heads of the people:
  "Hear me, Atreidae, and all well-greav'd, brave-hearted Achaians!
O may the gods, who inhabit the mansions of lofty Olympus
Grant that the city of Priam ye sack, home safely returning!
Further, my daughter beloved release, these ransoms accepting;
Thus shall ye reverence show Zeus-born, far-darting Apollo."
  Shouting applause, the immense host cheer'd, and consented to honour
Chryses the priest, and accept the magnificent ransoms he proffer'd:
Only the soul of incens'd Agamemnon, the monarch, it pleas'd not;
Him he dismiss'd with disgrace, this harsh speech scornfully adding:
  "Thee, old man, take heed by the deep-hull'd ships that I find not,
Either at this time waiting, or yet hereafter returning;
Sceptre and wreath of Apollo would then prove futile to aid thee.
Her I shall never release until safe in our mansion at Argos
30 Age comes on her apace, far, far from the land of her fathers,

While she is plying the loom, and at couch-time waiting my coming.
Hence! and enrage not my soul, if to reach home safe thou desirest."
  Ended: The old man fearing obey'd; thence taking his lone way
On by the shore which the huge wave, hollow-voic'd, boisterous, lashes.
Whereupon, far from the others apart having wander'd, the prophet
Pray'd to Apollo, whom Leto the fair-hair'd bore to Kronion:
"Hear my request, thou god of the silvery bow, who protectest
Chrysa and Killa divine, and with power over Tenedos reignest
Smintheus! if ever to thee I have rear'd an appropriate temple,
Ever to thee fat thighs on the sacred altar have off'er'd,
Either of bulls or of goats, O grant that my pray'r may be answer'd;
Grant that my tears be aveng'd on the Argives, aveng'd by thine arrows!"
  Ended the old man praying; and him heard Phoebus Apollo.
Instant in wrath forth darted the god from the top of Olympus,
Bearing his bow and the lid-clos'd quiver of shafts on his shoulders.
Rattl'd the arrows the quiver within, as, enrag'd in his bosom,
Onward he mov'd; and, advancing, he spread dark night all round him.
Then he apart from the ships sat down, and directed an arrow :
Loud twang'd, ringing, the string of the silvery bow in rebounding.
Sleek mules foremost he smote, then swift dogs, fiercely attacking ;
Afterwards, full at the host he his keen barb'd arrows directed,
Smiting in rage, until frequent the pyres of the corses were burning.

REVIEW COMMENT

Cochrane joins the long list of those who wish to argue that the hexameter line is a form well suited to English verse and particularly to Homer. He offers a few observations on the issue in a short preface which he published with Book I of the Iliad (in 1862). His complete translation was published after his death with the same preface. The only satisfactory resolution to this apparently endless argument is surely a pragmatic one: Has anyone produced a hexameter version of the poem which we recognize as a masterful rendition of Homer into English? Endless debates about the rules of Greek metre or the suitability of the hexameter for German poetry, interesting as they may be, are beside the point.

Cochrane's translation is clearly insufficiently imaginative and moving to provide the only justification for the hexameter which matters, especially since it leads him into such curious English constructions as "Ended the old man praying," "rich gifts many," and so on.

Readers who like to access the full text of Cochrane's translation should use the following link: Cochrane *Iliad*.

Homer's Iliad
In English Rhymed Verse
By Charles Merivale
London 1869

[Sample from the Opening of Book XIII]

BOOK XIII

JOVE, to the Grecian galleys when Hector he had brought,
And all the hosts of conquering Troy, with them no more he fought,—
But left them there to suffer sore toil and ceaseless pain;
Himself his glittering eyes withdrew
From these away, to mark and view the Thracian hunters' plain;
And the Mysians closely fighting; and them that milk the mare,
That feed on curds, that peaceful dwell, most just of men and fair.
From Troy-town altogether his glittering eyes he bent;
No God, he surely deem'd, would come
To stand for Greece or Ilium, with aid immortal lent.

Nor kept the great Earth-shaker incurious watch afar;
On the crest of Samos high he stood,
Of Thracian Samos, crown'd with wood, and gazed on all the war.
For thence was seen all Ida, and Priam's towers were seen;
And thence the galleys of the Greeks, bright in the airy sheen.
There from the main ascending the Power had fix'd his stand;
And much he rued the Achaians, routed 'neath the Trojans' hand;
And 'gainst great Jove with utter rage indignantly he bann'd.
From the misty mountain straightway down with quick steps he strode;
And mountain crest, and sylvan seat,
Quiver'd beneath the immortal feet of the monarch of the flood.
Thrice with great strides he bounded; and with the fourth he gain'd
Ægæ, where stands his palace bright, of golden sheen unstain'd,
Deep in the gulfs of mighty seas eternally maintain'd.
And there arriving yoked he his steeds of brazen hoof,
The swift of flight, with manes of light;
Himself about his shoulders dight with golden mail of proof.
And then the scourge he flourished, the well-wrought gilded scourge;
Sprang to his car, and featly drove high o'er the sounding surge.
Beneath him frisk'd the monsters from all their depths and caves;
And none might fail to know and hail the sovereign of the waves.
The seas with gladness parted before the slippery car;
Swift flew the steeds, nor dipp'd in wave the brazen axle-bar;
And so the God his generous team bore bounding to the war.

A cave there lies deep-seated in the bosom of the flood,
Midway 'twixt rock-bound Tenedos, and Imbrus dark with wood :
There Neptune, great Earth-shaker, his steeds unyoked, and cast
Before them meat divine to eat, and made their fetlocks fast,
With a golden chain to keep them,—that so they sure might bide
Their lord returning,—and himself to the Grecian leaguer hied.

Meanwhile at the heels of Hector with furious ardour came
The Trojans, thronging to the fight, like tempest and like flame.
Hurra'd they, and halloo'd they; and thought like fire to fall
On the ships of Greece, and at their sides to slay their champions all.
But Neptune, Earth-embracer, Earth-shaker, from the surge
With Calchas' shape and speech appear'd, the Achaian hosts to urge.
And first, to fire their courage, the Ajaces he address'd;
The Ajaces twain,—no recreants they,— but bravest aye and best:—
"Now ye, I say, brave heroes, shall save us,—if ye dare,—
Regardful of your strength of arms, regardless of despair.
Elsewhere indeed I reck not this turbulent attack ;
Though many they that scale the wall, the Greeks shall thrust them back.
But here I fear me shrewdly, some dire mishap shall be:
For here leads Hector, wild as fire;—
The Thunderer vaunts he for his sire, as though a God were he!
Now may some Power impel ye stedfast yourselves to stand,
And stay the rest, and guard the ships even from this madman's hand,
Even though the Olympian urge him!"—disguised thus Shakeland spoke;
And with his rod the girdling God dealt each a potent stroke,
And fill'd them full with vigour, and gave them courage large ;
And made them light,—their hands to fight,—their feet to tramp and charge.

REVIEW COMMENT

What can one say? This translation surely represents something about certain features of Victorian taste in poetry or in translations of Homer whereof it is perhaps best not to speak.

For a contemporary review of Merivale's translation, use the following link: Merivale Review.

Readers who would like to access Volume II of Merivale's *Iliad* should use the following link: Merivale *Iliad*.

The Iliad of Homer
A Translation
(with Greek Text)
by
J. G. Cordery
British Resident at Hyderabad
London 1870

[Sample from the Opening of the Poem]

Iliad I.

SING, Goddess, of Achilles, Peleus' son,
The Wrath that rose disastrous, and the cause
Of woes unnumber'd to Achaia's host,
Casting full many a hero's mighty ghost
Too soon to Hades—but the men themselves
Prey to the dogs and all the fowls of heaven!
Yet was the will of Zeus fulfill'd thereby ;
Then first, what time asunder stood in strife
Godlike Achilles from the King of men.

What heavenly Power inspired them to this strife?
The Child of Zeus and Leto. He in wrath
With Agamemnon sent an evil plague
Amongst them, and Achaia's nations fell
For that dishonour dealt by Atreus' Son
To Chryses, his high priest. For Chryses came
To their swift galleys, bearing priceless gifts
The ransom of his daughter, in his hands
Showing the garland of Apollo twined
About a golden sceptre, and besought
All the Achaians, yet address'd his prayer
Most to the brother-chieftains, Atreus' sons:
"Hear me, O Atreus' Sons, and ye their host!
May the Gods on Olympus grant to you
The sack of Ilion and return to home;
But render back to me mine own dear child,
Accepting ransom, honouring so the name
Of Him who smites from far, the Child of Zeus."
He spoke; to whom the Achaians gave applause,
Bidding revere the priest, and take the gifts
Of her redemption; but ill-pleased the soul
Of Agamemnon, who despiteful sent

Empty, with violent words, the priest away:
"Beware, old man, lest near these hollow barks
I find thee lingering now or ever again
Returning; else but little shall avail
Thy sceptre, or the garland of thy God.
I will not loose my hold from off thy child
Ere far in Argos from her fatherland
She hath worn old in service of our house,
Task'd at the loom, or partner of my bed.
Depart, nor move me unto anger; so
Shall thy return be safer—get thee hence!"
He spoke; the elder, all in awe, obey'd.
On the full-sounding ocean's echoing shore
He passed in silence to a place apart,
And there to great Apollo made his prayer,
Apollo, whom fair Leto bore to Zeus:
"Hear me, O Bender of the silver bow,
Who dwell'st in Chryse, or the fruitful dales
Of Cylla, or in Tenedos enthroned,
Sminthian Apollo! If that e'er I wreath'd
About thy fragrant altar crowns of flowers,
Or e'er have made to thee sweet sacrifice
Of bulls and goats, fulfil me my desire:
Venge with thy darts these tears upon their host."
He spoke; whose prayer Apollo heard, and straight
Strode wrathful o'er the Olympian peaks sublime,
Bearing his close-capp'd quiver and his bow
Swung round his shoulder; loud the arrows rang,
Hurtling in motion of the anger'd God.
Like unto Night, he came, and sate him down
Short space from off the fleet, and 'gan discharge
His arrows thence. Dire sung the silver bow;
Whilst first against their sumpters and their hounds
He aim'd, but after shot a bitter shaft
Upon themselves; thenceforward ceaseless rose
The flames of funeral piles throughout the host.

REVIEW COMMENT

Cordery's text has the Greek and English on facing pages. One assumes, therefore, that the text is meant primarily for those who wish to read the Greek and get some assistance from the English (although Cordery seems to suggest the reverse in his preface, as if readers would only consult the Greek in order to check the English). In any case, the blank verse here has no particular merit and is decidedly

inferior to the blank verse translations of Bryant and Caldcleugh. Cordery explains that his choice of blank verse stems from his view that the Greek hexameter "lies beyond the reach of the English tongue. . . ." (qu. Young 134). One wonders, too, if the translation is sufficiently faithful to Homer to be a useful crib for the reader going through the Greek text. That said, Cordery's diction is a considerable improvement on the "olde worlde" language of some of his predecessors.

For a contemporary review of Cordery's *Iliad*, use the following link: Cordery *Iliad* Review (1871)

The reader who would like to access the text of Volume I of Cordery's translation should use the following link: Cordery *Iliad*.

The Iliad of Homer
Translated into English Blank Verse
By William Cullen Bryant
Boston 1870

[Sample from the Opening of the Poem]

THE ILIAD.

BOOK I.

O GODDESS ! sing the wrath of Peleus' son,
Achilles; sing the deadly wrath that brought
Woes numberless upon the Greeks, and swept
To Hades many a valiant soul, and gave
Their limbs a prey to dogs and birds of air,—
For so had Jove appointed,—from the time
When the two chiefs, Atrides, king of men,
And great Achilles, parted first as foes.
  Which of the gods put strife between the chiefs,
That they should thus contend? Latona's son
And Jove's. Incensed against the king, he bade
A deadly pestilence appear among
The army, and the men were perishing.
For Atreus son with insult had received
Chryses the priest, who to the Grecian fleet
Came to redeem his daughter, offering
Uncounted ransom. In his hand he bore
The fillets of Apollo, archer-god,
Upon the golden sceptre, and he sued
To all the Greeks, but chiefly to the sons
Of Atreus, the two leaders of the host:—
  "Ye sons of Atreus, and ye other chiefs,
Well-greaved Achaians, may the gods who dwell
Upon Olympus give you to o'erthrow
The city of Priam, and in safety reach
Your homes; but give me my beloved child,
And take her ransom, honoring him who sends
His arrows far, Apollo, son of Jove."
  Then all the other Greeks, applauding, bade
Revere the priest and take the liberal gifts
He offered, but the counsel did not please
Atrides Agamemnon; he dismissed
The priest with scorn, and added threatening words:—

"Old man, let me not find thee loitering here,
Beside the roomy ships, or coming back
Hereafter, lest the fillet thou dost bear
And sceptre of thy god protect thee not.
This maiden I release not till old age
Shall overtake her in my Argive home,
Far from her native country, where her hand
Shall throw the shuttle and shall dress my couch.
Go, chafe me not, if thou wouldst safely go."
He spake; the aged man in fear obeyed
The mandate, and in silence walked apart,
Along the many-sounding ocean-side,
And fervently he prayed the monarch-god,
Apollo, golden-haired Latona's son:—
"Hear me, thou bearer of the silver bow,
Who guardest Chrysa, and the holy isle
Of Cilia, and art lord in Tenedos,
O Smintheus! if I ever helped to deck
Thy glorious temple, if I ever burned
Upon thy altar the fat thighs of goats
And bullocks, grant my prayer, and let thy shafts
Avenge upon the Greeks the tears I shed."
So spake he supplicating, and to him
Phœbus Apollo hearkened. Down he came,
Down from the summit of the Olympian mount,
Wrathful in heart; his shoulders bore the bow
And hollow quiver; there the arrows rang
Upon the shoulders of the angry god,
As on he moved. He came as comes the night,
And, seated from the ships aloof, sent forth
An arrow ; terrible was heard the clang
Of that resplendent bow. At first he smote
The mules and the swift dogs, and then on man
He turned the deadly arrow. All around
Glared evermore the frequent funeral piles.

REVIEW COMMENT

Bryant makes clear that his translation seeks to be "strictly faithful" and at the same time to offer "no violence to the ordinary usages and structures of our own." He continues, "I have sought to attain what belongs to the original,—a fluent narrative style, which shall carry the reader forward without the impediment of unexpected inversions and capricious phrases. . . ." This admirable goal informs the translation throughout, which is clear, fast paced, and for the

most part accurate (like many others Bryant is not entirely sure about Homeric epithets). His translation lacks the sense, so common in many nineteenth-century renderings of Homer (and some modern ones), of a verse line stuffed or wrenched to meet the demands of some metrical arrangement which the translator has determined is more important than fluent, idiomatic English. Bryant's *Iliad* ranks as one of the most successful and readable English renditions of Homer of the century.

For a contemporary review of Bryant's *Iliad*, use the following link: Bryant *Iliad* Review.

Readers who would like to access the full translation of Bryant's translation should use the following link: Bryant *Iliad*.

Iliad of Homer
Translated into English Verse
by W. G. Caldcleugh
Philadelphia 1870

[Sample from the Opening of the Poem]

THE ILIAD OF HOMER

BOOK I

THE QUARREL OF THE CHIEFS

ARGUMENT

The Greeks are encamped on the shore in front of Troy.—A pestilence breaks out in the army.—Achilles calls a council, at which Chalcas, the prophet, declares the cause of it to be the refusal of Agamemnon to ransom the captive maid whom he had taken in battle, and whose release had been begged by her father Chryses, priest of Apollo.—The king finally restores her, and indemnifies himself by seizing Briseis, another captive female who belonged to Achilles.—Achilles, in great wrath for this insult, withdraws from the war, and prays his mother, the sea-goddess Thetis, to go to Olympus and beg Jupiter to take part with the Trojans, and bring defeat on the Greeks.

SING of Achilles' wrath, oh heavenly muse,
Which brought upon the Greeks unnumbered woes,
And sent so many heroes to their doom;
Whose bodies, strewed unburied o'er the plain,
Became the prey of vultures and of dogs:
So Jove decreed, when first a quarrel rose
Betwixt the godlike warrior Achilles
And Agamemnon, sovereign of men.
  Who of the gods the quarrel set afoot?
Apollo 'twas; he, angry with the king,
Sent through the camp a plague; the people died,—
For Agamemnon insulted Chryses,
Apollo's priest; he to the Greeks had come
With costly gifts, his daughter to redeem,
And bearing in his hand the golden wand
And flowery garlands of his patron god,
He supplicated all the Greeks, but most
The two commanders, sons of Atreus.
  Hear me, ye sons of Atreus, and ye Greeks:
May the gods dwelling on the Olympian mount
Grant all you wish; may Priam's city fall,
And ye in safety to your homes return;

But, oh, restore to me my darling child,
Receive my gifts, and reverence my god.
Then shouted all the Greeks their full consent
The priest to honor, and accept his gifts.
But Agamemnon was much displeased,
Roughly dismissed him, and thus harshly spake:
Let me not find thee in the camp, old man,
Long loitering; nor hither come again,
Lest e'en thy garlands and thy rod divine
Protect thee not; as for thy daughter, I
Will not restore her till her charms decay.
But to my home in Argos shall she go,
Far from her native land, sharing my bed,
And laboring at the loom. Begone, I say,
Whilst safely thou canst go. Thus spake the king.
The old man, trembling, heard him and obeyed.
Silent he went, retiring from the camp,
Along the margin of the roaring sea;
Then to Apollo, all alone he prayed:
Hear me, Apollo, god of the silver bow,
Ruling o'er Chrysa, Tenedos, and Cilia,
If e'er with garlands I have crowned thy shrine,
Or offered up the fat of bulls and goats,
Grant this my prayer: may thy avenging darts
Upon the Greeks be sent for these my tears.
  Thus Chryses prayed, nor was his prayer unheard,
For full of wrath, down from the Olympian mount,
Apollo came; upon his shoulders hung
His splendid quiver and his costly bow;
The angry arrows rattled as he trod;
Like night he came, so terrible his frown.
Outside the camp he took his seat, and shot:
His silver bow twanged horribly; first fell
The mules, the dogs died next, then on the men
The deadly arrow of the god descended.

REVIEW COMMENT

Caldcleugh's preface is nothing if not modest: "The following translation, the desultory occupation of a few years, is submitted to the public with much diffidence. Written principally for the amusement of the translator and his friends, he makes no claim to the qualifications necessary for the success of such an undertaking; yet, perhaps, some of the admirers of Homer may honor the work with a perusal, if only to see in what light any new version may place their favorite

author." The result is an entertaining and energetic blank verse rendition, far superior to many of the efforts of the Victorian English tradition of translating the Iliad. Caldcleugh's verse is a reminder that in many things directness and clarity trump odd scholarly experiments (of which we may say, with Dr. Johnson, that no precedents justify absurdity).

Readers who would like to access the complete text of Caldcleugh's translation should use the following link: Caldcleugh *Iliad*.

Homer's Iliad
Translated by John Benson Rose
For Private Circulation
London 1874

[Sample from the Opening of the Poem]

HOMER'S
ILIAD.

BOOK I.

Now, goddess, sing of wrath, Achilles' wrath,
Fatal unto Achaians; and which sent
A host of souls of heroes unto Hades;
Their bodies left to vultures and to dogs;
Such was the will divine—since first began
Discord between Atreides, chief of men,
And the divine Pèleides; by what god
Urged and impelled, O goddess, now declare.
The son of Zeus and Leto, in his wrath
Shed dread contagion down upon the king
And on the hosts—destroying multitudes—
For the offence Atreides cast upon
Chryses, his priest. Who sought the Achaian fleet
With ransom for his daughter; in his hand
Bearing the golden sceptre and the wreath
Of the far-darting god. He bent to all
The host Achaian—but addressed himself
Unto the chief of all, the brother kings.
"Atreides, and Achaians, mighty-greaved,
So may the gods who in Olympus dwell
Grant Priameian spoil and heights to you
As ye shall yield my daughter, for the love
Of the far-darting son of Zeus—Apollo."
And to his prayer the Achaians gave assent
To take the holy and the bounteous price;
Save Agamemnon ; the Atreidan king
Refused with words of censure and rebuke:
"Away, old man, nor let me find you here
Hanging about our hosts, and hollow barks,
Lest that thy golden sceptre and the wreath,
The emblems of thy god, protect thee not.
Thy daughter is my captive—until she

In Argos shall grow old, my fatherland;
There at the loom, and partner of my bed
To bide whilst me it please. Now, hence, away."
He spoke, and the old man withdrew in dread
And trod the shores of the unquiet sea,
And there the old man loosed his words in prayer
Unto his lord Apollo, son of Leto:
"Lord of the silver bow, whom Chrysa's shores,
And Cilla the divine, and Tenedos,
Own for their god, O Smintheus! if I e'er
Graced with my off ring thy holy fane
And on thy shrine shed fat of bulls and goats,
Hear now my prayer, and on the Danaan host
Launch forth thy shaft, revengeful of my tears."
He prayed and he was heard. From high Olympus
Phœbus Apollo with resounding bow
And quiver full, descended, in his might
And anger there, rattled the pent-up shafts
As he approached with brow as black as night;
And when he saw the ships he loosed the string
And the dart parted from the silver bow.
He smote the wards and sentries, nor ceased from man
Until the pyres of death blazed far and wide.

REVIEW COMMENT

Rose's text offers no preface, but does have a cryptic and eloquent epigraph: "Adding his tears unto the needless stream." That, I would say, just about sums up the translation.

Readers who wish to access the full text of Rose's translation should use the following link: Rose *Iliad*.

The Iliad of Homer
Homometrically Translated
C. B. Cayley
London 1877

[Sample from the Opening of the Poem]

THE
ILIAD OF HOMER

BOOK I
THE STRIFE OF THE LEADERS.

MUSE, of Pelidéan Achilles sing the resentment
Ruinous, who brought down many thousand griefs on Achaians,
And ultimately banish'd many souls to the mansion of Hades
Of warriors puissant, them making a booty for hounds and
All manner of prey-birds, wherein Jove's will was accomplish'd
From that time forward, when first was in enmity parted
Atrides, king of hosts, from Jove-exampling Achilles.

To strife and bickerings will ye hear what diety mov'd them?
'Twas Jove's and Leto's offspring, wi' the king when offended,
Sent a fell infection, whence heaps fell on heaps in the army.
This wrought he for a priest, whom lord Agamemnon affronted,
For Chryses, who had hied to swift war-ships of Achaians
His daughter to redeem, and bearing a ransom enormous;
Holding aloft wool-wreaths in his hand of th' archer Apollo,
On gold sceptre attach'd, he pray'd to the banded Achaians
And the two Atridæ foremost, folk-marshalling heroes:
"Hear me, O Atridæ, O Achaians well to the greaves arm'd;
May the divine denizens of Olympus not disappoint you
Of Priam's city sack'd, or of homeward safely returning;
But my dear daughter restore me, and here have a ransom;
Show reverence to the child of Jove, far-shooting Apollo."

Then the common murmuers proclaim'd the desire of Achaians,
Showing honor to the priest, to receive so splendid a ransom.
No so at all minded prov'd Atreus-born Agamemnon,
Who with grim menaces dismiss'd, and sternly rebuk'd him:
"Thou'dst better, old father, no more be taken amongst us
Lingering, or back anew wending to the barks hollow-builded,
Lest not a whit wool-wreaths o' the god, nor sceptre avail thee.
And I'll not give her up, be assur'd, ere Age cometh o'er her,

Far from her own birthplace, within our habitation at Argos,
In labours o' the loom employ'd, and my bed attending;
But go forth, irritate me not, lest hurt should arrest thee."

He spoke, and th' old man, terrefied, 'gan obey the commandment.
Down went he in silence to the beach, where loudly the sea frets;
Lonely then he wander'd, and call'd many times on Apollo,
Great paramount, brought forth by Leto comelily braided.
"Argent bow's bender, that Chryse mightily guardest,
Great lord through Tenedos, through Killa's bounds hallow'd-holy,
Hear me, if I've garnish'd thy beautiful halidom, hear me,
If once by me upon thine altar smoke hath ascended
From fat of herds or goats—this alone vounchsafe that I ask thee;
Let Danaans my tearshed atone, thine archery tasting."

These he utter'd praying, not unheard by Phœbus Apollo,
Who started from Olympus's heights, with his heart full of anger,
With quiver all garnish'd, and bow slung athwart his shoulders.
Loud his arrows knister'd in rear of the Power offended,
Answering his footfall, and like very night was his advent.
Soon sat he over against their ships, and dreadfully signall'd,
With that bow's argent resonance, his first arrow's onset.
Their mules and dapper hounds for a while at first he assaulted,
Then with deadly weapons he against themselves began aiming,
Till fires from death-piles were uninterruptedly burning.

REVIEW COMMENT

The subtitle of this translation—Homometrically Translated—is neither explained nor defended by the translator, so it is up to the reader, I suppose, to find some imaginatively useful rhythmic connection between the lines here and Homer's hexameters. This translation, I believe, is one of the first to claim that it is based upon Homer's own metre. Cayley's diction must qualify as one of the strangest in a long tradition of often strange choices (e.g., "halidom," "Jove-exampling Achilles," "denizens of Olympus," and so on). His phraseology can lead to unintentionally (one assumes) humorous suggestions (like those arrows which "knister'd" in Apollo's rear). The spelling, too, is rather odd in places: "terrefied" and "comelily braided", for example (misprints perhaps). All in all, not a particularly noteworthy addition to the collection of translations of Homer, except for the Preface which is, well, quite splendid. I quote it here in its entirety:

DONS, undergraduates, essayists, and public, I ask you,
Are these hexameters true-tim'd, or Klopstockish uproar,
Like "Wie'd den tausendmal Tausend der Todten Gottes einst seyn wird,"

Or like "that wonderful land, at the base of the Ozark mountains,"
Where "they found Andromeden and Persea, fairest of mortals?"
Such measure I'd never hear! sooner blank verse chloroform me,
Seesaw me couplets, gape for me sooner, immense Earth!

Readers who would like to access the full text of Cayley's translation should use the following link: Cayley *Iliad*.

The Iliad
A Literal Prose Translation
by Herbert Hailstone
Cambridge 1881

[Sample from Book XXI]

ILIAD XXI.

μάχη παραποτάμιος

THE REQUITAL OF ACHILLES FOR THE LOSS OF HIS DEAR FRIEND PATROCLUS.

BUT when they now came to the ford of eddying Xanthus, river of fair flood, which deathless Zeus begat, there did he cut in twain the host, and some he chased plain wards to the city, by the way which the Achaeans fled yesterday bewildered, when noble Hector was frenzied: by the same way in wild alarm did they pour forth, and Here spread in front a deep mist to hinder them. Half into the river deep-flowing with silver eddies were close driven, and fell therein with a mighty plash, while the sheer streams roared, and banks around rang mightily: they with loud cry wereswimming to all sides, whirled round amid the eddies Like as when under a rush of fire-flame locusts in air dangle to fly river-wards; and the unwearied fire on a sudden starting forth doth blaze, and they flee into the wave cowering: so by Achilles was deep-whirling Xanthus' noisy stream cumbered with warriors in confusion and with steeds.

But the one born from Zeus left there his spear upon the bank laid by the tamarisks, and like to a god plunged in, having nought but his sword, and planned mischief in his soul, and this way and that turning upon them he smote: so did a shameful groaning rise from them smitten with the sword, and the water crimsoned with their blood. And as fishes by a big-bellied dolphin driv'n to flight fill in fear the recesses of a sheltering harbour: for greedily doth he devour whom he may catch: so did the Trojans flee cowering under the crags adown the streams of the dread river. But he, when now he was wearied in his hands with slaying, chose from the river alive twelve youths, quit-money for the slain Patroclus, son of Menœtius. These he dragged to the shore dumb-stricken as fawns, and bound behind their hands with well-cut thongs, which themselves were wearing around mailed tunics, and gave them to his comrades to bring down to the hollow ships. Then back again he rushed, lusting to slay.

There did he meet a son of Dardanian Priam, Lycaon, fleeing from the river, whom erst, having gone forth by night, he took and led from his father's orchard all unwilling : with sharp bronze was he cutting a wild fig-tree's tender shoots, to be a chariot's rails; and upon him goodly Achilles came an ill unlooked-for. At that time had he taken him for sale on ship board to well-stablished Lemnos, and the

son of Jason gave a price: thence a guest-friend redeemed him, and gave much ransom—Eetion of Imbros— and sent him to divine Arisbe; escaping thence by stealth had he come to his father's house. Eleven days with his friends did he cheer his heart, arrived from Lemnos: the twelfth, the god again laid him in Achilles' hands, he who should send him to the house of Hades all unwilling. So when the goodly Achilles fleet of foot perceived him without helm and shield— unarmed— neither did he bear a lance, but to the ground had he thrown all off; for sweat distressed him fleeing from the river, and weariness overcame his knees— then heavy in wrath did he commune with his mighty soul:
"Lo now, a wondrous marvel do I see here with, mine eyes! In very surety the great-hearted Trojans—those whom I slew, shall rise again from beneath the dusky gloom; e'en as this man has fled the pitiless day and come, sent once for sale over to most holy Lemnos: and not the ocean of hoary brine, which holds many fast despite their will, could keep this one away. But come now, my spear's point likewise shall he taste, that I may see and know within my soul whether in such manner he shall thence return, or if the quickeningearth, which holdeth e'en the strong man fast, shall also hold him fast."

Thus did he ponder, waiting: but Lycaon came near to him dumb-stricken, eager to grasp his knees, while in his soul he sore wished to shun evil death and black destiny. Goodly Achilles then held high his long lance, intent to wound him ; but he ran in underneath, and stooping clung to his knees: the spear stood fixed in earth over his back, longing to glut itself with human flesh. So with one hand had he clasped his knees and was entreating, with the other he held the pointed lance, nor would he let it go : and giving utterance he spake winged words to him:
"Achilles, I implore thee ; do thou reverence and pity me. I am to thee, Zeus-cherished one, a suppliant meet for respect: with thee first did I taste Demeter's grain, on that day when thou didst take me in the well-stablished orchard, and leading me away from father and from friends didst carry me for sale to Lemnos most divine, and I fetched for thee the price of an hundred beeves. But then was I redeemed, having brought thrice the sum : and this is my twelfth morn since I came to Ilios after much woe. Now hath destructive fate again placed me in thy hands:surely must I have become hateful to father Zeus, who gave me again to thee: short-lived did my mother bear me, Laothoe, daughter of aged Altes—Altes, who is lord over the warfare-loving Leleges, and holdeth Pedasus girt with cliffs by the stream of Satniois. His daughter did Priam wed, and many other maidens: from her we two were born, and thou wilt cut off our twain heads. Him didst thou vanquish, godlike Polydorus, among the foremost fighting-men, struck with the sharp javelin: and to me now shall there be evil here : for I think not to escape thy hands, since the deity hath brought me to them. This further will I say to thee, and do thou treasure it in thy mind: slay me not, for I am not from the same womb with Hector—he who thy comrade slew, gentle alike and brave."

Thus then did Priam's noble son address him, pleading with his speech, and a relentless voice he heard: "Fool, talk not to me of ransom, nor do thou mention it.

Before Patroclus met his day of doom, so long was it a half-pleasure in my soul to spare the Trojans, and many I took alive and sent for sale: but now no man evadeth death of all the Trojans, least of all of Priam's sons, whom before Ilios the god into my hands commits. But die thou too, dear friend. Why wailest thou so ? Patroclus died, he who was braver far than thou art. Canst thou not see what mannerof man am I, noble and great? I too am sprung from a brave sire, a goddess likewise was my mother: but death and mighty destiny hang also over me. A morn shall come or eventide or noon when in battle some man shall rob me also of my spirit, who smites me with a javelin or with an arrow from the bowstring."

Thus spake he, but his knees and dear soul were straightway loosened. The spear he let go, and sat with twain hands outspread. Achilles, drawing his sharp sword, smote him upon the collar-bone at the neck, and the whole two-edged blade sank within: prone on the ground he lay extended, and the black blood gushed out, and dewed the earth.

REVIEW COMMENT

Hailstone published translations of a number of individual books of the Iliad (the sample is from an edition of Book XXI which came out in 1880). His prose is a good example of the tendency to turn the *Iliad* into a historical romance largely through the deliberate use of a manufactured antique diction, answering to the translator's (and others') demands of what an old epic poem ought to sound like.

It is not clear whether or not Hailstone translated the entire poem.

Readers who would like to read more of Hailstone's translation may access his version of Book XXI using the following link: Hailstone *Iliad*.

Homer
The Iliad
translated by Andrew Lang, Walter Leaf, Ernest Myers
Boston, 1882

[Sample from the Opening of the Poem]

Sing, goddess, the wrath of Achilles Peleus' son, the ruinous wrath that brought on the Achaians woes innumerable, and hurled down into Hades many strong souls of heroes, and gave their bodies to be a prey to dogs and all winged fowls; and so the counsel of Zeus wrought out its accomplishment from the day when first strife parted Atreides king of men and noble Achilles.

Who among the gods set the twain at strife and variance? Apollo, the son of Leto and of Zeus; for he in anger at the king sent a sore plague upon the host, so that the folk began to perish, because Atreides had done dishonour to Chryses the priest. For the priest had come to the Achaians' fleet ships to win his daughter's freedom, and brought a ransom beyond telling; and bare in his hands the fillet of Apollo the Far-darter upon a golden staff; and made his prayer unto all the Achaians, and most of all to the two sons of Atreus, orderers of the host; "Ye sons of Atreus and all ye well-greaved Achaians, now may the gods that dwell in the mansions of Olympus grant you to lay waste the city of Priam, and to fare happily homeward; only set ye my dear child free, and accept the ransom in reverence to the son of Zeus, far-darting Apollo."

Then all the other Achaians cried assent, to reverence the priest and accept his goodly ransom; yet the thing pleased not the heart of Agamemnon son of Atreus, but he roughly sent him away, and laid stern charge upon him, saying: "Let me not find thee, old man, amid the hollow ships, whether tarrying now or returning again hereafter, lest the staff and fillet of the god avail thee naught. And her will I not set free; nay, ere that shall old age come on her in our house, in Argos, far from her native land, where she shall ply the loom and serve my couch. But depart, provoke me not, that thou mayest the rather go in peace."

So said he, and the old man was afraid and obeyed his word, and fared silently along the shore of the loud-sounding sea. Then went that aged man apart and prayed aloud to king Apollo, whom Leto of the fair locks bare: "Hear me, god of the silver bow, that standest over Chryse and holy Killa, and rulest Tenedos with might, O Smintheus! If ever I built a temple gracious in thine eyes, or if ever I burnt to thee fat flesh of thighs of bulls or goats, fulfil thou this my desire; let the Danaans pay by thine arrows for my tears."

So spake he in prayer, and Phoebus Apollo heard him, and came down from the peaks of Olympus wroth at heart, bearing on his shoulders his bow and covered

quiver. And the arrows clanged upon his shoulders in wrath, as the god moved; and he descended like to night. Then he sate him aloof from the ships, and let an arrow fly; and there was heard a dread clanging of the silver bow. First did the assail the mules and fleet dogs, but afterward, aiming at the men his piercing dart, he smote; and the pyres of the dead burnt continually in multitude.

REVIEW COMMENT

Lang, Leaf, and Myers follow the same basic translation principles laid down in the translation of the *Odyssey* by Butcher and Lang, an English prose version that deliberately draws upon the language of the King James Bible (the traditional English text most familiar to their readers, especially young students). The result, popular enough in their time and even in recent years (Andre Michalopoulos in his comparatively recent book on Homer remarks "no translation has surpassed, *or ever will surpass* the magnificent Victorian translation of Leaf, Lang, and Myers for the Iliad . . ." [emphasis added]—an observation that illustrates as well as any the extreme claims scholars often make when discussing translations of Homer), but nowadays with so many better and equally accurate translations of Homer available in more accessible English (prose and poetry) there seems little point in recommending this version to a new reader (especially since the diction, odd enough in the descriptions, is often disastrous in the dialogue).

For the complete text of this well-known translation, use the following link: Lang, Leaf, Myers *Iliad*.

The Iliad of Homer
With a Verse Translation
by
W. C Green
London 1884

[Sample from the Opening of the Poem]

SING, goddess Muse, the wrath of Peleus' son,
The wrath of Achilleus with ruin fraught,
That to Achaians brought unnumbered woes,
And many mighty souls of heroes hurled
To Hades' home, but gave themselves a prey
To dogs and every fowl. For thus its end
The will of Zeus worked out, since at the first
Parted in strife those twain, the king of men
Atrides and the godlike Achileus.
And who of the gods set these in strife to fight?
The son of Zeus and Leto. He in wrath
Against the king had stirred throughout the host
Fell plague, whereby the troops lay perishing:
Because Atrides shamed his holy priest
Chryses, who sought the swift Achaian ships
To free his daughter, bearing ransom large
Archer Apollo's wreaths in hand he heldc
Upon a golden staff, and prayed to all
Achaia's chiefs, but chiefly to the twain
The sons of Atreus, marshals of the host:
"Atridae and well-greaved Achaians all,
O may the gods who hold Olympian halls
Vouchsafe you grace to spoil king Priam's town
And home return in peace! But set ye free
My daughter dear, and this my ransom take,
In reverence for the Archer son of Zeus."
Thereto while each Achaian cried consent—
The priest to reverence, the rich ransom take—
It liked not Agamemnon Atreus' son,
But stern he drave him forth and fiercely spake:
"Thee, greybeard, let me by our hollow ships
Nor lingering now nor e'er returning find;
Lest staff and wreaths of gods avail thee nought.
Her I free not: old age shall find her first,
Far from her country in my Argive home,
Plying the loom and partner of my bed.

Go, chafe me not; so wilt thou safer go."
He spake: the greybeard trembled and obeyed
The monarch's word, and silent passed along
The sandy margin of the sounding sea.
Then turned he far apart, and much he prayed
To king Apollo fair-haired Leto's son.
"O hear me, Silver-bow, who standest round
Chrysa and holy Cilla, mighty king
Of Tenedos, thou Sminthian god: if e'er
For thee I roofed a temple fair to view,
Or burned to thee fat thighs of bulls and goats,
Fulfil thou this my wish! Let now thy shafts
Upon the Danaan host avenge my tears."

REVIEW COMMENT

Green opens his Preface by stressing at some length and with much common sense that English verse is the proper medium for translating Homer's poem:

> Granted that we do want to know—and to know accurately—what the ancient poet thought and said, I yet contend we can know this better with metre than without. For we best know what an author thought and said, if we receive from the translation the same impression that an intelligent scholar receives from the original. Now to things make up this impression: first, the matter, or meaning of the words; second, the form or metre: how much, the advocates of prose do not sufficiently realize.

Green's text has the Greek and English on facing pages ("a bold measure, as facilitating and challenging criticism").

Green's discussion of the importance of poetry in translations of Homer is welcome. But his own blank verse is hardly distinguished, in large part because his diction and sentence structure are so artificial ("Go, chafe me not; so wilt thou safer go" and so on). Attending to the demands of metre are here clearly not enough to do poetic justice to Homer's lines.

To access Volume I of W. C. Green's translation, use the following link: W. C. Green *Iliad* (the pdf file may take some time to load).

The Iliad of Homer
Done Into English Verse
Arthur S. Way
London 1886

Sample from the Opening of the Poem

BOOK I.

Of the bitter contention between hero and king; of pestilence on earth and strife in heaven.

THE wrath of Achilles the Peleus-begotten, O Song-queen, sing,
Fell wrath, that dealt the Achaians woes past numbering;
Yea, many a valiant spirit to Hades' halls did it send,
Spirits of heroes, and cast their bodies to dogs to rend,
And to fowls of ravin,—yet aye Zeus' will wrought on to its end
Even from the hour when first that feud of the mighty began,
Of Atreides, King of Men, and Achilles the godlike man.
Which of the Gods into hate and contention drave these twain?
The son of Latona and Zeus, for his wrath was the war-king's bane,
That he sent forth a plague through the host, and the people were smitten and died;
For Atreides rejected the prayer of his priest when Chryses cried,
When bereft of his daughter the sea-swift ships of Achaia he sought,
To deliver from thraldom his child, and a countless ransom he brought;
And the wreaths of Far-smiter Apollo in holy hands he bare
On a golden sceptre, and cried unto all the Achaians there,
And to Atreus' sons, the arrayers of war-folk, uttered his prayer:
"Ye sons of Atreus, Achaians battle-harness-dight,
May the Gods vouchsafe you, which dwell in the halls of Olympus' height,
To smite Troy-town, and to win safe home from your war-toils done:
But take ye my ransom, give back my child, my darling one,
For dread of Far-smiter Apollo, Zeus Allfather's son."
Then shouted the other Achaians thereto in favouring wise
To have respect to the priest, and to take the ransom-price.
But it pleased not the spirit of Atreus' son, Agamemnon their lord,
For he shamefully drave him forth, with a stern and a masterful word :
"Let me not find thee, old man, by the hollow galleys more,
Neither tarrying now, neither wending again to the ship-fringed shore,
Lest of the wreath of the God and his sceptre thy help be small!
I will not give her up:—nay, sooner shall old age find my thrall
In Argos, afar from her fatherland-home, in our palace hall,
While yet at the loom she doth pace, and arrayeth her lord's bed there.

Begone, and provoke me not—that thy feet safe homeward may fare!"
  And the old man quailed at his eyes, and shrank from the threat half spoken
By the shore of the thunderous-tumbling sea he went heart-broken:
Far thence he went, and alone that old man cried in prayer,
Cried to Apollo the King, whom Lêto the fair-tressed bare:
  "Hear, Silverbow, who art warder of Chryse and Killa's fane,
Hear, thou who in might of thy godhead o'er Tenedos' isle dost reign!
Smintheus! if ever I wreathed thy temple in lovely wise,
If ever I burnt unto thee on thine altar goodly thighs
Of bulls and of goats, vouchsafe this boon to the stricken in years—
May thine arrows requite the Danaan men for these my tears!"
So spake he with prayer and strong crying, and Phoebus Apollo heard;
And adown from the crest of Olympus he swept with soul wrath-stirred.
His bow on his shoulders he bare, and his quiver, the doom-enfolder:
Clashed they and clanged they, the shafts on the wrathful Archer's shoulder,
At the swoop of him earthward: his coming was like to the onrush of night.
Down sat he aloof from the galleys; he sped forth a shaft on its flight :
Terribly rang the twang of the silver lightning-bright.
First on the mules of the host and the fleetfoot hounds it came,
Thereafter his bitter-keen dart at the Danaan men did he aim,
Smiting them: flared evermore the close-thronged death-pyres' flame.

REVIEW COMMENT

A translation from Australia, Way's line-by-line translation of the *Iliad*, earned praise from his contemporaries—"he is unquestionably the most Homeric of English translators of Homer since Chapman" (qu. Young 135)—but the truly wretched quality of the English verse tells us more about popular Victorian taste in Homer translations than anything else (although, to be fair, some reviewers did complain strongly about Way's olde worlde diction).

For a contemporary review of Way's translation, use the following link: Way *Iliad* Review.

Readers who would like to sample Volume I of Way's translation (Books I to XII) should use the following link: Way *Iliad*.

The Iliad
By Homer
Translated by Samuel Butler
London 1888

[Sample from the Opening of the Poem]

Book One

Sing, O goddess, the anger of Achilles son of Peleus, that brought countless ills upon the Achaeans. Many a brave soul did it send hurrying down to Hades, and many a hero did it yield a prey to dogs and vultures, for so were the counsels of Jove fulfilled from the day on which the son of Atreus, king of men, and great Achilles, first fell out with one another.

And which of the gods was it that set them on to quarrel? It was the son of Jove and Leto; for he was angry with the king and sent a pestilence upon the host to plague the people, because the son of Atreus had dishonoured Chryses his priest. Now Chryses had come to the ships of the Achaeans to free his daughter, and had brought with him a great ransom: moreover he bore in his hand the sceptre of Apollo wreathed with a suppliant's wreath and he besought the Achaeans, but most of all the two sons of Atreus, who were their chiefs.

"Sons of Atreus," he cried, "and all other Achaeans, may the gods who dwell in Olympus grant you to sack the city of Priam, and to reach your homes in safety; but free my daughter, and accept a ransom for her, in reverence to Apollo, son of Jove."

On this the rest of the Achaeans with one voice were for respecting the priest and taking the ransom that he offered; but not so Agamemnon, who spoke fiercely to him and sent him roughly away. "Old man," said he," let me not find you tarrying about our ships, nor yet coming hereafter. Your sceptre of the god and your wreath shall profit you nothing. I will not free her. She shall grow old in my house at Argos far from her own home, busying herself with her loom and visiting my couch; so go, and do not provoke me or it shall be the worse for you."

The old man feared him and obeyed. Not a word he spoke, but went by the shore of the sounding sea and prayed apart to King Apollo whom lovely Leto had borne. "Hear me," he cried, "O god of the silver bow, that protectest Chryse and holy Cilla and rulest Tenedos with thy might, hear me oh thou of Sminthe. If I have ever decked your temple with garlands, or burned your thigh-bones in fat of bulls or goats, grant my prayer, and let your arrows avenge these my tears upon the Danaans."

Thus did he pray, and Apollo heard his prayer. He came down furious from the summits of Olympus, with his bow and his quiver upon his shoulder, and the arrows rattled on his back with the rage that trembled within him. He sat himself down away from the ships with a face as dark as night, and his silver bow rang death as he shot his arrow in the midst of them. First he smote their mules and their hounds, but presently he aimed his shafts at the people themselves, and all day long the pyres of the dead were burning.

REVIEW COMMENT

Butler's translation is among the best known and most popular prose translations of the *Iliad*—and deservedly so. It is accurate, unpretentious, and fluent. It is also very accessible on the internet. Butler was committed to rendering the *Iliad* in contemporary English, but there's still a strong sense of artificial antiquarianism in some of the syntax and diction, a sense of Medieval chivalry (in all fairness to Butler, many people do like that). Dover Thrift Books used Butler's translation for their edition of the *Iliad*.

Naturally enough, there are eminent critics who have little use for Butler's style: "Samuel Butler, a rebel against Victorian primness, made a prose version that he claimed was plain English but that ended up with the worst of both alternatives. Not only is his prose still mottled with fancy archaisms and inversions, his tone can range from indecorous to downright vulgar" (Bernard Knox, qu. Young 132).

Readers who would like to see the entire Butler translation should use the following link: Butler *Iliad*.

The Iliad of Homer
Translated Into English Prose
by
John Purves
London 1891

[Sample from the Opening of the Poem]

SING, O goddess, the fatal wrath of Peleus' son Achilles, which brought ten thousand troubles on the Achaeans, and sent to Hades many valiant souls of heroes, and made themselves a prey to gods and every fowl—such was the will of Zeus—after that day when first Atrides, king of men, and divine Achilles, quarrelled and were parted.

Who of the gods incited them to strife? The son of Leto and of Zeus. He was wroth with the king, and sent an evil plague upon the host, and the people died, because Atrides had slighted his priest, Chryses; he came to the swift ships of the Achaeans, seeking to redeem his daughter, and proffering unbounded price; in his hand he bore the chaplet of archer Apollo, set on a wand of gold; and he made his prayer to all the Achaeans, but most of all to the two Atridae, the marshallers of the people: "Ye sons of Atreus, and ye well-greaved Achaeans, may the gods, who dwell in houses of Olympus, grant you to take Priam's town and to return safely home. But give me back my dear daughter, and accept the ransom, reverencing the son of Zeus, archer Apollo."

Then all the Achaeans consented with a shout, to reverence the priest and take the rich ransom; but the thing pleased not Agamemnon, the son of Atreus, and he dismissed him with contumely and hard injunction: "Let me not find thee, old man, beside the hollow ships, either tarrying now or returning afterwards, lest the wand and the chaplet of the god protect thee not. And thy daughter I will not give back; sooner shall old age come upon her in my house in Argos, far from her own land, plying the loom and sharing my couch. Hence, anger me not, lest it be the worse with thee."

He said, and the old man feared and obeyed: he went silent along the shore of the sonorous sea, and much as he walked alone the old man prayed to Apollo the king, whom sweet-haired Leto bore: "Hear me, archer of the silver bow, who protectest Chryse and divine Cilla, and art the lord of Tenedos; Smintheus, if ever I have laid roof upon thy fair temple, if ever I have burned to thee fat thighs of bulls and goats, fulfil my prayer: let thine arrows avenge my tears upon the Danaans."

REVIEW COMMENTS

The translation (as the Preface by Evelyn Abbott explains) was started about 1871, completed in 1884, and published after Purves's death. The long Introduction is almost entirely a detailed summary of the poem.

To access the complete text of Purves's translation, please use the following link: Purves *Iliad*.

For a contemporary review of the Purves's *Iliad*, use the following link: Saturday Review, Volume 72 (1891).

The Iliad of Homer
To which is added an Appendix containing
Poems selected from Twenty-six
Languages all Translated
by
Edgar Alfred Tibbetts
Boston 1907

[Selection from the Opening of the Poem]

O Goddess, sing Pelides Achilles' baneful ire,
Which brought on the Achaians ten thousand sorrows dire,
And many strong souls of heroes sent down to Hades' sway;
Themselves to all the birds and dogs became a prey,
Since first, in anger parting (it was the will of Jove),
The king of men, Atrides, and divine Achilles strove.
Who of the gods incited to strife these rulers twain?
The son of Zeus and Leto. For with the king amain
Enraged, upon the army he sent a sickness dire;—
The people failed and perished, infected by its fire,
Because Atrides Chryses, the priest, had held in scorn
When to the rapid vessels of th'Achaians his course was borne,—
A priceless ransom bearing to loose his daughter's bands,—
With garlands of far-darting Apollo in his hands
(Hung from a golden sceptre); th' Achaians all he prayed,
But most the two Atridae whom all the folk obeyed:
"Atridae and ye others, well-greaved Achaian bands,
May the gods who hold Olympus bestow upon you hands
To ruin Priam's city and homeward safe to fare;
But free my cherished daughter and take the price I bear,
Thus reverencing far-darting Apollo, Zeus's son."
Then all the other Achaians said that 't were better done
To hold the priest in honour and take the splendid prize;—
Yet this was nowise pleasing in Agamemnon's eyes,
Who Evilly dismissed him—a menace on his lips:
"Old man, let me not meet you among these hollow ships;
For if to-day you linger, or to-morrow here shall see,
The scepter and the garland of the god no shield shall be.
But her I will not ransom till age upon her come;—
Far from her native country, within my Argive home,
She at the loom shall labour, her hands my bed adorn.
But go, nor rouse my anger, that safe to your return."
He spoke; the ancient, fearing, obeyed the stern decree
And silent sought the shore of the many sounding sea,

Then prayed, when he had wandered afar upon the shore
A prayer to King Apollo whom well-haired Leto bore.
"Hear me, with bow of silver, who watch o'er Chyrsa's land,
Who rule o'er sacred Killa and Tenedos command,
Smintheus! If e'er a temple, grateful to you, I raised,
And there the thighs well-fattened of goats and bullocks blazed,
Accomplish what I pray you, master of hopes and fears,
Avenge me on the Danaans with arrows for my tears."

REVIEW COMMENT

Tibbetts begins with a short Preface:

> It is proposed in this new translation of Homer's *Iliad* to follow the original text as nearly as practicable in rhymed verse. With this object in view, and since neither a paraphrase nor an imitation has been intended, the versification has been almost invariably subordinated to accuracy of translation. It is hoped that the meter selected, the historic epic measure of the Germanic languages, that of the Niebelungen Lied and Gudrun, will be found adequate to express the narrative flow, rapidity and simplicity of the hexameter.

To judge by the results over the years, the tradition of adopting (or adapting) "the historic epic metre of the Germanic languages" for a translation of Homer's *Iliad* has not had a great deal of success. This may not be simply a matter of metre (important though that is), since the desire to turn Homer into a Teutonic saga all too often tempts the translator into an artificially aged diction, the limitations of which are particularly evident when it is put into the service of rhyme (e.g., "twain" "amain," and so on). Tibbetts's translation is as good an example as any of this deleterious trend. The translation, so far as I can tell, has never been especially popular, although it is available in many places on the internet.

The collection of poems at the end of the volume is (as, one assumes, it was meant to be) a tribute to Tibbetts's command of many languages, including the following: Persian, Arabic, Hebrew, Turkish, Hungarian, Finnish, Greek, Modern Greek, Dutch, German, Swedish, Danish, Icelandic, Spanish, Anglo-Saxon, French, Provencal, Romanian, Portuguese, Latin, Russian, Polish, Ruthenian, and Slavonic. None of these English poems is exceptional, but some are of more interest than the translation of Homer which precedes them.

To access the full text of Tibbetts's *Iliad*, use the following link: Tibbetts's *Iliad*.

Homer
The Iliad
Translated by Arthur Gardner Lewis
New York 1911

[Sample from the Opening of the Poem]

BOOK I

SING thous the Wrath, O Muse! the baleful wrath
Of Peleus' son, Achilles; wrath which heaped
Unnumbered woes upon Achæa's band.
And hurled to Haded countless mighty souls
Of heroes, and their bodies gave for spoil
To dogs and birds of prey, that the design
Of Zeus might be fulfilled thus. These things all
Found origin that day when parted first
In jealous bick'ring Agamemnon, lord
Of warriors, and Achilles the divine.
Who was it then among the gods who brought
These two to discord and to feud? The son
Of Zeus and Leto. He, conceiving ire
Against the monarch, caused a fearful plague
To rage throughout the army, and the men
Were falling fast. For Atreus' son had giv'n
Affront to Chryses,—to that priest who came
To the swift barks of Greece to free his child,
Bringing a boundless ransom. In his hand
Bore he the fillets of the archer-god
Apollo, on a staff of gold entwined;
Imploring all the Greeks, especially
The twain Atridæ, marshals of the throng:
"Ye sons, of Atreus—all ye greavèd train,
Come from Achæa, I entreat the host
Throned on Olympus, that your lot may be
To spoil great Priam's city, and return
To your own homes, well prospered. Yet restore
Me now the daughter whom I love, and take
the proffered ransom; reverencing thus
Apollo the far-darting, Zeus's son."
Then, with approval, all the other Greeks
Urged that the priest be honored,—his rich store
Received; but Agamemnon, Atreus' son,
The thing pleased not. He sent the suppliant thence

With words of insult, and upon him laid
Thus his stern mandate: "Let me nevermore
Find thee, old man, beside our wide-hulled barks;
Now ling'ring here, nor daring to return!
Else staff and fillet of the archer-king
May naught avail thee. For that maid of thine,
I will not free her. Sooner shall old age
Come o'er her there in Argos, in my halls,
Far from her country, as she plies the loom
And decks my marriage-couch with busy tread.
Begone, then, and provoke me not to wrath,
If thou wouldst find they way unscathed from here."
He spake: the old man trembled and obeyed,
And sorrowful roved on along the strand
Of countless-echoed ocean. As he passed,
Thus he invoked with many an earnest prayer
Lordly Apollo, fair-haired Leto's child:
"Hear, Archer silver-bowed! defender thou
Of Chrysa and of Cilla's hallowed walls,
Holding o'er Tenedos thy kingly sway!
If ever I have roofed a shrine to thee
That pleased thee well, O Smintheus! if I e'er
Consumed upon thine Altars the fat thighs
Of goats or bullocks, now vouchsafe to me
This boon I crave: that, smitten by thy darts,
The Argive host may expiate these tears."
Thus prayed he; and Apollo heard his prayer.
Down from the heights Olympian, full of rage,
The Archer hastened; and his shoulders bore
The bow and covered quiver; and the shafts
Upon the shoulders of the angry king
Rang, as he moved. Like night he came; afar
From the Greek barks he sate him down, and sped
An arrow; from the silver bow was heard,
Dread to the ear, a twang. He first assailed
The mules and nimble dogs; but soon he winged
His keen shaft 'gainst the men: thick-crowded gleamed
The funeral pyres enkindled for the slain.

REVIEW COMMENT

Lewis's Preface suggests that he is acutely aware of the difficulty of satisfying a Victorian readership with an appropriately decorous English in a translation of an old poem: "The wish to substitute for the plain words of the Greek writer one's

own conception of what would impress the modern reader as more tasteful, more felicitous, is one which presents itself continually, owing to the change in standards of morality, humanity, and refinement, which over twenty-six centuries have brought with them. As a matter of fact, it is occasionally necessary, in consequence thereof, slightly to gloss over or modify the blunt language of the text; yet save where good taste absolutely demands the contrary, absolute literalness of rendition has been, in this version consistently studied from first to last."

Lewis's verse moves well, and the translation is sufficiently accurate. The diction, however, has a deliberate ersatz archaic smell ("decks my marriage-couch with busy tread," "with words of insult," "winged his keen shaft" and so on) which detracts from the immediate impact of the language. The result is a poem which is inferior to Bryant's earlier blank verse translation (1870).

In his brief Preface, Lewis does set down the single most important reason why translating Homer's poems matters: "Lastly, considered as a mere amusement and relaxation for idle hours, the translator's task is so thoroughly delightful, that the satisfaction of trying what he can do with the most splendid of ancient poems should be denied to no one."

Readers who would like to look over the complete text of the Lewis translation should use the following link: Lewis *Iliad*.

Homer
Iliad
(The Wrath of Achilleus)
Translated by George Ernle
London 1922

[Sample from the Opening of the Poem]

THE WRATH OF ACHILLEUS

I

Sing me that Anger, Goddess, which blinding royal Achilleus
Balefully, brought sufferings untold to the army of Argos,
Sent many souls of mighty Achaeans into the darkness
And flung abroad the bodies to the wild dogs and to the vultures
And to the fowls of Heaven, till Zeus had duly accomplished
All he decreed. Sing of it from where Agamemnon Atrides
And the gallant Achileus first fought and parted asunder.
What God aroused contention amongst these so to divide them?
'Twas the son of Cronides and Leto. He in his anger
Sent Agamemnon's army a foul plague, and the Achaeans
Lay ever dying of it; for why, Agamemnon Atrides
Shamefully used Chryses, God's priest, when bearing enormous
Wealth to redeem his daughter, he ventured unto the swift ships,
And carrying the fillets of a priest of Phoebus Apollon,
Bound on a golden scepter, besought the Achaean Assembly,
Turning him especially to the two Kings, children of Atreus.
'Ye Sovereigns and people of Argos, may the eternal
God, dwelling in the Heavens, vouchsafe your army to conquer
Priamos and carry home your spoil to the country you came from:
Only allow my daughter to go free, taking an ample
Price for her, and reverence God's son, far-darting Apollon.'
With one a accord the remaining Achaeans bade Agamemnon
Show the prophet reverence and take so noble a ransom,
Howso this pleased not their lord Agamemnon Atrides,
And he reviled and drove him away and rudely denied him.
'Quit my sight, graybeard, and do not let me behold you
Loitering or coming here henceforward unto the warships,
Lest chaplets and scepter avail no longer to save you.
I'll never free your daughter. The years shall find her in Argos,
Find her a slave dwelling in my halls far over the water,
Pacing at her loom there and sleeping nightly beside me,
So disappear, and quickly, before I do you a mischief.'

Such was Atrides' answer. The old man trembling obey'd him,
Pass'd from him in silence by plunging thunderous Ocean,
And when alone, uplifted his old voice, crying in anguish
On the son of bright-hair'd Leto, King Phoebos Apollon.
'Lord o' the Bow of Silver, who art as a tower to Chryse,
Guarding us, and rulest Tenedos with mighty dominion,
Smintheus, hear and help me! If I have builded a gracious
Temple,—if I offer up fat goats and slaughter the choicest
Bulls in it, oh suffer this my boon to be duly accomplish'd;
Smite the Achaean people,—avenge my weeping upon them.'
So he besought. His prayer was heard by Phoebos Apollon,
And he descended lofty Olympus, flaming in anger,
His quiver fill'd with arrows, his bow on shoulder behind him:
And the arrows range again for his heart's wrath, rattling at every
Stride of him. Invisibly, as night falls, so he descended,
And sat apart, looking over the warships of the Achaeans,
Whence as he loosed the arrow, his bow clang'd, evilly sounding.
First Phoebos smote only the mules and sharp-eyed watchdogs,
But very soon turn'd unto the men's selves, loosing his awful
Archery; and bodies of dead men burn'd numberless alway.

REVIEW COMMENT

Ernle's preface, which pays detailed attention to metre, contends that he is trying to "naturalize" the hexameter and has come up with the idea of putting the verse line on a "quantitative basis":

> The stress-rhythm will still remain strong, insistent and of primary importance, as it must always be while English retains its present qualities; but it will acquire a new liberty, the liberty which it already enjoys in the English iambic. As in the latter, stresses will no long be bound to fall upon particular feet; if the effect requires it they may fall elsewhere, may be muffled, may be omitted altogether. On the other hand the stress-rhythm must not lose touch with the quantitative rhythm to an extent which throws to great a strain upon the latter. . . . Those who stubbornly deny the existence of quantity may maintain that the foundations of my hexameter are imaginary. Yet our verse will still attain as effective a support from the stress-rhythm as our English iambic, and I trust that it will be as clearly distinguishable from prose.

Interesting as such discussions may be, they are largely irrelevant compared to the pragmatic test of reading the result, and one cannot say that Ernle's rendition of Homer is successful as English poetry (for any number of reasons), no matter what theoretical justification he tries to offer for the rhythm he has chosen.

Readers who would like to inspect the full text of the Ernle translation should use the following link: Ernle *Iliad*.

Homer, Iliad
Translated by A. T. Murray
Loeb Classical Library,
London 1924

[Sample from the Opening of the Poem]

The wrath do thou sing, O goddess, of Peleus'son, Achilles, that baneful wrath whichbrought countless woes upon the Achaeans, and sent forth to Hades many valiant souls of warriors, and made themselves to be a spoil for dogs and all manner of birds; and thus the will of Zeus was being brought to fulfilment; ósing thou thereof from the time when at the first there parted in strife Atreus'son, king of men, and goodly Achilles.

Who then of the gods was it that brought these two together to contend? The son of Leto and Zeus; for he in wrath against the king roused throughout the host an evil pestilence, and the folk were perishing, for that upon the man Chryses, his priest, had the son of Atreus wrought dishonour. For he had come to the swift ships of the Achaeans to free his daughter, and he bore with him ransom past counting; and in his hands he held the fillets of Apollo, that smiteth afar, on a staff of gold, and he made prayer to all the Achaeans, but most of all to the two sons of Atreus, the marshallers of the host: "Ye sons of Atreus, and ye other well-greaved Achaeans, to you may the gods who have homes upon Olympus grant that ye sack the city of Priam, and return safe to your homes; but my dear child do ye set free for me, and accept the ransom out of awe for the son of Zeus, Apollo, that smiteth afar."

Then all the rest of the Achaeans shouted assent, bidding reverence the priest and accept the glorious ransom, yet the thing pleased not the heart of Agamemnon, son of Atreus, but he sent him away harshly, and laid upon him a stern command: "Let me not find thee, old man, by the hollow ships, either tarrying now or coming back hereafter, lest thy staff and the fillet of the god protect thee not. But her will I not set free: ere that shall old age come upon her in our house, in Argos, far from her country, as she walks to and fro before the loom and tends my couch. Nay, get thee gone; anger me not, that so thou mayest go the safer."

So he spake, and the old man was seized with fear and hearkened to his word. Forth he went in silence along the shore of the loud-resounding sea, and earnestly thereafter, when he had gone apart, did the old man pray to the prince, Apollo, whom fair-haired Leto bare: “Hear me, thou of the silver bow, who dost stand over Chryse and holy Cilla, and dost rule mightily over Tenedos, thou Sminthian, if ever I roofed over a shrine to thy pleasing, or if ever I burned to thee fat thigh-pieces of bulls or goats, fulfil thou for me this prayer: let the Danaans pay for my tears by thy shafts."

So he spake in prayer, and Phoebus Apollo heard him. Down from the peaks of Olympus he strode, wroth at heart, bearing on his shoulders his bow and covered quiver. The arrows rattled on the shoulders of the angry god, as he moved; and his coming was like the night. Then he sate him down apart from the ships and let fly a shaft: terrible was the twang of the silver bow. The mules he assailed first and the swift dogs, but thereafter on the men themselves he let fly his stinging arrows, and smote; and ever did the pyres of the dead burn thick.

REVIEW COMMENT

This volume from the excellent Loeb Classical Library is the text of choice for those who want the English translation with the Greek on a facing page. Murray's prose is not particularly remarkable, but it is well suited to the purposes of the series, which is aimed especially at those who wish to read the Greek with an accurate and clear (if not very inspiring) English translation close at hand (the text has recently been revised). Those who require only the English text should look elsewhere, if for no other reason than the (alas) increasing expense of these famous and useful texts.

Readers who would like to look through Murray's complete translation should use the following link: Murray *Iliad*.

The Iliad of Homer
Rendered in English Hexameters
Alexander Falconer Murison
London 1933

[Sample from the Opening of the Poem]

THE ILIAD OF HOMER

BOOK I

THE WRATH OF ACHILLEUS

Sing, O goddess, the Wrath of Achilleus, son of king Peleus—
Wrath accursèd, the source of unnumbered woes to the Achaioi,
Hurling to Hades the spirits of warriors many and stalwart,
Casting their bodies a prey to the carrion dogs and the vultures—
So was the counsel of Zeus working out to its destined fulfilment—
Down from the time when they quarrelled and held them apart from each other,
Atreus' son, king of men, and the god-born warrior Achilleus.

Which of the gods was it, then, set the twain upon quarrel and conflict?
Zeus's and Leto's son. For he at the king had been angered,
And he had smitten the host with a cruel plague, and the people
Perished and perished, by reason that Atreus' son had dishonoured
Chryses his priest. For Chryses had come to the ships of the Achaioi
Seeking release of his daughter and bringing a limitless ransom,
And in his hands he was bearing the wreath of far-darting Apollon
Set on a staff of the gold, and he prayed all the men of Achaiis
And, above all else, the twain sons of Atreus, chiefs of the army:
"O ye twain sons of Atreus, and all ye well-greaved Achaioi,
May ye obtain from the gods that inhabit the halls of Olympos
Priamos' city to raze to the ground and to fare home in safety,
But O release me my child and accept these gifts as her ransom,
Yielding respect to the son of high Zeus, far-darting Apollon."

Thereon acclaimed their assent all the rest of the men of Achaiis,
Fain to respect the old priest and accept the magnificent ransom;
But this was highly displeasing to Atreus' son Agamemnon.
Harshly he order the priest to be gone and severely enjoined him:
"Let me know find thee, old man, by these hollow ships, I advise thee,
Whether now loitering on or some time in the future returning,
Lest that the staff and the wreath of the god not avail to protect thee.
Her I will not release; nay, first shall old age overtake her

Dwelling in our house in Argos afar from the land of her fathers,
Plying the work of the loom and attending my couch as my partner.
Hence, then! Provoke not mine anger, so may's thou depart all the safer."

Thus spake he, and the old man was frightened and followed his bidding.
Silent he fared by the sands of the shore of the deep-voiced ocean.
Then when a far way apart he had gone, he addressed to Apollon,
Glorious son of the lovely-tressed Leto, an earnest petition:
"Hear me, god of the bow of the silver, protector of Chryse,
Guardian of Killa the sacred, of Tendos mighty preserver,
Mouse-god. If e'er to thy pleasure I roofed o'er my temple with garlands,
Or if that e'er in thine honour, I offered in fire on thine altar
Rich thigh-pieces of bulls and of goats, fulfil my petition:
Launch thy shafts and avenge thou my tears on the Danaan army."

Thus spake the priest in his prayer, and him heard Phoibos Apollon.
Down from the peaks of Olympos he sped, in his heart a hot anger,
Bearing his bow on his shoulders and with it his close-covered quiver,
And on his shoulders, in wrath as he sped him, his arrows kept clanking
E'en as his body kept moving; and like unto night he descended.
Then sate he down well apart from the ships and let fly a swift arrow.
Dreadful and fireful resounded the twang of the bow of the silver.
First 'twas the mules and the fleet-foot dogs that he smote with his arrows,
But thereafter the sharp-pointed shaft he let fly at the people,
Smiting and smiting; and thick were the pyres of dead ever burning.

REVIEW COMMENT

Murison's text provides some of the longest and slowest "hexameters" of any translation I have encountered. And his vocabulary is in places decidedly odd (e.g., "staff of the gold," "the bow of the silver," "Achaiis"). Reading these lines, one can understand a little better the desire some people felt that it might be better to return to more modern prose renditions of the *Iliad*, for the verse here seems to be drawing on an exhausted tradition of "poetical" translations in an "antique" style which has long ceased to be meaningfully connected to imaginatively alive poetry.

[Dr. Simon Corcoran, of University College, London, informs me that only one volume (Books I-XII) of Murison's *Iliad* was ever published, for before he had finished Murison became too ill to continue (he died in 1934)]

For a review of Volume I of Murison's translation, use the following link: Murison *Iliad*.

Robinson Smith
The Original *Iliad*

(I) The Original *Iliad*, The Solution of the Homeric Question. Parts I–III in one. Pp. 1–36, 63–95, 100–140. Nice: privately printed, 1927 onwards. Quartercloth. (2) The Digamma in the Iliad. Pp. 51–68. (3) The Original Iliad, Text and Translation. Pp. xvi+245. (4) Homeric Studies. Pp.76. London: Grafton, 1938. Bound, 5s., 10s. 6d., 10s. 6d.

I have been unable to find a copy of Robinson Smith's text. The following details come from descriptions and reviews of what he provides.

Robinson Smith sets up a method for trimming the text of the *Iliad* by recognizing and deleting additions provided by scribes, who, he argues, expanded the text over hundreds of years by about 11,000 verses. His method of proceeding is summed up by one reviewer (J. State, "The Immaculate Iliad" Review Article, *Classical Review*, 53.4, September 1939, 119-120) as follows:

> When two passages seem alike it is assumed that one is an imitation of the other. (All other possibilities are ignored). Of the two passages the imitation is the one which violates more freely some twenty-five rules (e.g., that Homer always oberved diagamma, never used . . . irregular quantities, or elisions of 'structure-words'). Rejecting these imitations, we are left with 'source-lines.'
>
> We must now forget what we have done, and look at these 'source-lines' with unprejediced eye. Many of them show quite unexpected features: they keep some twenty-five rules. . . . Those which keep the rules will be 'original'; the remaining 'source-lines' will be early among the accretions.
>
> Thus the 'original' verses are selected because they keep the rules; and now the rules are regarded as confirmed by the fact that the 'original' verses keep them. It only remains to apply the rules throughout the poem--but not too stringently, lest the whole thing be wiped out.
>
> Mr. Smith is not alone in using such methods, which must surely give pause to any one who is tempted to exaggerate the benefits of a classical education.

The Story of Achilles
A Translation of Homer's "Iliad" into Plain English
W. H. D. Rouse
London 1938

[Sample from the Opening of the Poem]

THE STORY OF ACHILLÊS

Book I

How Achillês and Agamemnon quarrelled over Briseïs, and how Thetis persuaded Zeus to support her son.

AN angry man—there is my story: the bitter rancour of Achillês, prince of the house of Peleus, which brought a thousand troubles upon the Achaian host. Many a strong soul it sent down to Hadês, and left the heroes themselves a prey to dogs and carrion birds, while the will of God moved on to fulfillment.

It began first of all with a quarrel between my Lord King Agamemnon of Atreus' line and the Prince Achillês.

What god, then, made the match between them? Apollo, son of Leto and Zeus. The King had offended him: so he sent a dire pestilence on the camp and the people perished. Agamemnon had affronted his priest Chrysês, when the priest came to the Achaian fleet, bringing a rich treasure to ransom his daughter. He held in his hand a golden staff, twined about with the sacred wreaths of Apollo Farshooter, and made his petition to the Achaian people in general but chiefly to the two royal princes of Atreus' line:

"My lords, and you their subjects, for you I pray that the gods who dwell in Olympos may grant you to sack Priam's city, and to have a happy return home! but my dear daughter—set her free, I beseech you, and accept the ransom, and respect Apollo Farshooter the son of Zeus!"

Then all the people said good words, and bade them respect the priest and accept the ransom; but my lord King Agamemnon was not well pleased. He told the priest to be off, and in harsh words too:

"Don't let me find you here any more, you; don't stay now and don't come back again, or else your staff and sacred wreaths may not protect you. The woman I will not release! She shall live to old age in our house, far away in Argos, working the loom and lying in my bed. Begone now! don't provoke me, or it will be the worse for you."

The old man was afraid, and did as he was told. Silent he passed along the shore of the murmuring sea; and when he came home, he prayed earnestly to Apollo:

"Hear me, Silverbow! Thou who dost bestride Chrysê and holy Cilla, thou who art the mighty lord of Tenedos, O Smintheus! If I have ever built a temple to thy pleasure, if I have ever burnt for thee fat slices of bulls or of goats, bestow on me this boon: may the Danaäns pay for my tears under thy shafts!"

Phoibos Apollo heard his prayer. Down from Olympos he strode, angry at heart, carrying bow and quiver: the arrows rattled upon his shoulders as the angry god moved on, looking black as night. He sank upon his heel not far from the ships, and let fly a shaft; terrible was the twang of the silver bow. First he attacked the mules and dogs, then he shot his keen arrows at the men, and each hit the mark: pyres of the dead began to burn up everywhere and never ceased.

REVIEW COMMENT

> This book . . . is a translation into plain English of the plain story of Homer, omitting the embellishments that were meant only to please the ear: stock epithets and recurring phrases where the meaning is of no account. . . . For Homer is full of merriment, full of open fun and delicate comedy, even farce. . . . And the divine family! What a delightful natural party—human beings raised a degree or two, but all the funnier for that. (Preface)

Rouse attacks the poem with considerable zest, casting aside any concern with scrupulous fidelity to Homer's words (or, some might add, his vision of human life), and keeps the story moving quickly (the speed and directness of the Rouse's treatment of the story has led at least one eminent reviewer, Gilbert Highet, to recommend the translation as a good choice for those reading Homer for the first time). Rouse's translation is a prime candidate for the "most colloquial English translation of the *Iliad*" award (especially if one welcomes interesting new words like "mob-gobbled," "all finery and shinery," "jabberwinding," and "Rattle-chatterbox").

While there's a certain point to reminding readers (including scholars) that "plain" English is the language of most readers and that such language has a place in translations of Homer, alongside all the different poetical and often very quaint alternatives, there is (of course) a price to be paid, a certain lack of gravitas and what Matthew Arnold calls "nobility."

Readers who would like a generous preview of Rouse's translation (in Amazon) should use the following link: Rouse *Iliad*.

The Iliad
Translated by Alston Hurd Chase and William G. Perry
Boston 1950

[Selection from the Opening]

SING, O GODDESS, of the wrath of Peleus' son Achilles, the deadly wrath that brought upon the Achaeans countless woes and sent many mighty souls of heroes down to the house of Death and made their bodies prey for dogs and all the birds, as the will of Zeus was done, from the day when first the son of Atreus, king of men, and godlike Achilles parted in strife.

Which one of the gods, then, set them to strive in anger? The son of Leto and Zeus. For in anger at the king he sent a grim plague throughout the army, and the men perished, because the son of Atreus scorned Chryses, the priest, who came to the swift ships of the Achaeans to free his daughter, bearing a boundless random and holding in his hands upon a golden staff the garlands of unerring Apollo. He entreated all the Achaeans, but especially the two sons of Atreus, the marshals of the people: "Sons of Atreus, and you other well-greaved Achaeans, may the gods, who have their homes upon Olympus, grant that you sack the city of Priam and go safely home. And may you release my dear child to me and accept these gifts of ransom, reverencing the son of Zeus, unerring Apollo."

Then all the rest of the Achaeans shouted their assent, to honor the priest and take the glorious ransom, but this did not please the heart of Agamemnon, Atreus' son; rather, he sent him rudely off and laid on him a harsh command: "Let me not find you, old man, beside the hollow ships, either lingering now or coming back hereafter, lest the staff and garland of the god avail you not. Her I will not set free. Sooner even shall old age come upon her in my home in Argos, far from her native land, as she paces before the loom and shares my bed. Now go, anger me not, that you may go the safer."

So he spoke, and the old man was afraid and obeyed his command and went in silence by the shore of the resounding sea. When he was far away, the aged man offered many a prayer to lord Apollo, whom fair-haired Leto bore: "Hear me, thou of the silver bow, who dost protect Chryse and hold Cilla and dost rule over Tenedos with might. Sminthian, if ever I roofed for thee a pleasant temple or if ever I burned for thee fat thighs of cattle and of goats, grant me this wish may the Danaans pay for my tears beneath thy shafts."

REVIEW COMMENT

Chase's and Perry's prose translation appears to have received a generally friendly reception: the style was more accurate and less colloquial than Rouse's prose

translation and many (although not all) the traditional archaic expressions had been rendered in more modern English. For many readers who wanted an English *Iliad* in (more of less) contemporary prose, this seemed the obvious choice.

For a contemporary review of the Chase-Perry Iliad, use the following link: *Saturday Review* (1950).

Homer
The Iliad
Translated by E. V. Rieu
Harmondsworth 1950
[Revised and Updated by Peter Jones and D. C. H. Rieu]

Sample from the Opening of the Poem

Anger--sing, goddess, the anger of Achilles son of Peleus, that accursed anger, which brought the Greeks endless sufferings and sent the mighty souls of many warriors to Hades, leaving their bodies as carrion for the dogs and a feast for the birds; and Zeus' purpose was fulfilled. It all began when Agamemnon lord of men and godlike Achilles quarrelled and parted.

Which of the gods was it that made them quarrel? It was Apollo, son of Zeus and Leto, who started the feud because he was furious with Agamemnon for not respecting his priest Chryses. So Apollo inflicted a deadly plague on Agamemnon's army and destroyed his men.

Chryses had come to the Greeks' swift ships to recover his captured daughter. He brought with im an immense ransom and carried the emblems of the Archer-god Apollo on a golden staff in his hands. He spoke in supplication to the whole Greek armyu and most of all its two commanders, Agamemnon and Menelaus, the sons of Atreus:

'Sons of Atreus and you other Greek men-at-arms; you hope to sack Priam's town and get home in safety. May the gods that live on Olympus grant your wish. Now respect the Archer-god Apollo son of Zeus, accept this ransom and release my beloved daughter.'

Then all the other Greeks shouted in agreement. They wanted to see the priest respected and the splendid ransom taken. But this was not at all to Agamemnon's liking. He cruelling and bluntly dismissed the priest . . .

REVIEW COMMENT

Rieu's translation is a personal favourite of mine, because it was the first to awaken my imagination to the wonders of Homer. Hence, I am perhaps somewhat biased in its favour. Rieu's prose is direct, accurate, clear, and for the most part free of deliberate archaisms and traditional chivalric paraphernalia. He also handles the direct speech well, producing language that sounds as if it is something someone might actually say (in marked contrast to a few other modern translations). Here's a short sample from an impassioned speech at the opening of the poem:

> 'We joined your expedition, you shameless swine, to please you, to get satisfaction from the Trojans for Menelaus and yourself, dog-face—a fact you utterly ignore. And now comes this threat from you, of all people, to rob me of my prize, in person, my hard-earned prize which was a tribute from the army. It's not as though I am ever given a prize equal to yours when the Greeks sack some prosperous Trojan town. The heat and burden of the fighting fall on me, but when it comes to dealing out the spoils, it is you that takes the lion's share, leaving me to return to my ships, exhausted from battle, with some pathetic portion to call my own. (From the revised edition).

Place this dialogue alongside, say, Hammond's doggedly literal attempts to produce something that sounds like colloquial prose, and the preference is clear.

True, some critics have voiced the opinion that Rieu makes Homer's poems sound like a Victorian novel, but if that criticism has some merit (and I'm not sure that it does), well-written Victorian prose is vastly preferable to English wrenched out of all idiomatic shape or to some ersatz artificial Arthurian dialect. This translation has been around a long time and is still popular—deservedly so. It is still a translation to consider carefully if one is looking for Homer rendered into modern English prose, especially now that the text has been revised by Rieu's son, D. C. H. Rieu, and Peter Jones.

Readers who would like the preview the revised Rieu translation should use the following link: Rieu *Iliad*.

Homer
The Iliad
Translation by Richmond Lattimore
Chicago 1951

Sample from the Opening of the Poem
[Taken from the Chicago Homer]

SING, goddess, the anger of Peleus' son Achilleus
and its devastation, which put pains thousandfold upon the Achaians,
hurled in their multitudes to the house of Hades strong souls
of heroes, but gave their bodies to be the delicate feasting
of dogs, of all birds, and the will of Zeus was accomplished
since that time when first there stood in division of conflict
Atreus' son the lord of men and brilliant Achilleus.

What god was it then set them together in bitter collision?
Zeus' son and Leto's, Apollo, who in anger at the king drove
the foul pestilence along the host, and the people perished,
since Atreus' son had dishonoured Chryses, priest of Apollo,
when he came beside the fast ships of the Achaians to ransom
back his daughter, carrying gifts beyond count and holding
in his hands wound on a staff of gold the ribbons of Apollo
who strikes from afar, and supplicated all the Achaians,
but above all Atreus' two sons, the marshals of the people:
'Sons of Atreus and you other strong-greaved Achaians,
to you may the gods grant who have their homes on Olympos
Priam's city to be plundered and a fair homecoming thereafter,
but may you give me back my own daughter and take the ransom,
giving honour to Zeus' son who strikes from afar, Apollo.'

Then all the rest of the Achaians cried out in favour
that the priest be respected and the shining ransom be taken;
yet this pleased no the heart of Atreus' son Agamemnon,
but harshly he drove him away with strong order upon him:
'Never let me find you again, old sir, near our hollow
ships, neither lingering now nor coming again hereafter,
for fear your staff and the god's ribbons help you no longer.
The girl I will not give back; sooner will old age come upon her
in my own house, in Argos, far from her own land, going
up and down by the loom and being in my bed as my companion.
So go now, do not make me angry; so you will be safer.'

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
to King Apollo, who Leto of the lovely hair bore: 'Hear me,
lord of the silver bow who set you 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 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 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 an arrow.
Terrible was the clash that rose from the bow of silver.
First he went after the mules and the circling hounds, then let go
a tearing arrow against the men themselves and struck them.
The corpse fires burned everywhere and did not stop burning.

REVIEW COMMENT

The translation of the *Iliad* by Richmond Lattimore (1951) was greeted in many quarters with widespread praise, often bordering on hyperbole—the following comment, for example: "The feat is so decisive that it is reasonable to foresee a century or so in which nobody will try again the put the *Iliad* into English verse. Taste may change greatly, but it looks to me as if Mr. Lattimore's version would survive at least as long as Pope's, for in its way it is quite as solidly distinguished," a remark, ironically enough, from Robert Fitzgerald, whose translation of the *Iliad* (which many people, myself included, believe superior to Lattimore's) appeared in 1963. And since its appearance, Lattimore's *Iliad* has remained very popular (in a survey conducted in 1987, Lattimore's translation was preferred by three quarters of the respondents).

Lattimore's translation uses a six-beat line with a flexible number of syllables and strives for a line-by-line fidelity to the Greek text, a habit which the first person to try it (T. S. Brandeth in 1846) described as having "no great merit," an opinion with which I concur wholeheartedly. Even the advantage of being able to reference the Greek text easily is unavailable in Lattimore's text because his version does not number the lines. His vocabulary is, for the most part, as he says, "my own 'poetical language,' which is mostly the plain English of today." The result earned praise for rescuing Homer from prose translations, which had outnumbered poetical renditions in the previous years. And many readers obviously like the

result—a "weighty" poem which keeps them moving through the text and living up to Lattimore's eminently pragmatic answer to Arnold: "I do not think nobility is a quality to be directly striven for; you must write as well as you can, and then see, or let others see, whether or not the result is noble." Lattimore may also have put the rest the endless debates about the suitability of the hexameter for English verse (although, in fairness to the other debaters, one should note that his hexameter is much more flexible than they were prepared to admit).

Lattimore has also had his critics who complain about various things, including his syntax (in Knopff's words: "misprints, mistranslations, obscurities, or outrages to the English language"). The plainness in the vocabulary is not matched by the clarity in the sentences, so that (as in many of Lattimore's other translations—of Aeschylus, for example) there is a constant need to pause in order to sort out just what a particular phrase or sentence means ("I, who am such as no other of the bronze-armoured Achaians," "My mother bore me not utterly lacking in warcraft," and so on). Here's a random sample, taken from a moment in Achilles' response to Odysseus: "not if he gave me gifts as many as the sand or the dust is." Clear enough perhaps, but not idiomatic English, for sand cannot be "many" any more than "dust" can. We have to supply the missing: "grains of . . ." A small example but not untypical—and, in my view, very irritating. Here, too, the rhythm maintains the hexameter but in the process ends up sounding awkward and forced, anything but an outburst from a passionate man who has worked himself up into a temper. Reading Lattimore's *Iliad* I'm always reminded of Dr. Leavis' comment about how Milton's verse "calls pervasively for a kind of attention ... toward itself."

> There no more could a man who was in that work make light of it,
> one who still unhit and still unstabbed by the sharp bronze
> spun in the midst of that fighting, with Pallas Athene's hold on
> his hand guiding him, driving back the volleying spears thrown.

I cannot surrender myself to the narrative because I'm so often having to puzzle out the exact meaning, even in little details like the phrase "wine-blue" sea—a puzzling epithet (blue wine?) which obliterates the evocative ironic resonance of the more familiar "wine dark" sea.

In fairness to Lattimore, one has to concede that many readers obviously settle into to the somewhat odd style and do not share the discomfort I experience. But any reader who gives clear, idiomatic English a high priority in selecting a poetic translation should have a very good look at the translations of Fagles, Fitzgerald, and Lombardo (to say nothing of my own) before subjecting themselves (and, more importantly, their students) to Lattimore's translation.

Lattimore's translation is available on line in an interlinear Greek-English format at the following link: Chicago Homer.

Homer
The Anger of Achilles
Homer's Iliad
translated by Robert Graves
London, 1960

[Sample from the Opening of the Poem]

BOOK I
THE QUARREL

INVOCATION OF THE MUSE

Sing, MOUNTAIN GODDESS, sing through me
That anger which most ruinously
Inflamed Achilles, Peleus' son,
And which, before the tale was done,
Had glutted Hell with champions—bold,
Stern spirits by the thousandfold;
Ravens and dogs their corpses ate.
For thus did ZEUS, who watched their fate,
See his resolve, first taken when
Proud Agamemnon, King of men,
An insult on Achilles cast,
Achieve accomplishment at last.

You wish to know which of the gods originated the quarrel between these Greek princes, and how this happened? I can tell you: it was Phoebus Apollo, the son of Almighty Zeus and Leto the Fair-Haired, who sent a fearful pestilence among the Greeks, by way of punishing Agamemnon their High King. The trouble began with Agamemnon's insult of Apollo's priest Chryses, when he came to the Greek camp before Troy, armed with the Archer-god's sacred woollen headband bound on a golden wand. He was offering a remarkably high ransom for his daughter Chryseis, whom the Greeks held as a prisoner of war.

In an address to the entire army, but especially their two leaders, Agamemnon and his brother Menelaus, Chryses said: 'Royal sons of Atreus, and all you other distinguished warriors! I sincerely pray that the Olympians will permit you to sack King Priam's citadel yonder, and to sail safe home: but only if you honour Zeus' son Apollo, whom I serve, by setting my daughter free.'

The men uttered a generous roar of approval, yet Agamemnon sent Chrses about his business. 'Let me catch you here again, old man,' he shouted, 'among these ships of war, either now or later, and no wand nor priestly headband will protect you! Understand this: I shall never release Chryseis. She must spend her life as a

royal concubine and weaver of tapestries in my palace at distant Argos. Begone, and not another word, or you can expect the worst!'

The venerable Chryses, scared into obedience, walked silently away beside the rough sea, until he found himself alone. He then offered a prayer to Apollo:

'God with the bow of silver,
You that take your stand
At Chryse and holy Cilla,
Protector of our land,
Great Lord of Mice, whose sceptre
Holds Tenedos in fee:
Listen to my petition,
Consider well my plea!
'If ever I built a temple
Agreeable to your eyes,
Or cut from goats or bullocks
The fat about their thighs,
'To burn as a costly offering
At KING APOLLO'S shrine:
Let the Greeks pay with your arrows
These burning tears of mine!'

Phoebus Apollo heard Chryses' prayer, and his face grew darker than night. Shouldering the silver bow, he hurried down from Olympus. The arrows rattled in their quiver as he alighted at some distance from the ships, and his bow clanged dreadfully when he let fly. His first victims were mules and hounds; next, he shot their masters, whose pures were presently seen burning everywhere.

REVIEW COMMENT

In his introduction Graves claims to be following the example of ancient Irish and Welsh bards by "as it were, taking up my harp and singing only where the prose will not suffice." This procedure, he claims, "avoids the pitfalls of either an all-prose or an all-verse translation, and restores something of the *Iliad*'s value as mixed entertainment." The intention is, in theory, interesting; however, the practice has its problems, mainly because Graves's verse is (as in the sample above) too often mere doggerel which contributes nothing to the poetic quality of the lines. His prose is colloquial, even breezy at times, and for all its welcome rejection of thoroughly artifical ageing, tends to ride roughshod over interesting complexities in the Greek (as in his "rough sea" above for the evocative *polufloisboio* in Homer's text). In his introduction Graves suggests that the *Iliad* was intended as a satire, without a serious purpose (other than to offer amusing entertainment), a provocative suggestion that has not, so far as I can tell,

elicited much interest from readers of Homer. For a longer sample of Graves's *Iliad*, use the following link: Graves *Iliad*.

The Iliad of Homer
Translated by Ennis Reese
New York, 1963

[Sample from the Opening of the Poem]

Sing, O Goddess, the ruinous wrath of Achilles,
Son of Peleus, the terrible curse that brought
Unnumbered woes upon the Achaeans and hurled
To Hades so many heroic souls, leaving
Their bodies the prey or dogs and carrion birds.
The will of Zeus was done from the moment they quarreled,
Agamemnon, son of Atreus, and god like Achilles.
Which of the gods caused two such men to contend?
The son of Zeus and Leto. Deeply incensed
With King Agamemnon for failing to honor Chryses
His priest, Apollo sent a plague on the soldiers,
And many people were dying. Chryses had come
To the swift Achaean ships to ransom his daughter,
And the ransom be bore was boundless. In suppliant hands
On a staff of gold he held the sacred fillet
Of far-darting Apollo, and he made his plea to all
The Achaeans, especially to the two sons of Atreus,
Marshalers of many:
"O Atreus' sons and you other
Well-greaved Achaeans, may the gods who live on Olympus
Allow you to sack the city of Priam and reach
Your homes in safety. But reverence the son of Zeus,
Apollo who strikes from afar--take this ransom
And return my precious daughter."
All the other Achhaeans
Supported the priest and shouted to reverence him
And accept the splendid ransom. But Atreus' son
Agamemnon was far from pleased. Roughly he sent him
Away with these harsh words:
"Don't let me find you,
Old man, by the hollow ships, neither loitering now
Nor coming back later, or you will find small protection
In the sacred staff and fillet. The girl I will not
Let go! Before that she'll grow old in Argos, far from
Her own native land, working at the loom and sharing
My bed. Now go, old man! and you'll go much safer
If you don't provoke me."
At this the old priest was afraid

And did as the King bade him do. Without a word
He walked off along the shore of the loud-booming sea,
But when he had gone some distance he fervently prayed
To his lord Apollo, whom lovely-haired Leto bore:
"Hear me, O god of the silver bow, you
That bestride in your power Chryse and sacred Cilla
And mightily rule in Tenedos--O Smintheus, if ever
I built a temple that pleased you, or made burnt-offering
To you of rich thigh-pieces from bulls or goats,
Fulfill this prayer of mine by using your arrows
To make the Danaans pay for the tears I have shed."

REVIEW COMMENT

Rees's translation offers a short and eminently sensible introduction, which concludes with a summary of his aims:

> "I have tried to be faithful to the sentiments, ideas, and images of the original and to include whatever is necessary to the literal sense of the Greek poem. But I have also done what I could to make a readable English poem, since something of the quality of Homer's poetry would seem to be the most essential quality for a translator to convey. In diction I have aimed at effective expression in the large area between the stiled and the vulgar and always with regard to dramatic context. In meter the line I have found best suited for rendering the original dactylic hexameters is a loose measure of five major stresses plus a varying number of relatively unaccented syllables. The poem should, of course, be read with the natural and idiomatic stress that best interprets the sense."

This statement of intent is, in my view, excellent and should be required reading for anyone setting out to translate the *Iliad* or to evaluate a translation of the epic.

Just how much Rees succeeds in attaining his goal is, as with all translations, open to debate. His style is certainly accurate, clear, and for the most part sensitive to the dramatic context. My (admittedly cursory) reading of a number of selections leaves me wishing that the poetry was more compressed and that the sentences did not tend to run out of energy until well before the end. One reviewer of Rees's style in his translation of the *Odyssey* (Keith Aldrich) refers to an "evenness of tone" established by Rees's choice of metre. That, it strikes me, is one way of describing what I'm missing, a more interesting ebb and flow of emotion in the text--especially in the speeches (although the reviewer I'm referring to finds that quality useful).

Homer
The Iliad
translated by Robert Fitzgerald
New York 1974

[A Sample from the Opening of the Poem]

Book One
Quarrel, Oath, and Promise

Anger now be your song, immortal one,
Akhilleus' anger, doomed and ruinous,
that caused the Akhaians loss on bitter loss
and crowded brave souls into the undergloom,
leaving so many dead men—carrion
for dogs and birds; and the will of Zeus was done.
Begin it when the two men first contending
broke with one another—the Lord Marshal
Agamémnon, Atreus' son, and Prince Akhilleus.
Among the gods, who brought this quarrel on?
The son of Zeus by Lêto. Agamemnon
angered him, so he made a burning wind
of plague rise in the army: rank and file
sicked and died for the ill their chief had done
in despising a man of prayer.
This priest, Khrysês, had come down to the ships
with gifts, no end of ransom for his daughter;
on a golden staff he carried the god's white bands
and sued for grace from the men of all Akhaía,
the two Atreidai most of all:
"O captains
Meneláos and Agamémnon, and you other
Akhaians under arms!
The gods who hold Olympos, may they grant you
plunder of Priam's town and a fair wind home,
but let me have my daughter back for ransom
as you revere Apollo, son of Zeus!"
Then all the soldiers murmured their assent:
"Behave well to the priest. And take the ransom!"
But Agamémnon would not. It went against his desire,
and brutally he ordered the man away:
"Let me not find you here by the long ships
loitering this time or returning later;
old man; if I do,

the staff and ribbons of the god will fail you.
Give up the girl? I swear she will grow old
at home in Argos, far from her own country,
working my loom and visiting my bed.
Leave me in peace and go, while you can, in safety."

REVIEW COMMENT

Of modern translators, Fitzgerald is one of the most accomplished poets, and this rendition of Homer is notable for the quality of the English verse, especially at those decisive moments when Homer launches into an especially imaginative passage. One of the major tests of a translator is whether or not he can in his own poetry convey the intensity of these moments. Fitzgerald manages this better than almost anyone else, and his treatment of the dramatic speeches is excellent.

I also like the fact that Fitzgerald really understands how to structure an English sentence over many lines, so that the sense remains clear and the momentum of the verse unit gathers energy until the decisive moment, a quality that, among other things, delivers the full impact of the Homeric similes and the battle fighting. Fitzgerald's basic line is the pentameter, but he freely departs from a regular adherence to this rhythm. And he pays careful attention to the layout of the poem on the page. For some reason, many readers (especially academics) have excoriated Fitzgerald for the liberties he takes with Homer's text. But this is one of the finest English renditions of the *Iliad* available anywhere, and anyone who sets a high value on the quality of the English verse in a translation (in contrast to one which is willing to sacrifice idiomatic poetic English in order to remain allegedly "faithful" to Homer) will find Fitzgerald's translation of the *Iliad* particularly enjoyable. Those selecting the text for class room use may, however be disappointed in the lack of adequate supplementary material.

For access to Fitzgerald's translation, please use the following link: Fitzgerald *Iliad*.

For a review of Fitzgerald's translation, use the following link: Fitzgerald *Iliad*.

Iliad
Translated by Denison Bingham Hull
Scottsdale, Arizona, 1982.

[Selection from Book XII]

Glaucus, why have we two been honored so
with meat at table and with brimming cups?
All those in Lydia look on us as gods,
and we've been given lands beside the Xanthus
good for a vineyard or a field of grain.
So we must be the first among the Lycians
to stand up to the blazing fire of battle
until some heavily armored Lycian says:
"These are not common folk who rule in Lycia:
these kings of ours, they feed upon fat sheep
and drink wine sweet as honey, for they're noble
and fight among the foremost men of Lycia."
Friends, if we two could just escape this war
And live forever ageless and immortal,
I'd never be a leader in a battle,
Nor send you in to fight for honor's sake.
But now ten thousand shapes of death surround us
Which no man can escape from, or avoid.
Come, let us give someone glory—or attain it.

REVIEW COMMENT

Since I have been so far unable to obtain a copy of Hull's translation, I have taken the above selection from the book *Perfection in Death* by Patrick M. Clark., who uses that translation for quotations from the *Iliad*.

My first response to reading a few short selections of Hull's translation is an eagerness to read much more—the basic style (especially in the speeches) seems so clear, direct, and moving.

Homer
The Iliad
Translated by Martin Hammond
Penguin 1987

Selection from the Opening of the Poem

Sing, goddess, of the anger of Achilleus, son of Peleus, the accursed anger which brought uncounted anguish on the Achaians and hurled down to Hades many mighty souls of heroes, making their bodies the prey to dogs and the birds' feasting: and this was the working of Zeus' will. Sing from the time of the first quarrel which divided Atreus' son, the lord of men, and godlike Achilleus.

Which of the gods was it who set these two to their fighting? It was the son of Zeus and Leto. In anger at the king he raised a vile plague throughout the army, and the people were dying, because the son of Atreus had dishonoured Chryses, his priest. Chryses had come to the fast ships of the Achaians to gain release for his daughter, bringing with him unlimited ransom, and holding in his hands the sacred woollen bands of Apollo the far-shooter, wreathed on a golden staff. He began to entreat the whole body of the Achaians, but especially the two sons of Atreus, the marshals of the army. 'Sons of Atreus, and you other well-greaved Achaians, may the gods who live on Olympos grant you the sacking of Priam's city and a safe return to your homes. But release my dear child to me, and accept this ransom, in reverence for the son of Zeus, Apollo the far shooter.'

Then all the other Achaians shouted their agreement, to respect the priest's claims and take the splendid ransom. But this was not the pleasure of Agamemnon's heart, the son of Atreus. He sent him shamefully on his way, with harsh words of command: 'Old man, let me never find you by our hollow ships, either dallying here now or coming back again in future - or you will have no protection from your god's staff and sacred bands. As for the girl, I shall not release her. Before that, old age will come upon her in our house, in Argos, far from her own country, where she will work at the loom and serve my bed. No, away with you: do not provoke me, if want to return in safety.'

So he spoke, and the old man was afraid and did as he was ordered. He went in silence along the shore of the sounding sea. And then when he had gone a far way off, the old man prayed long to lord Apollo, the child of lovely-haired Leto: 'Hear me, lord of the silver bow, protector of Chryse and holy Killa, and mighty lord of Tenedos, Smintheus. If ever I have built a shrine that is pleasing to you, if ever I have burnt for you fat-wrapped thigh-bones of bulls and goats, grant this my prayer: may the Danaans pay for my tears with your arrows.'

Review Comment

Hammond's prose translation stays very close to the Greek and for that reason would be a useful text for someone reading the Greek and in seeking help from a reliable English text. As a stand alone English text, however, Hammond's prose is unsatisfactory, largely because it is inert and fails to deliver the energy, passion, and dramatic intensity of the poem, especially in the speeches, which too often do not come across as something a person would actually say. In addition, Hammond is at times fond of some rather odd English words (e.g., blatherskate). Anyone seeking a prose translation of the *Iliad*, especially for classroom use, should have a good look at other options (e.g., the revised Rieu translation) before choosing Hammond's version.

Link to longer preview (at Amazon): Hammond *Iliad*.

Review in Classical Review

Homer
The *Iliad*
Translated by Robert Fagles
Viking, NY, 1990

[Selection from the Opening of the Poem]

Rage—Goddess, sing the rage of Peleus' son Achilles,
murderous, doomed, that cost the Achaeans countless losses,
hurling down to the House of Death so many sturdy souls,
great fighters' souls, but made their bodies carrion,
feasts for the dogs and birds,
and the will of Zeus was moving toward its end.
Begin, Muse, when the two first broke and clashed,
Agamemnon lord of men and brilliant Achilles.

What god drove them to fight with such a fury?
Apollo the son of Zeus and Leto. Incensed at the king
he swept a fatal plague through the army—men were dying
and all because Agamemnon spurned Apollo's priest.
Yes, Chryses approached the Achaeans' fast ships
to win his daughter back, bringing a priceless ransom
and bearing high in hand, wound on a golden staff,
the wreaths of the god, the distant deadly Archer.
He begged the whole Achaean army but most of all
the two supreme commanders, Atreus' two sons,
"Agamemnon, Menelaus—all Argives geared for war!
May the gods who hold the halls of Olympus give you
Priam's city to plunder, then safe passage home.
Just set my daughter free, my dear one . . . here,
accept these gifts, this ransom. Honor the god
who strikes from worlds away—the son of Zeus, Apollo!"

And all ranks of Achaeans cried out their assent:
"Respect the priest, accept the shining ransom!"
But it brought no joy to the heart of Agamemnon.
The king dismissed the priest with a brutal order
ringing in his ears: "Never again, old man,
let me catch sight of you by the hollow ships!
Not loitering now, not slinking back tomorrow.
The staff and the wreaths of god will never save you then.
The girl—I won't give up the girl. Long before that,
old age will overtake her in my house, in Argos,
far from her fatherland, slaving back and forth

at the loom, forced to share my bed!

Now go,
don't tempt my wrath—and you may depart alive."

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
the old priest prayed to 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!
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!"

REVIEW COMMENT

In the past thirty years Robert Fagles's translations of classical works (Aeschylus, Sophocles, Homer, Virgil) have earned much critical praise and an enthusiastic following among general readers and academic specialists. And deservedly so. Anyone mulling the purchase of a classical work in translation should certainly include the Fagles translation (if there is one available) in the selection process.

Fagles' *Iliad* is remarkable, among other things, for its diction—the language has a certain gravitas and yet is (for the most part) quite familiar. As a result, the text is much easier to read than Lattimore's translation and carries more weight than Fitzgerald's. The potential ponderousness of the (more or less) hexameter lines is very skillfully offset by Fagles's fluent syntax. This translation never bogs down or flags. And those who like to have useful introductory and supplementary material along with the translation will really like this publication (the introduction to the *Iliad* by Bernard Knox is excellent, and there are plenty of maps).

I do have a couple of (perhaps minor) cavils. Fagles likes to insert into his text occasional reminders of older times and earlier poets at the expense of a fluent modern idiom: "I'll roil his body," "a bowyer good with goat horn," "armoured in shamelessness," "Achaean battalions ceaseless," and so forth. More seriously perhaps, he frequently adopts the alliterative thump of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, which at times becomes so over-emphatic that one learns to anticipate it, and thus the sound begins to pre-empt the sense: "As a burly farmhand wielding a whetted ax,/ chopping a field-ranging bull behind the horns,/ hacks through its whole hump and the beast heaves up . . ." or ". . . belching bloody meat, but the

fury, never shaken,/ builds inside their chests though their glutted bellies burst."
As I have remarked elsewhere, a little more than a little of this is much too much.

Longer Preview (at Amazon): Fagles *Iliad*.

Reviews of Fagles' *Iliad*: Bryn Mawr Classical Reviews, New York Times, Los Angeles Times.

Homer
Iliad
Translated by Stanley Lombardo
Indianapolis 1997

Sample from the Opening of the Poem

RAGE:
Sing, Goddess, Achilles' rage,
Black and murderous, that cost the Greeks
Incalculable pain, pitched countless souls
Of heroes into Hades' dark,
And left their bodies to rot as feasts
For dogs and birds, as Zeus' will was done.
Begin with the clash between Agamemnon—
The Greek warlord—and godlike Achilles.

Which of the immortals set these two
At each other's throats?
Apollo,
Zeus' son and Leto's, offended
By the warlord. Agamemnon had dishonored
Chryses, Apollo's priest, so the god
Struck the Greek camp with plague,
And the soldiers were dying of it.
Chryses
Had come to the Greek beachhead camp
Hauling a fortune for his daughter's ransom.
Displaying Apollo's sacral ribbons
On a golden staff, he made a formal plea
To the entire Greek army, but especially
The commanders, Atreus' two sons:

"Sons of Atreus and Greek heroes all:
May the gods on Olympus grant you plunder
Of Priam's city and a safe return home.
But give me my daughter back and accept
This ransom out of respect for Zeus' son,
Lord Apollo, who deals death from afar."

A murmur rippled through the ranks:
"Respect the priest and take the ransom."
But Agamemnon was not pleased
And dismissed Chryses with a rough speech:

"Don't let me ever catch you, old man, by these ships again,
Skulking around now or sneaking back later.
The god's staff and ribbons won't save you next time.
The girl is mine, and she'll be an old woman in Argos
Before I let her go, working the loom in my house
And coming to my bed, far from her homeland.
Now clear out of here before you make me angry!"

The old man was afraid and did as he was told.
He walked in silence along the whispering surf line,
And when he had gone some distance the priest
Prayed to Lord Apollo, son of silken-haired Leto:

"Hear me, Silverbow, Protector of Chryse,
Lord of Holy Cilla, Master of Tenedos,
And Sminthian God of Plague!
If every I've built a temple that pleased you
Or burnt fat thighbones of bulls and goats—
Grant me this prayer:
Let the Danaans pay for my tears with your arrows!"

Review Comment

Lombardo's translation feels immediately like a breath of fresh air: the verse is energetic, colloquial, crisp, and enticing; the diction is immediately accessible to the inexperienced reader, and the flexible rhythm keeps the poem moving. Lombardo is willing to depart from a strict literal fidelity to the original Greek in order to bring the poem closer to the modern imagination and makes no attempt to inject a strained loftiness or olde worlde vocabulary into his descriptions or dialogue. One of his striking innovations—placing the Homeric similes in italics in their own paragraphs—is also an extremely effective way of emphasizing the importance and impact of these (often overlooked) elements of Homer's style.

These qualities obviously come with a price. Readers may well find the style too direct and breezy, too far removed from the more solemn and lofty gravitas they expect in an ancient poem. They may feel that the tug of war between past and present (inevitably a part of the translation of an ancient epic) has here been resolved too easily in favour of our modern times, especially in the dialogue, which makes frequent use of modern slang: "goddamn," "pansy," "badmouth," and "man" as a term of address (as in the modern expression "Hey, man, . . .").

Whether Lombardo's bold diction amounts to what one reviewer has called a "dumbing down" of Homer's epic or adds to the vitality and impact of the style is

obviously up to the reader. In general, I like what Lombardo has done, but there are certainly moments when (reluctantly) I have to stop because some distinctively modern colloquial word or phrase has interrupted my imaginative contact with Homer's world.

For a longer preview of Lombardo's *Iliad*, please use the following link: Lombardo *Iliad* (Amazon)

For reviews of Lombardo's *Iliad*, please use the following links: New York Times; Bryn Mawr Classical Reviews.

Homer
The Iliad
Translated by Ian Johnston

[Sample from the Opening of the Poem]

Book One
The Quarrel by the Ships

[The invocation to the Muse; Agamemnon insults Apollo; Apollo sends the plague onto the army; the quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon; Calchas indicates what must be done to appease Apollo; Agamemnon takes Briseis from Achilles; Achilles prays to Thetis for revenge; Achilles meets Thetis; Chryseis is returned to her father; Thetis visits Zeus; the gods converse about the matter on Olympus; the banquet of the gods.]

Sing, Goddess, sing of the rage of Achilles, son of Peleus—
that murderous anger which condemned Achaeans
to countless agonies and threw many warrior souls
deep into Hades, leaving their dead bodies
carrion food for dogs and birds—
all in fulfillment of the will of Zeus.

Start at the point where Agamemnon, son of Atreus,
that king of men, quarrelled with noble Achilles.
Which of the gods incited these two men to fight?

That god was Apollo, son of Zeus and Leto.
Angry with Agamemnon, he cast plague down
onto the troops—deadly infectious evil.
For Agamemnon had dishonoured the god's priest,
Chryses, who'd come to the ships to find his daughter,
Chryseis, bringing with him a huge ransom.
In his hand he held up on a golden staff
the scarf sacred to archer god Apollo.
He begged Achaeans, above all the army's leaders,
the two sons of Atreus:

"Menelaus, Agamemnon, sons of Atreus,
all you well-armed Achaeans, may the gods
on Olympus grant you wipe out Priam's city,
and then return home safe and sound.
Release my dear child to me. Take this ransom.
Honour Apollo, far-shooting son of Zeus."

All the Achaeans roared out their support:

"Respect the priest. Take the generous ransom."

Displeased, Agamemnon dismissed Chryses roughly:

"Old man,
don't let me catch you by our hollow ships,
sneaking back here today or later on.
Who cares about Apollo's scarf and staff?
I'll not release the girl to you, no, not before
she's grown old with me in Argos, far from home,
working the loom, sharing my bed. Go away.
If you want to get home safely, don't anger me."

The old man, afraid, obeyed his words, walked off in silence,
along the shore by the tumbling, crashing surf.
Some distance off, he prayed to lord Apollo,
Leto's fair-haired child:

"God with the silver bow,
protector of Chryse, sacred Cilla,
mighty lord of Tenedos, Sminthean Apollo,
hear my prayer: If I've ever pleased you
with a holy shrine, or burned bones for you—
bulls and goats well wrapped in fat—
grant me my prayer. Force the Danaans
to pay full price for my tears with your arrows."

So Chryses prayed. Phoebus Apollo heard him.
He came down from Olympus top enraged,
carrying on his shoulders bow and covered quiver,
his arrows rattling in anger against his arm.
So the god swooped down, descending like the night.
He sat some distance from the ships, shot off an arrow—
the silver bow reverberating ominously.

First, the god massacred mules and swift-running dogs,
then loosed sharp arrows in among the troops themselves.
Thick fires burned the corpses ceaselessly.

COMMENT

Since this is my own translation I will not offer any personal evaluative remarks. This translation was (I think) the first new translation of the entire *Iliad* to be placed in the public domain on the web (in 2002). It was subsequently published by Richer Resources Publications as a paperback, and a sound recording of the entire translation was produced by Naxos Audiobooks. Later an abridged version of the translation (about one third of the original) was published in book and audio form.

The basic rhythm of the translation is a hexameter line for the descriptions and a pentameter line for the speeches. The diction is modern English but not overly colloquial (i.e., no slang). And there is virtually no use of a vocabulary of ancient warfare (not even in the descriptions and naming of weapons or armour).

The most frequent comment I have received about the translation is that it is very clear (and some critics add "vivid"). The commonest complaint is that the translation is not "heavy" enough, a comment which I interpret to mean that the reader misses a certain epic gravitas.

Readers who would like to access the entire translation should use the following link: Johnston *Iliad*.

For a review of this translation use the following link: Bryn Mawr Classical Review.

The Iliad of Homer
A Parsed Interlinear Text
Compiled and Parsed by John Jackson
2008

This interlinear Greek-English work uses the English translation of A. T. Murray (1924)—the Loeb edition (adjusted to meet the purposes of the interlinear text). What sets it apart from other English-Greek editions is the extremely thorough parsing of each word, directly under the relevant Greek.

Each line of Homer here is expanded to five lines: (1) the Greek line in Homer, (2) a Greek line which provides the relevant dictionary form of each word in the first line, (3) a parsing of the word in the Homeric Greek, (4) the simple English translation of the word in line two, and (5) the English translation for the full Homeric line. For example, a single sentence in line 20 of Book 1 (not the entire line) looks like this (for formatting reasons I have omitted the accents in the Greek, which Jackson's text includes):

20	παιδα	δ'	εμοι	λυσλιτε	φιλην
	παις	δε	εγω	λυω	φιλος
	noun. f. acc. sg	particle.	Per.pro. dat. 1. sg	verb.aor. opt. Act 2. pl	adj. f. acc. sg
	child	but, and	ego	loose	loved

but my dear child release to me.

The format of this information has changed in more recent editions of this work (the information is delivered vertically rather than horizontally). For a sample use the following link: Jackson.

This text will obviously be of little use to anyone who simply wishes to read the *Iliad* in a modern English translation, but it should provide valuable assistance to anyone who is striving to learn Homeric Greek.

Homer
The Iliad
Translated by Rodney Merrill
University of Michigan Press
2007

[Sample taken from the opening of Book 1]

Sing now, goddess, the wrath of Achilles the scion of Peleus,
ruinous rage which brought the Achaians uncounted afflictions;
many the powerful souls it sent to the dwelling of Hades,
those of the heroes, and spoil for the dogs it made of their bodies,
plunder for all of the birds, and the purpose of Zeus was accomplished--
sing from the time when first stood hostile, starting the conflict,
Atreus' scion, the lord of the people, and noble Achilles.
Which of the gods brought strife to the two men, and set them fighting?
It was the offspring of Leto and Zeus, for enraged at the king, he
roused in the army a baneful disease, and the people were slaughtered,
all on account of his priest, whom Atreus' scion dishonored,
Chryses. For he had arrived at the swift ships of the Achaians,
seeking to free his daughter and bringing a measureless ransom,
bearing in hand bay-garlands of great far-shooting Apollo
wound on a gold-wrought staff, and he pled with them, all the Achaians,
but above all the two scions of Atreus, marshals of people:
'Atreus' scions as well as the rest, you well-greaved Achaians,
now may the gods who dwell in Olympian palaces let you
ransack the city of Priam and safely arrive in your homeland;
but as for my dear child, set her free and accept this ransom,
showing respect for the scion of Zeus, far-shooting Apollo."
Thereat all of the other Achaians were shouting approval,
saying to honor the priest and accept the magnificant ransom;
yet this pleased not the spirit of Atreus' son Agamemnon;
roughly he sent him away, and he laid a strong order upon him:
“Old man, never may I by the hollow ships come upon you,
either now lingering on or returning again in the future,
lest no help to protect you the god's staff prove, nor his garland.
Her I will not give freedom; before, old age will assail her
there in our house in Argos and far from the land of her fathers,
where she will weave at a loom and will share my bed and affection.
Go now, do not provoke me, that you might go the more safely.”
So he spoke, and the old man feared, and obeyed what he said and
silently went by the shore of the deep sea rumbling and booming.
Loudly the old man, once he had gone to a distance, addressed his
prayer to the lordly Apollo, whom Leto of beautiful hair bore:

"Hear me, god of the silvery bow, who stride around Chrysè
and around Killa the sacred, and Ténedos mightily govern,
Smíntheus, if a delectable temple I ever have built you,
or if savory fat thigh-pieces I ever have burnt you
either of bulls or of goats, then bring this boon to fulfillment:
make those Dánaäns pay for my tears by shooting your arrows."

REVIEW COMMENT

Merrill is concerned, above all, with the "continuous musical energy of the *Iliad* [which] takes us into battle scenes more completely than any poem since, making us experience the bloodshed, the cruel mercilessness of the victors, the despairing humiliation of the losers, the bloodlust, the excitement of battle, the delight in strength, the craving for glory, and the consummation of manhood. I have striven to capture this in my translation." Accordingly, he devotes most of his interesting preface (titled "Singing the *Iliad*") to explaining the ways in which reading his hexameter lines brings one in close contact with the music of Homer's Greek.

Well, a rich musical quality is obviously an essential quality in any successful poem, long or short (a point too many translators of Homer forget). Whether Merrill achieves that consistently is up to the reader to decide. In my view what Merrill gains on the musical roundabout he often loses on the syntactical swings. I frequently get a sense that the verse here is padded or the syntax wrenched to meet the demands of the hexameter lines, so that whatever the musical quality of the lines, what is missing is the energy, especially in the speeches, which too often all sound inert.

For a longer and more scholarly review of Merrill's translation, use the following link: Bryn Mawr Classical Review.

Homer
The Iliad
Translated by A. S. Kline
Online Text
2009

[Selection from the opening of the poem]

Bk I: 1-21 Invocation and Introduction

Goddess, sing me the anger of Achilles, Peleus' son, that fatal anger that brought countless sorrows on the Greeks, and sent many valiant souls of warriors down to Hades, leaving their bodies as spoil for dogs and carrion birds: for thus was the will of Zeus brought to fulfilment. Sing of it from the moment when Agamemnon, Atreus' son, that king of men, parted in wrath from noble Achilles.

Which of the gods set these two to quarrel? Apollo, the son of Leto and Zeus, angered by the king, brought an evil plague on the army, so that the men were dying, for the son of Atreus had dishonoured Chryses the priest. He it was who came to the swift Achaean ships, to free this daughter, bringing a wealth of ransom, carrying a golden staff adorned with the ribbons of far-striking Apollo, and called out to the Achaeans, above all to the two leaders of armies, those sons of Atreus: 'Atreides, and all you bronze-greaved Achaeans, may the gods who live on Olympus grant you to sack Priam's city, and sail back home in safety, but take this ransom, and free my darling child; show reverence for Zeus' son, far-striking Apollo.'

Bk I: 22-52 Chryses invokes Apollo

Then rest of the Achaeans shouted in agreement, that the priest should be respected, and the fine ransom taken, but this troubled the heart of Agamemnon, son of Atreus, and he dismissed the priest harshly, and dealt with him sternly: 'Old man, don't let me catch you loitering by the hollow ships today, and don't be back later, lest your staff and the god's ribbons fail to protect you. Her, I shall not free; old age will claim her first, far from her own country, in Argos, my home, where she can tend the loom, and share my bed. Away now, don't provoke me if you'd leave safely.'

So he spoke, and the old man, seized by fear, obeyed. Silently, he walked the shore of the echoing sea; and when he was quite alone, the old man prayed deeply to Lord Apollo, the son of bright-haired Leto: 'Hear me, Silver Bow, protector of Chryse and holy Cilla, high lord of Tenedos: if ever I built a shrine that pleased you, if ever I burned the fat thighs of a bull or goat for you, grant my wish: Smintheus, with your arrows make the Greeks pay for my tears.'

So he prayed, and Phoebus Apollo heard him. Down he came, in fury, from the heights of Olympus, with his bow and inlaid quiver at his back. The arrows rattled at his shoulder as the god descended like the night, in anger. He set down by the ships, and fired a shaft, with a fearful twang of his silver bow. First he attacked the mules, and the swift hounds, then loosed his vicious darts at the men; so the dense pyres for the dead burned endlessly.

REVIEW COMMENT

Kline's prose diction is direct, clear, and energetic. The sentence structure is occasionally a bit loose (as in the opening sentence in paragraph 3 above), but it keeps the poem moving. Those seeking a straight-forward prose translation of the epic should certainly consider this readable text, which is freely available online for non-commercial purposes.

The online text contains hyperlinks (indicated in the above selection by words in a bold font) to a combined glossary and index, a very useful tool for readers who get confused by the enormous number of names and places.

This translation is now also available as a published book from Amazon or from Poetry in Translation.

For the full translation, please use the following link Kline *Iliad*.

Homer
Iliad

Translated by Herbert Jordan
University of Oklahoma Press
2008

[This sample from the beginning of the poem has been provided by the translator]

Sing, goddess, of Peleus' son Achilles' anger,
ruinous that caused the Greeks untold ordeals,
consigned to Hades countless valiant souls,
heroes, and left their bodies prey for dogs
or feast for vultures. Zeus's will was done
from when those two first quarreled and split apart,
the king, Agamemnon, nd matchless Achilles.

Which immortal god sowed that quarrel's seeds?
Zeus's son Apollo. Enraged at the king,
he riddled the camp with plague, and men were dying,
all because Agamemnon had scorned Chryses,
Apollo's priest, who approached the ships
bringing measureless ransom to free his daughter.
He held the garland that graced Apollo's head,
wrapped on a gold staff, and he begged the Greeks,
especially Atreus' sons, the two commanders:
"Sons of Atreus, and all you thick-greaved Achaeans,
may the gods who hold Olympus permit you
to plunder Priam's city and sail home safe,
but take this ransom, free my cherished child
and show respect for Zeus's son Apollo."

The assembled Argives shouted their wish
to honor the priest and take his splendid gifts,
but Agamemnon was deeply displeased
and dismissed the holy man with stern orders:
"Old man, let me not find you by these ships,
either tarrying now or returning later.
The god's garland and staff will not avail you.
I will not free her till age overtakes her
in my Argive home, far from here and yours,
after plying my loom and sharing my bed.
Go! Do not provoke me, and you leave unharmed!"

Frightened, the old priest obeyed the command
and walked silently by the roaring surf.
When he had gone a safe distance, he prayed
to lord Apollo, fair-haired Leto's son:
"O god who wields a silver bow, shelters Chryse
and sacred Cilla, and governs Tenedos!
Lord of plagues, if ever I built you a shrine
or burned on your altar the fattened thighs
of goats and bulls, then grant this wish for me:
Let your arrows repay the Greeks for my tears!"

REVIEW COMMENT

Herbert Jordan offers a "line-for-line" translation, "one line of English blank verse for each line of the original Greek." He imposes this condition in order to combat what he calls the "translation inflation" of other modern English *Iliad*s, "which dilutes the immediacy of the original . . . [and] makes it nearly impossible to compare a translation with the original." His aim, he says, "is to capture the essence of Homer's original lines, not to render the Greek literally." To reinforce this claim, the back cover blurb stresses that this translation "avoids unnecessary filler"—a statement which seems to imply that other translators have been much too verbose or that Homer's text itself is full of extraneous fluff or both.

The rationale Jordan advances for this decision is dubious. There is no obvious reason why using more words or lines than the original Greek must dilute the immediacy of the original, since Greek, like Latin, is a much more compressed language than English, especially in its verb forms (hence, a satisfactory translation of a simple expression like Morituri te salutamus requires almost three times as many words in English as in Latin). Excess verbiage is, indeed, a mark of inferior poetry, but what matters is not a mere count of the words or lines but an assessment of the quality of the English verse—Does each word contribute significantly to the translation? As for enabling the reader to compare the translation with the original Greek, the easiest way to do that is surely to include the line numbers of the Greek text in the translated poem, rather than to impose a stringent formula which might severely limit the English style.

In any case, the whole rationale is moot, because it turns out that Jordan's principal strategy for achieving the desired compression is the simple expedient of omitting a sufficient number of words from Homer's text to meet the requirements he has imposed on himself. His other strategy is to limit his English to the simplest possible phrasing in order to fit his needs, a practice which obviously limits the poetical possibilities of his style and leads, in places, to some curious word choices or syntactical constructions.

Jordan dismisses his omissions as relatively insignificant—"for the most part, omitted words are Greek particles, which often have no English equivalents, or frequently repeated patronyms and epithets. . . ." Well, there is a long (but minor) tradition of hostility to Homer's epithets, so he will have some readers on his side. But these expressions are an immediately noticeable (and very famous) element of Homer's style, so other readers may well wonder if their omission is not something of a significant loss.

This comment about the omissions turns out to be somewhat disingenuous, for Jordan has, in fact, routinely excised important elements from Homer's text. Here's one example, taken almost at random:

> Idomeneus' spear flew in Erymas' mouth
> The weapon's whetted point continued back
> under the brain and split the chalky bone.
> Teeth flew out; a powerful gush filled
> Erymas' eyes with blood. Through nostrils, through mouth
> still more blood burst as death's dark covered him. (16.345-350)

A comparison with the Greek here reveals that Jordan has left out a good deal more than a few extraneous epithets or particles. Homer describes the spear as "pitiless bronze" (part of an ominously evocative pattern in the text which ascribes human emotional attributes to the weapons, an effect squandered in the phrase "whetted point"). Homer also indicates that Erymas' mouth is "open" or "gaping," and pictures the arrival of death as a black cloud. Hence, a more faithful translation of the passage might look something like this:

> Idomeneus' pitiless bronze then struck Erymas right in his mouth—
> the spear forced itself straight through,
> below his brain, splitting his white skull apart,
> smashing out his teeth. His eyes filled up with blood.
> More blood spurted from his nose and gaping mouth.
> Then death's black cloud enveloped Erymas.

Well, Jordan does use fewer words, but I'm not sure that this simple numerical fact makes his translation more "immediate" and more able to "capture the essence of Homer's original lines" than the above alternative. The issue, after all, is not a matter of choosing between the essence of Homer's lines (whatever that means exactly) and the literal Greek but rather of staying alert and faithful to the nuances of Homer's poetic style.

Jordan's lines are, for the most part, clear and direct, and his style keeps the poem moving. While there is nothing outstanding in the poetry, it does hold one's attention, except on those occasions when there's a curious lapse in the diction.

Would Thersites, the ugliest and most scurrilous and vituperative common solder, in accusing Agamemnon of wanting a girl to screw, really use a euphemistic expression like "woman on whom to vent your lust"? Is the expression "Hector is fast coming this way" or "I must forthrightly deny your request" modern idiomatic English? What is one to make of ". . . so your comrades will not stand up and harp"? Such lapses are most evident in the speeches, where one repeatedly gets the sense that the most idiomatic and vivid possibilities in the English may have been sacrificed to the arbitrary demands the translator has set himself—either that, or the translator is at times curiously insensitive to the effects of his own phrasing (there's an important difference in effect, for example, between "valor" and "courage," especially in a text striving to deliver more or less contemporary speech).

Those in search of a classroom text of the *Iliad* should certainly have a look at what Jordan offers, for students will probably find this a readily accessible text. However, for me Jordan's style has an effect rather different than the one he announces—it tends to simplify and distance the poem rather than to convey the complex immediacy of Homer's text. One admiring comment quoted on the back cover compares Jordan's text to "a deceptively simple Attic frieze." Ironically enough (for that word "deceptively" surely cuts in different directions), this seems a useful analogy.

For another review of Jordan's translation, readers might like to consult: Bryn Mawr Classical Review.

Readers who would like a longer preview of Jordan's text should use the following link: Jordan *Iliad*.

Homer, Iliad
translated by Frederick Light
[2009]

[Sample provided by the translator]

No deconstruction comes to epic force,
Which bodies forth the archetypal source. F L L

1. Quarreling.

Menin Aeide Thea, from line 1

O Goddess, chant it out, the choler grown
In Peleus' son, aggrieved Achilleus,
Simply deathful, sheerly doleful for
Achaians; wholly numerous warrior souls

It sent to Hades but to dog-throngs down
By Troy and divers birds the corporal dead
In piles it highly proffered, all for prey,
And Zeus's will thus came to pass outright,

As this began when first Atreyedes,
Monarch of chiliad-lancers, and Achilleus, bright
With God, in breaching closed like enemies.
Which of the Gods to rupture in a fight

Provoked them? Leto's son, whom Zeus begot,
For he a fulsome plague on Argives brought.

Chryses With Ransom, from line 10

The camp commenced to die, for Chryses, priest
Of Apollonian prayer, incensed indignities
Incurred. Amid the hulls, among Achaians,
With suppliant means he met Atreyedes,

To whom in ceaseless loads the ransom for
His child he brought. Wound over a wand of gold,
The sacred fillets, held by him, Hekebolos1
Denoted. In his plea therewith he told

The tribes' full throng of ransom. But the sons

Of Atreus in beseechment he addressed
At greater length. "You brethren kingly born,
Atreyedai, and you Achaians, blessed

I'd see you by the Gods, by their great boon
Granted an avid sack in Ilium soon."

REVIEW COMMENT

Light has translated the *Iliad* in a sequence of 1823 sonnets (the passages above come from the opening pages). The first book is slated for publication in *Sonnetto Poesia*. His preface explains his artistic purpose:

> Homer's rapid words of music afforded more astounding pleasure to the Greek and Roman world than any other book. His idiom should be translated astoundingly by a stylist of Homeric character and care.
>
> My resolve is to write a greater Iliad in English than Homer composed in Greek. Being faithful to the greatest text of ancient poetry, more so than Alexander Pope, I cannot choose but honor the divine.
>
> My translation impersonates Homeric Greek. It runs like Achilleus and like man-shattering Hector in the shock of arms is resolutely sharp. As unrelenting as sublimity, not yielding lyrically, unprosaically vindicating Homer's vision, the brightest labor I have attempted and believe it is a consummate attempt.
>
> Homeric Greek is simply salubrious, soulfully celeritous, resuscitantly poetic, never prosaic. As Mozart sounds like Mozart in all his compositions, so Homer has a tone of voice specific to the vehemence of life. My translation, I believe, has this Homeric music quite unlike the unspritely softness of tenured professors. This book has the passion and devoutness of a striver in the open market. The professors have credentials. I must prove myself.

For a free audio preview of Light's translation of the Iliad please use the following link: **Light *Iliad***.

Homer
The Iliad
translated by Anthony Verity
(Oxford University Press, 2010)

SING, goddess, the anger* of Achilles, Peleus' son,
the accursed anger which brought the Achaeans countless
agonies and hurled many mighty shades of heroes into Hades,*
causing them to become the prey of dogs and
all kinds of birds; and the plan of Zeus was fulfilled.
Sing from the time the two men were first divided in strife—
Atreus' son,* lord of men, and glorious Achilles.
Which of the gods was it who set them to quarrel and fight?
The son of Zeus and Leto,* for he was bitter against the king, and
roused an evil plague through the camp, and the people went on
dying,
because the son of Atreus had dishonoured his priest Chryses.
This man had come to the swift ships the Achaeans to
redeem his daughter, bringing a boundless ransom and holding
in his hands the woollen bands of Apollo who shoots from afar,*
fixed to a golden staff. He entreated all the Achaeans, but
especially the two sons of Atreus, marshals of the people:
'You sons of Atreus, and you other well-greaved Achaeans,
may the gods who have their homes on Olympus grant
that you sack the city of Priam and return safely home.
Only release my dear child, and accept his ransom, and
show reverence to Zeus' son Apollo who shoots from afar.'
Then all the rest of the Achaeans shouted their approval, that
they should be in awe of the priest and accept the splendid ransom,
but this found no favour in the heart of Atreus' son Agamemnon;
he sent Chryses roughly away, and added a harsh command:
'Let me not discover you, old man, beside our hollow ships,
either dawdling here now or returning again later,
in case your staff and the god's bands prove no help to you.
I will not let the girl go; before I do, old age will find her
in my house in Argos, far from her fatherland, going
back and forth at the loom and serving me in my bed.
Go, do not provoke me; this way you will return unharmed.'

REVIEW COMMENT

Anthony Verity organizes the text of his translation of the *Iliad* on as close an approximation to the Greek lineation as possible and strives "to use a straightforward English register and to adhere closely to the Greek, allowing

Homer to speak for himself." He further states that his text "does not claim to be poetry." It's just as well he makes that clear, because, although the text is divided up so that it looks like poetry, most of the time it reads like fairly standard prose arbitrarily (and often awkwardly) carved up to match the Greek line numbers, without any regard for a more or less regular rhythm or line length.

In his introduction, Verity talks a good deal about Homer as a poet and offers us the following advice: ""Rather than looking for the poet of the *Iliad*, then, it seems more fruitful to look for the poet in the *Iliad*." That being his recommendation, it does seem curious that his text is constantly reminding us that, while Homer's original text is a poem, this *Iliad* is an extremely prosaic offering—not much sense of a poet lurking in these lines. His scrupulous fidelity to Homer is not, by itself, sufficient to deliver "the poem's directness and power," at least not consistently, especially in the speeches. I really don't know why Verity didn't simply offer us a prose translation (with appropriate line references to the Greek text, if necessary). After all, producing a text that looks like a poem but simply ignores some of the basic requirements of a poetic style runs the risk of constantly disappointing the reader's legitimate expectations.

For a lengthier review of Verity's *Iliad*, consult the following: **Open Letters Monthly**.

For a more extensive preview of Book One of Verity's translation, please consult the following link: **Verity *Iliad***.

Homer
The Iliad
Translated by Stephen Mitchell
(NY: Free Press, 2011)

Sample from the Opening of the Poem

The rage of Achilles—sing it now, goddess, sing through me
the deadly rage that caused the Achaeans such grief
and hurled down to Hades the souls of so many fighters,
leaving their naked flesh to be eaten by dogs
and carrion birds, as the will of Zeus was accomplished.
Begin at the time when bitter words first divided
the king of men, Agamemnon, and godlike Achilles.

What god was it who caused the two men to clash?
Apollo, who took offense at the king and sent
a deadly plague to the camp, and many were dying,
because he had dishonored the god's priest, Chryses,
who had come with a splendid ransom to the beached ships
to beg for his daughter's freedom. Holding the god's
golden staff adorned with his sacred ribbons,
he addressed the Achaean army, and most of all
the commanders Agamemnon and Menelaus:
"Sons of Atreus, and all you Achaean soldiers,
may the gods allow you to plunder Priam's great city,
then grant you a safe homecoming. But hear my plea.
Give me back my dear child; accept this ransom,
in reverence for Apollo, who strikes from afar."

Then all the Achaeans shouted out their assent
to honor the priest and accept the glorious ransom.
But this did not please Agamemnon, and he refused,
frowning, and sent him off with a harsh command:
"Get out of here now, old man, and don't let me find you
loitering by our ships or sneaking back later,
for then not even the staff of the god will save you.
As for your daughter: No—I will not return her.
She will grow old in Argos, far from her own dear country,
working the loom and coming to bed when I call her.
Go, before I get angry . . . while you still can."

Review Comment

Stephen Mitchell's new translation of the *Iliad* has attracted much attention recently, partly because Mitchell has earned a reputation as a fine translator of epic poems and partly because he takes as his starting point the Greek text prepared by the eminent scholar M. L. West, an *Iliad* which is considerably shorter (by over 1000 lines) than the standard Homeric text used by virtually all translators for hundreds of years. In West's (idiosyncratic?) view, that traditional text has been diluted by generations of rhapsodes, and their additions need to be purged in order to get back to the purity of the original.

Since these impure additions include most of the Homeric epithets and patronyms and all of Book X, one is entitled to wonder what the reader may be losing. As I have mentioned elsewhere, there is a long (but minor) tradition of disparaging Homer's epithets (which in Mitchell's view are "often merely tedious"), but they are the most immediately distinctive and famous feature of Homer's style. For many readers they are essential elements rather than easily disposable fill. Moreover, whatever aesthetic reasons one might have for excising lengthier passages, one needs to bear in mind that the *Iliad* is not simply an "original" text as a particular scholar (no matter how distinguished) may conceive it; it is also the poem as it has been accepted and read by countless generations. Many people have on aesthetic grounds challenged the ending of the Book of Job as an inauthentic part of the story, but without solid documentary proof few, I suspect, would recommend getting rid of it, simply because it has become, over time, an integral part of that text. Similarly Book X of the *Iliad*, no matter what one thinks of it (Mitchell finds it "baroque and nasty"), has long been part of the poem and, without incontrovertible evidence to justify the omission, its removal seems unduly capricious.

Mitchell uses "a minimally iambic five-beat line . . . it usually has from twelve to fourteen syllables, and occasionally eleven or fifteen. . . . With diction as with rhythm I have tried to sound natural, to write in a language that felt genuine to me, neither too formal nor too colloquial." The result is a fast, clear, and rhythmic line in a recognizably modern language that keeps the poem moving forward, a welcome change from some of the rhythmically inert offerings of Homer's poems in recent years.

Offsetting the generally effective rhythm, however, is a frequently loose syntax with, in many places, little sense of urgent compression, an effect that is especially evident in the way Mitchell uses simple conjunctions (particularly and) to pile one detail on top of another in a simple additive sequence:

Hector and the front ranks of the Trojans retreated,
and the Argives gave a loud shout and dragged off the bodies

and pushed far ahead. And Apollo looked on indignant,
from Pérgamus, and he shouted down to the Trojans. . . .

But Diomedes charged forward and hurled his spear,
and it hit the young man in the chest, between his nipples,
and it knocked him out of the chariot into the dust.
And Idǽus jumped off and, terrified, ran for his life. . . .

In passages like these, if one starts to anticipate the next *and* (hard not to do, given the frequency of the word) this stylistic feature can get quite irritating.

Mitchell, like some other translators, also has trouble establishing a consistently satisfying diction. For the most part, his language is sufficiently clear and direct, but there are times when the insertion of a modern colloquial expression ("son of a bitch," "sissy," "open his trap," and so on) seems rather at odds with his desire to get back to the purity of the original. People's reactions to such sudden reminders of a distinctively modern slangy idiom vary, of course, so what one reader may accept as a vivid and appropriate contemporary expression another may well deplore as an unwelcome interruption of her imaginative contact with Homer's world (not an uncommon complaint with Lombardo's translation, as well).

All that said, this translation is well worth the reader's attention, and someone seeking a text of the *Iliad* for classroom use should certainly consider it. I suspect, however, that many teachers in search of a full text of a translated *Iliad* may not be happy about the omissions, and Mitchell's text is too long for those seeking an abridged version.

For a lengthier and more detailed review of Mitchell's *Iliad*, please consult the following link: **Mitchell *Iliad* Review**.

For a more extensive preview (at Amazon) of Mitchell's translation, please use the following link **Mitchell *Iliad***.

The Iliad
A new rendering in heroic verse
James Muirden
Westfield Books
Rewe, 2012

BOOK I

The cause of the discord between Agamemnon and Achilles

Sing of Achilles, Peleus's son!
Sing, goddess, of his rage! Tell everyone
what sorrow the Achæans had to bear;
sing of the valiant men, the warriors there,
a feast for dogs and birds of every kind,
their countless souls to Hades' depths consigned.
Zeus willed it all, and so it had to be!
Goddess, here's where to start your history—
lord Agamemnon, son of Atreus,
defies noble Achilles. Sing to us!

The god Apollo (Leto's son by Zeus)
thought Agamemnon's attitude obtuse,
and started shooting arrows from his bow
that laid a good part of the army low.
What started their disastrous dispute?
Chryses, Apollo's priest, had brought his suit
to Atreus' son: the king had seized
his daughter as a prize, and, most displeased,
he reached the swift Achæan ships. He'd brought
a ransom with him of a priceless sort
to buy her freedom, holding in his hand
long-armed Apollo's brow-encircling band,
beribboned, set upon a staff of gold.
His tale the unhappy father told
to the Achæans; but really what he said
was meant for Atreus's sons, who led
the marshalled armies. He addressed them thus.
"Well-greaved Achæans. Sons of Atreus!
May all the gods who on Olympus dwell
return you to your homeland safe and well
when you've sacked Priam's city! As for me,
I've come to plead to have my child set free.

Don't scorn Apollo's ransom, but obey—
he's Zeus's son, and strikes from far away."

All the Achæans wanted her released:
accept the princely ransom, soothe the priest!
But Agamemnon, Atreus's son,
would not be influenced by anyone.
"Away, old man! If you should dally here
beside the hollow ships, or reappear,
even the staff and ribbons that you've brought
won't save your precious skin once you've been caught!
Your daughter's mine, you've no parental rights;
in Argos she will weave, and cheer my nights
until time robs her of her beauteous state
at which point I shall choose another mate.
Be warned—it isn't healthy for you here.
Don't hang around the ships. Just disappear!"

The old man, paralysed with fright, obeyed.
He wandered by the sounding sea, dismayed,
and when he was alone, he started praying
to fair-haired Let's son Apollo, saying:
"God of the silver bow, listen to me!
You rule Tenedos in the Trojan sea,
the towns of Cilla and of Chrysa too—
oh Smintheus, if ever I built for you
a well-roofed temple solely for your praise,
or set fat thighs of bulls or goats ablaze,
make these Danaans pay for how I feel.
I've had no luck at all with my appeal!"

Phœbus Apollo heard, and strode full pelt
down from Olympus, on whose peaks he dwelt,
with bow and quiver. Night closed on his track,
his stock of arrows clattered on his back,
and sitting near the ships a shaft he loosed:
a dreadful twang the silver bow produced.
The mules and the swift dogs came off worst
to start with, since he set upon them first;
but then the men themselves began to die.
the smoke of burning corpses dimmed the sky.
For nine long days the fires never ceased
as he repaid the insult to his priest.

[For formatting reasons I have omitted the short descriptive headings the translation includes at the start of each "stanza."]

REVIEW COMMENT

To judge from his previous work, Muirden would seem to have something of an obsession with rhyme, so it is perhaps not surprising that his choice of verse form is the heroic couplet. He undertook the translation, he says, because it would make him read every word of the *Iliad*, at least in English (since he does not read Greek, he worked from the A. T. Murray translation) and because the poem, "like Mount Everest" is "there" (reasons which I find perfectly acceptable and persuasive).

Well, it takes a brave translator to invite comparisons with Alexander Pope, whose heroic couplet translation of the *Iliad* is one of the masterpieces of English literature. So remarkable was Pope's genius that he makes this very challenging metre seem natural and easy when it is anything but, as one quickly discovers in reading Muirden's verse. Many of his couplets may be acceptable enough, but too often what he is prepared to sacrifice on the altar of Rhyme saps one's imaginative contact with the poem. One gets the frequent feeling that a sentence has been unnecessarily padded ("a ransom with him of a priceless sort," "robs her of her beauteous state,") or that a rather strange word has been chosen ("obtuse," "parental rights,") to meet the demands of the rhyming couplet. One can readily admire Muirden's skill at producing rhyming words, but the price seems unnecessarily high.

[

The Iliad: A Southern African Translation

Richard Whitaker

Sample from Book 1

Muse, sing the rage of Peleus' son Akhilleus,
deadly rage that brought the Akhaians endless pain,
that hurled down to Hades many strong souls
of heroes and made their bodies meat for dogs
and vultures, fulfilling the plan of Zeus,
ever since that day those two quarreled—
inkosi Agamemnon and godlike Akhilleus.
Which god made them clash in strife? The son
of Zeus and Leto. Angry with the chief,
he drove plague on the impis—people died
because Atreus' son dishonoured the priest,
Khryses. He came to the Akhaian ships
to free his daughter, offering rich ransom,
holding in his hands Apollo's ribbons
around a golden staff, and begged the Akhaians,
above all Atreus' two sons, their leaders:
'Sons of Atreus, all well-greaved Akhaians,
may the Olympian gods grant that you sack
the town of Priam and come safely home.
Take this ransom and release my daughter;
respect Apollo the Archer, Zeus's son.'
The other Akhaians shouted their assent:
he should respect the priest and take the splendid ransom.
This failed to please the heart of Agamemnon;
he harshly dismissed Khryses, saying roughly:
'Kehla, don't let me find you hanging
around the ships, now or in the future—
the god's staff and ribbons won't protect you.
I will not release her—before that, she'll grow old
in my home, in Argos, far from her native land,
working the loom and servicing my bed.
Go! don't annoy me and put yourself in danger.'
He spoke. The old man trembled and obeyed . . .

REVIEW COMMENT

The following remarks are based upon only a few selections (the ones available for preview online).

Richard Whitaker's translation uses a number of South African English words to provide the Southern African element in his translation: amakhosi (commanders), kgotla (assembly), assegai (spear), and so on. On the basis of what I have read, everything else in the poem is easily recognizable as standard modern English. I would think that only someone to whom this regional vocabulary is quite familiar can properly judge if it adds anything significantly poetical to the translation. To others (like myself) the result is inevitably rather odd, in spite of delightful new words like sloot (ditch) and kloof (glen). I'm not sure that the invitation the language proffers to see the Iliadic warriors as Africans makes the imaginative impact of the poem any more vivid or intense.

The style appears clear and straightforward, although the rhythm is not particularly impressive (at least in the samples I read). And, as I have repeatedly said elsewhere, the merits of having a translation with exactly the same number of lines as Homer's text seem vastly overrated.

For a more thorough review of Whitaker's translation please use the following links: **Bryn Mawr Classical Review**; **The Free Library** (this site offers links to the full translation).

Homer
The Iliad
Translated by Edward McCrorie
Johns Hopkins University Press
2012

[Sample from the Opening of the Poem]

♦ Sing of rage, Goddess, that bane of Akhilleus,
♦ Peleus' son, which caused untold pain for Akhaians,
♦ sent down throngs of powerful spirits to Aides,
war-chiefs rendered the prize of dogs and every
♦ sort of bird. So the plan of Zeus was accomplished
right from the start when two men parted in anger--
♦ Atreus' son, ruler of men, and godlike Akhilleus.

Which of the Gods brought these two into conflict?
♦ Phiobos, the son of Leto and Zeus, enraged at the ruler,
roused a mauling plague in the camp. Warriors perished
due to Atreus' son mistreating the God's priest:
Khruses had gone to the race-fast ships of the Greek force
♦ carrying boundless wealth to ransom his daughter.
Holding headbands for Far-shooting Apollo
high on a golden staff, he's begged all the Akhaians,
mainly the sons of Atreus, who'd marshaled the whole corps:
♦ "Sons of Atreus, you other well-greaved Akhaians,
♦ may the Gods who have their homes on Olumpos
♦ grant you destroy Priam's town and safely return home.
Free the child I love, though. Welcome my ransom,
fearing the son of Zeus, Far-shooting Apollo."
Promptly all the other Akhaians acclaimed him,
urging regard for the priest and his marvellous ransom.

Yet the heart of Atreus' son, Agamemnon, was not pleased.
Sending him off roughly, he weighed him with strong words:
♦ "Let me not find you, old man, stopped by the hollow
ships for now or coming around here later,
lest your God's headbands and staff will not help you.
I won't free her. Aging will come on her sooner
♦ living in Argos, our house, far from her homeland.
♦ There she can shuttle at looms and come to her lord's bed.
♦ Leave now, go home safely, don't be annoying."
After he stopped, the old one, trembling, obeyed him.
Soon he quietly walked the noisy shore of the salt sea.

Once he had gone apart, the old one prayed to his lordly
Phoibos Apollo, the son of lovely haired Leto.
"You of the Silver Bow, listen! You guard well
♦ Khruse and sacred Killa, you rule Tenedos strongly.
♦ If I ever roofed a temple that graced you,
♦ if I ever burned for you, Smintheus, fat-rich
bulls' and goats' thighs, act on my longing.
♦ Make the Greeks pay for my tears with your arrows."

REVIEW COMMENT

McCrorie's translation stays close to the Greek text and the English is generally clear enough, so that the reader does not have to pause from time to time to figure out what a particular sentence means (as she does with Lattimore, for example). I find his habit of ending a line with a modifier (not a common practice in English verse) irritating ("the hollow/ ships"; "his lordly/ Phoibos Apollo"; "fat-rich/ bulls' and goats' thighs") and his wording of certain phrases seems, well, unidiomatic ("she can shuttle at looms"; "a mauling plague"; "you rule Tenedos strongly").

The black diamond symbol at the start of some times indicates that there is a relevant note at the back of the book. This seems unduly distracting, since it gives the symbol unnecessary emphasis and requires the reader who wishes to consult the note to abandon the text momentarily and move to another distant page.

For a longer and more scholarly review, please use the following link: **Bryn Mawr Classical Review**.

For a longer preview of McCrorie's translation, please use the following link: **McCrorie *Iliad***.

The Iliad

A New Translation by Peter Green
University of California Press, 2015

OPENING LINES OF BOOK I

Wrath, goddess, sing of Achilles Pēleus's son's
calamitous wrath, which hit the Achaians with countless ills—
many the valiant souls it saw off down to Hādēs,
souls of heroes, their selves left as carrion for dogs
and all birds of prey, and the plan of Zeus was fulfilled—
from the first moment those two men parted in fury,
Atreus's son, king of men, and the godlike Achilles.

Which of the gods was it brought them into contention?
Lētō's and Zeus's son: for he, enraged by the king,
spread a foul plague through the army, and men were dying,
all because Chrysēs his priest had been dishonored
by Atreus's son. Chrysēs came to the Achaians' swift ships
to win his daughter's release, bringing ransom past counting,
in his hands the laurel wreath of the deadly archer Apollo
on a golden staff, and made his plea to all the Achaians,
but first to the two sons of Atreus, the host's field marshals:

"Atreus's sons, and you other well-greaved Achaeans,
may the gods who have their homes on Olympos grant you
to sack Priam's city, and win a safe homecoming!
But release my dear daughter, accept the ransom I offer,
show respect to Zeus's son, Apollo, the deadly archer."

Then all the other Achaians spoke up in agreement—
to respect the priest, to accept his splendid ransom.
Yet Atreus's son Agamemnōn's angry heart remained untouched.
Brusquely he turned him away with words of harsh dismissal:
"Don't let me find you still here, old man, by the hollow ships,
either loitering now or making your way back later,
lest your staff and the god's wreath afford you no protection!
Her I shall not release—no, sooner will old age reach her
in our house, in Argos, far away from her native country,
working to and fro at the loom and sharing my bed. Now go—
and do not provoke me, if you want to depart in safety."

So he spoke: the old man was scared and obeyed his words.

Silent along the shore of the thunderous sea he went;
but once well away, long and deeply the old man prayed
to Apollo his lord, the child of fair-haired Lētō:
"Hear me, you of the silver bow, protector of Chrysē
and holy Killa, who rule with might over Tenedos—
Smintheus, if ever for you I roofed a pleasing precinct,
if ever I burned for you the fat-rich thighbones
of bull or goat, now grant me this my desire:
use your arrows to make the Danaäns pay for my tears.

REVIEW COMMENTS

Peter Green's translation, one reviewer (James Romm) has remarked, is "best characterized as an update on Lattimore's." Green uses a similar poetic form to create a line-by-line version of Homer's poem, and his diction, although occasionally erratic, produces an English that is easier to navigate than the earlier translation. Green's English poetry, however, is rarely urgent or concise, a feature which has a deleterious effect, particularly on the speeches.

Green provides considerable scholarly assistance in his footnotes and copious endnotes. These will prove useful for anyone seeking explanatory assistance, but in many cases most of the details are not necessary for an immediate understanding of what is going on in the poem, and they can at times be quite distracting and even irritating (when one senses that the translator is attempting to guide our interpretative response).

A larger selection of the translation (at Amazon) is available **here**.

Review by **James Romm** (Eidolon).

Review by **Steve Donoghue** (Open Letters Monthly).

The Iliad
A New Translation by Caroline Alexander
HarperCollins 2015

Sample from the Opening of the Poem

1 ILIÁDOS A

Wrath—sing, goddess, of the ruinous wrath of Peleus' son Achilles,
that inflicted woes without number upon the Achaeans,
hurled forth to Hades many strong souls of warriors
and rendered their bodies prey for the dogs,
for all birds, and the will of Zeus was accomplished;
sing from when they two first stood in conflict—
Atreus' son, lord or men, and godlike Achilles

Which of the gods, then, set these two together in conflict, to fight?
Apollo, son of Leto and Zeus; who in his rage at the king
raised a virulent plague through the army; the men were dying
because the son of Atreus dishonored the priest Chryses.
For he came to the Achaeans' swift ships
bearing countless gifts to ransom his daughter,
holding in his hands on a golden staff the wreaths of Apollo
who strikes from afar, and beseeched all the Achaeans—

"Sons of Atreus and you other strong-greaved Achaeans,
may the gods who have homes on Olympus grant you
to plunder the city of Priam, and reach your home safely;
release to me my beloved daughter, take instead the ransom,
revering Zeus' son who strikes from afar—Apollo."

Then the rest of the Achaeans all shouted assent,
to respect the priest and accept the splendid random;
but this did not please the heart of Atreus' son Agamemnon,
and violently he sent him away and laid a powerful warning upon him:
"Let me not find you, old man, near our hollow ships,
either loitering now or coming again later,
lest the god's staff and wreath not protect you.
The girl I will not release; sooner will old age come upon her
in our house, in Argos, far from her homeland,
pacing back and forth by the loom and sharing my bed.
So go, do not make me angry, and you will return the safer."

Thus he spoke; and old man was afraid and obeyed his word,

and he went in silence along the shore of the tumultuous sea.
And going aside, the old man fervently prayed
to lord Apollo, whom lovely-haired Leto bore:
"Hear me, God of the silver bow, you who stand over Chryse
and Killa most holy, you whose might rules Tenedos,
God of Plague; if ever I roofed over a temple that pleased you,
or if ever I burned as sacrifice to you the fatty thighbones
of bulls and of goats—grant me this wish:
May the Danaans pay for my tears with your arrows."

Thus he prayed, and Phoebus Apollo heard him,
and set out from the heights of Olympus, rage in his heart,
with his bow on his shoulders and hooded quiver;
the arrows clattered on his shoulders as he raged,
as the god himself moved; and he came like the night.
Then far from the ships he crouched, and let loose and arrow—
and terrible was the ring of his silver bow.
First he went after the mules and sleek dogs,
but then, letting fly a sharp arrow, he struck at the men themselves,
and the crowded pyres of the dead burned without ceasing.

Review Comment

Caroline Alexander, the first woman to be listed on these pages, sets out "to render a line-by-line translation as far as English grammar allows; [the] translation, therefore, has the same number of lines as the Greek text and generally accords with the Greek lineation." Alexander takes particular care to stay close to the Greek text—her sense of the Greek is sensitive and precise—and achieves her desire to adhere to the Greek lineation by expanding or contracting the lines at will (anywhere from fewer than ten syllables to more than twenty for no apparent poetic reason other than to stick to her stated intentions of matching Homer's lineation), a style I find quite irritating. I miss the compression and momentum of an exciting and dramatic and often passionate traditional epic. The diction and sentence structure are generally clear but otherwise unremarkable. Based on the selections I have read, I suspect reactions to the translation will depend a great deal on the extent to which people are prepared to accept what often reads as rather loose and (at times) inert English free verse.

Read more of the Amazon selection here: **Alexander *Iliad*.**

Review in **New York Journal of Books**.

Homer's Iliad
Translated by William Guy
Xlibris, 2015

Sample from the Opening of the Poem

Brutal wrath of Akhilleus,
Peleus's son, o goddess sing--
Which put unnumbered woes on the Akhaioi,
And which hurled to Hades many valiant souls of heroes,
And which made them prey for dogs and all the birds--
And Zeus's will was being brought to pass--
From when the son of Atreus, men's king,
And brilliant Akhilleus first conceived offense and quarreled.
Who of the gods then brought these two
In strife together fighting?
The son of Leto and Zeus.
For he sent dreadful sickness through the army
In his outrage at the king--
Armies died because the son of Atreus
Dishonored Khruses the priest.
For, bearing countless ransom-gifts, he'd come
To the Akhaians' rapid ships to free his daughter,
Holding fillets of Apollo, distant shooter,
In his hands upon the golden staff of office,
He entreated all the Akhaioi,
But the two sons of Atreus, those marshallers
Of armies, most of all:
"Atreus's sons and other well-greaved Akhaioi,
May the gods who have their dwelling in Olumpos
Let you plunder Priam's city, then go home safely.
But release my darling daughter, and accept these gifts
As ransom, and evince respect for Zeus's son
Apollo, distant shooter."
The other Akhaioi nodded their assent
To showing honor to the priest
And to receiving splendid gifts.
But this did not seem pleasing
To the mind of Agamemnon, son of Atreus,
Who insultingly dismissed him,
And imposed a harsh injunction:
"Never let me find you either lingering now
Or later coming back beside the hollow ships, old man,
Lest scepter and the fillets of the god

Should not protect you then.
I will not let her go--before I do old age
Will come upon her at our house in Argos,
Far from her native country,
As she walks along the loom and shares my bed.
Now go away and don't provoke my anger,
So that you may go home more safely."
Thus he spoke, the old man was afraid
And did the bidding of his statement.
He went his way in silence by the shore of the noisy sea.
Stepping aside, the old man prayed intensely to
Apollo the king, whom Leto of the lovely hair had born:
"Hear me, mouse-god, silver-bowed one,
Circling Khruse, sacred Killa round,
And ruling Tenedos with might.
If ever I have put a roof that pleased you on your temple,
If I have ever burnt the fatty thighs of bulls
And goats to you, fulfill for me this wish:
May the Danaoi pay for my tears by your shafts."

REVIEW COMMENT

Guy's translation is in "free verse," but his lines often bring to mind Ezra Pound's dictum: "No verse is libre for the man who wants to do a good job." The most important justification for removing the constraints of a regularly repeating verse form (according to Pound) is to enhance the musical and imagistic quality of the verse, elements that seem in short supply in many of these lines. One can justly wonder whether adopting a free verse format adds anything to what is essentially a prose translation (a question worth directing at other free verse translations).

Guy's English is sufficiently clear, although at times one wonders about certain choices ("you've never had the guts to put on armour," "did the bidding of his statement," and about the curious repetitions, "which . . . / And which . . . / And which . . ."; "They furled their sail when they had reached/ The many-recessed harbor, and they placed it/ In the black ship, they had let it down by ropes--/ They brought the mast down swiftly to the crutch,/ They rowed it to its anchorage with oars./ They threw the stones with hawsers out,/ They bound them firmly to the stern./ They stepped out at the breakers' edge,/ They disembarked the animals devoted to Apollo . . ." I find it difficult to understand why Guy has chosen to write in this way, rather than using a less repetitive syntax.

For a longer preview of Guy's translation, please use the following link: **Guy *Iliad***

Homer
The Iliad
Translated by Joe Sachs
Philadelphia 2008

Selection from the Opening of the Poem

Sing of wrath, goddess—the deadly wrath of Peleus' son Achilles,
that brought sufferings by the housands down on the Achaeans and
hurled so many sturdy souls to the realm of Hades, souls of splendid
warriors, while they themselves were left for dogs and all manner of
carrion birds to feast on, as the will of Zeus went driving toward its
goal; start your song from the moment when the two first stood face
to face in open strife—Agamemnon, lord of men, and godlike Achilles.

And who among the gods brought those two to that fierce clash?
It was the son of Zeus and Leto who in anger at the king stirred up
a dreadful pestilence throughout the army; the men were dying off,
all because the son of Atreus had treated Apollo's priest Chryses with
disrespect when he came to the swift ships of the Achaeans bringing
countless gifts as ransom to win release of his daughter, bearing in
his hands the wreaths of Apollo, the god who strikes from afar, as
signs of office on his olden staff. He made his appeal to all the
Achaeans, and especially to the sons of Atreus, the pair who led them:
"Sons of Atreus, and the rest of you Achaeans clad in head-to-foot
armor, may the gods who have their homes on Olympus grant that
you sack the city of Priam and make a safe return to your homes;
but please release my beloved child to me and accept this ransom
out of reverence for the son of Zeus, Apollo who strikes from afar."

Then all the rest of the Achaeans gave loud shouts of approval for
this gesture of respect to the priest and acceptance of his magnificent
ransom, but this did not please the heart of Atreus' son Agamemnon;
he sent the man off rudely, with a heavy tongue-lashing: "Make sure
I don't catch you again, old man, anywhere near the hollow ships;
don't hang around here now and don't come back here any more,
or not even your staff of office or the wreaths of the god wills save you.
I'm not going to let her go; she'll be an old woman before that ever
happens, in my house in Argos, far from her own country, spending
her life going back and forth at the loom and coming to me in my bed.
Get out before you make me lose my temper, so you can go more safely."
Those were his words, and the old man was frightened and did as
he said; he went off in silence down the beach of the booming sea.
And when he'd gone some distance off, the venerable man made his

fervent prayer to the lord Apollo, born the son of lovely-haired Leto:
"Hear me, lord of the silver bow, you who stand guard over Chrysê
and over sacred Cilla dn hold mighty sway over the isle of Tenedos;
god of the plague, if I ever crowned a shrine with boughs that were
pleasing to you, if I ever burned fat thighs-pieces of bulls or goats to 40
you in sacrifice, then make the prayer I pray you come true—let
Your arrows make the Danaans pay the price for all my tears."

REVIEW COMMENT

In his preface to this translation of the *Iliad*, Sachs tries once again to explain the choices that have produced the distinctly odd style he has chosen for translating Homer: "Just as my translation has no aspiration to be literal, it makes no pretension to be verse. I have imitated to the best of my ability some of the prominent features of Homer's verse. The result does not preserve his hexameters, but it retains his long line. It lacks his dactylic meter but uses any assorted rhythmic touches that came to hand to maintain his forward momentum. . . . I cannot match Homer's poetry, but I have tried as much as possible to stay out of its way."

One senses here (as in Sachs's translation of the *Odyssey*) certain contradictions at work: Sachs eschews trying to be poetical in order to preserve Homer's poetry and claims he is trying to give the reader a sense of the poet's hexameter with "any assorted rhythmic touches that came to hand" and to be faithful to Homer without being literal. Whatever the reasons the translator offers, none of which mitigates the effects of the English results, the translation is not very satisfactory, either as poetry or prose.

For a longer review of Sachs's translation, please use the following link: **Open Letters**.

For a longer preview of Sachs' *Iliad*, use the following link: **Sachs *Iliad***.

Homer's Iliad
Newly Translated into English Verse by Sophie Grace Chappell
(2019)

Sample from the Opening of the Poem

Book One

Begin, goddess, with wrath: wrath of Achilles,
wrath that brought the Greeks ten thousand griefs:
Hades glutted with ghosts of strong young heroes;
the heroes themselves left carrion for the dogs
and every bird of heaven; by Zeus' will.

Tell it from when Agamemnon, king of men,
first fell to quarrelling with bright Achilles.
Which was it of the gods set them at feud?

Apollo, son of Zeus. Angered with the king,
he raised foul plague in the troops, and soldiers died,
when Agamemnon shamed Chryses, his priest.

Chryses had come among the swift ships of the Greeks
with lavish ransom to redeem his daughter.
He held in his hands the bands of far-archer Apollo
upon his golden sceptre; and besought
the whole Greek host, but most the Atreids:

"Atreus' sons—all you Greeks in your fine armour—
may all the gods who dwell in Olympus's halls
grant you the rape of Troy and safe sail home!
But set free my sweet daughter. Take these ransoms.
Take them and please Zeus' son, far-archer Apollo."

And all the other Greeks held it as piety
to reverence the priest and take the ransom.
But he pleaded not to Agamemnon's liking,
who shamed and dismissed him with these brutal words:

"Don't let me, old fool, catch you near our ships.
Don't stick around here now. Don't come back either;
that voodoo-tat you clutch might not protect you.
For I will not release her. She'll grow old
far from her homeland, creature of my harem,

plying her loom and sharing my bed in Argos.
So keep safe: go away, and don't annoy me."

So he spoke, and the scared old man obeyed,
dragged his slow steps by the shore of the echoing sea.
And as the old man trudged his prayers went up
to Lord Apollo, son of fair-haired Leto:

"Hear me, lord of the silver bow! Hear me, you
who haunt holy Killa and Chryse! Hear me, you
who rule in mighty power in Tenedos!
You plague-averting lord! If ever I
built any temple you delighted in,
if ever I laid burning flesh on your altar
of bulls and goats—if so then hear my prayer:
Make the Greeks pay for this. Smite them through thin air."

So he prayed; and Phoebus Apollo heard him,
descended in wrath from the high peaks of Olympus,
his bow on his shoulder and his rain-proofed quiver.
The arrows clattered upon him, a god in wrath,
moving as he moved, as swift as night,
still far from the ships when he stopped and released an arrow;
fearful the clang of the silver bow of the god.
First he struck down their mules and circling dogs,
then his darts of disease infected the soldiers themselves
till burning corpses smouldered in thick-thronged pyres.

Review Comment

Sophie Grace Chappell's "new translation in English verse," a project not yet complete but available, in installments, free of charge on the web, is probably the most colloquial and breezy recent translation of Homer's war epic. The rhythm and diction establish a rapid pace and make the poem immediately accessible to readers with no previous familiarity with Homer. The translator also provides footnotes which such readers will find helpful. All in all, this is a translation one could well recommend to first-time readers of the *Iliad*.

Chappell makes no attempt to stay in very close line-by-line contact with Homer's text, and her word choices are at times questionable ("voodoo-tat," "plague-averting")--characteristics which may annoy the scholar-critics, but this translation is a welcome reminder that the tradition of Homeric translations has room for more free-wheeling and more easily accessible English verse than our modern fashion usually permits.

For access to Chappell's translation, please use the following link: Chappell Iliad

Homer
The Iliad
Translated by Emily Wilson
(Norton, NY, 2023)

[Sample from the Opening of the Poem]

Goddess, sing of the cataclysmic wrath
of great Achilles, son of Peleus,
which caused the Greeks immeasurable pain
and sent so many noble souls of heroes
to Hades, and made men the spoils of dogs,
a banquet for the birds, and so the plan
of Zeus unfolded--starting with the conflict
between great Agamemnon, lord of men,
and glorious Achilles.

Which god set
the pair apart and prompted them to fight?
Apollo, son of Leto and of Zeus.
Furious at the son of Atreus,
the god spread deadly plague throughout the camp,
so that the common troops began to die,
because their leader, Agamemnon, treated
Chryses, Apollo's priest, with disrespect.
This priest had come towards the swift Greek ships,
and faced the warriors bedecked in bronze
to free his daughter with a countless ransom.
He had removed his sacred diadem,
the emblem of the distant god Apollo,
and held it wrapped around a golden staff,
and prayed to all the Greeks, and most especially
the pair of men who brought the troops to Troy;,
the sons of Atreus--Lord Agamemnon
and Menelaus.

"Sons of Atreus,
and all you other warriors from Greece,
I pray the gods who live on Mount Olympus
all you to destroy King Priam's city
and safely reach your homes--if you return
my darling child to me. Accept this ransom,

and satisfy Apollo, son of Zeus,
the god who shoots and strikes from far away."

Then all the other Greeks agreed to take
the lavish ransom and respect the priest.
But this proposal did not please the heart
of Agamemnon, son of Atreus.
He spoke to him aggressively and sent him
harshly away.

"Be off with you, old man!
You must not let me catch you lingering here
beside our hollow ships a moment longer!
And if you ever come back here again,
your staff and diadem will not protect you.
I will not let her go. She shall grow old
a very long way from her fatherland
in Argos, in my house, and work the loom,
and share my bed. Now go! Do not enrage me!
Go, if you want to get away alive!"

At this, the old man was afraid. He left,
and walked in silence on the shore, beside
the loud-resounding rumble of the sea.
Once he was far away from everyone
he prayed to Lord Apollo, son of Leto,
the goddess with the lovely braided hair.

"Lord of the silver bow, now hear my prayer!
Great guardian of Tenedos and Chryse
and sandy Cilla! Mouse lord! If I ever
built temples to your liking, ever burned
fat thighs of oxen or of goats for you,
fulfill this prayer for me, and let the Greeks
suffer your arrows to avenge my tears!"

This was his prayer, and Phoebus heeded him.
Enraged at heart, he swooped down from the peaks
of Mount Olympus, bearing on his shoulders
his quiver and his bow, and as he moved
in rage, his arrows clattered at his back.
Like night the god descended. Then he sat
a distance from the ships and started shooting.
His silver bow let out a dreadful howl.

First, he attacked the mules and nimble dogs,
then turned his piercing weapons on the men,
and pyres were always burning, piled with corpses.

Review Comment

Emily Wilson's translation of the *Iliad* has been widely praised for its clear, sensitive, and accessible English verse--and that praise is richly deserved, for this translation is a valuable addition to our collection of modern English versions of this ancient poem. In the words of one commentator (Johanna Hanink): "She has also given a new generation of readers the tools to approach Homer, with comfort and confidence, for the very first time."

But the undoubted merits of this translation come at a price. In the process of making the poem more comfortable, Wilson has, in the view of some commentators (notably Graeme Wood) defanged Homer. She has damped down one of the most notable features of the vision of life in the *Iliad*, its brutality.

This criticism is worth attending to, because there is no doubt that the harsh savagery on display in the *Iliad* is central to the life of the warriors, an essential part of the strangeness of the ancient poem and of its paradoxical effects. Imaginative contact with this element, after all, elicits from the reader an initial revulsion accompanied by the thrill and wonder (and alarm) of recognizing in oneself a link to the harsh and demanding ethos of the ancient heroes. I'm not sure that "comfortable" is the adjective I would use to describe that feeling.

For a longer preview of Wilson's translation (at Kindle) use the following link: **Wilson *Iliad***.

The Iliad
of Homer
Translated by
John Prendergast
(2023)

[Selection from the Opening of the Poem]

The Wrath of Achilles

Book One

The wrath sing of, Goddess, of the son of Peleus, Achilles,
ruinous, it upon Achaeans countless pains put,
and many worthy lives to Hades sent forth
of heroes, and made them spoils for dogs
and birds, all kinds, and fulfilled was Zeus' plan,
from when indeed they first divided stood, having contended,
the son of Atreus, lord of men, and also divine Achilles.
And which then of the gods these two in strife together sent to fight?
Leto's and Zeus' son, for he, at the king having been galled,
a sickness upon the army stirred, baneful, and perished the folk,
because Chryses had been dishonored, his priest,
by the son of Atreus, for he came on the sweeping ships of the Achaeans
to loose his daughter and bearing boundless ransom,
garlands holding in hands of striker-from-afar, Apollo,
upon a golden scepter, and he pleaded to all Achaeans,
the sons of Atreus the most, the two, order-givers of the folk:
"Sons of Atreus and also other well-greaved Achaeans,
for you may the gods grant, those holding Olympian houses,
to sack Priam's city, and well homeward to come,
and the child to me dear may you loose, and this ransom receive,
in awe being of Zeus' son, the striker-from-afar, Apollo."
There the others, all, spoke on well, the Achaeans,
to revere the priest and splendid ransom receive;
but not for the son of Atreus, Agamemnon, did it put pleasure in heart,
but badly he sent away, and upon a strong speech he imposed:
"Not you, elder, must I beside the hollow ships meet,
either now lingering, or later once more coming,
lest now for you not of help would be the scepter and garland of the god.

And her I will not loose, before on her also age comes
within our home in Argos far from her fatherland,
the loom going on and my bed encountering.
But go, lest me you goad, so safe you would return."

REVIEW COMMENT

Prendergast has imposed on his translation a surprising condition: he strives to use a clear language in which the individual words follow as closely as possible the same order as in the Greek original (with, if necessary, a few concessions to English syntax).

> My new translation stands apart from the others. It is made for people, like myself, who care to know what Homer actually said in the way he actually said it. I want to preserve Homer's epic style, not only in the big way, but in the little ways as well. The aim is to be a pleasure to read, while affording a more faithful telling of the tale and a more truthful view of Homer's pantheon. As demonstrated by my sample passages in this article, the order of words and the form and case of each word are preserved according to Homer's text within limits allowed by English syntax. The system of word formulas that Homer followed to compose his epic are thereby for the first time apparent in plain English, so the reading experience approaches reading the original Greek off the page.

Readers can judge the result for themselves. If interested, they can read Prendergast's lengthy defence of this decidedly odd decision here: Prendergast.

The translation is also remarkable for the choice of font, as Prendergast explains: "I have chosen Comic Sans, because that font is easier to read and confers the sense of a hand-written tale from ancient times. A legendary epic sanctioned by its antiquity should not read like modern newsprint. Comic Sans as a font is analogous to a swimming suit, which is not suited for serious and professional settings, and most any other, but when used in a setting for which it was designed, it is better suited."

To read a longer sample of the translation (at Amazon), use this link: **Predergast *Iliad***.

The Odyssey
translated by George Chapman
London 1616

[Sample from the Opening of the Poem]

THE man, O Muse, inform, that many a way
Wound with his wisdom to his wished stay;
That wandered wondrous far, when he the town
Of sacred Troy had sack'd and shivered down;
The cities of a world of nations,
With all their manners, minds, and fashions,
He saw and knew; at sea felt many woes,
Much care sustained, to save from overthrows
Himself and friends in their retreat for home;
But so their fates he could not overcome,
Though much he thirsted it. O men unwise,
They perish'd by their own impieties,
That in their hunger's rapine would not shun
The oxen of the lofty-going Sun,
Who therefore from their eyes the day bereft
Of safe return. These acts, in some part left,
Tell us, as others, deified Seed of Jove.
Now all the rest that austere death outstrove
At Troy's long siege at home safe anchor'd are,
Free from the malice both of sea and war;
Only Ulysses is denied access
To wife and home. The grace of Goddesses,
The reverend nymph Calypso, did detain
Him in her caves, past all the race of men
Enflam'd to make him her lov'd lord and spouse.
And when the Gods had destin'd that his house,
Which Ithaca on her rough bosom bears,
(The point of time wrought out by ambient years)
Should be his haven, Contention still extends
Her envy to him, even amongst his friends.
All Gods took pity on him; only he,
That girds earth in the cincture of the sea,
Divine Ulysses ever did envy,
And made the fix'd port of his birth to fly.
But he himself solemnized a retreat
To th' Æthiops, far dissunder'd in their seat,
(In two parts parted, at the sun's descent,

And underneath his golden orient,
The first and last of men) t' enjoy their feast
Of bulls and lambs, in hecatombs address'd;
At which he sat, given over to delight.
The other Gods in heaven's supremest height
Were all in council met; to whom began
The mighty Father both of God and man
Discourse, inducing matter that inclined
To wise Ulysses, calling to his mind
Faultful Ægisthus, who to death was done
By young Orestes, Agamemnon's son.
His memory to the Immortals then
Mov'd Jove thus deeply: "O how falsely men
Accuse us Gods as authors of their ill,
When by the bane their own bad lives instil
They suffer all the miseries of their states,
Past our inflictions, and beyond their fates.
As now Ægisthus, past his fate, did wed
The wife of Agamemnon, and (in dread
To suffer death himself) to shun his ill,
Incurred it by the loose bent of his will,
In slaughtering Atrides in retreat.
Which we foretold him would so hardly set
To his murderous purpose, sending Mercury
That slaughter'd Argus, our considerate spy,
To give him this charge: 'Do not wed his wife,
Nor murder him; for thou shalt buy his life
With ransom of thine own, imposed on thee
By his Orestes, when in him shall be
Atrides' self renew'd, and but the prime
Of youth's spring put abroad, in thirst to climb
His haughty father's throne by his high acts.'
These words of Hermes wrought not into facts
Ægisthus' powers; good counsel he despised,
And to that good his ill is sacrificed."

REVIEW COMMENT

Chapman abandons the fourteen syllable lines of his *Iliad* for pentameter rhyming couplets. His *Odyssey*, like his *Iliad*, is clear, vigorous, and still a pleasure to browse through (for all the liberties he takes with Homer's text). For the full text of Chapman's translation of the *Odyssey*, use the following link: Bartleby Chapman.

HOMER HIS ODYSSES TRANSLATED, ADORN'D WITH SCULPTURE, AND ILLUSTRATED WITH ANNOTATIONS,

BY JOHN OGILBY, Esq Master of His MAJESTIES Revells in the Kingdom of IRELAND.

LONDON, Printed by THOMAS ROYCROFT, for the Author, MDCLXV.

THE ARGUMENT.

A Court of Gods: Telemachus complains To Pallas. Sutors ryot: Phemius strains. Penelope disgust; Pallas inspires The Prince with Strength and Prudence, then retires. Antinous girds, Telemachus retorts, Eurymachus sides: Night closeth strife and Sports.

That prudent Heroes wandring, Muse rehearse,
Who (Troy being sack'd) coasting the Universe,
Saw many Cities, and their various Modes;
Much sufering, tost by Storms on raging Floods,
His Friends conducting to their native coast;
But all in vain, for he his Navy lost,
And they their lives prophanely feasting on
Heards consecrated to the glorious Sun;
Who much incens'd obstructed so their way
They nere return'd: Joves Daughter this display.

All now by Wars and Billows undestroy'd
Were safe at home, He only not enjoy'd
His dearest Spouse, nor wish'd-for Passage gain'd,
Whilst in her Cave Calypso him detain'd,
And hop'd to Wed. But when the Circling Sphears
Completed had the Fate-appointed years
That he his home and Native soyle should see
(Not from intesting broyles and trouble free)
The Gods all pittied him; but Neptunes rage,
Untill he landed, Vowes could nere asswage:
Who now to Aethiops distant Regions gon
(That verge the rising and descending Sun)
At plenteous Tables highly entertain'd,
Sate, where his Altars Hecarombs distain'd,
Whil'st th'other Gods in Heavens high Palace met,
There Jove reminding with no small regret,
Aegisthus storie, whom Atrides Son
Orestes slew, thus in full Court begun;

How fondly Mortals us accuse, that we
Both of their crimes and sufferings Authors be,
When by their folly they themselves destroy;
So Agamemnon new return'd from Troy
Aegisthus murther'd, then Espous'd his Wife,
Though Hermes him on forfeit of his Life
From us forbad; Kill not the King he said,
Nor Clytemnestra that Adultress Wed,
Lest young Orestes his Revenger come,
And these usurped Kingdoms reassume:
Yet obstinate he would not us regard,
So his fowle crime hath met a due reward.

[The above sample is somewhat differently formatted than the original.]

REVIEW COMMENT

Ogilby's *Odyssey*, like his *Iliad*, is a lavish publication, probably the most expensively produced edition of English Homer translations. But the poetry is unremarkable.

For the full text of this translation, use the following link **Ogilby Odyssey**.

The Odysses
Translated by Thomas Hobbes
London 1674

[Sample from the Opening of the Poem]

TELL me, O Muse, th' adventures of the man
That having sack'd the sacred town of Troy,
Wander'd so long at sea; what course he ran
By winds and tempests driven from his way:
That saw the cities, and the fashions knew
Of many men, but suffer'd grievous pain
To save his own life, and bring home his crew;
Though for his crew, all he could do was vain,
They lost themselves by their own insolence,
Feeding, like fools, on the Sun's sacred kine;
Which did the splendid deity incense
To their dire fate. Begin, O Muse divine.
The Greeks from Troy were all returned home,
All that the war and winds had spar'd, except
The discontent Ulysses only; whom
In hollow caves the nymph Calypso kept.
But when the years and days were come about,
Wherein was woven his return by fate
To Ithaca (but neither there without
Great pain), the Gods then pitied his estate,
All saving Neptune; who did never cease
To hinder him from reaching his own shore,
And persecute him still upon the seas
Till he got home, then troubled him no more.
Neptune was now far off in Black-moor land;
The Black-moors are the utmost of mankind,
As far as east and west asunder stand,
So far the Black-moors' borders are disjoin'd.
Invited there to feast on ram and bull,
There sat he merry. Th' other Gods were then
Met on Olympus in a synod full,
In th' house of Jove, father of Gods and men.
And first spake Jove, whose thoughts were now upon
Ægistus' death, which he but then first knew,
By th' hand of Agamemnon's valiant son,
Who to revenge his father's blood him slew.
Ha! how dare mortals tax the Gods, and say,

Their harms do all proceed from our decree,
And by our setting; when by their crimes they
Against our wills make their own destiny?
As now Ægistus did Atrides kill
Newly come home, and married his wife;
Although he knew it was against my will,
And that it would cost him one day his life.
Sent we not Hermes to him to forbid
The murder, and the marriage of the wife;
And tell him if the contrary he did
Orestes should revenge it on his life?
All this said Hermes, as we bade him. But
Ægistus, for all this, was not afraid
His lust in execution to put.
And therefore now has dearly for it paid.

REVIEW COMMENT

To access the full translation and two critical evaluations of Hobbes's Homer, please use the following link: Hobbes Odyssey. For a brief comment on Hobbes' translation of the *Iliad*, please use this link: Hobbes Iliad.

The Odyssey of Homer
translated by Alexander Pope
London 1725

[Sample from the Opening of the Poem]

The man for wisdom's various arts renown'd,
Long exercised in woes, O Muse! resound;
Who, when his arms had wrought the destined fall
Of sacred Troy, and razed her heaven-built wall,
Wandering from clime to clime, observant stray'd,
Their manners noted, and their states survey'd,
On stormy seas unnumber'd toils he bore,
Safe with his friends to gain his natal shore:
Vain toils! their impious folly dared to prey
On herds devoted to the god of day;
The god vindictive doom'd them never more
(Ah, men unbless'd!) to touch that natal shore.
Oh, snatch some portion of these acts from fate,
Celestial Muse! and to our world relate.
Now at their native realms the Greeks arrived;
All who the wars of ten long years survived;
And 'scaped the perils of the gulfy main.
Ulysses, sole of all the victor train,
An exile from his dear paternal coast,
Deplored his absent queen and empire lost.
Calypso in her caves constrain'd his stay,
With sweet, reluctant, amorous delay;
In vain-for now the circling years disclose
The day predestined to reward his woes.
At length his Ithaca is given by fate,
Where yet new labours his arrival wait;
At length their rage the hostile powers restrain,
All but the ruthless monarch of the main.
But now the god, remote, a heavenly guest,
In AEthiopia graced the genial feast
(A race divided, whom with sloping rays
The rising and descending sun surveys);
There on the world's extremest verge revered
With hecatombs and prayer in pomp preferr'd,
Distant he lay: while in the bright abodes
Of high Olympus, Jove convened the gods:
The assembly thus the sire supreme address'd,
AEgysthus' fate revolving in his breast,

Whom young Orestes to the dreary coast
Of Pluto sent, a blood-polluted ghost.
"Perverse mankind! whose wills, created free,
Charge all their woes on absolute degree;
All to the dooming gods their guilt translate,
And follies are miscall'd the crimes of fate.
When to his lust AEgysthus gave the rein,
Did fate, or we, the adulterous act constrain?
Did fate, or we, when great Atrides died,
Urge the bold traitor to the regicide?
Hermes I sent, while yet his soul remain'd
Sincere from royal blood, and faith profaned;
To warn the wretch, that young Orestes, grown
To manly years, should re-assert the throne.
Yet, impotent of mind, and uncontroll'd,
He plunged into the gulf which Heaven foretold."

REVIEW COMMENT

For a short comment on Pope's Homer translations see **Pope's Iliad**. To access the full text of Pope's translation of the Odyssey click on the following link: **Pope's Odyssey**.

The Odyssey of Homer
translated by William Cowper
London 1791

[Sample from the Opening of the Poem]

Book 1

In a council of the Gods, Minerva calls their attention to Ulysses, still a wanderer. They resolve to grant him a safe return to Ithaca. Minerva descends to encourage Telemachus, and in the form of Mentes directs him in what manner to proceed. Throughout this book the extravagance and profligacy of the suitors are occasionally suggested.

Muse make the man thy theme, for shrewdness famed
And genius versatile, who far and wide
A Wand'rer, after Ilium overthrown,
Discover'd various cities, and the mind
And manners learn'd of men, in lands remote.
He num'rous woes on Ocean toss'd, endured,
Anxious to save himself, and to conduct
His followers to their home; yet all his care
Preserved them not; they perish'd self-destroy'd
By their own fault; infatuate! who devoured
The oxen of the all-o'erseeing Sun,
And, punish'd for that crime, return'd no more.
Daughter divine of Jove, these things record,
As it may please thee, even in our ears.
The rest, all those who had perdition 'scaped
By war or on the Deep, dwelt now at home;
Him only, of his country and his wife
Alike desirous, in her hollow grots
Calypso, Goddess beautiful, detained
Wooing him to her arms. But when, at length,
(Many a long year elapsed) the year arrived
Of his return (by the decree of heav'n)
To Ithaca, not even then had he,
Although surrounded by his people, reach'd
The period of his suff'rings and his toils.
Yet all the Gods, with pity moved, beheld
His woes, save Neptune; He alone with wrath
Unceasing and implacable pursued
Godlike Ulysses to his native shores.
But Neptune, now, the Æthiopians fought,

(The Æthiopians, utmost of mankind,
These Eastward situate, those toward the West)
Call'd to an hecatomb of bulls and lambs.
There sitting, pleas'd he banqueted; the Gods
In Jove's abode, meantime, assembled all,
'Midst whom the Sire of heav'n and earth began.
For he recall'd to mind Ægisthus slain
By Agamemnon's celebrated son
Orestes, and retracing in his thought
That dread event, the Immortals thus address'd.
  Alas! how prone are human-kind to blame
The Pow'rs of Heav'n! From us, they say, proceed
The ills which they endure, yet more than Fate
Herself inflicts, by their own crimes incur.
So now Ægisthus, by no force constrained
Of Destiny, Atrides' wedded wife
Took to himself, and him at his return
Slew, not unwarn'd of his own dreadful end
By us: for we commanded Hermes down
The watchful Argicide, who bade him fear
Alike, to slay the King, or woo the Queen.
For that Atrides' son Orestes, soon
As grown mature, and eager to assume
His sway imperial, should avenge the deed.
So Hermes spake, but his advice moved not
Ægisthus, on whose head the whole arrear
Of vengeance heap'd, at last, hath therefore fall'n.

REVIEW COMMENT

Cowper's translation, as he explains, is, in part, designed to correct deficiencies he perceives in Pope's translation: first, Cowper rejects rhyming couplets as unsuitable for Homeric verse, second, he wishes to correct Pope's "deviations" from the Greek in order to remain faithful to the Homeric text ("I have omitted nothing; I have invented nothing. . . . My chief boast is that I have adhered closely to my original, convinced that every departure from him would be punished with the forfeiture of some grace or beauty for which I could substitute no equivalent."), and he mounts a stout defence of blank verse as the most suitable English verse form for translating Homer (citing Milton as an example worth following because of the close resemblance of his style to Homer's: "A translator of HOMER, therefore, seems directed by HOMER himself to the use of blank verse, as to that alone in which he can be rendered with any tolerable representation of his manner in this particular."

Cowper's translation received a mixed reception among his contemporaries; they lauded his fidelity to Homer but found his verse lacking in imaginative energy, a view endorsed later by Matthew Arnold, "the translation by Cowper is far superior to either Chapman's or Pope's as an interpretation of the poet, but it lacks a certain fire and swing essential winning great poetic renown." Nonetheless, Cowper's translation has endured, not as an especially popular choice, but one which people seem to consult from time to time (and it was the basis for a sound recording by Naxos Audiobooks).

For access to the complete text of Cowper's *Odyssey*, please use the following link: Cowper Odyssey.

Homer
The Odyssey
Translated by William Sotheby
London 1834

[Selection from the Opening of the Poem]

MUSE! sing the Man by long experience tried,
Who, fertile in resources, wander'd wide,
And when Troy's sacred walls in dust were laid,
Men's varying moods and many a realm survey'd.
He much endured on ocean's stormy wave,
Intent his followers, and himself to save,
In vain:—they perish'd by their guilt undone;
Fools! Who devour'd the bullocks of the Sun—
The God, in vengeance for his cattle slain,
In their return destroy'd them on the main.
Daughter of Jove! Deign thou to us disclose,
Celestial Muse, a portion of their woes.

All who that death had 'scaped, at home once more
Dwelt free from battle and the ocean roar:
All, save Ulysses, whom, compell'd to stay
Regretful of his wife, and homeward way,
In her bright cave, a nymph by love subdued,
The fair Calypso for her consort woo'd.
But when long years had o'er him slowly roll'd,
And beam'd on his return the day foretold,
E'en in his Ithaca, his native soil,
E'en 'mid his friends his course was cross'd by toil,
Tho' every god his woe with pity view'd,
Save Neptune, whose stern rage the chief pursued—
But now that wrathful God had pass'd alone
Where dwelt the Æthiops on earth's furthest zone,
These, at the sun-rise, those, at day's decline:
And there 'mid hecatombs that heap'd his shrine,
Glad Neptune shared the feast:—the rest, above,
Met in the palace of Olympian Jove.
'Mid these the God revolving in his mind
The guilt by base Ægisthus' wile design'd,
The wretch who perish'd by Orestes slain:—
Indignant thus address'd heaven's listening train:

'Gods!—How these mortals dare the immortals blame!
'And charge on us each ill they blindly frame;
'By their own fault, not fate, their ruin bred.
'Not fate, foul passion bade Ægisthus wed
'Atrides' wife, and make his hearth his tomb,
'Tho' warn'd by me of death's impending doom.
'The Argicide declared by strict command:
'Touch not his wife,nor raise 'gainst him thy hand.
'O'er thee dire vengeance from Orestes flames,
'When in man's strength the son his kingdom claims:
'Thus Hermes spoke: Ægisthus disobey'd—
'Lo! On his brow, all, all his crime repaid.'

REVIEW COMMENT

Sotheby's Homer translations were eagerly anticipated and well received in his time, as the following review suggests:

> As compared with Cowper, Mr. Sotheby is to be preferred, in consequence of giving us something like the fire and felicity of Homer, in the rhymed verse inwhich our poetry delights—and, as compared with Pope, he is to be still more readily preferred on account of that fidelity to their common principal, which Pope had irretrievably violated. (*The Monthly Review*, Vol. 14)

(Note that this review was based on a selection of Sotheby's translation of the *Iliad*, published in 1830, not on the complete text).

As the review rightly stresses, rhyme was a much more popular feature of long poems than it is today, when we (or most of us, I suspect) would find Cowper's objections to rhyme in translations of epic poetry more persuasive (the above review quotes the following passage and discusses the issue):

> 'I will venture to assert that a just translation of any ancient poet in rhyme, is impossible. No human ingenuity can be equal to the task of closing every couplet with sounds homotonous, expressing, at the same time, the full sense, and only the full sense of the original. The translator's ingenuity, indeed, in this case, becomes itself a snare: and the readier he is at invention and expedient, the more likely he is to be betrayed into the widest departures from the guide whom he professes to follow.'

For the complete text of Sotheby's *Odyssey*, use the following link: Sotheby *Odyssey*.

The *Odyssey* of Homer
With the
Hymns, Epigrams, and Battle of the Frogs and Mice
Literally Translated
By Theodore Alois Buckley
London 1851

[Sample from the Opening of the Poem]

BOOK I.

ARGUMENT.

In an assembly of the gods it is determined that Ulysses shall be sent to Ithaca, from the island of Calypso. Minerva then goes to Ithaca to Telemachus, assuming the figure of Mentes, king of the Taphians, an old friend of Ulysses. Entering into conversation with Telemachus, she advises him to go to Pylos, to Nestor, and to Menelaus, at Sparta, to make inquiries about his father, whether he is still alive; after which she departs, giving manifest proofs of her divinity. Telemachus rebukes his mother Penelope, and desires her to go up-stairs: and then, during a banquet, threatens the suitors that he will be revenged on them for their insolent conduct.

O MUSE, sing to me of the man full of resources, who wandered very much after he had destroyed the sacred city of Troy, and saw the cities of many men, and learned their manners. Many griefs also in his mind did he suffer on the sea, although seeking to preserve his own life, and the return of his companions; but not even thus, although anxious, did he extricate his companions : for they perished by their own infatuation, fools! who devoured the oxen of the Sun who journeys on high; but he deprived them of their return. O goddess, daughter of Jove, relate to us also some of these things.

Now all the others, as many as had escaped from utter destruction, were at home, having escaped both the war and the sea. But him alone, anxious for a return [home], and for his wife, the venerable nymph Calypso, a divine one of the goddesses, detained in her hollow grot, desiring him to be her husband. But when, after revolving years, the time had now arrived, in which the gods destined him to return home to Ithaca, not even then was he freed from labours, although amongst his own friends. But all the gods pitied him except Neptune; but he was unceasingly angry with godlike Ulysses, before he arrived in his own land. But he [Neptune] had gone to the Æthiopians who dwell afar off, (the Æthiopians who are divided into two parts, the most distant of men, some at the setting of the sun, others at the rising,) in order to obtain a hecatomb of bulls and lambs. There sitting down he was delighted with a feast ; but the other [gods] were assembled together in the palace of Olympian Jove. And unto them the father of men and of gods began discourse ; for he remembered in his mind the noble Ægisthus, whom

far-famed Orestes, the son of Agamemnon, slew : and remembering him, he spoke [these] words to the immortals.

"Alas! How, forsooth, do mortals reproach the gods! For they say that their evils are from us: whereas they themselves, through their own infatuation, suffer griefs beyond what is destined. Thus even now Ægisthus, contrary to the decrees of fate, married the wedded wife of Atrides, and slew him on his return, although aware that utter destruction [awaited himself]; since we forewarned him, (having sent the trusty Mercury, the slayer of Argus,) neither to kill him, nor to woo his wife; for from Orestes revenge shall follow for Atrides, when he grows to man's estate, and longs for his country. Thus spoke Mercury: but although he gave good advice, he did not persuade the mind of Ægisthus; but now has he at once atoned for all these things."

REVIEW COMMENT

Buckley's translation is brisk and business like: he stays very close to Homer's text, but the English is clear, if at times a little antiquated, and keeps the story moving along. Buckley provides many footnotes; the numbers clutter the text somewhat, but the information in the notes is varied and stimulating, especially when Buckley explains the choices he has made. This translation went through a number of printings, and one can understand its popularity, even if the modern reader is likely to be somewhat irritated at the Latin names.

The text includes an interesting Life of Homer (Attributed to Herodotus of Halicarnassus, translated by Kenneth R. H. Mackenzie) "It is the earliest memory of the supposed author of the *Iliad* we possess, and, as such merits translation."

Readers who would like to see the complete translation should use the following link: Buckley *Odyssey*.

The Odyssey of Homer
Construed Literally, and Word for Word
by the Rev. Dr. Giles
London 1860

HOMER'S ODYSSEY

BOOK I.

1. Εννεπε declare μοι I to me, Μουσα Muse, ανδρα the man πολυτροπον of many fortunes, ός who πλαγχθη wandered μαλα πολλα very much, επει when επερσεν he had destroyed ιερον πτολιεθρον the sacred city Τροιης of Troy: ιδε δε and saw αστεα towns και and εγνων learnt νοον the mood πολλων ανθρωπων of many men, πολλα δε αλγεα but many sorrows όγε he indeed παθε suffered όν κατα θυμον in his soul, αρνυμενος while grasping ήν τε ψυχην both his own life και and νοστον the return έταιρων of his companions. Αλλα but ουδε not even ώς thus ερρυσατο did he save έταρους his companions ίεμενος περ though bent upon it: ολοντο γαρ for they perished σφετερησιν ατασσθαλιησι by their own phrensies, νηπιοι fools, όι who κατα ησθιον ate up βους the oxen Ήελιοιο of the Sun Ύπερινος who rolls above us: αυταρ but ό he αφειλετο took away τοισι from them νοστιμον ημαρ the day of their return: των of these things άμοθεν γε from whatever source, θεα O goddess, θυγατερ daughter Διος of Jupiter, ειπε tell και ημιν to us also.

REVIEW COMMENT

Note that for formatting reasons, the passage above does have two or three mistakes in the Greek spelling (e.g., σφετερησιν ατασσθαλιησι).

Giles' format is very odd, since the text seems set up for the student of the Greek who needs considerable assistance. Yet placing the English and Greek together like this effectively prevents the student from puzzling through the Greek and then checking his effort against the English (say, on a facing page or the line below). The text was part of the Keys to the Classics series.

It is not entirely clear to me whether Giles translated the entire epic.

Readers who would like to read more of Giles' translation (Books I to VI) should use the following link: Giles *Odyssey*.

The Odyssey of Homer
in English Hendecasyllable Verse
Henry Alford
London 1861

[Sample from the Opening of the Poem]

HOMER'S ODYSSEY.

I.

TELL of the man, thou Muse, much versed, who widely
Wandered, when he had sacked Troy's sacred fortress;
Many men's town he saw, and knew their manners;
Many the woes he suffered on the ocean,
To win his life, and safety for his comrades.
But them he might not rescue, though he loved them;
For they were slain amidst their impious daring,
Fools, who the cattle of the mighty Sun-god
Devoured,—and He cut short their homeward journey.
Of all this, Goddess, what thou wilt, inform us.
  Now all the rest, who 'scaped from dire destruction,
Were safe at home, from wars and waves delivered;
But him alone, for home and consort yearning,
The goddess-nymph detained, divine Calypso,
In her smooth caves, and wooed him for her husband.
But when the period came, in years revolving,
Destined of heaven his finished course to witness
In Ithaca (nor then to end his labours,
Though with friends round him), him the gods compassioned,
All, save Poseidon: He still raged relentless
Against Odysseus, till he reached his country.
But He was visiting the far-off Æthiops
(Æthiops, the last of men, who dwell divided,
Part by the setting sun, part near the rising),
Great hecatombs of bulls and lambs partaking.
There He made merry, feasting; while the others
In the Olympian hall of Zeus assembled.
Then first the sire of men and gods addressed them;
For he bethought him of unblamed Ægisthus
Slain by the far-famed son of Agamemnon;
Whom he, remembering, thus bespoke th' immortals:
  Surely in vain against the gods men murmur,
Charging on us their ills, while they in folly

Bring on themselves more mischief than is fated.
Even thus Ægisthus, against fate, Atrides
Slew, from the war returned, and took his consort,
With death before his eyes: for we forwarned him,
Sending the Argicide, quick-sighted Hermes,
Neither the chief to slay, nor woo the matron;
For from Orestes should arise swift vengeance,
Grown up, and thirsting for his native country.
Thus Hermes spoke, but did not move Ægisthus,
Though for his good; who now of all hath suffered.

Review Comment

Alford offers a line by line translation in an unusual style. His Preface contains a review of various metres available to the translator of Homer. He rejects the Heroic Couplet ("[which] will certainly never allow of adaptation to the flow of the Homeric hexameters"), English blank verse ("It . . . would assuredly be altogether violating [its own laws], were it to insulate its lines after the manner of the Homeric hexameters. It also labours under this disadvantage, that, ending as it must do with a complete iambic foot, it can never place at the termination of a line a proper name with which an Homeric line terminates. . . .," the Ballad metre of Chapman ("If each line be to represent one of the original, it is more than enough, and stop-gap epithets must be inserted; if two, it is not enough, and omissions must be made, to the prejudice of a faithful translation"), the Alexandrine, or twelve-syllable line ("intolerable to the English reader, from its extreme heaviness and want of relief"), and the Hexameter ("It is not an English metre, and it never will be"). He settles for the Hendecasyllable, or eleven–syllable line, citing Shakespeare as a precedent (e.g., "It is the curse of kings to be attended/ By slaves that take their humours for a warrant . . ."). He concedes that this metre runs the risk of monotony and that it is sometimes too short to give the full sense of the Greek hexameter). Alford also indicates that he is abandoning the traditional habit of using the Latin names for the gods and provides a table listing the Greek names and their Latin equivalents.

Even if some of Alford's criteria seem somewhat arbitrary, it's nice to see a translator air his views on metrical options, especially when he's prepared to discuss the importance of what an English ear will accept in a long traditional poem. The result, however, is not particularly noteworthy and the succession of feminine endings to the lines does become, as he fears, monotonous.

For a link to Volume One, which includes the Preface and Books I to XII, please use the following link: **Alford *Odyssey***.

The *Odyssey* of Homer
translated into English Verse in
the Spenserian Stanza

By Philip Stanhope Worsley
Edinburgh 1862

[Sample from the Opening of Book XIII]

1

HE ceasing, all sat charmed in the great halls,
Mute, till the lord Alcinous answer gave:
"Odysseus, who hast come within my walls,
No more, I think, wild storm and wandering wave
Shall drive thee homeless, as they erewhile drave;
After long woes, return at last is thine.
Therefore this charge I give you, chieftains brave,
Who here still quaff the senatorial wine,
And in my fair halls list the minstrel's voice divine—

2

"For now, behold, in the well-burnished chest
Lies store of gold in quaint devices wrought,
Changes of raiment for our godlike guest,
And all the choice gifts that our chiefs have brought ;
Yet have I still this counsel in my thought —
Let each one here a tripod, large of weight,
And caldron offer, that he want for nought.
These will we pay for by a public rate;
Else, singly, it were hard to bear a charge so great."

3

So spake the king, and all assenting heard,
And each passed homeward to his couch of rest.
But when the rosy-fingered Dawn appeared,
They to the ship their eager course addressed,
And brought the brazen tribute, all their best ;
Which the divine strength of Alcinous there
Stowed with his own hands 'neath the benches, lest
Aught should the seamen hinder, whensoe'er
They to the great oars lean, and through the billows fare.

4

Thence for the feast they sought the kingly hall,
And the divine strength of Alcinous then
To cloud-wrapt Zeus Kronion, lord of all,
Offered an ox in sacrifice. So when
Burned were the thighs, they feasted, and agen
Demodocus the minstrel made them song.
But oft Odysseus turned his wistful ken,
While in his breast the home-desire beat strong,
On the sun's orb, which seemed to linger all too long.

REVIEW COMMENT

Worsley is, it seems, the second English translator to use the Spenserian stanza as the basis for Homer (Barter's *Iliad*, 1854, is the first). He makes no attempt to justify the choice other than the eminently commonsensical notion that it is the style he finds most congenial to his imagination: "personally, I could embody my own feeling of Homer with greater success in Spenser's metre than in any other." The same sturdy common sense informs much of what Worsley says in the preface to Volume II (unlike many other similar essays): "All through this version it has been my wish to appeal to the popular heart rather than to the scholastic intellect. It would indeed have been hopeless for any one, whose learning and opportunities are so limited as mine, to write with the special view of conciliating scholars. But neither does such an end seem to me, on consideration, in itself worthy and adequate. . . . Whatever helps to contract our aspirations within a narrower limit, stifles in a measure our sympathy with the poet himself, and introduces a new tendency to failure. . . . There is a shade of danger that translators who think of learned critics will be led to forget this, and devote their energies too exclusively to those minor points which the scholar alone can appreciate."

As for the translation itself, the very strict form tends to overwhelm the content (one quickly gets to anticipate the strong and simple rhymes, for example) and the rhythm is insufficiently nuanced. The diction is deliberately aged in a manner that adds very little imaginative quality to the translation. Even if we concede that Worsley's readers were much more intimately familiar with Spenser than we are, his use of the verse form does not deliver what he hopes to achieve, at least not to the modern reader.

Readers who wish to access Worsley's translation should use the following link: Worsley *Odyssey*.

For a contemporary review of Worsley's translation, please use the following link: Saturday Review (1863).

Homer
The Odyssey;
or
The Ten Years' Wandering of Odusseus
After the Ten Years' Siege of Troy
Reproduced in Dramatic Blank Verse
T. S. Norgate
Edinburgh 1863

[Sample from the Opening of the Poem]

THE ODYSSEY OF HOMER
SYNOPSIS OF THE POEM.

"I told him how that after many troubles
And losing all his comrades, he himself,
In the twentieth year,—unknown to everyone,—
Should reach his home: and now at last all this
Is an accomplishment."
BOOK ii. 174-178

ARGUMENT OF THE FIRST BOOK. A

An assembly of the gods is held, on the subject of sending Odusseus home to Ithaca from the island of Calypso, where he has been detained about seven years. Accordingly, Athênè, the goddess of wisdom, under the form of Mentês, lord of the Taphians, goes down to Ithaca,—engages Telemachus, Odusseus' son, in conversation, and exhorts him to set out in search of his father, first to Nestor, king of Pylos, and then to Menelaüs, king of Sparta. After giving him clear instructions, she departs. The suitors' banquet and revels are set forth.

ALPHA: the assembly of the gods: Athênè
Visits Telemachus, and gives him Courage,
And Wisdom for his guide: the suitor's revels.

———

The travelled Man of many a turn,—driven far,
Far wandering, when he had sacked Troy's sacred Town;
Tell me, O Muse, his tale; how too he conned
The manners of mankind, and visited
Full many a City, and how on the deep he suffered
Many a heart-pang, striving to secure
His own and comrades' lives and safe return,
Yet them he rescued not, howe'er desirous;

For by their own blind folly they all perished:
Fools that they were! to eat the Sun-god's herds;
So, Hyperion, he who Walks above,
Bereft them of their day of home-return!
Whereof, from whatsoever source, O goddess,
Daughter of Zeus, vouchsafe to tell e'en Us!—
Already now at home were all the others
Who safe through war and sea had scaped hard death.
Yearning for home-return and wife, This Man
Was alone stayed by a Nymph to hollow caves
Lady Calypso, fair of goddesses,
Longing for him to abide and be her lord.
But when at length the years had run their rounds,
And the time came, predestined by the gods
For his return to Ithaca and home,
No, not e'en then was he released from troubles,
E'en when amongst his friends: the gods indeed
Were all, all save Poseidon, pitying him;
While He with wrath relentlessly pursued
Godlike Odusseus e'en to his own dear land.
Gone was Poseidon now howe'er to visit
The far off Æthiopians: (outermost
Of men the Æthiopians, and asunder
In twain divided,—to the setting sun
Are these, while others dwell towards the rising:)
To accept a hecatomb of bulls and rams
Gone was he thither; and at feast and merry
There was he sitting. The other gods meanwhile
Were in Olympian Jove's high court assembled;
When thus began the sire of men and gods;
For thinking was he of blemishless Ægisthus,
Whom Agamemnon's far-famed son Orestès
Had put to death; and Zeus remembering this
Spake thus among the Deathless ones: "O Strange!
'What blame those mortals cast upon us gods!
'They say that ills come forth from Us, while They,
'By their own impious folly, undergo
'Ills beyond those of Fate. As now, forsooth,
'Quite beyond Fate, Ægisthus wooed and married
'Atreidès' wedded wife, and slew Atreidès
'On his returning home: the murderer knew
'Sheer death o'erhanging him, for we forewarned him
'And sent the keen-eyed Argus-killer, Hermès,
'With warning not to murder Agamemnon

'Nor woo his wife: for, for Atreidès' death
40 'Sure vengeance should there be from prince Orestès,
'Whene'er should He have come to man's estate
'And yearn to obtain his own inheritance.
'Such was the word of Hermès: kindly-minded,
'He yet persuaded not Ægisthus' heart,
'Who therefore now has paid full penalties."

REVIEW COMMENT

Norgate's is surely one of the odder Victorian attempts to render Homer's Greek into English—a quality symbolized by the curious paraphernalia at the start of the book and by his decision to spell the hero's name Odusseus. He also includes the line numbers of the Greek text rather than of his own verse and places them to the left of the text. A quick reading of a few lines raises some serious questions about Norgate's command of acceptably idiomatic English, even given the tradition of translating Homer into very odd-sounding English. Enough said.

To access the full text of the Norgate translation, please use the following link: **Norgate *Odyssey***.

The Odyssey of Homer
Rendered into English blank verse
George Musgrave, London 1865

[Sample from the Opening of the Poem]

Tell me, O Muse, declare to me that man
Tost to and fro by fate, who, when his arms
Had laid Troy's holy city in the dust,
Far wand'ring roam'd on many a tribe of men
To end his gaze, their minds and thoughts to learn.
Grief upon grief encounter'd he, when, borne
On ocean-waves, his life he carried off
A prize from perils rescued, and would fain
Have homeward led his brethren in arms;
But, not to him,—not to his anxious zeal
Was giv'n their rescue; destin'd as they were
In their mad arrogance to perish; fools!
That dared to seize, and to consume for food,
Hyperion's herds, the oxen of the Sun
That walks on high, by whose behest the day
Of their return was evermore denied.
And thou, too, goddess daughter of great Jove,
The theme pursue, and thine own record bear!
Each in his home, secure from battle strife
And ocean wave, now rested every chief
To whom was given to survive that war:
But, this lone man, whose pining soul had yearn'd
To reach his own and to regain his wife,
A captive lay within the hollow grot
Of that divine one among goddesses,
The august Calypso, who, on wedlock bent,
Sought him, above all other, for her own;
And still, as with revolving years the time
At length drew nigh when the immortal gods
Decreed that Ithaca he should regain,
His struggle ended not; no, though by friends
Encompass'd round; yet did the gods themselves,
Neptune alone relentless, pity him;—
For long did he, ere he his home regain'd,
The unrelenting hate of Neptune brook—
Who in those days a sojourner abode
Among the Æthiops—(a divided race
Of all men most remote—whose tribes behold

At once the rising and the setting sun,—)
Seeking a hecatomb of bulls and lambs.
There at a joyous banquet sate the god,
While, in the palace of Olympian Jove,
The deities their thronging synod held:
To whom the Father of all men and gods
Thus op'd discourse, as in his mind he mus'd
On blameless-soul'd Ægysthus whom far-fam'd
Orestes, son of Agamemnon, slew;
And, of his memory full, these words he spake
In the immortals' ears: "Why! what reproach,
Ye gods! do mortals cast on deities!
To us all their calamities they trace,
While they, themselves, through their own senseless acts,
Feel pangs their destiny had ne'er decreed:
Witness, e'en now, with what contempt of fate
Ægysthus seiz'd Atrides' married spouse,
To make her his own consort, and, though sure
Of his own ruin, took the husband's life,
As he re-enter'd home. Our warning words
Through faithful Mercury—(even him by whom
Argus was slain)—thus to Ægysthus spake:
'Destroy him not, nor seek to wed his wife;—
For, from Orestes, when to manhood grown,
All eager for his father-land, shall come
Full vengeance for Atrides.' Even thus
Spoke Mercury; yet, though his counsel sage
He tender'd, no wise did he sway the mind
And purpose of Ægysthus: all these deeds
He answer'd for, and one atonement made."

REVIEW COMMENT

Musgrave's poetic style, though energetic enough and better than a great many of his contemporaries' efforts, is as good an example as any of the influence of Milton's blank verse on Victorian translators of Homer and of the poetic effects of that style throughout (e.g., "Neptune alone relentless," and so on). Still, the poem was received sufficiently well, even if competing translations got more attention. Many modern readers also object to the use of Roman names for the gods, although that was more or less standard practice at the time. Contemporary readers commented on the length of Musgrave's translation (1700 lines longer than Homer's text and 200 lines longer than Derby's). Readers who would like to access Volume II of the Musgrave translation (Books XIII to XXIV) should use the following link: Musgrave *Odyssey*.

A Nearly Literal
Translation
of
Homer's *Odyssey*
Into Accentuated Dramatic Verses
by the
Rev. Lovelace Bigge-Wither
Oxford 1869

[Sample from the Opening of the Poem]

HOMER'S ODYSSEY.

BOOK I.

TELL me, oh Muse, of-the-many-sided man,
Who wandered far and wide full sore bestead,
When he had razed the mighty town of Troy :
And-of-many-a-race of human-kind he saw
The cities; and he learned their mind and ways :
And on the deep full many-a-woe he bore
In his own bosom, while he strove to save
His proper life, and-his-comrades' home-return.
But *them* not *so* he saved with all his zeal;
For they in *their* own wilful folly perished:
Infatuates! to devour *Hyperion's* kine!
So *he* bereft them of their home-return.
Of these things, Goddess, where thou *wilt* beginning,
Daughter of Zeus, the tale tell e'en to *us*!
Now all the rest, who swift destruction, 'scaped,
At home were safe from peril-of-war and sea:
While *him* alone for home and wife sore yearning
The Ladie-Nymph Calypso, lovely goddess,
Held in her grot, for love to make him *hers*!
But when came-on the time, as-the-years rolled round,
At which the gods had destined his return
To Ithaca-home; not *then* was-he-free from struggles,
E'en midst his friends! The *gods all* pitied him ;
Save Posidaon: *he* raged ceaselessly
'Gainst god-like-Odyssus, ere he reached his home:
But *he* was gone to the Æthiops far away—
(Æthiops, extreme of men, all-parted twain-wise,
Some by the setting, some by-the-rising sun)—
To share of bulls and lambs their hecatombs!

There merrily *he*-sat feasting: but the others
Were thronged in-the-halls of Zeus Olympius.
'Mid *them* 'gan speak the Sire of men and gods;
For he remembered in his heart Ægisthus,
Whom slew Agamemnon's famous son Orestes:
Of *him* full mindful 'mid the gods he spake:
"Oh heavens! how mortals now do blame the gods!
From *us* they say spring ills! but they themselves
By their own folly bring unfated woes.
As now Ægisthus married-in-spite of fate
Atrides' wife, and slew him home returning—
Knowing full well his own death hard at hand:
For we ourselves foretold it him; and sent
Hermes—the keen-eyed Argicide—to warn him—
'Slay not the husband, and wed not the wife!
For vengeance-shall-come from-Orestes, son of Atreus,
When grown a man he-shall-yearn for his own land.'
Thus Hermes spake: but-Ægisthus' will he turned not,
Tho' kindly wise; who now has paid for all!"

REVIEW COMMENT

Bigge-Wither is, so far as I can tell, among the first to hope that his English will be sufficiently similar to the Greek so that people will think of the Greek as they read the translation:

> The aim of this translation is to be literal. In many passages it is almost line for line, and even word for word with the original; so that to persons well acquainted with the Greek this version will readily suggest the very words of the divine old bard himself.

This very odd notion, which has come into vogue in recent years in an even more pronounced manner, leaves one wondering why anyone who wished to be reminded of the Greek did not just read Homer in Greek rather than putting up with various unidiomatic oddities in the English. Perhaps it is with this purpose in mind that Bigge-Wither makes such an idiosyncratic use of hyphens:

> Where three syllables are intended to form one foot they are connected by hyphens, and the stress is always on the last syllable . . . In some instances the hyphens are omitted or misplaced: the reader will easily discover where this is so.

In keeping with a great many Victorian (and later) translators, Bigge-Wither looks to the poetic styles of the past to define his verse form and diction:

> In order to be free to render that text literally, the translator has chosen the most elastic of English metres—the accentuated dramatic, in which, though the accents are only five in each line, the syllables vary from ten to sixteen. . . . For diction the translator has taken as his models—Shakespeare—Milton—and above all the authorized version of the Bible."

Readers who would like to see the full translation should use the following link: **Bigge-Wither *Odyssey***.

The *Odyssey* of Homer
Translated into English Blank Verse
by William Cullen Bryant
Boston 1871

[Sample from the Opening of the Poem]

THE ODYSSEY.

BOOK I.

TELL me, O Muse, of that sagacious man
Who, having overthrown the sacred town
Of Ilium, wandered far and visited
The capitals of many nations, learned
The customs of their dwellers, and endured
Great suffering on the deep; his life was oft
In peril, as he labored to bring back
His comrades to their homes. He saved them not,
Though earnestly he strove; they perished all,
Through their own folly; for they banqueted,
Madmen! upon the oxen of the Sun,—
The all-o'erlooking Sun, who cut them off
From their return. O goddess, virgin-child
Of Jove, relate some part of this to me.
Now all the rest, as many as escaped
The cruel doom of death, were at their homes
Safe from the perils of the war and sea,
While him alone, who pined to see his home
And wife again, Calypso, queenly nymph,
Great among goddesses, detained within
Her spacious grot, in hope that he might yet
Become her husband. Even when the years
Brought round the time in which the gods decreed
That he should reach again his dwelling-place
In Ithaca, though he was with his friends,
His toils were not yet ended. Of the gods
All pitied him save Neptune, who pursued
With wrath implacable the godlike chief,
Ulysses, even to his native land.
Among the Ethiopians was the god
Far off,—the Ethiopians most remote
Of men. Two tribes there are; one dwells beneath
The rising, one beneath the setting sun.

He went to grace a hecatomb of beeves
And lambs, and sat delighted at the feast;
While in the palace of Olympian Jove
The other gods assembled, and to them
The father of immortals and of men
Was speaking. To his mind arose the thought
Of that Ægisthus whom the famous son
Of Agamemnon, prince Orestes, slew.
Of him he thought, and thus bespake the gods:—
"How strange it is that mortals blame the gods
And say that we inflict the ills they bear,
When they, by their own folly and against
The will of fate, bring sorrow on themselves!
As late Ægisthus, unconstrained by fate,
Married the queen of Atreus' son and slew
The husband just returned from war. Yet well
He knew the bitter penalty, for we
Warned him. We sent the herald Argicide,
Bidding him neither slay the chief nor woo
His queen, for that Orestes, when he came
To manhood and might claim his heritage,
Would take due vengeance for Atrides slain.
So Hermes said; his prudent words moved not
The purpose of Ægisthus, who now pays
The forfeit of his many crimes at once."

Review Comment

Bryant in this translation follows the principles he set down in the Preface to his translation of the *Iliad*, and, like that poem, his verse here is faithful, clear, fast paced, and for the most part colloquial. This is certainly one of the more successful translations of the *Odyssey* in the nineteenth century, and it still reads well.

Readers who would like to see the full text of Bryant's translations should use the following link: Bryant *Odyssey*.

Homer
The Odyssey of Homer
Rendered into English blank verse
Mordaunt Barnard
Edinburgh, 1876

[Sample Passage from the Opening of the Poem]

Book I

Muse! tell me of the man with much resource,
Who wandered far, when sacred Troy he sacked;
Saw towns of many men, learned all they knew,
Winning his own life and his friends' return.
Yet them he saved not, earnest though he was,
For by their own temerity they died.
Fools! who devoured the oxen of the sun,
Who from them took the day of their return.
[Muse, child of Jove! from some source tell us this.]
The others, all who sudden death escaped,
Flying from war and sea, were now at home.
Him only, yearning for his home and wife,
Calypso, nymph adorable, detained
In hollow caves, and woo'd him for her spouse.
When with revolving years the year was come
In which the gods had fated his return
To Ithaca (nor there he toils escaped
Even among his friends), then all the gods,
Neptune except, compassion on him took.
He 'gainst Ulysses raged unceasingly,
Before that to his native land he came.
To the far Æthiopians he had gone,
The Æthiopians most remote of men;
Some near the setting, some the rising sun,
To take a hecatomb of bulls and lambs.
There sitting he enjoyed the feast. The rest
Were in the house of the Olympian Jove.
The sire of gods and men began a speech,
Calling the famed Ægisthus to his mind,
Whom Agamemnon's son, Orestes, slew.
Rememb'ring him, th' immortals he addressed:
'O strange it is how mortals blame the gods!
'They say their evils are from us, while they
'By their own folly have unfated woes.

'Thus, contrary to fate, Ægisthus took
'Atrides' wife, and slew him when returned;
'Though knowing his own fate, as him we warned
'(And Hermes, watchful Argeiphontes, sent),
'Neither to kill him nor to woo his wife;
'For that revenge would from Orestes come,
'When he grew up and claimed his own domains.
'This Hermes told him, but did not persuade,
'Though well he counselled him, Ægisthus' mind.
Now for all this the penalty he pays.'

REVIEW COMMENT

"The object of the translator is two-fold:" Barnard announces in his Preface, "to assist backward students in mastering the original, and to give English readers a simple and unambitious version, often differing little from mere prose. He has therefore made it as literal as the requirements of metre would allow, except, for obvious reasons, in two passages." To the last point he adds a coy excuse, "Virginibus puerisque canto" [I sing for virgins and boys].

Barnard adopts most of the standard conventions of Victorian translators, but I find his poetic line has more clarity and energy than most, perhaps because his style is not so weighed down by deliberate archaisms and Miltonic imports. When I retrieved this book from the Bodleian stacks, the pages were uncut. I was evidently the first person to read that copy past the first page.

Readers who would like to review Barnard's complete translation should use the following link: Barnard *Odyssey*.

Homer
The Odyssey
translated by
Samuel Henry Butcher and Andrew Lang
New York 1879

[Sample from the Opening of the Poem]

Book I

In a Council of the Gods, Poseidon absent, Pallas procureth an order for the restitution of Odysseus; and appearing to his son Telemachus, in human shape, adviseth him to complain of the Wooers before the Council of the people, and then go to Pylos and Sparta to inquire about his father.

Tell me, Muse, of that man, so ready at need, who wandered far and wide, after he had sacked the sacred citadel of Troy, and many were the men whose towns he saw and whose mind he learnt, yea, and many the woes he suffered in his heart upon the deep, striving to win his own life and the return of his company. Nay, but even so he saved not his company, though he desired it sore. For through the blindness of their own hearts they perished, fools, who devoured the oxen of Helios Hyperion: but the god took from them their day of returning. Of these things, goddess, daughter of Zeus, whencesoever thou hast heard thereof, declare thou even unto us.

Now all the rest, as many as fled from sheer destruction, were at home, and had escaped both war and sea, but Odysseus only, craving for his wife and for his homeward path, the lady nymph Calypso held, that fair goddess, in her hollow caves, longing to have him for her lord. But when now the year had come in the courses of the seasons, wherein the gods had ordained that he should return home to Ithaca, not even there was he quit of labours, not even among his own; but all the gods had pity on him save Poseidon, who raged continually against godlike Odysseus, till be came to his own country. Howbeit Poseidon had now departed for the distant Ethiopians, the Ethiopians that are sundered in twain, the uttermost of men, abiding some where Hyperion sinks and some where he rises. There he looked to receive his hecatomb of bulls and rams, there he made merry sitting at the feast, but the other gods were gathered in the halls of Olympian Zeus. Then among them the father of gods and men began to speak, for he bethought him in his heart of noble Aegisthus, whom the son of Agamemnon, far-famed Orestes, slew. Thinking upon him he spake out among the Immortals:

'Lo you now, how vainly mortal men do blame the gods! For of us they say comes evil, whereas they even of themselves, through the blindness of their own hearts, have sorrows beyond that which is ordained. Even as of late Aegisthus, beyond

that which was ordained, took to him the wedded wife of the son of Atreus, and killed her lord on his return, and that with sheer doom before his eyes, since we had warned him by the embassy of Hermes the keen-sighted, the slayer of Argos, that he should neither kill the man, nor woo his wife. For the son of Atreus shall be avenged at the hand of Orestes, so soon as he shall come to man's estate and long for his own country. So spake Hermes, yet he prevailed not on the heart of Aegisthus, for all his good will; but now hath he paid one price for all.'

Review Comment

Butcher and Lang, as they explain in their preface, render Homer's Greek accurately in an English prose that deliberately draws upon the language of the King James Bible (the traditional English text most familiar to their readers, especially young students):

> Homer has no ideas which cannot be expressed in words that are "old and plain"; and to words that are old and plain, and as a rule, to such terms as, being used by the translators of the Bible, are still not unfamiliar, we have tried to restrict ourselves. It may be objected, that the employment of language which does not come spontaneously to the lips is an affectation out of place in a version of the *Odyssey*. To this we may answer that the Greek Epic dialect, like the English of our Bible, was a thing of slow growth and composite nature; that it was never a spoken language, nor, except for certain poetical purposes, a written language. Thus the Biblical English seems as nearly analogous to the Epic Greek, as anything that our tongue has to offer. (Butcher and Lang)

The result was popular enough in their time and even in recent years, but nowadays when readers are not nearly so familiar with the style of the King James Version and with so many better and equally accurate translations of Homer available in more accessible English (prose and poetry) there seems little point in recommending this version to a new reader (especially since the diction, odd enough in the descriptions, is often disastrous in the dialogue).

For the complete text of this well-known translation, use the following link: Butcher Lang *Odyssey*.

Homer
The Odyssey
Translated by George Augustus Schomberg
London 1879

[Sample from the Opening of the Poem]

Book I.

ARGUMENT
Council of the Gods in Olympus—Minerva visits Telemachus at Ithaca—The Suitors

DAY 1

SING Muse the hero versatile, who roved
So far, so long, after he overthrew
Troy's holy citadel; of many men
He saw the cities, and their manners learned;
And woes he suffered on the deep; he strove
To win his comrades' lives, and safe return,
But all his striving failed to rescue them:
They perished for their witless sacrilege,
Who ate the oxen of Hyperion Sun;
Hence never more saw they their native land.
Daughter of Jove, help us to tell the tale.
  All had reached home, escaping war and flood,
Whom sheer destruction spared, save one alone;
Him only—pining for his wife and home,
Calypso, lovely goddess, held enthralled
In her arched grots, hoping to win his love.
But when the circling years brought round the time
In which the gods had willed his home return
To Ithaca, not then, e'en midst his friends
Escaped he trials sore; the gods themselves
All pitied him, save Neptune; who alone
With unrelenting anger still pursued
Godlike Ulysses, ere he reached his home.
  But now the god had gone to Æthiops' land,
The distant Æthiops—whose tribes are twain,
One towards the setting, one the rising sun:
There he was present at the sacrifice
Of lambs and oxen, and enjoyed the feast:
Meanwhile the other gods assembled were

In Jove's Olympian halls; when thus to them
The father of gods and men to speak began;
For he bethought him of Ægisthus' fate,
Whom Agamemnon's son Orestes slew:
Remembering this, the immortals he addressed:
"How strange it is that mortals throw the blame
Of all their ills on us, the gods; when they
By their misdeeds bring on themselves their woes,
In spite of fate; 'twas thus Ægisthus stole
The wife of Atreus' son, and murdered him
On his return; although full well he knew
Vengeance awaited him, forwarned by us;
Who sent to him the wrathful Argus-slayer,
Hermes, to bid him not to slay the chief,
Nor violate his wife; for vengeance sure
Would from Orestes fall when he should reach
The prime of youth, and for his birthright long:
Thus counselled Hermes well, but failed to sway
Ægisthus' mind; who paid full penalty."

REVIEW COMMENT

Readers who would like to look at the text of Volume I of Schomberg's translation should use the following link: Schomberg *Odyssey*.

The Odyssey of Homer
in English Verse
Arthur S. Way
London, 1880

[Sample from the Opening of the Poem]

BOOK I.

How a Goddess came to the halls of the Isle=King, and
beheld the riot of froward men.

The Hero of craft-renown, O Song-goddess, chant me his fame,
  Who, when low he had lain Troy-town, unto many a far land came
And many a city beheld he, and knew the hearts of their folk,
And by woes of the sea was unquelled, o'er the rock of his spirit that broke,
When he fain would have won for a prey his life and his friends' return,
Yet never they saw that day, howsoever his heart might yearn,
But they perished every one, by their own mad deeds did they fall,
For they slaughtered the kine of the Sun, and devoured them,—fools were they all.
So in anger their home-coming day did the God take away for their guilt.
O Goddess, inspire my lay with their tale: take it up as thou wilt.
  Now all the rest of the host, through the jaws of destruction that passed,
Battle-buffeted, tempest-tossed, were safe in their homes at last.
But the hero Odysseus only was kept from his wife and his rest
By a Goddess in duress lonely, Calypso the beautiful-tressed;
And she longed in her grotto-home to have him her husband for aye.
But at last, when the season was come, as the years rolled slowly away,
When the Gods had his doom-thread spun to return unto Ithaca's isle,
To his home, yet he had not won unto that sweet rest from his toil,
Nor yet with his friends was he, and with ruth were the Gods all filled,
Save Poseidon, the Lord of the Sea, but his fury would not be stilled
Against godlike Odysseus, before to his fatherland-isle he had won.
But now to the far-off shore of the Aethiops Poseidon was gone,—
The Aethiops, sundered in twain, of all men farthest away,
These where the sun in the main sinks, those by the fountains of day,—
Where the bulls and the fat rams slain for the mighty hecatomb lay.
There did he taste the delight of the banquet, enthroned thereat.
But the rest on Olympus' height in debate with the Thunderer sat.
And the Father of Gods and men to the rest of the Blessed began,—
For his heart in him brooded then on the fate of a high-born man,
Aegisthus, slain so late by Orestes, son of the dead,—
And calling to mind his fate, to the Deathless the Thunderer said:
"Out on it! see how these mortals are wont us Gods to upbraid,

Saying that trouble and sorrow from us are upon them laid!
Yet they of their own blind folly have woes that were never ordained;
Even as Aegisthus now hath o'erleapt his fate, and hath stained
The couch of Atreides, and slain him even as he entered his home,
With vengeance full in his sight, for we told him of that which should come,
For we warned him by Hermes, the Slayer of Argus, the Watcher keen,
That he neither should murder the king of men, neither tempt the queen,
For that vengeance for Atreus' son should be dealt by Orestes' hand.
So soon as he grew unto manhood, and longed for his native land.
So Hermes spake, but the soul of Aegisthus would not give heed
To the kindly warning: now doth he reap the reward of his deed."

REVIEW COMMENT

The selection above is from the Third Edition, Revised (1903). Way's line-by-line translation surely represents an extreme in the common desire to turn Homer's poetry into something with a strong flavour of Arthurian romance (as the title of Book I in Gothic script above, among other things, clearly announces). In my view, this is a serious artistic error, since the effect is to sentimentalize Homer and almost inevitably, given the wretched way in which some translators come up with their own Babylonian dialect as ersatz Medieval diction, ruins the verse. Here the problems of this approach are obviously visible, and they are compounded by the extremely erratic rhythm and often very odd rhyme. The result is something inferior to McGonagall. But the translation is a worthy example of some of the more perverse tendencies in the tradition of rendering Homer in English. Way's translations was, however, received quite favourably by his contemporaries: the London Quarterly Review called him "unquestionably the most Homeric of English translators of Homer since Chapman" (qu. Young 135)—a remark which reveals more about Victorian poetic taste than about the lasting merits of the translation.

The Odyssey of Homer
Translated into English Verse
With Notes and Parallel Passages
By Sir Charles Du Cane
Edinburgh and London 1880

MUSE! of that hero versatile indite to me the song,
Doomed, when he sacred Troy had sacked, to wander far and long.
Who saw the towns of many men, much knowledge did obtain
Anent their ways, and with much woe was heart-wrung on the main,
Seeking his own life to preserve, his friends' return to gain.
E'en so he rescued not his friends, though eagerly he strove,
For them their own infatuate deeds to direful ending drove.
Fools, who the sun-god's sacred beeves dared madly to devour,
Doomed by his anger ne'er to see of glad return the hour.
Sing, goddess, child of mighty Jove, of these events, I pray,
And from what starting-point thou wilt begin with me the lay.
Now all the rest, whose lot it was destruction sheer to flee,
Had reached their homes, unscathed by war, or peril of the sea.
But him alone, for wife and home consumed with longing sore,
The nymph divine, Calypso, kept upon her island shore,
And fain would keep in hollow cave her lord for evermore.
But when, as seasons went their round, at length the year had come
Wherein the gods willed his return to Ithaca and home,
Not even then might he escape from trouble and from toil,
Not though he stood amidst his friends, upon his native soil.
Yet, save Poseidon, all the gods felt pity for his woe,
He only to the godlike chief relentless hate did how,
E'en till he reached his fatherland, nor would his wrath forego.
But great Poseidon for the nonce on other route had gone,
For he had sought the AEthiops' land, who far from others wonne:
Who, sundered into regions twain, inhabit earth's extreme--
Some toward the setting of the sun, some toward his rising gleam.
There of a hecatomb of bulls and lambs to take his part
The god had gone, and at the board sat joying in his heart.
In solemn conclave, him except, meanwhile th' Immortals all
Of the great Sire, Olympian Jove, were gathered in the hall.
To them the Lord of heaven and earth straightway his speech addressed,
For thought of dead Aegisthus then was stirring in his breast,
Whose life Atrides' far-famed son, Orestes, late did take,--
Of whom bethinking him, the Sire thus to th' Immortals spake:
"Oh strange! upon immortal gods what blame do mortals throw,
Who say that we are unto them the source of every woe,
When by their own infatuate deeds they on their own heads bring,

E'en beyond that which Fate decrees, a load of suffering!
For so Aegisthus, by no Fate's resistless impulse led,
Chose with Atrides' lawful wife unlawfully to wed,
And slew Atrides, fresh returned to his own palace hall,
Though well he knew that on himself would retribution fall.
For timely warning to his ear of all that would betide,
Ourselves did Hermes charge to bear, the watchful Argicide.
We bade him nor the monarch kill nor dare his wife to wed,
Since vengeance for Atrides slain would fall upon his head,
Soon as Orestes, his dear son, to prime of manhood come,
Should yearn in heart for sweet return to fatherland and home.
This Hermes told, yet did not all his warning wise persuade
Aegisthus, who for all hath now by one atonement paid."

REVIEW COMMENT

Du Cane in his Preface briefly discusses the difficulties of selecting one single metre for Homer's entire poem and explains his choice of a ballad metre and the fourteen-syllable line, the verse form of Chapman's *Iliad*. None of what he has to say on these matters is very convincing. His translation is accompanied by many footnotes offering quotations from other poets who are alluding to a particular part of Homer's *Odyssey*.

Link to Volume One of the Du Cane translation: Du Cane, Volume I.

The Odyssey
translated by George Herbert Palmer
Boston, 1886

[Sample from the Opening of the Poem]

I

THE COUNCIL OF THE GODS AND THE SUMMONS TO TELEMACHUS

SPEAK TO me, Muse, of the adventurous man who wandered long after he sacked the sacred citadel of Troy. Many the men whose towns he saw, whose ways he proved; and many a pang he bore in his own breast at sea while struggling for his life and his men's safe return. Yet even so, by all his zeal, he did not save his men; for through their own perversity they perished—fools! who devoured the kine of the exalted Sun. Wherefore he took away the day of their return. Of this, O goddess, daughter of Zeus, beginning where thou wilt, speak to us also.

Now all the others who were saved from utter ruin were at home, safe both from war and sea. Him only, longing for his home and wife, the potent nymph Calypso, a heavenly goddess, held in her hollow grotto desiring him to be her husband. Nay, when the time had come in the revolving years at which the gods ordained his going home to Ithaca, even then, among his kin, he was not freed from trouble. Yet the gods felt compassion, all save Poseidon, who steadily strove with god-like Odysseus till he reached his land.

But Poseidon now was with the far-off Ethiopians, the remotest of mankind, who form two tribes, one at the setting of the Exalted one, one at his rising; awaiting there a sacrifice of bulls and rams. So sitting at the feast he took his pleasure. The other gods, meanwhile, were gathered in the halls of Zeus upon Olympus, and thus began the father of men and gods; for in his mind he mused of gentle Aegisthus, whom Agamemnon's far-famed son, Orestes, slew. Mindful of him, he thus addressed the immortals:

"Lo, how men blame the gods! From us, they say, spring troubles. But through their own perversity, and more than is their due, they meet with sorrow; even as now Aegisthus, pressing beyond his due, married the lawful wife of the son of Atreus and slew her husband on his coming home. Yet he well knew his own impending ruin; for we ourselves forewarned him, dispatching Hermes, our clear-sighted Speedy-comer, and told him not to slay the man nor woo the wife. 'For because of the son of Atreus shall come vengeance from Orestes when he is grown and longs for his own land.' This Hermes said, but did not turn the purpose of Aegisthus by his kindness. And now Aegisthus makes atonement for it all."

REVIEW COMMENT

Palmer says in his introduction that he has "approached the Odyssey from the philosophic and poetic side, delighting in Homer's unique mental attitude . . . . he seems to me to confront the world like a child." How this affects the choices he makes in the style is not immediately obvious, yet the prose is clear enough, if generally rather flaccid. The translation would probably not command much attention these days had it not been given a new life by Dover Publications in its Thrift Books series. In the interest of reducing costs, Dover often uses old translations of questionable merit. Palmer's *Odyssey*, though not particularly inspiring and certainly very dated, is better than some of the wretched Victorian translations of the classics which have found their way into the Dover offerings (the translations of Aeschylus, for example) and it is still the cheapest text for those who wish to spare their students any additional expense.

Those who would like to access the full text of Palmer's translation should use the following link: Palmer *Odyssey*.

Homer
The Odyssey
William Morris

London 1887

[Selection from the Opening of the Poem]

THE ODYSSEY OF HOMER, DONE INTO ENGLISH VERSE BY WILLIAM MORRIS

BOOK I. THE GODS ORDAIN THE RETURN OF ODYSSEUS: PALLAS GOES TO ITHACA AND IN THE LIKENESS OF MENTES HEARTENS UP TELEMACHUS, & BIDS HIM CALL A MEETING OF MEN TO LAY HIS GRIEVANCE AGAINST THE WOOERS, AND THEN TO TAKE SHIP TO PYLOS AND SPARTA SEEKING TIDINGS OF HIS FATHER.

Tell me, O Muse, of the Shifty, the man who wandered afar,
After the Holy Burg, Troy-town, he had wasted with war;
He saw the towns of menfolk, and the mind of men did he learn;
As he warded his life in the world, and his fellow-farers' return,
Many a grief of heart on the deep-sea flood he bore,
Nor yet might he save his fellows, for all that he longed for it sore.
They died of their own souls' folly, for witless as they were
They ate up the beasts of the Sun, the Rider of the Air,
And he took away from them all their dear returning day;
O Goddess, O daughter of Zeus, from whencesoever ye may,
Gather the tale, and tell it, yea, even to us at the last!
Now all the other heroes, who forth from the warfare passed
And fled from sheer destruction and 'scaped each man his bane,
Saved from the sea and the battle, at home they sat full fain;
But him alone, Odysseus, sore yearning after the strife
To get him back to his homestead, sore yearning for his wife,
Did the noble nymph Calypso, the Godhead's glory, hoard
In the hollow rocky places; for she longed for him for lord,
Yea, and e'en when the circling season had brought the year to hand
Wherein the Gods had doomed it that he should reach his land,
E'en Ithaca his homestead, not even then was he,
Though amidst his kin and his people, of heavy trouble free.
Know now, that of all the God-folk there was none but pitied him,
Save that Poseidon only was with ceaseless wrath abrim
Against the godlike hero from his house and his home shut out.

But he to the Aethiopians e'en now was gone about,
The far-dwellers outmost of menfolk; and these are sundered atwain,
Some dwell where the High-rider setteth, and some where he riseth again.
There then of bulls and of rams would he gather an hundred-fold,
And he sat him adown rejoicing and noble feast did hold.
But the rest in the hall were gathered of Zeus the Olympian lord.
So the Father of Gods and of men amidst them took up the word,
For mindful in heart was he of Aegisthus the noble one,
He that was slain of Orestes far-famed, Agamemnon's son.
Thus then to the deathless he spake, these things remembering still:
'Out on it! how do the menfolk to the Gods lay all their ill,
And say that of us it cometh; when they themselves indeed
Gain griefs from their own souls' folly beyond the fateful meed.
E'en as of late Aegisthus must wed Atrides' wife
In Doom's despite, and must slay him returning home from the strife.
Though his end therefrom he wotted, and thereof we warned him plain,
Sending him Hermes withal, the keen-eyed Argus-bane,
Bidding him slay not the man, nor woo the wife to his bed.
'For vengeance shall come from Orestes for the son of Atreus dead
When the child is waxen a man and longeth his land to win:'
So spake Hermes, but nought prevailed with Aegisthus herein,
Despite his goodly counsel. But now for all hath he paid.'

REVIEW COMMENT

Perhaps the most idiosyncratic translation of the *Odyssey*, Morris' version is a very handsome publication. But the extremely odd metre and diction make it something of a curiosity (especially given the fame of its author) rather than a text one wishes to keep reading.

To view the full text of Morris' translation, please use the following link: Morris *Odyssey*.

The Odyssey
J. W. Mackail
London 1903

[Sample from the Opening of the Poem]

THE ODYSSEY

BOOK FIRST

THE ASSEMBLY OF THE GODS: ATHENA'S
EXHORTATION TO TELEMACHUS

O MUSE, instruct me of the man who drew
His changeful course through wanderings not a few
After he sacked the holy town of Troy,
And saw the cities and the counsel knew

Of many men, and many a time at sea
Within his heart he bore calamity,
While his own life he laboured to redeem
And bring his fellows back from jeopardy.

Yet not his fellows thus from death he won,
Fain as he was to save them: who undone
by their own hearts' infatuation died,
Fools, that devoured the oxen of the Sun,

Hyperion: and therefore he the day
Of their returning homeward reft away.
Goddess, God's daughter, grant that now thereof
We too may hear, such portion as we may.

NOW all the rest that from the yawning grave
Escape had won, lay safe from war and wave
Each in his home; but him alone held fast
The queenly nymph within her vaulted cave,

Calypso, bright of Goddesses, who fain
Had kept him there her husband to remain;
Though for his wife and his return he pined.
But when the seasons in their circling train

Fulfilled the year wherein the Gods had planned

That he to Ithaca his native land
Should win his passage, not even yet was he
Quit of his labours nor had friends at hand.

Yet all the Gods on him compassion bore
Except Poseidon; who for evermore
Against divine Odysseus furiously
Was wroth, until he reached his native shore.

Now to the Aethiopians on a day
He took his journey, dwellers far away:
The Aethiopians, who in twofold lands
Dwell, and the uttermost of men are they:

Some where Hyperion begins to spring
At morn, and some beyond his downgoing:
Who made him sacrifice of bulls and rams,
And he sat by them at their banqueting,

Taking his pleasure there: but meanwhile all
The other Gods in Zeus the Olympian's hall
Were met together: and among them there
The sire of Gods and men these words let fall:

Because into his mind the prince he drew,
Aegisthus, whom renowned Orestes slew,
The son of Agamemnon; wherefore now
Among the deathless Gods he spake anew:

"Alas, how idly do these mortals blame
The Gods, as though by our devising came
The evil that in spite of ordinance
By their own folly for themselves they frame!

"As now, by no decree predestinate,
Aegisthus took to wife the wedded mate
Of Atreus' son, and him returning home
Slew, knowing sheer destruction for his fate;

"As we foretold him ere the deed was done
By Hermes' mouth, the keen-eyed Shining One;
Bidding him neither kill nor take to wife:
Since from Orestes' hand for Atreus' son

"Vengeance shall come when grown to man once more
His realm he claims: that message Hermes bore,
But his good counsel on Aegisthus fell
Fruitless: and now he has paid out the score."

REVIEW COMMENT

Here is another translation which defeats itself by the peculiarity of the form the translator has used. Mackail chooses an odd metre for his translation, that of "Omar Kayyam" of Fitzgerald, and the effect is to subodinate almost all effects of the poem to the very strong and frequent rhyme, so that Homer's text is, as it were, overwhelmed, as a contemporary reviewer noted: "it is hardly possible to read any considerable number of [these Omarian quatrains] without feeling that the style and speed and sound of Homer is gently vanishing away, and that, in these late days, Salamis is being at last revenged and the Persian is triumphing over the Greek."

Readers who would like to inspect Mackail's translation (Books IX to XVI) should use the following link: **Mackail *Odyssey***.

Homer's Odyssey
A Line for Line Translation in the Metre of the Original
H. B. Cotterill
London 1911

[Sample from the Opening of the Poem]

ODYSSEY BOOK I

SING, O Muse, of the man so wary and wise, who in far lands
Wandered whenas he had wasted the sacred town of the Trojans.
Many a people he saw and beheld their cities and customs,
Many a woe he endured in his heart as he tossed on the ocean,
Striving to win him his life and to bring home safely his comrades.
Ah but he rescued them not, those comrades, much as he wished it.
Ruined by their own act of infatuate madness they perished,
Fools that they were—who the cows of the sun-god, lord Hyperion,
Slaughtered and ate; and he took from the men their day of returning.
Sing—whence-ever the lay—sing, Zeus-born goddess, for us too!

Now ere all of the rest of the Greeks who had 'scaped from destruction
Safely at home and secure from the dangers of war and the ocean,
All but the one, whom yearning in vain for his wife and his homeland
Still did the beautiful goddess, the sea-nymph Calypso,
Hold in her hollow caves, with a longing to make him her husband.
Ay and at last, when the year in the slow revolution of seasons
Came, in the which, as the gods had ordained, he returned to his country,
Ithaca's isle, e'en then was he nowise free from his troubles,
Though once more with his own; and the gods were touched with compassion,
All but Poseidon, who was ever unceasingly angered
Raging at godlike Odysseus and keeping him far from his homeland.
Now was he gone to revisit the far-off Aethiop people—
Aethiop people that dwell wide-sundered, furthest of mortals,
Some where sinks Hyperion to rest, some where he ariseth,
Here he expected of rams and of oxen a solemn oblation,
Here he rejoiced as he sat at the feast. But the other immortals
Unto the mansion of Zeus the Olympian gathered together.
Then in the midst brake silence the Father of men and immortals,
Since in the depths of his heart he remembered the noble Aegisthus
Slaughtered by King Agamemnon's son, far-famous Orestes;
Mindful of him these words he addressed to gods everlasting:
"Verily! how these mortals of earth give blame to the heaven!
Evil is sent by the gods, they affirm! It is they that in folly,
Ay in the madness of folly, o'erleaping their destiny, seek it.

Thus did Aegisthus, in spite of his fate predestined, in madness
Marry the wife of Atrides and murdered her lord at his coming,
Fully he knew of the doom that impended—for this we foretold him,
Sending him Hermes, the keen-eyed slayer of Argus, to warn him
Neither to murder the man nor his wife to solicit as suitor:
Else shall Orestes repay for his father a terrible vengeance
After the days of his youth, when he learneth to long for his homeland.
Such was the warning of Hermes, but nowise heeded Aegisthus
Well-meant counsel—and now he hath paid all reckonings fully."

REVIEW COMMENT

I've never understood why anyone would want to try rendering Homer in English line by line, even less with some attempt to deliver the rhythm of the Greek Given that Greek rhythm is very different from English rhythm based on stresses, why would anyone want to impose a foreign style upon a language not designed for it? And one has to wonder just how many readers have any idea of how to read an English Homer while observing the "rules" for traditional Greek rhythm (how many of them read it aloud anyway?). Yes, the requirement does make an interesting challenge, but what possible attractions are there for the reader, if the attempt means that the English has to be delivered in a manner so different from modern or traditional English poetry? However, those readers for whom these two criteria are important (for some reason) might enjoy reading Cotterill. His language, though suffering from too many deliberate archaisms and the syntactical awkwardness typical of those who wrench the English to fit the Greek, is no harder on the ears or the understanding than Lattimore's.

Those who would like to access the full text of Cotterill's translation should use the following link: Cotterill *Odyssey*.

Homer
Odyssey
Translated A. T. Murray
Loeb Classical Library
London 1919

[Sample from the Opening of the Poem]

Book I

Tell me, O Muse, of the man of many devices, who wandered full many ways after he had sacked the sacred citadel of Troy. Many were the men whose cities he saw and whose mind he learned, aye, and many the woes he suffered in his heart upon the sea, seeking to win his own life and the return of his comrades. Yet even so he saved not his comrades, though he desired it sore, for through their own blind folly they perished—fools, who devoured the kine of Helios Hyperion; but he took from them the day of their returning. Of these things, goddess, daughter of Zeus, beginning where thou wilt, tell thou even unto us.

Now all the rest, as many as had escaped sheer destruction, were at home, safe from both war and sea, but Odysseus alone, filled with longing for his return and for his wife, did the queenly nymph Calypso, that bright goddess, keep back in her hollow caves, yearning that he should be her husband. But when, as the seasons revolved, the year came in which the gods had ordained that he should return home to Ithaca, not even there was he free from toils, even among his own folk. And all the gods pitied him save Poseidon; but he continued to rage unceasingly against godlike Odysseus until at length he reached his own land. Howbeit Poseidon had gone among the far-off Ethiopians—the Ethiopians who dwell sundered in twain, the farthermost of men, some where Hyperion sets and some where he rises, there to receive a hecatomb of bulls and rams, and there he was taking his joy, sitting at the feast; but the other gods were gathered together in the halls of Olympian Zeus.

Among them the father of gods and men was first to speak, for in his heart he thought of noble Aegisthus, whom far-famed Orestes, Agamemnon's son, had slain. Thinking on him he spoke among the immortals, and said: "Look you now, how ready mortals are to blame the gods. It is from us, they say, that evils come, but they even of themselves, through their own blind folly, have sorrows beyond that which is ordained. Even as now Aegisthus, beyond that which was ordained, took to himself the wedded wife of the son of Atreus, and slew him on his return, though well he knew of sheer destruction, seeing that we spake to him before, sending Hermes, the keen-sighted Argeiphontes, that he should neither slay the man nor woo his wife; for from Orestes shall come vengeance for the son of Atreus when once he has come to manhood and longs for his own land. So Hermes spoke,

but for all his good intent he prevailed not upon the heart of Aegisthus; and now he has paid the full price of all."

REVIEW COMMENT

This translation is part of the well known Loeb Classical Library Series which has the Greek and English on facing pages. This series has its fans and its critics, and I belong to the former group, especially when the translation is accurate (as this one is) and can serve as a useful assistance to a reading of the Greek. This is the book to purchase if you want the parallel texts, but be warned: the volumes can be expensive, so shop around. The translation has recently been revised. Those seeking a prose translation without the Greek, however, should look elsewhere (to Rieu, for example).

Readers who would like to review the entire Murray translation should consult the following link: Murray *Odyssey*.

THE ODYSSEY OF HOMER
Translated by
William Marris
Oxford University Press, 1925

BOOK I

Tell me, O Muse, of that Great Traveller
Who wandered far and wide when he had sacked
The sacred town of Troy. Of many men
He saw the cities and he learned the mind;
Ay, and at heart he suffered many woes
Upon the sea, intent to save his life
And bring his comrades home. Yet even so
His men he could not save for all his efforts,
For through their own blind wilfulness they perished;
The fools! who at up Hyperion's kine;
And he bereft them of their homing day.
Touching these things, beginning where thou wilt,
Tell even us, O goddess, child of Zeus.
Now all the rest, as many as escaped
The plunge to death, were safe from war and wave
At home: Odysseus only, hungering
For wife and home, the queenly nymph Calypso
Kept, that bright goddess, in her hollow caves,
Desiring him for mate. But when the year
Came with the circling of the seasons, when
The gods had so ordained that he should come
Homer unto Ithaca, not even there
Among his own folk, was he quit of toils.
And all the gods felt pity for him, save
Poseidon, who unceasing raged against
Godlike Odysseys, till he reached his home.
Howbeit Poseidon had gone off to visit
The distant Ethiopians (now they dwell,
Those Ethiopians, in twain divided,
Some by the sunset, others by the dawn,
The uttermost of men) there to receive
His hecatomb of bulls and rams from them.
There made he merry sitting at the feast;
But in the dwelling of Olympian Zeus
The other gods were gathered; and the Father
Of gods and mend began to speak among them.
For he was thinking of superb Aegisthus,

Whom famed Orestes, Agamemnon's son,
Had slain; and having him in mind, he spake
Among the immortals:
'Look ye, how apt men are to blame the gods!
It is from us, they say, that evils come,
Whereas through their blind folly they themselves
Have miseries beyond what was ordained.
So even now, beyond what was ordained,
Aegisthus took to him the wedded wife
Of Atreus' son, and when her lord came home,
Slew him, though well he knew it meant sheer death;
Since we betimes had sent our word to him
By Hermes, keen-eyed Argus-slayer, thus:
"Thou must not kill the man nor woo his wife:
Since from Orestes' hand, once he has won
To man's estate and longs for his own land,
Shall the avenging of Atrides come."
So Hermes spoke, but yet could not persuade,
For all his good intent, Aegisthus' heart:
Well, now hath he paid the full price of all!'

To access the full text of the Marris translation, please use the following link: Marris *Odyssey*.

The Odyssey of Homer
translated by Herbert Bates
London 1929

[Sample from the Opening of the Poem]

BOOK ONE

TELL ME THE TALE, MUSE, OF THAT MAN
OF MANY CHANGES, HE WHO WENT
WANDERING SO FAR WHEN HE HAD PLUNDERED
Troy's sacred citadel. And many
The men whose cities he beheld,
Whose minds he learned to know, and many
The sorrows that his soul endured
Upon the deep the while he strove
To save himself from death and bring
His comrades home.
Of these things now,
Daughter of Zeus, O goddess, tell us,
Even as thou wilt, the tale.
Ere this
Those others who escaped death's stroke
Had reached their homes at last, delivered
From battle and the sea. But him
And him alone—though still he longed
For home and wife—the nymph Calypso,
A mighty goddess, kept imprisoned
Within her hollow caves, and longed
To make him there her husband. No,
Not when the day came when the gods
Granted, as circling season passed,
That he might once again return
To Ithaca—not even then,
With those that loved him, might he find
A rest from strife. And all the gods
Felt pity for him, all but one—
Poseidon. Still, with wrath unceasing,
He strove against the good Odysseus
Until he reached his home.
But now
this god was gone afar to visit
The Ethiopians, and there
He shared the offering they made him

Of bulls and rams, and at their feast
Sat with delight.
And now there came
The other gods all gathering
In Zeus the Olympian's hall. And thus
Spoke out before them then the father
Of gods and men:
"Alas that mortals
Should blame the gods! From us, they say,
All evils come. Yet they themselves
It is who through defiant deeds
Bring sorrow on them—far more sorrow
Than fate would have them bear. Behold
Ægisthus, he who overpassed
Fate's measure, for he took the wife
Of Atreus' son to be his own
And slew him coming home. And yet
He might have seen swift ruin coming
For we ourselves gave warning. Now
He pays the price for all."

Review Comment

Bates translates Homer in English tetrameters, and his version illustrates as well as any why this rhythm feels all wrong for Homer (mainly because it's not a verse form we are very familiar with in long dramatic poems). It's not clear to me that this rhythm adds anything poetically significant to one's experience of reading Homer. Bates also leaves out bits here and there (e.g., the reference to Hermes in Zeus's speech above) in order (one assumes) to keep the poetry moving quickly, so the translation is not altogether reliable as an accurate rendition of Homer. There is, however, a rather nice map at the start ("The Wanderings of Odysseus: The Unknown World").

Homer

The Odyssey of Homer
Translated by T. E. Shaw
(Colonel T. E. Lawrence)
USA 1932

[Sample from the Opening of the Poem]

O DIVINE POESY
GODDESS-DAUGHTER OF ZEUS
SUSTAIN FOR ME
THIS SONG OF THE VARIOUS-MINDED MAN
WHO AFTER HE HAD PLUNDERED
THE INNERMOST CITADEL OF HALLOWED TROY
WAS MADE TO STRAY GRIEVOUSLY
ABOUT THE COASTS OF MEN
THE SPORT OF THEIR CUSTOMS GOOD OR BAD
WHILE HIS HEART
THROUGH ALL THE SEA-FARING
ACHED IN AN AGONY TO REDEEM HIMSELF
AND BRING HIS COMPANY SAFE HOME

VAIN HOPE—FOR THEM
FOR HIS FELLOWS HE STROVE IN VAIN
THEIR OWN WITLESSNESS CAST THEM AWAY
THE FOOLS
TO DESTROY FOR MEAT
THE OXEN OF THE MOST EXALTED SUN
WHEREFORE THE SUN-GOD BLOTTED OUT
THE DAY OF THEIR RETURN

MAKE THE TALE LIVE FOR US
IN ALL ITS MANY BEARINGS
O MUSE

BOOK I

By now the other warriors, those that had escaped headlong ruin by sea or in battle, were safely home. Only Odysseus tarried, shut up by Lady Calypso, a nymph and very Goddess, in her hewn-out caves. She craved him for her bed-mate: while he was longing for his house and his wife. Of a truth the rolling seasons had at last brought up the year marked by the Gods for his return to Ithaca; but not even there among his loved things would he escape further conflict. Yet had all

the Gods with lapse of time grown compassionate towards Odysseus—all but Poseidon, whose emnity flamed every against him till he had reached his home. Poseidon, however, was for the moment far away among the Aethiopians, that last race of men, whose dispersion across the world's end is so broad that some of them can see the Sun-God rise while others see him set. Thither had Poseidon gone in the hope of burnt offerings, bulls and rams, by hundreds: and there he sat feasting merrily while the other Gods came together in the halls of Olympian Zeus. To them the father of Gods and men began speech, for his breast teemed with though of great Aegisthus, whom famous Orestes, the son of Agamemnon, had slain.

"It vexes me to see how mean are these creatures of a day towards us Gods, when they charge against us the evils (far beyond our worst dooming) which their own exceeding wantonness has heaped upon themselves. Just so did Aegisthus exceed when he took to his bed the lawful wife of Atrides and killed her returning husband. He knew the sheer ruin this would entail. Did we not warn him by the mouth of our trusty Hermes, the keen-eyed slayer of Argus, neither to murder the man nor lust after the woman's body? 'For the death of the son of Atreus will be requited by Orestes, even as he grows up and dreams of his native place.' These were Hermes' very words: but not even such friendly interposition could restrain Aegisthus, who now pays the final penalty."

REVIEW COMMENT

Lawrence claims that his is the twenty-eighth English rendering of the Odyssey. His version has no particular merits. In general the prose is fairly vigorous, in spite of the sometimes odd phraseology ("beyond our worst dooming"). Still, I get the impression throughout that the traditional habit of rendering Homer in deliberately archaic language has affected Lawrence's prose for the worse. In his own writing he is surely much better than he is in this translation.

For a longer preview of Lawrence's translation, please use the following link: **Lawrence *Odyssey***.

Homer
The Odyssey
The Story of Odysseus
Translated by W. H. D. Rouse

THE STORY OF ODYSSEUS

BOOK I

What Went On in the House of Odysseus

THIS IS THE STORY OF A MAN, ONE WHO WAS NEVER AT A loss. He had travelled far in the world, after the sack of Troy, the virgin fortress; he saw many cities of men, and learnt their mind; he endured many troubles and hardships in the struggle to save his own life and to bring back his men safe to their homes. He did his best, but he could not save his companions. For they perished by their own madness, because they killed and ate the cattle of Hyperion the Sun-god, and the god took care that they should never see home again.

At the time when I begin, all the others who had not been killed in the war were at home, safe from the perils of battle and sea: but he was alone, longing to get home to his wife. He was kept prisoner by a witch, Calypso, a radiant creature, and herself one of the great family of gods, who wanted him to stay in her cave and be her husband. Well, then, the seasons went rolling by, and when the year came, in which by the thread that fate spins for every man he was to return home to Ithaca, he had not yet got free of his troubles and come back to his own people. The gods were all sorry for him, except Poseidon, god of the sea, who bore a lasting grudge against him all the time until he returned.

But it happened that Poseidon went for a visit a long way off, to the Ethiopians; who live at the ends of the earth, some near the sunrise, some near the sunset. There he expected a fine sacrifice of bulls and goats, and there he was, feasting an enjoying himself mightily; but the other gods were all gathered in the palace of Olympian Zeus.

Then the Father of gods and men made them a speech; for his heart was angry against a man, Aigisthos, and Agamemnon's son Orestes, as you know, had just killed the man. So he spoke to the company as follows:

"Upon my word, just see how mortal men always put the blame on us gods! We are the source of evil, so they say—when they have only their own madness to thank if their miseries are worse than they ought to be. Look here, now: Aigisthos has done what he ought not to have done. Took Agamemnon's wedded wife for himself, killed Agamemnon when he came home, though he knew quite well it would be his own ruin! We gave him fair warning, sent our special messenger Hermes, and told him not to kill the man or to make love to his wife; their son Orestes would punish him, when he grew up and wanted his own dominions.

Hermes told him plainly, but he could do nothing with Aigisthos, although it was for his good. Now he has paid the debt in one lump sum."

REVIEW COMMENT

Rouse's original translation bears the sub-title "The Adventures of Ulysses" and he must be among the last translators to use the old Latin names (although that has changed in more recent editions of his translation). Strictly speaking, this title should not be included on a list of complete English translations of the *Odyssey*, because Rouse, in his desire to deliver a rendition of Homer in modern colloquial prose for everyman, takes considerable liberties with Homer's text. However, in its day the translation was well known, and it is still in print (as a Signet Classic) and available on line. Anyone seeking a prose translation of Homer's *Odyssey* should, in the interest of getting Homer's poem relatively unsullied, select another version, but Rouse is worth browsing for his no nonsense brusque energetic prose (larded with the occasional odd piece of antique diction).

Homer
The Odyssey
Translated by E. V. Rieu
London 1946
(Revised 1991)

Sample from the Opening of the Revised Edition

I

ATHENE VISITS TELEMACHUS

Tell me, Muse, the story of that resourceful man who was driven to wander far and wide after he had sacked the holy citadel of Troy. He saw the cities of many people and he learnt their ways. He suffered great anguish on the high seas in his struggles to preserve his life and bring his comrades home. But he failed to save those comrades, in spite of all his efforts. It was their own transgression that brought them to their doom, for in their folly they devoured the oxen of Hyperion the Sun-god and he saw to it that they would never return. Tell us this story, goddess daughter of Zeus, beginning at whatever point you will.

All the survivors of the war had reached their homes by now and so put the perils of battle and the sea behind them. Odysseys alone was prevented from returning to the home and wife he yearned for by that powerful goddess, the Nymph Calypso, who longed for him to marry her, and kept him in her vaulted cave. Not even when the rolling seasons brought in the year which the gods had chosen for his homecoming to Ithaca was he clear of his troubles and safe among his friends. Yet all the gods pitied him, except Poseidon, who pursued the heroic Odyssey with relentless malice till the day when he reached his own country.

Poseidon, however, was now gone on a visit to the distant Ethiopians, in the most remote part of the world, half of whom live where the Sun goes down, and half where he rises. He had gone to accept a sacrifice of bulls and rams, and there he sat and enjoyed the pleasures of the feast. Meanwhile the rest of the gods had assembled in the palace of Olympian Zeus, and the Father of men and gods opened a discussion among them. He had been thinking of the handsome Aegisthus, whom

Agamemnon's far-famed son Orestes killed; and it was with Aegisthus in his mind that Zeus now addressed the immortals:

'What a lamentable thing it is that men should blame the gods and regard us as the source of their troubles, when it is their own transgressions which bring them suffering that was not their destiny. Consider Aegisthus: it was not his destiny to steal Agamemnon's wife and murder her husband when he came home. He knew the result would be utter disaster, since we ourselves had sent Hermes, the keen-eyed Giant-slayer, to warn him neither to kill the man nor to court his wife. For Orestes, as Hermes told him, was bound to avenge Agamemnon as soon as he grew up and thought with longing of his home. Yet with all his friendly counsel Hermes failed to dissuade him. And now Aegisthus has paid the final price for all his sins.'

REVIEW COMMENT

Rieu's translation is a personal favourite of mine, since it was my introduction to Homer. In its day it was extremely popular, and it is still top of the list for the reader who is looking for a prose translation of Homer's *Odyssey*, especially since the edition has been revised by Peter Jones and D. C. H. Rieu. There's an interesting and brief introduction explaining some of the revisions they have made. The translation is accurate, idiomatic, and dramatic, far superior to Martin Hammond's prose version.

Rieu does have his critics (of course), some of whom object that he tones down the poem to something less majestic than it should be ("[Rieu] converts Homer into treacle" is the way John Crossett—somewhat hyperbolically—puts it) or that he turns the poem into a Victorian novel (as Adam Parry observed "Rieu had discovered that Homer was really Trollope"). But if this is treacle, there's nothing about it which slows the reader down or gives him an overdose of saccharine sweetness.

The reader who would like a preview of the revised Rieu translation should use the following link: Rieu *Odyssey*.

The Odyssey of Homer
Translated by
Ennis Rees
New York, 1960

I have been unable to find a copy of Ennis Rees's translation of the *Odyssey*. I did, however, stumble across a short review of the work, a portion of which I offer below, not because I think it is a fair evaluation of Rees's translation, but because I think it is a splendid example of a certain attitude one occasionally comes across in the Classics professoriate:

> Of the present translation, it may suffice to quote the publishers' own description: 'Brilliantly done, in natural, free flowing verse, it is the most readable version available to modern readers.' If that does not deter buyers on this side of the Atlantic, the translator's own claims (p. xv) may be more effective; he writes: 'I have tried to be faithful to the sentiments, ideas and images of the original and to include what ever is necessary to the literal sense of the Greek poem. But I have also done what I could to make a readable English poem.' Such claims, as we know, are beyond the measure of human capacity to satisfy; and when it is realised, as it will soon be by those who pass beyond the preface to the translation itself, that Mr. Rees has no adequate knowledge either of Homeric Greek or what we still possessively regard as English, we shall, without a pang of regret, leave the book to be praised by those for whom it seems to have been intended. (J. A. Davison, *The Classical Review*, Vol 12 Issue 3, December 1962, p. 303)

Another academic reviewer of the Rees translation raises an issue which has become increasingly evident in the translations of Homer in the past decades: the habit of offering Homer in what has come to be known as "stacked prose":

> This new translation of the *Odyssey* is printed as though it were verse. The translator, moreover, tells us in the introduction, "In meter the line I have found best suit for rendering the original dactylic hexameters is a loose measure of five major stresses plus a varying number of relatively unaccented syllables." Unable myself to feel that I was reading verse, but conscious of my limitations, I typed off as prose the following passage from the second paragraph of Rees's version (a fair sample, as far as I can tell): "Now all the others who had managed to escape destruction were safe at home, untroubled by war or the sea. Odysseus alone, full of longing for wife and friends, was kept from returning by that beautiful nymph Calypso, the powerful goddess who hoped to make him her husband. Even in the year of his predestined return, at home among his own people, his toils were many." To this I added translations of the same passage by Rieu, Rouse, and Shaw. These anonymous extracts were then presented to a number of

> colleagues, who were asked to say which, if any, they felt might have been intended as verse. (I was careful not to choose classicists, and for the most part chose younger members of the English Department.) All were agreed that all the translations were prose. When I told them that one was said by the author to be verse and pressed them to pick which one this might be, their choices were varied, but no one chose Rees. Can it be that, like a famous predecessor, Rees has been using prose without realizing it?
>
> Though obviously not all his readers will be conscious of any metrical pattern in his rendering, Rees himself apparently is. At least I assume that it must be this subtle sense which causes him to pad his lines at times with words which have no counterpart in the original and are not necessary for the English sense. (Frederick Combellack, *Classical Philology*, Volume 57, Number 1, p. 60)

The phrase "stacked prose" is a commonly used pejorative to describe this modern tendency:

> The original lines of Homer are ignored and the text is translated in prose. What makes stacked prose different from prose is that after the text starts at the left margin it only goes on for a set number of syllables before breaking to start the next line. This is done so that the text may look and read like verse, but while stacked prose mimics verse, a line of verse shows a strict poetic structure and forms a unit of composition, a line in stacked prose does not.(https://iliad-translations.com/ translation-comparison/).

This habit blurs the distinction between poetry and prose (presumably under the banner of "free verse") since increasing the only major difference between the two is that printed prose has a more or less even right justification, whereas poetry has an erratic blank space to the right of the printed text.

Homer
The Odyssey
Translated by Robert Fitzgerald
(New York 1961)

Sample from the Opening of the Poem
[This sample does not reproduce the accents on some of the names.]

Sing in me, Muse, and through me tell the story
of that man skilled in all ways of contenting,
the wanderer, harried for years on end,
after he plundered the stronghold
on the proud height of Troy.
He saw the townlands
and learned the minds of many distant men,
and weathered many bitter nights and days
in his deep heart at sea, while he fought only
to save his life, to bring his shipmates home.
But not by will nor valor could he save them,
for their own recklessness destroyed them all--
children and fools, they killed and feasted on
the cattle of Lord Helios, the Sun,
and he who moves all day through heaven
took from their eyes the dawn of their return.

Of these adventures, Muse, daughter of Zeus,
tell us in our time, lift the great song again.
Begin when all the rest who left behind them
headlong death in battle or at sea
had long ago returned, while he alone still hungered
for home and wife. Her ladyship Kalypso
cling to him in her sea hollowed caves--
a nymph, immortal and most beautiful,
who craved him for her own.
And when long years and seasons
wheeling brought around that point of time
ordained for him to make his passage homeward,
trials and dangers, even so, attended him
even in Ithaca, near those he loved.
Yet all the gods had pitied Lord Odysseus,
all but Poseidon, raging cold and rough
against the brave king till he came ashore
at last on his own land.
But now that god

had gone far off among the sunburnt races,
most remote of men, at earth's two verges,I
n sunset lands and lands of the rising sun,
to be regaled by smoke of thighbones burning,
haunches of rams and bulls, a hundred fold.
He lingered delighted at the banquet side.

In the bright hall of Zeus upon Olympus
the other gods were all at home, and Zeus,
the father of gods and men, made conversation.
For he had meditated on Aigisthos, dead
by the hand of Agamemnon's son, Orestes,
and spoke his thought aloud before them all.

"My word, how mortals take the gods the task!
All their afflictions come from us, we hear.
And what of their own failings? Greed and folly
double the suffering in the lot of man.
See how Aigisthos, for his double portion,
stole Agamemnon's wife and killed the soldier
on his homecoming day. And yet Aigisthos
knew that his own doom lay in this. We gods
had warned him, sent down Hermes Argeiphontes,
our most observant courier, to say;
'Don't kill the man, don't touch his wife,
or face a reckoning with Orestes
the day he comes of age and wants his patrimony.'
Friendly advice--but would Aigisthos take it?
Now he has paid the reckoning in full."

REVIEW COMMENT

Fitzgerald's *Odyssey* is one of the best, if not the best, modern rendition of Homer into English verse, mainly because Fitzgerald is a much more accomplished poet than his competitors and because he understands better than almost all his fellow translators (ancient and modern) how best to reconcile the demands of the Greek text with the requirements of a modern readership. He also knows how to use the iambic pentameter line to convey the energy, speed, and beauty of Homer's original, without being sidetracked by misleading notions of fidelity to the Greek metre or to the original sound of the poem (notions which have infected a number of modern translations): he has "paid less attention to the technicalities of his Homeric verse and more to an inventive American style in [his] mother tongue" (McCrorie).

This translation places Fitzgerald in the tradition of the best and most successful translators of Homer who have rendered the Greek in extraordinarily expressive poetry of their own age:

> Fitzgerald's supreme virtue is to have solved the dilemma of adequate language. . . . he has developed a mode which is at once neutral and modern, lyric yet full of technical resource. It has many of the qualities of very good prose, being at all times in forward motion and responsive to the claims of precision. But it has the economy and soar of the poet. Written in flexible blank verse, Fitzgerald's narrative moves with such ease of tread that we often forget the sheer virtuosity of the artisan. . . . Fitzgerald's book is a primer in the vexed craft of translation." (George Steiner, *Kenyon Review* 1961).

Readers who would like the full text of Fitzgerald's translation should use the following link: **Fitzgerald *Odyssey***.

The Odyssey of Homer
Translated by
Richmond Lattimore
Chicago 1965

Sample from the Opening of the Poem

Tell me, Muse, of the man of many ways, who was driven
far journeys, after he had sacked Troy's sacred citadel.
Many were they whose cities he saw, whose minds he learned of,
many the pains he suffered in his spirit on the wide sea,
struggling for his own life and the homecoming of his companions.
Even so he could not save his companions, hard though
he strove to; they were destroyed by their own wild recklessness,
fools, who devoured the oxen of Helios, the Sun God,
and he took away the day of their homecoming. From some point
here, goddess, daughter of Zeus, speak, and begin our story.
Then all the others, as many as fled sheer destruction,
were at home now, having escaped the sea and the fighting.
This one alone, longing for his wife and his homecoming,
was detained by the queenly nymph Kalypso, bright among goddesses,I
n her hollowed caverns, desiring that he should be her husband.
But when in the circling of the years that very year
came in which the gods had spun for him his time of homecoming
to Ithaka, not even then was he free of his trials
nor among his own people. But all the gods pitied him
except Poseidon; he remained relentlessly angry
with godlike Odysseus, until his return to his own country.
But Poseidon was gone now to visit the far Aithiopians,
Aithiopians, most distant of men, who live divided,
some at the setting of Hyperion, some at his rising.
to receive a hecatomb of bulls and rams. There
he sat at the feast and took pleasure. Meanwhile the other
Olympian gods were gathered together in the halls of Zeus.
First among them to speak was the father of gods and mortals,
for he was thinking in his heart of stately Aigisthos,
whom Orestes, Agamemnon's far-famed son
had murdered. Remembering him he spoke now before the immortals:
'Oh for shame, how the mortals put the blame upon us
gods, for they say evils come from us but it is they, rather,
who by their own recklessness win sorrow beyond what is given,
as now lately, beyond what was given, Aigisithos
married the wife of Atreus' son and murdered him on his homecoming,
though he knew it was sheer destruction, for we ourselves had told him,

sending Hermes, the mighty watcher, Argeiphontes,
not to kill the man, nor court his lady in marriage;
for vengeance would come on him from Orestes,
son of Atreides, whenever he came of age and longed for his own country.
So Hermes told him, but for all his kind intentions he could not
persuade the mind of Aigisthos. And now he was paid for everything.'

REVIEW COMMENT

Richmond Lattimore's translation of the *Odysssey*, like his Iliad, has received fulsome praise, more so than any other recent translation. And the two books are firmly established as the favourites of the professoriate. Yet many readers find his translations--offerred to us as poetry (hexameters)--almost unreadable:

> It is incredible that a man who can write English poetry, who has written fine translations . . . could abandon English for the worst translationese. . . . [Lattimore] gets some things right now that were botched in *The Iliad* . . . but he still does not think the thing into English. . . . [The] cause for so dismal an effect [is his] conception of fidelity to the Homeric hexameter. . . . To achieve mathematical faithfulness, he sacrifices the primary esthetic effect, which is one of formality and control. . . . Lattimore distorts the order of English, and stumbles, often, into ambiguity. . . . The result of his narrow minded focus and literalism in the handling of separate units is the lifeless jointure of part to part . . . an effect the very opposite of . . . [that] made possible by oral poetry's large formulaic and rhythmic building blocks" (Gary Wills, *National Review* 1968)

There is not enough space here to explore this curious difference of opinion. Perhaps I shall do so at a later date. Such an investigation might reveal some interesting facts about the evaluating criteria of the scholarly establishment. Meanwhile, here are some comments in praise of Lattimore:

> It would be a crime to underestimate the miraculous and self-effacing artistry with which Professor Lattimore has reanimated Homer for this generation and perhaps for other generations to come" *Times Literary Supplement* (London)

> Lattimore's translation of Homer's *Odyssey* is the most eloquent, persuasive, and imaginative I have seen. It reads as if the poem had originally been written in English. (Paul Engle)

> The best . . . translator of Greek poetry into English is Richmond Lattimore. . . . This is the best *Odyssey* in modern English. (Gilbert Highet).

The best advice I can give to someone considering purchasing Lattimore's translation is to make sure you read enough of it first to see how you respond to the style. Do not be misled by other people's comments.

For a Review Comment on Lattimore's *Iliad*, please use the following link: Lattimore *Iliad*

For a longer preview of Lattimore's Odyssey, use the following link: Lattimore *Odyssey*

The Odyssey
Translated by Walter Shewring
Oxford 1980

Sample from the Opening of the Poem

GODDESS of song, teach me the story of a hero.

This was the man of wide-ranging spirit who had sacked the sacred town of Troy and who wandered afterwards long and far. Many were those who cities he viewed and whose minds he came to know, many the troubles that vexed his heart as he sailed the seas, labouring to save himself and to bring his comrades home. But his comrades he could not keep from ruin, strive as he might; they perished instead by their own presumptuousness. Fools, they devoured the cattle of Hyperion, and he, the sun-god, cut off from them the day of their homecoming.

Goddess, daughter of Zeus, to me in turn impart some knowledge of all these things, beginning where you will.

The tale begins when all those others who had escaped the pit of destruction were safe in their own lands, spared by the wars and seax.

Only Odysseus was held elsewhere, pining for home and wife; the nymph Calypso, a goddess of strange power and beauty, had kept him captive within her arching caverns, yearning for him to be her husband. And when there came with revolving seasons the year that the gods had set for his journey home to Ithaca, not even then was he past his troubles, not even then was he with his own people. For though all the gods beside had compassion on him, Poseidon's anger was unabated against the hero until he returned to his own land.

But now Poseidon had gone to visit the Ethiopians, those distant Ethiopians whose nation is parted within itself, so that some are near the settting and some near the rising sun, but all alike are at the world's end; to these he had gone to receive a great offering of bulls and rams, and there he was taking his pleasure now, seated at the banquet. But the other gods were gathered together in the palace of Olympian Zeus, and the father of gods and men began to speak to them. His mind was full of Lord Aegisthus, slain by renowned Orestes, the child of Agamemnon; with him in mind Zeus began to speak to the Deathless Ones.

'O the waywardness of these mortals! They accuse the gods, they say that their troubles come from us, and yet by their own presumptuousness they draw down sorrow upon themselves that outruns their allotted portion. So now, Aegisthus outran his allotted portion by taking in marriage the wedded wife of the son of Atreus and killing her husband when he returned. Yet he knew what pit of

destruction was before him, because we ourselves warned him of it. We sent him Hermes, the Keen Watcher, the Radiant One; we forbade him to kill the king or to woo his wife, under pain of vengeance for Agamemnon that would come upon him from Orestes when the boy grew up and felt a longing for his own country. Thus Hermes warned him, wishing him well, but Aegisthus' heart would not hear reason, and how he has paid all his debts at once.'

REVIEW COMMENT

Shewring offers an accurate and direct English *Odyssey* in (generally) idiomatic English. And he offers interesting footnotes throughout. Those looking for a prose translation should certainly consider using this text.

Readers who would like a longer preview of Shewring's text should use the following link: **Shewring *Odyssey***.

The Odyssey of Homer
Allen Mandelbaum
Berkeley 1990

[A Sample from the Opening of the Poem]

Muse, tell me of the man of many wiles,
the man who wandered many paths of exile
after he sacked Troy's sacred citadel.
He saw the cities—mapped the minds—of many;
and on the sea, his spirit suffered every
adversity—to keep his life intact,
to bring his comrades back. In that last task,
he will was firm and fast, and yet he failed:
he could not save his comrades. Fools, they foiled
themselves: they ate the oxen of the Sun,
the herd of Hélios Hypérion;
the lord of light requited their transgression—
he took away the day of their return.

Muse, tell us of these matters. Daughter of Zeus,
my starting point is any point you choose.

All other Greeks who had been spared the steep
descent to death had reached their homes—released
from war and waves. One man alone was left,
still longing for his home, his wife, his rest.
For the commanding nymph, the brightest goddess,
Calypso, held him in her hollow grottoes:
she wanted him as husband. Even when
the wheel of years drew near his destined time—
the time the gods designed for his return
to Ithaca—he still could not depend
upon fair fortune or unfailing friends.
While other gods took pity on him, one—
Poseidon—still pursued: he preyed upon
divine Odysseus until the end,
until the exile found his own dear land.

But now Poseidon was away—his hosts,
the Ethiopians, the most remote
of men (they live in two divided parts—
half, where the sun-god sets; half, where he starts).
Poseidon, visiting the east, received

the roast thighs of bulls and sheep. The feast
delighted him. And there he sat. But all
his fellow gods were gathered in the halls
of Zeus upon Olympus; there the father
of men and gods spoke first. His mind upon
the versatile Aegisthus—whom the son
of Agamemnon, famed Orestes, killed—
he shared this musing with the deathless ones:

"Men are so quick to blame the gods: they say
that we devise their misery. But they
themselves—in their depravity—design
grief greater than the griefs that fate assigns.
So did Aegísthus act when he transgressed
the boundaries that fate and reason set.
He took the lawful wife of Agamemnon;

And when the son of Atreus had come back,
Aegísthus murdered him—although he knew
how steep was that descent. For we'd sent Hermes,
our swiftest, our most keen-eyed emissary,
to warn against that murder and adultery:
'Oréstes will avenge his father when,
his manhood come, he claims his rightful land.'
Hermes had warned him as one warns a friend.
And yet Aegísthus will could not be swayed.
Now, in one stroke, all that he owes is paid."

REVIEW COMMENT

Mandelbaum has a reputation as an outstanding translator of traditional poems, so it is not surprising that his rendition of the *Odyssey* is one of the very best available. The pentameter verse is succinct, direct, rapid, and sensitive—ideal for this particular poem (it might be insufficiently heavy for a rendition of the *Iliad*, but it's exactly right here). The translator also from time to time makes very interesting and effective use of rhyme and near rhyme (at first the habit sounds a bit odd, but one quickly gets used to it). The diction is colloquial without being slangy , and there are occasional reminders in the diction and the alliteration that this is a very old poem (a habit I normally deplore, but here the translator uses the technique sparingly).

My only reservation (a very minor cavil) is that the style doesn't quite deliver the full effect of the violent moments (e.g., putting out Polyphemus' eye and the mutilation of Melanthius). But if one is looking for an excellent rendition of

Homer's poem in modern English verse that sings (as opposed to ersatz olde worlde idioms or fractured English syntax or inappropriately ponderous lines), then forget about other possibilities for the moment and take a really close look at Mandelbaum's *Odyssey*, especially if you're searching for a class room text for younger readers. If you'd like to listen to this lyrical rendition of Homer, a full and an abridged version are available (read by Derek Jacobi).

Readers who would like a longer preview of Mandelbaum's translation should use the following link: Mandelbaum's *Odyssey*.

Homer
The Odyssey
translation and commentary
R. D. Dawe
Book Guild, Sussex 1993

[Sample from the Opening of the Poem]

Tell me, Muse, of the versatile man who was driven off course many times after he had sacked the holy citadel of Troy. Many were the peoples whose cities he saw, and whose minds he got to know; and at sea many were the pains he felt in his heart as he tried to secure his own life and his comrades' return home. Even so he did not save them, much as he wanted to. Instead they perished through their own outrageous behaviour, foolish men who ate up the cattle of Hyperion the Sun; and he took from them the day of their homecoming. From some point or other, goddess, daughter of Zeus, tell us too about these things.

At that point all the others who had escaped an abrupt death were at home, after escaping war and the sea. But him alone, longing for a return home and for his wife, a nymph, the lady Calypso, divine among goddesses, was detaining in her hollow caves, desiring him to be her husband. But when the year came, as the anniversaries rolled by, in which the gods had spun <their decree> for him that he should return to Ithaca, not even then was he quit of trials and among his own friends: all the gods pitied him apart from Poseidon, who was unrelentingly angry with the godlike Odysseus before he reached his own country.

But he [sc. Poseidon] had gone off to the Ethiopians far away, the Ethiopians who are divided into two, the most remote of men, some of them where Hyperion sets, the others where he rises, in quest of a sacrifice of bulls and rams. There he enjoyed himself sitting at the feast. But the others were all together in the halls of Olympian Zeus. The father of men and of gods was the first of them to speak. He was thinking in his heart about the good-looking Aigisthos, whom, the son of Agamemnon, the far-famed Orestes, had killed. It was with him in mind that he addressed his words to the immortals.

'Ah! The way mortals blame the gods! They say that it is from us that bad things come; but is it they themselves who by their own outrageous behaviour get pains beyond what is fated—as now Aigisthos beyond what was fated married the wedded wife of the son of Atreus, whom he killed on his return, though he [sc. Aigisthos] knew of his <own> abrupt death, since we had told him earlier—sending him Hermes, the sharp-sighted killer of Argos—not to kill him and not to woo his wife. 'From Orestes there will be vengeance for the son of Atreus, when he grows up and desires his own land'. So Hermes spoke, but for all his good

intentions he did not persuade the heart of Aigisthos; and now he has paid the penalty for everything together.'

REVIEW COMMENT

Dawe's volume is worthy of attention primarily for its very extensive footnotes and explanations, which many readers seeking clarification about particular passages will find useful (although there are other, better commentaries). The translation itself has a number of odd interpolations of different brackets and sudden changes in font size (to indicate an editorial point about the reliability of the Greek text at a particular place), as in the last line of the second paragraph above. These tend to interrupt the continuity of the narrative. In his commentary Dawe seems particularly concerned to point out passages which should be excised from the poem as inauthentic or later interpolations (e.g., Book 8). Still, Dawe's English prose is far preferable to Hammond's, though for a prose rendition of Homer I still prefer Rieu. The translator himself appears to have a low estimate of his success, calling the text "entirely devoid of literary merit." This volume is not for those who do not want to cope with voluminous footnotes.

Homer
The Odyssey
Translated by Robert Fagles
New York 1996

[Selection from the Opening of the Poem]

Sing to me of the man, Muse, the man of twists and turns
driven time and again off course, once he had plundered
the hallowed heights of Troy.
Many cities of men he saw and learned their minds,
many pains he suffered, heartsick on the open sea,
fighting to save his life and bringing his comrades home.
But he could not save them from disaster, hard as he strove
the recklessness of their own ways destroyed them all,
the blind fools, they devoured the cattle of the Sun
and the Sungod blotted out the day of their return.
Launch out on his story, Muse, daughter of Zeus,
start from where you will—sing for our time too.
By now,
all the survivors, all who avoided headlong death
were safe at home, escaped the wars and waves,
But one man alone . . .
his heart set on his wife and his return—Calypso,
the bewitching nymph, the lustrous goddess, held him back,
deep in her arching caverns, craving him for a husband.
But then, when the wheeling seasons brought the year around,
that year spun out by the gods when he should reach his home,
Ithaca—though not even there would he be free of trials,
even among his loved ones—then every good took pity,
all except Poseidon. He raged on, seething against
the great Odysseus till he reached his native land.
But now
Poseidon had gone to visit the Ethiopians worlds away,
Ethiopians off at the farthest limits of mankind,
a people split in two, one part where the Sungod sets
and part where Sungod rises. There Poseidon went
to receive an offering, bulls and rams by the hundred—
far away at the feast the Sea-lord sat and took his pleasure.
But the other gods, at home in Olympian Zeus's halls,
met for full assembly there, and among them now
the father of men and gods was first to speak,
sorely troubled, remembering handsome Aegisthus,
the man Agamemnon's son, renowned Orestes, killed.

Recalling Aegisthus, Zeus harangued the immortal powers:
"Ah how shameless—the way these mortals blame the gods.
From us alone, they say, come all their miseries, yes,
but they themselves, with their own reckless ways,
compound their pains beyond their proper share.
Look at Aegisthus now . . .
above and beyond his share he stole Atrides' wife,
he murdered the warlord coming home from Troy
though he knew it meant his own total ruin.
Far in advance we told him so ourselves,
dispatching the guide, the giant-killer Hermes.
'Don't murder the man,' he said, 'don't court his wife.
Beware, revenge will come from Orestes, Agamemnon's son,
that day he comes of age and longs for his native land.'
So Hermes warned, with all the good will in the world,
but would Aegisthus' hardened heart give way?
Now he pays the price—all at a single stroke."

Review Comment

In the past thirty years Robert Fagles' translations of classical works (Aeschylus, Sophocles, Homer, Virgil) have earned much critical praise and an enthusiastic following among general readers and academic specialists. And deservedly so. Anyone mulling the purchase of a classical work in translation should certainly include the Fagles translation (if there is one available) in the selection process.

In his translation of Homer's *Odyssey*, Fagles employs a line of varying length, which most of the time carries the weight of a hexameter, and a diction that achieves the remarkable result of feeling old (or different) and yet familiar. The poem has an unmistakable gravitas, and yet is not at all ponderous. Fagles' syntax is also very skillful in maintaining the movement and energy of the poetry.

This translation invites comparison with another very popular and poetically adept modern translation of the Odyssey, that by Fitzgerald—which offers a much faster and less weighty style. Readers' preferences will, I suppose, be determined by their sense of the qualities most appropriate to Homer's epic.

Link to longer preview (**at Amazon**)

Fagles reviews: **New York Times**, **Bryn Mawr Reviews**.

Review Comment on Fagles's Iliad: **Fagles *Iliad***

Odyssey
translated by
Martin Hammond
London, 2000

Book I

The Gods, Athene, and Telemachos

Muse, tell me of a man: a man of much resource, who was made to wander far and long, after he had sacked the sacred city of Troy. Many were the men whose lands he saw and came to know their thinking: many too the miseries at sea which he suffered in his heart, as he sought to win his own life and the safe return of his companions. But even so, for all his efforts, he could not save his companions. They perished through their own arrant folly—the fools, they ate the cattle of Hyperion the Sun, and he took away the day of their return.

Start the story where you will, goddess, daughter of Zeus, and share it now with us.

At that time all the others, all those who had escaped stark destruction, were in their homes, safe from war and sea. He alone was still yearning for his return to home and wife. The great nymph Kalypso, queen among goddesses, was keeping him in her hollow cave, eager to make him her husband. But when, as the years revolved, the time came which the gods had fated for his return home to Ithaka, even there he was not free from trials, even among his own people. And now all the gods felt pity for him, except Poseidon: he was ceaseless in his anger at godlike Odysseus before he reached his own land.

But Poseidon had gone to visit the Ethiopians far away—the Ethiopians who are split in two divisions, remote from other men: some live by the setting sun, and others where it rises. There he had gone to receive a full sacrifice of bulls and rams and was seated at the feast taking his pleasure. But the other gods were gathered together in the house of Olympian Zeus, and the father of men and gods began to speak to them. His thought had turned to noble Aigisthos, killed by the son of Agamemnon, famous Orestes. With him in mind he spoke to the immortals:

'Oh, look how men are always blaming the gods! They say their troubles come from us. But is they themselves, through their own arrant folly, who bring further misery on themselves beyond what we destine for them. So it was beyond his destiny that Aigisthos took the wife of Agamemnon's marriage, and killed the son of Atreus on his return. He knew it was his own stark destruction. We had told him before. We had sent Hermes the sharp-sighted, the slayer of Argos, telling him not to kill the man or woo his wife: there would be vengeance from Orestes for the son of Atreus, when Orestes reached manhood and felt the desire for his own

country. That is what Hermes said, but his good advice did not sway Aigisthos' mind. And now Aigisthos has paid it all in full.'

REVIEW COMMENT

Hammond's translation is very clear, straightforward, and accurate. Its language is readily comprehensible and suffers from no infections of olde worlde English or Arthurian nostalgia. Thus, anyone seeking a prose version of the *Odyssey* should certainly sample it. Personally, I find Hammond prose, for all the welcome characteristics noted above, curiously inert, especially in the speeches. The accuracy and clarity are there, but what has happened to the colloquial vitality? Other readers, however, may well disagree.

For a Review Comment on Hammond's *Iliad*, please use the following link: Hammond *Iliad*.

To read a review of the Hammond *Odyssey*, use the following link: **Hammond *Odyssey*** (*Bryn Mawr Classical Review*).

Homer
Odyssey
Translated by
Stanley Lombardo
(Hackett, 2000)

Sample from the Opening of the Poem

SPEAK, MEMORY--

Of the cunning hero,
The wanderer, blown off course time and again
After he plundered Troy's sacred heights.
Speak
Of all the cities he saw, the minds he grasped,
The suffering deep in his heart at sea
As he struggled to survive and bring his men home
But could not save them, hard as he tried—
The fools--destroyed by their own recklessness
When they ate the oxen of Hyperion, the Sun,
And that god snuffed out their day of return.

Of these things
Speak, Immortal One,
And tell the tale once more in our time.

By now, all the others who had fought at Troy—
at least those who had survived the war and the sea—
Were safely back home. Only Odysseus
Still longed to return to his home and his wife.
The nymph Calypso, a powerful goddess—
And beautiful—was clinging to him
In her caverns and yearned to possess him.
The seasons rolled by, and the year came
In which the gods spun the thread
For Odysseus to return home to Ithaca,
Though not even there did his troubles end,
Even with his dear one around him.
All the gods pitied him, except Poseidon,
Who stormed against the godlike hero
Until he finally reached his own native land.

But Poseidon was away now, among the Ethiopians,
Those burnished people at the ends of the earth—

Some near the sunset, some near the sunrise—
To receive a grand sacrifice of rams and bulls.
There he sat, enjoying the feast.
The other gods
Were assembled in the halls of Olympian Zeus,
And the Father of Gods and Men was speaking.
He couldn't stop thinking about Aegisthus,
Whom Agamemnon's son, Orestes, had killed:

"Mortals! They are always blaming the gods
For their troubles, when their own witlessness
Causes them more than they were destined for!
Take Aegisthus now. He marries Agamemnon's
Lawful wife and murders the man on his return
Knowing it meant disaster—because we did warn him,
Sent our messenger, quicksilver Hermes,
To tell him not to kill the man and marry his wife,
Or Agamemnon's son, Orestes, would pay him back
When he came of age and wanted his inheritance.
Hermes told him all that, but his good advice
Meant nothing to Aegisthus. Now he's paid in full."

For a longer preview (at Amazon), use the following link: Lombardo *Odyssey*

For a review of Lombardo's translation, use the following link: New York Times.

For a Review Comment on Lombardo's translation of the *Iliad*, use the following link: Lombardo *Iliad*

Homer
The Odyssey
Translated by A. S. Kline
(2004)
Online in the Public Domain

[Sample from the Opening of the Poem]

Bk I:1-21 Invocation and Introduction

Tell me, **Muse**, of that man of many resources, who wandered far and wide, after sacking the holy citadel of Troy. Many the men whose cities he saw, whose ways he learned. Many the sorrows he suffered at sea, while trying to bring himself and his friends back alive. Yet despite his wishes he failed to save them, because of their own un-wisdom, foolishly eating the cattle of Helios, the **Sun**, so the god denied them their return. Tell us of these things, beginning where you will, Goddess, Daughter of **Zeus**.

Now, all the others, who had escaped destruction, had reached their homes, and were free of sea and war. He alone, longing for wife and home, **Calypso**, the Nymph, kept in her echoing cavern, desiring him for a husband. Not even when the changing seasons brought the year the gods had chosen for his return to **Ithaca** was he free from danger, and among friends. Yet all the gods pitied him, except **Poseidon**, who continued his relentless anger against godlike **Odysseus** until he reached his own land at last.

Bk I:22-43 Zeus speaks to the Olympians.

Now, though, **Poseidon** was visiting the distant **Ethiopians**, the most remote of all, a divided people, some of whom live where **Hyperion** sets the others where he rises, to accept a hetacomb of sacrificial bulls and rams, and there he sat, enjoying the feast: but the rest of the gods had gathered in the halls of **Olympian Zeus**. The Father of gods and men was first to address them, for he was thinking of flawless **Aegisthus**, whom far-famed **Orestes**, **Agamemnon**'s son had killed. And, thinking of him, he spoke to the immortals.

'How surprising that men blame the gods, and say their troubles come from us, though they, through their own un-wisdom, find suffering beyond what is fated. Just as **Aegisthus**, beyond what was fated, took the wife of Agamemnon, son of **Atreus**, and murdered him when he returned, though he knew the end would be a complete disaster, since we sent **Hermes**, keen-eyed slayer of **Argus**, to warn him not to kill the man, or court his wife, as **Orestes** would avenge Agamemnon, once he reached manhood and longed for his own land. So Hermes told him, but

despite his kind intent he could not move Aegisthus' heart: and Aegisthus has paid the price now for it all.'

REVIEW COMMENT

Klein's translation is fast, accurate, clear, and direct. His prose keeps the reader moving very quickly through the narrative, perhaps too quickly in some places. The text contains links to an index (indicated in the sample by the words in a bold font). The links are somewhat distracting at first, but one gets used to them, and this feature is very useful for anyone seeking to trace the frequency of a name in the entire text (a handy research tool). This translation is an excellent addition to Homer on the internet and will be of particular interest to teachers seeking to put together selections of the poem for their students or anyone who wishes to do a quick search of the poem for specific details (especially since the translator has put the text into the public domain for all non-commercial use). A printed version of the translation is now available (at Amazon).

For the complete Kline translation, please use the following link: Kline *Odyssey*.

Homer
The Odyssey
translated by
Rodney Merrill
University of Michigan Press, 2002

[Selection from the Opening of the Poem]

Tell me, Muse, of the man versatile and resourceful, who wandered
many a sea-mile after he ransacked Troy's holy city.
Many the men whose towns he observed, whose minds he discovered,
many the pains in his heart he suffered, traversing the seaway,
fighting for his own life and a way back home for his comrades.
Not even so did he save his companions, as much as he wished to,
for by their own mad recklessness they were brought to destruction,
childish fools—they decided to eat up the cows of the High Lord,
Helios: he then took from the men their day of returning.
Even for us, holy daughter of Zeus, start there to recount this.
Then were the others, whoever escaped from the sheer destruction,
all in their homes, since they had escaped from the war and the deep sea;
only the one still yearned to go home, still wanted his woman;
queenly Kalýpso, a nymph and illustrious goddess, was holding
him in her spacious cavern; she wanted to make him her husband.
But when the year came round in the course of the season' revolving
wherein the gods had spun as his destiny making the journey
homeward to Ithaka, once he was there he did not escape trials,
even among his friends. All the gods took pity upon him,
all but Poseidon, who hated with deep unquenchable anger
godlike Odysseus, until he arrived at last in his country.
But to the far Ethiopians now that god had departed—
these Ethiopians, farthest of men, are divided asunder;
some of them dwell where the High Lord sets; near the others, he rises.
He was with them to partake to their hecatomb, bulls and mature rams;
there he rejoiced as he sat at the feast; but the other immortals
were in the house of Olympian Zeus all sitting together.
Speaking among them opened the Father of gods and of mankind,
for in his heart he was moved to reflect on faultless Aigísthos,
whom Agamemnon's child had killed, far-honored Orestes.
Mindful of him, Zeus spoke these words there among the immortals:
"Strange to behold, what blame these mortals can bring against godhead!
For their ills, they assert, are from us, when they of themselves by
their mad recklessness have pain far past what is fated.
So even now has Aigísthos, beyond fate, married the lawful

bedmate of Atreus' son, then murdered the man as he came home,
though he knew of his ruin, because we told him beforehand—
sending as messenger Hermes, the keen-eyed slayer of Argos—
neither to murder the man himself nor to marry his bedmate:
'For from Orestes will come the requital for Atreus' scion,
when he reaches adulthood and feels a desire for his country.'
So spoke Hermes but did not prevail on the mind of Aigísthos,
though so kindly disposed; now all has been paid for together."

REVIEW COMMENT

Merrill endorses the English hexameter and a more or less linear fidelity to Homer's text, not with a view to reproducing Homer's rhythms, but in order to display the beauty and musical potential of the English hexameter. And the rhythmic demands of latter, Merrill explains, obviate any requirement for colloquial English ("any attempt to be colloquially idiomatic in such a translation would run counter to the very genius of the medium."). "I can hope . . ," he concludes, "this translation may make more vividly manifest the music of repetitions that would appear only dimly, if at all, from a slow and painstaking reading in one's study."

As Merrill's very long discussion of his purposes makes clear, his translation willingly sacrifices regular English syntax and (in many places) diction in order to bring out the musical possibilities of the English hexameter—an aim that for its attainment really requires the poem to be read aloud by someone well-versed in public recitation. A modern reader will have to decide whether or not what is gained on the musical roundabout makes up for what is lost on the colloquial swings. For me (and, I suspect, for a majority of readers) it does not.

To listen to Merrill recite his own translation, use the following link: **Merrill Audio**.

For a review of Merrill's translation, please use the following link: ***Classical Review***.

Homer
The Odyssey
Translated by Edward McCrorie
Baltimore 2004

Short Sample from the Opening

Book 1 Trouble at Home

The Man and the Story
♦ The man, my Muse, resourceful, driven a long way
after he sacked the holy city of Trojans:
tell me all the men's cities he saw and the men's minds,
how often he suffered heartfelt pain on the broad sea,
striving for life and a way back home for his war friends.
Yet he saved no friends, much as he longed to:
they lost their lives through their own reckless abandon,
fools who ate the cattle of Helios the Sun-God.
Huperion seized the day they might have arrived home.

Stranded
Tell us, Goddess, daughter of Zeus, start in your own place.
When all the rest at Troy had fled from that steep doom
and gone back home, away from war and the salt sea,
only this man longed for his wife and a way home.
A queenly Nymph, goddess-like, shining Kalupso,
kept the man in a hollow cave. She wanted a husband.
But now the years came round, Gods had arranged it:
the treads were spun for the man's homecoming voyage
to Ithaka. Even there he would undergo trials,
yes, among those he loved. Most of the great Gods
pitied him; only Poseidon's rage was unflagging
at godlike Odysseus until he came to his own land.

The Gods Assemble
Lately Poseidon had gone to remote Ethiopian
people, far from us men, cut off from each other—
♦ some where the God Huperion sets and some where he rises.
Accepting rams and bulls burned by the hundred,
Poseidon sat and enjoyed the feast there. But other
Gods were joining Zeus in his hall on Olumpos.

The Father of Gods and men wanted to speak first.
His heart recalled the high-born, handsome Aigisthos:
♦ Agamemnon's well-known son Orestes had killed him.
He spoke to the deathless Gods, recalling that murder.
"Look at this, how these humans are blaming the high Gods,
saying evil's from heaven! No, it's a reckless
way of their own, beyond what's fated, that hurts them.
The way Aigisthos lately went beyond measure:
he wooed Agamemnon's wife and killed the man when he came home.
He knew his doom would be headlong. We told him beforehand,
sending Hermes, the sharp-eyed Splendor of Argos.
'Marry no wife,' he was told, 'and murder no husband:
Orestes will take revenge for Atreus's offspring
soon as he comes of age and longs for his own land.
But Hermes, meaning well, failed to deter him;
now Aigisthos has paid in full for all of his evil."

REVIEW COMMENT

McCrorie is concerned in his translation to follow the group he calls "close followers of Homer . . . often lovers of every nuance of the Greek, less concerned with passing styles of English poetry, they worked hard to produce faithful translations of the *Odyssey*." This desire leads him to pay detailed attention to Greek metre and sound, even though "we'll never know exactly how Homer sang his poetry." McCrorie offer a very personal and interesting introduction to his choice of what at first glance looks like a rather odd metre ("It resembles Homer in that it counts the number of 'longs' or stresses but lets the number of 'short' or unstressed syllables vary"). His lines, he assures us, can be read aloud "enjoyably and naturally, though a little help from a phorminx or some other tightly strung instrument would help." I'll have to take his word for the advantages of musical accompaniment, because, although the diction is clear enough and the translation accurate, I consistently find the rhythm very disconcerting, often unnecessarily padded, even reading it aloud. This is especially true when the verse needs to drive through a moment of high action and deliver an energy and intensity appropriate to the moment (as in the blinding of Polyphemus, for example). It's as if the a priori demands of the allegedly Greek-like metre will make no concessions to the poetical possibilities of more idiomatic English verse. Well, where the metre is concerned, McCrorie's "frail translator's craft" (his own words) is determined to stay at the "fidelity to the Greek" end of the spectrum, and the result pays the usual price. That's particularly true in the dramatic dialogue, especially when strong feelings are at stake. Here's how McCrorie renders a angry utterance by Antinoos: "Now I am thinking you won't be gracefully leaving/ the room any longer after mouthing reproaches," lines remarkable for their inability to deliver

any emotional insight into the tense moment. Here's another example, one of the most expressive speeches in Homer's poem:

'My dear ram: why are you leaving the cavern
last? The herd has never left you behind here
You're always the first by far to be cropping the tender
grasses and first to arrive at the stream with your long strides,
first to show your desire to return to the sheepfold
at dusk. Now you're last of all. I think your are mourning
master's eye. An evil man with his wretched
war-friends blinded me. He'd quelled my brain with a strong wine.
No-one! He's not yet fled, I think, from his death here.
If only my ram could feel and speak like a Kuklops—
say where the man scurried away from my anger—
then I could spatter his brains out this way and that way,
beating the ground through the cave, bringing my own heart
rest of the hurt that no-good No-one has brought me.'

All right, it's faithful enough to the Greek, but as a dramatic utterance in English this falls completely flat (to say nothing of the ram with "long strides") as a comparison with, say, Fagles' or Fitzgerald's rendition of the same passage reveals. It's not that McCrorie is incapable of felicitous phrasing or eloquent description; it's simply the constant feeling that the English is being shaped by some demand foreign to it.

If there is some advantage to using English like this to match what people believe were the effects of the sound and rhythm of the Greek (and I'm not sure that there is), it is more than offset by the uninspired quality of the translation at a particularly moving moment in the entire bloody episode, and one is doing no service to students by presenting them with a Homeric text which, however euphonious it might be for the reader of Greek, fails to deliver imaginative English, particularly at the moment of high drama.

The layout of the translation is a bit odd, too, with headings at the left hand margin throughout and small black diamond shapes to indicate that notes have been supplied for the line (as in the above sample). The translation comes with fifty pages of useful notes (by Richard Martin).

Some scholars, as one might expect, place a high value on the alleged similarity of McCrorie's English to the original Greek:

> McCrorie's new translation can be recommended without reservation to the generations of students to whom it is bound to be assigned and to any reader who'd like to get as close to the original as is possible without

> reading the original Greek. It is refreshing, accurate, and direct. It echoes the rhythms of the original hexameter line and renders the various formulas of epic verse ("rose-fingered dawn," "long-suffering Odysseus," and "glow-eyed Athene") with brilliant poetic sensitivity. (Jay Kenney)

I've written about this strange practice of trying to match elements of the Greek rhythm or sound elsewhere. There's nothing wrong with the practice except when it leads the translator, as it almost always does, to sacrifice important qualities of the English verse. If I want the Greek sound, then I'll read it in Greek. If I don't know Greek, then what on earth is the merit of making the poem sound like something I don't even recognize, at the expense of my own contemporary poetic language with which I am familiar?

For a lengthier (and more favorable although not uncritical) review, please consult the following link: **Bryn Mawr Classical Review**.

For a generous preview of McCrorie's translation, please use the following link: **McCrorie *Odyssey***. It's worth a visit simply to look at the intriguing cover, one of the most original ever devised for the poem.

The Odyssey
translated
by
Charles Stein
(Berkeley, 2008)

Sample from the Opening of the Poem

SPEAK THROUGH ME, O MUSE,
of that man of many devices
who wandered much
once he'd sacked the sacred citadel of Troy.
He saw the cities of many men
and knew their minds,
suffering many sorrows
in order to win back his life-soul
and the return of his companions.I
n the end he failed to save them,I
n spite of his longing to do so,
for through their own heedlessness they perished.
Fools -- who ate the cows of Helios-Hyperion,
and the day of their return was taken from them.
Of these matters, goddess, daughter of Zeus, speak through us
beginning wherever you will.

When all the warriors who'd managed
to escape complete destruction
were back at home
safe from war and the sea,
the queenly nymph Calypso, radiant goddess
detained only him
back in her hollow cavern
longing that he be her husband
though he longed only to return
and yearned for Penelope.

And when as the seasons turned and the year came 'round
that the gods had appointed for him to sail home to Ithaka,
he was not done with affliction even then,
even among his own people.
All the gods pitied him but Poseidon,
who raged against Odysseus
until the time when he at last
arrived at his native country.

But Poseidon now was far away
among the Ethiopians,
that most remote of peoples,
a people split in two:
some dwell where Hyperion sets, some where he rises.
He had gone among them to receive
a hecatomb of rams and bulls
and was there enjoying the feast.
But the other gods were gathered
in the halls of Olympian Zeus.
The father of gods and men
began to speak among them,
for he was mindful in his blameless heart
of Aigisthos whom Orestes,
Agamemnon's famous son, had slain.
With him on his mind he spoke to the immortals.

"See how mortals blame to gods
from whom they say all evils spring;
yet they themselves
suffer beyond their allotment
because of their own folly.
Witness how Aigisthos, beyond his portion,
wooed the wedded wife of Agamemnon
and killed him upon his return
and now knows utter ruin
even though we warned him,
sending Hermes, the keen-eyed Argeiphontes,
not to woo Agamemnon's wife
and not to kill him,
because from Orestes vengeance would surely come
for the death of Agamemnon
when he should attain full manhood
and want his patrimony.
Thus Hermes warned,
Hermes' good intentions failed
to persuade the mind of Aigisthos,
and now he has paid for all his crimes together."

REVIEW COMMENT

Stein eschews the hexameter or pentameter, neither of which he seems to regard with much favour, in order to explain his decision to translate Homer into free verse based upon some of the better-known principles of modern poetry (i.e., post

Imagism), where the musicality and immediacy of the phrase are more important than any regularity in the rhythm. The result does take some getting used to, since one can move quickly from a line of two or three syllables to a line of twenty syllables and back again, and one is constantly shifting one's eyes here and there as lines are indented or not, at the translator's discretion. Reading this poem does not give one the luxury of remaining in a regular and comfortable verse form. This feature may well put off readers so quickly that they simply set the book immediately aside. However, the text is worth lingering on: its a brave and interesting attempt to tackle the problem of writing a long narrative poem in a style which is often very fractured and constantly shifting.

Stein's language is, for the most part, plain and evocative (although I have some problem with phrases like "Daimoniac person," "arrow-emitting Artemis," and "who have perished away," especially in direct speech), and I'm not sure that the style serves him well in places where some gathering momentum in the verse would help to bring out important emotional qualities in the speech or action.

However, I have read only selected portions of the translation, available at the following link: **Charles Stein, *Odyssey***.

Odyssey
Translated by
Stephen Mitchell
Atria Books (NY: Simon and Schuster, 2013)

SAMPLE FROM BOOK I

Sing to me, Muse, of that endlessly cunning man
who was blown off course to the ends of the earth, in the years
after he plundered Troy. He passed through the cities
of many people and learned how they thought, and he suffered
many bitter hardships upon the high seas
as he tried to save his own life and bring his companions
back to their home. But however bravely he struggled,
he could not rescue them, fools that they were—their own
recklessness brought disaster upon them all;
they slaughtered and ate the cattle of Hélios,
so the sun god destroyed them and blotted out their homecoming.
Goddess, daughter of Zeus, begin now, wherever
you wish to, and tell the story again, for us.
All the Achaeans who had survived the war
and the voyage home and long since returned to their houses.
That man alone still longed for his land and his wife;
the beautiful nymph Calypso was keeping him
inside her cavern, wanting to make him her husband.
But when the revolving seasons at last brought round
the year the gods had appointed for his homecoming
to Ithaca, not even then was he free of troubles
and among his own people. All the gods pitied him
except for Poseidon, who worked with relentless malice
against him, until the day when he reached his own country.
But that god had gone to visit the distant race
of the Ethiopians, out at the edge of the world
(they live in two different regions; half of them where
the sun god sets, and half of them where he rises);
they had sacrificed hundreds of bulls and rams, and he sat
at the banquet, delighted. Meanwhile the other immortals
were assembled in Zeus's palace on Mount Olympus,
and the father of men and gods was the first to speak.
He felt troubled because he was thinking now of Ægisthus,
whom Oréstes, Agamemnon's son, had just killed.
Thinking of him, he spoke out to the assembly:
"How ready these mortals are to accuse the gods!
They say that all evils come from us, though their own

recklessness brings them grief beyond what is fated:
Beyond his fair share Ægisthus slept with the wife
of Agamemnon, then murdered him when he came home.
He knew this would end in disaster; we ourselves told him
when we sent down Hermes to caution him not to kill
the man or to touch his wife, since vengeance would come
from Oréstes once he reached manhood and longed for his country.
That is what Hermes said, but his kind words didn't
convince Ægisthus, and now he has paid for all his crimes."

REVIEW COMMENT

[This review comment is based upon a detailed look at the selection of the poem available on Amazon and thus confines itself to a general remark on the poetic style of the translation].

Mitchell announces that in his translation he has been guided by the criteria set out by Matthew Arnold: a translator should be "eminently rapid," "eminently plain and direct both in the evolution of his thought and in the expression of it . . . and eminently noble." Well, Mitchell's translation appears to be sufficiently plain and direct, but, based on what I have read so far, nobility may be a stretch.

Now, nobility, as Richard Lattimore has observed, is probably not a quality one should (or can) strive for directly. One does one's best and hopes that other people find the result sufficiently noble. Well, the admittedly limited evidence I have seen so far suggests that Mitchell's translation—for all its faithful adherence to Homer and its direct English—is curiously lacking in anything one might call nobility. The poetry never sings. One looks in vain for a memorable or even an unexpected turn of phrase. There is little sense of compressed energy, and the lines much of time read like loose prose (as the above opening excerpt reveals) rather arbitrarily chopped up without sensitive attention to the effect of line breaks on the rhythm of a sentence. In moment of dramatic tension the flat, prosaic style limits rather than enhances the imaginative possibilities of the story: "At first I planned to creep up beside him and draw/ my sword from its sheath at my thigh and plunge it straight into/ his chest at the place where the midriff supports the liver./ I was feeling for it with my hand when a second thought stopped me:/ I realized that if I killed him, we too would die/ since, even combined, we would never have had the strength/ to push aside the huge rock he had set in the doorway./ So with moans and tears we sat there and waited for morning" (9.293-300). How does this selection differ from a passage of indifferently written prose (apart from the erratic breaks in the lines)? Yes, we are getting a direct and accurate translation of Homer, but a work presented to us as a poetic English version of a magnificent epic (especially from a translator as well respected as Mitchell) should surely offer more than this.

For a longer preview of Mitchell's translation (at Amazon), see **Mitchell *Odyssey***.

For a sample and review comment on Mitchell's *Iliad*, use the following link: **Mitchell *Iliad***.

Homer
The Odyssey
Translated by Herbert Jordan

Book I

Athena Seeds
Odysseus' Return

Tell how he wandered, Muse, time and again
confounded, after he sacked Troy's citadel,
how many towns he saw and learned their ways,
how many trials the man endured at sea
to save his comrades' lives, return them home.
Hard though he tried, he failed to save those men
whose recklessness secured their own demise.
Like fools they ate the sun god Helios' cows,
and he made certain they would not survive.
choose where to start your story, Zeus's daughter.

So many other men eluded ruin,
survived both war and sea to reach their lands,
but nymph Calypso—regal, divine—kept him,
longing for hearth and wife, in vaulted caves,
where she entreated him to marry her.
Season on season passed until the year
arrived that gods ordained for his return
to Ithaca, but he had trials to come—
even when home. The deathless gods took pity,
except Poseidon, who remained enraged
until Odysseus reached his father's isle.

Poseidon went to visit Ethiopians,
the most remote of men. They live divided,
some where the sun comes up, some where it sinks.
They sacrificed a mass of lambs and bulls
to please the god, while fellow deities
assembled in Olympian Zeus's halls,
where he, father of gods and men, spoke first,
his mind consumed with thoughts of bold Aegisthus,
whom Agamemnon's son Orestes killed.
Zeus spoke of him when he addressed the gods:
"Curious it is how mortals blame immortals,
and say their troubles stem from us, when they

invite their own ordeals through foolish acts,
just as Aegisthus did when, after he
wooed Agamemnon's wife, he killed the king,
aware that ruin would follow. We warned him—
sending our courier, Argus-slayer Hermes—
neither to kill the man nor court his wife,
because his son Orestes would take vengeance
when he became a man and journeyed home.
So Hermes warned. Aegisthus did not take
our sound advice and now has paid full measure."

REVIEW COMMENT

Herbert Jordan's translation is a useful and workmanlike rendition of Homer's text. The more or less regular iambic pentameter lines set a good pace and keep the reader moving through the poem at a steady clip, as is appropriate to an often fast-paced narrative. The rhythm is generally effective, but while it does not get monotonous, it never really surprises. Jordan's language is for the most part straightforward and clear, easy to follow and effective. These qualities make the translation of the speeches work well--they sound as if they are words someone might actually say (an observation one cannot make about some translations).

At times one does get the sense, however, that the choice of words has been dictated by mechanical metrical requirements rather than by a desire for a direct and vivid impact. For example (chosen almost at random): "Now protean Odysseus shed his rags,/ leapt to the threshold holding bow and quiver/ abrim with arrows, which he emptied out,/ dumped at his feet, proclaiming to the suitors:/ 'Thus will the baleful contest reach its end:/ a target no man ever hit till now--/ but if Apollo grants my prayer, I will.'" It's not clear to me what "protean," "abrim," and "baleful" add to the intense emotional quality of this dramatically vivid moment (compare their effect with that word "dumped," for instance)--they simply inject what sounds like a limp "poetical" tone in contrast to the direct and urgent clarity of the rest of the description. Some readers may well find this a minor cavil.

As with his translation of the *Iliad*, Jordan maintains a line-by-line fidelity to Homer's text; in order to do this with the shorter iambic pentameter line, he routinely leaves out words and phrases from the Greek. He does this because "The object is to capture the essence of Homer's individual lines, not to render the Greek literally." This will not bother first-time readers, of course; they will not recognize what they are missing.

The translation has useful notes (with some illustrations). The only one I might object to is the one for 1.122, explaining why the translation never attempts to deal with one of Homer's most famous metaphors, "winged words." Jordan musters

some impressive precedents to make his case, but the argument that the words are meaningless is unconvincing. I'm not sure that the best way to deal with a problematic phrase is simply to omit it, especially a metaphor as evocative as this one.

For a more extensive preview of the Jordan translation (at Amazon), click **here**.

For a longer and more scholarly review of Jordan's translation, please use the following link: **Bryn Mawr Classical Review**.

For a sample of and a Review Comment on Jordan's translation of the *Iliad*, please use the following : **Jordan *Iliad***.

Homer
The Odyssey
Translated by Joe Sachs
Philadelphia 2014

[Sample from the Opening of the Poem]

A man, resourceful but forced into so many wanderings from the time
he sacked the sacred stronghold of Troy—sing me his story, Muse.
There were many people whose town he saw, whose minds he took
the measure of, and many miseries he suffered at sea, sick at heart,
while trying to earn his own life and a way home for his shipmates.
But there was no saving those shipmates, determined as he was;
they were undone by their own reckless acts. With no more sense
than infants they fell on the cattle of the sun god Hyperion and
ate them. The god robbed *them* of the *day*—their day of homecoming.
Start anywhere, goddess, daughter of Zeus, and tell the story again for us.
When all the rest who had escaped utter destruction
were home, survivors of the war and also of the sea,
he alone was still yearning for his homecoming and his wife,
kept in the cavernous lair of the queenly nymph Calypso,
a goddess among goddesses, who wanted him for a husband.
Time sailed its monotonous circuit, but when the year came round
in which the gods had spun his destiny to return to Ithaca,
he was not home free even there; his struggles continued,
even among his own loved ones. All the gods took pity on him,
apart from Poseidon; he went on with his raging fury
at godlike Odyseys to the moment of his arrival in his own land.

But Poseidon was far from home, gone off to the Ethiopians—
the Ethiopians who are the most remote of men in either direction;
they live where Hyperion sets and also where he rises.
He went to receive their sacrifice of a hundred bulls and rams,
and he was right there for the feast, partaking with gusto. The rest
of the gods were gathered in the palace of Olympian Zeus,
and the first to speak among them was the father of men and gods.
His heart was mindful of Aegisthus, a man not to be trifled with,
Yet Agamemnon's far-famed son Orestes had killed him.
With him in mind, he spoke among the immortal ones, saying:

"Incredible how quick mortals are to blame the gods!
They claim all their evils come from us, when their own
reckless acts get them sufferings outstripping what's fated;
and now Aegisthus oversteps fate and marries Agamemnon's

lawful wedded wife, then kills him when he comes home,
knowing it would be utter destruction; we told him so beforehand!
We sent Hermes, who sees far and appears in a flash,
to warn him not to kill the man or seduce the wife,
since there would be vengeance from the line of Atreus, from Orestes
when the time came that he grew up and yearned for his own land.
That's what Hermes told him, but he couldn't get that into the stubborn heart
of Aegisthus, even for his own good, and now he's paid the price in one lump sum."

REVIEW COMMENT

In his preface Sachs announces what sounds like a paradoxical intent: "Just as this translation does its best to give you the feel of the poem without poetry of its own, it strives to give you an accurate rendering of the poet's word without being what is called 'literal.'" I fail to see how such a prosaic and at times cumbersome. awkward, and thoroughly unmusical style comes close to conveying "the feel of the poem."The text stays close to Homer's and is clear enough, but the periphrastic style lacks any sense of imaginative energy.

For a sample and review comment on Sachs's translation of the *Iliad*, use the following link: **Sachs *Iliad***.

For a longer preview of Sachs's translation please use the following link: **Sachs *Odyssey***.

The Odyssey of Homer
A South African Translation
Translated by Richard Whitaker
Cape Town 2017

There is no preview available. For a sample of Whitaker's translation of the *Iliad* and a Review Comment please use the following link: **Whitaker *Iliad*.**

For a useful review of Whitaker's *Odyssey*, please use the following link: **Bryn Mawr Classical Review**.

Homer
The Odyssey
Translated by Emily Wilson
(Norton 2018)

[Selection from the Opening of the Poem]

Tell me about a complicated man.
Muse, tell me how he wandered and was lost
when he had wrecked the holy town of Troy,
and where he went, and who he met, the pain
he suffered in the storms at sea, and how
he worked to save his life and bring his men
back home. He failed to keep them safe; poor fools,
they ate the Sun God's cattle, and the god
kept them from home. Now goddess, child of Zeus,
tell the story for our modern times.
Find the beginning.
All the other Greeks
who had survived the brutal sack of Troy
sailed safely home to their own wives—except
this man alone. Calypso, a great goddess,
had trapped him in her cave; she wanted him
to be her husband. When the year rolled round
in which the gods decreed he should go home
to Ithaca, his troubles still went on.
The man was friendless. All the gods took pity,
except Poseidon's anger never ended
until Odysseys was back at home.
But now the distant Ethiopians,
who live between the sunset and the dawn,
were worshipping the Sea God with a feast,
a hundred cattle and a hundred rams.
There sat the god, delighting in his banquet.
The other gods were gathered on Olympus,
in Father Zeus' palace. He was thinking
of fine, well-born Aegisthus, who was killed
by Agamemnon's famous son Orestes.
He told the deathless gods,
"This is absurd,
that mortals blame the gods! They way we cause
their suffering, but they themselves increase it
by folly. So Aegisthus overstepped:
he took the legal wife of Agamemnon,

then killed the husband when he came back home,
although he knew that it would doom them all.
We gods had warned Aegisthus; we sent down
perceptive Hermes, who flashed into sight
and told him not to murder Agamemnon
or court his wife, Orestes would grow up
and come back to his home to take revenge.
Aegisthus would not hear that good advice.
But now his death has paid all debts."

REVIEW COMMENT

Based on what I have read of Professor Wilson's translation (several passages available in preview), my first response is an excited interest in what reads (and sounds) like a genuinely new modern voice in the translation of this famous poem. The language is lean, direct, accurate, and colloquial—with no hint of artificially aged olde-worlde English or of modern slang—and the rhythm and syntax keep the poem moving throughout. Wilson has apparently managed the very difficult feat of maintaining a linear fidelity to the Greek without (as in so many other translations) sacrificing the clarity or the momentum of the English. Anyone seeking a classroom text for the Odyssey should definitely have a long look at this translation. The Translator's Note—a clear and commonsensical discussion of certain issues in translating Homer—is also well worth reading.

For an interesting, challenging, and detailed review of Wilson's *Odyssey*, use the following link: **Whitaker**.

For more reviews of Wilson's translation of the *Odyssey* try **Kirkus Review** and **Bryn Mawr Classical Review**.

The Odyssey
of
Homer
Translated by William Mann
(2022)

[Sample from the opening of the poem. This sample is taken from a paperback version of the poem]

MOÚSAÊ
tell me about the man and his great will and the vastness of his many wanderings
after the sacred citadel of Troiê was destroyed by him.
Many the cities and the people's minds he saw and learned
many the agonies upon sea he suffered in his heart
fighting for life and for his men's return
But he could not save his men, despite his desire—
destroyed by their own depravity,
the fools, they ate the oxen of Huperiôn Êelios,
who took away from them their day's return.

Speak of these things, goddess daughter of Zeús,even to us.

All others who escaped their fall and death
were then at home, escaping war and sea—
he was alone, longing for home and his wife
held by Kalupsô, adored of of the Numphêsi, divine of goddesses
in hollow caves, desiring him to marry her.
But when the years revolved, the year had come
destined by gods he would return to his home
to Ithakê, not even there escaped he suffering
from friends. Pitied by all the gods,
except Poseidaôn, whose rage would never end
againstgod-like Oduseús before he reached his own land.

Poseidaôn was with Aithiópessi, their existence is far away,
divided into two, the Aithiópessi on the edges of mankind,
some where Huperiôn sets, some where he rises,
to receive a hecatomb of bulls and rams.
There Poseidaôn sat, rejoicing at the feast—the other gods
together gathered in Zeús's Ólumpos halls.

The father of men and gods spoke first to them
his heart remembering Aígisthos nobleness,

killed by Agamemonidês Orestês, glorified far away.
Remembering him, Zeús spoke to the immortals:

"See how the living blame the gods—
for they say their evil is from us but they themselves,
by their depravity suffer beyond their fate.
As even now, beyond his fate, Aígisthos seduced

Atreïdés wedded wife, and killed him when he returned,
knew his fall and death. We told him this before,
sending Hermeías Argeïphontês to watch him well,
neither to kill the man nor seduce his wife—
for Atreïdés was be avenged by Orestês
when he became a man and longed for his own land.
So he was told by Hermeías but his good heart
did not persuade Aígisthos' mind—who now atones for all."

REVIEW COMMENT

[This comment was based on the first printing of the translation, which was significantly different from the revised version above. However, I have left the comment unchanged, even though the revisions to the first version have addressed some of my concerns.]

Mann has made a number of interesting (some might say idiosyncratic) choices in his translation. His free verse is based on an "infinite (or French) iambic" so that each line "is as long as it needs to be, without being constrained or forced to obey an artificial line length"; he has decided to eschew punctuation marks as much as possible; and he renders the Greek names of people and places by transliterating the Greek as faithfully as possible, with the help of various accents. In the appendix to the translation he offers a defence of these decisions, but such explanations, here and in other translations, are irrelevant. What matters is the translation itself. How have these decisions affected the quality of this English version of Homer?

While the diction of the translation is accurate and clear, the lack of a regular poetic form and the scarcity of punctuation seriously affect the overall tone of the poem, which (to me) is curiously flat. Reading the text is easy enough, but Mann offers little help to the reader in providing some energy to the lines. Punctuation, after all, is not merely a matter of clarifying the syntax; it also guides the reader through the pauses and determines in large part the momentum of the poem (as does a regular rhythm). The lack of such help means that reading the text

(especially out loud) is a slow business, because readers have to construct the rhythm and the pauses as they proceed.

Consider the effect of these aspects of the style is one of the most dramatic moments in the poem, the blinding of Polyphemus. The English is clear and accurate but the overall tone is relatively calm and expansive, the sort of description an accurate and objective observer might make, ensuring that each point in his description is equally important. What's lacking is an intense feeling for the drama of the moment.

About Mann's treatment of the Greek names, I'm of two minds. The strangeness of the Greek name does make familiar figures more remote, mysterious, and grand. On the other hand, some student readers will certainly find it difficult to get used to the practice (I learned that from using Robert Fitzgerald's translation in undergraduate courses).

These remarks I should qualify by the observation that Mann is an experienced actor and has recorded on YouTube his own reading of parts of his *Odyssey*. The sample is remarkable and well worth listening to. You can access it here: **Mann Audio**.

https://casa-kvsa.org.za/legacy/AC63-Whitaker-18DEC2019.pdf

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