

Homer. **The Iliad**. Tr. by Rodney Merrill. Michigan, 2008 (c.2007). 464p bibl afp ISBN 978-0-472-11617-1, \$55.00. Reviewed in 2008jul CHOICE.

Merrill's new verse translation of the *Iliad* is the equal of Richmond Lattimore's poetic version (1951) and even Martin Hammond's prose edition (1987) in its fidelity to the sense of Homer's words. Read (preferably aloud) for the quality of its verbal music as a poem in English, it is on a par with Lattimore and with the more beautiful renderings of Robert Fitzgerald (1963) and Robert Fagles (1990). And for sheer readability, it matches Stanley Lombardo's lively translation (CH, Dec'97, 35-1954) while conveying a sense of antiquity through deft, sparing use of archaisms (e.g., "scion"). But what particularly distinguishes Merrill's version is its resourceful approximation in English of the rhythms of the Greek dactylic hexameter. Only Merrill's *Odyssey* (CH, May'03, 40-5063) and, to some extent, Edward McCrorie's *Odyssey* (CH, Nov'04, 42-1388) are as effective in this regard. Another plus is the consistent replication of Homer's formulaic repetitions. To vary these, as do most other verse translators, falsifies the true aesthetic power of Homer's epic. In sum, Merrill has succeeded better than anyone since Lattimore in retaining the meaning of Homer's words while ingeniously suggesting the effect of their metrical and formulaic rhythms. A sensitive introduction, bibliographic guidance, and a glossary of names complete the volume.

Summing Up: Essential. All readers, all levels.

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