

The Iliad: Openings for Comparison

Achilles' bane full wrath resound, O Goddess, 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.

George Chapman, 1611

The wrath of Peleus' son, the direful spring
Of all the Grecian woes, O Goddess, sing!
That wrath which hurled to Pluto's gloomy reign
The souls of mighty chiefs untimely slain,
Whose limbs, unburied on the naked shore,
Devouring dogs and hungry vultures tore:
Since great Achilles and Atrides strove,
Such was the sovereign doom, and such the will of Jove!
Declare, O Muse! in what ill-fated hour
Sprung the fierce strife, from what offended Power?
Latona's son a dire contagion spread,
And heaped the camp with mountains of the dead;
The king of men his reverend priest defied,
And, for the king's offence, the people died.

Alexander Pope, 1715

Sing, goddess, the anger of Peleus' son Achilles
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 Achilles. . . .

Richmond Lattimore (1951)

Anger be now 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. . . .

Robert Fitzgerald, 1961

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.

—Stanley Lombardo, 1997