

An Old Soldier Reads *The Iliad* · R. L. Barth

Volume and desk, coffee and cigarette  
Forgotten, the reader, held in Homer's mind,  
Looks on both Greeks and Trojans fighting yet  
And heroes and foot-soldiers, thin and blind,

Forced-marching for the Styx. But suddenly  
Stunned by the clamor under smoky skies,  
Boastings and tauntings, he looks up to see—  
Not the god-harried plain where Hector tries

His destiny, not the room—but a mountain  
Covered with jungle; on one slope, a chateau  
With garden, courtyard, a rococo fountain,  
And, faces down, hands tied, six bodies in a row.