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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.