

Karl Maurer Translation Contest 2024: *Aeneid* II.199-249

Name: Maria Miller

Class: Junior

I. Serpent Sonnet

Here yet ev'n more shudd'ring to the downtrod

Greatly is cast, disturbs the hearts unlined.

Laocoön, holy priest to Neptune by lot,

Slaughtered the huge holy bull on yon shrine.

Lo! Twin serpents (I shake to tell) pressed o'er,

From Tenedos, through still deeps and the vast

Orb, equal stretched from open sea to shore;

Whose tall chests and sanguine crests did o'er mast

Tides and waves, the remaining portion swelled

Behind, tails curled in a furrow immense.

Sea resounds with froth; now sea's field beheld

Eyes burning with blood, and mouths recompensed

With fire licking hisses with tongues flashing.

We fled, blood from our faces receding.

II. Siege Sestina

Those ones sought Laocoön in a fixed military line
And the first serpent, the small bodies encircling
Of his two sons, enfolded them both
And with his bite their wretched limbs way-laid;
Afterwards they snatched up him, a spear bearing
And coming up in aid, and bound him with their huge coils;

And his middle was already encircled twice, twice with their scaly throat coiled

Round his back they overcame him with their head and necks uprightly lined.

At the same time as he stretched with his hands their knots to unbear
In ribbons of pus and black poison encircled,
At once dreadful shouts to the stars are relayed:
Just such a bellow as when a wounded bull flees both

Altar and priest and shakes neck and unfixed ax both

But the twin dragons to the highest temple in a coil

Fled and sought the citadel where cruel Minerva lay,

And under the feet of the goddess they aligned
And they hid under her shield encircling.

Then indeed through every heart driven a-tremble was slowly bearing

A new panic, and they say that wicked Laocoön his penalty was bearing

Deservingly, he who had struck with his spear the oak both

Holy and strong, and twisting through its back his wicked spear had encircled.

“An image should be led to the throne of the goddess,” they cried in recoil,

“And with her divine will we should be aligned.”

We divide the walls, and the fortifications of the city we outlay

They all girded themselves for the work and under their feet they lay

The gliding of wheels, and they stretched around its neck a flaxen bearing;

The fateful machine climbed the walls, lined

Pregnant with arms. Around it boys and unmarried girls both

Sing holy rites and rejoice to touch with their hand the coils;

She passes through and, threatening, into the city she ‘circles.

O country, O Ilium, divine home and Dardanian fortifications encircling,

Renowned in war! Four times on the threshold of the gate it lay

And four times gave a sound the arms in its womb encoiled;

Nevertheless forgetful of blind madness, on we are bearing,

And on the holy citadel we stop the monster ominous and unhappy both.

Then also Cassandra opened her mouth and forth the future delined,

Divine doom encircling to order the Teucrians not to ever bear trust.

We lay wretched, for whom that day would be last and fateful both,

And coiled the temples of the gods with lines of festive foliage through the city.