

A Manifesto from Ancient Indo-European Poetics (2025 December 2)

I've written here before about various Indo-European linguistic and literary texts and topics, including recently Calvert Watkins' *How to Kill a Dragon: Aspects of Indo-European Poetics* (Oxford UP, 1995).

Watkins' writing adheres to a notion of poetics that closely parallels my own, one which some extent exemplifies my own practice, standards and critiques over my years of writing, publishing and teaching about poetry, admittedly bent toward the academic and what used to be called "scholar-poets (famously including, in the English-language tradition, Chaucer, Spenser, Sidney, and almost everyone now denigrated as dead white men in "the canon").

In the fifth chapter of *How to Kill a Dragon* (a very dry book I recommend only to writers seriously concerned with the structural and thematic traditions of western poetry from the 2nd millennium BC on), Watkins translates and quotes a bit from Enrico Campanile's *Indogermanische Dichtersprache* (1987), which stands out to me as what could well be the basis of a Manifesto to sign on to:

"The features which our western tradition ascribes to poetry (feeling, inspiration, individualism, participation, etc.) and which the aesthetics of romanticism has particularly underscored, were for Indo-European poetry only a side issue, although they were present. The main thing was to preserve and increase cultural elements which presented something essential to the well-being, collectivity and stability of the society.":