

The War Nerd Iliad: Modern Prose Translation of Homers Iliad By John Dolan The War Nerd Iliad: Modern Prose Translation of Homers Iliad The way I felt reading Dolan's Iliad reminded me of friends' stories of finally getting on the right antidepressant: a veil has lifted on a grey and dreary world revealing dimensions of color and feeling that you had heard about but never actually experienced. I've read at least three English versions great swathes of the Greek and spent a few years attempting to teach Homer to (generally indifferent) freshmen Great Books students at a major midwestern university. I could tolerate the stately verse of Lattimore or Fagles because I knew a lot about why Homer was important: echoes of the Bronze Age the beauty of dactylic hexameter the social role of the rhapsode in pre literate societies; I could go on but you don't care. The prose moves beautifully is alternately hilarious moving thrilling and disgusting and most of all tells the story with great faithfulness to the original and very subtle scholarly panache. The vividness of Achilles' anger the stupidity and stubbornness of Agamemnon Odysseus' craft the doom of the Trojans the resentment that everyone feels for the stupidity of the war it all burns brightly through. Losing the poetic structure gave the author the freedom to make the story readable to a 21st century audience and I can't tell you how grateful and thrilled I am for this version to exist. This would be an AMAZING teaching tool for anyone in Classics assign it first let the students really get into the story and then give them a good verse translation to compare it to. John Dolan has restored much of the humor and vivacity of the original tale which generations of classicists have removed while still remaining faithful to the spirit of the original. I began reading the War Nerd written under the identity of Gary Brecher after the now fb less Connor Sullivan posted one of his articles to me early on in my time in college early enough that I was one of the ding dongs speculating COULD Brecher be Dolan??? While I pay my homage to the Gary Brecher persona I'd have to say the Dolan half was probably important to my education. It's meant to be gripping a real emotional rollercoaster and it's not meant to stint on the goods gore gloating gods descriptions of riches feasts and other things that bored peasants passing some time in the winter want to imagine. Dolan argues that sentence and paragraph structure does form modern readers what meter and rhyme did for our ancestors and over who reads epic poems today (I know I know a few of my fb friends)? He wants this read. The characters are alive than ever before (in English anyway) angst teen death dealer Achilles aggrieved manager Odysseus decent doomed Hector vain late stage mob boss like Agamemnon etc. The granular cynical grasp on the politics of war that made the War Nerd such a success comes out in his depictions of the Greek war effort all squabbling chiefs mission drift and chaos. And he delivers the goods the battle scenes have all the chaos blood pain confusion you could want but also the sheer joy of rage and action that draws so many to this story and stories like it. Dolan may have chosen prose here but the poet is still there in his similes and apostrophes and probably other figures I'm missing because you know didn't take any literature classes. Often these points encourage delude people (whole generations in some instances of the British ruling class in the 18th and 19th centuries) into thinking that these alien people actually were like us or like what we could (or even should) be. Sometimes sick of that people go the opposite direction claiming it's all so different you'll never understand it except maybe if you immerse yourself in these languages become a difficult prig about it etc. In his take on the Iliad Dolan illuminates an alien world in all of its splendor and terror a lot of both in a way that is relatable to us today while never losing sight of the gulf between us and the Homeric. But Dolan has been making the alien seem familiar and the familiar alien in his literary historical and (for lack of a better term) political writing for a long time now and making it look easy the sure sign of a master. ***** English War Nerd Dolan's chatty contemporary prose rendition is an interesting and surprisingly fresh feeling take on the Iliad — I'd call it an adaptation or a version rather than a translation but there you are — that renders it accessible and easy reading. In fact at points apart of course from the ubiquitous gore I almost felt I was reading a children's book; this is the version to recommend to light readers Internet readers page flipping skimmers and I don't mean that as a backhanded compliment but rather as a recognition of its terse simple grabbiness. It reminded me of War Music at times but shorn of all that book's residual shall we say poetliness: Dolan's prose really doesn't aspire to be literary and indeed

reading the book is a lot like reading his Facebook notes or email newsletters. At a few moments a contemporary techie word or metaphor satellites and the like is used seemingly as a mere grab for attention linguistically and I wished for a sparer approach. And the treatment of the gods makes them into essentially Marvel superheroes; their powers are meticulously described and explained in rationalistic terms that deprive them of all their mystery weirdness and to me their real power as harbingers of a worldview and set of explanations now very very remote from our own,

We recognize the names: Achilles Odysseus Zeus and Apollo: We're taught that The Iliad is a foundational text of civilization: But who has really read the text? Until now The Iliad was hijacked by academics and used to bludgeon schoolchildren as a boring yet mandatory reading: Poet novelist essayist and former teacher John Dolan revisits this ancient tale and restores it to its ancient glory. But in Dolan's version you'll be amazed at how funny raw and terrifying this doomed world of war really is. He strips away clunky archaic language to reveal the true meaning and themes that animate this tale of war and futility: John Dolan's work under the nom de guerre Gary Brecher The War Nerd has been met with both acclaim and controversy. Dolan's version of The Iliad is sapped of the usual saccharine romance attributed to heroes and lets the action tell the story, Regardless of attributed name Dolan/Brecher is an astute observer of modern warfare who now turns that keen analysis to the most classical of documented battles The Iliad. John Dolan now works with Mark Ames (of eXile fame) to produce the Radio War Nerd weekly podcast on military matters. I've spent a lot of time with Homer first as an undergraduate Classics major then as PhD student in Classical Archaeology. In all this time I appreciated the Iliad a lot but always intellectually, The point is that I never FELT the Iliad the way it was intended to be felt until I got my hands on this: I wish I had had something like this in my TAing days, English couldn't put it down English This is an ABSOLUTELY fabulous translation of The Iliad, English Homer/John Dolan The War Nerd Iliad (2017) it would be hard to overstate the impact John Dolan has had on my education, There's a simple reason for this I went to hippie school sans requirements and loaded my plate with history and sociology classes, Dolan's writings were Lit 101 (and a few extra classes alongside) for me. The list of writers I picked up because of his recommendations is nearly coextensive with the list of my favorite writers: So I get why the man himself might prefer Gary Brecher but I'll always have a soft spot for Dolan: I'm glad the interests of the two literature and war coincided for this particular volume: Moreover it'd also be hard to overstate how important the Iliad or anyway the children's Iliad I had was to me as a child. It was my favorite story though I was disappointed to find that the grown up versions were generally slogs: Probably worth it especially for people whose interest in literature comes to a large extent through history but slogs nevertheless. The Iliad was meant to be recited aloud closer a to campfire tale than a school poem, Dolan tries to bring this quality back to the Iliad for modern readers of English, He delivers right to a sweet spot that few works really go for these days (arguably Fury Road did). He does something really special with the gods their human qualities come through clearly but they never lose a truly weird eerie quality. At bottom the Iliad is about an alien world but with just enough familiar features to give us moderns some grasping points, That balancing act alone is supremely difficult let alone making it readable and entertaining: There are nonetheless a few decisions that struck me as a bit odd, But I understand this as a move made for contemporary accessibility and in those terms I guess it works well enough. Basically: Dolan's done a good job with this it's a hell of a fun read and I'll be recommending it. The Greeks and Trojans are still fighting. The gods are still interfering. Born in Denver Colorado Dolan currently lives in Macedonia. Buy it read it and come back to it again.P.S. I never took a literature class.Dolan sees the slog quality as an injustice to the poem. He does so via prose translation. English

