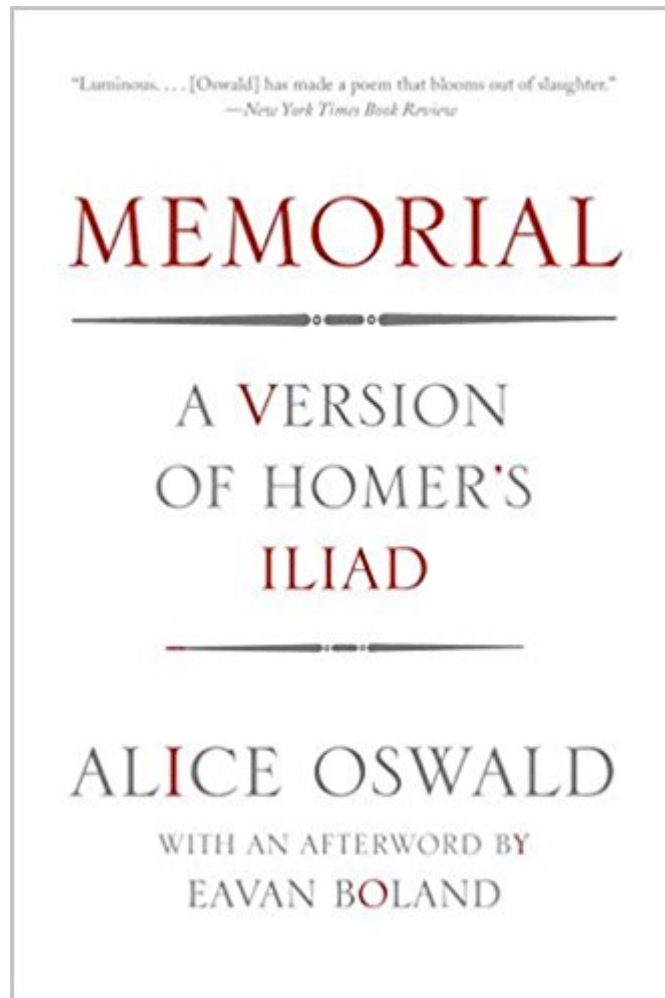


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Memorial: A Version Of Homer's Iliad



Synopsis

“The most remarkable and affecting book of poetry I encountered this year.” —James Wood, *The New Yorker*

In this daring new work, the poet Alice Oswald strips away the narrative of the *Iliad*—the anger of Achilles, the story of Helen—in favor of attending to its atmospheres: the extended similes that bring so much of the natural order into the poem and the corresponding litany of the war-dead, most of whom are little more than names but each of whom lives and dies unforgettably and unforgotten in the copious retrospect of Homer’s glance. The resulting poem is a war memorial and a profoundly responsive work that gives new voice to Homer’s level-voiced version of the world. Through a mix of narrative and musical repetition, the sequence becomes a meditation on the loss of human life.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

PROTESILAUSECHEPOLUSELEPHENORSIMOISIUSLEUKOSDEMOCOONDIORESPIROUSPHEGEUSIDAEUS. . . Eight pages, five hundred names, the roll-call of the dead in the Trojan Wars, they call to mind the names chiseled into the white marble of so many war memorials, filling four sides of a towering column. British poet Alice Oswald’s poem, subtitled “a version of Homer’s *ILIAD*,” begins not in verse but in cold statistics. She has extracted the names of every person killed, from Protesilaus down to Hector, without regard for heroism or rank, or even whether they were Trojan or Greek. War is war, death is death, no matter the reasons for which the armies were fighting. Then she goes through again, offering a brief eulogy or epitaph on all the slain warriors for whom Homer provides enough detail. But these passages are not strict translations of Homer. As she says

herself: "I work closely with the Greek, but instead of carrying the words over into English, I use them as openings through which to see what Homer was looking at. I write through the Greek, not from itâ "aiming at translucence rather than translation."To show this in action, look at this passage (Book 6, 23â "33) from the classic translation by Robert Fagles (Penguin):"Euryalus killed Dresus, killed Opheltius,turned and went for Pedasus and Aesepus, twinthe nymph of the spring Abarbarea bore Bucolionâ |Bucolion, son himself to the lofty King Laomedon,first of the line, though his mother bore the princein secrecy and shadow. Tending his flocks one dayBucolion took the nymph in a strong surge of loveand beneath his force she bore him twin sons.

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