

### ***The Odyssey* shouldn't be an odyssey to read**

We've all been there—stuck in a library, frantically searching Google, asking all our friends, ANYTHING to find a version of *The Odyssey* that won't put us to sleep three pages in. Maybe reading the Greek Epics is on your New Year's Resolution list. Maybe your professor assigned it. Maybe you're like me and picked it up to refamiliarize yourself with Greek classics after the recent surge in recontextualized Greek myths and stories (thank you Madeline Miller). Whatever the reason, Emily Wilson's translation of *The Odyssey* is the answer to all of your problems.

Every version of *The Odyssey* follows Odysseus' ten year journey back home to Ithaca, through the losses of his crew, his battle with the Cyclops, multiple encounters with sea monsters, his dalliances with Circe and Calypso, and his time with the Phoenicians who finally bring him home. It also follows his wife Penelope and his son Telemachus as they wage their own war against unwanted suitors that have taken over their home and refuse to leave without Penelope's hand in marriage. Their stories come together once Odysseus finally returns home and brutally kills the suitors after revealing himself during a contest over Penelope.

So if all of the translations have the same story, why shouldn't you just read the cheapest version? After all, there are free online versions all over the place. What makes Emily Wilson's version worth buying?

Well friend, let me enlighten you.

First of all, Wilson is the first woman to ever translate *The Odyssey* into English. Her male predecessors were more than happy to add in their own misogynistic opinions and pass them off as faithful to the text. For example, apparently the female slaves who had slept with Penelope's suitors (willingly or not) were often translated as "whores" or "sluts" by these men, when the actual text never refers to them as such.

Second of all, Wilson's version is *perfect* for both the casual reader and academia. She includes two extremely informational pre-story chapters. The first is an introduction to the world of *The Odyssey* and the historical context of the era in which it was created. She gives a history of oral traditions, including a history of Homer and if he even existed as a sole person. The second is a "translator's note," in which Wilson speaks about how she chose to translate

the work from Ancient Greek and also calls out the modern bias of the previous all-male cast of translators.

She gives the reader a quick summary of the story, so you don't have to worry about whether or not you're understanding the plot correctly (and also to help when the story jumps from one character to another). Everything and anything you could possibly need to fully understand *The Odyssey* is offered up to you on a silver platter.

Wilson returns *The Odyssey* to its original state of a really freaking cool adventure story. Odysseus fights monsters, sleeps with beautiful mysterious women, and dines with royalty. There are shipwrecks and gods and family reunions. This story has captured the attention of its audience for millenia! And yet so many people have turned it into a dry, dull recitation of events. Emily Wilson, with her use of the poetic form and her fantastic translation work, has restored *The Odyssey* to its former glory.