



Why Homer Matters

Adam Nicolson

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"Adam Nicolson writes popular books as popular books used to be, a breeze rather than a scholarly sweat, but humanely erudite, elegantly written, passionately felt...and his excitement is contagious."?James Wood, *The New Yorker*

Adam Nicolson sees the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* as the foundation myths of Greek?and our?consciousness, collapsing the passage of 4,000 years and making the distant past of the Mediterranean world as immediate to us as the events of our own time.

Why Homer Matters is a magical journey of discovery across wide stretches of the past, sewn together by the poems themselves and their metaphors of life and trouble. Homer's poems occupy, as Adam Nicolson writes "a third space" in the way we relate to the past: not as memory, which lasts no more than three generations, nor as the objective accounts of history, but as epic, invented after memory but before history, poetry which aims "to bind the wounds that time inflicts."

The Homeric poems are among the oldest stories we have, drawing on deep roots in the Eurasian steppes beyond the Black Sea, but emerging at a time around 2000 B.C. when the people who would become the Greeks came south and both clashed and fused with the more sophisticated inhabitants of the Eastern Mediterranean.

The poems, which ask the eternal questions about the individual and the community, honor and service, love and war, tell us how we became who we are.

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