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### The Glorification of Conflict in the *Iliad* and *Women of Troy*

War is something that as a whole, humans have mixed feelings about. Many wars have occurred throughout history, but literature surrounding war seems to either put it in an over-glorified spotlight, or only talk about the devastation and suffering it causes. The issue of whether or not war is necessary continues even to modern-day times, a reason why the *Iliad* and *The Women of Troy*, two texts that date back to Ancient Greece, remain relevant today. Both texts look at the impacts of war on people, however, though both synopses write about the Trojan War, the two texts offer very different perceptions of the universal truths of conflict. The *Iliad* glorifies war, and sees the killing that occurs during war as a necessary evil, whereas *Women of Troy* refutes this claim by focusing on the tragedies behind it.

In the *Iliad*, Homer describes war as something that can be used to gain eternal glory for the people who fight in it, thus establishing a norm of war as inevitable and acceptable. This overall perception of war, and the disregard of human life that goes along with it, can be seen with Homer's metaphor of human life to that of a leaf:

“As is the generation of leaves, so is that of humanity.

The wind scatters the leaves on the ground, but the live timber  
burgeons with leaves again in the season of spring returning.

So one generation of men will grow while another dies.” (Homer 117-120)

In this instance, humanity is being compared to “the generation of leaves,” with death portrayed as something irrelevant because “the live timber” will “[burgeon] with leaves again,” if “[t]he wind scatters the leaves on the ground.” In other words, the killing and destruction of war does not matter, because though many people will die, the people who are left behind will take their place. This sentiment is also apparent in Homer’s word choice - “hero,” (Homer 61) “great,” (Homer 12) “mighty,” (Homer 2) “godlike” (Homer 332) - and the overall positive attitude Homer uses when describing the characters in his epic. For example, though Hektor is described as “the slayer of men,” (Homer 498) he is also assigned the epitaph of “glorious,” (Homer 466) a combination that would be considered an oxymoron by many. By doing this, Homer alleges that conflict in and of itself should not be considered evil, rather something that is necessary and deserving merit. As such, the *Iliad* states that war gives people a chance to earn glory, and thus be remembered as a hero for all time.

*Women of Troy* offers a contrasting view to the *Iliad*, by depicting the devastation of Troy after the Trojan War, and thus suggesting that conflict is destructive by nature and should be avoided at all costs. Euripides demonstrates the devastation that war creates for individuals through descriptions of characters such as Hecabe, who is expressed as a “pitiable, prostrate figure, drowned in tears,” (Euripides 129) a far cry from the “noble” (Homer 296) and “honour[able]” (Homer 87) women in the *Iliad*. In *Women of Troy*, Hecabe bemoans how, because of the war, everything is “now shrunk to nothing, sunk in mean oblivion,” (Euripides 130) a stark contrast to the sentiment in the *Iliad* that though people may die, their places will be filled by their posterity, just as timber “burgeons with leaves again” after its leaves are scattered by the wind. This dichotomy between the two texts brings two of the most frequent perceptions

of war into light: that it is both glorious and horrendous. *Women of Troy* argues that though there is some glory to be found in war, the destruction and death that it causes far outweighs any heroic sentiments that conflict may contain. Furthermore, though the *Iliad* glorifies its characters as heroes worth remembering, in *Women of Troy*, Odysseus, one of the most famous of these “heroes,” is described as “a perjured impious outcast,” (Euripides 132) and a “monster of wickedness” (Euripides 132). By using a well-known Grecian hero universally lauded for his sharp wit, and calling him “perjured” and “wicked,” Euripides further emphasizes his point that conflict should not be praised, but instead be condemned. Through a vivid description of the destruction that war causes, Euripides’ *Women of Troy* contrasts the overly glorified view shown by Homer’s *Iliad*.

Overall, the *Iliad* and *Women of Troy* offer contrasting views of war. The *Iliad* looks at war in a more positive light, whereas *Women of Troy* looks at the negative aspects of war. The *Iliad* overly glorifies soldiers, with Homer skimming over the negative aspects of war, and focusing on heroics. *Women of Troy* portrays war in a very candid light, highlighting the various atrocities that occur during a war. Both of these texts have merit in their portrayals of war, and in the end, war is probably best described as a combination of the two; although there can be some positive outcomes, it ends in destruction.