



WOMEN, WAR, AND PATRIARCHAL AUTHORITY IN GRECO-ROMAN EPIC: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF *THE ILIAD* AND *THE AENEID*

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Abstract

The Aeneid by Virgil and The Iliad by Homer are analysed in a qualitative, interpretive and comparative manner; with a focus on the representation of femininity, conflict and patriarchy. The study takes the two epics as a literary system in which gender, violence, authority, and the power of the narrative become mutually "constitutive". The study takes the two epics as a literary system in which gender, violence, authority, and the power of the narrative become mutually "constitutive", and the provided research document is followed. The analysis indicates that in both poems, women have been sidelined as subjects, but not as subjects not, as the analysis will further suggest, are women not central to the meaning of war as they suffer and speak, as they are mothers and wives and have political roles, as the effects of the violence on women is a social discourse. In The Iliad Briseis discovers the relationship between captive women and the status of man, Andromache and Hecuba speak of heroic fighting in terms of widowhood, bereavement and familial destruction. However their view is mainly reactive instead of institutional influencing. While in The Aeneid women are more politically and symbolically present, they also have their agency curtailed by the fates and destinies of men, perpetuation of the line and direction of the Empire. Dido, Creusa, Lavinia, sovereignty becomes driven towards tragedy, the wife is sacrificed to the future of the founder and the bride is a dynastic sign, silent most of the time. The comparison then points to a continuity of the Greek and Roman epic, that is, the public declaration of war by men, even though it may be suffered by women and offer much of the emotional and ethical substance of the epic. In tandem with this, Virgil's work, which is more clearly political, reworks Homeric patterns with gendered power as the logic of empire. Based on the study, it can be concluded that the two poems are not only a reflection of the patriarchal societies, they tell them in a gendered way.

Keywords: *The Iliad, The Aeneid, women, war, patriarchy, gender, narrative authority, classical epic, feminist literary criticism*

Introduction

The presence of war in the Greco-Roman epic is unique, inasmuch as it is the arena where heroic status, political authority, social standing, and collective memory are proclaimed. This is evident from the accompanying research document: classical epic is not just a representation of violence, but an arrangement of violence organized by means of the ideological frameworks of masculine action, honour, authority, movement and history. Women, however, are always caught up in the problems of such a system as captives, wives, mothers, mourners, political actors, bearers of dynastic continuity. This is a central problem when reading Homer and Virgil—the power of war, of course, can be as crucial to the emotional and structural importance of the work, without the male logic assigning it a public meaning. The present paper focuses on the even more massive study whose sources are limited to two significant sources: Homer's *The Iliad* and Virgil's *The Aeneid*. The comparison raises three pertinent questions: How do women play a role in the economy of war and male power? What are the possible modes of speech or agency that could be

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given to the female characters? In what ways does the Roman epic change, elaborate or repeat the gendered patterns in Homeric epic? The paper argues that both of the poems are focused on women as the human price of war and that women have little or no say in the direction of future political and historical developments. The primary difference is one of a scale of ideologies. All of the above – patriarchy, heroic honor and possession, martial reputation, and the survival of the household – are very close together in the *Iliad*. They are part of a great story about foundings, families and empires of *The Aeneid*. It should be pointed out that this is a distinction, since women are not automatically a feminine authority. For Andromache, Hecuba, Helen, and Briseis, Homer grants moments of psychological and emotional visibility; for Dido, Virgil grants political visibility; for Briseis and Lavinia, it is the movement of the narrative that makes them indispensable. But with sight comes no causal power. Women may feel, mourn, warn and represent without having to be rational about the war, as the studies here provided report. Thus, “patriarchal authority” is not just the ignorance of any given man but also a story and a system that facilitated a male prerogative to decide, influence, and ultimately direct military, political, property, inheritance, and public interpretation of history.

Literature Review

Recent feminist studies of classical texts have criticized the interpretations that have seen women's marginalization as a reflection of the marginalization of women in their own society. The research paper offered here is a continuation of this heritage and argues that literary form can be an element of gender hierarchy. The importance of Arthur (1983) is also highlighted in relation to women becoming objects to be taken up by men who compete with one another and induct them into their system of competitions, whether in the form of prizes, symbols of winning, exchangeable objects, or objects of conflict. These sorts of arrangements are helpful in understanding Briseis because the issue of who gets her is also an issue of legitimacy for Agamemnon's rule and of masculine identity. In the scholarship presented in the source the significance is on the ability to narratively see the suffering of women, but not to have political authority over it.

The study refers to Foley's (2001) research on lament, which is a main genre of a classical literature and is used to register the impact of war on the human. This battle is shown in the characters of Andromache and Hecuba. Their speech is strong both morally and emotionally, yet not preventing them from being afflicted by the military actions that inflict suffering on them. This knowledge can then be of a retroactive or re-refractive nature and not institutionally transformative. Virgil, Giusti and Rimell (2021) suggest a framework for considering the political role of women in the *Aeneid*. While Virgil gives his female characters a major part in the imperial story, he also marginalizes women's experiences to the future of the male-dominated political system, as suggested by the source. Abandoned not only by Aeneas, but first made a ruler who can organize a city, then put to divine, erotic, and teleological strains, Dido, though, is not just abandoned by Aeneas. The related structures, in different shapes, are removed in Creusa, but it plays a key role in the dynastic incorporation process in Lavinia, with little independent voice in the narrative. A classical reading also makes use of classical reception theory, which places classical works of literature in the position of active places of interpretation rather than fixed cultural monuments. In general, 'reception' is the study of how works of art become meaningful in the future through the connections that are made. (Hardwick and Stray 2008). The word reception is used here in a more limited sense: it is used to distinguish between Homeric and Virgilian models



but it does not imply a literal copying of the earlier Greek poem by the later Roman one. Virgil's reworking of the heroic tradition shifts away from a war narrative of honor and death to a ground narrative, in which violence plays a part in the history of Rome. The literature in the provided document thus indicates that there exists a gap in research on the topic, focusing on gender, war and narrative authority. The study of classical women can be on a character-by-character basis, and research of epic war can be of the heroic ideology. Comparative reading can show the female agency and the male authority in the two poems, and can bring out the fact that the suffering of the women is a necessary element of the representation of the heroism of the men and the continuity of the political.

Theoretical Framework

This research method is in the form of feminist literary criticism. Feminist criticism seems appropriate because it is not that women are not present in the poems, but rather that they cannot act, speak, have, decide, inherit, and be remembered historically. According to the research paper, it is suggested that the feminist criticism approach can be used to analyse literature and the act of analysing literature is a cultural act of making, reproducing and negotiating relations of gendered power. This way, a woman can be complex, articulate and emotionally present without having the authority to maneuver the plot. The second is classical reception theory. The purpose of this exercise is not to do an exploration of the modern adaptation of the epic, but to recognize the history of the relationship between Greek and Roman epic. Virgil is operating within a framework of Homeric themes of war and heroism, providence and suffering of women. So, what happens when the heroic world becomes a Roman foundation narrative? The answer is that the authority of the patriarchal regime begins to get embroiled in genealogies, and the future of the empire. Not only does male action get paid off in terms of personal glory, it is a way of getting a political future. The paper can be a social theme as well as a narrative structure with the help of feminist criticism and reception theory. The analytical concepts are: Patriarchal authority, Female agency, Narrative voice, Possession, Lament, Kinship, Dynastic continuity.

Methodology

The method used in this research is a qualitative, interpretive and comparative method. The primary sources are the writings of Homer, *The Iliad* and *The Aeneid*, while the secondary source from which the thematic approach, scholarly comments and textual quotations are taken is the PhD thesis provided. Selected episodes of the characters of Briseis, Andromache, Hecuba, Dido, Creusa, Lavinia are analyzed. The numbers selected are those that represent our understanding of the relationship between women and systems of martial, domestic, political and dynastic power. Close reading to uncover patterns and not tally numbers. The analysis focuses on the agents of action, the agents of property and marriage, the agents that shape events via their speech, and how suffering is rendered visible, as well as how the poems relate the individual women to larger systems of heroic or imperial history. The comparison is thematic: women as property, women as witnesses of violence, female speech, limits of agency, of sovereignty, of desire and of political authority, women as instruments of dynastic continuity. The method is intended to clearly differentiate between the two epics. Both cultures (Homeric and Augustan Roman) are markedly different, as are the poems and their function as narratives. The comparisons, however, suggest continuities and changes in ideology. The aim of the study is to investigate how the power of the father is manifested differently in two related epic traditions.



Women as Property and the Economy of Male Honor in *The Iliad*

Briseis may be the most obvious instance of women being constituted as objects of man's energy. In the very first book of *The Iliad*, the argument between Agamemnon and Achilles is about the sharing of spoils, but it also has to do with rank, kingship, and public acclaim of male accomplishment. This conflict manifests itself in Briseis. She is repeatedly described in the accompanying research paper as a commodity that is taken over by a martial economy: Agamemnon is the king who takes her, Achilles the man who is attacked on the honor of his own military work. Briseis is, therefore, not a person but an important structural factor. Achilles retreats and it alters the course of the war. But the irony is there, that a woman is a key character in the story, and yet has limited or no agency to the action. Her body is up for grabs at a contestation of powerful men, but she cannot attribute political meaning to it. The poem, in effect, offers a form of patriarchy, one that deals with women as object of exchange, and men as the object of decisions. This is also a pattern which reveals that the patriarchy isn't just a blunt opposition to women. But Achilles does not have to think of Briseis as unimportant; his speech gives Briseis her own place in the context of his heroic role. The issue is thus institutional. Briseis is useful in a system that is based on the man getting the woman. There is there her humanity, but the social order has made her the symbol of another's honour. This is supported by the overall context of the Homeric world. In time of war, women are captured and transferred to the family of the conquered and their abduction is a sign of the conquered community's destruction. The woman's body turns into a node point, where the conquest of military forces, penetration into sexuality, and the work and prestige of men intertwine. The thesis that is provided, then, is not merely an incidental element of characterisation, but rather an interpretation of the idea of patriarchal possession as one of the ways of epic war.

Andromache, Hecuba, and the Female Witness to War

In martial exchange Briseis is an example of the objectification of women and Andromache and Hecuba are examples of the consequences of this. They are significant because they are able to make the violence of the heroic into the terms of the domestic or familial. What is important about Andromache's argument to Hector in Book 6 is that she does not in any way challenge the reality of heroic honor, nor does she ask for it, but rather discovers its cost. Hector continues to fight and risks having his wife widowed, and his son orphaned. From the home the heroic action, therefore, can be seen as the breaking of family continuity, on the battlefield. The provided research paper highlights the fact that Andromache has a lot of interpretive knowledge. She knows the effects of war as her own family was destroyed. Her father, brothers are dead, her mother is dead and Troy is in danger. In her speech, she makes war a recurring bereavement, thus making the fight of warriors become a bereavement. However, Hector refuse to change his way. The limitation is that Andromache can figure out what the effect of some man's action is, but she cannot say what the action will be. Hecuba is in a similar role. In her Grievance for Hector, her body bears witness to the fame of heroes. In the mother's dream, the warrior who was the protector and honor of Troy turns into a corpse. The perspective of Hecuba then throws war back into its brutal reality and reintroduces the issue of death. However, as the source text points out, lamenting is a secondary component to action. The woman can be in authority, but not control, in grief, but not in the political/military authority/military/military hierarchy that caused her grief.



It is important to the depiction of women in *The Iliad* that there is a separation between emotional and institutional authority. The lack of meaning doesn't necessarily represent women's speech; indeed, it might be one of the most morally persuasive female speech in the poem. It's lacking in the ability to restructure the social order. Women are made witnesses to the fact of war when they aren't its acknowledged decision makers. The poem is the heroic system; it does not follow them.

Female Voice and Patriarchal Authority in *The Aeneid*

Virgil gives a special place to women in the pattern of politics and emotions in the *Aeneid*. However, higher visibility doesn't always lead to higher autonomy. The given thesis is: Always, there is a theme of transition, sacrifice, love, and continuity of the dynastic line in the role of the Virgilian women. Thus, they are not an absolute but a relative importance: they help to establish, to test, to legitimate or to dramatize the historical future for men. The most complicated one is Dido, as they'll settle for her swinging a sword there. Her first time is not a love, it's a kingdom. She organizes, judges and governs the people of Carthage. Whereas the female principals in *The Iliad* are only speculative, the political identity of her character brings the possibility of female authority to life. As the poem moves on, however, it questions her claims to sovereignty by Aeneas' divine and destiny. The desire to leave becomes a political problem and she separates from Aeneas, which becomes part of the wider story of the founding of Rome. Partly the gendered asymmetry of the episode is that of the respective narrators, Dido and Aeneas. Dido is very emotional, and very convincing, particularly when Aeneas is on the brink of leaving. But Aeneas has a response to this, the language of duty, of fate and of historical necessity. Her speech is related with the personal injury, her personal grief and loss of trust, his speech is guarded by the power of destiny. Dido is therefore able to declare with a loud voice, but not have the power to alter the trajectory of a poem's history. Dido is by no means a weak character! Her strength renders the ideological construct more apparent. Virgil's first step is to claim the sovereignty of the feminine, then to show the boundaries of her sovereignty set by a teleology in which the man is the destiny, and the male, the emperor. Then, her death is not only personal, but political too.

Creusa and Lavinia: Sacrifice, Silence, and Dynastic Continuity

In the founding story, there are two kinds of subordination for women, Creusa and Lavinia. When Creusa is destroyed she disappears and her ghost to Aeneas is enough for him to lose his connection with the old world. Her speech provides emotional and prophetic significance to her disappearance, but also makes it clear that the journey must go on without her. Then the woman takes over the man's story of "letting go" of an old role as a housekeeper. The opposite movement to that of Lavinia, is not departure but incorporation: Lavinia is the movement of the body into the world of the mind, but Lavinia is the movement of the mind into the body. In fact, Aeneas' marriage is a part and parcel of her political resolution of what follows her arrival in Italy. But, she's very quiet. She is not an important but a dynastic discus. Others are interpreting in her marriage, in her prophetic ministry and in the controversy that arises in her. She is thus the focus of a conflict over territory, legitimacy, ethnicity and succession, but not the main speaker in the conflict. Creusa and Lavinia are opposed, and they serve as an emblem of the malleability of patriarchy's story. A woman can be removed from the story if the hero has to continue his journey—or she may remain in the story to provide the means for the hero's future to be legitimate. In both cases, it is her role that is connected with continuity from males. Creusa approves division, Lavinia approves merger.



The story is for women to make history but not to have a say in what it is. It is then alleged that Lavinia's muteness does not necessarily imply insignificance, but rather a most powerful positioning of an ideology.

She is very political, as her body and marriage is the future of the community. The absence of a narrator allows you to read this future in a number of different ways, from the perspective of the male warriors, the father, the King or the Divine.

Comparative Discussion: From Heroic Patriarchy to Imperial Patriarchy

The contrast accentuates the continuity of the gendered authority of the Homeric texts and also of the Virgilian text, and a significant transformation. The values of patriarchy in the Iliad are basically towards the heroic status, martial reputation, kingdom, and the accumulation of war booty. The issue of Briseis brings to the fore the link between the body of the woman and the male honour, while the social valuation of a system focused on the man's action is evident in the case of Andromache and Hecuba. In The Aeneid these buildings are more political and historical. Aeneas is no mere man of personal glory, however. It is warranted by the obligation, divine command, descent, and as a foundation for the future establishment of the Roman power. This makes female suffering enter into an imperial teleology. The absence of Dido and the disappearance of Creusa and the political marriage of Lavinia are not separate episodes, but components of a story of foundation. Thus, there can be a difference between the heroic patriarchy and the imperial patriarchy. In the world of the Homeric epics male authority is located in the competitive realm of warriors and kings. Virgil saves it, invests it with a more institutional frame of reference, in terms of ancestry, state-formation, and destiny. In both poems, the women are mistreated by the men and the "reason" for the choice in the Roman poem expands. The female political visibility is also different in the poems. The main place of women, in the Iliad, is in the household, in slaves' economies and in the social residue of war, but some women such as Helen may cross these lines. In the Aeneid, Dido is given the political power of a ruler and women begin to play a significant role in the political transition from Troy to Italy. Alongside the increased visibility, however, comes an increase in awareness of what is necessary and what is authoritative in history. The women involved in the creation of Virgil's story of empire are crucially involved in it, but it is a story of empire told by a man. A comparison of his attitude towards women and Homer's is more difficult to make. The more practical answer is that the two epics order gendered power differently. The love between women and warrior honour is praised by both Virgil and Homer. However, in both instances, women are always used as a proxy for the human and emotional price of war and it is the men who are conducting the war.

Discussion

The results confirm three general assertions about the humanity of women, warfare, and patriarchy in the epic tradition of the Greeks and Romans. First, marginalization of women is not a synonymous with insignificance of their story. Briseis, Andromache, Hecuba, Dido, Creusa, Lavinia are all important in structure. But their experiences prove otherwise if the poems are read only via their male heroes. Women expose their enslavement, their losses, destruction of the family, abandonment, sexual exposure, the family burden, emotional cost of political necessity. Secondly, the poems differentiate between types of authority. The women characters, however, can be emotional, rhetorical, symbolic, political without dominating the historical story. Yes, Dido is queen, but she can't control Aeneas' destiny. But Andromache's knowledge prevails and it is not to



be stopped by Hector. Hecuba's lament is for the loss of a heroic proudness, but a hero's proudness can't be restored by a woman's lament. Lavinia's marriage is part of a political continuity; it is not the basis for it. Because patriarchy does not only leave women voiceless, it also gives their voice to categories which do not affect public action. Third, how do you tell the story of war? Third, how has war been told, gender-wise? Men's sphere of action is the battlefield, women's the sphere of the home, captivity, mourning, reproduction and memory. It is suggested in the provided document that the separation can lead to a perception that being masculine is being associated with the notion of movement, history, change while being feminine is being associated with the notion of stasis and domestic continuity. What comes across is not just a set of character stereotypes, it's a tale hierarchy in which male action propels the narrative, female experience is the interpreter of its ramifications. A feminist interpretation doesn't have to deconstruct the epics as instances of basic misogyny. Both of these poems deal with the gender politics in a more complex way because of tension. Women speak and advise, they weep and they govern, they interpret, sometimes challenge men. Their ethical power shows even some of the paradoxes of heroic ideology. The trouble is, that's not the time when these moments result in institutionalized power. Their voices add to the comprehension of war to the poem but not to the structures that make the poem.

Conclusion

The brief comparative study we have made here makes it clear that women in *The Iliad* and *The Aeneid* may be said to occupy a paradoxical place: they play a vital role in the significance of war, but they are also subject to an authority which gives significance to war to the public. Homer's Briseis shares the message that women can be objects for the economy of male honor, and Andromache and Hecuba bring the language of heroic warfare into the realm of family destruction and grieving. They have some of the clearest moral points of view in the poem, but they do not have the same decision making authority. These tensions are worked out in a more overtly political and imperial setting in Virgil. Dido starts out as a queen, but her political power is subject to desire, a divine play and destiny of Aeneas. While Lavinia is crucial to settlement of the founding line, Creusa is sacrificed to the continuation of the founder's journey, and isn't given the same narrative voice. The female is completely subsumed in the future of the male, and the regime. The most important comparison is therefore the one between the lack of women and the continuation of patriarchy in classical epic. This is thus the most important comparison: the lack of women and the maintenance of patriarchy in classical epic. It's also reinforced by the control of women's membership in male-dominated systems of honor, kinship, destiny and empire. The past is a place where men only exist, but women do exist and are observed, remembered and felt. When taken together the two epics together raise the question not whether a woman is represented, but what sort of authority is granted to her representation. However, both Homer and Virgil allow women plenty of space to be present in an emotional and meaningful way, while providing women with only limited space to make the public meaning of war. Homer's is a patriarchy much more heroic and competitive, Virgil's a dynastic and imperial one. But both effects make war a realm in which the strength of males is a historical reality, and the plight of females a principal consideration in its cost. A feminist comparative reading discovers the politics of epic and the politics of who has the right to say, to decide, to have, to inherit, to be remembered.



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