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Echoes of Peace: Anti-War Sentiment in the *Iliad* and *Heike monogatari*
and Its Manifestation in Dramatic Tradition

Tyler A. Creer

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

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The *Iliad* and *Heike monogatari* are each seen as seminal pieces of literature in Greek and Japanese culture respectively. Both works depict famous wars from which subsequent generations of warriors, poets, and other artists in each society drew their inspiration for their own modes of conduct and creation. While neither work is emphatically pro-war, both were used extensively by the warrior classes of both cultures to reinforce warrior culture and to inculcate proper battlefield behavior. In spite of this, however, both tales contain a strong undercurrent of anti-war sentiment which contrasts sharply with their traditionally seen roles of being tales about warriors and their glorious deeds. This thesis examines these works and details the presence of anti-war sentiment while also highlighting its emergence to greater prominence in later works found within the genres of Greek tragedy and *nō* theater. Ultimately, the *Iliad* and *Heike monogatari* act as foundational sources of anti-war sentiment for the later dramatic works, which poets of both cultures used to decry the woeful effects of war on both combatants and the innocent. By examining the presence of anti-war sentiment in two cultures that share surprising similarities but are widely separated by geography and chronology, we are presented with both a broader and deeper understanding of the effects of warfare on society and of the historical responses of citizen populations to events in war.

Keywords: *Iliad*, *Heike monogatari*, Greek tragedy, *nō*, warfare, pacifism

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INTRODUCTION

Glance through the pages of the *Iliad* or *Heike monogatari* and chances are that you will, in fairly short order, come upon battle scenes filled with guts, glory, and the heroic ideals of ancient Greek and medieval Japanese society. Larger-than-life warriors arrayed in splendid armor shooting, throwing, stabbing, and slicing at one another with suitably oversized weaponry—such spectacles seem just the sort of material one should expect from two tales whose narratives are built around exaggerated versions of two of the most important conflicts in the cultural memory of the Greeks and Japanese: the Trojan War and the Genpei War, respectively. Through even a cursory encounter with either text, one is struck by the preponderance of violence and what can appear to be blatant glorification of the warfare, fighting, and killing which appear to be the main thrust of both epics. For example, both tales feature hosts of warriors fighting in pursuit of honor and glory, killing and dying with a generally equal measure of enthusiasm. In light of what appears to be a general pro-war attitude in such scenes, suggestions of anti-militaristic sentiment in the *Iliad* or *Heike monogatari*—less-frequent though they may be—may come as something of a surprise and present us with consternating contradictions as we grasp for thematic consistency. Since the two tales were quite obviously highly influential works that helped shape the warrior identity of ancient Greece and medieval Japan (and beyond, for that matter), how could anti-war sentiment, an ideology inimical to warfare, creep its way into narratives glorifying the same?

Such a discovery would be both strange and profitable if it were to occur in a reading of just the *Iliad* or *Heike* alone, but that these same sentiments are expressed in both tales, multiple times, and in similar ways is uncanny. In the scenes featuring these sentiments, the singers of the tales emphasize the destructive nature of warfare, lamenting over the deaths of the young, noble,

and culturally refined warriors whose lives would have been better spent in peace and happiness than on the blood-soaked fields of Ilium or Ichi-no-tani. Rather than simply being momentary lapses in the pro-war momentum of each tale, however, the vitality of these sentiments is revealed by their presence—and even their rise to prominence—in the literary and dramatic traditions that adapted and expanded on the narratives surrounding the Trojan and Genpei Wars.

The intent of this thesis, then, is to explore the presence of anti-war sentiment in ancient Greek and medieval Japanese culture from its apparent origins in the *Iliad* and *Heike monogatari* to its reemergence in the Greek tragedy of the fifth century B.C. and the *nō* theater of the fifteenth century A.D. Following the dramatic and literary traditions that continued or spun-off from the narratives of these two tales, I will attempt to map the evolution of anti-war sentiment in Greek and Japanese society through an examination of the historical climate of the periods in which the works of these traditions were first written and published. Ultimately, although ancient Greek and medieval Japanese societies were seemingly dominated by warlike sentiments, the people of these times—warriors and otherwise—were conscious of the destructive nature of warfare and let their longing to be free of it be seen in their literary and dramatic works, in spite, or perhaps because, of the reality of near constant fighting.

PREMISE

In both Greek and Japanese society we see a strong, enduring tradition of oral epic performance. Due to the ubiquity of his works and the Greeks' seemingly universal admiration of them, Homer has long been called the schoolmaster of Greece (Plat., *Rep.*, 595b-595c); though of a much later date, the *Heike monogatari* is a similarly powerful example of the influence of oral poetry on later generations of Japanese. While the enduring popularity of these works even centuries after their initial composition speaks to just how influential they were in

shaping their respective cultures, the manner in which the *Iliad* and *Heike monogatari* were presented to their audiences and proliferated throughout their regions of origin requires some explanation.

Both the *Iliad* and *Heike monogatari* were composed orally and performed in the same way as part of an oral tradition for centuries before eventually being committed to writing. There has been intense debate over the course of the last two centuries concerning the true origins of the Homeric poems and the accuracy of their representations of the Mycenaean era in which their events, the Trojan War and its fighters' homecomings, assumedly took place.¹ The delay between the original composition of the *Heike monogatari* and its transition to writing, on the other hand, compasses a much shorter time span.² In both cases, however, it is agreed that

¹ A commonly accepted date for the first written copy of the *Iliad* is c.650 BC, approximately 600 years after the estimated date of the events it describes, though this is still subject to extensive debate: "Powell 1991 suggests that the Greek alphabet was adapted from West Semitic prototypes specifically so as to write down Homeric epic at around 800 BCE. Janko 1982: 231 dates the *Iliad* to c. 755/750-725 BCE. Burkert 1976 and M.L. West 1995 detect allusions in the *Iliad* to later events, and on that basis suggest a date of composition in the seventh century BCE. Jensen 1980 argues that the poems were written down in Athens, in the sixth century BCE" (Homer, *Iliad: Book VI* ed. Barbara Graziosi and Johannes Haubold (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 9). Such a large gap in the written record is attributed to a number of different causes, such as an influx of Doric peoples into Greece, the abandonment of former major population centers such as Mycenae, and a general decline in material culture and writing. There is also much debate as to Homer's identity—whether he was an actual man or a mythical figure (Barbara Graziosi, *Inventing Homer. The Early Reception of Epic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002)), whether there were two of him (Homer, *Odyssey: Books VI-VIII* ed. A.F. Garvie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994)), or whether his name is simply a symbolic assignment to the epic tradition of which he is the bannerman (M.L. West, "The Invention of Homer" in *Classical Quarterly*, Vol. 49 (1999), 364-382). For more information on the Homeric problem and oral tradition, see also Fowler's "The Homeric question", Edwards' *Homer: Poet of the Iliad*, Lord's *The Singer of Tales*, and Taplin's *Homeric Soundings: The Shaping of the Iliad*.

² Unlike ancient Greece, 12th and 13th century Japan had a well-established literary culture that was populated by a vibrant intelligentsia. Despite this pre-existing framework, however, *gunkimono* ("war tales") were particularly suited to oral performance for two central reasons—their performers were mostly blind and their audience illiterate (Kenneth Dean Butler, "The Heike monogatari and The Japanese Warrior Ethic" in *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 29 (1969), 104). The Genpei War described by the *Heike monogatari* occurred between 1180-1185 AD, and the original text is believed to have been compiled sometime between 1198 and 1221 (Ibid., 94). From this point, the tale underwent a series of revisions by different storytellers as it circulated throughout Japan—at present there are more than 100 textual variants of the *Heike monogatari* that were composed within the 1198-1221 window, a telling example of its popularity and cultural significance (Ibid.). In 1371 the so-called Kakuichi-bon was compiled from a number of different manuscripts and has since become the commonly accepted authoritative version of the *Heike* since it is the newest and among the most complete (Kenneth Dean Butler, "The Textual Evolution of the Heike Monogatari," in *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 26 (1966), 7). Therefore, there are approximately 200 years intervening between the occurrence of the Genpei War from 1180 to 1185 and the time at which the Kakuichi-bon was written.

oral performances continued even after the tales had been committed to writing. Further adding to the list of similarities between these two works, both were also associated with blind bards—Homer is famously supposed to have been blind, and the *biwa hōshi* who typically were tasked with performing the *Heike* were also often (much more verifiably) blind.³

Commonalities of composition and performers aside, though, the most significant comparison to be made between the *Iliad* and *Heike* is the similarity of their theme—tragic warfare—and the power they exerted on later art and literature in their respective cultures. The *Iliad* was used frequently in the *poleis* of ancient Greece as a basis for education and to reinforce social and military ideals,⁴ and the *Heike monogatari* spawned a veritable legion of related additions, adaptations, and expansions of its story that continued to spin the sorts of tales of pride, tragedy, and loss that characterized warfare and the life of a warrior.⁵ Perhaps due to the vitality and power of the characters and themes present in these tales, the numerous works that expand on their narratives largely remain faithful to the sentiments and portrayals established by their creators while still exerting their own fair share of creative license in order to address issues pertinent at the time of their own composition. As such, Greek tragedies and Japanese *nō* frequently feature characters and stories that are continuations of those first related in the *Iliad* and *Heike*. While there are plenty of other works of tragedy and *nō* that explore tragic warfare

³ While both traditions feature blind singers, the reasons are quite different. For Homer, most evidence is contained within works associated the bard himself: the *Hymn to Apollo* (though no longer believed to have been written or composed by Homer) features a reference to a blind singer (HH 3.172-173), and Demodocus, the bard featured at the court of the Phaeacian king in the *Odyssey*, also blind, is thought to be an instance of self-reference for Homer (Hom., *Od.*, 8.64). The Japanese, on the other hand, have historically attributed musical professions like narrative performance to blind individuals, such to the point that traditional instruments like the *biwa* have almost exclusively been mastered by blind musicians until as recently as the nineteenth century (Hugh De Ferranti, *The Last Biwa Singer: A Blind Musician in History, Imagination, and Performance* (Ithaca: Cornell East Asia Series, 2009), 20-21). Also, the specific profession of blind itinerant musician has its roots in India and is closely tied to Buddhist tradition, which perhaps acted as another means of providing the strong Buddhist themes featured in the *Heike* (Ibid., 21-23).

⁴ See J.E. Lendon, *Soldiers & Ghosts: A History of Battle in Classical Antiquity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005).

⁵ See Butler, “The Heike monogatari and The Japanese Warrior Ethic” and Paul Varley, *Warriors of Japan as Portrayed in the War Tales* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994).

and anti-war sentiment, the works explored here are those tied directly to the *Iliad* and *Heike*, and even these represent only a sampling.

What follows will be an examination of the *Iliad* and *Heike* and the relationship each work shares with a series of dramatic works of tragedy and *nō*. The Greek plays I have chosen to analyze, Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, Sophocles' *Ajax*, and Euripides' *Trojan Women*, *Rhesus*, and *Helen*, are all part of the Trojan Cycle in that they relate stories dealing with famous figures from the Trojan War and act as continuations or expansions of Homeric narrative. The Japanese plays, *Atsumori*, *Tadanori*, and *Tsunemasa*, are all taken from the *shura mono* (修羅物) or *ashura nō* (阿修羅能) tradition, which feature the ghosts of famous warriors reenacting the scenes of their deaths to often terrified mortal audiences. Although all are quite similar to one another in terms of setting and content, the thematic consistency of the plays and the fact that each features the ghost of a prominent warrior from the *Heike* is appropriately significant.⁶

ILIAD

For all its popularity with ancient Greek audiences due to its military imagery and utility in reinforcing the fighting ethos of their warriors, the *Iliad* is not an emphatically pro-war work.⁷ As Van Wees points out, outright affection for warfare and fighting is generally frowned upon in Homer, and the poet never refers to war with positive epithets save for the rather neutral “glory-bringing.”⁸ Given the enormity of the casualty lists recorded throughout the course of the poem and the tragedy inherent in Achilles' and company's struggles with death, it seems less difficult

⁶ Although there are other Greek plays that comprise the Trojan Cycle, I have selected the ones featured in this paper because each features a slightly different perspective of anti-war sentiment, perspectives which, although found in other plays, I feel are best represented by these particular works. There are also dozens more practically identical *ashura nō* plays, but while these do feature the same thematic thrust, they deal with non-*Heike* warriors.

⁷ Lendon, *Soldiers & Ghosts*, 156-161.

⁸ Hans van Wees, “Heroes, Knights and Nutters: Warrior Mentality in Homer” in *Battle in Antiquity* ed. Alan B. Lloyd (London: Duckworth, 1996), 5-6.

to call the *Iliad* at the very least an example of the sorrows and horrors of war, if not an outright indictment of it and of the kingly powers which promote its being waged.

The reaction of the assembled Greek forces near the beginning of the epic is indicative of their feelings toward what is clearly an unpleasant war, as all rejoice at the prospect of an end to hostilities and receiving leave to return home; it is particularly notable that this is in response to a speech given by Menelaus—the only individual in the entire Greek army with any real reason to fight—urging a swift end to the fighting (Hom., *Il.*, 3.111-112).⁹ Even the gods, who are arguably the principal prosecutors of the war, display a hesitancy toward warfare given the reality that such a large number of warriors, many of whom are their own children, will die in the course of the fighting. Zeus relates the following to Hera just before the death of his son

Sarpedon:

ὦ μοι ἐγών, ὃ τέ μοι Σαρπηδόνα, φίλτατον ἀνδρῶν,
μοῖρ' ὑπὸ Πατρόκλοιο Μενoitιάδαο δαμῆναι.
διχθὰ δέ μοι κραδίη μέμονε φρεσὶν ὀρμαίνοντι,
ἢ μιν ζῶν ἐόντα μάχης ἄπο δακρυοέσεως
θείῳ ἀναρπάξας Λυκίης ἐν πίονι δήμῳ,
ἢ ἤδη ὑπὸ χερσὶ Μενoitιάδαο δαμάσσω.

Ah, woe is me, since it is fated that Sarpedon, dearest of men to me,
be vanquished by Patroclus, son of Menoetius!
And my heart is divided in counsel as I ponder in my thought
whether I shall snatch him up while yet he lives
and set him afar from the tearful war in the rich land of Lycia,
or whether I shall let him be vanquished now at the hands of the son of Menoetius.
Hom., *Il.*, 16.433-449¹⁰

That it is within Zeus' power to prevent Sarpedon's death is without question; Aphrodite, Poseidon, and Apollo at various points in the poem display their willingness and ability to save mortal heroes from their apparent doom—the first by magically transporting Paris away from

⁹ “ὦς ἔφαθ', οἱ δ' ἐχάρησαν Ἀχαιοὶ τε Τρῶές τε | ἐλπόμενοι παύσασθαι οἴζυροῦ πολέμοιο. So he spoke, and the Achaeans and Trojans rejoiced, hoping that they had won rest from **woeful war**” (Hom., *Il.*, 3.111-112), emphasis added.

¹⁰ *Iliad* translations by A.T. Murray.

certain death at the hands of Menelaus and by saving Aeneas from Diomedes, the second by infusing Aeneas with a godlike burst of jumping power to aid the hero in escaping Achilles' wrath, and the third by shrouding Agenor in mist to allow him to escape Achilles as well (Hom., *Il.*, 3.369, 5.311- 317, 20.325-329, 21.596-598). In spite of Hera's words immediately following Zeus' own speech, there does not seem to be any sort of real prohibition elsewhere in the *Iliad* that expressly bars the gods from saving favored mortals from harm. Instead, it seems that the purpose of this particular passage is to evoke sympathy from the hearers of the tale, who themselves would have felt just as helpless as Zeus appears when their own fathers and sons went off to fight. Rather than utilizing the gods for further expounding upon the epic-ness of Achilles' or Patroclus' exploits, the poet sees fit to place them in a sympathetic role that conveys understanding of the horrible costs exacted by the waging of war not only upon the warriors themselves, but upon those who love them.

As shown through Achilles' own example, however, even the great heroes who typically are on the winning side of the slaughtering recognize the woeful nature of war and must also face the pains of the losses it exacts upon them. Achilles' staunchly maintained principles—which remained unmoved in the face of Agamemnon's attempt at capitulation and bribery and of the mass slaughter of the Greek army coupled with the near destruction of their fleet—shrink away into insignificance after the death of Patroclus, almost immediately transforming Achilles from a disciplined man of principle to a vengeful berserker. Even after Hector is dead and Patroclus is avenged, Achilles feels only sadness and emptiness, refusing food and sleep in vain attempts to desecrate Hector's body and somehow wrest a form of satisfaction from his miserable lot (Hom., *Il.*, 24.2-15).

The fury and self-deprivation which Achilles displays in desecrating Hector's body—and in most of his behavior following Patroclus' death—is indicative of how Achilles is effectively already dead.¹¹ Although he is promised everlasting glory and honor for fighting and dying at Troy, Achilles has already stated that he does not care for any of these (Hom., *Il.*, 19.421-423); his only concern is vengeance, which he obtains by brutally killing numerous Trojans until his rampage culminates in Hector's death. It is at this point that Homer reveals the degree of Achilles' barbarity, as he responds to Hector's pleas for a proper burial with disrespect and scorn:

μή με, κύον, γούνων γουνάζεο μηδὲ τοκήων.
 αἶ γάρ πως αὐτόν με μένος καὶ θυμὸς ἀνείη
 ὦμ' ἀποταμνόμενον κρέα ἐδμεναι, οἷα ἔοργας,
 ὡς οὐκ ἔσθ' ὅς σῆς γε κύνας κεφαλῆς ἀπαλάλκοι,
 οὐδ' εἴ κεν δεκάκις τε καὶ εἰκοσινήριτ' ἄποινα
 στήσωσ' ἐνθάδ' ἄγοντες, ὑπόσχωνται δὲ καὶ ἄλλα,
 οὐδ' εἴ κέν σ' αὐτόν χρυσῶ ἐρύσασθαι ἀνώγοι
 Δαρδανίδης Πρίαμος· οὐδ' ὧς σέ γε πότνια μήτηρ
 ἐνθεμένη λεχέεσσι γοήσεται, ὃν τέκεν αὐτή,
 ἀλλὰ κύνες τε καὶ οἰωνοὶ κατὰ πάντα δάσσονται.

Implore me not, dog, by knees or parents. I wish that somehow wrath and fury might drive me to carve your flesh and myself eat it raw because of what you have done, as surely as there lives no man that will ward off the dogs from your head; not though they should bring here and weigh out ransom tenfold and twentyfold, and should promise yet more, not though Priam, son of Dardanus, should command them to pay your weight in gold, not even so will your queenly mother place you on a bier and make lament for you, the son she herself bore, but dogs and birds will devour you utterly.

Hom., *Il.*, 22.345-354

Achilles' complete disregard for the humanity of his victim, indicated by his uncharacteristically rude¹² use of the word “dog” (κύον) to address Hector and his thoughts of cannibalism, augments

¹¹ Jonathan Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character* (New York: Scribner, 1994), 51-55.

¹² This is odd for the *Iliad* because the warriors of the Trojans and Greeks are usually relatively respectful toward one another, as indicated by Hector's and Ajax's conduct during their duel (Hom., *Il.*, 7.202-205, 244-276) and by Hector's own behavior toward Achilles—even when Achilles has determined to kill Hector—when he calls Achilles

the idea that Achilles has forsaken his own humanity in his quest for revenge. Furthermore, Achilles' refusal of the huge sums of money offered by Hector in exchange for his corpse's safe passage is a telling indication of just how far removed Achilles has become from the world of the Homeric warrior in which he was previously preeminent, as the spoils taken from fighting—monetary, material, and even human—were some of the strongest indicators of a warrior's success, prowess, and social esteem, hence the importance of Agamemnon's and Achilles' quarrel.

Jonathan Shay's excellent *Achilles in Vietnam* asserts that the *Iliad* is a story of Achilles' journey into the most horrific depths of warfare in which he is wronged by his social superiors,¹³ loses his dearest comrade,¹⁴ and is transported to what Shay characterizes as the extremely damaging "berserk state," which is "the most important and distinctive element of combat trauma."¹⁵ His argument—that the war in which Achilles has little or no stake so thoroughly traumatizes him that it robs him of his humanity—acts as helpful support to my own, as it is highly unlikely that Homer's portrayal of Achilles' would have been viewed in a positive light even by ancient audiences. Much in the same way that Sophocles' *Ajax* depicts the eponymous warrior's dysfunctional (and fatal) adherence to destructive warrior culture, Homer's depiction of Achilles in the *Iliad* displays vividly the toll that war exacts from its practitioners and the horrible transformation which it can effect upon them.

These same anti-war notions are also apparent in the conflict between cultural refinement and martial prowess found throughout the course of the *Iliad*'s battles. All too often the poet

"valiant" (ἔσθλόν) while foretelling his death at the hands of Paris and Apollo (Hom., *Il.*, 22.360). Achilles' behavior is, however, in keeping with Shay's characterization of the berserk state (Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam*, 81, 86-87).

¹³ Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam*, 32.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 40-43.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 75.

describes the estimable virtues of certain warriors as they are killed in famously vivid and viscerally creative ways, and quite often these virtues are not those of the battlefield, but those of civilized society. Menelaus, taunting Paris, says that even with all Paris' handsomeness, musical ability, and favor from Aphrodite, he will not amount to much on the battlefield without the fighting skills he so obviously lacks (Hom., *Il.*, 3.54-55). Axylus falls to Diomedes' spear in spite of his wealth, vast network of friends, and pious observance of the laws of *xenia* (Hom., *Il.*, 6.12-19), and numerous other beautiful and “glorious limb[ed]” warriors also meet their ends to a similarly mournful tone. Perhaps Achilles did not have quite the same notion in mind when he addressed Odysseus, but his words nevertheless convey the likewise somber idea that war takes even the best and brightest before their time:

ἴση μοῖρα μένοντι καὶ εἰ μάλα τις ποελμίζοι·
 ἐν δὲ ἰῆ τιμῇ ἡμὲν κακὸς ἠδὲ καὶ ἐσθλός·
 κάτθαν' ὁμῶς ὃ τ' ἀεργὸς ἀνὴρ ὃ τε πολλὰ ἐοργός.

A like portion has he who stays back, and he who wars his best,
 and in one honor are held both the coward and the brave;
 death comes alike to the idle man and to him who works much.
 Hom., *Il.*, 9.318-320

HEIKE¹⁶

Anti-war sentiment in the *Heike monogatari* represents one of the most striking dichotomies to be found in Japanese culture. Although the warrior class controlled Japan for centuries, the art and literature produced during its tenure is frequently evocative of a clear Japanese consciousness of the tragedy inherent in warfare. Many literary works, the *Heike* included, prominently feature meditations on the inevitability and pain of loss and death, ideas

¹⁶ The *Heike monogatari* or “Tale of the Heike” is an epic retelling of the Genpei War, a conflict that was fought by two rival samurai clans, the Taira and the Minamoto (or Heike and Genji, these being the Chinese readings of the characters 平 and 源). While the two names are used interchangeably throughout the text and in scholarly writings, I will use here only the proper Japanese names, Taira and Minamoto).

which, while certainly informed by Buddhist thought, nevertheless present a seemingly strange juxtaposition between a warrior class that is heavily invested in warfare and death yet still fears and to some extent even reviles them. Given this fact, it should come as less of a surprise, then, that the *Heike* and the various *nō* plays that are based upon it, much like the *Iliad*, concern themselves more with the negative effects of warfare on their characters rather than on war itself.

Like the *Iliad*, the *Heike* also features a discernible struggle between refined courtly culture and the more rugged and brutal customs of warriors. This is seen frequently in the habits of Taira warriors as they play music and compose poetry and literature on the battlefield (*Heike*, 229, 314, 317, 321, 396, 406-407, 424-425). Two episodes in particular display the contrast between the refined Taira and bloodthirsty Minamoto (and the intentional reversal of this formula), and will be treated at length.

The Atsumori episode from the *Heike monogatari*, which marks its origin within the canon of Japanese literature, takes place in the aftermath of the Minamoto victory at the Battle of Ichi-no-tani. As the surviving ships of the defeated Taira clan set sail in retreat from the coastal fortress of Ichi-no-tani, Kumagai no Jirō Naozane, an unremarkable Minamoto retainer, courses over the battlefield in the hopes of catching a high-ranking Taira general in flight (*Heike*, 315).¹⁷ At length, he spots a retreating Taira samurai, challenges him to single combat, and successfully subdues him. Hurling his foe to the ground and stripping off his helmet, Kumagai is stunned by the beauty of his young opponent—to the point that he is unable to even determine where to strike the boy in order to take his head, which was the customary method of trophy-taking among the samurai of late-Heian Japan. Filled with emotion due to the similarity of the boy in both age and appearance to his own son, Kumagai hesitates, searching for a way to avoid killing the

¹⁷ All *Heike* translations from: *Heike monogatari*, trans. Helen Craig McCullough (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988).

young man and aid his escape from the battlefield. However, Kumagai is surrounded by Minamoto warriors and, realizing he is in sight of two of his commanders standing just a short way off, he reluctantly informs the young lordling, Atsumori, that he must kill him. Atsumori gruffly responds “just take my head and be quick about it,” and Kumagai, now in tears, reluctantly obeys (*Heike*, 317). Retiring from the scene of his grisly deed, Kumagai laments “Alas! No lot is as hard as the warrior’s. I would never have suffered such a dreadful experience if I had not been born into a military house. How cruel I was to kill him!” (*Heike*, 317). After removing the youth’s armor in order to wrap his head, Kumagai happens upon a brocade bag tucked into Atsumori’s waist sash, which contains an ornate flute. Recalling the beautiful flute music that he had heard just before dawn that must have been played by Atsumori, Kumagai marvels at the young man’s refinement: “there are tens of thousands of riders in our eastern armies, but I am sure none of them has brought a flute to the battlefield. Those court nobles are refined men!” (*Heike*, 317). Having promised to offer prayers for the repose of Atsumori’s soul, Kumagai later becomes a monk to seek the salvation of his victim and restitution for the sin he believes he has committed.

The conflict between cultural refinement and the brutality of the soldiering profession is illustrated well by this passage. Kumagai is a retainer of the Minamoto clan, a rough-and-tumble lot of samurai from the more remote and rugged eastern portion of Japan. Far-removed from the Imperial Court at Kyoto, the Minamoto are unacquainted with its refined literary and artistic culture and instead feel much more at home in a saddle on the battlefield—traits that are popularly asserted in the *Heike* to have given them an edge in warfare (*Heike*, 188-189). Not far removed from this condition themselves, the Taira are nevertheless more cultured than their Minamoto brethren, having been established in the Imperial Court for nearly two generations by

Taira Kiyomori. While both groups represent the very real threat the samurai class poses to the imperial aristocracy, the Taira seem to be utilized in the *Heike* to signify the refinement of classical Japan that is soon to be trampled under the hooves of samurai war horses. Conversely, the Minamoto, often victorious in battle, unconscious of the social protocol of the upper class, and constantly plagued by infighting and fractures within their own clan, represent the rough, volatile, even mercurial warrior class that plunged Japan into four centuries of near ceaseless warfare after their ascension to power.

Perhaps one of the most striking elements of this passage, then, is the strange role-reversal of sorts that occurs between Atsumori, a prim and pretty Taira lordling, and Kumagai, a middling Minamoto retainer seeking glory in battle.¹⁸ As soon as he is struck by the beauty of Atsumori's powdered face and blackened teeth, Kumagai uses the most respectful Japanese possible to address Atsumori and spends the remainder of the passage in a state of near abject deference.¹⁹ Atsumori, on the other hand, speaks arrogantly, even going so far as to refuse to give Kumagai his name after the latter has bested him, instead assuring the older warrior that he is "a desirable opponent for you. Ask about me after you take my head. Someone will recognize me, even if I don't tell you" (*Heike*, 317). Even as Kumagai apologizes for having to kill Atsumori and promises to offer prayers for his soul, Atsumori remains belligerent, ordering Kumagai to "just take my head and be quick about it" (*Heike*, 317). It is notable that Kumagai does not simply ride up, take Atsumori's head, and gloat about his newly taken prize to his comrades—which is more the sort of episode one would expect to play out when a cultured courtier-warrior and a rebelliously rugged soldier meet on the battlefield—but rather goes out of his way to aid in his enemy's escape and apologizes when he fails to be able to do so and must

¹⁸ Donald Keene, "Dramatic Elements in Japanese Literature" in *Comparative Drama*, Vol. 10, No.4 (Winter 1976-77), 280.

¹⁹ Paul Varley, *Warriors of Japan as Portrayed in the War Tales* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994), 110.

kill him instead. Atsumori passes through the whole scene with the sort of arrogance befitting a proud warrior, not a courtier untried on the battlefield and more skilled with a flute than with a bow or sword. While the gentility of the courtier tradition faded as the age of the samurai progressed, the nobles of the court bequeathed to the new power not only their wealth and opulence, but perhaps most importantly their pride. As the Minamoto clan closed its gauntleted fist around the neck of the Taira-controlled court, Atsumori's command to "just . . . be quick about it" serves as a fitting echo for the end of the haughty masters of the Heian era.

A strange mirror to the tale of Atsumori, the brief duel between the Taira general Takahashi Hangan Nagatsuna and Nyūzen Kotarō Yukishige of the Minamoto at the Battle of Shinohara serves as a parallel testimony to the destructive nature of the warrior class in *Heike*. Once again, the Minamoto warrior is the one who seeks to kill a famous opponent, as Yukishige rides furiously in order to catch up with the retreating Nagatsuna (*Heike*, 233). In this episode, however, Nagatsuna the Taira is the superior warrior, and he rather easily overpowers Yukishige. Like Kumagai, Nagatsuna is reminded by the eighteen year-old Yukishige of his own son, now dead, and decides to spare the young man's life. To this Yukishige reflects "even though he did spare my life, he is a glorious opponent. I must find a way to kill him" (*Heike*, 233). Relying on his speed and Nagatsuna's distraction, Yukishige draws his dagger and rushes at the older warrior, viciously stabbing him twice in the face before being thrown back and then dispatching him.²⁰

Although exchanging Atsumori's role with an older warrior makes for a less poignant story, the underlying message behind it remains much the same. Whereas Kumagai's thirst for glory is overcome by the pity brought on by his own paternal love, Yukishige encounters no such

²⁰ It should be noted that this episode is repeated almost exactly in the ninth chapter of the *Heike* by Etchū no Zenji Moritoshi and Inomata no Koheiroku Noritsuna, with Moritoshi, a famous Taira general, showing mercy to Noritsuna and being swiftly betrayed and killed by the latter (*Heike*, 312-313).

deterrents in the face of Nagatsuna's kindness. Murdered because of his clemency, Nagatsuna also represents here the dignity and honor of the courtly class associated with the Taira in the *Heike monogatari*, while Yukishige bears the Minamoto banner and all the connotations of barbarism that seem to come with it. Motivated by their desire for power and glory, the Minamoto, or in a broader sense the samurai, show no respect for the gentility of the court. While Nagatsuna is a powerful warrior, the refined culture which he represents is still ill-suited for the battlefield and the years of carnage that are to come. As with so much of later samurai history, Nagatsuna, like the Minamoto, Hōjō, Ashikaga, Oda, and Toyotomi that would follow, finds only death in return for generosity.

TRAGEDY

In antiquity, poets carried with them a certain amount of weight with regard to spiritual and ethical concerns, and their works were seen as didactic pieces to be both admired and learned from.²¹ As such, the notion of Greek plays being viewed as significant social commentary is not farfetched. In light of the previous point, it is instructive to consider the manner in which Greek tragedy presents the events about which it is concerned. Most, if not all, action—action, that is, in the dynamic, Iliadic sense of the word (i.e. violence, travel, rituals, etc.)—takes place offstage. As such, poets place the most emphasis on the events actually occurring on stage and these usually take shape as responses to the “huge, violent events” around which the narrative of each play is built—the Trojan War in the case of the plays examined here.²² As Taplin explains it, “the stuff of tragedy is the individual response to such events; not

²¹ N.T. Croally, *Euripidean Polemic: The Trojan Women and the function of tragedy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 17.

²² Oliver Taplin, “Emotion and Meaning in Greek Tragedy” in *Oxford Readings in Greek Tragedy* ed. Erich Segal (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 2.

the blood, but the tears.”²³ At its heart, then, tragedy is a reactive genre which is more focused on depicting responses to events than the events themselves; a characteristic which makes the genre particularly well-suited to expressing anti-war sentiment.²⁴

Aeschylus’ tragedy *Agamemnon* recounts the return of the titular leader of the Greeks to his home in Argos and the bloody reception he receives there at the hands of his vengeful wife, Clytemnestra. After nine years of fighting and a few more spent on the return journey to Greece, Agamemnon finally returns to Mycenae, where Clytemnestra has been plotting with Aegisthus, Agamemnon’s cousin and her adulterous lover, to murder her husband upon his return. Though she vows to Agamemnon that she has been faithful during his absence, Clytemnestra justifies her infidelity and the heinous murders she commits because of Agamemnon’s own sins toward their family—in order for the expedition to Troy to successfully reach its destination, Agamemnon was required to offer his daughter Iphigenia as a sacrifice to Artemis (Aesch., *Ag.*, 154-55, 206-257, 1412-1420). After lulling her husband into a false sense of security, Clytemnestra entangles Agamemnon during a bath and stabs him to death, glorying like a triumphant warrior at his fall and showing a sort of perverse delight when a gore-ridden cough covers her in blood:

οὕτω τὸν αὐτοῦ θυμὸν ὀρμαίνει πεσῶν
 κάκφυσιῶν ὀξεῖαν αἵματος σφαγὴν
 βάλλει μ’ ἔρεμνῆ ψακάδι φοινίας δρόσου,
 χαίρουσαν οὐδὲν ἦσσον ἢ διοσδότῳ
 γάνει σπορητὸς κάλυκος ἐν λοχεύμασιν.

Thus, having fallen, he forced out his own soul,
 and he coughed up a sharp spurt of blood
 and hit me with a black shower of gory dew—

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Each of the famed three tragedians of Athens penned at least one play that contains elements of anti-war sentiment *and* which is set within the Trojan Cycle. While there are other plays set outside of the Trojan Cycle which feature similar themes, such as Aeschylus’ *The Persians* and *Seven Against Thebes*, and Euripides’ *The Suppliants*, *Ion*, and *Phoenician Women*, these will not be treated here since they lack a direct narrative connection to the Homeric source material.

at which I rejoiced no less than the growing corn
rejoices in the liquid blessing granted by Zeus
when the sheathed ears swell to birth.

Aesch., *Ag.*, 1388-1392²⁵

The play concludes with Agamemnon and most of those who returned with him dead at Clytemnestra's hand, with the chorus predicting the return of Orestes, Agamemnon's and Clytemnestra's son, and his own vengeful murders of Aegisthus and Clytemnestra.

Like other return stories examined here, *Agamemnon*'s setting does not necessarily lend itself to overt anti-war sentiment, primarily due to it taking place so long after the fighting at Troy has ceased and being located a fair distance away. However, the play showcases the conditions of Mycenae and of Agamemnon's family in the aftermath of the fighting and in so doing displays the negative effects of warfare on the family and community—in this case even on the winning side. Perhaps the most common anti-war theme found in the play that resonates with the sentiments of the *Iliad* and of later poets is the futility of warfare on a large scale and the cost it exacts from both the individuals who fight it and their families. Near the beginning of the play, the chorus recounts the events that led to the outbreak of the Trojan War and of the circumstances that led to Iphigenia's sacrifice. Their rendition of the story is punctuated multiple times by the use of the phrase “cry sorrow, sorrow, but may good prevail!”²⁶ which highlights the suffering placed upon the people and their hope that these difficulties will somehow yield good results. Along with Clytemnestra's constant invocations of Iphigenia's murder at Agamemnon's hands, the event itself is described in piteous terms similar to those used above:

λιτὰς δὲ καὶ κληδόνας πατρώους
παρ' οὐδὲν αἰῶνα παρθένοιόν τ'
ἔθεντο φιλόμαχοι βραβῆς·

²⁵ Translation by Alan H. Sommerstein.

²⁶ “αἴλινον αἴλινον εἰπέ, τό δ' εὖ νικάτω” Aesch., *Ag.*, 121.

Her pleas, her cries of “father!”,
and her maiden years, were set at naught
by the war-loving chieftains.

Aesch., *Ag.*, 228-230

The term “war-loving” (φιλόμαχοι) is of especial importance here, as its use in characterizing the chieftains of the Greeks emphasizes their disregard not only of Iphigenia’s wishes—and her unblemished life—but also of the will of the people, as the Trojan War seems by all accounts to have been rather unpopular among all the Greek host save for but a few of their leaders (Hom., *Il.*, 3.111-112). The *Odyssey*, associated tragedies, and other Trojan Cycle works paint a similarly negative picture as well.²⁷

Complimenting Aeschylus’ numerous examples of the high costs of war is his frequent emphasis on the absurdity of the Greeks’ reason for fighting the Trojans and for the Trojans’ eventual destruction. A particularly moving passage illustrates the twisted sort of barter required for Helen’s return to Greece:

οὓς μὲν γάρ <τις> ἔπεμψεν
οἶδεν, ἀντὶ δὲ φωτῶν
τεύχη καὶ σποδὸς εἰς ἑκάσ-
του δόμους ἀφικνεῖται.
ὁ χρυσαμοιβὸς δ’ Ἄρης σωμάτων
καὶ ταλαντοῦχος ἐν μάχῃ δορὸς
πυρωθὲν ἐξ Ἰλίου
φίλοισι πέμπει βαρὺ
ψῆγμα δυσδάκρυτον, ἀντ-
ήνορος σποδοῦ γεμί-
ζων λέβητας εὐθέτου.
στένουσι δ’ εὖ λέγοντες ἄν-
δρα τὸν μὲν ὡς μάχης ἴδρις,
τὸν δ’ ἐν φοναίς καλῶς πεσόντ’,
ἀλλοτρίας διαὶ γυναι-
κός·

²⁷ See footnote 60.

one knows the men one sent off,
 but instead of human beings
 urns and ashes arrive back
 at each man's home.
 Ares, the moneychanger of bodies,
 holding his scales in the battle of spears,
 sends back from Ilium to their dear ones
 heavy dust that has been through the fire,
 to be sadly wept over,
 filling easily-stowed urns
 with ash given in exchange for men.
 And they lament, and praise this man
 as one expert in battle,
 that man as having fallen nobly amid the slaughter—
 “because of someone else's wife”.

Aesch., *Ag.*, 433-449

Excellent imagery aside, the indictment of warfare here is quite clear; the notion of a warrior being praised for dying in a massive war on account of another man's wife seems to be rather intentionally absurd. Nevertheless, Aeschylus makes here a strong case for his earlier point that for all parties except Menelaus and Agamemnon, the Trojan War brings only death and misery with no rewards, an argument first put forth by Achilles himself in the *Iliad* (Hom., *Il.*, 9.334-343). Finally, Aeschylus includes a bit later in the play a mention of the fact that although the Greeks were victorious (after all the aforementioned deaths, of course), the return journey exacted its own high death toll, thus further illustrating the high cost and sparse benefits of fighting the Trojan War—or any war for that matter.

Euripides seems to have engaged in a great deal of social commentary compared to either of his esteemed predecessors, as several of his plays serve rather ably as sources of political commentary on Athens' actions during the Peloponnesian War—*Trojan Women*, *Helen*, and *Rhesus* are all set within the Trojan Cycle and therefore access the tradition of anti-war sentiment first encountered in the *Iliad*. *Trojan Women*, for example, is often interpreted to have been a Euripidean commentary on Athens' treatment of the inhabitants of the island state of Melos

during a confrontation in 416-415 B.C.²⁸ According to Thucydides, after an intense and rather hostile debate, the Athenians famously besieged the island and took the city, after which they slaughtered all of its male inhabitants and sold the women and children into slavery (Thuc., 5.114-116). This sort of treatment of a mostly innocent state (the Melians' only "transgression" against the Athenians was their wish to remain neutral in the conflict between Athens and Sparta and their respective allies) parallels neatly with the situation of the Trojan War, the traditional cause of which was so absurd that Euripides devotes a fair amount of his *Helen* to ridiculing it. The conditions described in *Trojan Women*, however, further Euripides' attempt to parallel the post-Trojan War with the incident at Melos, as the play is situated in the aftermath of the Greeks' successful slaughter of their Trojan opponents and features a depiction of them divvying up the wives and children of their conquered foes to be hauled back to Greece as slaves. The grief expressed by Priam, Hecuba, and Andromache in the *Iliad* over Hector's death is still fresh in Euripides' continuation of the story, and the sense of helplessness and horror at the extermination of much of Troy's population is keenly felt as Hecuba, Andromache, and Cassandra are sent to their respective fates. Furthermore, Euripides also depicts the murder of Andromache's and Hector's son, Astyanax, whom the Greeks throw off the battlements of Troy in order to prevent him from seeking revenge for his vanished city and family upon reaching adulthood, an act

²⁸ Croally, *Euripidean Polemic*, 12; Segal, Erich, "Euripides: Poet of Paradox" in *Oxford Readings in Greek Tragedy* ed. Erich Segal (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 250.

This view has been challenged by Van Erp Taalman Kip in her incisive "Euripides and Melos" (*Mnemosyne*, Fourth Series, Vol. 40, Fasc. 3/4 (1987), 414-419), in which she asserts that *Trojan Women* could not have possibly been in response to the events of Melos because of the constrictive time span between the fall of Melos and the beginning of the Dionisia in which it is unlikely that Euripides was able to respond to the events in his writing, integrate the play into a trilogy, and rehearse all the plays properly with volunteer choruses. Many find this argument convincing, Kovacs and Allan among them, but it has been challenged by both Croally and Kuch ("Euripides und Melos" in *Mnemosyne*, Fourth Series, Vol. 51, Fasc. 2 (Apr., 1998), 147-153), the latter of whom asserts that *Trojan Women* could still have been a response to the slightly less-severe events at Mytilene eleven years earlier in 427 BC, that Euripides was likely aware of the situation at Melos while he was writing the play, and that more overt reactions to Athens' treatment of Melos could have been added to the work closer to its debut, thus accounting for any potential thematic inconsistencies between it and the other members of the trilogy, *Alexandros* and *Palamedes* (*Trojan Women* ed. David Kovacs (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 3), which some have found to be a convincing argument against this reading as well.

which is quite in keeping with the Greeks' unflinching directive to kill all male captives through the course of the fighting in the *Iliad*. It seems likely that this episode is also included so that Euripides might drive home more fully to his audience the dread implications of depopulating a city and of the overpowering grief felt by those few who survived—a perhaps not-so-subtle attempt to portray the conditions that likely prevailed after the similar incident at Melos.

Helen is peculiar among the other offerings found here in that it does not contain the same overtones of hopelessness and grief found in *Trojan Women* and *Rhesus*. Instead, Menelaus and Helen behave like reunited lovers on an adventure filled with intrigue and daring rescues—not the usual fare found in much more serious tragic works. *Helen* is of surprising utility to this examination, however, because of certain anti-war undertones found within it and most especially because of its special placement in Athenian history.²⁹ During a lapse in the fighting of the Peloponnesian War, the Athenians embarked upon their notoriously ill-fated

²⁹ For more developed commentary on *Helen* as an anti-war work, see Euripides, *Helena* ed. Richard Kannicht (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1969), I.53-57; Martin Hose, *Drama und Gesellschaft: Studien zur dramatischen Produktion in Athen am Ende des 5. Jahrhunderts* (Stuttgart: Wissenschaft und Forschung, 1995), 77; and Erich Segal, “Euripides: Poet of Paradox” in *Oxford Readings in Greek Tragedy* ed. Erich Segal (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 244-253.

Allan attacks this theory with enthusiasm in his commentary on *Helen* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). His primary reasoning for this dismissal is that because Euripides would have been motivated to cater to the views of the majority in order to win first prize in drama festivals, his plays should not be read in the sort of subversive light for which they are famous (*Ibid.*, 5). While I agree with his assertion that we should not “assume a more or less simple equation between the play world and the world of the audience” (*Ibid.*, 6), his other points of argument are guilty of the same generalizing shortsightedness of which he accuses those whose points he attempts to refute. There is no reason to assume, for example, that *Helen* was intended to be an anti-Spartan narrative (*Ibid.*, 7-8), as the Spartans played a relatively small role in the Sicilian expedition and Athens was technically at peace with Sparta through the duration of the operation (it was, in fact, Athens’ pursuit of the expedition which arguably urged Sparta to move on Decelea in 413 BC). Finally, Allan’s assertions that “Athens was at war almost constantly throughout the fifth century” (*Ibid.*, 8) and that “the majority of Athenians continued to vote for the war” (*Ibid.*, 9) following the conclusion of the Sicilian expedition are just the sort of blithe generalizations which he earlier characterizes as being “exceptionally naïve and anachronistic” (*Ibid.*, 6). The Sicilian expedition was conducted during the technical hiatus afforded by the Peace of Nicias and was directed at Syracuse, not Sparta. Also, the idea that Athenian support of the Peloponnesian War following the expedition can also be seen as an endorsement of the expedition is a flawed assumption, as the Athenians were in anything but a favorable position with their allies revolting and enemies closing in to take advantage of their newly acquired weakness, courtesy of their defeat at Sicily—necessity dictated that they continue the war, lest they be destroyed. Finally, the argument that because Athens was “at war almost constantly” and a majority of its citizens voted to continue the war then Euripides must have felt the same way is a rather large stretch, especially given his established history of rather daring alterations to tragic norms and non-traditional depiction of women in many of his plays (Segal, “Euripides: Poet of Paradox”, 245-246; Croally, *Euripidean Polemic*, 249).

invasion of Sicily in 415 B.C. Its disastrous failure in 413 not only deprived the Athenians of thousands of much-needed soldiers, but also tarnished Athens' reputation in the eyes of its enemies and sparked numerous revolts among its subjects and allies. *Helen*, which was produced for the first time in 412 B.C., seems to be offering commentary on the Athenians' current state as they attempt to rebuild and rebuff attacks from former allies and vengeful foes. The main idea of *Helen*, relying as it does on the idea that the actual Helen was in Egypt for the entirety of the Trojan War and *not* in Troy being fought over, highlights the absurdity of the Trojan War's purpose in order to show the foolishness of the Sicilian Expedition. Menelaus, after nine years spent besieging Troy and an untold number travelling home amidst divinely directed storms and other perils, finds Helen safe—and still faithful—in Egypt, thus completely obviating any meaning the Trojan War might have had. So, too, for Athens. Instead of remaining in Greece, consolidating power, and preparing for potential incursions by the Spartans, Thebans, or Corinthians, the Athenians elected to venture far away from home to engage in largely unhelpful conquest.³⁰ Just like the Greeks who fought at Troy, of whom Euripides says

ἄφρονες ὅσοι τὰς ἀρετὰς πολέμῳ
 λόγχαισὶ τ' ἀλκαίου δορὸς
 κτᾶσθ', ἀμαθῶς θανάτῳ πόνους καταλυόμενοι.
 εἰ γὰρ ἄμιλλα κρινεῖ νιν αἵματος, οὔ ποτ' ἔρις
 λείψει κατ' ἀνθρώπων πόλεις·

All men are fools who by war
 and the spear of stout-heart battle
 acquire renown for valor, foolishly winning release from
 toil in death.
 If contests of blood shall always decide, never will strife
 cease among the cities of men.

³⁰ The foolishness of this decision is likewise expressed by Thucydides in Nicias' famously over-the-top speech, in which he attempts to intimidate the Athenians by describing the wealth and power of Syracuse and the number of ships and men necessary for such an undertaking (Thuc., 6.20-24). The speech has an effect opposite from what Nicias intended, and the Athenians enthusiastically pursue the expedition with Nicias as one of its hapless *strategoï*.

Eur., *Hel.*, 1151-1156³¹

the Athenians sought riches and renown through violence, and received their fair measure of grief in return.

Rhesus is more difficult to anchor historically, as the date of its production is unknown and even its authorship by Euripides disputed.³² Regardless of who actually wrote *Rhesus*, there is plenty to say about the anti-war sentiment contained within the play and its relationship with the *Iliad*. *Rhesus* presents a variation on the story of Rhesus found in *Iliad* 10, commonly called the "Doloneia," which depicts Rhesus in a minor role and focuses more on Dolon, the hapless Trojan spy whom Odysseus and Diomedes capture, interrogate, and kill (Hom., *Il.*, 10). The play sends Dolon to the background and instead features more information on Rhesus, who has undergone slight changes with respect to his parentage, background, and the cause for his tardiness in arriving to fight for the Trojans. The fundamental outcome of the events of *Iliad* 10 remain unchanged, however, as Dolon, Rhesus, and all of Rhesus' men are killed in Odysseus' and Diomedes' night attack. What results is fear and anger on the part of the Trojans and grief for Rhesus' mother, an unnamed member of the nine Muses. After a period of lamentation for her fallen son, the Muse departs with the following words:

ὦ παιδοποιοὶ συμφοραί, πόνοι βροτῶν
ὡς ὅστις ὑμᾶς μὴ κακῶς λογίζεται
ἄπαις διοίσει καὶ τεκῶν θάψει τέκνα.

What troubles, what disasters mortals have in bearing
children! Anyone who calculates them properly will spend
his life childless, not beget them only to bury them!

Eur., *Rh.*, 980-983³³

³¹ Translation by David Kovacs.

³² While it is not doubted that Euripides wrote a play called *Rhesus*, Kovacs believes that the version now attributed to the famed tragedian is likely a later work by an unknown fourth-century poet that was mistakenly taken to be the lost *Rhesus* of Euripides at some later date (David Kovacs, *Rhesus* in *Euripides VI* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 352-353).

³³ Translation by David Kovacs.

While the Muse's emotions are understandably high in this scene, the tragedy of the whole event and of her statement is augmented by a few contributing factors. First, there is the prophecy spoken of by Athena to Odysseus and Diomedes which states that if Rhesus survives the night and fights with the Trojans against the Greeks the following day, he will be unstoppable, even to Achilles (Eur., *Rh.*, 595-607). Had Rhesus survived, then, the Trojan War likely would have ended within a few hours and untold amounts of death and tragedy would have been prevented. Second, Rhesus' pedigree also heightens the tragedy of his death. Son of the river god Strymon and the unnamed Muse as well as king of the Thracians, Rhesus seems a figure fit to fight among the best of the Greeks and Trojans, many of whom are demigods themselves. Instead, he is ignominiously cut down in his sleep by Diomedes without having ever actually fought in a single battle of the Trojan War. Finally, the fact that the Muse herself is unnamed is significant, as her anonymity evokes sympathy among viewers of the play. In a sense the Muse (who is, significantly, the daughter of Mnemosyne, "Memory")—and her grief—is representative of all mothers who lose sons and husbands in warfare. In these regards, many of the same factors of anti-war sentiment are present in *Rhesus*: the absurdity of the war's cause (and by association those of all other wars), the cruelty of fate claiming the sons of the divine, and the ever-present conflict between the refined foreign king Rhesus and his brutally proficient Greek killers. Although the author of *Rhesus* saw fit to alter some of the background information and content featured in *Iliad* 10, such changes only serve to strengthen the anti-war sentiments which this and similar episodes from the epic were meant to invoke.

Lastly, Sophocles' *Ajax* serves as a somewhat uncharacteristic indictment of warfare and warrior culture from the typically conservative and patriotic playwright. Written as a continuation of Ajax's and Odysseus' famous quarrel over the arms of Achilles, *Ajax* depicts

Ajax's mind-bending fury after losing the contest. After mistakenly slaughtering a host of sheep and cattle—all the while believing, in his rage, they were the leaders of the Greeks—Ajax decides to commit suicide due to the shame he feels from such a foolish deed. The pleadings of his concubine, Tecmessa, are of no avail, and Ajax's death is met with an equal measure of scorn and shame from his former comrades. Menelaus and Agamemnon in particular order that Ajax's body not be buried, a severe punishment toward the dead, but at length Odysseus intervenes and successfully persuades them to allow the burial to take place.

Ajax is most notable not only for the common elements of Homeric anti-war sentiment which it contains (i.e. the notion of the ridiculousness of fighting a war for Helen, the conflict between the refined and beautiful with the rugged and martial), but for its intriguing portrayal of the tense relationship between warriors and rulers. Much like Kurosawa Akira's iconic *Seven Samurai*, *Ajax* is very much a story about the sad lot of soldiers in society—they are only wanted when there are battles to be fought, whereas afterward their sense of honor is misplaced and their skills are at best unneeded, at worst threatening. In *Ajax*, the Trojan War is all but over and the Greeks have nearly obtained the objective of their invasion—the sense of finality and the inevitability of Greek victory is palpable. In this context, the Greek assembly's attitude toward Ajax's complaints is interesting, especially considering the fact that similar complaints (i.e. that which he feels is rightfully his has been taken from him) were being voiced by Achilles and Agamemnon just weeks earlier and were being taken quite seriously. The answer to this odd disconnect is simple: during wartime, Ajax's sense of honor and warrior's pride are tolerated because his fighting skills are needed; during peacetime—or in this case when the fighting is effectively over—such sentiments are a nuisance. This is illustrated well by Agamemnon's and Menelaus' attitude following Ajax's death. Rather than give Ajax a grand funeral befitting the

so-called “bulwark of the Achaeans” (Hom., *Il.*, 6.5), the Atreidai seem annoyed by the entire affair and seek to simply have Ajax’s body exposed. Even when Odysseus persuades the two to relent and allow the funeral to take place, he does so by calling to their remembrance Ajax’s past service to the Greek army, whereas perhaps a few weeks earlier he might have been able to have simply argued that Ajax died for honor.

Ajax himself also seems to be fixated on his identity as a warrior. Described in the *Iliad* as the strongest warrior of the Greek host after Achilles, it is notable that he passes through the entirety of the *Iliad*’s battles without being wounded. In *Ajax*, Ajax seems to be very much a representative of warrior identity; in a world of war and violence, Ajax is an able occupant, fighting through the thickest of battles with his great strength and massive shield. When this world ceases to be, however, Ajax struggles with the change. After fighting Odysseus to a draw in contest after contest to determine who was worthy to receive Achilles’ arms, Odysseus famously outspeaks Ajax at the final decisive assembly, thus plunging Ajax into a furious bout of rage that ends in his delirious killing spree. To add insult to injury, not only was Ajax beaten by Odysseus, but he was beaten by Odysseus’ superiority with persuasion and speaking, both skills that are usually better suited to peacetime. Bested in the contest for Achilles arms and having sullied his warrior’s honor by slaughtering livestock instead of his foes, to Ajax there seems no other recourse for redemption but suicide—death at his own hand in the martial way is preferable to a life of frustration and defeat outside of battle, where he is no longer equipped to compete.

NŌ

Nō lends itself particularly well to the expressions of grief over the dead and meditations on life, death, and their relationship to war due to its association with the supernatural. Though it began as a less-sophisticated form of popular entertainment in the mid-fourteenth century—and

this largely under the guidance of Zeami Motokiyo, a second-generation *nō* actor and playwright who is credited with codifying the genre and ensuring its survival through his courtship of the Shogun, Ashikaga Yoshimitsu—*nō* quickly evolved according to Zeami's Zen-influenced principles into a minimalistic and mysterious art form.³⁴ *Nō* is perhaps best characterized by two core concepts: *yūgen*, which "implies 'depth,' 'mystery,' 'dark beauty,' 'grace,' and 'elegance'"³⁵, and *mono no aware* ("the sorrow/pathos of things"), another aesthetic principle which entails a keen sense of the inevitability of loss and its accompanying sorrow. As such, visitations from ghosts and deities are commonplace in *nō* plays, and plays featuring the angry or mournful spirits of dead warriors are legion in the canon of *nō* tradition.³⁶ *Nō* as a genre is already distinguished by its preoccupation with sorrow, mourning, and the spirits of the dead, so it comes as little surprise, then, that many of its plays often feature anti-war sentiment. In the case of those examined here, these sentiments are directly tied to those first depicted and expressed in the *Heike monogatari*.

The *nō* play *Atsumori* is a famous work of the Muromachi period (1337-1573) which, in typical *nō* fashion, dramatizes Kumagai's life as a monk and his journey back to Ichi-no-tani to seek repose for Atsumori's soul. Immediately upon reaching Ichi-no-tani, Kumagai, now called by his monk's name, Renshō, hears the beautiful tune of a flute being played in the distance.³⁷ Soon thereafter three youths appear with bundles of mown grass, singing and playing music amongst themselves. Renshō is informed that one of the youths was playing a familiar flute tune, and the group proceeds to provide a lecture on the universally joyous nature of music and song,

³⁴ *Masterworks of the Nō Theater* ed. Kenneth Yasuda (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989), 4.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 5.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Zeami Motokiyo, "Atsumori" in *Traditional Japanese Literature: An Anthology, Beginnings to 1600* ed. Haruo Shirane (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 982-83.

which “ease all the sad trials of life.”³⁸ Shortly thereafter, two of the youths depart leaving only the flute player, who in time is revealed to be the ghost of Atsumori. After speaking with Renshō and hearing of the monk’s desire to aid Atsumori’s soul on the path to enlightenment, the specter relates the tale of his last battle, after which it shouts accusingly at Renshō “you are my foe!”³⁹ Rather than assume his role in the dread spectacle, however, Renshō simply kneels on the ground in representation of his rejection of his former life as a warrior and the true remorse he feels after taking young Atsumori's life. Atsumori’s ghost soon drops to one knee himself, realizing that his old foe is an enemy no longer, and after rising departs, declaring “Renshō, you were no enemy of mine . . . Pray for me, O pray for my release!”⁴⁰

The anti-military sentiments in the play *Atsumori* are not nearly as overt as in the Atsumori episode featured in *Heike monogatari*, but they do nevertheless serve as a foundational element of the ideologies that shaped the play. Contrary to what is often commonly believed about *nō* theater of the medieval period, *nō* was actually quite popular among commoners—though still funded almost exclusively by samurai.⁴¹ Zeami, to whom *Atsumori* is attributed, was patronized by the shogun, Ashikaga Yoshimitsu, a not unimportant partnership that ultimately resulted in the elevation of *nō* as a high art form.⁴² In spite of the elite origins of its funding, *nō* was still popularized among the common people and many of the themes and sentiments expressed in the plays are significantly more representative of this section of society than of the warrior class.⁴³ *Atsumori* is no exception.

³⁸ Ibid., 984

³⁹ Ibid., 990.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Watsuji Tetsuro, David A. Dilworth, “Yokyoku ni arawareta rinri shiso. Japanese Ethical Thought in the Noh Plays of the Muromachi Period,” in *Monumenta Nipponica*, Vol. 24, No. 4 (1969), 468.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid., 469.

The presence and prominence of the pastoral youths is a telling indication of *Atsumori*'s tie to the interests of the common people. Indirect—and sometimes direct—victims of the samurai-waged wars that had ravaged the country for most of the years following the establishment of the Kamakura Shogunate at the Genpei War's conclusion, peasants bore the dubious distinction of being the primary producers of wealth for the samurai; indeed, up until the very end of the Edo era, samurai were paid with bushels of rice rather than with coin.⁴⁴ As such, they would have been particularly sensitive to and affected by the territorial squabbles that so characterized samurai warfare for much of the medieval period. In light of such facts, the three youths' song about music, singing, and dancing serving to “ease all the sad trials of life” is particularly telling of the role of these dramas and other forms of musical entertainment in common Japanese culture.⁴⁵ In addition to this, however, the song also serves as another indictment of the warrior class, as it is imputed by *Atsumori*'s ghost immediately following this song that Kumagai, and warfare and the warrior class in general, put an end to his pursuit “to seek out beauty”—that is, warfare and warriors like Kumagai are inimical to beauty, refinement, and, if the songs of the farmers are any indication, happiness itself.⁴⁶

The play's conclusion also serves as an indictment of the warrior profession. *Atsumori*'s ghost, obsessed with grief over its own death, is unable to leave this world and move on toward enlightenment. Kumagai, having given up his lands, titles, and family has effectively ended his own life in the hopes of securing salvation for *Atsumori* and forgiveness for himself. Thus, the lives of both men were destroyed by the same single act of violence. However reluctant he may

⁴⁴ While there certainly must have been a fair number of peasants that suffered from the destruction caused by the incessant wars, the disincentive for harming them or their crops must not be underestimated—most *daimyo* were shrewd rulers who would have understood the wisdom of preserving peasants and rice paddies for their own future enrichment when conquering enemy territory. Harm likely came most often in the form of sabotage, as killing a rival warlord's producers and burning their crops would have directly impacted his coffers; this sort of action was, of course, met with swift and forceful retribution, which may have acted as a deterrent toward its use.

⁴⁵ *Atsumori*, 984.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

have been to strike off Atsumori's head, Kumagai's act nevertheless condemned him to a life of misery and pain.

The play *Tsunemasa*, like other *nō* works, features the ghost of the titular character, Taira Tsunemasa, discussing his death and grievous state in the afterlife with a mortal intercessor, in this case the monk Gyōkei. Gyōkei, a priest of the imperial temple at Ninnaji, has been sent by the Emperor to return to Tsunemasa a prized lute which had been given to him by the Emperor in earlier, happier times.⁴⁷ Upon offering the lute to Tsunemasa's spirit at the site of his grave, Gyōkei hears the voice of the ghost of Tsunemasa, who laments the tortures he currently endures in the afterlife and longs to still dwell in the world of the living playing music.⁴⁸ Unlike other plays, Tsunemasa's ghost is at no point vengeful or menacing, instead attempting to remain hidden from Gyōkei's view and confining his remarks to longing for the mortal realm and the life he left behind. Hoping to placate the anguished spirit, Gyōkei performs a song on the lute, after which Tsunemasa remarks "Oh terrible anguish! For a little while I was back in the World and my heart set on its music, on revels of midnight. But now the hate is rising in me..."⁴⁹ Rather than attacking the monk, however, Tsunemasa retreats in sorrow and vanishes into thin air, the chorus singing him out with the haunting refrain:

手に取るや帝 釋修羅の 戦ひは火を 散らして。
 瞋恚 の猛火は 雨となつて。
 身にかかれ ば。
 拂ふ劍 は他を惱 まし。
 我と身を 切る。
 紅波はかへ つて猛火となれば。
 身を焼 く苦患はづかしや

The god Indra, in battle appeareth
 Warring upon demons.
 Fire leaps from their swords,

⁴⁷ Zeami Motokiyo, *Tsunemasa in The Nō Plays of Japan* ed. Arthur Waley (Rutland: Tuttle, 1976), 51.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 53.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 56.

The sparks of their own anger fall upon them like rain.
 To wound another he draws his sword,
 But it is from his own flesh
 That the red waves flow;
 Like flames they cover him.⁵⁰

Like other Taira featured in *nō*, much of the point of the discussion about the tragic nature of their deaths is founded upon music and art—things which both the *Heike* and *Atsumori* describe in no uncertain terms as having been damaged and destroyed by the flames of war. *Tsunemasa*, however, contains some interesting differences from the other *nō* plays examined here. As mentioned above, *Tsunemasa*'s ghosts lacks the vengeful quality of *Atsumori*, and instead focuses entirely on its longing for the mortal world and the artistic pursuits at which *Tsunemasa* excelled and which he clearly preferred to warfare. Unlike the other plays, which only hint at the punishments the souls of those killed in battle must endure in the hereafter, *Tsunemasa* explores them in more detail. As shown in the last chorus of the play (quoted above), according to Buddhist theology, humans who die in battle are condemned to fight with the demons of one of the Buddhist hells in perpetuity—thus, Indra, the demons, swords, and flames convey a more vivid idea of the sort of scene to which *Tsunemasa*'s ghost is returning following his retreat from the mortal world. As such, *Tsunemasa* imparts a message similar to that of other warrior-ghost plays,—namely, that war consumes both the mortal and eternal lives of those who participate in it—though it does so in a slightly different manner. Unlike *Atsumori* and *Tadanori*, both of whom died fighting in notable instances in the *Heike*, *Tsunemasa*'s death is unremarkable and largely unnoticed.⁵¹ Known more for his success as a poet and musician, *Tsunemasa*, even more so than *Atsumori*, whose fierce behavior at the time of his death at least

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ The only reference to *Tsunemasa*'s death at the Battle of Ichi-no-tani is in an unemotional listing of those killed at the conclusion of *Heike*'s coverage of Ichi-no-tani: “Among the dead were the Echizen Governor Michimori . . . *Tsunemori*'s heir, the Assistant Master of the Empress's Household Office *Tsunemasa*” (*Heike*, 320).

befits his samurai heritage, seems like a victim of war and the horrible punishments he must endure in the afterlife because of his grudging involvement in the Genpei War. As such, *Tsunemasa* presents its audience with a sobering view of the lot of those who die committing the sin of taking life—even if they do so unwillingly—and drives home the message conveyed in the *Heike* that war brings death to beautiful things like poetry, music, and art as it kills their practitioners.

Tadanori features meditations similar to those found in *Atsumori* and *Tsunemasa* with another member of the Taira clan as its main focus. One key difference from the other two plays, however, is that Tadanori, the eponymous fallen warrior, is famous for both his skill in warfare and in poetry. The play itself features the familiar setup of two traveling monks encountering an old fisherman at Suma Bay, the supposed site of Tadanori's burial. After the usual exchange between monks and fisherman describing the history of the site and the individual interred there, the scene shifts and the ghost of Tadanori appears to recount the scene of his death and, in a departure from the other two plays, to beseech the two travelers to inform Fujiwara no Teika, a famous poet and compiler of Imperial anthologies of poetry, to attribute a poem previously supposed to have been written by an anonymous author to Tadanori.⁵² The monks marvel at Tadanori's skill and also lament that he was unable to rectify the quarrel with Fujiwara no Toshinari (Shunzei) which led to his poem being attributed to an anonymous author in the *Senzaishū*. As Tadanori looks longingly and mournfully at a piece of paper upon which the

⁵² Zeami Motokiyo, *Tadanori* in *Masterworks of the Nō Theater* ed. Kenneth Yasuda (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989), 269.

poem is written, he gradually fades away to the words of the chorus: “To the roots all flowers must return when they fall.”⁵³

While the dialogue of *Tadanori* is not terribly striking, the imagery of the play is particularly evocative of Tadanori’s regret and anti-war sentiments. In both *Atsumori* and *Tsunemasa*, the ghosts of the departed Taira warriors return for the main purpose of expressing grief over their deaths; Tadanori certainly does his fair share of grieving and also delivers the obligatory description of his own tragic death, but this seems like more of an afterthought to his primary objective—getting credit for his poem. Far more lines are devoted to Tadanori’s concern over this issue than to bemoaning his own death, and it even seems at times that Tadanori’s ghost really only regrets not being able to claim full credit for his anthologized work. Although none of this is overtly anti-war, Tadanori’s poetic concerns and the conclusion of the play convey the same sense of tragic loss and express the same conflict between refinement and martial prowess found in the *Heike* and its dramatic descendants. The fact that Tadanori is famous both for his refinement as a poet and his skill as a warrior is significant (*Heike*, 314), as he himself embodies the conflict that features so prominently throughout the work. His obsession with his poem and seeming disregard for the fact that he was defeated in battle hints at what he views to have been the more important pursuit—the only reason to lament his defeat is because it brought about his death, which prevented him from writing more poetry and from reconciling with Shunzei. Rather than asking the monks to pray for his soul that it might have a happier afterlife like the ghosts of Atsumori and Tsunemasa, Tadanori’s ghost only mentions this as an aside between ravings about his poem. The conclusion of the play also features Tadanori wistfully staring at his poem, no doubt wishing he could make the request of Teika, Shunzei’s

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 270. These lines, an allusion to a poem by Emperor Sutoku, are also evocative of the opening lines of the *Heike*, which feature *sāla* flowers falling to convey the idea that all things must pass and that the mighty (in this case the Taira) will eventually fall (*Heike*, 23).

son, to change the attribution of his poem himself. Instead of fading away with renewed peace like Atsumori or in fear of his own anger like Tsunemasa, our last image of Tadanori, now ignorant of the traveling monks, is of him *still* staring at his poem, a clear indication of his desires and regrets concerning the end of his life during the Genpei War. With it we see the cost which war exacts upon its participants, robbing them of not only their lives, but also their passions and, in Tadanori's case, of their creative legacies.

SYNTHESIS

The similarities between Greek and Japanese culture discussed above represent a surprisingly small body of scholarly writing.⁵⁴ Aside from content, the very structure of tragedy and *nō* are uncannily similar—both feature a chorus, allow for only two to three speaking actors on stage at any given time, and are usually set in a mythical past. These resemblances extend even further to such realms as geography, culture, and warfare; but while the comparison of two cultures characterized by great achievements in both art and warfare that inhabit isolating, mountainous archipelagos ruled by autonomous, land-owning aristocrats seems a rather interesting topic in and of itself, for the purpose of this study a key shared characteristic between the Greeks and Japanese is their capacity for both recognizing and elucidating the great paradox of war.

It is apparent from the outset of the *Iliad* and *Heike monogatari* that both tales are concerned with the consequences of war. From Homer's famous request of the muse that she sing to him of Achilles' wrath and all the great fighters it sent to their deaths, to the *Heike's*

⁵⁴ For a comparison largely focused on the *Iliad* and *Heike monogatari*, see Yamagata Naoko, "Locating Power: Spatial Signs of Social Ranking in Homer and the Tale of the Heike," in *Scholia*, 13 (2003), 34-44. Yamigawa Hanako Hoshino's "Japanese Parallels to Ancient Greek Life" (*The Classical Journal* 31, No. 9, 1931, 549-558) is one of the few other attempts at the comparison between ancient Greece and Japan, and it covers a much wider spectrum. Lastly Mae Smethurst's *The Artistry of Aeschylus and Zeami: A Comparative Study of Greek Tragedy and Japanese Nō* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989) provides an excellent and more in-depth outline of the sorts of commonalities between tragedy and *nō* which are discussed more briefly in this examination.

fatalistic pronouncement that “the proud do not endure . . . the mighty fall at last, they are as dust before the wind” (*Heike*, 23), the first lines of both epics make no secret of what they are about—war brings about death and, by association, warriors can expect death as the end result of their profession. This theme is accentuated in each tale by the common inclusion of the idea that war destroys that which is beautiful and good in life. In the *Iliad*, young, handsome demi-gods are killed in their prime, the singer lamenting the loss of not only their physical beauty but also of their cultivated manners and virtuous behavior; the *Heike* likewise emphasizes the loss of the young, beautiful, and refined through its inclusion of numerous episodes in which well-mannered Taira warriors are tragically killed by bloodthirsty Minamoto samurai, their musical instruments and poetry often being discovered or noted at the time of their death for extra effect.

Achilles’ own story focuses primarily on what war takes from him: first physical possessions and honor through his famous quarrel with Agamemnon, then dear friends with the death of Patroclus, and ultimately his own life. In exchange, Achilles receives glory and immortal fame for his exploits—the sorts of deeds he himself sang of during his hiatus from fighting earlier in the *Iliad*.⁵⁵ Achilles’ recklessness in battle, as shown in his contemptuous disregard for mercy and the dignity of his foes in his treatment of Lycaon and Hector (*Hom., Il.*, 21.64-135, 22.256-404), as well as his earlier pronouncement that

εἶ νυ τὸ οἶδα καὶ αὐτὸς ὃ μοι μῦθος ἐνθάδ' ὀλέσθαι
νόσφι φίλου πατρὸς καὶ μητέρος: ἀλλὰ καὶ ἔμπης
οὐ λήξω πρὶν Τρῶας ἄδην ἐλάσαι πολέμοιο.

Well I know even of myself that it is my fate to perish here,
far from my dear father and my mother; but even so
I will not cease until I have driven the Trojans to their fill of war.
Hom., *Il.*, 19.421-423

⁵⁵ “τὸν δ’ εὖρον φρένα τερπόμενον φόρμιγγι λιγείῃ. . . τῇ ὃ γε θυμὸν ἔτερπεν, ἄειδε δ’ ἄρα κλέα ἀνδρῶν and him they found delighting his mind with a clear-toned lyre. . . With it he was delighting his heart, and he sang of the glorious deeds of warriors” (*Hom., Il.*, 9.186, 189).

are indicative of Achilles' descent into the sort of berserker state described by Shay,⁵⁶ in which he no longer cares for honor, glory, or any sort of earthly reward, but is satisfied only by vengeance. Achilles is representative, then, of the devastating costs of war on all parties involved and is perhaps the most conspicuous example of the Greeks' primary focus in their anti-war literature upon the tangible suffering of the human subjects involved in and affected by fighting.

The *Heike*, on the other hand, reflects more frequently upon the loss of abstracts, such as artwork and music, though its singer does not often forget to lament the beautiful and culturally refined individuals who create such things; its overall theme is also more representative of Japanese history and of the cyclical rise and fall of ruling samurai families than of the rage of an individual warrior and its devastating consequences. As stated by its opening lines, the *Heike monogatari* is concerned mainly with the fall of the Taira, who, like the Fujiwara that preceded them and the Minamoto that came after, destroy all that is good about themselves in their pursuit of power as they rise, grow proud, and fall. Even the very title of the tale, *Heike monogatari*, or "The Tale of the Heike," is an intriguing name given that the titular clan are the losers in the Genpei War and that the Taira are completely wiped out by the tale's conclusion.⁵⁷ The *Iliad's* title—effectively "the tale of Ilium"—similarly evokes the name of the losing side of the Trojan War, and suggests perhaps a more universal attraction to the tragedy of defeat among both the Greeks and the Japanese.

The final moments of Taira no Kiyomori are particularly illustrative of the decline and fall theme, as they find the aged warlord literally burning alive with fever (supposedly inflicted due to the severity of his sins) and cursing his enemies, wishing with his dying breath for the

⁵⁶ Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam*, 77-79.

⁵⁷ The reasoning for this particular name is likely because of a general Japanese affection for tragic figures (and also because the name *Genji monogatari* was already taken).

head of his enemy, Minamoto no Yoritomo—a desire with damnable consequences according to Buddhist belief (*Heike*, 209-211). Kiyomori's condemning hatred of the Minamoto is due to the threat they pose to his power in the Imperial Court, and as such the Genpei War is fought not because of stolen women, besmirched honor, or violation of religious laws, but only for the sake of this power. Especially in light of the suffering Tsunemasa experiences in the afterlife in the *nō* play,⁵⁸ the metaphorical implications of Kiyomori's death are not overly difficult to parse—the internal fires which consume him in life are representative of the hellfire which awaits him as punishment for his monomaniacal pursuit of power and concomitant warmongering.

Both tales seem to be pursuing similar ideas through the fates of some of their main characters. As these warriors bleed out their lives and see their comrades fall, it seems as if the singers of both tales are asking through their depiction of the destruction of beauty, refinement, art, and even life itself if such things are really worth sacrificing in the name of power and glory. If beauty, cultural refinement, art, and song bring joy and war is “destructive, dreadful, abominable, a cause of tears, or simply bad,”⁵⁹ why then do the characters of these tales seem so intent on continuing to fight, even going so far as giving themselves over to excessive violence and death—especially when they seem fully aware of the overly negative character of warfare?⁶⁰ Such is the paradox of war. Compelled to fight—by their lords, oaths, honor, and eventually either their will to survive or their overriding desire for vengeance—the warriors of the *Iliad* and *Heike* struggle and die with a shared, hopeless longing for peace, aware of the malady with which they are afflicted, but ultimately unable to fathom a cure.

⁵⁸ Waley, *Tsunemasa*, 56.

⁵⁹ Van Wees, “Heroes, Knights and Nutters,” 6

⁶⁰ The accounts of heroes engaging in various forms of subterfuge in order to avoid going to fight in the Trojan War is potentially illustrative of this point: Achilles was disguised as a woman and hidden in the court of Lycomedes of Skyros (Statius, *Achilleid*, 1.283-396) and Odysseus famously feigned madness, sowing his fields with salt and yoking a donkey and an ox to his plough in order to avoid going to Troy (Hom., *Od.*, 24.115-118; Apollod., *Epit.*, 3.7; Hyginus, *Fabulae*, 95).

As has been demonstrated, the *Iliad* and *Heike* provided dramatic writers of later centuries with a rich mythology from which to draw their subject matter. Holding the seminal positions in Greek and Japanese culture that they did, the *Iliad* and *Heike* would have been subjects of great familiarity to the audiences of tragic plays and *nō* theater, and would also have provided the authors of these plays with a preexisting degree of depth and background of which most playwrights can only dream. As I have argued, this cultural resonance extends beyond more simple matters such as having characters with established backstories. The *Iliad* and *Heike monogatari* imparted larger themes to later literary works, the anti-war sentiment being among those most emphasized.

Like the *Iliad* and *Heike*, the plays of the Greeks and Japanese examined here display a similar, culture-specific focus on particular aspects of war and its consequences. Overwhelmingly, the works of the Greeks seem to direct their attention to the clearly discernible suffering of individuals, both mortal and immortal. Just as much of the *Iliad* is concerned with the suffering of Achilles over Patroclus' death, that of the Greeks as they are driven to the shore by the Trojans, or of the Trojans as they are pushed back and hang upon the precipice of defeat, the Greek plays emphasize the direct consequences of war and violence upon their subjects. Agamemnon's family is riven and eventually destroyed by the Trojan War and its attendant circumstances in *Agamemnon*; the *Trojan Women* and *Rhesus* examine the pain of those who lose sons, brothers, and husbands to war and their own grim prospects in the wake of defeat; *Helen* highlights the suffering of those who returned from the war and the absurdity of fighting and killing on such a scale over one person; while *Ajax* depicts the destructive nature of warrior society and its combat-centric value system on the individuals involved in the fighting through these individuals' inability to cope with peacetime society. All of these are clearly focused on

the suffering of the here and now. There is relatively little thought of the extended future—more specifically, there is no sort of reflection on the state of individuals in the afterlife, though this is facilitated well by the Greeks’ largely ambiguous take on the post-mortal consequences of morality in life and their rather depressing view of the status of the dead.⁶¹

The Japanese, on the other hand, seem to be more concerned with intangibles. While the suffering of mortals is certainly evident, there is more of an overriding concern over the state of a warrior’s soul in the afterlife and on the loss of things like music, poetic beauty, and other art forms. The *Heike* features numerous instances of this sort of behavior, from the already mentioned incidents with Atsumori and company, to Kiyomori’s death and an intriguing episode in which Taira no Noritsune is exhorted by his commander Taira no Tomomori to “not commit too many sins” (*Heike*, 380) by killing lowly Minamoto warriors indiscriminately, since killing was technically prohibited by Buddhist law and would therefore have unpleasant ramifications for an individual’s afterlife. We see the consequences of such sins in the *nō* plays that attach themselves to the *Heike* tradition. *Atsumori* depicts the sad results of the destruction of the music that brings people joy, as well as the ruination of Kumagai’s mortal life and Atsumori’s afterlife. *Tsunemasa* displays in no uncertain terms the torment of a warrior’s soul in the afterlife, while *Tadanori* concerns itself with not only the destruction of poetic art, but of man’s role in that art. This emphasis is in keeping with the sort of long-term, spiritual perspective promoted by Buddhism as well as the overridingly supernatural setting of *nō* dramas, which commonly feature ghosts as their main characters.

⁶¹ In the underworld journeys of numerous figures, most especially in *Odyssey* 11, we observe that the lot of the majority of Greek dead seems to be a largely flavorless afterlife spent idling away in Hades, longing for their days in the mortal world. A speech by Achilles on the subject is particularly enlightening: “μη δὴ μοι θάντόν γε παραύδα, φαίδιμ’ Ὀδυσσεῦ·| βουλοίμην κ’ ἐπάρουρος ἐὼν θητευέμεν ἄλλω·| ἀνδρὶ παρ’ ἀκλήρω, ᾧ μὴ βίωτος πολὺς εἶη,| ἢ πᾶσιν νεκύεσσι καταφθιμένοισιν ἀνάσσειν. Never try to reconcile me to death, glorious Odysseus. I should choose, so I might live on earth, to serve as the hireling of another, some landless man with hardly enough to live on, rather than to be lord over all the dead that have perished” (Hom., *Od.*, 11.488-491; translation by A.T. Murray).

The final commonality found between the Greek and Japanese epic-dramatic traditions is the role song plays in every work. Each play features a chorus that acts as a moral pole of sorts from which the audience is able to triangulate the moral position of characters' words and actions. All of these choruses represent the voices of non-combatants and are uniformly against warfare and warrior culture in their speeches. In this regard, then, their songs are representative of the voice of the Greek and Japanese people—voices which it seems are commonly cut off and silenced by the wars and warriors of which they sing. In all of these works, song represents an escape from the violence and killing that are the everyday realities of warrior-dominated societies, a source of joy which “ease[s] all the sad trials of life”⁶² and delights the heart and mind (Hom., *Il.*, 9.186, 189). Present in the epics and plays, however, is the ever-present reminder that song—along with all of the beauty, peace, and happiness which it represents—is itself also a victim of war. This idea is punctuated rather well by the by now-familiar scene cited above, in which Achilles delights himself by playing the lyre:

τὸν εὖρον φρένα τερπόμενον φόρμιγγι λιγείῃ
καλῆ δαιδαλέῃ, ἐπὶ δ' ἀργύρεον ζυγὸν ἦεν,
τὴν ἄρετ' ἐξ ἐνάρων πόλιν Ἡετίωνος ὀλέσσας·
τῇ ὅ γε θυμὸν ἔτερπεν, ἄειδε δ' ἄρα κλέα ἀνδρῶν.

and him they found delighting his mind with a clear-toned lyre,
fair and elaborate, and on it was a bridge of silver;
this he had taken from the spoil when he destroyed the city of Eëtion.
With it he was delighting his heart, and he sang of the glorious deeds of warriors.
Hom., *Il.*, 9.186-189

Nestled between the delight of Achilles mind and heart, however, is a grim description of the lyre's origins; even a source of beauty and joy such as this is shadowed by the dread specter of war, as the lyre was likely taken after its previous owner had been killed in the Greek attack on Eëtion. Just as Atsumori's song was silenced and the artistry of the Taira clan sank with them to

⁶² Zeami, *Atsumori*, 984.

the bottom of the sea in the *Heike*, then, the *Iliad* reminds its listeners of the costs of war and of the sobering reality that it will always be easier to destroy than to create (Hom., *Il.*, 3.54-55). It must be remembered, however, that the very songs from which these anti-war sentiments are drawn are surviving depictions of warfare; in a way they and their creators have conquered warfare and death by surviving and continuing to tell their stories for such a long time. While war may destroy much of what is good, these tales and plays are proof that song can survive, and through its survival the poets achieve a final, ironic victory over violence and death.

CONCLUSION

The stories of the warriors of the *Iliad* and *Heike monogatari* evolved in a variety of ways, then, and adapted to the changing circumstances of their times and audiences. From their respective dates of inception to the end of their cultural primacy (in some regards) centuries later, these tales of warfare and its tragic effects on warriors and bystanders found resonance in the hearts and minds of both the Greek and Japanese people. While their focuses may be different, the fact still remains that the Greek and Japanese plays, connected as they are to their respective epic cycles, share a strong commonality in their denouncement of war. Through the varying perspectives brought forward by the two traditions and each individual play, we are presented with both a broader and deeper understanding of the effects of warfare on society. Especially given the prominence of the warrior class in both societies throughout the duration of the popularity of these epics and their associated plays, the consistent presence of anti-war sentiment in each story provides an intriguing commentary on the warrior class' own self-awareness of the damage it caused to society and of the tensions that existed between it and the rest of the population.

It often seems to be supposed in this day of preemptive strikes, police actions, and nuclear escalation that anti-war sentiment is a luxury of the modern world, a privilege which is extended only to those who are protected by that world's unprecedentedly massive militaries. Perhaps what we gain the most from the examples found in the *Iliad*, *Heike monogatari*, and their respective dramatic traditions, however, is the reminder that the anti-war sentiments expressed in each tale are representative of a sense of longing that seems to have been present through the entire course of war-fraught human history—from the Bronze Age battles of the unknowable past to the aptly-named bloodbaths of the Feudal Age, these traditions represent a crucial link to this idea. It is a longing for a different world and a time when humankind might abandon its dread fascination with the spectacle of warfare and the sorrow that inevitably follows in its wake.

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