

Homer's Iliad and Ovid's Dulce et decorum est

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Both Homer and Owen, in their poems present arguments about the death of a soldier. However in Homers poem it appears he is engaging the writer with a much more emotional approach than that of Owens. He presents the soldiers as " great fighters" and " brave souls". In contrast, we see in Owens poem, a typical effect of war, and the realisation of death. With seeing so many men die each day, soldiers often became immune to deaths and unable to express any emotion of them.

While Homer clearly feels for the deaths of the men in his poem, Owen, who unlike Homer was fighting in the war, has built up an immunity toward feeling the emotion of it, and instead presents death in a much more realistic way. The title of Homers poem " Iliad" jumps straight into the main theme of it, rage of Achilles. The word Iliad means rage, which throughout the language is repeated a further two times " sing the rage". This title, and the bitter tone when describing the deaths, reflects Homers anti war attitude toward the war, which is happening thousands of years before Christ.

Owen however, presents a contrasting title to that of Homer, while Homer was expressing the main theme of his poem, Owen prefers to use irony to reflect his feelings of the war. " Dulce et Decorum est" translated means " it is sweet and right to die for your country". This is irony because; Owen felt the war was slaughter. Another contrast is the reasons behind the writing of these two poems. Owen was writing in response to Jessie Pope's pro war poetry " who's for the game" which was encouraging men to sign up for the war, and treating it as a simple sports game.

Owen at the time found Pope's views on the war disgusting and wrote "Dulce et Decorum est" in response to her. In contrast, Homer was writing his poem as an epic, telling the war as a story. This presents the war in a more noble and exciting way, instead of showing war to be realistic. The reasons behind Owen writing his poem are far more realistic as he is trying to prove to people that Jessie Pope and other propaganda writers do not know the true realisation of war. Society at the time of 1917, when Owen wrote the poem, was beginning to see the true horrors of war.

In Homer's poem the descriptions of death are told in a very emotive way "hurling down into the house of death so many sturdy souls". Homer feels that the loss of these men was a great loss indeed, and speaks of them as if they are heroes and a true sacrifice of youth "loss on bitter loss and crowded brave souls". The repetition of "loss" emphasises the fact that Homer feels that the death of the soldiers was a great sacrifice. Homer also uses alliteration in order to express this feeling of loss too "countless losses".

The sibilant "S" sounds and alliteration are a technique used in order to portray sorrow and a feeling of sadness towards the death of these many soldiers. Homer also uses a very irregular structure to his poem, which could reflect his emotion, far more effectively than Owen's typical regularly structured stanzas. While Homer's tone toward the death of the soldiers is sorrowful, Owen is more realistic and shows the effect that the war has had on him. He describes the death of a soldier from a gas attack quite calmly and without much emotion "in all my dreams, before my helpless sight, he plunges at me guttering, choking, drowning. This description of death is <https://assignbuster.com/homers-iliad-and-owens-dulce-et-decorum-est/>

more vivid and grotesque than that of Homer who simply describes it as "their bodies left to rot as feasts".

Homer here uses a simile to show the comparison of how their bodies were left. This is similar to how Owen also uses a simile to describe the effect of the war on the troops "bent double like old beggars". Owen also uses one toward the end of the poem to show the effect of the gas on the man "obscene as cancer, bitter as cud". This double simile is a description of what happened to the man when he took in the gas and the substance that foamed out of his mouth is what is being described.

Owen liked to use similes like this to emphasise the death of the soldier more so. The death of the soldier in Owens poem is taken as just another death as the body of the soldier is carelessly "behind the wagon that we flung him in". In the First World War, there were so many deaths that there was simply not enough time to build graves, and feel compassion for all of them. Eventually the soldiers become accustomed to the amount of deaths, which is why Owen is able to use a tone, which is not emotional, as is Homers.

A lot of stark realism is used throughout Owens poem such as the descriptions of the man when the gas gets into him "floundering like a man in fire or lime" again this is another use of a simile, which peppers the entire poem to make show the comparisons of reality. Similarly Homer also chose to use similes in his poetry too "for dogs and birds as Zeus' will was done". Owen chose to call the killed soldier "innocent" which reflects the way he feels about the loss of innocence and loss of many good men of Britain.

This is similar to Homer as throughout the poem, the reader gains a sense that Homer feels there is a loss of youth and men because of the war "so many sturdy souls". Another difference between the ways in which death is presented between the two poems is the actual death itself. Owens soldier dies from a gas attack and not being able to put on his helmet fast enough, while Homer is able to incorporate a supernatural element into his poetry "so the god struck the Greek camp with plague, and the soldiers were dying of it".

This is referring to a Greek god, having the power to put the plague in the camp of the soldiers. The effect this has on the poem, gives it an unrealistic element, and makes the men to be more sacrificed for the sake of an argument between two gods. Owens poem deals with a lot more realistic elements because gas, a real weapon of war, was used to kill troops "come gargling from the froth corrupted lungs". This reflects how more so, Owens poem is able to display more realism than that of Homers.

Another realistic element of Owens poem is the descriptions of the marching. The men appear "drunk with fatigue, deaf to the hoots" which are all very realistic elements of war. Soldiers drank alcohol to deal with the horrors as they would not be able to unless they were drunk. Also they were deaf because of constant exposure to loud noises of bombing and guns. In the second stanza of Owens poem we also see how the pace changes "Gas! Gas! Quick boys" this again being another natural element of surprise that the soldiers had to deal with.

In contrast Homer in his poem is unable to gain realistic qualities due to the fact he is talking about gods and goddesses. These supernatural qualities do not make the poem seem real but instead add to its epic story telling nature. Homer instead uses language and words to add sorrow to sacrifice "immortal one" and "brave souls". By using words such as immortal and brave, Homer is giving the poem a much more sacrificial element, and again adds weight to the argument that he writes in a more emotive style.

I believe that, Owens poem is showing the stark reality of the war. The fact that it is written in response to Jessie Pope to show her what the war is really like, also gives it more realistic properties. The death of the soldier, described by Owen shows how realistic the war is, especially when he is given no proper burial. Owen wanted to prove that war is not a game, and people die, which is not his idea of fun. At the end he uses the irony again to emphasise his point that propaganda is a cruel and twisted way of sending hundreds of men to their death.

The death of the soldier in fact, is presented as realistic, throughout the poem we also see the effect of war, and what it does to the men "the men marched asleep". Owen is trying to show the people back home, how the war is not fun and games at all, it is murder and that's the stark realism of it. Because of the fact that Homer gives supernatural references in his poem, we cannot give the war, the same view as Owens poem. Homer however is more concerned with the deaths in a more emotive way than Owen was, but was not trying to show the realism of war but the sacrifice of lives.