

Jonathan Gottschall. *The Rape of Troy: Evolution, Violence, and the World of Homer*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008. Pp. 236. Paper \$39.99.

Jonathan Gottschall examines Homeric poetry detailing the war fought between the Greeks and the Trojans around the thirteenth and twelfth centuries BCE from a perspective that is rarely used in Classical interpretation. An American literary scholar at Washington and Jefferson College, Gottschall contends that human beings exhibit behaviors that reflect evolutionary development through warfare and competition for resources. In Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, men such as Achilles, Agamemnon and Odysseus, are portrayed as savage barbarians who seek glory and fame in the horrors of war. The motivations for such violent behavior however is more complex, and has not been properly explored in Classical scholarship. Gottschall argues violence, as it is portrayed in the Homeric epics, goes beyond the desire for glory and plunder. Homeric men, from an evolutionary biological perspective, committed acts of carnage and violence because of the competition for resources when eligible women became a scarce commodity.

Despite the issue in Classical scholarship over the historical accuracy of the Homeric epics, Gottschall demonstrates these poems can be used as an important source in reconstructing Greek life during the Late Dark Ages, offering historical, cultural and anthropological significance. The status of men, role of women and the importance of religion are significant traits of Greek society in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. In addition, Gottschall presents biological evolutionary analysis of the epics to further his argument of the importance of Homeric men monopolizing resources for their own biological benefit. Cross cultural comparisons from similar cultures such as the Inuit and Yanomamo reaffirm the shortage of women as a major motivator for war. The scarcity of females (possibly sex selec-

tive abortion, female infanticide or the poor treatment of young girls), created a higher ratio of males to available females. Because of the higher ratio, men were more prone to violence in order to obtain this rare resource. In addition women sought strong men as mates because of their ability to protect women and to acquire wealth. War, despite the many risks and dangers it presents, was necessary and rewarded its victors with social and reproductive hegemony over their competitors.

Often readers focus has been on the ferocious relationships found within the epics until recent changes in scholarship have permitted another view point. Women were beyond the narrow necessity to obtain war goods, but rather were a rare commodity that men fought over in order to capitalize them. While Gottshall's analysis of the epics is unusual, it is convincing. His application of evolutionary biology is significant because it has not been done before in Classical scholarship. He also notes that his argument does not discount the validity of other interpretation of the epics, but rather it complimentary layer of the larger view of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.

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J.R. McNeill. *Mosquito Empires: The Greater Caribbean, 1620-1914*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. Pp. 390. Paper \$24.99.

J.R. McNeill focuses on microbial dangers of the mosquito-borne diseases malaria and yellow fever to argue that these non-human factors played a crucial role in the success and eventual defeat of European colonization of the "greater Caribbean plantation zone." Published in 2010, *Mosquito Empires* surveys the rise and fall of European empires over the course of three centuries. McNeill, a Georgetown University History Professor, argues that European lust for