

## *The siege of Troy*

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# The Siege of Troy<sup>i</sup>

## *For Oliver Taplin*

No matter how often I try, I can never manage to understand how cities, fortresses, landscapes, sanctuaries, can lie forgotten for centuries, preserved, if at all, only in writings which no one any longer credits with truth content; until a few fanatics with their Homer in hand begin to scratch in the earth at places designated 2,500 years before... But recently I have come to understand the source of the passion that drove Heinrich Schliemann and Arthur Evans... The steps of the ancient forum where the apostle Paul may well have preached to the Corinthians, with the pillars of the far more ancient temple of Apollo in the background: this picture affords more insight than books can into the way various strata of belief are linked to various strata of rocks. What kind of faith will the people of the future (assuming there *are* people in the future) read out of our stone, steel, and concrete ruins? How will they account for the hubris of the gigantic metropolises, in which people cannot live without paying the penalty? Of the maze of themes which we, its contemporaries, perceive in our civilisation, will only a few remain? Power. Wealth. Delusions of grandeur.

Christa Wolf, *Cassandra: Conditions of a Narrative*

### **In the beginning: Homer**

The Trojan War may – or may not – have happened, but whatever events took place around the city of Ilion about 1200 BCE have long been eclipsed by the legends subsequent ages have made of them. Principal among our sources for the ten-year siege and its culmination in the city's destruction are the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, two epic poems the ancients attributed to a single, divinely gifted poet called Homer. In fact, only one ancient source attests to the use of this name before the sixth century BCE – and even there it denotes the author of a *Thebaid* ('song of Thebes'), rather than one of Troy.<sup>ii</sup> By the classical period, however, Greeks were (with a few exceptions) convinced of both Homer's existence and the truth of his songs, their authenticity guaranteed by divine inspiration from the Muses. The traditional comparison of the role of the Trojan epics in Greek culture to that of the Bible in Christendom, although hackneyed and in some ways misleading, remains useful in giving a sense of the respect Homer was accorded. Only Hesiod, an almost equally shadowy figure traditionally considered the author of two didactic poems, *Theogony* and *Works and Days*, was spoken of with comparable reverence.<sup>iii</sup>

Despite their monumental scale – the *Iliad* is some 16,000 lines long, the *Odyssey* 12,000 – neither poem recites the entire story of the war. Rather, the Siege as a whole provides the 'essential background' (Sherratt) to the particular events narrated in each: in the *Iliad* the momentous consequences of the quarrel that arose between Agamemnon, commander-in-chief of the besieging Greek forces, and Achilles, his champion fighter, over the division of war booty; in the *Odyssey* the challenges faced by the resourceful Greek warrior Odysseus on his way home to his palace in Ithaca, his son Telemachus and his loyal wife Penelope. While the ancient biographical legends that grew up around 'Homer' make him an eyewitness to the fighting, who handed down its story to his children, the consensus today is that the poems derive from traditional stories of gods and heroes that were transmitted around the Mediterranean for centuries in song before being written down around the

seventh or sixth century BCE. Analyses of their language and of the material culture described in them agree in dating 'Homer' (who, if he ever existed, was the master-poet who gave these stories their canonical form) to the late eighth century, while also indicating they derive from storytelling traditions that stretch back as far as the middle of the second millennium. Certain elements, such as the motif of the siege, the death of a boon companion, or immortality denied, find parallels in the even older textual and visual traditions of Egypt and Mesopotamia.<sup>iv</sup> At some point in the historical period Homer's poems were incorporated into a sequence with other Troy poems: the 'Cycle' thus created narrated the entire story of the War, from the initial sowing of discord between Athena, Hera and Aphrodite at the marriage of Peleus and Thetis to the returns of the other major Greek heroes to their native lands. These 'Cyclic Epics' were considered inferior to the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* in antiquity and now survive only in summaries and fragments. They nonetheless inspired later authors whose works treat of the Trojan War, among them the great trio of Athenian tragedians: Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides.<sup>v</sup>

The Homeric narrative of the Siege was thus already the product of long processes of telling and retelling which stretched across the centuries and over different regions of the Mediterranean world. Although tradition and memory are often understood as the unreflective and unselfconscious repetition of past elements in an unchanging context, oral traditions possess a certain (though by no means unbounded) fluidity, such that a singer can produce notably different performances of what purports to be 'the same song' on discrete occasions.<sup>vi</sup> As a product of oral tradition, the Homeric narrative of the Trojan War – which is our oldest, and the source from which all others derive – raises in particularly sharp form a number of questions pertinent to many of the 'famous battles and their myths' discussed in this volume. How far does Homer's narrative preserve a kernel of historical truth, an echo of a real siege and sack of a city in the late Bronze Age? In what ways, over the centuries of its transmission, was the material reshaped (whether deliberately or otherwise) to suit particular audiences and agendas? Did this story, which projects back into prehistory an image of independent Greek cities united in a righteous war against a common enemy, serve primarily as a source of cohesion and collective identity for Greeks of the historical period, or was it sometimes a site of discord and contestation? What, finally, is the role of physical location, of *place* in all of this? The geography of the Homeric poems is twofold: on the one hand, the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* take in the whole of the early Greek world, from the Asia Minor seaboard to the mysterious (possibly mythical) Ithaka in the west.<sup>vii</sup> On the other, the *Iliad* in particular points to a particular site in north-western Anatolia: an ancient, ruined city guarding the entrance to the Dardanelles straits, whose once-proud citadel remained visible until it was levelled and built over in the Hellenistic and Roman periods, to be rediscovered in the 1870s by Heinrich Schliemann.

These questions do not only apply to the Homeric version of the myth. They echo through the centuries, for the tale of the Trojan War has inspired political, social, literary and artistic imaginations in all subsequent ages, even for those with no access to Homer's Greek. In medieval and Renaissance Europe, dynastic rulers bolstered their authority by tracing their lineage back to Greek and Trojan heroes, much as the Roman emperors had before them. By the sixteenth century, Odysseus and (surprisingly, to modern readers) Agamemnon were

studied as models of good kingship. More recently, the story has attracted those who have sought to develop critical perspectives on military might and glory: not the triumph of victors, but the tragedy of the vanquished, the dehumanization of fighters and the vulnerability of defenceless civilians, or those pressed by an enemy within.

### **Antiquity: political competition and cohesion**

As we have already seen, the origins of the *story* of the Trojan War are almost as obscure as the events of the war themselves.<sup>viii</sup> The evidence points to the Siege being one of a number of heroic battle sagas that circulated around Dark Age Greece, alongside the stories of the Sack of Thebes, the Labours of Hercules, and the voyage of Jason and the Argonauts, amongst others. Our best explanation of how and why the Trojan myth came to achieve the prominence it so evidently had by the sixth or fifth century BCE starts from a number of significant political and socioeconomic changes of the eighth century BCE, at the end of what is traditionally (but increasingly misleadingly, given what archaeology can now tell us) known as Greece's 'Dark Age'. Principal among these were population growth and concentration around regional centres on the Greek mainland; the establishment of new Greek settlements overseas to both west and east; the growth in importance of interregional religious sanctuaries, such as those of the god Apollo at Delos and Delphi; and the establishment of both interregional and 'Panhellenic' festivals, the most famous of which is, of course, the Olympic Games (traditional date of establishment: 776 BCE). Alongside these developments, which brought Greeks from different regions into increasing contact with each other and with non-Greeks, we find cultural changes: the spread of writing using a modified Phoenician alphabet rather than the forgotten Linear B script of Mycenaean Greek; the appearance of heroic, narrative scenes on Greek pots; and evidence of a new interest in the distant past, as manifest in cult practices centred around Bronze Age burial sites.<sup>ix</sup>

Hesiod, whom ancient and modern scholarship alike treat as the oldest Greek author besides Homer, also provides evidence that the tale of Troy belongs to this context. In the myth of the Five Ages of Man given in his *Works and Days*, composed perhaps a little after 700 BCE, he names the sieges of Troy and Thebes as the outstanding exploits of that 'godly race of men-heroes, who are called demigods' which followed upon the Gold, Silver and Bronze eras and preceded his, Iron age:

Evil war and dread battle destroyed these, some under seven-gated Thebes in the land of Cadmus while they fought for the sake of Oedipus' sheep, others brought in boats over the great gulf of the sea to Troy for the sake of fair-haired Helen. There the end of death shrouded some of them, but upon others Zeus the father, Cronus' son, bestowed life and habitations far from human beings and settled them at the limits of the earth; and these dwell with a spirit free of care on the Islands of the Blessed beside deep-eddying Ocean—happy heroes, for whom the grain-giving field bears honey-sweet fruit flourishing three times a year.<sup>x</sup>

If, as has been argued, this 'age of heroes' constitutes an innovative insertion into an older myth of metallic ages with oriental roots, it attests to a contemporary interest in investing

the Trojan War with the significance of cosmic history.<sup>xi</sup> Hesiod's second mention of the myth, in an aside as he counsels his brother Perses on the risks of seafaring, is equally revealing:

For never yet did I sail the broad sea in a boat, except to Euboea from Aulis, where once the Achaeans, waiting through the winter, gathered together a great host to sail from holy Greece to Troy with its beautiful women. There I myself crossed over into Chalcis for the games of valorous Amphi-damas—that great-hearted man's sons had announced and established many prizes—and there, I declare, I gained victory with a hymn, and carried off a tripod with handles.<sup>xii</sup>

This is a joke, for the strait that divides Aulis from Chalcis is so narrow that today it is bridged at the shortest point. But Hesiod's description of a competitive gathering of poets from different regions points to the kind of occasion on which songs about the Trojan War might have been performed and become known among diverse audiences. Ancient commentators preserve an alternative version of the last line of this passage, according to which Hesiod declares that he gained victory 'in Chalcis over godlike Homer'. This is also the conceit of the intriguing ancient rhetorical treatise known as 'The Contest of Homer and Hesiod.'

The evidence noted above combines to suggest that the myth of the Trojan War began to grow in cultural importance during a period when Greeks were coming into increasing contact with Greeks from cities and regions other than their own, as well as non-Greek peoples, and were also increasingly concerned with their own heroic past. Some scholars seek to explain this by suggesting that the story played a role in grounding a developing notion of pan-Greek identity: 'the idea of a past in which all Greeks combined together in a single, heroic and successful enterprise, under the leadership not of an overlord or emperor but of a *primus inter pares*'.<sup>xiii</sup> Yet Homer's tale could also be given other, more divisive meanings: the sixth-century tyrant Kleisthenes (eponymous grandfather of the founder of the classical Athenian democracy) was said to have banned public recitations of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* in the city of Sikyon while it was at war with Argos, 'since [in the poems] Argives and Argos are principally celebrated'.<sup>xiv</sup> It may also have played a role in Persian efforts to dissuade Greek cities on the Ionian coast of Asia Minor from revolting against their rule. Homer's inclusion of Miletos and Mykale in the catalogue of Trojan allies, rather than that of Greek ships, in Book 2 of the *Iliad* provided one way of grounding such appeals in notions of ancient allegiance.<sup>xv</sup> The idea that Xerxes presented himself as an avenger of Priam also provides a way of making sense of the elaborate rituals he carried out at Troy and on the shores of the Hellespont in 480 BCE, on his way to invade Greece.<sup>xvi</sup>

Herodotus, who reports both Kleisthenes' act of political censorship and Xerxes' activities at Troy, implicitly seeks to define his own achievement against that of Homer. His *History of the Persian Wars* also narrates a glorious military victory achieved by individual Greek cities united against an eastern enemy, and its opening chapters are devoted to explicating a distinction between those past events he *knows* to have taken place, because he has ascertained their truth by his own inquiry ('*historiē*'), and stories told by others, about whose truth he reserves judgement. The story of Troy belongs in the latter category, and

Herodotus is keen to highlight discrepancies between Greek and Persian accounts of events.<sup>xvii</sup> Herodotus is also one of our earliest extant authors to make the claim – which goes back at least as far as the sixth-century BCE lyric poet Stesichorus, and which has echoed down the centuries to Christa Wolf – that Argive Helen never arrived at Troy with Paris, remaining instead in Egypt for the war’s duration.<sup>xviii</sup> This is a rationalisation, since Herodotus cannot believe that the Trojans would sacrifice their city rather than give up the woman they had stolen.<sup>xix</sup> He does not refrain from accusing Homer of having known the true story of events but electing to tell an alternative version because he found it better suited to poetry.<sup>xx</sup> He concludes that the true lesson of the Trojan War is a moral one: the inability of the Trojans to give back the woman they did not possess, and the Greeks’ refusal to believe their protestations that they did not have her, demonstrate ‘that vengeance sent by the gods in retribution for terrible wrongs is also terrible’.<sup>xxi</sup> For Herodotus, then, as for Hesiod before him, we see the Trojan War invested with more than historical significance, its destruction cited as proof of a coherent and just cosmic order.

Throughout the Ages the Trojan War has also been given new interpretations linked to the more immediate political and cultural circumstances of each generation of readers. The slants given to the story – and even the heroes favoured – have differed in different periods. Despite the popularity of the *Iliad* in military circles, as an exposition of the ethic of the warrior-hero, an equally prominent strand of contemporary interpretation sees the *Iliad* as an anti-war poem: Caroline Alexander has likened Achilles’ refusal to continue to fight for Agamemnon and Menelaus to Muhammad Ali’s refusal of the Vietnam draft on the basis that ‘No Viet Cong ever called me nigger’.<sup>xxii</sup> The same comparison is invited by the reproduction of the famous image of Ali towering over the unconscious Sonny Liston on the cover of a recent translation.<sup>xxiii</sup> This moral of justified civil disobedience was certainly overlooked by those ancient military and political leaders who paid their respects at the site of the siege on their journeys of conquest between Europe and Asia. Xerxes’ activities at Troy have already been noted; he was followed – so ancient writers report – by Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, and the Roman emperors Hadrian, Caracalla, Constantine, and Julian.<sup>xxiv</sup> As Philippe Borgeaud (2010) notes, the highly embellished (in some cases, entirely fictional) narratives of these pilgrimages testify to the continuing resonance of the legend for Hellenistic and Roman leaders. Lucan’s fictitious account of Julius Caesar’s visit – a detour from chasing the defeated Pompey east over the Hellespont after the Battle of Pharsalus in 48 BCE – provides a particularly interesting example.<sup>xxv</sup> To some extent it replicates a motif of filial piety found already in narratives of Alexander the Great’s visit, for Alexander claimed descent from Achilles through his mother and modelled himself on the War’s greatest hero in various ways.<sup>xxvi</sup> But the crucial reference point for Lucan’s Caesar is no longer a Greek but a Trojan: it is to the household gods of his ancestor Aeneas that Caesar sacrifices.<sup>xxvii</sup> Through this, apparently entirely invented, episode, Lucan projects back into the Civil-Wars period that connection between the fall of Troy and the foundation of Rome that had become a central plank in the dynastic portrayal of the Julio-Claudian emperors. The important literary precedent was, of course, Virgil’s *Aeneid*.<sup>xxviii</sup>

## Medieval and modern responses: genealogies and eternal truths

The Roman practice of deriving one's ancestry from Trojan War heroes caught on in a big way in medieval and Renaissance Europe. While Homer's poems were hardly read in the Latin West until the end of the fifteenth century (the first printed edition was published in Florence in 1488/9), the myth lived on through Virgil, the Latin verse summary known as the *Ilias Latina*, and plentiful allusions in other ancient poets and commentators. Widely disseminated and influential too were Latin translations of what purported to be two eye-witness accounts by warriors present at the Siege: Dictys of Crete and Dares of Phrygia.<sup>xxix</sup> These in turn informed works such as Benoît de Sainte-Maure's mid-twelfth century *Roman de Troie*, the origin of the romantic story of Troilus and Cressida retold by Boccaccio, Chaucer and Shakespeare, amongst others; and Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*, a major source of Arthurian legend which also traced the lineage of the British Kings back to a supposed descendant of Aeneas named Brutus. The passion for finding Trojan ancestors was perhaps greatest in France, where both the Valois monarchy and various lesser dukes claimed descent from Francus, son of Hector, and other warriors on both the Greek and Trojan sides.<sup>xxx</sup> The greatest fruit of this tradition is Pierre de Ronsard's *Franciade*, commissioned in the mid-1500s by Henri II: it tells the story of Francus in order to furnish the French kings with a national epic to rival Virgil. Yet by 1572, the year Ronsard's poem began to appear, such myths of origin were falling into disrepute. Appealing to an Aristotelian distinction with a distinctly Herodotean pedigree, Ronsard himself admitted the challenge of reconciling the requirements of poetry and history, and ultimately classed his version of the story, alongside the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, as 'romance'.<sup>xxxi</sup>

Those sceptical of the traditional stories of Francus, Brutus and the like pointed to the complete absence of reference to them in the ancient sources. As Ronsard's case shows, appreciation of the character of Homer and Virgil as poetry rather than historical chronicle was growing, and for some two hundred years the Siege was generally assumed to be a product of poetic invention rather than a story with any basis in historical reality. This scepticism did not dent the authority of Homer's narrative in a different sense: as a repository of moral and political wisdom. It was for their educational value to princes (the *Iliad* as a paradigm of martial valour, the *Odyssey* of prudence) that the humanist Guillaume Budé recommended the study of Homer to Henri's father, François I, and the Bolognese painter Francesco Primaticcio created a cycle of Ulysses frescos to decorate the royal apartments at Fontainebleau.<sup>xxxii</sup> Aspects of this approach, which treats the myth as expressing eternal verities of the human condition, survive in today's very different cultural context, proving particularly popular in the United States. In two books, *Achilles in Vietnam* and *Odysseus in America*, the psychiatrist and PTSD specialist Jonathan Shay has appealed to the tale of Troy to illuminate the psychological and social challenges faced by traumatized veterans of military conflicts.<sup>xxxiii</sup> The New York theatre director Bryan Doerries takes this approach to its logical conclusion, staging readings of Sophocles' Trojan War tragedies (principally *Ajax* and *Philoctetes*) to audiences of veterans as almost a form of group therapy.<sup>xxxiv</sup>

Since the 1990s there has been renewed interest among both poets and creative nonfiction writers in the Trojan War as a paradigm of military conflict and devastation. This interest is no doubt prompted by the increasing number of ‘hot’ wars in which Western powers have again been involved since the fall of the Soviet Union, as well as by the centenary of the First World War. Greek tragedies’ unremitting focus on the catastrophe of the War’s aftermath have proved particularly popular, but there have also been reworkings of Homer.<sup>xxxv</sup> Caroline Alexander’s aforementioned reading of the *Iliad* as the first anti-war poem (2009), finds a poetic counterpart in Alice Oswald’s *Memorial* (2011), a tour-de-force which extracts and reworks the *Iliad*’s similes and battle descriptions while obliterating its main story. The result is a mesmerising, repetitive incantation which if anything heightens the original’s emphasis on death and loss.<sup>xxxvi</sup> Oswald herself interprets the *Iliad* as ‘a kind of oral cemetery – in the aftermath of the Trojan War, an attempt to remember people’s names and lives without the use of writing’.<sup>xxxvii</sup> *Memorial*’s poppy-red cover art and publication just before 11 November 2011 invite parallels with the organised, institutional remembrance of twentieth-century war dead. Oswald thus joins a tradition of poets, from Michael Longley, through Seamus Heaney and W.H. Auden, to the First-World War poets Rupert Brooke and Patrick Shaw-Stewart, who have used the Trojan War as a reference-point for commenting on the conflicts of their own day.<sup>xxxviii</sup>

### **History rediscovered: Robert Wood, through Heinrich Schliemann to the present**

One of the most famous poetic responses in the English language to Homer’s account of the Trojan War is John Keats’ sonnet *On first looking into Chapman’s Homer* (1816):

Much have I travell'd in the realms of gold,  
And many goodly states and kingdoms seen;  
Round many western islands have I been  
Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.  
Oft of one wide expanse had I been told  
That deep-brow'd Homer ruled as his demesne;  
Yet did I never breathe its pure serene  
Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold:  
Then felt I like some watcher of the skies  
When a new planet swims into his ken;  
Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes  
He star'd at the Pacific—and all his men  
Look'd at each other with a wild surmise—  
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

Although Keats was to die in Rome he never visited Asia Minor, and the voyage of discovery prompted by his exposure to George Chapman’s Homer translation occurred in the imagination. The physical rediscovery of Ilion would begin in earnest with Heinrich Schliemann’s excavations in the 1870s. Yet in 1816 Keats was already behind the times. By then, Western visitors had been making their way to Constantinople and down what is now the west coast of Turkey for some hundred and fifty years. Most were diplomats or clergy on postings to the Ottoman Empire; many were also enthusiastic tourists and amateur

archaeologists. The travel accounts they published sparked a new interest in the historical reality of the Trojan War, and provide the intellectual background to Schliemann's endeavours.<sup>xxxix</sup>

Robert Wood in particular is worth noting as precursor of Schliemann. An Irish-born minister's son who travelled to Greece and the Levant in the 1740s and 50s, Wood is also significant for having visited, and published, accounts of the impressive ancient ruins of Baalbek and Palmyra.<sup>xl</sup> More immediately relevant to our story is his enthusiastic meditation on Homer's descriptions of landscape and manners, first published in 1769 and then in a much expanded edition in 1775.<sup>xli</sup> Wood struck a new note in an age where Homer's writings were considered mere 'fable'. Wandering around the plain of Troy, and seeking to match the descriptions found in the *Iliad* with the evidence of his eyes, he insisted that Homer was true to both the geography and the social customs of the lands in which his story was set: 'We shall admit his antient title of *Philosopher* only as he is a *Painter*'.<sup>xlii</sup> Schliemann claimed that similar convictions had motivated his Trojan explorations. In the autobiographical introduction to his *Ilios: The City and Country of the Trojans* (1880), he alleges that his interest in rediscovering the historical site of the Siege was sparked by a childhood spent listening to the story of the Siege at his father's knee:

He... related to me with admiration the great deeds of the Homeric heroes and the events of the Trojan war, always finding in me a warm defender of the Trojan cause. With great grief I heard from him that Troy had been so completely destroyed, that it had disappeared without leaving any traces of its existence. My joy may be imagined, therefore, when, being nearly eight years old, I received from him, in 1829, as a Christmas gift, Dr. Georg Ludwig Jerrer's *Universal History*, with an engraving representing Troy in flames, with its huge walls and the Scaean gate, from which Aeneas is escaped, carrying his father Anchises on his back and holding his son Ascanius by the hand; and I cried out, 'Father, you were mistaken: Jerrer must have seen Troy, otherwise he could not have represented it here.' 'My son,' he replied, 'that is merely a fanciful picture.' But to my question, whether ancient Troy had such huge walls as those depicted in the book, he answered in the affirmative. 'Father,' retorted I, "if such walls existed, they cannot possibly have been completely destroyed: vast ruins of them must still remain, but they are hidden away beneath the dust of ages." He maintained the contrary, whilst I remained firm in my opinion, and at last we both agreed that I should one day excavate Troy.<sup>xliii</sup>

A personal fortune built in overseas trade enabled Schliemann to realise his alleged childhood dreams. Following a tip from Frank Calvert, who owned part of the site and had conducted trial excavations there the previous decade, Schliemann began digging at Hisarlik in 1870.<sup>xliv</sup> During eight excavation seasons between then and 1890, he and his collaborators discovered nine superimposed settlement layers dating back to the third millennium BCE. Schliemann in fact dug through the Troy VI/VIIa – the layers now thought to contain the 'Homeric' city – to Troy II (now dated to the third millennium), and in May 1873 uncovered a rich hoard which he smuggled back to Germany and put on display under the sensational

banner, the 'Treasure of Priam'. He went on to excavate other sites mentioned in Homer: Mycenae (where he also discovered gold treasure), Ithaca, Tiryns, and Orchomenos.

Schliemann's reputation as an archaeologist is controversial. His methods were unscientific and sometimes legally dubious (neither his first excavation at Hisarlik nor his removal of 'Priam's Treasure' to Germany occurred with the Ottoman authorities' permission). His accounts of his finds were sensationalised, and he destroyed much historically valuable material in his eagerness to uncover the earliest strata of Trojan civilisation. Yet it was his commitment, drive, and (not least) financing that produced the great discoveries at Hisarlik and Mycenae, and the stratigraphy established by his collaborator, the respected German archaeologist Wilhelm Dörpfeld, is still considered valid today.<sup>xlv</sup> Schliemann's knack at popularising his finds also brought Troy and Mycenae to life for a broader audience. Despite its questionable relationship to Homer's texts (it dates around 300 years too early), the golden 'mask of Agamemnon' Schliemann discovered at Mycenae is today among the most iconic objects in Athens' National Archaeological Museum.<sup>xlvi</sup> The fate of 'Priam's Treasure' is more interesting still: after vanishing from the Berlin Royal Museums in 1945 it resurfaced in the early 1990s in Moscow's Pushkin Museum. Arguments between Germany and Russia over its 'restitution' are ongoing.

After Schliemann's death in 1890 the excavations were continued by Dörpfeld, whose work was followed by that of Carl Blegen in the 1930s and, most recently and impressively, Manfred Korfmann, whose excavations from 1988 to 2002 uncovered an extensive lower citadel, defensive ditch, and gate consistent with a Bronze-Age Anatolian city of the size and importance suggested in Homer.<sup>xlvii</sup> Evidence from other ancient Anatolian civilizations has also strengthened the case for identifying Hisarlik with the Troy of legend. For example, some thirty documents excavated at Hattusa (modern name: Boğazkale) in north-central Turkey, ancient capital of the mighty Hittite Empire, mention a kingdom 'across the sea' named Ahhiyawa which enjoyed trading and diplomatic relations with the Hittites from the early fourteenth to the end of the twelfth century BCE. While often cordial, interactions between the two powers were punctuated by episodes of conflict and contestation for influence over regions of the western Anatolian seaboard. Since the 1920s, when documents were first deciphered and published, scholars have debated whether 'Ahhiyawa' - a name that bears a striking resemblance to Homer's 'Akhaioi' ('Achaean') - refers to one or a group of Mycenaean Greek kingdoms.<sup>xlviii</sup> One of these texts, the so-called 'Tawagalawa Letter', is a diplomatic missive addressed by the Hittite Emperor to the Great King of Ahhiyawa, appears to refer to a former dispute between the two powers over 'the matter of the land of Wilusa', a name that scholars since the 1920s have identified with Ilium/Troy.<sup>xlix</sup> If the dating of this letter to the late thirteenth century is correct it tallies with destruction of Troy VIIA, the settlement Blegen identified as the Homeric city. Together with the other Hittite sources, the Tawagalawa Letter thus provides a tantalising glimpse of a possible kernel of historical truth at the heart of the Trojan War legend.

## Conclusion

In 1998, in the wake of Korfmann's spectacular discoveries, UNESCO declared Hisarlik a World Heritage Site. The award citation on the UNESCO website reads as follows:

Troy, with its four thousand years of history, is one of the most famous archaeological sites in the world. In scientific terms, its extensive remains are the most significant and substantial demonstration of the first contact between the civilizations of the Near-East and the burgeoning Mediterranean world. Moreover, the siege of Troy by Mycenaean warriors from Greece in the 13th century BC, immortalized by Homer in *The Iliad*, has inspired great creative artists throughout the world ever since.<sup>i</sup>

Visitors to the site today have the opportunity to climb inside, and pose for pictures in front of, a replica Wooden Horse, while a similar effigy (the scene property from Wolfgang Petersen's blockbuster 2004 movie, *Troy*) graces the seafront in nearby Çanakkale.

Over the millennia during which the myth of the Trojan War has entranced listeners and readers, the pendulum of historical interpretation has swung and returned: from the ancient conviction that the Siege really happened, through modern understandings of the myth as either as 'fable' or as true in some higher, moral or philosophical sense, to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries' renewed interest in its possible historicity. The image of Troy recovered by contemporary archaeologists and historians is complex, pointing east to the Hittites and south to Egypt as well as west to mainland Greece. UNESCO's citation nonetheless betrays that it is the myth of the Siege as told by a Greek poet that has placed Ilium on the map of modernity. As the Bronze-Age specialist Susan Sherratt comments:

It is because Homer's Trojan War, as a powerful and infinitely adaptable ideological motif and just about the most famous "event" of history (after the Flood) on which one can hang a long and glorious ancestry, is so deeply embedded in the collective psyches and cultural traditions and national inheritance and sense of self-identity of so many Europeans, that anyone even thinks of caring whether it represents real history or not.<sup>ii</sup>

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<sup>ii</sup> Pausanias 9.9.3, citing one Kallinos, who may or may not be identifiable with the seventh-century BCE elegiac poet, Kallinos of Ephesos.

<sup>iii</sup> See for example Hdt. 2.53 (mid-C5th BCE), who states that Hesiod and Homer are the earliest Greek poets as well as the ones who 'created a theogony [i.e. an account of the gods' generation] for the Greeks, gave the gods their names and their honours and powers, and indicated their forms'.

<sup>iv</sup> Janko 1982, Sherratt 1990, Sherratt (2010), 12.

<sup>v</sup> See for example Aeschylus' *Oresteia* trilogy, Soph. *Ajax*, Eur. *Troades*, *Hekabe*.

<sup>vi</sup> Foley (1997).

<sup>vii</sup> Sherratt (2010) 5-6, who notes that no Mycenaean palace has yet been found on either Kefalonia or Ithaka, the two main candidates for Odysseus's homeland.

<sup>viii</sup> For an influential, although hardly uncontested, reconstruction of various historical phases the oral tradition see West (1988).

<sup>ix</sup> Sherratt (2010), 7-9; Antonaccio (1994).

<sup>x</sup> Hesiod, *Erga*, 159-60, 161-73. All translations of Hesiod from Most (2007).

<sup>xi</sup> West (1978), On the cosmic context of the Trojan War, see Graziosi and Haubold (2005), Chapter 2.

<sup>xii</sup> Hesiod, *Erga*, 650-7.

<sup>xiii</sup> Sherratt (2010), 7.

<sup>xiv</sup> Hdt. 5.67.1.

<sup>xv</sup> *Iliad* 2.867-75; see Haubold (2007) 59.

<sup>xvi</sup> Hdt 7.43-52; for discussion see Haubold (2007); Borgeaud (2010) 340-2, who offer very different interpretations of this episode.

<sup>xvii</sup> See especially Hdt. 1.5.3, with its emphatic distinction between *oída* ('I know') and *legousi* ('they say'). On Thermopylae and Marathon, two of key battles of the Persian Wars see Aston and Leoussi in this volume.

<sup>xviii</sup> Hdt 2.112-20; see too the sentiment he puts into the Persians' mouth at 1.4.2: 'we consider the abduction of women to be the mark of unjust men, jealousy in avenging them that of fools'. Stesichorus's 'palinode'

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<sup>xx</sup> Hdt 2.116.1.

<sup>xxi</sup> Hdt 2.120.5.

<sup>xxii</sup> Alexander (2009) 20-21, For the *Iliad* in military circles see French 2003, Heuser 2010.

<sup>xxiii</sup> McCrorie (2012).

<sup>xxiv</sup> Borgeaud (2010).

<sup>xxv</sup> *De Bello Civili* 9.964-99.

<sup>xxvi</sup> Plut. *Alex.* 15.4-5, Arrian *Anabasis* 1.11.3-1.12.2; see Borgeaud (2010) 342-3.

<sup>xxvii</sup> *De Bello Civili* 9.986-9.

<sup>xxviii</sup> Borgeaud (2010) 344-6, see further Gellérfi, (2012).

<sup>xxix</sup> Ni-Mheallaigh (2011).

<sup>xxx</sup> Asher (1993), 9-43.

<sup>xxxi</sup> Ronsard, 1572 Preface to the *Franciade*, quoted from Bizer (2011) 84,

<sup>xxxii</sup> Bizer (2011), 17-58, 68-79.

<sup>xxxiii</sup> Shay (1995), Shay (2002); see too Tritle (2000).

<sup>xxxiv</sup> Meineck (2009) Doerries (2015).

<sup>xxxv</sup> See for example Hall, Macintosh and Wrigley (2004), Macintosh et al. (2005)

<sup>xxxvi</sup> Alexander (2009), Oswald (2011).

<sup>xxxvii</sup> Oswald (2011), 2.

<sup>xxxviii</sup> On Longley see Taplin (2007), 186-90; Hardwick (2007); on First World War poets and Trojan material, particularly evident among those who participated in the Gallipoli campaign, see Vandiver (2013).

<sup>xxxix</sup> Pollard (2015). Although now somewhat out of date (it predates Manfred Korfmann's important excavations in the 1990s), Michael Wood's book *In Search of Troy* (1985), based on the BBC documentary of the same name, provides an engaging introduction to the historical and archaeological evidence for the real Troy.

<sup>xl</sup> Wood (1753), (1757).

<sup>xli</sup> Wood (1769), (1775); a good introduction to his travels and writings is Constantine (2011), Chapter 3.

<sup>xlii</sup> Wood (1769), ii.

<sup>xliii</sup> Schliemann (1880), 3.

<sup>xliv</sup> On Calvert see Allen (1995); for a short introduction to Schliemann, see Traill (2014).

<sup>xlv</sup> On Dörpfeld, who excavated with Schliemann in the 1880s and continued in the 1890s, after the latter's death, see Pernicka and Thumm (2014).

<sup>xlvi</sup> The object (NM 624) is dogged by controversy, not least over whether or not it is the one Schliemann himself associated with Agamemnon. See Dickinson (2005).

<sup>xlvii</sup> The best summary of Korfmann's excavations and their importance remains that of Latacz (2004). See too Bryce (2006).

<sup>xlviii</sup> See for example Cline (2011), 3: 'Ahhiyawa must, essentially by default, be a reference to the Mycenaeans' vs. Sherratt (2010), 11: "there is nothing (apart from wishful thinking) to link the land of Ahhiyawa and its successive kings in the Hittite texts with anywhere on the Greek mainland let alone with any Mycenaean palace yet known to us'.

<sup>xlix</sup> Beckman, Bryce and Cline (2011), 101-122. For brief discussion of the linguistic arguments identifying Ilion and the Achaeans with Wilusa and the Ahhiyawans, see Latacz (2004)73-100, 120-136.

<sup>l</sup> UNESCO 1998.

<sup>li</sup> Sherratt (2010), 17-18.