The Endurance of the Trojan Cycle

By

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Introduction

“Humans think in stories rather than in facts, numbers, or equations, and the simpler the story, the better” (Harari 3).

Humankind is a story driven species in that we rationalize the proceedings of the world around us by authoring tales. These fictions are often appealing contortions of the factual events they sought to capture. The Trojan Cycle is no exception to this contortion. The ancient Greek epic poems which composed the Trojan Cycle were based on both bardic tradition of the Bronze Age Aegean, and the desires of the ancient audience of the poets. When we observe the tale of foremost significance amongst those of the Trojan Cycle, Homer's Iliad, we see that it is, as is the case for the whole of the cycle, in many ways estranged from what the archeological evidence from the mound of Hisarlik and elsewhere suggests about the historical Trojan War.

Humanity’s manipulation of these events, however, has not been limited to the immediate tales produced. Just as the ancient Greek epic poets embellished the surviving tales of the Trojan War passed down from the bards of the Bronze Age for their own audiences, historically, the tale as recounted in the Trojan Cycle has been no less subject to appropriation by authors and artisans throughout the ages. These stories have endured as they have, leading storytellers across time and in different media to keep them alive in many different forms, due to the Trojan Cycle’s unique ability to express intense human emotions and mortality. In order to understand how the Trojan Cycle has endured, we must understand both from whence it originates, and how the adaptation of the work was handled.

The thesis is composed of three subsections which are as follows; 1): what does/can archaeology tell us about the “reality” of the Trojan War as famously illustrated in Homer's epic,
the *Iliad*; 2): adaptation of the Trojan Cycle in Euripides’ *The Trojan Women* and in vase paintings of classical Athens; 3): contemporary adaptation of the Trojan Cycle in the 2004 film, *Troy*, directed by Wolfgang Petersen, and Madeline Miller’s *The Song of Achilles* (2011). To understand what the archeological evidence suggests, part I of the thesis discusses the historiographic element as constituted by the intentions and findings of historical excavators Calvert, Schliemann, Dörpfeld, and Blegen at the mound of Hisarlik, the site of Troy, and contemporary excavators Becker, Korfmann, and Pernicka. Part I will also consider the archeological evidence that is not from the site of Troy, such as the artifacts recovered from the Mycenaean Grave Circle A, the archeological discoveries of Sir Arthur John Evans, and the Ahhiyawā texts from the Hittite archives. Understanding the factual historical context of the events of the Trojan Cycle serves to lay the groundwork for understanding how such has been adapted throughout time.

Part II and III argue that, while the method and audience of adaptation has evolved from classical Athens to our modern world, the Trojan Cycle has remained relevant through time and medium due to its capacity for the expression of intense human emotions and mortality. Part II works to understand how scenes from the Trojan Cycle were employed to represent conflicts which transpired more than 700 years after the historical Trojan War, and over 200 years after the oral composition of Homer’s *Iliad*. In doing so, we consider both a selection of Athenian vase paintings and Euripides’ *The Trojan Women*. The vase paintings selected are that of the Kleophrades Painter’s “Iliou persis” hydria and “Embassy to Achilles” hydria, the Brygos Painter’s “Iliou persis” kylix, and the “Thetis consoles Achilles” pelike. Vase paintings were selected due to both the physical endurance of pottery and the cultural significance of the art form in classical Athens. Without texts of many of the original oral poems which compose the
Trojan Cycle, the vase paintings (one of the only artforms beyond sculptures to survive from this period) of classical Athens which adapt scenes from the Cycle provide the greatest wealth of examples to analyze. Similarly, Euripides’ *The Trojan Women* was selected due to the cultural significance of the author and the wealth of surviving plays from him which adapt the Trojan Cycle.

Part III investigates how the Trojan Cycle has been adapted in our modern era, over three millennia after the events of the historical Trojan War. To do so, we consider both the 2004 film, *Troy*, directed by Wolfgang Petersen, and Madeline Miller’s novel *The Song of Achilles* (2011). The film and the novel were both selected due to their having achieved mainstream significance in the twenty-first century, placing them in a position of preeminence among Trojan Cycle adaptations in their respective media. While *Troy* (2004) drastically manipulates the narrative of the Trojan Cycle in an attempt to meet the expectations of the audience of a Hollywood blockbuster film, Miller takes pains to make *The Song of Achilles* as true to the mythological canon as possible (“Q & A with Madeline Miller”). The selection of a film and novel is intended to mirror the selection of two different mediums of study, namely play and vase, in part II. The conclusions drawn by part II and III evidence the unique ability of the Trojan Cycle to find applicability in not only an ancient world rife with warfare similar to that within the cycle, but in our modern world with a wholly new set of conflicts, many of which deal little with physical violence.

Before we enter into an investigation into the endurance and adaptation of the Trojan Cycle, it is necessary to understand what is meant by the term Trojan Cycle, who Homer was, and from whence the text of the *Iliad*, the work of preeminent importance for us, originates. The Trojan Cycle belongs to a greater collection of poems referred to as the Epic cycle, which also
included poems about the origins of the gods and the Theban War. The poems of the Trojan Cycle were called the Cypria, the Aethiopis, the Little Iliad, the Iliou Persis, the Nostoi, the Telegony, and the Iliad and the Odyssey (Burgess 7). Of these poems, the Iliad and the Odyssey are the only ones surviving today, yet we know what the plots of the others were based on later references. In story order, the first of these poems, the Cypria, is ascribed to Stasinus or Hegesias, and detailed the origin of the Trojan War, and all that transpires before the events of the Iliad, from the ordaining of warfare by Zeus, to the allotment of Briseis and Chryseis to Achilles and Agamemnon respectively. Homer’s Iliad details the feud between King Agamemnon and Achilles in the ninth year of the war, the near destruction of the Greeks in the absence of Achilles on account of the feud, and Achilles’ eventual return to warfare and triumph over Hector, the son of King Priam of Troy. The Aethiopis, ascribed to Arctinus of Miletus, proceeded from the events of the Iliad, culminating with the death of Achilles and the holding of funeral games in his honor. These funeral games would see the victory of Odysseus over Ajax the Great, leading to the eventual suicide of the latter (West 12-14).

Succeeding the Aethiopis, the Little Iliad, ascribed to Lesches from Pyrrha or Mytilene in Lesbos, detailed both the Achaean fulfillment of the three acts outlined by the Trojan seer Helenus necessary to progress the war against Troy in the wake of the deaths of Achilles and Ajax, and a small account of the sack of Troy. These acts included the recovery of Heracles’ bow to Troy, the retrieval of Neoptolemus, Achilles son, from Scyros, and the building of the Wooden Horse. The Iliou Persis, ascribed to the Aethiopis’ Arctinus of Miletus, both overlapped with and furthered the narrative of the Little Iliad, detailing the reception of the Wooden Horse by the Trojans, and the inevitable sacking of their city. Following the events of the Iliou Persis comes the homeward journey of the Achaeans, the stories of which were expounded upon in the
Nostoi. The Nostoi detailed foremost the drowning of Ajax the Lesser, the return of the Atreidai, the death of Agamemnon, and the revenge of Agamemnon’s son, Orestes. Homer’s Odyssey regales the tumultuous 10-year long return voyage from Troy of Odysseus, King of Ithaca. Lastly comes the Telegony, succeeding the events of the Odyssey, and having elaborated upon the return of Odysseus and the end of his life. In the Telegony, Odysseus heeded the words of the blind prophet Teiresias, dedicating an oar to Poseidon in the land of Thesprotia, and incidentally siring a child of the local queen. At the close of the poem, Odysseus was accidentally slain by his son of Circe, Telegonus (West 14-17).

Having come to understand what the Trojan Cycle is, and where within it fits the Iliad and Odyssey of Homer, it becomes necessary to ask: who was Homer, and from what origins does the written work of the Iliad as we know it today come? Homer, whose name is likely a pseudonym meaning “hostage,” is thought to have originated from the Ionian Greek colonies, as the language of Homeric poetry is demonstrative of the Ionic dialect (Hose & Schenker 445). There is, however, little conclusive evidence as to whether Homer was from the Anatolian city of Smyrna, the island of Chios, or the island of Ios. Although the Greek historian Herodotus supposed Homer to have been active in ca. 850 BCE (Histories 2.35), the Ionian poet is now generally thought to have worked in ca. 750 BCE. This conclusion was reached, at least in part, because Arctinus of Miletus, a student of Homer, was born in 744 BCE (Cline 42).

Homer is thought to have performed in the Aegean courts of Chios and Kyme, to name a few, due to their having known about the tales of Troy and having adopted the names of the Bronze Age Heroes for their own (Wood 128). The Epic poet also found audiences for his songs in Ionian festivals, namely the Panionion at Mykale. It was at these venues that Homer rose to a position of preeminence among oral composers. Such preeminence resulted in him being
succeeded by a group of singers on Chios who considered themselves his descendants, the Homeridae (Wood 128).

There is, however, much debate as to whether Homer was a man, a woman, two or more poets, or even a profession. In fact, according to author, historian, archaeologist, and professor of ancient history and archaeology at The George Washington University, Eric H. Cline, computer stylistic analysis of the Homeric works seemed to confirm, although inconclusively, that the Odyssey and the Iliad were composed by different individuals. Alternatively, the idea of Homer as a profession posits that one would become a “Homer,” or rather, a travelling bard whose livelihood was the singing of tales of the Trojan War (Cline 43). Following this line of thinking would imply that the written version of the Homeric epics was a transcription authored or recounted to a scribe by one who served as a “Homer.”

Although the nature of the poet(s) Homer is indeterminate, the history of the written work of the Iliad is far from. According to English historian Michael Wood, the Iliad was orally composed in ca. 730 BCE (Wood 128), roughly contemporary with the development of writing in Greece (Yunis 3). Although it has been speculated that perhaps the poem was composed after the advent of writing in Greece, or that writing was introduced specifically to author the Homeric Epics, the formulaic language of the works suggests that the composer was illiterate, composing for an illiterate audience (Wood 127-128). While the implication is then that the work must have been orally composed, it is worthy to note that the introduction of the Phoenician alphabet into Greece brought an end to the poetic oral tradition within a few generations (Schein x).

The Roman writer Cicero tells us that Pisistratus, an Athenian tyrant, had ordered the first transcription of the epic poem in ca. 550 BCE, approximately 180 years after its initial composition (De Oratore 3.135). This transcription was likely the tyrant’s attempt at securing
the work for Athens so as to solidify his rule via glorification of the Athenian state. It was under these circumstances that the Homeridae recited the work to an Athenian scribe for its initial transcription. There exist some 200 surviving manuscripts of the Homeric works, the majority of which are from the Renaissance era. Of these 200, the two earliest remaining manuscripts of the Homeric works originate from tenth century CE Constantinople (Wood 124-126). In the CE 860s, the Byzantines prepared a revised edition of the Homeric works known as Venetus A which would, according to Wood, become “the most authoritative edition of the Iliad” (Wood 125).

Alas, destruction befell the Byzantines in 1204 with the Sack of Constantinople during the Fourth Crusade, and again in 1453 with the Ottoman Siege of Constantinople. Nevertheless, prior to the ultimate fall of the Byzantine Empire, the Italians acquired many of the Homeric manuscripts as a reverence of Greco-Roman culture was on the rise in Italy. It was the Italian scholar Pliato who in the 1360s, having access to such manuscript, attempted translation into Latin. With the resulting popularization among the scholarly class, the translated works were first printed in Florence in the year 1488. In 1504, the Venetian Aldine Press, founded explicitly to print Greek texts, would produce the first widely disseminated edition of the work. The Aldine Press publication would result in seven major European editions of the work being printed in the 16th century (Wood 125).

The many cultures of humankind are perpetually in flux as new ideas and technologies from external cultures replace or reform traditional ways of life. Similarly, how cultures digest stories, be them local or otherwise, has evolved throughout the ages with the people the cultures represent. For a tale to be enjoyed by a culture in the mainstream, it must be tailored to what that
culture is experiencing and must provide them with a way of grappling with their reality. Authors and artists are philosophers in this way, and their work is their philosophizing.

The Trojan Cycle is no exception to these rules of cultural consumption. In order to understand how the tale of the Trojan Cycle has been handled both in classical Athens, and in our modern day, we must first understand from what factual event the epic poems of the Trojan War were derived— if there is one—and what this says about the embellishments of the tale. Once we understand how a story can be contorted from the historical event that gave it shape, we can observe how again the tale is modified by other authors and artists so as to serve their creative wants and needs. We can observe how medium and audience obligate the succeeding authors and artists to reimagine how they present the events, characters, and scenes of the Trojan Cycle. In doing so we will come to understand why and how stories are retold, and who oversees their manipulation. Warfare may be universal, but how the embroiled are felt to fare with conflict, and who is considered the lesser for it, are not.
PART I: The “Reality” of the Trojan War

“... all the Father decrees is death for both sides at once.

Until you Argives seize the well-built towers of Troy

or you yourselves are crushed against your ships” (*Iliad* 7.82-84).

Classical tradition tells us that the Trojan War transpired in approximately 1250 BCE. However, Homer, the poet who is responsible for the popularization of the war, is thought to have composed the oral tale of the *Iliad* ca. 730 BCE, some 550 years after the Bronze Age war. The authenticity of the Trojan War has been a highly debated topic since even before the time of the Roman Empire. What does/can archaeology tell us about the “reality” of the Trojan War? To understand what the archeological evidence suggests, we will discuss the historiographic element as constituted by the intentions and findings of historical excavators Calvert, Schliemann, Dörpfeld, and Blegen at the mound of Hisarlik in modern day Turkey, the site of Troy, and contemporary excavators Becker, Korfmann, and Pernicka. We must also consider the archeological evidence that is not from the site of Troy, such as the artifacts recovered from the Mycenaean Grave Circle A, the archeological discoveries of Sir Arthur John Evans, and the Ahhiyawā texts from the Hittite archives. As is evidenced by the findings of the archeological excavations both at the mound of Hisarlik and beyond, the Trojan War—or some version of it—did indeed occur in around 1250 BCE, the version of Troy in question most likely being Troy VI

Historical Excavations at Hisarlik
The first principal authority for the field of archeology at Troy was a man named Frank Calvert, an English consular official in the eastern Mediterranean region with permanent residency at the Dardanelles. Prior to his discovery of Troy at the mound of Hisarlik, in 1853, Calvert accompanied Charles Thomas Newton, British Vice-Consul at Mytilene, to various sites which showed potential for being the Troy of Homer’s *Iliad*. These sites included Pınarbaşı, Hisarlik, Ophryneion, and Hanay Tepe (Allen 379-386). Focusing at Hanay Tepe, Calvert managed to correctly date the Bronze Age layer of the mound, though erroneously suggested that the site represented the communal burial of the Trojans. From 1859 - 1864, Calvert began looking elsewhere to excavate, completing work at Çigri Dağ, the necropolis of Dardanos and Ophryneion, and finally at Pınarbaşı. Dissatisfied by his findings at Pınarbaşı, Calvert purchased a greater portion of the land at Hisarlik and began an excavation of his own. However, the project was costly, and the British Museum refused to provide the English consular official with the funds necessary.

On the 15th of August 1868, Calvert met Heinrich Schliemann, a German businessman who would become a pioneer in the field of archeology. Recognizing Schliemann’s interest in Hisarlik and his financial ability to carry out excavations at the site, Calvert offered his insight and limited resources (Allen 387-393). Schliemann was particularly concerned with proving the authenticity of the war as detailed in Homer’s epic poem. Under the recommendation and guidance of Calvert, Schliemann accepted Calvert’s offer and travelled to the mound of Hisarlik. *(In Search of the Trojan War Episode 1: The Age of Heroes)*. Although Schliemann would receive great fame for his findings at Hisarlik and is often considered the “father of Mycenaean archeology” (Cline 71), he was by all accounts an amateur, and by many considered a reprobate
who falsified many of his excavation journals. In 1870, without having received an excavation permit from the Turkish authorities, Schliemann began to dig illegally at Hisarlik.

Being an amateur (and archeology itself being a young and rather unscientific discipline), Schliemann’s approach was destructive and included the cutting of a 45-foot-deep trench directly into the mound, boring through several layers of ancient settlements (Cline 71-75). While drilling into the mound and digging too deeply, Schliemann, unbeknownst to himself, had demolished a portion of Homeric Troy, as well as precious structures from many of the other cities at Hisarlik. This would result in a minor falling out between the German businessman and his predecessor Calvert (Wood 56). Even after reconciliation between the two, in his archeological work at Troy, Schliemann failed to give credit to Calvert, his predecessor and guide (Cline 72). Nevertheless, Schliemann discovered that at the mound of Hisarlik there were several cities superimposed upon one another (see Fig. 1-1), the oldest of which was nearly 50ft deep into the mound. The discovery of a multitude of superimposed cities forced Schliemann to ponder the question of which level was “Homer’s Troy”. Ultimately, Schliemann selected the level known as Troy II, the oldest of the superimposed cities and which showed evidence of heavy trade with the mainland Greeks, implying an amicable relationship existed between the two. The pioneer archeologist believed that the oldest level at Hisarlik must be the Troy of Homer’s *Iliad*. In 1872, according to British classical archaeologist J. Lesley Fitton, in reference to Troy II, Schliemann “began to refer to the site as the Pergamus of Troy, claiming that he had proved, by the discovery of ‘a high civilisation and immense buildings upon the primary soil’, that this was the city immortalised in the poems of Homer” (Fitton 66-67).

Schliemann thought himself further vindicated in his supposition when, within a chamber of Troy II, he discovered a trove of precious wares that he would term “Priam’s Treasure,” a
cache that he would later have illegally smuggled out of Turkey, and sent across the Aegean to his home in Athens (Cline 77-78). Furthermore, although posthumously, Schliemann would also be vindicated in his suspicion that the world of the Bronze-Age palaces was undeniably Greek thanks to the decipherment of the Linear B script (Wood 121). Alas, in his lifetime, the German businessman was ultimately disappointed with his findings, for the city he thought to be Troy was too small in his eyes to be the Troy Homer detailed in the *Iliad*. Moreover, it would be realized later that Schliemann’s Troy II was approximately 1,000 years too early to have been the Troy of the Trojan War. Following excavations at Mycenae in 1874, Schliemann returned to Hisarlik and began excavations beyond the area he had thought to be the Troy of the Trojan War and found a grand house with Mycenaean pottery. This newfound pottery matched in date with the Mycenaean pottery discovered at Mycenae from the Heroic Age. This meant that the Troy in Homer’s *Iliad* existed beyond the walls of Schliemann’s ancient Troy (*In Search of the Trojan War Episode 1: The Age of Heroes*).

Schliemann died December 26, 1890 in Naples, Italy. His successor, German architect Wilhelm Dörpfeld, took over excavations at Hisarlik on charge of Schliemann’s widow, Sophia Engastromenos. While excavating at Hisarlik, Dörpfeld’s primary intention was to prove Schliemann’s theories. Dörpfeld recognized that the bulk of Schliemann’s archeological work had been carried out at the heart of Hisarlik. Therefore, the German architect expended the majority of his time and resources excavating the periphery of the mound of Hisarlik (Cline 82). Amongst the nine superimposed cities which constituted the archeological site at the mound of Hisarlik (see Fig. 1-1), Dörpfeld thought he succeeded in discovering the walls of the Bronze Age Troy, though the 700yd circuit of Dörpfeld’s Troy VI was smaller than that of Mycenae. The German architect also succeeded in finding a Troy that resembled the bardic
traditions about the Bronze Age city in Homer’s *Iliad* (*In Search of the Trojan War Episode 2: The Legend Under Siege*). Dörpfeld’s Troy VI was “a ‘well-built’ city with wide streets, beautiful walls and great gates just as the *Iliad* had told” (Wood 91).

The significance of Dörpfeld’s Troy VI being akin to the Troy of bardic tradition arises from what this archeological accuracy suggests about the bardic tradition of Homer’s predecessors. Homer composed his *Iliad* in the Iron Age, some 550 years after the historic Trojan War of the Bronze Age. Yet, there are certain elements of his story which would have been beyond his knowledge as an Iron Age poet writing about a Bronze Age war. These elements include the sloped walls of Troy that Patroclus had been thrust down from by Apollo (*Iliad* 16.821-822), and the existence of an older section of wall in legendary Troy’s circuit which had not been replaced by the beautiful walls that Homer attests were built by the gods. In Homer’s time, the walls of historic Troy would have been buried in debris, veiling both the sloped angle at which they were built and the existence of a portion which had not been replaced. These elements must therefore be the result of a loose bardic tradition from the time of the war itself to which Homer was exposed and employed in his drafting of the *Iliad* (*In Search of the Trojan War Episode 3: The Singer of Tales*). The Great Tower of Ilios, while it conceivably could be a fantasy, may also have been the result of such traditions.

In Troy VI, Dörpfeld had not only uncovered sloped walls, an older segment of wall in the circuit, but also an immense angular watchtower—still standing some 25 feet tall of an original 30+, and the base of a large square tower (Wood 89). The archeological evidence suggests that this tower, now reduced to a base, enclosed an altar, flanked the main gate, and had pedestals for cult statues, just like Homer’s Great Tower of Ilios. Furthermore, Troy VI showed signs of a great fire, and had many a building and tower that had been forcibly topped. Dörpfeld
believed this evidence suggested that the city had been razed by man (*In Search of the Trojan War Episode 3: The Singer of Tales*). It was this destruction coupled with the three elements of bardic tradition that suggested to Dörpfeld that Homer’s Troy was the very same as Hisarlik’s Troy VI.

The archeological successor to Dörpfeld at Hisarlik was an American by the name of Carl Blegen, who would concern himself with refuting Dörpfeld’s belief that Troy VI was the Troy of Homer’s *Iliad*. Blegen, overseeing new excavations at Hisarlik in 1932, reexamined all nine levels of the archeological site at the mound of Hisarlik. His primary focus was upon the successor city of Dörpfeld’s Troy VI, Troy VIIa. Troy VIIa was allegedly a shanty town built within the walls of the decimated glorious Troy VI. Contrary to Dörpfeld’s perspective, Blegen believed that Troy VI had been destroyed by an earthquake, not an enemy force. After this earthquake, Blegen insisted that the Trojans had rebuilt where they could, transforming the ruins of the grandiose and spacious city into a network of crude dwellings (*In Search of the Trojan War Episode 2: The Legend Under Siege*).

To Blegen, there was little doubt that Troy VIIa had been besieged, and likely that “the population from the lower city and perhaps from the surrounding villages had flooded the wealthy upper citadel of the town in the face of an advancing enemy force” (Cline 91). The city had been destroyed once again, this time by war, perhaps within a generation of being reconstructed. Blegen’s evidence for this belief in Troy VIIa being the Troy of the historical Trojan War were Mycenaean arrowheads found amongst the debris, skeletons crushed beneath the fallen walls, and a skeleton outside of the walls with a skull crushed-in from combat. There were also sunken storage jars and troughs for wine burrowed into the streets. On the basis of what he believed to be a bread and wine dispensary adjoined to a public saloon directly inside of
the main gate of Troy VIIa, Blegen inferred that a war economy existed within the shanty city (Wood 115). To the American archaeologist, this archeological evidence demonstrated that Homer had erred in his description of Troy during the Trojan War, in that Troy had not been the illustrious and spacious city that was Troy VI, but rather the meager network of hastily made shelters that constituted Troy VIIa.

Considering that the Mycenaean involvement in the Trojan War would have had to happen prior to the destruction of many mainland Greek civilizations, Blegen determined that the destruction of his Troy VIIa dated to ca. 1260-1240 BCE (Cline 91). It was in his preference of Troy VIIa as having been the city of the Homeric Trojan War that Blegen dissented from the beliefs of both Schliemann and Dörpfeld. However, as evidenced by an overwhelming amount of bardic tradition present in Homer’s *Iliad*, Troy VIIa was not the historical Troy of the Trojan War. The destruction of Troy VIIa likely came at the hands of the displaced Mycenaeans of Tiryns, the supposed seafaring people who laid siege to the kingdoms of the eastern Mediterranean at the close of the era of Mycenaean Greece (*In Search of the Trojan War Episode 6: The Fall of Troy*). The destruction of Troy VIIa likely transpired around 1190/80 BCE, some 60-70 years after the destruction of Troy VI in 1250 BCE (Cline 94).

Archeological Evidence from Beyond Hisarlik

A great deal of the archeological evidence that appears to confirm the authenticity of the historical Trojan War was not found at the mound of Hisarlik. Heinrich Schliemann’s discoveries in the mainland of Greece are one such trove of archeological evidence. Following his initial excavations at the mound of Hisarlik, Schliemann turned his attention to the Bronze Age Greek city of Mycenae, home to Homer’s King Agamemnon. As historian Michael Wood
writes, “though it had been deserted for well over 2000 years, Mycenae had never been forgotten” (Wood 62). Here Schliemann would uncover what is known today as Grave Circle A, a site which housed six shaft graves. Although the individuals uncovered here predate the historical Trojan war by approximately 350 years, thus debunking the idea that the body of the legendary King Agamemnon had been among the entombed, the artifacts buried with the royal deceased fit Homer’s description of the *Iliad*’s Heroic Age perfectly. Within the shafts of Grave Circle A are examples of “studded swords like the one Hector gave to Ajax” (see Fig. 1-2) and depictions of tower shields like those described by Homer (*In Search of the Trojan War Episode 1: The Age of Heroes*). This means that Homer had succeeded in accurately detailing the world of Mycenaean Greece, providing archeological validity to this aspect of his epic poem.

While Schliemann and Dörpfeld were convinced that they had found Homer’s Troy, English archaeologist Sir Arthur John Evans was of a different opinion. Unlike Schliemann, Evans was not self-taught and had received an education in archeology at Oxford. In 1894, Evans followed a trail of ancient tiles with a syllabic script to the island of Crete in hopes of discovering their origin. However, although the tiles prompted Evans to venture to Crete, according to historian Michael Wood, “at the time, the idea that a hieroglyphic system of writing could have existed in any part of prehistoric Europe seemed far-fetched” (Wood 100). Nevertheless, it was here that Evans, funded by profits from his family business, began excavations at the Palace of Knossos in 1900. During these excavations, much was found that linked the Palace of Knossos to Mycenae, namely Mycenaean stirrup jars and stone rosettes akin to those of the Treasury of Atreus in Mycenae (*In Search of the Trojan War Episode 2: The Legend Under Siege*).
To Evans, the unknown script, stirrup jars, and stone rosettes were suggestive that the people who ruled at the Palace of Knossos were a great bureaucratic power of Bronze Age Greece. He was convinced that the architectural grandeur of Bronze Age Mycenae was a product of Minoan labor and influence. Under such circumstances, Evans claimed that the force necessary to fight Homer’s Trojan War could never be produced by such a meager kingdom. Evans’ findings became the establishment view of the reality of the Trojan War for over 50 years (*In Search of the Trojan War Episode 2: The Legend Under Siege*).

Blegen would seek to refute Evans’ claims that Bronze Age Greece was dominated by the Minoans, not the Mycenaeans. In order to do so, he knew it would be necessary to decipher the Linear B script unearthed by Evans first at Knossos. Realizing that the wealth of texts so far unearthed was insufficient to allow the language to be deciphered, Blegen began excavations at a yet unexcavated palace in the land of Pylos, the homeland of Homeric Nestor. It was here that, early in his excavations, Blegen unexpectedly came upon an archive with a wealth of Linear B tablets (*In Search of the Trojan War Episode 2: The Legend Under Siege*). Using the quantity of tablets discovered at Knossos, as well as inscriptions from Thebes, Elefsis, Tiryns, Orchomenos, and Pylos, in 1952, Linear B was deciphered by the English architect and classicist Michael Ventris, together with John Chadwick (Wood 121). Evans had formulated his belief in Minoan supremacy years before the decipherment of the Linear B texts, meaning that their contents had not been incorporated into his postulation, and he did not live long enough to see their decipherment.

Following translation of the texts, most of which were administrative documents on clay tablets, it was discovered that the language was an ancient form of Greek and had come from the Mycenaeans of the mainland (Wood 121). It was also discovered that the Minoans of Crete had
written an earlier language known as Linear A, which has yet to be deciphered (*In Search of the Trojan War Episode 2: The Legend Under Siege*). The implication of the quantity of Linear B administrative texts found at the Palace of Knossos was therefore that the Mycenaeans of the mainland had invaded the Palace and ruled over the Minoans, not serving as subjects to them as Evans had argued. Therefore, with the translation of the Linear B tablets, Blegen was able to debunk Evans’ argument in support of Minoan supremacy, returning Mycenae to the forefront of Bronze Age Greece as a great kingdom capable of carrying out the Trojan War.

Evans sowed much distrust in the legitimacy of the Homeric Trojan War for over 50 years. However, as was the case with the unearthing of archeological evidence proving the existence of a powerful Bronze Age Mycenae and a razed Bronze Age Troy, Homer was vindicated in his descriptions of Troy, the cities which contributed troops to the Mycenaean war cause, and the troops themselves by legitimate Bronze Age bardic traditions in that they match the Bronze Age archeological evidence. For example, Homer remarks that windy Troy had sat atop a great mound, towering high above the bay below (*Iliad* 8.579). While these descriptors are factually accurate to the ruins of Bronze Age Troy at the mound of Hisarlik, the bay before the plains below Troy, which has now receded a great deal from where the waters reached in the Bronze Age, is thought to have still been in place during the Iron Age (Homer’s own time) (*In Search of the Trojan War Episode 3: The Singer of Tales*). This means that we cannot be certain whether this information is a genuine bardic memory as with the sloped walls, or whether Homer had inquired into these features of ancient Troy in his own time.

A matter we can be certain of is the fact that over half of the 164 places named in the *Iliad*’s “Catalogue of Ships” have been proven to exist, and all of those identified show evidence of Mycenaean occupation. Since many of the places identified ceased to be occupied following
the collapse of Mycenaean Greece, and were not inhabited again until after Homer’s time, this information must harken back to a bardic tradition from the Mycenaean world. Furthermore, at the ancient port-town of Aulis, where Homer says the great Mycenaean king Agamemnon had to sacrifice his daughter to Artemis for a fair wind on his journey to Troy, there is a Bronze Age sanctuary of the goddess (In Search of the Trojan War Episode 4: The Women of Troy). This exhibition of an intimate knowledge of Bronze Age Greece serves to further illustrate the authenticity of Homer’s words in the particular details he ascribes to the Bronze Age cities that he brings to life in the Iliad. Further still, according to historian Michael Wood, there is an oddity in Homer’s catalogue in that it “is full of strange political divisions. It ignores the Iliad by giving the chief heroes, Achilles and Odysseus, insignificant kingdoms . . . Perversely, most experts have thought that these divisions are so unlikely that they must reflect a real situation which once obtained in Greece” (Wood 137).

Just as with the characteristics of the cities detailed, Homer too succeeds in accurately describing Bronze Age weaponry and armor. Not only this, but “though he lived in the Iron Age, everywhere in the Iliad Homer assumes that the weapons and armor of the heroes are of bronze” (In Search of the Trojan War Episode 3: The Singer of Tales). Homer also succeeds in perfectly describing a Mycenaean war helmet sewn with plates of boar’s tusk (Iliad 10.305-310). Moreover, Homer’s description of Achilles as being vulnerable only at his heel would seem to be a tale based upon the full-body armor of the age. As evidenced by the Mycenaean-era “Dendra panoply” discovered in 1960, (see Fig. 1-3) when conjoined with shin guards, the only point vulnerable to attack would have been only the lower calf and the heel (In Search of the Trojan War Episode 3: The Singer of Tales).
The most compelling evidence from beyond the mound of Hisarlik is that of the archeological contribution of the texts from the Hittite archives. These texts succeed in proving that it was in fact the Mycenaeans under a great king who had laid siege to Troy. The Hittite diplomatic archive itself was discovered in 1906, in ancient Hattusa, modern day Boğaz Koy, Turkey. The tablets of particular importance to the Trojan War are those whose contents reference a great seafaring kingdom by the name of Ahhiyawā to the west of the Hittite empire, which was thought to be comparable in status to Egypt, Assyria, and Syria. In particular, the texts authored by the Hittite foreign office tell us of a conflict between the Hittite King Ḩattušili III and the city of Millawanda. The great rebel named Piyamaradu had been raiding the western lands of the Hittite empire, much to the ire of King Ḩattušili III. Piyamaradu was given shelter within the walls of Millawanda, a city revealed within the Linear B tablets to be Mycenaean, referred to by the Greeks as Miletus (Wood 182-183).

To the Hittites, Millawanda belonged to the Kingdom of Ahhiyawā, a nation whose ruler King Ḩattušili III would write frequently to implore the yielding of Piyamaradu (see Fig. 1-4). Although the conflict resolves with a reluctance on the side of Ahhiyawā and with Piyamaradu’s escape, these writings suggest that Ahhiyawā is a powerful Mycenaean kingdom. While Orchomenos, Thebes, and Iolcos were formidable Mycenaean kingdoms around the time of the Trojan War, according to both the findings discussed heretofore and historian Michael Wood, “archeology and the epic tradition surely point to Mycenae” (Wood 181). It is also noteworthy that a strong phonetic resemblance exists between Homer’s word for the Mycenaean Greeks, Achaeans, and the Hittites’ Ahhiyawāns, as well as the Mycenaean Greeks, Atreus, and the Hittites’ Attarissiya, the ruler of Ahhiyawā during the Piyamaradu conflict (Cline 57). This phonetic resemblance serves to reinforce the idea that the two in both
instances are one and the same (In Search of the Trojan War Episode 5: The Empire of the Hittites). If the equation of the Achaeans with the Ahhiyawāns is not true, according to Professor Eric H. Cline, it would mean that “we would have an important Late Bronze Age culture not mentioned elsewhere in the Hittite texts (the Mycenaeans) at the same time as having an important textually attested Late Bronze Age state or kingdom with no archeological remains left whatsoever (Ahhiyawa)” (Cline 57). Since this occurrence is highly unlikely to be the case, it is a safe assumption to equate the two.

The connection between the great seafaring kingdom of Ahhiyawā and the Hittites is important in order to understand the implication of the Hittite diplomatic office texts which talk of a conflict at a site called Wilusa. The texts talk of a beleaguered King Alaksandu of Wilusa, perhaps equivalent to Prince Aléxandros, also known as Paris, of Troy in Homer’s Iliad, who called upon the Hittite empire to come to the aid of Wilusa in the face of an Ahhiyawān siege. The Ahhiyawā kingdom was at the height of its power in the heroic age and had expressed interest in the lands of western Anatolia in modern day Turkey and the trade routes through the Dardanelles. Wilusa, due to both a similarity of supposed geographic situation and a descriptory likeness of key features and figures (such as Alaksandu), is thought to be Homer’s Bronze Age Troy. According to English historian Michael Wood, the Ahhiyawāns persuaded many allies of the Hittites to defect to their cause. Wilusa defied the Ahhiyawāns, instead electing to remain loyal to the Hittite Empire. For this, the Ahhiyawāns stormed the mouth of the Dardanelles and laid siege to the high city of Wilusa. Following the destruction of the city, the Hittites managed to repel the joint rebel and Greek forces (In Search of the Trojan War Episode 5: The Empire of the Hittites).
The archeological evidence suggests that it may be this sack of Wilusa that is the historical event upon which Homer’s *Iliad* and other poems of the Trojan Cycle were based. However, the motives for the war were likely far estranged from the *Cypria*’s elopement of Helen, the wife of Menelaus, with Prince Paris of Troy. For Mycenae, the 12th century BCE was a period of economic decline. Coupled with this economic downturn, the Mycenaeans were in the midst of financing a series of massive building projects, and experiencing overpopulation, threatened trade routes, and reduced levels of productivity. The prospect of conquering/sacking the wealthy cities of western Anatolia, namely Troy which commanded the Hellespont and was experiencing a period of economic growth, would have been a tempting one (Cline 82). The yield of such an endeavor would be a horde of new slaves from the west and riches enough to finance much of the debts of the Greek kingdoms. The slaves would serve as free labor, compensating for the declining domestic productivity while contributing only a minimal maintenance fee to the cost. Evidence of this very inflow following the war is found in the form of the Linear B administrative tablets from Pylos, some of which spoke of approximately 500 female slave laborers from the east who had newly arrived. These women were tasked with working on the flax plantations of Pylos, preparing the flax for use as rope and cloth (Wood 159).

Recent Excavations at Hisarlik

Scholars both contemporary with Dörpfeld and modern alike have taken issue with his proposed 700yd circuit of Troy VI which seems too small both for the Troy of the poems and the Wilusa mentioned in the Hittite archive. However, this quandary of the circuit would be resolved soon after the resumption of excavations at Hisarlik in 1992 under the direction of a
German archeologist by the name of Manfred Korfmann. According to Peter Jablonka and C. Brian Rose, Manfred Korfmann suggested “based on the data from earlier research at Troy as well as several new observations, that a sizable settlement must have existed outside the citadel” (Jablonka and Rose 616-617). In 1992, Korfmann, with the aid of German archaeologist Helmut Becker’s employment of magnetic prospection, discovered that ditches more than 600m in length existed approximately 400m to the south of the citadel of Troy (see Fig. 1-5) (Becker 114). The ditches, full of late Bronze Age settlement debris, were dated with the aid of pottery fragments as having been dug during late Troy VI and throughout Troy VIIa. Korfmann’s findings show that both Dörpfeld’s Troy VI and Blegen’s Troy VIIa were far greater in scale than initially suspected, resembling in much greater measure the Troy detailed in Homer’s Iliad (Jablonka and Rose 616-617). For example, the magnetic prospection revealed that Troy, with the inclusion of the newfound “Lower City,” was a minimum of 18 ha. In such a plane the city could accommodate nearly 6,000 inhabitants. Becker notes that, “following the fortification ditch to the west Troy VI grows bigger and bigger covering an area of at least 22 to 25 hectares, which would be enough for 10,000 to 20,000 people” (Becker 114). The magnetogram of 1994 revealed an additional Bronze Age ditch approximately 50 m outside of the Hellenistic/Roman city wall, suggesting that the Troy of the Bronze Age may have been as large as 30 ha (Becker 114).

During his 1996 excavations at Hisarlik, Korfmann also managed to reconstruct a wooden fortification wall some 30 meters long. Homer’s Iliad distinctly mentions both wooden fortification walls and trenches dug to combat chariot warfare (Iliad 7.509-511). The situation of the two is, however, attributed to the war camp of the Achaeans. The dilemma thus presented to Korfmann was “whether such features represented standard building techniques or whether they
embodied specific bardic traditions relating to Troia and its vicinity” (Korfmann 372). Since this is the first time that these two defensive structures have been archeologically established in this part of the world, if their existence in the *Iliad* is due to a specific bardic tradition, then this is further evidence that Homer’s Bronze Age Troy exists at Hisarlik.

Korfmann was also particularly sensitive to a possible connection between the Troy at the mound of Hisarlik and the Hittites’ Luwian city of Wilusa. The archeological evidence suggests that Troy was Anatolian in nature, possessing a combination of citadel and densely populated, walled Lower City. This combination had no parallel example in the Aegean or Greece. Furthermore, the walls of both houses and fortifications were built sloped in eastern style, and a great deal of Anatolian Gray Ware pottery has been unearthed at Hisarlik. The use of house-like tombs, funerary pithoi, and cremation is also heavily suggestive of Anatolian culture rather than Greek (Korfmann 373).

The historical Trojans also adorned nearly every gateway to their city with free-standing stelai of a multitude of shapes and sizes. Architecturally functionless, similar stelai composed the predominant idol of the stone and pillar cults of the east which experienced a resurgence in popularity in Syria and Anatolia of the second millennium BCE. According to Korfmann, the Hitties referred to such stelai as *huwasi*-stones and *danit*-stones. The stelai were both ritualistically important to the creation of the gate and inextricably religious in nature. A number of these stelai may have a connection to the Greek god Apollo, a likely refinement of the Asia Minor god Agyieus, a gatekeeper. Greek worship of Apollo Agyieus often took the form of outdoor monuments, much like the stelai of Troy, so much so that cultish stone monuments became characteristic of the god (Kormann 374-376).
A possible connection of Apollo Agyieus with Troy is significant because Apollo is the foremost protectorate of Troy in the Homeric poems. Additionally, according to the Hittite archives, one of the few chief gods of the city of Wilusa was that of the Anatolian Apaliunus, a god identical to the Greek Apollo. This connection is evidenced by King Alaksandu of Wilusa’s naming of him as a witness to the 1280 BCE treaty with the Hittite King Muwatallis (Korfmann 375-376). Korfmann believed that the connection drawn between the stelai and the Greek Apollo serves as further evidence that Wilusa and the Troy of the mound of Hisarlik are one and the same. In this instance, Homer’s equating of Apollo with Troy may very well have been based on genuine bardic traditions of Bronze Age Wilusan worship of Apaliunus, as the stelai are a relic of Troy VI/VIIa and would therefore have been buried or repurposed in other structures in Homer’s time.

As mentioned in the discussion of archaeological evidence from beyond the mound of Hisarlik, the Wilusa mentioned in the archive was an important trading center included within the Anatolian socio-political and economic systems. Wilusa was rich in raw materials such as precious metals from the Anatolian high plains, trained horses from the Pontus and Steppe regions, amber from the Baltic Sea, tin from Central Asia, and iron. Foremost amongst Wilusa’s trading connections “involved sea trade with the north Aegean, the Sea of Marmara, and the coast of the Black Sea” (Korfmann 380). In around 1700 BCE as the Assyrian settlement overland trade network came to an end and the restored Hittite Old Kingdom abandoned participation in Black Sea Trade, Troy entered a phase of Trojan High Culture associated with Troy VI. Since the wealth of sea trade in the Bronze Age was dependent on friendly agreements and contracts with harbor city-state leaders, Troy and its predominant sea trading partners and suppliers were likely allies by treaty. Since these cities would have faced economic
repercussions if the important trading center of Troy was destroyed, they would be keenly interested in the provision of militaristic support to Troy against attackers. Homer remarks in the *Iliad* that the Trojan army faced difficulties in communication due to the lack of a uniform language between soldiers (*Iliad* 2.912-913). This remark suggests that Troy and the city-states nearby did not speak a uniform language, as would have been the case with the Luwian Wilusa and the cities in its vicinity (Korfmann 382).

In 2006, after Korfmann’s untimely death, new excavations began at Hisarlik under the directorship of Korfmann’s colleague Ernst Pernicka. Pernicka, along with his colleague Peter Jablonka, have confirmed the existence of Troy VI’s rock-cut defensive ditch, noting that the second ditch found to the south of the first was likely representative of expansion during Troy VIIa. Pernicka and Jablonka note that the archeological evidence found in Troy VI demonstrated that “considerable effort was made to secure the settlement’s water supply” (Pernicka and Jablonka 1430). These efforts constituted “a system of artificial tunnels and shafts 200 m southwest of the citadel tapping two aquifers” (Pernicka and Jablonka 1430). This behavior suggests a perceived need by the Trojans to protect the water supply, perhaps stemming from a fear of siege warfare akin to the Trojan War of Homer’s *Iliad*.

Pernicka and Jablonka go on to note that in both the Gray Ware and Tan Ware ceramics or Troy VI-TroyVIIb, Mycenaen shapes were imitated. Additionally, although but a small minority of the pottery of Troy VI-TroyVIIb was imported, these imports consisted primarily of pottery from Minoan, Mycenaen, Cypriot, and Levantine cultures. These connections through pottery represent a heightened awareness of Mycenaen culture in Troy during the years of Troy VI-TroyVIIb. This heightened awareness would also make the Mycenaeans amply aware of the economic prosperity of Wilusa/Troy, and the potential gain to be derived from a
sacking/conquering of the city (Pernicka and Jablonka 1430). As Professor Eric H. Cline writes, Troy VI “was a wealthy city, a desirable plum commanding the Hellespont—the passageway from the Aegean to the Black Sea—and growing wealthier from a combination of trade and taxation” (Cline 82).

* * *

In conclusion, we have considered both the archeological evidence that is not from the site of Troy, such as the artifacts recovered from the Mycenaean Grave Circle A, the archeological discoveries of Sir Arthur John Evans, and the Ahhiyawā texts from the Hittite archives, and the excavation work from the mound of Hisarlik itself, the site of Troy. As is evidenced by the findings of the archeological excavations both at the mound of Hisarlik and beyond, a Trojan War did indeed occur in around 1250 BCE, the version of Troy being Troy VI. The war was between a great Mycenaean kingdom, likely Mycenae at the head of a confederate army of Greeks and Anatolian rebels, and Wilusa, the westernmost protectorate of the Hittite empire, under the rulership of the elderly King Alaksandu. Understanding the archeological “reality” of the Trojan War in context illustrates the disparities and similarities present between such and Homer’s Iliad, one of only two of the original Trojan Cycle poems to survive. The setting and powers at play may have been the same, but as for Helen and the majority of the great heroes of the warfront, the evidence is nonexistent.

Homer adapted his source material to fit the tastes of an audience steeped in the tradition of phalanx warfare, carnal gods, and fallible heroes, as did likely the other poets of the Trojan Cycle whose works are now lost. The product of their adaptation would itself be transfigured by subsequent generations to fit the tastes of wholly new audiences, each with their own set of struggles. In part II, we will work to understand how scenes from the Trojan Cycle were
employed to represent the conflicts of classical Athens in the century succeeding the
transcription of Homer’s *Iliad*. To do so, I have selected for analysis both a selection of
Athenian vase paintings and Euripides’ *The Trojan Women.*
PART II: Classical Adaptation of the Trojan Cycle

The Trojan Cycle has endured for millennia due to its powerful ability to express intense human emotions and mortality. This axiom was just as true in classical Athens as it is today, as evidenced by the works of art produced by the classical Athenian playwrights and vase painters. This section will look at how the works succeeding the transcription of the oral epic of Homer’s *Iliad* related scenes from the Trojan Cycle to their contemporary conflicts and the feelings surrounding these conflicts. To understand how scenes from the Trojan Cycle were employed to represent conflicts which transpired more than 700 years after the historical Trojan War, and over 200 years after the oral composition of Homer’s *Iliad*, we will consider both a selection of fifth-century Athenian vase paintings and Euripides’ *The Trojan Women*. The vase paintings selected are that of the Kleophrades Painter’s “Embassy to Achilles” hydria, the unattributed “Thetis consoles Achilles” pelike, the Brygos Painter’s “Iliou persis” kylix, and the Kleophrades Painter’s “Iliou persis” hydria.

Adaptation in Classical Athenian Vase Paintings

My reason for considering the mythological imagery of a selection of classical Athenian vase paintings in specific is due to the cultural and archeological significance of the medium. Culturally, the art of Athenian vase painting was at its zenith in Athens during the sixth and fifth centuries. Greek vase painters were widely celebrated during this period and sometimes took to signing their work. The Greeks systematically recorded the names of many individual artists for posterity, so great was the renown of the craft (Kleiner 108). According to classicist Thomas Carpenter,
“[w]hile in most ancient civilizations painting on pottery is relatively unimportant and is rarely a medium for narrative scenes--in Greece, particularly during the Archaic and Early Classical periods, it attracted significant talent and developed alongside sculpture and wall-painting as an art in its own right” (Carpenter 9).

The vase painters of classical Athens, as artists revered in their own right, had a great deal of agency in their adaptation of mythological scenes, exercising their creativity without obligation to honor the canon of the Trojan Cycle or the words of Homer, just as Homer felt himself under no obligation to honor the “reality” of the Trojan War in his epic poems. We see this in the group scenes and narrative conflations of the fifth century which will be discussed in further detail in relation to the four works of pottery selected. Archeologically, while there are thousands of surviving vase paintings, Athenian wood panel painting, woven fabrics, wood and ivory carvings, and even objects of gold and silver, have all virtually, if not completely, been lost (Carpenter 9). Similarly, whereas a majority of the epic poems from the Trojan Cycle no longer exist, many of the scenes from these poems have been adapted by Athenian vase painters. While it is impossible to analyze the epic poems which dealt with the sack of Troy, we can analyze surviving Athenian vase paintings which depict scenes from the sack. Therefore, Athenian vase painting serves best my purposes in that the artform and the artist alike were of preeminent importance in classical Athens, and the medium provides an abundance of examples which have survived and can be analyzed.

All of the vase paintings selected depict one of three scenes from the Trojan Cycle: the “Embassy to Achilles” hydria (water jar) depicting the mission of Odysseus, Phoenix, and Ajax the Greater to reason with a despondent Achilles, echoing a scene from the Iliad; the “Thetis consoles Achilles” pelike (jar for wine or oil) depicting the mourning of Achilles in the wake of
the death of Patroclus, similarly related to the *Iliad*; and the Brygos Painter’s kylix (drinking cup) and Kleophrades Painter’s hydria depicting the Achaean sack of Troy, both of whose subjects echo the lost poem of the *Iliou Persis*. What unifies these three scenes are mourning in the wake of loss, and the action or threat of destruction. This loss and destruction illustrated was possibly intended by the artists of classical Athens to mirror the agony and elation they felt during, and after, the Persian invasions. Therefore, in order to understand why they felt so intensely wronged, and how these stories of the Trojan Cycle best encapsulate their intense affliction, we must understand the historical context and backdrop of the Persian wars.

In 499 BCE, the Ionian Greeks revolted against the Persian empire, fed up with the Greek tyrants in charge of their respective cities whose sustainment came at the hands of the Persians (Austin 289). One year later, Aristagoras, one of the main orchestrators of the insurrection and ruler of the city of Miletus, came as an ambassador of the Ionian Revolt to Athens. Athens, while fearful of the Persians after the loss of Sigeum and amidst the plotting of the exiled tyrant Hippias, son of Peisistratos, realized the merit in victory over Persia and decided to send twenty ships with Aristagoras. Nevertheless, the Ionian Revolt failed, and Miletus was destroyed in 494 BCE (Robinson 232-233). In 492 BCE, King Darius I of Persia launched an attack on the Greek mainland in retribution of Athenian interference in Ionia. Following their occupation of the Greek island of Euboea, the exiled Athenian tyrant Hippias directed the Persians to the bay of Marathon. 10,000 Athenian infantrymen and a battalion from the city of Plataea rushed to meet the Persian army of 90,000 strong. Having the element of surprise on their side, the Athenian and Plataean joint forces routed the Persians in the plain of Marathon in 490 BCE, killing more than 6,400, and losing fewer than 200 infantrymen themselves. The Persians were forced to retreat, only to return ten years later under King Xerxes I (Spivey 216).
Upon their return in 480 BCE, and possessing an army of some 300,000 warriors, the Persians defeated a Spartan force of 300 led by King Leonidas I at the mountain pass of Thermopylae. Spartan defeat paved the way for Persian invasion of Attica, and ultimately the sack of an evacuated Athens and the Acropolis. The Persian armada then confronted the combined Greek forces in the Straits of Salamis, led by Athenian ships. The narrow passage of the straits and smaller size of the Greek ships made warfare for the vast navy of the Persians difficult, allowing the meager combined Greek navy to emerge victorious. A triumphant Athens, following the subsequent defeat of the Persians on land at Plataea in 479 BCE, would establish the Delian League to prevent foreign conquest of the Greek city-states, with itself at the head of the alliance (Spivey 216).

While the combined Greek forces may have succeeded in subduing the Persian threat, glorious Athens had been sacked and the Acropolis lay in ruins. Upon their return to Athens, the Athenians gathered up the many statues on the Acropolis mutilated by the Persians and buried them ceremoniously. This noble treatment of the statues is evidence that the Athenians wanted to remember the hardship they had experienced and the victory that succeeded. Many Athenians had lost not only their homes and belongings, but their loved ones who served during the Persian wars. The artists of a war-torn Athens would work to embody both the destruction done unto them by the Persians and the grief it wrought, although often presented independently of one another.

Yet, Athenian victory had been achieved, and this triumph against the Persians was important not only militaristically, but philosophically. The Athenians had thought the Persians guilty of hubris, “insolent and willful acts of outrage, a form of behavior arising from a lack of restraint or a lack of respect for lawful limits of various kinds” (Castriota 17), in their attack on
the Greek mainland. The Athenians neither committed nor endured hubris, for to them, it was understood that hubris left unchecked would threaten the sustainment of a lawful society. Therefore, in the wake of hubris committed, it was necessary not only to punish, but to commit an equal opposite reaction of moral excellence. It was this moral excellence that the Athenians felt themselves paragons of in their destruction of the Persians who would threaten to undermine the social order. Satisfied with their victory, the Athenians neglected to investigate the context and motivation of the Persian invasion, and instead began to weave myths of a great clash between antithetical cultures in which they were the just (Castriota 17-19).

The Kleophrades Painter’s “Embassy to Achilles” hydria (Munich, State Collections of Antiquities, Inv. 8770) and the unattributed “Thetis consoles Achilles” pelike (London, British Museum, E 363), I believe, strive to illustrate the desperation and worry of the Athenians in the midst of the series of Persian invasions into the Greek mainland which threatened to upend the social order. The former of these two, the Kleophrades Painter’s “Embassy to Achilles” hydria, was produced in c. 480 BCE, roughly around the time of the second invasion, although it is impossible to be certain of the exact date. The scene adapted from the Iliad is that of the embassy of Ajax the Greater, Odysseus, and Phoenix to Achilles on behalf of Agamemnon (Fig. 2-1) (Iliad 9.198-203). It is significant to note that the mission to Achilles scene appeared on a number of Attic red-figure vases, predominantly in the early 5th century BCE. Repeated elements between these depictions suggest a common prototype for the production of this scene: “Achilles sits on a stool mourning while Odysseus sits (or occasionally stands) in front of him, and Ajax and Phoenix then frame the scene when they are included” (Carpenter 201). While there are slight deviations from this prototype in the Kleophrades Painter’s decision to supplant Ajax with Patroclus as a framing figure, it must be understood that the Kleophrades Painter was
not unique in his depiction of the subject nor in the elements that he included. The context for this scene is as follows: both Achilles and King Agamemnon had been awarded captives as trophies of war, Briseis and Chryseis respectively. Chryseis is, however, the daughter of a priest of Apollo. The priest offers the king of Mycenae lavish gifts of gold and silver in exchange for his daughter, yet Agamemnon refuses. The result is a plague sent from Apollo upon the Achaeans. Agamemnon, acquiescing in the prophesying of Calchas, the Achaeans seer, that the plague would not end until Chryseis was safely returned to her father, relinquishes her from his captivity. He then contents himself with the captive of Achilles, Briseis, enraging the son of Peleus to the point that he refuses to participate in the war. Achilles, wanting to punish Agamemnon for his insolent decision to seize Briseis, petitions his mother Thetis, a sea nymph and daughter of the sea god Nereus, to call upon Zeus to turn the tide of war in the favor of the Trojans. Zeus, having been protected from usurpation by Thetis’ summoning of Briareus to defend him, champions Achilles’ cause, bolstering the Trojan war effort against the Achaeans. The Trojans, under the leadership of Priam’s son Hector, thus rout the Achaeans in the battlefield, as is the will of Zeus, and King Agamemnon fears that they will overcome the defenses of the camp and destroy the Greek ships. Heeding the council of king Nestor of Pylos, Agamemnon elects to send three ambassadors to convince Achilles to put aside his anger spawned by the seizure of Briseis, and to return to the war. Yet, the pleas of the ambassadors and the gifts of Agamemnon are spurned by Achilles, and he remains withdrawn from combat.

The Kleophrades Painter depicts the meeting of Achilles and the ambassadors of Agamemnon by having Phoenix and Odysseus positioned before a seated Achilles with his cloak drawn over his head and Patroclus standing behind him. Ajax the Greater is not featured in this particular scene, perhaps because of a lack of space. Achilles, as he is depicted here, looks
unsure of himself as he holds his head in his right hand, his eyes downcast as if in contemplation and even mourning, refusing to even make eye contact with Odysseus. Phoenix too has his eyes downcast, perhaps in empathy with the cloaked Achilles, or perhaps to denote the severity of the mission. Patroclus gazes out before him at the seated Odysseus and Achilles, intently observing the meeting between the two men. Perhaps his interest here in their parley is meant to evoke his inevitable championing of the cause of the ambassadors in his later rallying of the Myrmidons to arms. Regardless, in my view, although we cannot be certain of the Kleophrades Painter’s intent, his purpose in adapting this scene from the *Iliad* was likely to embody the dread of destruction at the hands of a foreign power. This unease is epitomized by the desperation of the Achaeans, who fear that the war against the Trojans will be lost on account of Achilles inertia. The depiction of a seated Achilles who would have been understood to have rejected the pleas of his fellow Achaeans, is therefore intended to be immensely frustrating to the viewer. In reference to a similar vase by another classical Athenian vase painter, classicist H. A. Shapiro, argues that the embassy to Achilles was not perceived as an isolated episode, “but rather as linked to another, now looking ahead to the chain of events, starting with the death of Sarpedon (.), that will finally end Achilles’ boycott of the war” (Shapiro, *Myth Into Art: Poet and Painter in Classical Greece* 20). Perhaps this was also the intention of the Kleophrades Painter, seemingly evoked by his supplanting of Ajax with Patroclus. It is Achilles' pride from which his anger and stubbornness are derived that pushes the Greeks to the brink of destruction and facilitates the death of Patroclus, the person dearest to him, thus ending his boycott. This frustration born of the impending threat of destruction evokes the plight of the Athenians in their warring against a force more powerful than their own, and which threatened a destruction of the Greek social order.
Odysseus remarks to Achilles that the Trojans had set up camp just beyond the Achaean ships and ramparts, and that Hector meant to bring destruction to the Greeks, ending their long siege on Troy (Iliad 9.280-294). The tension of this scene would have been understood by an Athenian audience familiar with the Iliad and would evoke contemplation of the hardships of their own time. Athens remained fearful of the Persians after the aforementioned loss of Sigeum and plotting of the exiled tyrant Hippias, wary of the consequences of war against such a formidable force. The differences between themselves and the Persians that the Athenians perceived were, according to classicist David Castriota:

...very different from the pseudo-biological or genetic racist arguments for national superiority that have arisen in more recent times. Insofar as they believed the national character of peoples to be determined largely by culture, fifth-century Greeks saw the distinctions between themselves and other peoples as an ethical issue, as the result of differing custom, training, and political organization” (Castriota 19).

It is therefore not difficult to perceive what sort of dread the Athenians would have felt at the threat of Persian invasion of mainland Greece. Conquest of Greece would have meant an abuse of Athenian culture and a forced assimilation to certain elements of Persian culture. The Athenians felt that their identity itself was at stake, and that the threat of such was pressing. In the depiction of the embassy to Achilles, I believe that the Kleophrades Painter meant for the dread of defeat embodied by the warring powers of the Iliad to remind Athenians of the threat of cultural upheaval that they themselves faced.

Succeeding the events of the embassy to Achilles, the unattributed “Thetis consoles Achilles” pelike, produced in c. 470 BCE, depicts the scene from the Iliad wherein Thetis, the mother of Achilles, brings to a mournful Achilles the armor forged by the blacksmith god
Hephaestus (Fig. 2-2) (Iliad 19.3-13). Just as with the Kleophrades Painter’s “Embassy to Achilles” hydria, there was very probably a prototype for the “Thetis consoles Achilles” scene depicted on the pelike. This is evidenced by several attic red-figure vases from the early and mid-fifth century BCE similarly combining the Thetis comforting Achilles scene with the presentation of his new armor carried by Nereids accompanying Thetis. The context of this scene is as follows: after having heard the pleas of both Nestor and the ambassadors of Agamemnon, and having watched the beginnings of the destruction of the Achaean war camp, Patroclus, realizing that the Achaeans faced ruination without the aid of Achilles, implores Achilles to join the fight. Discerning that Achilles remained steadfast in his want to refrain from combat, Patroclus then manages to successfully convince Achilles to permit him to don the son of Thetis’ gleaming bronze armor and lead the charge against the Trojan forces. Alas, although Achilles cautioned him against pursuing the conflict to the gates of Troy, demanding instead that he return when the ships are safe, Patroclus does not heed him. As he tries and fails to climb the sloped walls of Troy after having pushed the assault, Patroclus is stripped of Achilles’ brilliant armor by Apollo, and then felled by the spear of Hector, who then collects the bronze gear of Achilles for himself. The body of Patroclus is fought over by both sides for a long while before the Achaeans manage to recover it. Upon receiving the news of Patroclus’ death, Achilles is driven mad with loss, as evidenced by his smearing of soot and filth upon his head and removal of his own hair (Iliad 18.20-30).

Since Achilles is now without armor, Thetis has a new panoply fashioned for her son by the blacksmith god, Hephaestus. In the poem, Achilles is wailing over the body of Patroclus when Thetis comes at last to deliver the armor. It is this meeting, wherein the mother of Achilles consoles her child and delivers the god-made armor, that is depicted on the pelike. Achilles is
picted as being held by his divine mother Thetis. He and his mother are flanked by Nereids on either side bearing the arms of Hephaestus fashioned for Achilles. Achilles is wrapped in his cloak, and his eyes are downcast as if in sorrowful contemplation, a pose recalling scenes of the embassy to Achilles. The Nereids too mourn his loss, as depicted by the Nereid directly behind him covering her face with her hand in grief as she gazes upon the mother and son.

Achilles, as he is depicted in the *Iliad*, mirrors the grieving depiction of the son of Thetis on the pelike, as is exemplified by his words to his mother as she tries to console him: “Then let me die at once”—Achilles burst out, despairing—"since it was not my fate to save my dearest comrade from his death!” (*Iliad* 18.113-115). Nevertheless, it is of no little import that the death of Patroclus is the catalyst for Achilles’ reallocation of his anger from Agamemnon to Hector, ultimately urging him back into the fray of war against the Trojans (*Iliad* 18.389-394). Achilles feels responsible for the death of Patroclus, as it was his petty feud with Agamemnon that ultimately led to the son of Menoetius’ death. Thus, at this pivotal point in the poem, Achilles abandons his anger derived from a selfish pride in favor of one born of guilt and mourning over his loss of the one he loved dearest. It is this resolution amid sorrow that, in selecting the scene of Thetis consoling Achilles while delivering the arms of Hephaestus, the artist of this pelike likely meant to embody. The plight of Achilles would have been likely to resonate with the Athenian people in the wake of warfare with the Persians. Achilles, although stricken with fear and sorrow over the fate of his beloved Patroclus, arms himself in the armor forged by Hephaestus (*Iliad* 19.25-30). So too must the Athenians, fearful, according to art historian Fred S. Kleiner, “that Asia would swallow up Greece and that the Persian king Xerxes . . . would rule over all” (Kleiner 123), arm themselves for battle and eradicate the threat to the Greek mainland. The subject of Thetis consoling Achilles while bringing him new arms would
therefore perhaps have served as a rally for the despairing Athenians, demonstrating the merit in rallying in the wake of great despair. Furthermore, Achilles, in his choice to avenge his dearest companion Patroclus, guarantees his own death, as per the prophecy Thetis had told him, yet will deal a decisive blow to the Trojans first (Iliad 9.497-505). Thus, so too can a message of the virtue of self-sacrifice be derived from the scene depicted. With victory at the battle of Marathon, Athens believed itself to have achieved salvation for “all the Greeks by taking the lead in the struggle against the Asiatic menace [the Persians]” (Castriota 79). The Athenians considered their stand against the Persians at the battle of Marathon self-sacrifice “on behalf of the common laws and freedom of the Greek states” (Castriota 79). Therefore, the message of the necessity of self-sacrifice embodied by Achilles on the pelike would have been culturally relevant to a classical Athenian audience in the wake of warring with the invading Persians, as the virtue of self-sacrifice was equated by the Athenians with a sustainment of both tradition and the Greek socio-political order.

Representations of uncertainty, tragedy, and virtue are replaced by devastation and a deep pathos as we move into the Brygos Painter’s kylix (Paris, Louvre, G152, c. 490 BCE), and the Kleophrades Painter’s hydria (Naples, National Archaeological Museum, H2422, c. 480 BCE). Both the hydria and kylix depict scenes of the sack of Troy from the Trojan Cycle, possibly related to the lost poem, the Iliou Persis. Scenes from the sack of Troy appeared frequently in classical Athenian art and were often grouped together during the last quarter of the sixth century BCE and first quarter of the fifth century BCE (Carpenter 208). Just as was the case with the “Embassy to Achilles” hydria, since the majority of the scenes depicted on both the “Iliou Persis” hydria and kylix appear in similar likeness on a number of both archaic and classical black-figure and red-figure Athenian vase paintings, it is likely that a common
prototype existed, or at least that vase painters in the tight-knit potters’ quarter were familiar with one another’s work. However, both the Kleophrades Painter and the Brygos Painter provide unique alterations to this supposed prototype in their renditions of scenes from the sack of Troy. For example, the Kleophrades Painter’s explicit depiction of Athena as the statue to which Cassandra clings as Ajax the Lesser reaches for her is one of the first of such depictions of this scene to do so in classical Athenian vase painting (Carpenter 209). Similarly, in his depiction of Neoptolemus using Astyanax as a club with which to kill the king of Troy, the Brygos Painter creates a variant of the established prototype for the depiction of the murder of Priam scene (Carpenter 209). From the Ionian Revolt in 499 BCE to the battle of Plataea in 479 BCE, the conflict with Persia would have been manifest in the minds of all Athenians. The relative dating of these two works, and the concentration of depictions of the sack of Troy around this period suggests that the pictured destruction on each is perhaps meant to recall the Persian invasions of mainland Greece (Robertson 49). In the Brygos Painter’s kylix, the earlier of the two, we see a seated King Priam of Troy with arms outstretched towards Neoptolemus, the son of Achilles (Fig. 2-3). Neoptolemus holds high above his head the dead body of Astyanax, son of Hector, who was thrown from the walls of Troy by the Greeks. With the body of Astyanax does he intend to slay Priam, the grandfather of the child, who sits upon the altar of Zeus. The depiction of Neoptolemus using the impractical weapon of a child to slay King Priam would seem to suggest an unnatural cruelty in his nature.

On the kylix we also see the retaliation of Andromache, the widow of Priam’s son Hector, which has been visualized by the Brygos Painter as her striking down upon a Greek warrior with a pestle. The Achaeans in the act of slaying a fallen Trojan, his eyes cast downward at his victim, seemingly unaware of Andromache. The Brygos Painter likely includes
this tragic depiction to highlight the theme of hopelessness in the vase painting, in that the whole of Troy was protected from harm so long as Hector lived, yet in the wake of his death, not even his wife or child are safe from the ruinous Achaeans. The kylix depicts also the pursuit of a Trojan warrior by an Achaean, and several Trojan women cowering in fear of the ongoing conflict. These depictions of lesser characters were likely intended to contribute to the chaos of the composition, making more pronounced the horror of the sack itself.

The Kleophrades Painter’s hydria shares several scenes in common with the Brygos Painter’s kylix, namely the murder of Priam and the retaliation of Andromache (Fig. 2-4). However, unlike the Brygos Painter’s kylix, the hydria depicts the frightened King Priam bringing his hands to his bloodied head as he hunches over the dead body of his grandson Astyanax. Nonetheless, both the Brygos Painter and the Kleophrades Painter depict the deceased Astyanax present for the death of Priam, yet there is no surviving textual evidence to support this interpretation. This depiction of Priam together with and a dead Astyanax, the last of his line, as he is about to be struck down by Achilles’ son is likely meant to accentuate the plight of the Trojans in the sack of their city.

On the Kleophrades Painter’s hydria we also see the assault of Cassandra, a daughter of Priam, committed by Ajax the Lesser (not to be confused with Ajax the Greater). Cassandra, having been both a consecrated virgin of Apollo, and a priest of Athena, is depicted pleading with Ajax to let her be as she clings to the statue of Athena. This scene precedes her rape, and subsequent allotment to Agamemnon for service as a concubine. The inclusion of the statue of Athena by the Kleophrades Painter is suggestive that the assault is occurring within a temple of the goddess. For both the murder of Priam and the assault of Cassandra, according to classicist H. A. Shapiro, it is essential to understand that “[t]he barbarism of these two brutal acts derives
not simply from the violence itself—in wartime, old men and young children are always vulnerable, and women are always the victims of rape—but from the fact that they take place in sacred space, in sanctuaries of the gods” (Shapiro, “Lost Epics and Newly Found Vases: Sources for the Sack of Troy.” 229).

Depicted also on the hydria are the fleeing of Aeneas, a Trojan hero and a second cousin to the children of Priam, and his father Anchises; the retaliation of Andromache; and the rescue of Aethra, the mother of Theseus, by her grandsons (Carpenter 204-209). The flight of Aeneas and the aforementioned retaliation of Andromache are evocative of the near hopelessness of the Trojans in the midst of the sack of Troy. Aeneas and his father gaze back over their shoulders as Ajax the Lesser seizes Cassandra. Even the mighty Aeneas, a stalwart defender of Troy during the war, is unable to stop the Greeks, for to pause his flight would mean death for him and his kin amidst the sack. He and his father have only the hope that, after escaping, they can build a new life elsewhere, leaving the ruined city far behind. Andromache, as was the case in the Brygos Painter’s kylix, is depicted clubbing a Greek soldier. The soldier is caught unaware as he crouches next to a fallen warrior and is depicted turning to look over his shoulder at the widow.

The Kleophrades Painter depicts also the rescue of Aethra, the mother of Theseus and a handmaiden of Helen, by her grandsons, likely to evoke the unwanted nature of the war itself. Helen, in her youth, had been kidnapped by Theseus before her marriage to Menelaus. Theseus would entrust the watch of Helen to his mother Aethra, who in turn became the involuntary mother-in-law to Helen. Helen’s brothers, the Dioscuri, in retribution for Theseus’ kidnapping of Helen, kidnapped Aethra and forced her into the service of Helen. When Helen embarks for Troy with Paris, son of Priam, Aethra follows in captivity. While Aethra is ultimately liberated from her captivity by her grandsons Acamas and Demophon, she has lived
much of her life in the unwilling service of Helen, at Troy and elsewhere (Baumbach & Bär 350-352). The inclusion of the twice enslaved Aethra seems implicative of the fact that the war too was forced upon Troy by the coming of Helen.

It is important to note that the transgressions of those who committed some of the most impious acts in the sack of Troy, namely Ajax the Lesser and Neoptolemus, would be considered hubris, the aforementioned lack of restraint or a lack of respect for lawful limits of various kinds. For their hubris, these two men would earn the ire of the gods and would be punished in turn. For the assault and rape of Cassandra, Ajax the Lesser would draw the ire of Athena. Athena took issue with Ajax the Lesser for several reasons, foremost of these being that the impious act was committed within the sanctuary of Athena, as the victim clung to a statue of the goddesses and was dragged from the altar. While within the sanctuary, Cassandra is considered to be under the protection of Athena. In defiling the daughter of Priam while within the sanctuary walls, Ajax the Lesser impinges upon the honor of the goddess herself. Furthermore, Ajax the Lesser commits this act of hubris during a sack which was facilitated by Athena herself, thus fouling the work of the goddess and again desecrating her honor (Lee et al. 264-266). For his transgression, Athena, with the aid of Poseidon and Zeus, has his ship dashed to bits at sea. Yet, Ajax the Lesser survives, and boasts to the gods of his triumph over their will. For this boasting, he is drowned in the sea by Poseidon (Quintus of Smyrna 14.629-642).

Neoptolemus too, for his murder of Priam upon the altar of Zeus, is retributively slain for his impious deed. The tale of the fate of Neoptolemus is recounted by Apollo to the son of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra in Euripides Orestes as follows: “[Neoptolemus is] fated to die by a sword in Delphi, when he demands I give him satisfaction for the killing of his father,
Achilles” (Euripides, *Orestes* 2003-2005). Just as Neoptolemus slew Priam upon the altar of Zeus, so too shall Neoptolemus be slain upon the altar of a god as punishment for his impiety. The punishment of Ajax the Lesser and Neoptolemus does not, however, suggest that the gods were angry towards all Achaeans. Rather, even the Greeks themselves denounced these heinous acts, as is evidenced by Odysseus calling for Ajax the Lesser to be stoned to death for his treatment of Cassandra (Pausanias 10.31.2). The Kleophrades Painter includes a similar juxtaposition of Greek character on the hydria by including the rescue of Aethra by her grandsons Akamas and Demophon, demonstrating a respect for elders and love for family. In classical Athens, respect for one's elders was not only an affair of familial significance, but one of public importance in that it was legally required. Isaeus, a preeminent Athenian orator, tells us how Athens ordained that both grandparents and surviving great-grandparents must be cared for by an heir of age, and that, should an heir neglect these responsibilities, there would be both punitive action by the state and public disfavor (Savage 96) (Isaeus 1.39, 8.32). Therefore, this juxtaposition of what would have been perceived as high civility by an Athenian audience, in the midst of impiety was perhaps intended to evoke the notion that many Greeks had not been complicit in the sacrilege committed during the sack of Troy, and rather against such acts. Nonetheless, on account of such violent and impious acts done unto the Trojans by the Achaeans constituting the majority of the artistic programs, in both the kylix and the hydria, the viewer is meant to sympathize with the Trojans. Furthermore, in their depiction of heinous war crimes which dishonor the gods themselves, the kylix and hydria work to impart a lesson upon the viewer about conduct in war and hubris. The Athenian audience, familiar with the stories of the Trojan Cycle, would have recognized that the foremost perpetrators of hubris illustrated on the works, namely Ajax the Lesser and Neoptolemus, are justly punished for their crimes by the
gods. So too would the Persians, who the Greeks felt committed great hubris in their invasion of the Greek mainland, be punished by the gods.

Classical Athenian vase painting flourished in the wake of a great series of wars against the Persians. The repercussion of these wars on the Athenian psyche was a mix of elation and deprivation. Although vastly outnumbered, twice the Athenians had been instrumental in defeating the Persians, though at the cost of the desolation of their glorious Athens in 480 BCE. The Athenian artistic response to these conflicts was the production of art that encapsulated virtue, uneasiness, dread, and the devastating impact of war. The Kleophrades Painter’s “Embassy to Achilles” hydria, the “Thetis consoles Achilles” pelike, the Brygos Painter’s “Iliou persis” kylix, and the Kleophrades Painter’s “Iliou persis” hydria are but a few examples of work by classical Athenian vase painters who decided to adapt scenes from the Trojan Cycle, and they did so likely because they perceived the powerful ability of the Trojan Cycle to illustrate extreme emotions necessary to encapsulate the conflicts of their age. Yet, this is not true exclusively of classical Athenian vase painting. In the next section we will see how characters and scenes of the Trojan Cycle were adapted in Euripides’ The Trojan Women in order to encapsulate emotions of similar intensity to those displayed in the four vase paintings selected.

Adaptation in Euripides’ The Trojan Women

I have selected to analyze The Trojan Women by Euripides due to a similar archeological and cultural significance to the vase paintings discussed above. “There are only three fifth-century Greek playwrights whose works survive in more or less complete form: Aeschylus (c. 525-446, seven tragedies), Sophocles (c. 496-406, seven tragedies), and Euripides (c. 480-406,
eighteen tragedies and one satyr play . . .)” (McDonald 473). These 33 plays constitute only approximately one tenth of the total number of plays authored by these playwrights (McDonald 473). Of the extant plays, only a handful deal with Trojan Cycle, the bulk of which can be attributed to Euripides. Culturally, the plays of Euripides were performed far more than those of his predecessors in fourth-century Athens, awarded a position of preeminence in the emerging repertoire of classic fifth-century plays. While classicist Anne Duncan postulates that the fourth-century Athenian reverence of Euripidean tragedy may perhaps be attributed to a taste for the decadence or melodrama of his work, what is certain is that his work was perceived as the apex of fifth-century tragedy (Duncan 535). For my purposes, the age of an imperial Athens on the brink of self-destruction during which Euripides’ *The Trojan Women* was authored makes a fitting comparison to the ascendant Athens of the Persian invasions contemporary with the vase paintings discussed. Furthermore, since *The Trojan Women* is told from the unconventional perspective of the captive women of the city, it is safe to assume that Euripides was at least in part unobligated to adhere strictly to the canon of the Trojan Cycle.

As posited by British writer Derek Attridge in his introduction to Jacques Derrida’s *Acts of Literature*, “Derrida and the Questioning of Literature”, literature is an act of philosophizing, and the author is the philosopher (Attridge 1). Therefore, in order to understand Euripides’ *The Trojan Women*, we must first understand Euripides himself, and how both his early life and the society where he worked influenced his craft. However, Euripides lived in a pre-biographical society which documented only major events, not the life of any one individual. The biographical information that we do have comes predominantly from two ancient biographical sources structured in large part around anecdotes. These sources, according to classicist Johanna Hanink, include “the [Vita], transmitted with manuscripts of Euripides’ plays, and a dialogue by
the Hellenistic biographer Satyrus that is preserved fragmentarily on papyrus” (Hanink 543). The *Vita* itself is likely based upon the writings of third century BCE Greek historian Philochorus in his treatise *On Euripides*, the *Chronographia* of Eratosthenes of Cyrene in which important dates pertaining to Euripides and other writers were recorded, and the biographical work of Hermippus of Smyrna (Bates 2).

Euripides was born in ca. 485 BCE at the village of Phlya in the heart of Attica (Rollyson 270). His mother, Cleito, was likely a greengrocer of likely gentle birth, and his father, Mnesarchus, was a middle-class shopkeeper (Lefkowitz 189). In his youth, Euripides was both a successful athlete and an amateur painter (Rollyson 274). In around 466 BCE, he began his two-year service in the Athenian army which was embroiled in warring on six fronts split between the west and the east bay (Lucas 3-4). Around this time, there was a gathering of Greek thinkers in a powerful Athens. Some of these philosophers include the pre-Socratic Anaxagoras, and the first-generation sophists, a group of traveling thinkers and teachers, Prodicus and Protagoras (Rollyson 274). Following the congregation of these Greek thinkers, and in the wake of the death of the ever-influential Aeschylus, in ca. 455 BCE, Euripides produced his first trilogy for competition in the Great Festival of Dionysus, the *Daughters of Pelias* (Rollyson 275).

For half a century, Euripides would compete as a playwright both at the dramatic festivals of the Dionysia and Lenaia, and elsewhere in and around classical Athens, winning such competitions only four times during his career. In ca. 408 BCE, Euripides relocated to Macedon at the invitation of King Archelaus and died shortly afterwards. Euripides authored more than 90 plays over the course of his career, only 19 of which are extant (Roche ix). The playwright’s life transpired alongside the rise and fall of classical Athens, and this is reflected in his work. His youth was spent with a victorious Athens in the wake of the battle of Salamis. During his
lifetime, Athens would transition from an imperial and naval power into a nation on the cusp of defeat in the Peloponnesian War. (Roche 459).

In around 415 BCE, while still embroiled in the Peloponnesian War against Sparta and her allies, Athens began to prepare for a massive military expedition to the land of Sicily. The aim was to enrich Athens by forcing Athenian dominance upon the wealthy cities of the Greek west. Yet, in the 13 years prior, not only had Sparta destroyed the city of Plataea, an ally of Athens, but Athens had been forced to suppress revolts in several ally cities of Lesbos, recapture her revolted ally city of Scione, and conquer the resistant island of Melos. In each of these instances, the decision was either considered or enacted to slaughter all the men, and to enslave the women and children. The excessive desolation wrought by the powers of the Peloponnesian War would seem to evoke the folly of hubris in their lack of restraint. Euripides, around the date of the conquest of Melos, and aware of the prior hubristic atrocities of imperialism committed by both Athens and Sparta during their warring, authored *The Trojan Women* as part of a trilogy, which included also the plays *Alexander* and *Palamedes*, for competition in the City Dionysia of 415 BCE in which he would be awarded 2nd prize. There is, however, some disagreement among scholars as to whether the *The Trojan Women* was authored as a critique of Athenian imperialism at Melos specifically. Classicist Nancy Sorkin Rabinowitz addresses this debate, noting that, due to an idealization of classical Athens in modern times, many scholars are likely ashamed to admit that the brutal proposed conquest of Melos went unchallenged in Athens. Moreover, according to Rabinowitz, the chronology makes it impossible that *The Trojan Women* was authored with this proposal in mind, unless Euripides somehow knew of such before it was proposed (Rabinowitz 201). Regardless of the pertinence of the conquest of Melos in the creation of the play, Peter Burian argues that *The Trojan Women* was irrefutably
authored as a means of illustrating the shortcomings of warfare and the hysteria it wrought to his primary audience, the men of Athens (Burian 3-6).

*The Trojan Women* regales the tale of the aftermath of the sack of Troy from the point of view of the wives and mothers of the war dead. This narrative differs from what we know of the plot of the lost epics that discussed the sack of Troy and its aftermath, namely the *Little Iliad* and the *Iliou Persis*, in that *The Trojan Women* gives voice and spotlight to characters that are largely marginalized in the epics, the women of Troy (West 14-15). This decision allows for the telling of an entirely unfamiliar narrative about a wholly familiar conflict with characters of whom the audience would already be knowledgeable. In the play, the wives and mothers of the Trojan war dead stand mournfully in the Greek camp. They have just heard the will of the Greek kings from Talthybius, and now await judgement as to which king they will each be made to serve. Foremost amongst them is Hecuba, widow of King Priam of Troy who had been blasphemously felled upon the altar of Zeus by Achilles’ son Neoptolemus (as seen in the earlier discussion of vase paintings). Meanwhile, Athena, the once stalwart ally of the Achaeans in their war on Troy, enraged at the Greeks’ permitting of Ajax the Lesser’s rape and abduction of Cassandra in her temple, now enlists the aid of Poseidon in punishing them (Euripides, *The Trojan Women* 72-91).

The theme of intense grief that exudes from the noble women of Troy as they prepare to be dealt to Greek destroyers as slaves is accented throughout the play by acts of further Greek demonism. The first of these acts is the discovery of which Greek kings Hecuba and her daughters are to serve. We learn that Cassandra shall serve as a concubine to King Agamemnon, Polyxena shall be sacrificed at the tomb of Achilles, and Hecuba herself shall be a slave to the wife of Odysseus, Penelope (Euripides, *The Trojan Women* 255-295). Euripides’ depiction of
Cassandra in *The Trojan Women* is one of madness, born of grief over both the loss of her brothers and father, and her mistreatment at the hands of Ajax the Lesser. Cassandra comes dancing forth from her tent, clad in soiled priest robes, and brandishing a torch above her head. She feigns elation at the prospect of her union with Agamemnon, yet threatens the destruction of the house of Atreus (Euripides, *The Trojan Women* 326-380).

The depiction of Cassandra’s madness contributes to the overarching theme of hysteria at the loss endured by the Trojans, and the blasphemous nature of her allotment and service to Agamemnon. Cassandra was a consecrated virgin of Apollo before her rape at the hands of Ajax the Lesser, and therefore, the command that she shall serve as, not only a slave, but a concubine to the commander of the Greek armada, is ultimately sacrilege against Apollo. Since King Agamemnon is the commander of the Achaeans at Troy, his transgression is arguably worse than that of Ajax the Lesser in that it becomes reflective on the whole of the Greek army, furthering the gods’ ire towards them as mentioned in Athena’s discussion with Poseidon at the open of the play. Already familiar with the stories of the Trojan Cycle, the audience of Euripides’ *The Trojan Women* would have been aware that for his hubris in forcing Cassandra into service as his concubine, among other transgressions, Agamemnon would be punished by the gods with death at the hands of either his wife Clytemnestra, according to Aeschylus’ *Oresteia* (*Agamemnon* 1401-1406), or Aegisthus, the lover of his wife, according to the *Odyssey* (*Odyssey* 1.49-51), the former perhaps being more familiar to Euripides’ audience given its production in Athens. The consternation of Hecuba at the mention of the fate of Cassandra is suggestive that her intended service is an evil deed indeed, evoking the punishment of Agamemnon, and thus warning the viewer against unjust actions in war (Euripides, *The Trojan Women* 267-270).
The second of these allotments serves to greatly deepen the grief of the widow of Priam. Hecuba discovers that her youngest daughter, Polyxena, is to, not serve at, but be sacrificed to the spirit of Achilles, at his tomb. Further still, not only has she lost her daughters, but she herself has been allotted to Odysseus, the man who devised the Trojan Horse which ultimately led to the destruction of the Trojans. So deep is her disdain for the man and the allotment alike that in a trancelike verse she claims the King of Ithaca to be a “loathsome perfidious beast” (Euripides, *The Trojan Women* 301). As the play progresses, the acts of Greek injustice become rapidly more terrible. It is foreshadowed that Helen, the adulterous wife of Menelaus and lover of Paris who spawned the Trojan war, is to escape punishment. This implication is evidenced by Hecuba’s cautioning of Menelaus to “not betray [his] allies whom she’s slaughtered” (Euripides, *The Trojan Women* 1,191), meaning that he should ensure that Helen does not ride upon his galley. The widow of Priam fears that his having loved Helen makes him weak to her seduction, and that he may therefore permit her to live (Euripides, *The Trojan Women* 1,199). Helen is regarded by Hecuba as having the power to rivet the eyes of men, topple cities, and burn down houses, in obvious allusion to her betrayal of Menelaus and the ensuing conflict at Troy (Euripides, *The Trojan Women* 1,002). The uncertainty of the prospect of Helen surviving the catastrophe that she herself spawned grieves Hecuba dearly.

Nevertheless, the greatest terror depicted in Euripides’ *The Trojan Women* comes in the decision of the Greek kings to throw Hector and Andromache’s son Astyanax from the battlements of Troy, an action upon which the “immorality of the Greeks” (Rabinowitz 203) rests. The progression of events here is different than in the vase paintings we looked at, wherein Astyanax was dead before the sack of Troy had come to an end, as evidenced by Priam’s being alive in the paintings. The Panhellenic council makes the decision to kill the boy.
in order to exterminate the line of Priam, fearing retribution when the boy comes of age. Yet, since the boy would have otherwise grown up as a slave, far from his ancestral home and raised by his oppressors, he would have presented no threat to the Greeks (Euripides, *The Trojan Women* 806-815). The death of Astyanax is therefore naught but an act of blind fear and aggression, for which the women of Troy, namely Hecuba and Andromache, suffer immensely. As Classicist Nancy Sorkin Rabinowitz writes, “the murder of Astyanax makes it clear that innocent non-combatants pay with their lives for decisions they never made” (Rabinowitz 203). Rabinowitz argues that the death of Astyanax is symbolic of the true end of Troy, in that even he, the young son of Troy’s greatest defender, could not be saved from destruction (Rabinowitz 204). Not only were Andromache and Hecuba powerless to save the boy’s life, but by the time his body was returned to Hecuba, Andromache had already departed from Troy with her new master, Neoptolemus, the murderous son of Achilles. Having departed, Andromache cannot give her son a proper burial, therefore the responsibility falls to Hecuba, the grandmother of Astyanax, and the guilt of Talthybius, messenger of the Greek Kings. In relaying the decision that Astyanax should be killed, as was the case with the pronouncement of the fate of Polyxena, Talthybius, herald of Agamemnon, is depicted as being reluctant (Euripides, *The Trojan Women* 280-289, 793-806). This faltering in the character of Talthybius is likely meant to demonstrate the brutal nature of the commands sent down from the Panhellenic council, in that even King Agamemnon’s herald himself has difficulty relaying such to the women of Troy.

Euripides’ *The Trojan Women* is a barrage of one calamity after another. However, this immense accumulation of grief is purposeful in illustrating the desolation wrought by warfare, especially to vulnerable women and children as suggested here. The mercilessness of Euripides’
Achaeans is perhaps evocative of the dreadful imperialistic warfare between the powers of the Peloponnesian war exemplified by destruction wrought at Plataea, Lesbos, and Scione. The Trojan Cycle’s Hecuba, Andromache, and the women of Troy seem to represent the hysteria of the wives and mothers of those who perish in war, be them Trojan, Athenian, or otherwise. Euripides’ *The Trojan Women* presents war as suffering transcendent of national ethnic allegiance. Talthybius, messenger of the Greek kings, exemplifies this principle in his guilt at the deliverance of orders. He goes so far as to bathe the body and wash the wounds of Astyanax in the Scamander River before delivering his corpse to Hecuba, and to dig the grave as she dresses him for burial (Euripides, *The Trojan Women* 1,299-1,307). In *The Trojan Women*, Talthybius would seem to represent both the Greek who is cognizant of the crimes of he and his kin, and proper conduct in war in contrast to others among the Greeks.

Euripides authored *The Trojan Women*, a dismal representation of war, amid the Peloponnesian War with Sparta and its allies, and possibly even aware of Athenian preparation for a massive military expedition to the land of Sicily. Yet, although warfare was rife in his own day and age, Euripides did not express this representation of war in a contemporary setting. Rather, the aged playwright chose to adapt the story of the aftermath of the sack of Troy from the Trojan Cycle for his plea to Athens. The intense sorrow displayed by the well-known characters, and the terrible escalation of the crimes done unto them, speak to what it means to suffer as a human. Through *The Trojan Women*, the men of Athens seeing the performance in the Theater of Dionysus would be pressured to imagine themselves in the position of the fathers of the Achaean war dead, referred to as “lonely old men in houses without sons--sons they’d reared for nothing” (Euripides, *The Trojan Women* 403-404). This plight was just the same as the fathers of Plataea, Lesbos, and Scione who survived extermination at the hands of Athens or
Sparta. Hence, *The Trojan Women* is likely meant to evoke an impending ruination with an illustration of desolation in Euripides’ Athenian audience. To Euripides, the Trojan Cycle met this criterion due to the common knowledge of the myths in his day and the Cycle’s ability to embody the intense emotional distress he wanted to illustrate.

* * *

Human mortality is most evident in times of war. This is as true for Homer’s Trojan War as it is for the Persian invasions, sack of Athens, Peloponnesian War, and Athenian Sicilian Campaign. In the wake of destruction, those left behind are made to mourn the war dead or the otherwise lost. In the wake of an impossible victory, there is bittersweet elation. In the age succeeding that of the transcription of Homer’s *Iliad*, both the playwrights and vase painters of classical Athens found that the widely known and emotionally well-articulated narratives of the Trojan Cycle were a perfect engine through which to express Athenian emotional connection to the conflicts faced in their own time. Whereas the vase painters were working with scenes that had established prototypes of how to craft each detail of the composition, often combining a number of these scenes into single artistic programs, Euripides’ *The Trojan Women* navigates uncharted territory in the perspective from which the play unfolds. Yet, both Euripides and the vase painters selected exhibit agency in their work to manipulate scenes from the Trojan Cycle as they see fit in their adaptations for audience and medium, unbound to the canon of the Cycle. The vase paintings exemplify this agency in both the Kleophrades Painter’s explicit depiction of Athena as the statue to which Cassandra clings, and the Brygos Painter’s depiction of Neoptolemus using Astyanax as a club with which to kill the king of Troy (Carpenter 209). As for Euripides, *The Trojan Women* regales a familiar scene (the sack of Troy) but retold
through a wholly untraditional perspective (the post-war suffering women of Troy). The differences in adaptation between the playwright and the vase painters represent the necessary manipulations made by the artists in attention to medium, culture, and audience; the vase painters working around the year of the Persian invasions, and Euripides in an imperial Athens in the midst of war with Sparta and its allies.

Having considered both a selection of Athenian vase paintings, namely the Kleophrades Painter’s “Embassy to Achilles” hydria, the “Thetis consoles Achilles” pelike, the Brygos Painter’s “Iliou persis” kylix, and the Kleophrades Painter’s “Iliou persis” hydria, and Euripides’ *The Trojan Women*, the emotive properties of the Trojan Cycle, and the applicability of such to classical Athens, have become irrefutably evident. However, the stories and scenes of the Trojan Cycle endured not only up until classical Athens, but into the modern day in our globalized world. The next subsection of this thesis will discuss how the Trojan Cycle has been adapted in modern times, and in what ways these adaptations are similar and dissimilar to the adaptations of the past.
PART III: Modern Adaptation of the Trojan Cycle

In the twenty-first century, power has shifted on a global scale to those entities which advocate for “democratic, consensual, free-market-oriented governance” (Halliwell & Morley 5). The conflicts of this era have therefore necessarily been concerned with correcting deviation from these qualities of modern governance. While the schisms of this modern age seemingly have less in common with the conventional warfare and greater than life heroes of the Trojan Cycle, warfare yet persists, although changed, and still other conflicts unconcerned with warfare find similarity in the works of the epic poets of the Trojan Cycle. In fact, in the world of the twenty-first century, the Trojan Cycle has found new relevance in the mainstream. This section will look at how the media of the twenty-first century has related scenes from the Trojan Cycle to modern conflicts and the emotions surrounding these conflicts. In order to understand how scenes from the Trojan Cycle have been employed to represent conflicts which transpired over three millennia after the historical Trojan War, we will consider both the 2004 film, Troy, directed by Wolfgang Petersen, and Madeline Miller’s 2011 novel The Song of Achilles.

Adaptation in Wolfgang Petersen’s Troy

“[C]onsider the impact of the twentieth-century sciences on a civilisation that, however devoted to progress, could not understand them and was undermined by them; the curious dialectics of public religion in an era of accelerating secularisation, and of arts that had lost their old bearings but failed to find new ones” (Hobsbawm xi).

As illustrated by the words of British historian Eric Hobsbawm, the world of the twentieth century was one characterized by comprehensive societal transformation at an ever-
accelerating rate. The twentieth century saw a revolutionary rise in socialism, nationalism, racism, fascism, and economic liberalization (Hobsbawm 257). Life expectancy in the EU is high while fertility rates have plummeted, placing increasing financial strain on systems of social security (Valverde 29). Globally, armed forces have diminished as the conventional warfare epitomized by WWI and WWII has given way to low-intensity warfare, distinguished by nuclear forces (Creveld 18). The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists tells us that in 2020, the Doomsday Clock, a measure of humanity’s approach to global catastrophe, is only but 100 seconds from midnight, the portended annihilation (Mecklin).

This is not to say that warfare has no place in the late twenty and early twenty-first century adaptation of the Trojan Cycle. Rather, we see just such adaptation in both clinical psychiatrist Jonathan Shay’s book *Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character*, and in the projects of Theater of War Productions. The former of these two, *Achilles in Vietnam*, was published in 1995, and relates the “lifelong disabling psychiatric symptoms” (Shay xiii) caused by catastrophic war experiences undergone by Vietnam veterans during the war, to Homer’s account of Achilles in the *Iliad*. Theater of War Productions, founded in 2009, similarly works to confront the wounds wrought by war, raising awareness of post-war psychological trauma through the dramatic readings of plays, including both *Ajax* and *Philoctetes* by Sophocles, and subsequent discussion with production audiences about the underlying themes (*Theater of War Productions*). In both instances, the grief derived from war is of central importance in their adaptation of the narratives or characters from the Trojan Cycle, just as was the case with the adaptations of the Trojan Cycle from classical Athens that we considered. Nevertheless, in the twenty-first century, warfare on the large-scale is no longer a universal covenant. This is because, although military endeavors themselves have not ceased,
the warring between major military powers has, for fear of immediate absolute destruction in an
age of nuclear weapons.

In the twenty-first century, people are living longer lives with less familial ties in a world
perpetually on the brink of destruction. The essence of modern existence is an incessant
uneasiness over safety and companionship, or the lack thereof. For our purposes, the importance
of recognizing the intense uneasiness of the twenty-first century comes in the fact that Wolfgang
Petersen’s *Troy* (2004) is evocative of this in its adaptation of the Trojan Cycle. *Troy* (2004) was
selected due to both the cultural relevance of the film and the severe manipulations made to the
Trojan Cycle in the adaptation of scenes from such. A Hollywood blockbuster with an estimated
production cost of $175,000,000, the twenty-first century relevance of *Troy* (2004) comes in the
mainstream popularity that the film achieved, unrivaled by any prior cinematic production of an
adaptation of the Trojan Cycle (IMDb, *Troy*). Wolfgang Petersen adapted the Trojan Cycle to
create a film that would, and did, match the expectations of a modern audience of what a
Hollywood blockbuster should be. The drastic blatant manipulations to the source material
necessary to meet modern expectations allow us to speculate upon the ways in which twenty-first
century audiences differ from the audiences of the ancient epic poets of the Trojan Cycle. In
doing so, we can understand the nature of the culture that produced such expectations, and
contrast such against the culture in which Madeline Miller authored *The Song of Achilles* (2011).

The story of *Troy* (2004) contains narrative components from the *Cypria*, the *Iliad*, the
*Aethiopis*, the *Little Iliad*, and the *Iliou Persis*, but in some key respects, the plot is significantly
altered. The film opens with the conquest of Thessaly by Agamemnon, king of Mycenae, as part
of his effort to form an alliance between all of the Greek kingdoms. Wishing to avoid warfare, a
spiteful Agamemnon calls upon Achilles to best the champion of King Triopas of Thessaly. In
Sparta, King Menelaus negotiates a peace treaty with Prince Hector and Prince Paris of Troy. Alas, Helen, the wife of Menelaus, has fallen in love with Prince Paris, and upon his entreaty, returns to Troy with him. Agamemnon, in retribution for the seizure of his brother’s wife, and in hopes of controlling the Aegean Sea, rallies the armies of the Greek kingdoms and sails for Troy.

Achilles, although at odds with Agamemnon, is urged to Troy by Thetis’ promise of everlasting glory at the cost of an early death, and Odysseus’ entreaty. Achilles leads the assault on the beach of Troy, sacking the Temple of Apollo and besting the horsemen of Hector who ride to meet his Myrmidons. It is important to note that in the film, the Trojans ride upon horseback (which would not have been the case in the historical Trojan War), and that the character of Briseis is a conflation of the Briseis of the Trojan Cycle and Cassandra, the daughter of Priam. The Briseis of the film is a priestess and consecrated virgin of Apollo (the station of Cassandra) and the cousin of Paris and Hector, not the wife, and to-be widow, of Prince Mynes of Lyrnessus as was the case in the Trojan Cycle. Cassandra is neither depicted nor mentioned in Wolfgang Petersen’s Troy, and her place in the depiction of the royal family of Troy is usurped by Briseis. Nevertheless, Briseis is taken from the Temple of Apollo and given to Achilles, who becomes fond of the priestess. Agamemnon, spiteful towards a disrespectful Achilles, seizes Briseis for his own, an action in response to which Achilles and his Myrmidons temporarily refrain from further combat.

The next day, Prince Paris challenges Menelaus to single combat as a means of ending the warfare, yet flees when his life is in peril. Menelaus, in pursuing Paris, is slain by Hector--in great contrast to the story of the Iliad--and the parley quickly devolves into warfare. The tide of war favors the well-organized Trojans, resulting in the death of Ajax the Greater and
Agamemnon’s calling for retreat. Briseis, discarded by Agamemnon that evening, is saved from the Greek soldiers by Achilles. She tries to kill the prince later that night, but instead becomes his lover, an act which strengthens his resolve to sail homeward. After some debate, the Trojans decide to attack the following morning with Hector leading the charge. However, soon after the battle begins, Hector and Odysseus agree to a pause in the conflict, as Hector has killed Patroclus who had secretly garbed himself in Achilles’ armor and led the Myrmidons to war. For this, Achilles forgoes his inertia and rides to the gates of Troy to challenge Hector to single combat. The death of Hector is followed by a 12 day pause in conflict, in which time the Greeks construct Odysseus’ Wooden Horse. The Trojans, having been led to presume that the Greeks fled over concern of a plague, bring the Wooden Horse within the walls of the city against the wishes of Prince Paris. That night, the sack of Troy begins in which Priam and Agamemnon both perish, Helen and the women of Troy escape from destruction through a hidden passage exposed to Andromache by Hector, Achilles is slain by Paris while trying to save Briseis, and the she and Paris escape together as the Greeks arrive en masse at the palace.

While several major plot changes have been made to the source material of the film, varying from the adaptation of the Athenian artists and playwrights, the story is nonetheless an adaptation of the Trojan Cycle. These changes can be attributed to the difference of medium, culture, and audience between the film, Athenian artists, and the Epic Poems. For instance, the choice to depict the whole of the war at Troy as taking place over the course of 17 days as opposed to 10 years can likely be attributed to the condensing of a narrative traditionally told over the course of the Cypria, the Iliad, the Aethiopis, the Little Iliad, and the Iliou Persis into a film of 163 minutes. The decision to omit Cassandra, Hecuba, and Chryseis was likely made due to the fact that, whereas the Athenian vase painters and poets who adapted the Trojan Cycle
worked for an audience familiar with the characters and scenes portrayed, modern audiences are widely not. The omission of several characters and the conflation of others was likely meant to ease audiences of the twenty-first century into the story by keeping the cast small and the focus on the traditionally important characters. In a Hollywood epic, “[m]yth is embodied in a larger-than-life story that serves as the context, the value system projected subconsciously, for the heroic image to arise, take flesh and be worshiped--while the opponent is abhorred---by the masses” (Santas 55). The trimming of the cast of characters therefore serves to satisfy ingrained American expectations about a blockbuster epic movie by focusing the narrative on the conflict between protagonist and antagonist.

There are also the premature deaths of Menelaus and Ajax the Greater, the survival of Paris, the escape of the women of Troy and Helen from Greek capture, the omission of the gods, and the likely de-romanticization of the relationship between Achilles and Patroclus. The decision to have Menelaus die halfway through can perhaps be attributed to the film attempting to antagonize Agamemnon against Troy itself, affirming his resolve for warfare. In Troy (2004), Agamemnon employs Menelaus’ loss of Helen as sufficient justification to rally the Greeks and besiege the city of Troy, an imperial endeavor he had long since desired to undertake to further his own objective of controlling the Aegean Sea. Yet, with the death of Menelaus, the brother of the war-effort leader, the war becomes personal to Agamemnon. As now the sole driver for the war at Troy, the personal investment of Agamemnon is likely meant to demonstrate that the war-effort will be sustained, prefacing the notion that there must necessarily be only one victorious army. The premature death of Ajax the Greater in the film serves likely to demonstrate the battle prowess of Hector. According to the Iliad, “best by far of the men was Telamonian Ajax while Achilles raged apart” (Iliad 2.872-874). Troy (2004), in having Hector slay Ajax the Greater,
likely means to suggest that only Achilles even remotely stands a chance in combat against the Trojan prince.

Both the survival of Paris and the escape of the Trojan women and Helen from Greek capture in the film can likely be attributed to the ubiquity of the ‘happy ending’ in Hollywood cinema (MacDowell 1). The ‘happy ending’ is a satisfying conclusion to the events of the story and serves to confirm established values (MacDowell 10). In *Troy* (2004), the problematic love between Helen and Paris is one of such established values at the onset of the film and is confirmed by their survival of the sack of Troy. Paris remarks to Helen as she prepares to flee the city, “[w]e will be together again, in this world or the next. We will be together” (*Troy*, 2004), indicating that while their relationship may have come to an end, their memory of, and appreciation for, the love they hold for one another will endure. The survival of the Trojan women, victims of the whole affair, spares the audience from the sense of loss accompanying unnecessary casualty, instead substituting an uneasiness around a forced displacement (MacDowell 42). Having the women of Troy survive makes the finale of *Troy* (2004) more ‘happy’, as per the Hollywood ‘happy ending’, while still retaining a sense of misfortune at the end of the conflict. In ancient Greek culture, Paris would have been considered to have committed hubris in his eloping with Helen, the wife of Menelaus, as in both the Homeric age and in classical Greece she would have been effectively the property of her husband (Savage 67); moreover, according to Nigel Guy Wilson, “at the heart of Paris’ crime is his violation of the custom of guest-friendship [(the sacred codes of *xenia*)]” (Wilson 371), that had been shown to him by Menelaus at Sparta. The ancient Greeks believed that, should one’s wife be found to have a paramour, the lover should be justly killed, and the husband adjudged no guilt of murder (Savage 66). Therefore, to the audiences of Homer, the decision of *Troy* (2004) to have Paris
survive would perhaps have been frowned upon. The omission of the gods from the film is likely meant to contribute to the unease surrounding the conflict, and to perhaps “[free] the filmmakers from having the added burden of describing deities from long ago” (Santas 46), whose function as “divine intermediaries between man’s works and his unalterable fate” (Santas 46) in Homer’s world may not have been readily comprehensible to modern audiences. Whereas in the Iliad we often see direct interference in the war by the Olympians, the film is devoid of such contact. Hector, the champion of Troy and son of Priam, in consideration of the sack of the temple of Apollo by Achilles, remarks to the Trojan war council that “[t]he gods won't fight this war for us” (Troy, 2004). This unease derived of godlessness and fate being placed in the hands of man alone in the film is also seemingly indicative of our modern age. As Professor and Chair of the Department of Religion and Philosophy at Lebanon Valley College Jeffrey W. Robbins writes in reference to the twenty-first century, “we live in the postmetaphysical age in which there are no absolute truths” (Robbins 17).

As to the likely de-romanticization of the relationship between Achilles and Patroclus, although not explicitly stated in the poem, the intimacy of the bond between Achilles and Patroclus in Homer’s Iliad implies that the two men were lovers. This is suggested by the profundity of Achilles’ mourning, even after both the death of Hector and the funeral games of Patroclus:

“But Achilles kept on grieving for his [beloved companion],

the memory burning on ...

and all-subduing sleep could not take him,

not now, he turned and twisted, side to side,

he longed for Patroclus' manhood, his gallant heart--” (Iliad 24.4-8).
The film, however, elects to make Patroclus and Achilles cousins instead, and Achilles a manner of mentor to his young relative. We learn this during Odysseus’ recruitment of Achilles to the war effort, as Patroclus and he had been sparring only moments before, and Achilles introduces him to Odysseus by familial relation. In *Troy* (2004), upon discovering that Patroclus has perished, Achilles becomes indignant, brutalizing both Eudorous, one of the commanders in his service, and Briseis in his rage. This enraged depiction in the film is contrary to the hysterical mourning that Achilles in the *Iliad* undergoes upon discovering the death of Patroclus (*Iliad* 18.20-30). Although in both the film and in the *Iliad* Achilles is urged by the death of Patroclus to set aside his anger towards Agamemnon and to re-enter combat for the purpose of killing Hector, the Achilles of the *Iliad* differs from his cinematic counterpart in his seeming to have lost the will to live, demonstrative of a greater depth of sorrow at the loss of Patroclus (*Iliad* 18.113-115). The film likely deviates from such an expression of sorrow due to the de-romanticization of the relationship, which results in a lessening of intensity of the bond between the two men.

Nevertheless, the decision to de-sexualize the relationship between these two characters was likely made due to the global contestation over the acceptance of homosexuality in 2004 when the film was released, or at least over the notion of having a homosexual protagonist. We see this contention over homosexuality in the US during the late 90s and early 2000s, when politicians were forced to take a stance either for or against the lesbian and gay movement, dichotomizing the political sphere on party lines (Fetner 102). As for on the global scale, in 2003, a resolution put forth by the Brazilian delegation to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation was vehemently
opposed by “the Vatican, Zimbabwe, Pakistan (leading the Organization of Islamic Conference or OIC), Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, and Bahrain” (United Nations Human Rights Commission 3).

We see this early twenty-first century contention over the notion of having a homosexual protagonist exemplified in the institutional response to the 2005 film Brokeback Mountain, directed by Ang Lee. The film Brokeback Mountain takes place in 1963 and is about two young men who are hired to look after sheep for the summer on a mountain in Wyoming, and the intense emotional and sexual bond they form. This bond continues over the next twenty years of their separate lives in the form of occasional outings together. While the film received numerous awards and, with a budget of only 14 million dollars, earned more than 83 million dollars in the US, and 95 million dollars abroad during its 133 day run, there was a great deal of conservative backlash at the film and its premise (Patterson 42-43). For instance, many members of the Academy Awards “refused to watch the film because of its content, or rather, because of their preconceptions and prejudices about its content” (Patterson 42). Throughout America, and via all forms of media, a substantial number of people regarded the film with hostility and ridicule (Patterson 43). Similarly, the 2004 film Alexander faced much the same criticism as Brokeback Mountain due to its depiction of Alexander the Great as bisexual. We see this opposition seemingly exemplified in both a lawsuit proposed by some 25 Greek lawyers against both the film’s director Oliver Stone, and Warner Bros, on the grounds that the film was "not a true depiction of Alexander's life" (“Greek lawyers halt Alexander case”), and poor performance at the box office. Alexander (2004), which depicts the life of Alexander the Great and his romance with his childhood friend Hephaestion, had an estimated production cost of $155,000,000, and cumulatively grossed only $167,298,192 worldwide (IMDb, Alexander). Troy (2004), similar to Alexander (2004) both as an epic historical drama film and in approximate estimated production
cost, likely avoided including a homosexual protagonist so as to not face similar conservative backlash and financial ruin. This decision would have been at odds with the opinions of the ancient audiences of Homer, in that ancient Greek aristocratic culture was one in which “homosexual relations were at home in the symposium, athletics, and civic/religious ritual” (Hubbard 21).

Nevertheless, for *Troy* (2004), Director Wolfgang Petersen and screenplay writer David Benioff likely undertook the arduous task of adapting the Trojan Cycle to the medium of a Hollywood cinematic blockbuster likely because they wanted to express the rampant uneasiness of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, and acknowledged that the emotive capacity of the Cycle was a fitting engine through which to achieve such. We see an example of this uneasiness early in the film with the seizure of Helen by Paris. Upon discovering the stowaway Helen aboard his homeward bound vessel, Prince Hector is enraged at his brother Paris, and fears Greek retaliation. This foreboding is exemplified in Hector’s remarking to Paris: “you’d let Troy burn for this woman? I won’t let you start a war for her” (*Troy*, 2004). The viewer is made aware that destruction shall come if Helen is taken back to Troy, but it is yet uncertain in what form. We see an uncertainty also in the discussion of Priam with his councilors Velior, a Trojan priest in the film; Archeptolemus, a high priest of Apollo in the film; and Glaucus, who in the Trojan Cycle is a captain under Sarpedon, and in the film is a nondescript captain of Trojan forces, over the plausibility of victory against the Greeks. After the Greek storming of the beach, King Priam himself is uncertain of victory, as is evidenced by his asking of Glaucus if the Trojans can triumph. The Trojans are outnumbered two-to-one, and the council is made to place their faith of triumph in a farmer’s report of an eagle with a serpent in its talons which perhaps foreshadows a great victory. This dubious prophesying coupled with the uncertainty of Priam,
the king of Troy, over a matter with such dire consequences to the Trojans and their allies makes uncertain the destiny of the city for the modern audience unfamiliar with the Trojan Cycle.

Assuming again that modern audiences are much less likely to be knowledgeable about the scenes and characters of the Trojan Cycle than their predecessors, when Patroclus strides forth in Achilles’ armor, the viewer would be roused into believing that he is Achilles, and that his fated match with Hector is about to commence. Since the fall of Ajax the Greater positions Achilles in the eyes of the viewer as the only man capable of defeating Hector, Hector’s sundering of Patroclus’ (in the guise of Achilles) neck is confounding, in that it seemingly contradicts the narrative. Yet, it is Patroclus, and the feeling of dread shifts against the Trojans in anticipation of the wrath of Achilles. This shifting of dread is significant in that In Troy (2004), the viewer is made to sympathize with both warring parties, as is evidenced by our being shown both the aforementioned despair of Priam, and a despondent Odysseus in the wake of the routing of the Greeks after the death of Menelaus. The champion of each faction, namely Achilles for the Greeks and Hector for the Trojans, are all that stand between their kin and annihilation. Therefore, when Hector, against the wishes of his wife Andromache, descends the walls of Troy to meet Achilles in single combat, it is understood that the fate of the armies shall therein be decided. The death of Hector signifies the ruin of Troy; a realization of the prophesying of the crown prince when he first discovered the stowaway Helen. The viewer would understand this, and thus meet Hector’s defeat with a dread of what is to befall the fortress city. This sentiment is shared by Homer’s Iliad, wherein, upon defeating Hector, Achilles rhetorically asks his men whether the Trojans will “abandon the city heights with this man fallen? Or brace for a last, dying stand though Hector's gone?” (Iliad 452-453). Here, Achilles equates the death of Hector with the inevitability of the destruction of Troy.
Other instances where an uneasiness seemingly permeates the film come in the forms of the reception of the Wooden Horse and the pursuit of Briseis by both Paris and Achilles. The unease connected to the Wooden Horse arises from the viewer's knowledge of both the intention of the offering, and the Greek armada waiting in secret rather than having departed. Even if unfamiliar with the Wooden Horse of antiquity, the viewer gains insight into Odysseus’ design in Agamemnon’s comment to him as he paces passed the construction site of the vessel: “[y]ou found a way to make the sheep invite the wolves to dinner” (Troy, 2004). The sense of pretended annihilation evoked in the viewer by this meta-knowledge is resounded by Prince Paris’ pleading with his father to burn the Wooden Horse on the ground of a dark suspicion about its intent. Alas, Priam decrees that it shall be brought within the walls of Troy, unknowingly enabling the destruction of his city. Regarding the pursuit of Briseis, during the sack of Troy, the film alternates between Priam’s son Paris, and Achilles, Hector’s murderer. Both men search for the priestess during amidst the chaos, and due to the grievance perceived by Paris for the murder of his brother, conflict is foreboded should the two men meet. By now, Achilles has seemingly given up his allegiance to the Greeks in his murder of the two soldiers who tried to slay Briseis in the wake of her murder of Agamemnon. He seeks her out of love, but this is unknown to Paris. Even as Briseis pleads for the life of Achilles, Paris realizes the conflict that the viewer is made to suspect by slaying the Prince of the Myrmidons with a slew of arrows.

The importance of Wolfgang Petersen’s Troy for the sake of my argument is two-fold, in that both the film’s manipulation of the Trojan Cycle to fit the expectations of a modern audience of what a Hollywood blockbuster should be, and how such manipulation serves the end of being indicative of the uneasiness of the twenty-first century, are validated by the positive reception of
the film by a global audience. According to the Internet Movie Database (IMDb, *Troy*), with an estimated production cost of $175,000,000, *Troy* grossed $497,409,852 worldwide, and was the 13th highest grossing film of 2004 (IMDb, *Troy*). This positive reception by global audiences signifies a validation of the adaptability of the Trojan Cycle, regardless of era, and the Cycle’s great capacity to express intense human emotions and mortality. Yet, the ‘happy ending’, narrative simplification, and de-romanticization observed in *Troy* (2004) necessary to meet global expectations of a blockbuster film in 2004 would have likely been disagreeable to the Homeric audience contemporary with the oral composition of the epic poem. Conversely, the fear and pity at the heart of the ancient tragic epics “are not necessary ingredients of the modern epic, for such (or other) emotions have been enlarged and modified (or nullified) by psychology and modern sensibilities” (Santas 32). The tragic themes of the Homeric story would likely be unfavorable to modern audiences who have a predilection for a happy resolution and the grand spectacle of a Hollywood blockbuster film.

Yet, as Susan Sontag remarks, “commercial cinema has settled for a policy of bloated, derivative filmmaking, a brazen combinatory or re-combinatory art, in the hope of reproducing past success” (Sontag 117). Whereas the *Iliad* (the story of which is widely adapted for *Troy* (2004)) expressly revolves around “the anger of Achilles and its destructive effect on the Greek campaign in Troy” (Santas 47), Constantine Santas argues that *Troy* (2004), although it attempts to prioritize the conflict between Achilles and Agamemnon, ultimately demonstrates a lack of thematic cohesion in its presentation of a number of themes which seemingly vie for a central place in the film (Santas 47-50). The failure of *Troy* (2004) to retain the thematic fulcrum of the *Iliad* begs reflection upon whether *Troy* (2004) has remained faithful to the Trojan Cycle in its sterilization (reduction of tragedy, de-romanticizing of Patroclus and Achilles, etc.) of the
ancient story to meet modern expectations of what a Hollywood blockbuster film should be. In answer to this dilemma, according to Robert Stow, “the creation of a believable world on screen, which meets prior conceptions and expectations, is far more important than the creation of an authentic world” (Stow 90). Perhaps in at least attempting to recapture the nuances of the world of the Trojan Cycle, Troy (2004) has remained faithful to its source material. In the next section we will analyze The Song of Achilles by Madeline Miller which, unlike Wolfgang Petersen’s Troy (2004), prioritized remaining faithful to the events of Homer’s narrative (“Q & A with Madeline Miller”).

Adaptation in Madeline Miller’s The Song of Achilles

Similarly to the cinematic success of Wolfgang Petersen’s Troy (2004), Madeline Miller’s The Song of Achilles (2011)--winner of the 2012 Orange Prize and a New York Times Bestseller--achieved fame unparalleled by any prior twenty-first century literary adaptation of the Trojan Cycle. The fame achieved by The Song of Achilles, a novel centered around the homosexual relationship between Achilles and Patroclus, is of particular importance due to what it suggests about the cultural progression of opinions towards the LGBTQ community from 2004 (when Petersen’s Troy was released) to 2011. Furthermore, with the majority of the epic poems of the Trojan Cycle no longer in existence, Madeline Miller was forced to reconcile ancient reports of these poems with her own imagination in order to build a cohesive narrative of the lives of Achilles and Patroclus. Although Miller strove to maintain the narrative canon of the Iliad whenever possible, in reconciling the Trojan Cycle with an elaborated tale of the romance between Patroclus and Achilles--told from the unconventional perspective of Patroclus--Miller necessarily deviates from the source material in her rendering (“Q & A with Madeline
Miller”). It is these deviations in the process of her adaptation that allow us to consider how culture and audience shaped *The Song of Achilles* in ways untraditional. Therefore, it is both the mainstream success and what this success suggests about the culture in which the work was produced that led me to select Madeline Miller’s *The Song of Achilles* (2011) for analysis.

As aforementioned, Madeline Miller’s *The Song of Achilles* (2011) regales a tale of romance between the legendary figures of Patroclus and Achilles from the unconventional perspective of Patroclus. In order to discuss the novel in detail, it is necessary to first discuss the story as it is presented in the work. As a child, Patroclus, the son of King Menoetius, was a suitor of Helen, and swore an oath to “defend her husband against all who would take her from him” (Miller 12), who would become Menelaus. In his tenth year, after the accidental murder of a nobleman’s son, Patroclus is exiled to Phthia, the realm of King Peleus. He is quickly befriended by Peleus’ son, Achilles. When Achilles is sent to train with the centaur Chiron on Mount Pelion in Thessaly, Patroclus follows, and the relationship between the two young men evolves into a romance, much to the ire of Achilles’ divine mother, Thetis. After two years of training, the young men learn about the abduction of Helen by Prince Paris of Troy, and the arming of Agamemnon for war. Peleus desires Achilles to lead the Phthian delegation to Troy, but Thetis, aware of the doom that awaits her son should he go to Troy, intervenes. She transports him to the court of King Lycomedes on the island of Scyros and disguises him as a woman. While here, Achilles is unwillingly married to, and made to impregnate, Lycomedes’s daughter, Deidameia. Patroclus pursues Achilles to Scyros and goes into hiding alongside him.

The two remain in hiding on Scyros until Odysseus and Diomedes arrive with a call to arms. Patroclus, having sworn an oath to defend Helen in his youth, was obligated to participate in the Trojan War. Achilles, unbound by the oath to Helen, nevertheless joined the war effort in
hopes of achieving the everlasting glory that his prophecy promised. The Greek forces congregate at Aulis before departure to Troy. Here, Achilles develops animosity towards the war-effort leader, King Agamemnon, who, as a show of good faith, promises the hand of his daughter Iphigenia in marriage to the son of Peleus, then sacrifices her for favorable winds during the Greek passage to Troy. At Troy, Achilles participates in local raids and Patroclus works in the infirmary. As the war progresses, Miller recounts with intended similarity to the *Iliad* (“Q & A with Madeline Miller”) the seizure of Briseis from Achilles on the heels of the plague of Apollo and Agamemnon’s subsequent return of Chryseis to her father, Chryses; the withdrawal of Achilles from warfare; the dawning of the armor of Achilles by Patroclus; and the death of the son of Menoetius at the hands of Hector. Achilles, distraught by the death of his lover Patroclus, slays Hector in revenge, and is soon after killed by Prince Paris. A tomb is wrought for Achilles, and the ashes of he and Patroclus are buried together, yet the absence of Patroclus’ name upon the tomb keeps him from passing to the underworld. Eventually, Thetis, the mother of Achilles, reconciles with Patroclus’ spirit, and carves his name into the monument (an act forbidden by Achilles’ son, Neoptolemus), allowing the two to be together in the afterlife as was their desire.

Just as with Wolfgang Petersen’s *Troy*, Madeline Miller’s *The Song of Achilles* is unquestionably a product of its time, with alterations or addition to the story of the Trojan Cycle being made to appeal to the audience for which it was produced. As a story rooted in the love between two men, it is necessary to consider how perceptions of homosexuality evolved from 2004, when Petersen’s *Troy* was released, to September 20th, 2011, when *The Song of Achilles* was originally published. The aforementioned widely opposed 2003 resolution put forth by the Brazilian delegation to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights prohibiting
discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, was, after much discussion, postponed until the end of 2004 (*United Nations Human Rights Commission* 3). Nevertheless, in 2006, a joint statement on human rights, sexual orientation and gender identity, was presented at the United Nations Human Rights Council, actively expanding the once postponed discussions to now include also gender identity (U.S. Department of State).

Following this expansion of inclusivity in such discussion, in 2008, the premiere statement on sexual orientation and gender identity at the United Nations General Assembly, sponsored by the Netherlands and France, received signatures of approval from 67 countries (Sauvagnargues). Furthermore, U.S. Representative to the Human Rights Council, Ambassador Eileen Chamberlain Donahoe, tells us that on March 22nd, 2011, 85 countries signed a UN statement entitled “Ending Acts of Violence and Related Human Rights Violations Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity” (*U.S. Mission to International Organizations in Geneva*). Meanwhile, the first years of the Obama administration in the United States saw the passage of the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act, which furthers coverage of Federal hate crimes law to “include attacks based on the victim’s actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity” (*The White House Office of the Press Secretary*); the Affordable Care Act, which included the prohibition of insurance company discrimination against individuals based upon sexual orientation or gender identity; and the repeal of Don’t Ask Don’t Tell, allowing LGBT members of the American Armed Forces to be open about their sexuality without fear of dismissal. For the global body of governance, these seven years were a period of gradual movement in the direction of acceptance. It is in this climate of change for the better that Madeline Miller’s *The Song of Achilles* was authored into existence. “I did not deliberately set out to tell a deliberately “gay” love story; rather, I was deeply moved by the love
between these two characters—whose respect and affection for each other, despite the horrors around them, model the kind of relationship we all can aspire to” (“Q & A with Madeline Miller”), Miller tells us in regards to the genesis of her novel. In her creation of a story that celebrates love as a universal virtue, Miller’s *The Song of Achilles*—winner of the 2012 Orange Prize and a New York Times Bestseller--inadvertently championed the movement towards acceptance of homosexuality by normalizing a relationship of this nature in mainstream media and the genre of historical fiction specifically, a scenario that would have likely been impossible only a decade before, at least to that degree of financial success.

Yet, while much progress had been made by 2011, there was still a great deal of distress in the homosexual community. According to the United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, in 2012, one year after the publication of *The Song of Achilles*, there were still some 76 countries which had discriminatory laws in place that criminalized “private, consensual same-sex relationships – exposing individuals to the risk of arrest, prosecution and imprisonment” (*Born Free and Equal: Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in International Human Rights Law*). The LGBT community was still marginalized globally, with members unable to be loved or express as much for another due to fear of ostracization, persecution, and/or death. It is of this marginalized love in the midst of such intense hardship that Miller’s *The Song of Achilles* is seemingly indicative. As we have seen in the *Iliad*, the romance between Achilles and Patroclus is largely implicit, defined by the depth of the suffering Achilles endures from the moment he learns of the demise of Patroclus at the hands of Hector, up until after the funeral games he holds in Patroclus’ memorial (*Iliad* 18.20-30, 24.4-8).

Just as was the case with Euripides’ protagonization of the women of Troy in *The Trojan Women*, in having Patroclus serve as the protagonist in *The Song of Achilles*, Miller gives a voice
and spotlight to a character that was largely marginalized in the epics. In the *Iliad*, the primary function of Patroclus is in his service as an engine through which Achilles is propelled back into the war effort against Troy. We see this exemplified in his speech with Thetis upon her trying to console him:

“Enough.

Let bygones be bygones. Done is done.

Despite my anguish I will beat it down,

the fury mounting inside me, down by force.

But now I'll go and meet that murderer head-on,

that Hector who destroyed the dearest life I know” (*Iliad* 18.132-137)

The resentment Achilles had felt towards Agamemnon over the seizure of Briseis dissolves before him in the face of the death of Patroclus. Had Patroclus not perished, Achilles may well have sailed homeward before the war was through as he forewarned Odysseus (*Iliad* 9.432-441). In having Patroclus be the protagonist, Miller grants significance to the unfamiliar perception of a traditionally marginalized character of a wholly familiar narrative. This empowerment of the perception of a homosexual peripheral character towards an established narrative is evocative of the rise in LGBT rights and recognition in mainstream media in recent history, in that this recognition of the experiences of a people who had for so long been silenced challenges the establishment narrative. In just such a way does the perception of Achilles by Patroclus, and the love exhibited between the two men, challenge the reader to reconsider the tale of these two legendary figures. Moreover, by highlighting the romance of Achilles, the hero of Homer’s *Iliad*, his love too is glorified. Achilles is not a traditionally marginalized character
with an opinion little perceived, rather, throughout *The Song of Achilles*, he is referred to as “aristos achaion”, meaning the “best of the Greeks”.

*The Song of Achilles* is doubtless a story with an unconventional twist in its narration. However, the reason that Miller chose to adapt this narrative from the Trojan Cycle specifically was due to a desire to express an intense love between legendary figures in the presence of ever-looming doom, a narrative the Cycle tells well (“Q & A with Madeline Miller”). In the *Iliad*, we learn that Achilles’ life is forfeit in the pursuit of glory at Troy, for there, “hard on the heels of Hector's death” (*Iliad* 18.112), his own must come at once. This equating Troy with the demise of Achilles is just the same in *The Song of Achilles*, whereupon Odysseus’ urging, Thetis relays to her son that, should he go to Troy, he will die a young man there (Miller 166). Yet, in exchange for an early death, Achilles will be remembered for thousands of years. Patroclus remarks on the words of Odysseus that to be destined to obscurity and senility is a horror of a life (Miller 165). Achilles must go to Troy, and as his lover and having had taken an oath, Patroclus resigns himself to accompanying Achilles, even if his own death were to await him (Miller 168).

Miller’s depiction of this clinging to love in the face of adversity is suggestive of the plight of the homosexual community in the twenty-first century. Achilles and Patroclus realize that before the war is over, their union will be broken in some form or another, as the doom of prophecy looms over them always. Just so, societal taboo in the US, and in many places around the world, legal repercussions, oppressed the sexuality of millions of individuals, making them necessarily aware that to love was dangerous, and that pain would follow. Nevertheless, in both the *Iliad* and in *The Song of Achilles* the two men of legend, resigned to their fate, pledge that their ashes should be mixed, and buried together, so that they may live forever together in the afterlife (*Iliad* 18.386-388) (Miller 350). This promised eternity is the peace sought at the end of
their hardship, the reward beyond the everlasting fame. But in *The Song of Achilles*, it is a peace hard-won, as Neoptolemus refuses the wishes of his father, blotting out the existence of Patroclus from the conjoined burial monument of he and Achilles (Miller 357). While Thetis later ascribes the monument also to Patroclus, it is important to consider what Neoptolemus may have been intended to be suggestive of in the age in which the book was published (Miller 369). The hubris that Neoptolemus commits in his rejection of his noble-father’s postmortem wishes is seemingly demonstrative of the inhumanity of prejudice. Even in death, the two lovers are nearly denied peace, because one who knew nothing of them was uncomfortable with what their wishes suggested, and therefore decided to substitute his own interpretation of what should be done. Yet, hardships such as this speak to the nature of the doomed love that Madeline Miller seemingly sought to portray in her adaptation of the Trojan Cycle.

* * *

Although the age of conventional warfare has long since passed, the worth of the Trojan Cycle in its capacity to express intense human emotions and mortality has made it irrefutably relevant in the twenty-first century. From an uneasiness spawned of a dread of societal upheaval and impending annihilation, to the Greek assault on Troy; from an oppression of the self-expression of a steadily strengthening minority, to the doomed love between two of the Trojan Cycle’s greatest heroes; so long as we and our strife are human, there is to be found a likeness of situation within the Trojan Cycle. In this subsection, we discussed how the 2004 film, *Troy*, directed by Wolfgang Petersen, and Madeline Miller’s *The Song of Achilles* (2011) related scenes from the Trojan Cycle to modern conflicts and the emotions surrounding these conflicts more than 3,000 years after the historic Trojan War. Whereas *Troy* (2004) was crafted expressly
to meet the expectations of what a Hollywood blockbuster film should be, *The Song of Achilles* was crafted to tell a tale of love, according to Miller, unbeholden to audience expectation (“Q & A with Madeline Miller”). Furthermore, while *Troy* (2004) makes a number of critical manipulations to the canonical narrative in adapting the Trojan Cycle centered around narrative simplification, avoidance of homosexuality, and the addition of the ‘happy ending’, Miller remarks in reference to her process while authoring *The Song of Achilles* that “[i]t was very important to me to stay faithful to the events of Homer’s narrative” (“Q & A with Madeline Miller”), deviating from the canon of the Trojan Cycle only when there existed conflicting accounts of mythological events, or none at all of portions of her heroes lives’. Nevertheless, in both of these adaptations, we see manipulation shaped by both medium and audience, purposing the emotive capacity of the Trojan Cycle to embody the conflicts of the modern day and the feelings surrounding such.
Conclusion

“If we accept that the most fundamental purpose of the *lieu de mémoire* is to stop time, to block the work of forgetting, to establish a state of things, . . . it is also clear that the *lieux de mémoire* only exist because of their capacity for metamorphosis, an endless recycling of their meaning and an unpredictable proliferation of their ramifications” (Nora 19).

Between memory and history, there exists the *lieu de mémoire* (place of memory). The *lieu de mémoire* binds the two inextricably, giving living form to an entity which itself is derived from the memories of a culture that no longer exists. The Trojan Cycle regales a tale of ancient men driven by now mythicized gods into bitter warfare. Yet, the Cycle finds historical grounding in a real-world event. While the archeological reality of the historical Trojan War has been resigned to the annals of antiquity, the event of the Trojan War has persisted throughout history in countless iterations and as part of the cultural fabric of much of the west.

Throughout the course of this thesis, we have looked at from whence the Trojan Cycle comes, and how it has endured both in times ancient and contemporary. Part I of this thesis concerned itself with what does/can archaeology tell us about the “reality” of the Trojan War. Through a consideration of both the historiographic element as constituted by the intentions and findings of historical excavators Calvert, Schliemann, Dörpfeld, and Blegen at the mound of Hisarlik in modern day Turkey, the site of Troy, and contemporary excavators Becker, Korfmann, and Pernicka; and the archeological evidence from beyond Hisarlik, such as the artifacts recovered from the Mycenaean Grave Circle A, the archeological discoveries of Sir Arthur John Evans, and the Ahhiyawā texts from the Hittite archives; we concluded that the
Trojan War--or some version of it--did indeed occur in around 1250 BCE, the version of Troy in question most likely being Troy VI.

Having determined the reality of the historical Trojan War, part II and part III then observed how the Trojan Cycle, a mythification of the event, had been adapted in classical Athens and the twenty-first century respectively. In part II, the discussion was centered around examples of Athenian vase painting, namely the Kleophrades Painter’s “Embassy to Achilles” hydria, the “Thetis consoles Achilles” pelike, the Brygos Painter’s “Iliou persis” kylix, and the Kleophrades Painter’s “Iliou persis” hydria, and Euripides’ The Trojan Women. Both the pottery and Euripides’ The Trojan Women were selected because of their cultural significance, the former of the craft and the latter of the artist, and their having survived into the modern day. For part III, the 2004 film, Troy, directed by Wolfgang Petersen, and Madeline Miller’s novel The Song of Achilles (2011) were selected due to the mainstream preeminence achieved by both works in their respective media unparalleled by other adaptations of the Trojan Cycle. In the disparity between the highly dramatized and overly sterilized Hollywood epic and the attemptively canonical novel, the adaptation for medium and audience becomes readily discernible.

Nevertheless, the importance of part II and III is derived from what they suggest about the endurance of the Trojan Cycle. It is necessary to note that all of the epic poems of the Trojan Cycle save for the Iliad and Odyssey are lost to us. Yet the tale of the Trojan Cycle has influenced western culture since its inception up into the modern age, remaining inextricably a part of cultural memory. This endurance is because Troy, just like the war itself, is very much a lieu de mémoire, the psychological grounding of which, as we have seen in part II and III, are the works of art and literature which adapt scenes from the Trojan Cycle. In adoption, the artists and
playwrights of classical Athens and the film-makers and authors of our modern age alike give form to the myth in the minds of the collective, bringing to life the fantastical epic and in turn the mundane conflict from which it was derived, the archeological details of which are resigned to antiquity. With each reinvention, the emotive properties of the Trojan Cycle are given new significance in their relation to the socio-political conflicts of the culture for whom the Cycle was transformed.

This thesis is an experimental examination which sought to argue for both the historical and modern significance of the Trojan Cycle, and the reasons for such. The Trojan Cycle has arguably been adapted due to the applicability of the characters, scenes, and emotive capacity of the work to conflicts contemporary with the ages for which it is being adapted. In the persistence of adaptation throughout history, the Trojan Cycle has for more than 2,500 years been inexorably part of the socio-cultural memory fabric of the west. One cannot help but wonder if perhaps the prophecy of Achilles was right beyond even the parameters of the myth.

“Mother tells me,
the immortal goddess Thetis with her glistening feet,
that two fates bear me on to the day of death.
If I hold out here and I lay siege to Troy,
my journey home is gone, but my glory never dies” (Iliad 9.497-501)
Fig. 1-1, Main archeological layers of the site of Troy/Hisarlik.

“Archeological plan of the Hisarlik citadel (Troy).” *Wikimedia Commons*, 2007,
Fig. 1-2, Depiction of a hunting scene on a dagger found in Grave Circle A, Mycenae, Greece.

c.1600-1700 BCE.

“Depiction of a hunting scene on a dagger found in Grave Circle A.” Wikimedia Commons,

Athens, Historical Museum, 2005,

Fig. 1-3, Dendra panoply from Dendra Mycenaean cemetery, Tomb 12 ("The Cuirass Tomb")

Dendra, Greece. c. 15th Century BCE.

“Mycenaean armour from chamber tomb.” *Wikimedia Commons*, Archaeological Museum of Nafplio, 2014,

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mycenaean_armour_from_chamber_tomb_12_of_Dendra_1.JPG.
Fig. 1-4, Map of Late Aegean Bronze Age. 

“Mapping History.” Mapping History, University of Oregon, 1997, mappinghistory.uoregon.edu/europe/static/map04.html.
Fig. 1-5, Map of Kornmann’s expanded Troy VI, with fortifications.

Fig. 2-1, Kleophrades Painter’s “Embassy to Achilles” Attic red-figure hydria, c. 480 BCE.

Fig. 2-2, “Thetis consoles Achilles” Attic red-figured pelike, c. 470 BCE.

“Thetis comforts the grieving Achilles while Nereids bring his new arms.” Wikimedia Commons,
London, British Museum, 2006,
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Thetis_consoles_Achilles_red_figure_pelike_470_BC_E_from_Kamiros_Rhodes_BM_E363.jpg.
Fig. 2-3, Brygos Painter’s “Iliou persis” Attic red-figure kylix, Side A, c. 490 BCE.

Fig. 2-4, Kleophrades Painter’s “Iliou persis” Attic red-figure hydria, c. 480 BCE.

“Kleophrades Painter 'Sack of Troy' hydria” University of Oxford, Naples, Museo Nazionale Archeologico, 2013,


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