

Why, it seems like only yesterday, or the day before, when our vast armada gathered, moored at Aulis, freighted with slaughter, bound for Priam's Troy.

- Homer¹

The end of the eastern Mediterranean Bronze Age, in the twelfth century BCE, was one of history's most frightful turning points ... Altogether, the end of the Bronze Age was arguably the worst disaster in ancient history, even more calamitous than the collapse of the western Roman Empire ...

[T]he fall of [Troy] may have marked the beginning of the Catastrophe.

- Robert Drews²

Troy was, perhaps, a client state of the Hittite empire, which was one of the chief Near Eastern powers at that time. This state was the cause of hostilities between Greeks and Hittites in the mid-thirteenth century BCE ... [T]he true background to the historical Trojan War ... can be adduced from first-hand primary sources, the diplomatic archives of the Hittite empire ... In short, the essential facts of Homer's story – the city, the location by the Dardanelles, the Greek expedition, the war – were all true.

- Michael Wood³

1. On Myth and Pre-classical History

Wolfgang Petersen's 2004 Hollywood version of Homer, *Troy*, is the sword and sandal epic kind of introduction to ancient legend. It was not a serious effort to reconstruct for a twenty-first century world the tragic drama immortally penned by the poet 2,700 years ago. Rather, it seems to have been an attempt to use the distant and epic appeal of the legend of Troy to entertain an audience that flocked to films such as *Titanic*, *Pearl Harbor* and *The Lord of the Rings*. While this is commercially understandable, it made the film merely an ephemeral piece of entertainment. Given both the power of the legend and the realities of our time, Petersen could have made a much more powerful piece of theatre.⁴

Both Eric Bana (Hector) and Brad Pitt (Achilles) are reported to have said that, in preparing to play their heroic roles, they read *The Iliad* for the first time and were awed by Homer's poetry. One might hope that others who saw the movie were prompted to read *The Iliad* and were as stirred by it as were the two actors.⁵ Having been so affected by the great poem of the storm of war, it would be interesting to learn what Bana and Pitt thought of David Benioff's screenplay or Wolfgang Petersen's direction of *Troy*.

Petersen and his team seem to have taken pains with some things, but they neglected or made a mess of others. Considerable efforts were made, for example, to have the sets for Sparta, Mycenae and Troy look authentic. But for some unaccountable reason, as the Greek armada sails east for Troy, the sun rises *behind it*. Indeed, it rises from the west throughout the film. Given that the film had begun with a map showing Greece to the west of Troy, you'd have thought something as elementary as this would have been taken into account.

Moreover, in legend, the siege of Troy lasted ten years. Petersen's film has the action over and done with in about three weeks, including a twelve-day pause for Hector's funeral. It is not at all apparent why. Less flagrant, but just as indicative of rather cavalier disregard for the realities behind the 'action', Petersen has Troy's main gate facing the sea. It didn't. The famous main gate of Troy was the Scaean Gate, which faced south – inland. There is no classical or archaeological evidence for a major gate facing the sea.⁶

Petersen and Benioff are just as capricious in deleting from their account of the Trojan War many of the dramatic details that have been the subject of drama and opera for two and a half millennia. The blood sacrifice by the Greek king Agamemnon of his own daughter, Iphigenia, at Aulis (so that the Greek fleet might have a fair wind for Troy),⁷ the cutting of Polyxena's throat on the tomb of Achilles, the throwing of Hector's little son, Astyanax, from the city walls by the victorious Greeks – are all omitted. The audience is allowed to believe that Astyanax and his mother, Andromache, escape. Menelaus and Agamemnon, the 'bad guys' are both killed (by Hector and Briseis, respectively), contrary to the entire classical tradition.

Most melodramatically of all, Achilles, instead of being slain outside the city walls, runs through Priam's palace looking for Briseis amid the city's sack. This seems almost a direct reproduction of the scene in *Titanic*, in which Kate Winslett seeks desperately for Leonardo di Caprio as the ship fills with water. It is an extravagant concession to juvenile sentimentality and a betrayal of the grim spirit of Homer. What Petersen surrendered in crafting his film this way was the power of the great original to seize people by their throats and compel them to feel that surge of pity and fear which Aristotle believed was the purpose of tragic drama.⁸

Benioff's screenplay, unsurprisingly, has the same characteristics. It lacks gravity and caters too much to a superficial and mawkish taste. Perhaps its finest moment is where it draws most directly on Homer. The scene is that in which Priam comes to the Greek camp, kneels at the feet of Achilles, kisses his hands, then says gravely, 'I have endured what no-one on earth has ever done before – I put to my lips the hands of the man who killed my son.' Benioff here used the very words from Robert Fagles' acclaimed translation of *The Iliad*, Book XXIV, lines 590-91. In general, he does nothing of the kind.⁹

Benioff innovated with characteristic effect in having Hector and Achilles, in particular, consistently express scepticism about the gods. Whereas the gods are ever-present and active in *The Iliad*, in *Troy* they are absent. Their cults are depicted as harmless and colourful features of civic life, but they never intervene in response to invocations or blasphemies and are openly mocked by Achilles without the hero suffering for it. What is not clear, however, is precisely what the writer was trying to achieve by having the figures of legend exhibit this anachronistic scepticism.¹⁰

Hector, for example, is a model of good sense, but the underlying implications are only feebly followed through. After leading the Trojans to victory on the first day of the war, he counsels prudence on the second. 'The Greeks underestimated us yesterday,' he tells his father's war council. 'We should not return the favour.' But Priam's court seer declares he has seen an eagle soaring in the air with a snake clutched in its claws – a sign that Apollo will champion the Trojans in battle against the Greeks. 'Bird signs!' Hector exclaims in exasperation. 'You want to plan a strategy based on bird signs?!'

Was Benioff trying to make an anachronistic theological or philosophical point here? Or to poke fun at the WMD intelligence shambles in the war against Saddam Hussein? Or to highlight the tragic plight of Hector, caught up in a current he could not master and carried to his inevitable doom? The screenplay as a whole is too insubstantial for one to work out which, if any, of these possibilities was in Benioff's mind.

Had he wanted to challenge the delusions of ordinary people and their seers, he had a great classical tradition on which to draw. He could, for example, have studied Euripides' *The Women of Troy*, written and performed 2,420 years ago. Set after the fall of Troy, this play was a sombre reflection on the human catastrophe entailed in the sacking of cities. Its Athenian audience not only knew their Homer far better than a modern audience, but their soldiers had just that year (416 BCE) sacked Melos, killing its men and enslaving its women and children.

In Euripides, it is Hector's mother, Hecuba, who gives voice to Euripides' critique of the ancient gods – Hector being dead by the time the play begins. For some reason, Hecuba is entirely absent from *Troy*, as if Priam had been a widower. Yet she is a substantial figure in the classical legends, who exclaims, after the fall of the city: 'The man who finds his own wealth and security a cause for pleasure is a fool. Those forces which govern our lives are as unpredictable as capering idiots. Assured good fortune does not exist ... O dearest friends, I see the cold abyss of truth ... Gods, gods, where are you? Why should I cry to the gods? We cried out to them before and not one heeded us.'¹¹

In such passages, Euripides, whom Aristotle called the most tragic of the great dramatists,¹² foreshadowed the darker passages in Shakespeare, notably in *Macbeth* and *King Lear*. Benioff, by contrast, throws in Hector's lines about bird signs like a mocking schoolboy, then lapses back into lines redolent more of *Days of Our Lives* than of Euripides or Shakespeare. Perhaps he simply was not capable of doing better. In any case, he and Petersen, in seeking to merely entertain an immediate public, sacrificed their chance to create something that would endure. After its run in the cinemas, the film almost immediately faded away into obscurity.

Some thirty years ago, Michael Cacoyannis filmed Euripides' play as *The Trojan Women*, starring Katherine Hepburn as Hecuba, Vanessa Redgrave as Andromache and the young Irene Pappas as Helen. That film was anything but 'entertaining'. It was intended as a reflection on the horrors of war and their tendency to lead to atrocities. Petersen, Benioff and their producers may well have decided that a film à la Cacoyannis simply would not sell, but they themselves sold out much of the moral force of the classical tradition.

Enough of Petersen and Benioff, though. As Troilus exclaims in Shakespeare's war-weary take on the legend of Troy, 'I cannot fight upon this argument. It is too starved a subject for my sword.'¹³ Far more stirring and far more worthy of attention is the legend behind the film and, even more, the reality

behind the legend. Shift from Petersen to Homer and your gain in the graphic grasp of the face of battle is immeasurable. Shift from Homer to history and you glimpse the very roots of Mediterranean civilisation, centuries before the founding of Rome.

It is a testament to the enduring power of Homer's writing that, even in the twentieth century, he should have remained the benchmark against which writing about war was measured, neither shrinking from its horror, nor denying its grim heroism. Ernst Junger's extraordinary memoir of the First World War, *Storm of Steel*, is a case in point. Both its warrior ethos and its unvarnished descriptions of violent death strike one again and again as 'Homeric'.

The very opening of the book takes the reader into a Homeric world – a world of clashing gods (overwhelming forces) and murderous furies: 'Full of awe and incredulity, we listened to the slow grinding pulse of the front, a rhythm we were to become mightily familiar with over the years. The white ball of a shrapnel shell melted far off, suffusing the grey December sky. The breath of battle blew across to us, and we shuddered. Did we sense that almost all of us – some sooner, some later – were to be consumed by it, on days when the dark rumbling yonder would crash over our heads like an incessant thunder?'¹⁴

Not for nothing do even more recent books on war in our time evoke Homer. Two very recent ones are Robert Kaplan's *Warrior Politics* and Philip Bobbitt's *The Shield of Achilles*. Both are concerned that the twenty-first century world faces the possibility of a catastrophe redolent of the end of the Bronze Age – civilisation under siege by marauding warriors intent on the sack of cities. 'The *ancientness* of future wars has three dimensions:' Kaplan writes, 'the character of the enemy, the methods used to contain and destroy him, and the identity of those beating the war drums.'¹⁵

Kaplan argues that the world has entered an age of increasing anarchy in which murderous gangs in West Africa, Russian or Albanian mafias, Latin American drug cartels, uprooted and religiously deluded Muslim jihadists all pose threats to the peace and prosperity of the 'walled city' of the liberal democracies. 'Like Achilles and the ancient Greeks harassing Troy,' he writes, 'the thrill of violence substitutes for the joys of domesticity and feasting.' He even quotes Achilles' words to Odysseus, from Book XIX of *The Iliad*: 'You talk of food? I have no taste for food – what I really crave is slaughter and blood and the choking groans of men.'¹⁶

Bobbitt took his very title from Book XVIII of *The Iliad* – 162 lines of which he used as a long epigraph to the book.¹⁷ These lines describe the astonishing shield wrought by Hephaestus for the great warrior Achilles, a shield which depicted the entire Bronze Age world in miniature. Here were the heavens, with the sun, moon and stars; the earth and sea; two cities, one at peace, with all the arts of agriculture, law and civic life, and one under siege, Strife and Havoc spurring slaughter beneath the city's walls. All this was emblematic for Bobbitt in a book designed to help a contemporary readership understand the nature of war and peace.

‘This is the main point I wish my readers to bear in mind.’ Bobbitt writes, ‘war is a product as well as a shaper of culture. Animals do not make war, even though they fight.’^A No less than a market and the law courts, with which it is inextricably intertwined, war is a creative act of civilized man with important consequences for the rest of human culture, which include the festivals of peace.’¹⁸ It is those consequences Bobbitt sought to explicate in his book – written before 11 September 2001, though not published until the following year.^B

In his foreword to *The Shield of Achilles*, historian of war Michael Howard writes, ‘Bobbitt believes that mankind could be facing a tragedy without precedent in its history. It is not clear that he is wrong.’¹⁹ ‘We are entering a fearful time,’ Bobbitt himself writes at the end of his book, ‘a time that will call on all our resources, moral as well as intellectual and material.’²⁰ Both feared a cataclysm in which world order would disintegrate under the impact of anarchic and terrorist assaults, including the indiscriminate use of weapons of mass destruction.

This is not the place to explore Bobbitt’s thesis.^C I mention it because, in a major study of war and peace at the beginning of the twenty-first century, he saw fit to put the shield of Achilles right into his title.²¹ My disappointment with *Troy* is that it was a missed opportunity to provide a mass audience with a serious ‘thesis’ on the nature of war and peace. The shield of Achilles, like much else, is entirely omitted from the film. Achilles has a shield, to be sure, but it has none of the features described by Homer. I believe this is symptomatic of the fact that the film’s makers simply did not have any but the flimsiest sense of the moral and historical significance of the legend of the Trojan War – whatever awe Bana and Pitt may have felt when they read *The Iliad*.

Bobbitt’s book is significant for a second reason, also related to the Trojan War. For the actual sack of Troy was a matter of history, not only of legend. And, as the epigraphs at the beginning of this essay indicate, it stood at the beginning of a ‘tragedy without precedent’ in human history up to that time – the devastation of the Bronze Age world by anarchic warriors and sackers of cities. This history has only in the past century been reconstructed out of the ruins of the deep past. Yet it is a gripping story – incomparably more dramatic than Wolfgang Petersen makes it seem in his film.

Imagine, for a moment, that Petersen’s research team had had something other than a fancy dress melodrama in mind. They might have recreated the world of the late Bronze Age – the last three centuries of the second millennium BCE in more detail and at least hinted at the catastrophe that overwhelmed it between 1220 and 1170 BCE.²² This is the context for the real Trojan War.²³ Invoking that real context could have had a powerful resonance in our time, whereas Petersen’s thin context provided almost none.

A See Essay 4 in Part I, ‘On the Origins of Warfare.’

B See Essay 2 in Part III, ‘On Challenges Laid Down by the Islamists.’

C See Essay 1 in Part III, ‘On Strategy in the Twenty-first Century World.’

Troy as we call it, was a trading city on the western periphery of the Hittite Empire, known to the Hittites as Taruisa, the leading city of a kingdom called Wilusa, whence the classical names Troia/Troy and Ilios (Wilios)/Ilium.²⁴ Diplomatic exchanges occurred between the great king of the Hittites, in the centre of what is now Turkey, the great king of Ahhiyawa (the Hittite name for Achaea, or Greece), the Pharaoh in Egypt and lesser principalities – including Wilusa. It was a world of high culture, with a history extending back many centuries.²⁵

Within half a century, at the end of the thirteenth and the beginning of the twelfth century BCE, this whole world came crashing down. As Robert Drews puts it, ‘almost every significant city or palace in the eastern Mediterranean world was destroyed, many of them never to be occupied again.’²⁶ Literacy disappeared from much of this hitherto highly civilised region and a dark age ensued in which much was forgotten or passed into legend. What Homer inherited was an oral tradition handed down over half a millennium. He was the equivalent of a Saxon bard telling tales of the Roman conquest of Britain.²⁷

Only now, based on scientific and painstaking research, can we tell something like the true story and see it in its dramatic and historical context. Some few of those who watched Petersen’s *Troy* will have known of this richer context. Most viewers will not have and perhaps, for that reason, did not miss it. One might wish, however, that Petersen had done more – as he could have done – to have opened their eyes to the terrors and awesome depths of the past, so that they might have felt more fully alive in our own time: the world of *The Shield of Achilles*.

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Endnotes

- 1 Homer, *The Iliad*, Book II, lines 355-6, trans. Robert Fagles, with an introduction and notes by Bernard Knox, Viking, 1990, p. 109.
- 2 Robert Drews, *The End of the Bronze Age: Changes in Warfare and the Catastrophe Circa 1200 BC*, Princeton University Press, 1993, pp. 3-4, 42.
- 3 Michael Wood, *In Search of the Trojan War*, BBC Books, rev. edn., 1998, preface, p. 4.
- 4 In his classic study of tragic theatre, literary critic George Steiner was concerned with the fundamental outlook on the world which underlies tragic drama. His contrast between the Hebraic and Homeric world views is still worth reflecting on. See *The Death of Tragedy*, Faber & Faber, London, 1974, pp. 4-5.
- 5 Walter Kaufmann captured quite well the enduring power of Homer's epic. The great tragedians, he argued, inherited from Homer the forms and themes of tragic drama and also a profound sense of humanity, in which the terrors of human existence are dwelt on, the glory and anguish of human suffering and the grief of one's enemies, as well as one's own. *Tragedy and Philosophy*, Chapter 5, 'Homer and the Birth of Tragedy', Princeton University Press, 1979, pp. 160-2.
- 6 Wood, *In Search of the Trojan War*, p. 143.
- 7 The Agamemnon who sacrifices Iphigenia in classical legend is not the coarse thug of *Troy*, but a man of his time, torn between paternal love and the ruthless demands of war and auguries. It was Calchas the priest who demanded the blood sacrifice to Artemis, who had sent a wind contrary to Greek hopes and aims. In Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, his demand on behalf of the goddess was 'a thought to crush like lead the hearts of Atreus's sons [Agamemnon and Menelaus], who wept, as weep they must, and speechless ground their sceptres in the dust.' Agamemnon then responded, 'What can I say? Disaster follows if I disobey: surely yet worse disaster if I yield.' That, at least, is Philip Vellacott's translation (*Aeschylus: The Oresteian Trilogy*, Penguin, 1959, p. 49). The translations of *Agamemnon* by Robert Fagles, *Aeschylus: The Oresteia*, Penguin 1979, is stronger, as is that by Ted Hughes, a poet in his own right, *Aeschylus: The Oresteia*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 1999. Hughes renders the passage in question: 'At that point, Calchas the seer spoke for heaven. He told us what had to be done to shift that wind – When they heard what Artemis demanded the warlords cried out, incredulous. But Agamemnon, Agamemnon, when he heard it, roared with anguish, sudden as the wound of a night-arrow. They took it in, those chieftains, with a jabbering of grief. Their royal staves pounded the earth. Then Agamemnon, our general for good reason, mastered himself with painful words: If I obey the goddess, my own daughter has to die. If I deny the goddess, this whole army has to dissolve ...'
- 8 Aristotle, *Poetics* #6, 'A tragedy, then, is the imitation of an action that is serious and also, as having magnitude, complete in itself; in language with pleasurable accessories, each kind brought in separately in the parts of the work; in a dramatic, not in a narrative form; with incidents arousing pity and fear, wherewith to accomplish its catharsis of such emotions.' Richard McKeon (ed.), *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, Random House, New York, 1941, p. 1460.

- 9 Benioff does, however, borrow a brief line from Homer for the climactic scene in which Hector confronts Achilles before the gate of Troy and asks that whoever wins their combat respect the corpse of the conquered. 'There are no pacts between lions and men,' Achilles (Pitt) tells Hector (Bana), in *Troy*. In Homer, Achilles speaks as grimly but at greater length: 'Hector, stop! You unforgivable, you ... don't talk to me of pacts. There are no binding oaths between men and lions – wolves and lambs can enjoy no meeting of the minds – they are all bent on hating each other to death. So with you and me. No love between us. No truce till one or the other falls and gluts with blood. Ares who hacks at men behind his rawhide shield. Come, call up whatever courage you can muster. Life or death – now prove yourself a spearman, a daring man of war! No more escape for you – Athena will kill you with my spear in just a moment. Now you'll pay at a stroke for all my comrades' grief, all you killed in the fury of your spear.' Homer, *The Iliad*, trans. Robert Fagles, with an introduction and notes by Bernard Knox, Viking, 1990, p. 550. Book XXII, ll, 307-321.
- 10 Walter Kaufmann's remarks on this matter are worth noting: 'Nothing has obstructed a sensible reading of the *Iliad* more than the frequent failure to understand the role of the gods in Homer. Gods, one assumes, are supernatural; and Homer was a polytheist ... But the concept of the supernatural is out of place in Homer; it involves an anachronism, a reference to a wholly uncongenial vision of the world, and precludes an understanding of the experience of life in the *Iliad* ... The most crucial point about the gods in Homer is that belief is out of the picture ... Preoccupation with beliefs belongs to a far later stage in religion ... the whole antithesis of nature and the supernatural belongs to a post-Homeric climate of thought ... it has no place in the *Iliad* ... Polytheism suggests belief in many gods, as opposed to monotheism, which signifies belief in one god only. But Homer differs from monotheism in two ways. First, confronted with the reality of a cult of many gods, he does not oppose this diversity with any polemic; on the contrary, he turns it to poetic use. Secondly, belief is out of the picture. Polytheistic language is especially well suited to the description of war. No other poet has ever been able to capture so perfectly the confusion of war, the changing fortunes and the apparent cross-purposes.' *Tragedy and Philosophy*, pp. 168-178.
- 11 Euripides, *The Bacchae and Other Plays*, trans., Philip Vellacott, Penguin, 1954, pp. 129-31. The translation here, however, is my own, revising Vellacott, from *The Women of Troy*, lines 1213-16, 1236 and 1280-1.
- 12 Aristotle, *Poetics* #13, in Richard McKeon (ed.), *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, Random House, New York, 1941, p. 1467.
- 13 William Shakespeare, *Troilus and Cressida*, act 1, scene 1, lines 96-7.
- 14 Ernst Junger, *Storm of Steel*, trans. Michael Hofmann, Allen Lane, Penguin, 2003, p. 5. Consider, also, the passage on p. 58 in which Junger reflects on the ethics of war: 'Throughout the war, it was always my endeavour to view my opponent without animus, and to form an opinion of him as a man on the basis of the courage he showed. I would always seek him out in combat and kill him, and I expected nothing else from him. But never did I entertain mean thoughts of him. When prisoners fell into my hands, later on, I felt responsible for their safety, and would always do everything in my power for them.'
- 15 Robert D. Kaplan, *Warrior Politics: Why Leadership Demands a Pagan Ethos*, Vintage Books, Random House, New York, 2002, p. 118.
- 16 *Ibid.*, p. 119.
- 17 Philip Bobbitt, *The Shield of Achilles: War, Peace and the Course of History*, Penguin, 2002, pp. ix-xiii; *The Iliad*, Book XVIII, lines 558-720.
- 18 *Ibid.*, p. xxxi.
- 19 *Ibid.*, p. xix.
- 20 *Ibid.*, p. 822.
- 21 There are, nonetheless, many passages in Bobbitt that are worth reflecting on against the background of the catastrophe at the end of the Bronze Age since, like Drews, he looks at changes in the nature of warfare as the harbingers of conflicts and possible catastrophes to come. Towards the end of his book, he writes almost as if the danger were from 'Trojan horses' – gifts for Poseidon, the god of the open sea and of international commerce,

one might say: 'We are entering a period... when very small numbers of persons, operating with the enormous power of modern computers, biogenetics, air-transport, and even small nuclear weapons, can deal lethal blows to any society. Because the origin of these attacks can be effectively disguised, the fundamental bases of the State will change.' (p. 811.) Or again, 'Will we lay a long siege against ourselves or master the craft of the armourer when shields are made of secrets and not of bronze?' (p. 807.)

- 22 Fernand Braudel described an even earlier catastrophe, more than a thousand years before the Trojan War, in which the archaic Bronze Age world was overwhelmed by Indo-European invaders. This was the antecedent to the sack of cities right around the eastern Mediterranean littoral and throughout Anatolia and Syria in the late thirteenth and early twelfth centuries BCE – and archaic Troy was among the cities burned then, as well as later. *The Mediterranean in the Ancient World*, Allen Land, Penguin, 2001, pp. 129-131.
- 23 'We do care about the authenticity of the tale of Troy,' wrote Byron in his diary in 1821. 'I venerate the grand original as the truth of history (in the material facts) and of place, otherwise it would give no delight. Who will persuade me, when I reclined upon a mighty tomb, that it did not contain a hero? Men do not labor over the ignoble and petty dead – and why should not the dead be Homer's dead?' Benita Eisler, *Byron: Child of Passion, Fool of Fame*, Hamish Hamilton, London, 1999, p. 257.
- 24 Wood, *In Search of the Trojan War*, pp. 206-7: 'If there is anything at all in the legend, it must be tested against the only reliable sources for the history of the thirteenth century BCE in Asia Minor – archaeological finds, Linear B names, Hittite diplomacy – and it holds up surprisingly well.'
- 25 Ibid., p. 169: 'Remarkable discoveries in central Turkey have led to the decipherment of the Hittite language and have revealed the hitherto unsuspected existence of a great empire which stretched from the Aegean to the Euphrates valley at precisely the time when tradition places the Trojan War. In the Hittite archives... we have "real" historical texts to interpret: diplomatic letters, treaties, annals and royal autobiographies, in which the characters of the Hittite kings and queens come to life in the most vivid way. Most exciting of all is the claim that Troy and the Trojan War are to be found in these files of the Hittite "Foreign Office".'
- 26 Drews, *The End of the Bronze Age*, p. 4.
- 27 'A deserted, ruined and overgrown site in a sparsely populated area of northwestern Anatolia, with no visible links with Greece, surely cannot have been selected as the setting for the Greek national epic, unless it had at some time in the past been the focus of warlike deeds memorable enough to have been celebrated in song. The simplest explanation is that the tale of Troy owed its central place in later epic tradition to the fact that it was the *last* such exploit before the disintegration of the Mycenaean world...' Wood, *In Search of the Trojan War*, p. 144.