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Helen Of Troy

Bettany Hughes

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HELEN OF TROY

‘I didn’t think it would be possible to write a life of Helen. Bettany Hughes has done so with a brilliance and erudition that leaves me gasping.’ *Sunday Times*, Books of the Year

‘Hughes skilfully brings this period back to life. A fascinating window on to the power politics of an age.’ Richard Miles, *Sunday Telegraph*

‘Fantastic ... I have never, ever, read anybody write so well about travels in Greece and going to explore archaeological sites.’ Professor Edith Hall, ‘Woman’s Hour’

‘When Helen launched her “thousand ships” was she a “shameless hussy”?... Or, like her mother, was she a rape victim?... The answers have always depended on who you speak to and when, Hughes has them all.’ Peter Stothard, *The Times*

‘Bettany is the first person to push Helen as a major Bronze Age figure, rather than as a shadowy myth, and to a large extent she’s succeeded. Why should we think all the people Homer mentions are fictitious? I see every reason to believe that the Helen of legend, like Agamemnon or Menelaus, may have been a real character with a real background whose actions have been modified, embellished and distorted over the centuries.’ Dr Kenneth Wardle, *Independent on Sunday*

‘The book triumphantly reclaims Helen from her traducers. Hughes’ portrait is as close to a real, living Helen as we are likely to get. In an increasingly sexualised culture, the questions Helen raises are more alive than ever.’ *Financial Times*

‘Her multi-faceted, multi-hued, and multi-period portrait of la Belle Helene will capture the imagination of professional scholars and general readers alike. I cannot recommend it too strongly.’ Professor Paul Cartledge, Chairman of the Faculty of Classics, Cambridge University

‘Intense debate surrounds Helen whose elopement with Paris sparked the Trojan war. “Did she jump or was she pushed?” has been a key question from the sixth century BC to our own. In *Helen of Troy* Bettany Hughes has gathered together a startling array of answers, both ancient and modern ... an investigative achievement.’ Mary Beard, *Guardian*

‘A fantastic, compelling argument ... A gripping read.’ Dr Jenny Wallace, Peterhouse, Cambridge University

‘Hughes brings a passion for ancient history and archaeology crossed with a strain of feminism to the figure of Helen.’ Marina Warner, *Washington Post*

‘A meticulously-researched book about Helen, whose text and notes demonstrate her intimate knowledge of her subject.’ Joan Smith, *Independent*

‘This book puts Helen of Troy at the centre of a world in which, as Bettany Hughes convincingly explains, the primordial power was female.’ Geraldine Bedell, *Observer*

‘So has Bettany succeeded in her quest and self-appointed task [to track down Helen of Troy]? In my view – yes. Magnificently ... Bettany controls this complex material beautifully and brings it together into a very satisfying whole. Moreover the book is a “good read”.’ Lesley Fitton, Chief Bronze Age Curator, Department of Greek and Roman Antiquities, British Museum

HELEN OF TROY

Goddess, Princess, Whore

BETTANY HUGHES



PIMLICO

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For my mother and father
who taught me everything

And for Adrian, Sorrel and May, from whom I'm still learning

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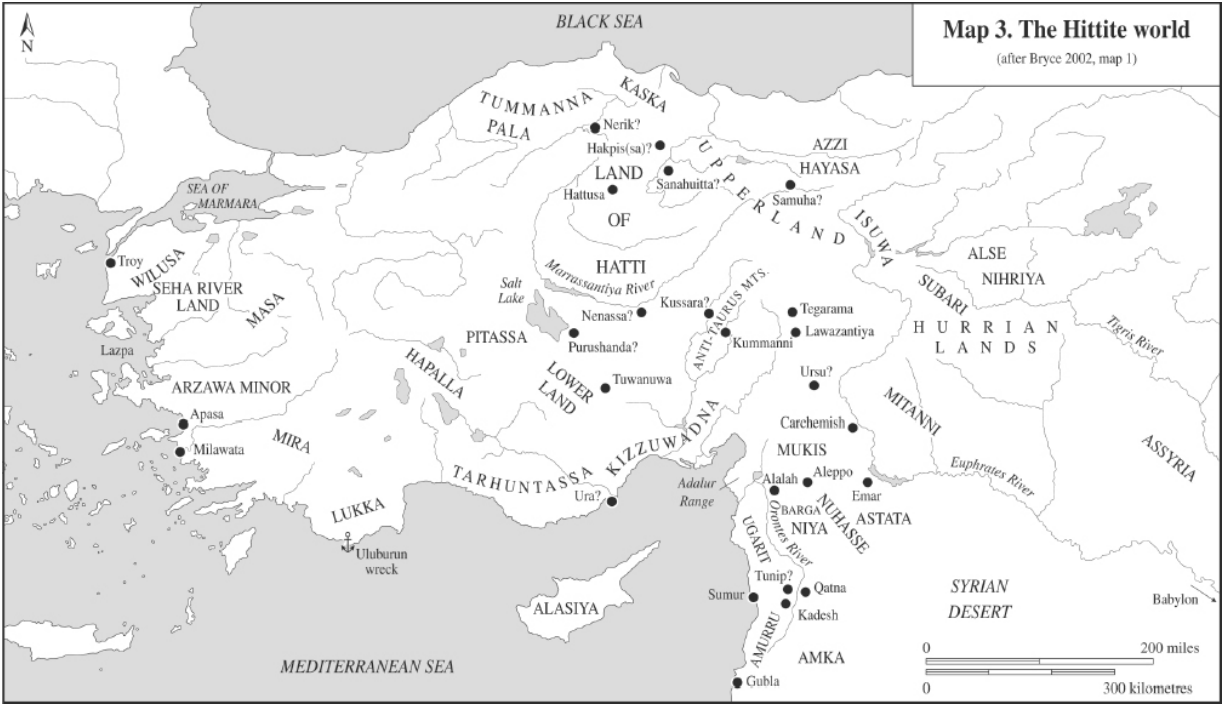
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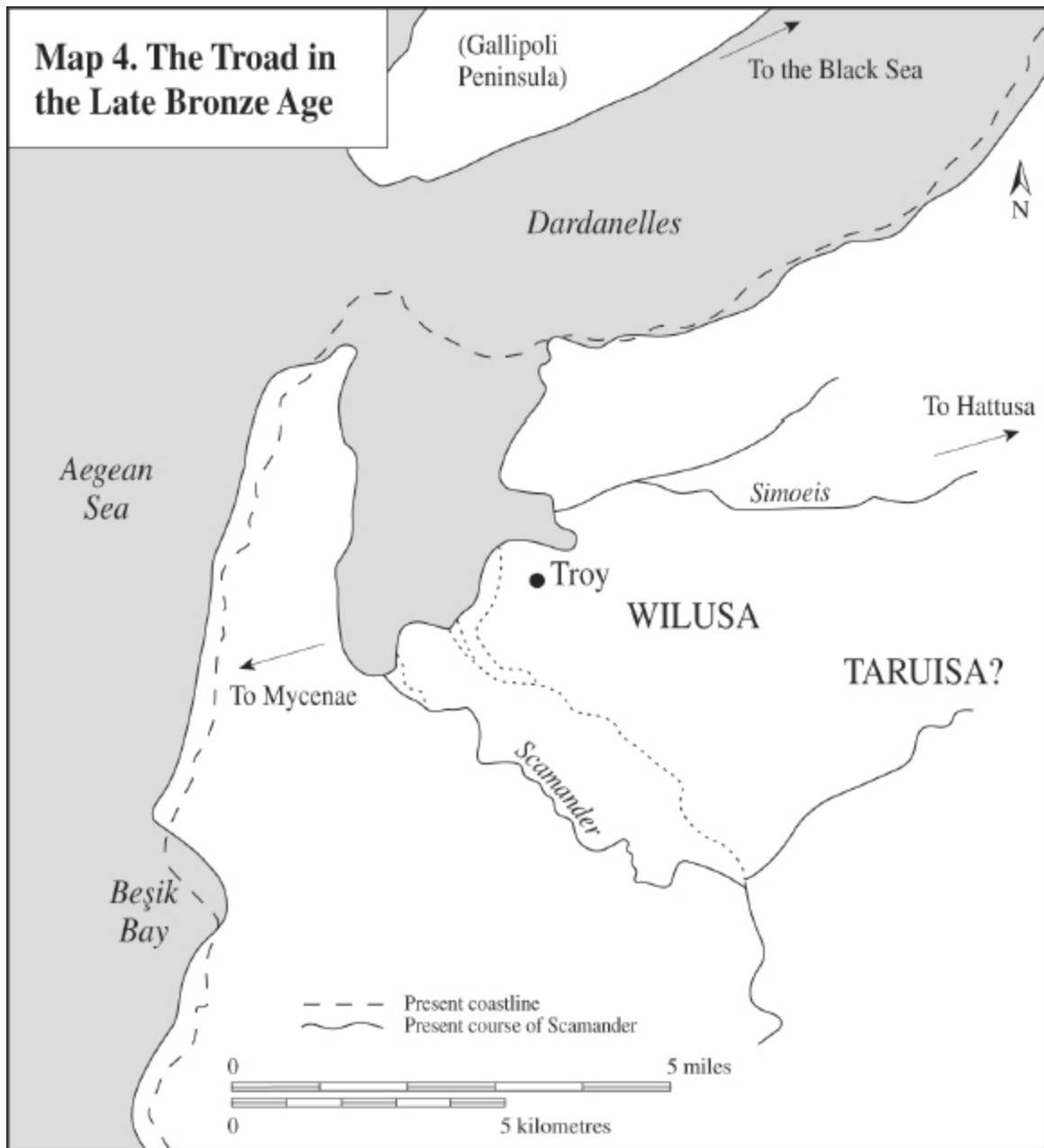
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Map 1. The Mycenaean World

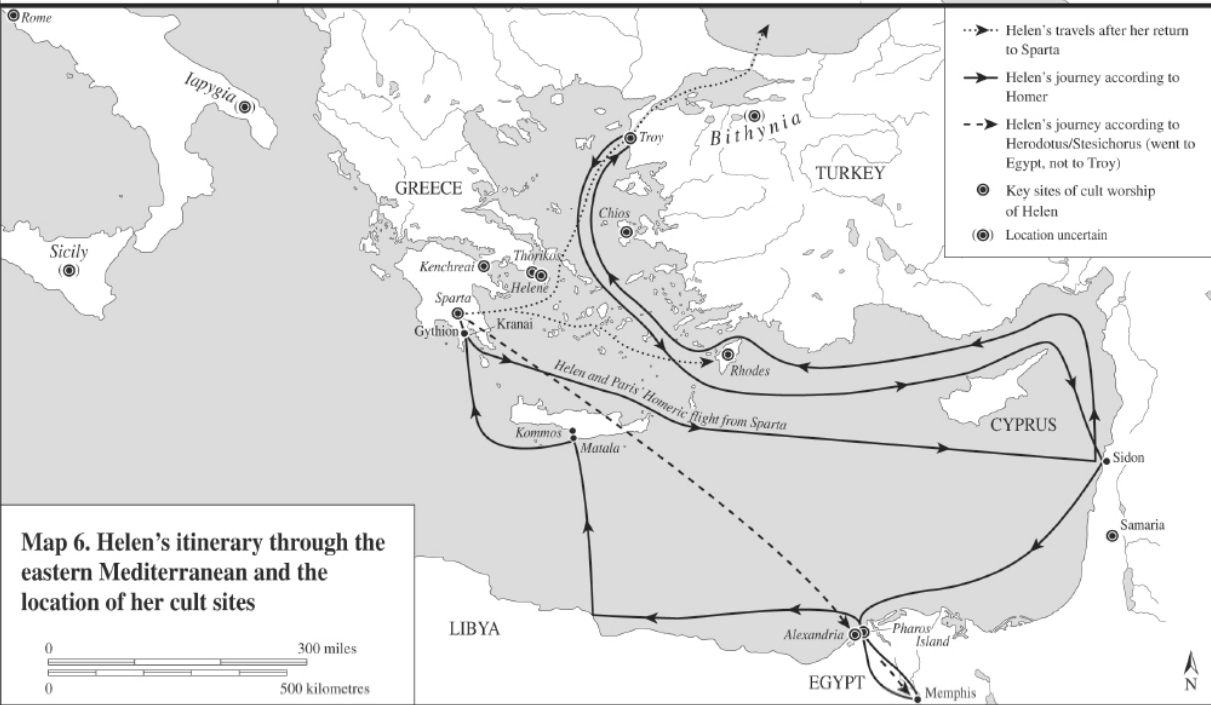
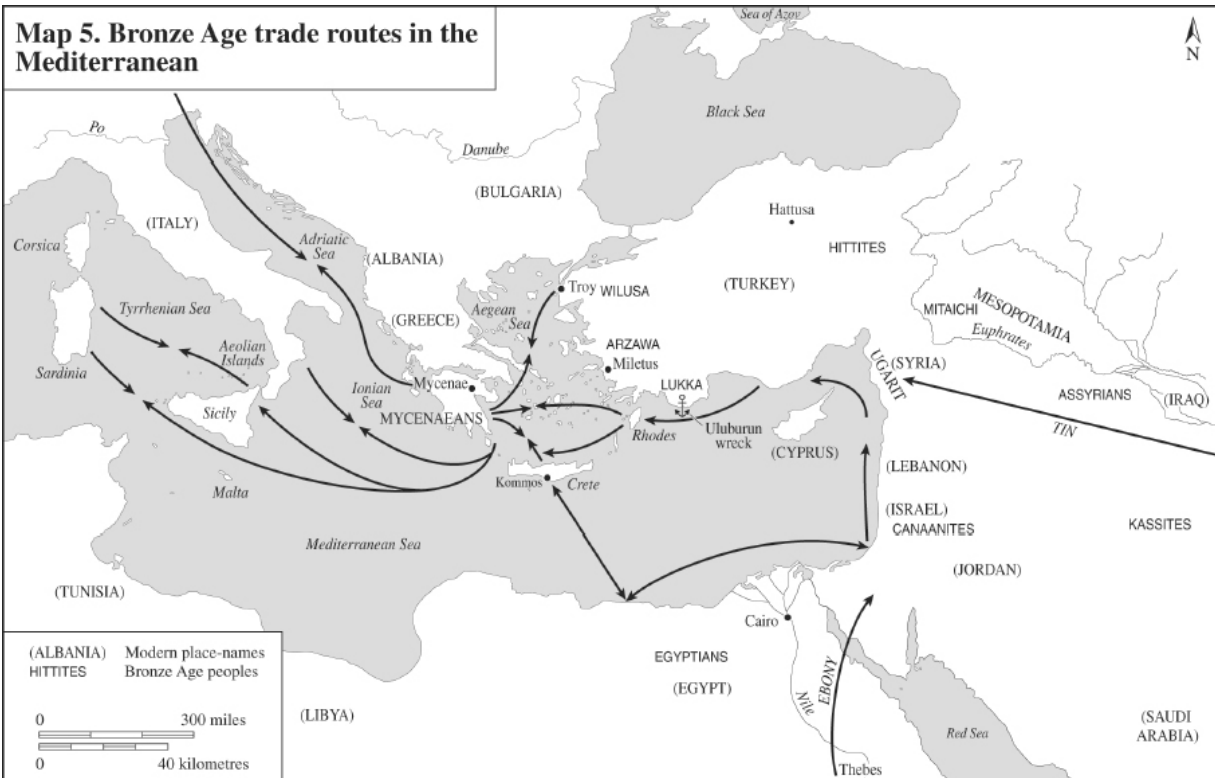








Map 5. Bronze Age trade routes in the Mediterranean



TIMELINE



All dates before 500 BC are approximate unless otherwise stated.

	BRONZE AGE CRETE
2000 BC	MIDDLE MINOAN (MM) period starts MM I-II Old Palaces at Knossos and elsewhere are built Destroyed c. 1700 BC by earthquakes
1700 BC	MM III New Palaces are built
1600 BC	LATE MINOAN (LM) period starts
1425–	LM II–III A Linear B in use at Knossos. Mycenaeans begin to dominate the Aegean and influence Minoan culture
1370 BC	Destruction of palace at Knossos
	BRONZE AGE GREECE
1600 BC	LATE HELLADIC (LH) period starts Grave Circles A and B at Mycenae
? 1550 BC	Eruption of Thera/Santorini
1525–	(LH IIA)
1450 BC	Early <i>tholos</i> and chamber tombs constructed at Mycenae
1450–	(LH IIB)
1410 BC	Warrior panoply found near Midea, the ‘Dendra armour’
1410–	(LH IIIA1)

1370 BC	Treasury of Atreus constructed at Mycenae
1370– 1300 BC	(LH IIIA2) Uluburun shipwreck Tomb of Clytemnestra built at Mycenae
1300– 1200 BC	(LH IIIB1) ? Trojan Wars? <i>c.</i> 1275 BC–1180 BC ‘Mycenaean Lady’ fresco from the House of the High Priest Cult Centre at Mycenae Extant Linear B tablets found at mainland Greek sites date from <i>c.</i> 1200 BC Evidence of destruction in Mycenaean palace settlements
----- THE HITTITE WORLD	
1400 BC	First mention of Wilusa (Troy) and Ahhiyawa (Greece) in Hittite texts. Hittite Empire at its height
1360 BC	Horse-training manual written by Kikkuli
1300 BC	Alakšandu rules over Wilusa, correspondence: the ‘Alakšandu treaty’
1275 BC	Battle of Kadesh between Egyptian pharaoh Rameses II and Great King of Hatti
1275– 1250 BC	Destruction of Troy VIh
1275– 1180 BC	The Trojan War?
1250 BC	‘Tawagalawa letter’ sent to King of Ahhiyawa (<i>c.</i> Hattusili III reigns at Hattusas, with Puduhepa as his queen

1265– 1240 BC)	
1230 BC	Crisis between Hittite states of Ugarit and Amurru over marriage alliance
1223 BC	Last mention of Ahhiyawa in Hittite text
1200 BC	Last mention of Wilusa in Hittite texts
1175 BC	Collapse of the Hittite Empire

‘DARK AGES’ OF GREECE

1100– 800 BC	Mycenaean citadels abandoned, literacy appears to be lost
1000 BC	Dorians settle Sparta and Lakonia

ARCHAIC GREECE

800 BC	Sparta expands to include settlement at Amyklai
700 BC	Homer’s epics, the <i>Iliad</i> and the <i>Odyssey</i> , written down
650 BC	Poems of the Epic Cycle composed, including the <i>Cypria</i>
650 BC	Works of Hesiod composed – <i>Works and Days</i> , <i>Theogony</i> , <i>Catalogues of Women and Eoiae</i>
	‘Helen’s Temple’ or the Menelaion: shrine to Helen and Menelaus dedicated at Therapne, Sparta
650–550 BC	Lyric poems of Sappho, Stesichorus, Alcaeus and Alcman featuring Helen composed
	Earliest extant votive offerings left for Helen at the Menelaion
650 BC	The Mykonos vase is created, one of the earliest surviving images of Helen and the Trojan War
	Reform of Spartan society attributed to Lycurgus

CLASSICAL GREECE

506 BC	Sparta and Peloponnesian League allies invade Attica
500–450 BC	Persian Wars between Greeks and Persians
480 BC	Battle of Thermopylae Persian king Xerxes visits Troy
500–400 BC	Radical development of Athenian democracy and cultural ‘golden age’ of Athens
447 BC	Building of the Parthenon begins Tragic plays by Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides composed and performed at Athens, including those that deal specifically with Helen of the Troy story: 472 BC – Aeschylus’ <i>Persians</i> 458 BC – Aeschylus’ <i>Agamemnon</i> 415 BC – Euripides’ <i>Trojan Women</i> 412 BC – Euripides’ <i>Helen</i> 411 BC – Aristophanes’ <i>Lysistrata</i> 408 BC – Euripides’ <i>Orestes</i> c. 405 BC – Euripides’ <i>Iphigeneia at Aulis</i> (posthumous)
431–404 BC	Peloponnesian War between Athens and Sparta. Ends with Spartan hegemony of much of Greece
430 BC	Herodotus’ <i>Histories</i> Thucydides’ <i>History of the Peloponnesian War</i>
400 BC	Gorgias’ <i>Encomium of Helen</i>
390–350	Plato’s philosophical works, include reference to Helen

BC	
370 BC	Isocrates' <i>Encomium of Helen</i>
335–322 BC	Aristotle's philosophical works
336–323 BC	Alexander the Great of Macedon conquers territories from Greece to India
334 BC	Alexander visits Troy
280 BC	Foundation of the Library of Alexandria
270 BC	Theocritus' <i>Epithalamium for Helen</i> written at Alexandria
----- IMPERIAL ROME	
31 BC–AD 14	Octavian defeats Mark Antony and Cleopatra at Actium. Reign of Octavian henceforth known as Augustus. Birth of imperial Rome
19 BC	Death of Virgil, and publication of the <i>Aeneid</i> – telling of the travels of Aeneas after the fall of Troy
c. 25 BC–AD 17	Works of Ovid, including <i>Art of Love</i> , <i>Heroides</i> and <i>Metamorphoses</i> – many of which make Helen their subject
AD 14–68	Julio-Claudian dynasty. Includes reigns of Tiberius (AD 14–37); Claudius (AD 41–54); Nero (AD 54–68)
	AD 64 Fire of Rome (Nero reported to have sung of the fall of Troy)
	AD 66 Alleged 'discovery' of Dictys' account of the Trojan War
AD 69–96	Flavian Dynasty
AD 79	Eruption of Mount Vesuvius, destroying towns of Pompeii and Herculaneum Death of Pliny the Elder, author of the <i>Natural History</i>

AD 96–192	Age of the Antonines. Includes reigns of Trajan (AD 98–117); Hadrian (AD 117–138); Marcus Aurelius (AD 161–180)
c. AD 160	Pausanias' <i>Guidebook to Greece</i>
	Works of Lucian, including <i>Dialogues of the Dead</i>
c. AD 200	Works of Christian writers such as Irenaeus, Hippolytus, Clement of Alexandria and Justin Martyr, with testimony on Simon Magus' life in the first century AD
	Statue of <i>kore</i> /Helen from Samaria-Sebaste
	Cult of Simon Magus and Helen at Rome
	Dictys' account of the Trojan War written
AD 306–337	Reign of Constantine I Official recognition of Christianity
(c. AD 300–600)	Dares' account of the Trojan War?
	Statue of <i>kore</i> /Helen destroyed
----- MEDIEVAL TO TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY	
c. AD 500	Collapse of Roman Empire in the West
c. AD 700	Isidore of Seville inscribes Helen's name into account of 132 seminal event in the history of the world
AD 1122–1204	Life of Eleanor of Aquitaine
c. AD	Benoît de Sainte-Maure writes the <i>Roman de Troie</i> for Eleanor

1170	
c. AD 1175	Matthew of Vendôme's <i>Art of Versification</i>
c. AD 1180	Joseph of Exeter completes his <i>Trojan War</i> tale
AD 1204	Sack of Constantinople, destruction of Helen's statue in the Hippodrome
AD 1475	William Caxton produces the first printed book in English, the <i>Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye</i>
AD 1594	The first recorded performance of Christopher Marlowe's <i>The Tragical History of Dr Faustus</i>
AD 1864	Premiere of Offenbach's operetta, <i>La Belle Hélène</i>
AD 1870	Heinrich Schliemann begins excavations at the site of Troy
AD 1876	Heinrich Schliemann excavates at Mycenae – Grave Circle A
AD 1880s	Gustave Moreau paints a number of Helen canvases including <i>Helen at the Ramparts of Troy</i>
AD 1952–3	Michael Ventris and John Chadwick decipher and publish Linear B
AD 1961	Publication of Hilda Doolittle's (H.D.) <i>Helen in Egypt</i>
AD 2004	Wolfgang Peterson's <i>Troy</i>