'Third Cheerleader from the Left': From Homer's Helen to Helen of Troy


The supreme beauty of Helen of Troy makes her the most dangerous of all mythological heroines. Many Greek authors react to the threat she poses by limiting her power, often in the guise of defending her. This begins with the *Iliad*, where Achilles' story displaces Helen's and male characters excuse her by denying her agency. Wolfgang Petersen's *Troy* (2004), which draws on the *Iliad*, extends the Greek project of disempowering Helen by defending her, using some strategies that echo ancient texts and others that are specific to contemporary ideology and the cinematic medium. Helen (Diane Kruger) is presented as a hapless victim, cast as an adolescent everygirl, and contrasted with the feisty Briseis. Meanwhile her beauty is displaced in favor of the star power and charisma of Brad Pitt's spectacular body. Once again, Helen is displaced by Achilles.

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