The Love of Achilles

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It is not surprising, since we find women consistently regarded throughout the Iliad as little more than property, that men turn to other men for deep friendship, intellectual stimulation, and even sexual gratification. A practiced custom in those heroic days was one of a nobleman taking in a less noble youth as a companion for his son. The two grew up together and, although the less noble youth was in many ways treated as a servant, he accompanied the noble everywhere--even, once they had grown up, into war. Such is Patroclus' lot. Patroclus and Achilles, however, had developed a relationship far beyond simple companionship; they grew to love each other with a frightening level of intensity. Thus, as we implied in class, Homer's Iliad is not the story of Achilles' anger, but rather an attempt to portray the love that Patroclus and Achilles share and the role this love has in the outcome of the epic. It is this love, not Achilles' wrath, which ends the stalemated condition of the war and which overcomes, through Patroclus' death, the haughty pride and honor which Achilles possesses, while at the same time showing us the tender and vulnerable side of this demi-god.

This vulnerability brings to light an interesting idea: perhaps the real "heel" of Achilles is not the physical heel at all, but rather his weakness for Patroclus. Patroclus alone has the power to wound Achilles with harsh words and Patroclus, in a symbolic way, ends Achilles' zest for living when he dies on the battlefield. Achilles mourns him by saying "my own heart will not let me live on among men" (18, 151). All Achilles does after Patroclus' death is done for the memory of Patroclus--not for the glory of Achilles. In his "black cloud of sorrow" (18, 149) he storms across the battlefield, he avenges Patroclus by slaying Hector, then, in a very dishonorable act to those still living, he pays tribute to the dead Patroclus by dragging Hector's body around the funeral pyre of his friend. Achilles shows a special care and consideration in his handling of Patroclus' is a polar opposite from another madly raging into battles and second thought. His love for the basic portraits of Achilles--the second, more important one friend. The gesture which I the concept of opposites is Achilles hands on Patroclus' breast with. His friend's death causes the "lie stretched on the earth in and to mourn like a woman. Fr Achilles constantly referring do forget him while I live on and (22, 181); he eagerly awaits d quickly now I come after you u Achilles' death comes before to his ankle; it comes symboli of his anger. But in a much m comes with the news of Patroclu "honored as no other, even as Patroclus' death is the c sudden burst of activity--but affected by Patroclus to such was living" The evidence of t Patroclus' death is found in o phrases. The most important o statement: "I have no time, s man he is, and how ready he is no caluse" (11, 113). Apar references to Achilles' temper knows only too well, we find i that Achilles does indeed trea he is jealous of his friend. attacks Achilles with the heat anger as this grow in me, O yo wounding of others" (11, 138). luke-warm defense of his actio moved" (11, 138). What is ast that Achilles doesn't vehement
LOVE OF ACHILLES**

Surprising, since we find women revered throughout the Iliad as little more than objects of desire. Yet, men turn to other men for deep and meaningful emotional and sexual experiences. This was a practiced custom in those heroic days, where a man taking in a less noble youth as his son. The two grew up together and, accompanied the noble everywhere—even, grown up, into war. Such is Patroclus' and Achilles, however, had developed beyond simple companionship; they lived together with a frightening level of love, not Achilles' wrath, which ends in the thoughts of the war and which overcomes, death, the haughty pride and honor of Achilles, while at the same time showing the vulnerable side of this demi-god.

Patroclus' death is the catalyst for Achilles' sudden burst of activity—but were Achilles' decisions affected by Patroclus to such an extent while Patroclus was living? The evidence of their relationship before Patroclus' death is found in only a few scattered phrases. The most important of these is Patroclus' statement: "I have no time, sir...you know what a hard man he is, and how ready he is to blame even when there is no cause" (11, 113). Apart from the obvious references to Achilles' temperament, which Patroclus knows too well, we find in this quotation proof that Achilles does indeed treasure and cherish Patroclus—he is jealous of his friend. In another scene, Patroclus attacks Achilles with the heated words "never may such anger as this grow in me, 0 you only good for the wounding of others" (11, 138). Achilles responds in a luke-warm defense of his actions, "his heart deeply moved" (11, 138). What is astonishing in this scene is that Achilles doesn't vehemently defend himself against
Patroclus' slanderous words. Yes, Patroclus is very important during his life, but it is only through death that he becomes the unsung hero of the poem. By dying he changes the epic, in death he reminds Achilles--almost to a point of insanity--what it's like to lose the love and friend he had valued more highly than anything else.

It is the love and devotion Patroclus freely gives and exchanges with Achilles that defeats, in the end, Achilles' blind pride and anger, and brutally shakes Achilles out of his state of self-absorption, into the savage action which turns the tide of the war. Achilles' anger did nothing for the Greeks--although it did greatly aid the Trojans--but Patroclus' death, that death which caused their love to live, seems to release Achilles. His purpose becomes no longer self-directed; he fights for the memory of Patroclus, because of his love for that comrade above all other comrades.

--Charla Johnson

**This essay won first prize in the 1976 English Writing Contest (Freshman English Category).**

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STARMAN

You burst under spotlight
Outshining the uncommon
With Your thunderous entrar!
None match Your violent
Your static orange strands
Your powdered orb and del
You shriek
And we know You're real.
Ten thousand decibels
Succumb to high heels.
You rip us apart.

Shriller echoes
Escape pulsar-red lips.
We fall to the floor
And fornicate Your pres
While You fling back Your
And laugh.
One final clash of riffs
Melts us
And we're gone--
A half-million souls
Fearing the brittle sil
Lifted, Crushed,
We scatter like ants in