

daylight." Social blame only served as an enticement, and regrets were not to be expected.

At the very end of his life, Abu Nuwas underwent a sudden reformation, and devoted his final days to the composition of verses in favor of Islamic holiness. Yet it is not these verses which brought him his fame.

*See also Ghulamiyya; Islam.*

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## ACHILLES

Greek mythological hero. Achilles was the son of Peleus and Thetis, usually represented as their only child. All the evidence suggests that the Greeks thought of him as a man, real or imaginary, and not as a "faded" god, and that his widespread cult resulted mainly from his prominence in the *Iliad*. His portrait was drawn once and for all by Homer, and later writers supplied details from their own imagination or from local traditions of obscure origin.

In the *Iliad* he appears as a magnificent barbarian, somewhat outside the sphere of Achaean civilization, though highly esteemed for his personal beauty and valor. Alone among the figures of Homer, he clings to the archaic practice of making elaborate and costly offerings, including human victims. His furious and ungovernable anger, on which the plot of the *Iliad* turns, is a weakness of which he himself is conscious. When not aroused by wrath or grief, he can often be merciful, but in his fury he spares no one. He is a tragic hero, being aware of the shortness of his life, and his devoted friendship for

Patroclus is one of the major themes of the epic. Later Greek speculation made the two lovers, and also gave Achilles a passion for Troilus.

The homoerotic elements in the figure of Achilles are characteristically Hellenic. He is supremely beautiful, *kalos* as the later vase inscriptions have it; he is ever youthful as well as short-lived, yet he foresees and mourns his own death as he anticipates the grief that it will bring to others. His attachment to Patroclus is an archetypal male bond that occurs elsewhere in Greek culture: Damon and Pythias, Orestes and Pylades, Harmodius and Aristogiton are pairs of comrades who gladly face danger and death for and beside each other. From the Semitic world stem Gilgamesh and Enkidu, as well as David and Jonathan. The friendship of Achilles and Patroclus is mentioned explicitly only once in the *Iliad*, and then in a context of military excellence; it is the comradeship of warriors who fight always in each other's ken: "From then on the son of Thetis urged that never in the moil of Ares should Patroclus be stationed apart from his own man-slaughtering spear."

The Homeric nucleus of the theme of Achilles as homosexual lover lies in his relationship with Patroclus. The friendship with Patroclus blossomed into overt homosexual love in the fifth and fourth centuries, in the works of Aeschylus, Plato, and Aeschines, and as such seems to have inspired the enigmatic verses in Lycophron's third-century *Alexandra* that make unrequited love Achilles' motive for killing Troilus. By the fourth century of our era this story had been elaborated into a sadomasochistic version in which Achilles causes the death of his beloved by crushing him in a lover's embrace. As a rule, the post-classical tradition shows Achilles as heterosexual and having an exemplary asexual friendship with Patroclus.

The figure of Achilles remained polyvalent. The classical Greek pederastic tradition only sporadically assimilated

him, new variations appeared in pagan writings after the Golden Age of Hellenic civilization, and medieval Christian writers deliberately suppressed the homoerotic nuances of the figure. But in the world of Greek gods and heroes, Achilles remains the supreme example of the warrior imbued with passionate devotion to his comrade-in-arms.

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### ACKERLEY, JOSEPH RANDOLPH (1896-1967)

British writer and editor. In 1918 Ackerley wrote a play "The Prisoners of War" about the cabin fever and repressed homoerotic longings of his own stint in a German camp during World War I. It was produced in 1925, by which time Ackerley had become a protégé of E. M. Forster. Forster arranged for him a nebulous position with the Maharajah of Chhatarpur, whose misadventures in pursuit of homosexual love Ackerley mercilessly lampooned in his travel book *Hindoo Holiday* (1929).

The frustrations of Ackerley's own inhibited sexual encounters with working-class men and men in uniforms led him to concentrate his affections on his dog, an Alsatian named Queenie, who is the main romantic interest of *My Dog Tulip* (1956), and of his one novel, *We Think the World of You* (1960), which juxtaposes the pleasures of owning a dog with the difficulties of having a lower-class beloved. After Queenie's death and Ackerley's retirement from the BBC (where he had been an editor of *The Listener*, 1935-59), he journeyed to Japan, where he had a modicum of sexual gratification. Ackerley wrote an obituary of Forster and

sold Forster's letters to the University of Texas, then predeceased him by three years.

Just before his death, Ackerley completed a memoir (*My Father and Myself*) in which he fantasized that as a youth his guardsman father had prostituted himself to rich patrons, thereby securing the financial stability that was eventually to afford his son the opportunity to rent later generations of guardsmen for mutual masturbation. Unfortunately, many of his admirers have taken this account to be established fact.

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### ACQUIRED IMMUNE DEFICIENCY SYNDROME

See AIDS.

### ACTIVE-PASSIVE CONTRAST

Common usage divides homosexual behavior into active and passive roles. These terms are ambivalent and often confusing.

A truism of physics is that bodies may be either at motion or at rest. Inert objects, however, can only respond to external attraction and repulsion. It is the property of living things that they can initiate activity as well as respond (or refuse to respond) to stimuli. This last distinction is the basis of commonsense notions of active personalities as against passive ones. Some individuals seem to expend energy freely while others conserve it. In addition to this expend-conserve model, the active-passive contrast corresponds in large measure to those of lead-follow and command-obey.

Around such notions the popular morality of ancient Greece and Rome constructed a sexual dichotomy that classified participants in sexual acts not so