ACIILLES AND PATROCLUS IN LOVE

Were Achilles and Patroclus lovers? It is notorious that much of antiquity thought so, and so represented them — often in very unambiguous language. Xenophon’s Socrates does deny it: 'Αχιλλεύς ὁ Ὀμήρῳ πεποίηται ὁ Ὀμήρῳ ὁ Ὀμήρῳ ὁ Ὀμήρῳ ὁ Ὀμήρῳ ὁ Ὀμήρῳ ὁ Ὀμήρῳ ὁ Ὀμήρῳ ὁ Ὀμήρῳ ὁ Ὀμήρῳ ὁ Ὀμήρῳ ὁ Ὀμήρῳ ὁ Ὀμήρῳ ὁ Ὀμήρῳ ὁ Ὀμήρῳ ὁ Ὀμήρῳ ὁ Ὀμήρῳ ὁ Ὀμήρῳ ὁ Ὀμήρῳ ὁ Ὀμήρῳ ὁ Ὀμήρῳ ὁ Ὀμήρῳ ὁ Ὀμήρῳ ὁ Ὀμήρῳ ὁ Ὀμήρῳ ὁ Ὀμήρῳ ὁ Ὀμήρῳ ὁ Ὀμήρῳ ὁ Ὀμήρῳ ὁ Ὀμήρῳ ὁ Ὀμήρῳ ὁ Ὀμήρῳ ὁ Ὀμήρῳ ὁ Ὀμήρ鄠©. But this assertion needs to be read in context. Socrates has just finished arguing that Zeus kidnapped Ganymede not because the boy was physically attractive, but because he had an attractive mind: ὁ δὴ δυνάμεα τοῖς ἐκπρέπειστα συμφωνήσατε. A notion as absurd as this gives away Xenophon’s bias. He means in this part of the Symposium to deny the exalting character of homosexual love as it was represented by Plato; so he explicitly contradicts Phaedrus on Achilles and Patroclus (Plato, loc. cit.) and, a little later (8, 32), Pausanias on the army of lovers (actually Phaedrus, Plato, op. cit. 178E—179A). We will return to his view of Achilles and Patroclus presently. His remarks about Ganymede suggest that he is determined to defend a point of view at all costs, not examine facts disinterestedly.

Modern scholars, debating the nature of the relationship of Achilles and Patroclus, often seem as determined as Xenophon to urge a point of view — and as careless of facts. Thus, Licht, followed by Robinson and Fluck, insists that Achilles’ homosexuality is proved when Agamemnon prepares to offer him young men among the gifts of reconciliation (T 193f.). The verses are:

1 Aeschylus, Myrm. fr. 135f. (Nauck) ~ Fr. 228 (Matthew); cf. Athenaeus 13, 601A; 602E; Plutarch. Amat. 731C (cf. 761D); Plato, Symp. 179E—180B; Aeschines, Tim. 142—150; Theocritus, Id. 29, 31; Martial, 11, 43, 9; A. P. 12, 217; Lucian, Am. 54. The tragedians dealt repeatedly with the homosexual loves of Achilles; fragments and references in R. Beyrer, Fabulae Graecae quatenus quaeve acetate puororum amore commutatae sint, Weida 1970, pp. 52 ff.; 73.
2 Symp. 8, 31.
3 op. cit. 8, 30. Xenophon is here universally opposed by the tradition beginning with Homer: Il. Y 231—235 (cf. E 266); Hymn 5. 202—206; Theogonia 1345—1350; Apollonius Rh. 3. 115—127; A. P. 9, 77; 12, 37; 65; 69f.; 133; 194; 220f.; 254.
4 Xenophon’s Socrates alludes that ἰαμάλδεκες is a compound of γάτημεν (the rejoices) and μυθέα (thoughts). He quotes two phrases from Homer which contain these words, but neither of them is found in existing Homeric poems. Even Cicero, in a passage hostile to homosexual love, asks indignantly, Alqui ... quis aut de Ganymede rapita dubitat quid poetar velini, aut non intelligit quid aude Eurypidem et loquatur ex cupidat Laimus ae (Tusc. 4, 71).
Agamemnon is speaking to Odysseus, and certainly means him to select young men to help carry the gifts; indeed, at T 247f., we find them doing just that: χρυσοὶ δὲ στήσας Ὀδυσσέως δέκα πάντα τάλαντα ἡρξα, ἀμα δὲ ἔλλοι δώρα φέρον καρπητε 'Αχιλλος. There is not the slightest indication that these young porters are gifts themselves. Levin⁷, on the other hand, believes there is no evidence whatever of paederasty in the Iliad. In fact, there are three passages in the poem (discussed below), dealing with Achilles and Patroclus, two of which were thought by ancient editors to be paederastic, and one which implies paederasty on its face. Levin ignores one, presents one without comment, and attempts to explain the last away by misconstruing a vital particle. About Homer’s references to Ganymede, he has nothing to say. He bolsters his argument further with the essentially irrelevant observation that the gymnasium encouraged classical paederasty, and Homer does not say any of his athletes are nude⁸. Finally, aware that Aeschylus et al. had made the heroes outright lovers, Levin dismisses those writers (without analysis or proof) on sociological grounds⁹; and ends with the assertion that We may ... read Homer with the confidence that except for language difficulties [sic] he is no more inaccessible to us than to Aeschylus or Isocrates or Plato (p. 48) — thus ignoring the notorious plurality of the textual tradition before the Alexandrians, to say nothing of the problems posed by the editing Zenodotus and his successors may have done to produce the text we read¹⁰. Again,

⁸ The gymnasium was sometimes cited in antiquity itself as the origin of Greek homosexuality: cf. Plutarch, Amat. 751 F; Cicero, Tusc. 4, 70 (cf. Lucan 7, 270). Whatever its role in classical Greece, however, nudity during exercise cannot be used to explain the presence of paederasty elsewhere; in ancient Persia, for example, paederasty was practiced (cf. Herodotus 1, 135), but public nudity of any kind was regarded there as shameful (Herodotus 1, 10). Cicero is outspoken on the modesty of Rome in this respect (loc. cit.; De off. 1, 35, 129; cf. Plutarch, M, Cato 348 C), but this did not prevent the development of paederasty among his countrymen.
⁹ »Between the Homeric and the Golden Age, sex habits and feelings changed radically in Greece ... The old heroic type was not discarded but remodeled to satisfy and nourish the taste of later Greeks (p. 47). It is well known that this view was held by some ancients themselves: cf. Plutarch, Amat. 751 F, Lucian, Am. 54; but modern scholars often overlook the fact that most ancient writers who deal with it, by the very fact that they attribute paederasty to personalities of the heroic age, do not regard it as a late development; cf. above, n. 1. And what is slates? Scholars who endorse a late development are fond of quoting Plutarch (loc. cit.): »It was yesterday, or the day before ... (Ἐγκάκω γάρ ... καὶ πρόφητα). But paederasty is already explicit in Solon in the 7th cent. B. C. — according to Plutarch, Amat. 751 B—C; cf. Solon 78 E—79 B. Modern opinion on the age of this practice in Greece remains divided: cf. R. Flacelière, L’Amour en Grèce, Paris 1960, p. 64: H.-I. Marrou, Histoire de l’éducation dans l’antiquité, Paris 1955 3rd ed., pp. 556.
¹⁰ A. Parry, Have We Homer’s Iliad? YCIS 20, 1966, pp. 175—216, tries to argue that our text of Homer is almost exactly the one he wrote or dictated; he is decisively
BETHE announces firmly that Homer erwähnt niemals, auch nicht mit leiser Andeutung, ein pädéristisches Verhältnis. A generalization of this breadth entitles us to leave the Iliad for a moment and go to the Odyssey. In book 3 Nestor has welcomed Telemachus to Pylos; after conversation and drinking, the old man directs Telemachus to sleep under the portico — and gives him as a bedmate his only unmarried son:

τὸν δ’ αὐτὸν κοίμησε Γερήνιος Ἰππότα Νέστωρ,
Τηλέμαχον, φίλων υἱὸν Ὀδυσσέας θείου,
τρητοῖς ἐν λεχέσαις όπε’ αἰθουσῆ ερειδούπορ,
πάρ’ δ’ ἄρ’ ἐμμελήνειν Πεσίστρατον, ἄρχομεν ἄνδρῶν,
δὲς οἱ ἐν’ ἱλίδεος παῖδων ἦν ἐν μεγάροισιν (γ 397—401)

If the purpose of this arrangement seems opaque, the verses which immediately follow may help to clarify it:

αὐτὸς δ’ αὖτε καθεύθη μνήμη δόμου ψηλοῖο,
τῷ δ’ ἐλοχοῖς δέσποινα λέχος πόρσυνε καὶ εὐνήν.

The text is not in doubt. Peisistratus accompanies Telemachus on his trip to the court of Menelaus, where they again sleep together; and again the parallel with husband and wife is made explicit:

οἱ μὲν δὲ ἐν προδόμῳ δόμου αὐτῆδε κοίμησαντο,
Τηλέμαχος δ’ ἥρως καὶ Νέστορος ἄγλαδος υἱὸς.
‘Απεθάνεις δὲ καθεύθη μνήμη δόμου ψηλοῖο,
πάρ’ δ’ Ἐλένης τανύστερος ἐλέσυτο, διὰ γυναικῶν. (δ 302—305)

And so Athena finds them:

εὔρε δὲ Τηλέμαχον καὶ Νέστορος ἄγλαδον υἱὸν
εὐδοντ’ ἐν προδόμῳ Μενελάου κυδαλίμοιο (ο 41f.)

It seems unnecessary to point out that, if Peisistratus is old enough to deserve the epithets of a man — but is still unmarried — we are probably meant to picture him in that bloom of young manhood which later authors regard as ideally attractive from a homosexual standpoint. There is here, I think, at least a leise Andeutung of a pædæastic relationship.

refuted by G. S. KIRK, Homer’s Iliad and Our Own, PCPhS 16, 1970, pp. 48—59. For evidence for the pre-Alexandrian text, see A. di Luzio, I Papiri Omerici d’Epoca Tolemaica e la Costituzione del Testo dell’Epica Arcaica, RCCM 11, 1969, pp. 3—152.

11 E. BETHE, Die dorische Knabenliebe, RthM 62, 1907, p. 441. With BETHE’s thoroughly negative conclusions, cf. the inordinately positive ones of R. von Schelila, Patroklos: Gedanken über Homers Dichtung und Gestalten, Basel 1943, p. 315: though Homer does not represent his heroes practicing pædæasty, he so stresses friendship and the beauty of boys that that er die griechische Knabenliebe gleichsam inauguriert.

12 M. OKA, however, Telemachus in the Odyssey, JCS 13, 1963, pp. 33—50, goes too far in arguing that Telemachus has in general adopted the role played by a hero’s woman. Cf. C. MILLAR and T. CARMICHAEL, The Growth of Telemachus, G & R 1, 1954, pp. 58—64.
But does the *Iliad* contain such *Andeutungen*, specifically in reference to Achilles and Patroclus? Two passages in the *Iliad* were thought by ancient critics to express paederastic love, and were athetized accordingly. Some modern scholars have found additional reasons to challenge them.

1. At the end of his long instructions to Patroclus (Π 49—96), Achilles says:

\[\text{α} \text{γάρ, Ζεῦ τε πάτερ καὶ Ἀθηναίη καὶ Ἀπόλλων, μήτε τις ὕπατων Θάνατον φύγοι, δοσοὶ ἔσοι, μήτε τις Ἀργείων, νόϊν δ’ ἐκδύμεν ἐδέσθρον, δορ’ οἴοι Τροίς ἱερὰ χρήσεμα λύσαμεν. (Π 97—100)}\]

According to Aristonicus in schol. A, Aristarchus athetized these verses on the grounds that they are an interpolation by someone who thought Achilles was in love with Patroclus. Thus, in the opinion of Aristarchus, the verses show the heroes to be not only friends, but lovers. For that reason alone he athetized them; are they genuine? Many scholars have thought not, chiefly because of the problem of νοῖν, properly gen. dat. (ἐκδύμεν, infinitive, cannot be read in the absence of εν). Zenodotus seems to have regarded this as a legitimate form of the nom. acc., perhaps considering νοῖν, νόϊν, σφών, σφών sandhi alternants. But there is practically no evidence of νοῖν, σφών as gen. dat. (cf. K 546, where Zenodotus would read σφών, and δ 62). Αὐτον emended to νοῖν δ’ ἐκδύμεν (cf. E 219, o 475). With four late witnesses *Leaf* reads νοῖν with 1 lengthened by iactus, as frequently in the dative; but this license is considered too violent by some scholars. Meanwhile, *Leaf* accepts the verses as consistent with the context and character of Achilles, and so does *Wilamowitz*, though neither scholar believes they reveal a paederastic relationship. The genuineness of the verses may never be established to the satisfaction of all scholars. But, quite apart from considerations of vocabulary, why did these verses seem to Aristarchus to express paederastic

---

18 διδάσκονται στίχοι τέσσαρες, διότι κατά διασκεδασμόν ἐμφανίσεως γεγορφθάναι ὑπὸ τούτου τῶν νομιζόντων ἐξάν τὸν Ἀχιλλέα τὸῦ Πατρόκλου τούτοις γὰρ οἱ λόγοι πάντες ἐπέλευσεν πλὴν ἤμεν. καὶ δ’ Ἀχιλλέως οὐ τούτοις, συμπαθής δέ. The athetesis is endorsed by a late scholar in schol. T: καλῶς οὖν ἔφην Ζηνόδοτος (sc. ὁ Μαλλίτης) Ἀρίσταρχον (Ἀρίσταρχος Ζηνόδοτος cod.) ὑπωτευκέναι, ὡς εἰρένευσέντες οἱ στίχοι ὑπάν τῶν ἀράμεικῶν ἐρωτῶν λέγοντων εἶναι παρ’ Ὀμήρου καὶ ὑπονοοῦντων παλικά εἶναι Ἀχιλλέως τὸν Πατρόκλον. (Emendation of schol. T, with justifications, by G. Bolling, The Athetized Lines of the Iliad, Baltimore 1944, p. 151.) It may be noted that the assertion of Aristarchus (or Aristonicus) that Achilles is not ruthless like this, but is συμπαθής, can hardly be supported from the *Iliad*, where he is repeatedly urged to show pity, but does not, and is repeatedly denounced as pitiless: cf. I 300—303, 496f., 517f.; Λ 664f., 666—668, 762—764; Σ 139—142, Π 203—206. He does, however, pity Patroclus (ὦ θυμοῦ, II 5).

14 Becker and Fick omit them; they are condemned by Faes i, Paley, Nauck, Christ, Rzach, Dindorf-Hentsch, Cauer, Ludwig, Ameis-Hentsch; cf. C. Robert, Studien zur Ilias, Berlin 1901, p. 95, and Bolling, op. cit. pp. 151f.

18 Die Ilias und Homer, Berlin 1916, pp. 121f.
love? The answer is surely because they show in extreme terms the intensely exclusive relationship of the two heroes. Let them all perish, Achilles prays, all the Trojans, and yes, all the Achaeans too, except we two; and may we two, alone, then share the ultimate glory of taking Troy. The ruthlessness and egotism of Achilles yield only to Patroclus — but to him readily and naturally. It is as if they are one person. Now this characterization, this quality of their relationship — suspiciously paederastic in the view of Aristarchus — is repeated in other terms many times in the Iliad, as I shall presently show. It can survive theathesis of these verses quite easily. We can only wonder why there is no evidence that Aristarchus attacked a multitude of verses for the same reason he athenized these, since the sentiment they express is explicit over and over again in the Iliad.

2. At the beginning of book Ω the funeral games are over, but Achilles cannot sleep, still weeping and remembering Patroclus. He turns restlessly on one side and then the other,

Πατρόκλοι ποθέων ἀνδροτήτα τε καὶ μένος ἦ,  
ἐν’ ὅποια τολύτευσε σὺν αὐτῷ καὶ πάθεν ἄγεσα,  
ἀνδρών τε πτολέμισαν ἄγεσαν τοῦ κόματα πέφρον  
tῶν μυθησάμονοι διαλέγοι καὶ δάχτυρον εἴβεν. (Ω 6—9)

Aristonicus (schol. A) and Didymus (schol. AT) tell us that these verses were athenized by Aristarchus and Aristophanes. Aristonicus records the general objection that the passage is worthless and excessive, and the specific objections that ἀνδροτήτα is never used, and that τῶν μυθησάμονοι is awkward. There is no record that the passage was described as paederastic, but schol. T writes as if he were refuting such a description: ὅτι οὐκ ἄγεσαν ποθέων ὁμόν ἡμιθέους ἄλλοι τυπάν ἡμυνακάκοις ἔξιον, εἰ γὰρ δόλως τούτο ὑπονοεῖν δει, ἐραστῆς ἡν εἴ τῆ Πάτροκλος ὡς νεότερον καὶ περικαλλεστέρην. Scholars are again divided on the genuineness of the verses, chiefly over the suitability of ἀνδροτήτα, which its critics charge with being too late (above, n. 16). But again, the sentiments expressed in the passage appear elsewhere in unchallenged verses. Achilles will not eat, because of my longing for you (σῆ ποθή, Τ 319—321); he will remember Patroclus as long as he lives, and even after he himself is

14 εὐτελεῖς εἰσιν, ἀφέντων δὲ αὐτῶν καὶ ἕφεσινκωπέτρων δηλοῦται ἡ τοῦ Ἀχιλλέως λύπη, καὶ οὐδετέρο ἀνδροτήτα εἰρήκει τὴν ἀνάπεσαν ἄλλα ἦν ὁρέγεν, ἔχει δὲ καὶ τὸ δουκεσεδηπτον τῶν μυθησάμονοι· καὶ γὰρ δέω [Ω 4] εἴρηκεν ετέρου μεμνημένος. R. Peemühl, Commentar des 24. Buches der Ilias, Berlin 1876, and LEAF accept the verses; A. Römer, Aristarchus Atheneis in der Homerkritik, Leipzig 1912, p. 22, and Bolling, op. cit. p. 186, reject them. ἀνδροτήτα appears in Π 837 (quoted by Plato, Rep. Γ 386D); Bolling concedes that ἀδροτήτα might be read in Ω 6, the related ἀδροσύνη (Hesiod, Op. 473) helping to establish an old enough pedigree. J. Latacz, Ἀνδροτήτα, Glotta 43, 1965, pp. 62—76, is certain ἀδροτήτα was the original form.
dead (V 387—390); he remembers him, weeping and sleepless (Ω 3—5; i0f.).
We are again dealing with implications of homosexual love sufficient to disturb
ancient critics, but found in a number of other passages besides the one which
drew their fire. These sentiments remain in the poem whether this passage is
rejected or not.
I have recorded the opinions of these critics because, unlike other ancient
commentators, they address themselves to specific passages; and because,
unlike other ancient commentators (excepting Xenophon), they themselves
do not believe Achilles and Patroclus are in love. Their opinions about evidence
for paederasty in the text are thus free from a fundamental bias to find it there.
But they are opinions still. Does the text of the Iliad contain any explicit
implications of paederasty?
One passage contains such implications. In book Ω Thetis comes to Achilles
to persuade him to recover himself from his grief, and return Hector’s body:

τέχνον ἐμόν, τέο μέχρις ὀδυρόμενος καὶ ἔχεων
σὴν ἔδειξα κραδίγην, μεμνημένος οὕτε τι σῖτου
οὐ’ εὔνης; ἄγαθον δὲ γυναῖκι περ ἐν φιλότητι
μίσγεσθ’ οὐ γάρ μοι δηρὸν βέθι, ἀλλὰ τοὐ ἢδη
ἀγαλματικῶς παρῆστηκεν θάνατος καὶ μοῖρα χραταιή. (Ω 128—132)

The passage has been attacked on a number of grounds, of which those employed
by the ancient critics are the least convincing. The notorious Platonic morality
of Aristarchus (and perhaps his ignorance of the habits of soldiers) can be
seen in Aristonicus’ remarks in schol. A: ἀστετοῦνται στίχοι γ’, δι’ ἀπερείης
μητέρα υἱῷ λέγειν ἄγαθόν ἄστι γυναῖκι μίσγεσθαι. Ἐπὶ δὲ ... ἀσμφροτατόν
ἔστι καὶ μάλιστα τοῖς εἰς πόλεμον ἔξουσι· χρέα χάρ ἐντονάς καὶ πνεύματος.17
καὶ τὸ λέγειν διὰ τὸ θάνατος σου ἐγγὺς ἠτίν ἐκαίρων. Similarly, schol. T: ἄγα-
θον δὲ γυναῖκι περί μίσγεσθαι ἀστετεῖται ἀνὸλειον γάρ ἢρω καὶ θεκ. Schol. T
also contains, however, a defense with which modern critics might be readier
to agree: Τοιοῦτος δὲ τὸ πλέον ἀντὶ αὐτοῦ κτῆσισθαι ἐκκόμιοι ή τάχα ὑπο-
κλέπτουσα αὐτὸν τοῦ πένθους ταῦτα φησιν.
Not much unlike these ancient arguments is the modern one that Homer
does not as a rule refer explicitly to coarse or unseemly matters, even though
these may have been explicit in the traditions that preceded him.14 It is for

17 Aristotle, Nic. Eth. 1116B appears to allude to the verses in a passage where he says
the desire for sexual intercourse is natural for the young and vigorous.
J. Wackernagel, Sprachliche Untersuchungen zu Homer, Göttingen 1916, pp. 224—231.
Murray, however, seems to think (p. 124 n. 2) the passage is genuine, perhaps by oversight;
he makes clear that the Iliad does contain many elements of coarseness and unseemliness
(pp. 140—142), despite a general reticence. For the possible antiquity of the hero-friends
in ancient epic well before Homer, cf. H. Petricon, Das Gilgamesch-Epos als Vorbild

100
this reason that there are not (or should not be) any references to paederasty in the *Iliad*. Verses 130—132 are therefore rejected as an interpolation by some scholars. This, however, creates a problem in v. 129 for οὐτέ τι στρω; even the alternative οὐδῆ in Homer before an indefinite adverb always means αν and not ε, and here requires a correlative.

Accordingly, at least one scholar accepts the passage, but attempts to translate περ in such a way that previous homosexual relations with Patroclus are not implied. Levin claims (without examples) that περ may be employed with a word that fills in a detail of the picture; it implies something in contrast not necessarily to that one word, but to the whole sentence. The contrast here would be 'instead of tossing about by yourself' (cf. 24.41, 9—11) και. Denniston, however, lists Ω 130 as an example of the determinative use of περ, which he defines thus: εThe particle denotes, not that something is increased in measure, but that the speaker concentrates on it to the exclusion of other things: with, or without, the definite envisagement of some other particular thing thus excluded or contrasted. He gives five other examples from the *Iliad* and one from the *Odyssey*, all with comments; in every case περ immediately follows and stresses a word, not a sentence. Levin's attempt to read the paederastic implications out of v. 130 might succeed if the author had written:

οὐτε εὐνής; ἀγαθόν περ δὲν φιλότητι γυναῖκι μῖσοσθ'.

Why are you forgetful of food and of bed? It is a good thing to join in love with a woman — i.e., *it* is not a bad thing to enjoy sexual relations, even though you are in mourning. But the author did not so place περ; and the verse as it stands can only be translated, *It* is a good thing to have sexual relations, and I mean with a woman, i.e., *not* now with Patroclus, or with some other youth (perhaps: *who* would only remind you of him) και.

---


19 E.g., Bolling, op. cit. p. 191.
20 Cf. Wackernagel, op. cit. pp. 254f. οὐδὲ is in fact read only in five witnesses; the rest read οὐτε. Levin is mistaken in translating οὐδὲ not even.
21 Levin, op. cit. p. 45 n. 19.
23 Both Achilles and Patroclus are described as sleeping with women. Achilles twice (I 663—668, Ω 676); but this, as the career of later Greeks, both literary and historical, shows, is not conclusive evidence that they had not had a sexual relationship. It may also be noted that, though Denniston says the determinative particle need not envisage something excluded or contrasted, it is hard to imagine why it would be used here without doing so. The author might have used περ to stress μῖσοσθ', simply to stress it. But there is no point in stressing γυναῖκι, if Homer assumes that is the one and only partner in a sexual act.
Yet it remains a fact that this verse contains the only explicit implication in the entire poem that Achilles and Patroclus were paederastic lovers. Alone, it can hardly be used to prove anything.

If the poet does not explicitly characterize the heroes' relationship as paederastic, how does he characterize it? Xenophon's Socrates (loc. cit.) declares that Achilles mourns Patroclus not as his παιδικά but as his ταξιφός. This is fair enough, at first glance; Achilles and others refer repeatedly to Patroclus as his ταξιφός, never as his παιδικά (a word Homer does not use): cf. P 204, 411, 557, 642, 655; Σ 80, 98. And yet, Xenophon's remark is subtly misleading. It implies, no doubt deliberately, that Patroclus was only Achilles' companion, in the sense, no more and no less, that other heroes of the Iliad have companions: so Antiphilus kills Leucus, Odysseus' brave companion (εὐθάλῃ εὐσεβῶν, Δ 491), and Odysseus retaliates by killing Democoon, sin anger for his companion (εὐσεβῶν χαλασάμενος, Δ 501). Indeed, in this sense, all the Achaemen are Achilles' companions: so Ajax says Achilles does not remember that companions' affection with which we honored him (ὁδὲ μετατρέποντα φιλό-τροχος ταξιφόν τίς ἂν μῦν . . . ἀτόμῳ, I 630f.). Xenophon's alternative descriptions of the relationship of Achilles and Patroclus have in fact been accepted as the terms for most subsequent debate by both ancient and modern readers — but neither term actually describes the relationship as Homer presents it. Achilles and Patroclus cannot possibly conform to the conventions of παιδε-παρτία as classical Greece conceived them; Patroclus is older than Achilles, but Achilles is obviously the dominant partner: Patroclus is weaker (II 140—144), and obedient to him (Λ 648—654). Considerations such as these, plus the absence of express references to a sexual relationship, have led many readers to dismiss with disgust any inference that the heroes are passionately in love; and instead to talk high-mindedly of their chaste and beautiful companionship. But it is equally true that the relationship of the heroes in the Iliad is conceived and described by Homer in terms that put it far beyond the conventions of companionship as these conventions are attributed to other couples in the poem. We must dispense with the levelling, commonplace

24 A fact which critics of their alleged passion were quick to observe; cf. Α 787, and schol. T (above, p. 385). But Plato also noticed it (Symp. 179 E—180 B).
25 How easy it is to lose sight of this fact is well demonstrated by A. ADKINS, 'Friendship' and 'Self-sufficiency' in Homer and Aristotle, CQ 13, 1963, pp. 30—45. He says, In a hostile or indifferent world the person or things on which [the hero's] survival depends must appear to him sharply defined from the rest of his environment. He is, accordingly, likely to use some word to demarcate these things from things in general . . . It is evident that φιλος in Homer demarcates in precisely this manner (p. 33). Again: When the chief concern of [the hero] is to secure his own continued existence, a φιλον object, whether animate or inanimate, is something he can rely on to use for his own preservation (p. 33). This cold-blooded analysis of friendship fails precisely at the point of the Achilles-Patroclus relationship, often an occasion for the use of the word φιλος, but in no way
connotations of ἐκατοράς, as well as the anachronistic one of παιδικά, and look instead at what is to be found in the Iliad itself.

Apart from the feelings of Achilles and Patroclus, strong emotional attachments between individuals are not much in evidence in the Iliad — unless they are felt by women: cf. the feelings of Thetis and Hecuba for their sons, of Andromache for her husband, of Briseis for the fallen Patroclus. The poet gives considerable space to the expression of these feelings, which are too well-known to require description here. Nevertheless, it should be born in mind that, in terms of numbers of verses alone, and excepting Achilles and Patroclus, Homer treats emotional attachment and its expression as the province of women. Achilles' attachment to Patroclus, and the considerable expression of it, is in this perspective literally unparalleled in the poem. The evidence for emotional attachments felt by other men is as follows.

When the truce is broken and Menelaus is wounded, Agamemnon is terrified for him, groans, takes his hand, addresses him as dear brother (Δ 153—155), will suffer terrible grief if he dies and must be left behind (Δ 169—181). Odyseus angrily avenges his brave companion, Leucus (Δ 491—501). Sthenelus gives the horses of Aeneas to Deiphilos, his dear companion, whom he honored beyond all others his age, because their hearts were close (ἐκατορό φίλω δὲ περὶ πάσῃ/τεν δυσπληκτή, διὶ οἱ φιλοί/τριτα ἀδή, Ε 325 f.). Hector proposes to Ajax that they end their duel with friendship, so that others will say they parted in affection (ἐν φιλότητι, Η 302). When Agamemnon has proposed that the Achaeans return home, Diomedes suggests sarcastically that the king and the rest leave: We two, Sthenelus and I, will fight till we witness the end of Troy (νὰί δ', ἐγὼ Σθήνελός τε, μαχησόμεθ' εἰς δὲ τέκμορφ/ Ἰλίου ἐφρωμεν, Ι 481 f.; cf. the disputed Π 97—100). Phoenix says he loved Achilles as a child (Ι 485 f.). Ajax tells Achilles the members of the embassy desire beyond all others to be honored and loved by you (Ι 641 f.). During his duel with Achilles, Athena appears to Hector disguised as his brother, Deiphobus; Hector says he was always the dearest of his brothers, and now he will honor him even more for coming to his aid (Χ 233—235).

That is all. And even if we do not dismiss some of these as the conventions of blood relationship, or courtesy, this evidence is little enough in a long poem. Only once (Ε 325 f.) is there a reference that approaches the intensity found in the relationship of Achilles and Patroclus; but Deiphilos is never mentioned again.

Based upon survival in the utilitarian terms employed by Adkins; yet he makes no exception for these heroes. His definitions apply well enough to certain inanimate φόρα in the poem, and can even comprehend some of the companionships; but they are quite inadequate to describe what Achilles and Patroclus feel and express for one another.

*I omit Priam's expressions of grief at the deaths of his sons, since these plainly reveal a parent's love; and the general mourning for Patroclus, which is conventional.
In contrast, the things said by and about Achilles and Patroclus are overwhelming. Since the story is well known in its outlines, I will concentrate here on key passages.

The keynotes of the attitude of Patroclus toward Achilles are deference, dependence, and intimacy. It is characteristic that when he is first described at all in the Iliad, Homer pictures him passive, alone with Achilles, focusing all his attention upon him (I 190 f.). He does not speak during the embassy’s visit; though we are told that it is Patroclus who directs the slaves and others to prepare a bed for Phoenix (I 568 f.) — an act of domestic overseership that, if it is not unfair to say so, a wife might perform, if Achilles had one with him. The first words Patroclus utters in the poem are addressed to Achilles (A 606, asking what need Achilles has of him); the last words he utters living are Achilles’ name (Π 854, Ἀχιλλής δύσμοιον Αλκιδίαο); and during this

It should be pointed out that Achilles himself expresses emotional attachment to a number of people other than Patroclus. He says the members of the embassy are dearest of all the Achaeans to him (I 198; 204) — though he refuses to do as they ask. He says he loves Phoenix (I 614) — but in the context of a veiled threat that Phoenix could become hateful to him. He says he loved Briesis (I 341—343); and indeed, Briesis herself says Patroclus assured her she would become Achilles’ wife (T 297—299). Achilles, however, assumes that his father has arranged a marriage for him at home, and he expresses a strong desire to marry there (I 395—400). R. Krill, Achilles’ War-prize Briesis, CB 47, 1971, pp. 92—94, suggests he may actually have married Briesis in the tradition; had he done so, however, it is unlikely we should have no mention of it in what survives to us. In any case, in Homer, he will not take Briesis back when she is offered; his love of her, whatever it is worth, is not stronger than his anger. Only his love for Patroclus is that strong; cf. R. Delhône, Patrocle, le rédempteur des Achéens, LEC 32, 1964, pp. 270—277. He even wishes Briesis had died before she could make trouble between himself and Agamemnon (T 591 f.). She is, in fact, fundamentally no more than his γάργας; cf. W. Sale, Achilles and Heroic Values, Arion 2, 3, 1963, pp. 86—100. Sale tries to argue that, by the time of the embassy, love for Briesis is as important to Achilles as honor; but this notion is refuted by his unwillingness to take her back. Seeing Priam, Achilles weeps for his father — but then for Patroclus (Ω 514 f.), whose death he has already described as a worse misfortune than the death of his father or son would be (T 321). Achilles’ relationship with his mother hardly deserves mention here, since (from his point of view) it seems to be little more than petulant and egotistical; whenever they meet, he is either issuing requests of his own, or refusing to grant hers (the requirement that he return the body of Hector comes not from her, but from the gods). R. Bespaloff’s famous and beautiful essay (On the Iliad, trans. M. McCarthy, New York 1947. pp. 51—58), though it tries, cannot quite get round this unpleasant reality.

Patroclus is described (Π 244: P 271; Σ 152; Ψ 90) as Achilles’ δερματωρ, and used to serve him his meals (T 315—318). The term is often translated servant, which implies something approaching servant status. J. Stagakis, however, Ἄθεραντες and Hetairoi in the Iliad, as Symbols of the Political Structure of the Homeric State, Historia 15, 1966, pp. 408—419, argues conclusively against Nilsson that the δερματωρ is not a servant, but at least = ἰσχίος, and is in a reciprocal relationship with the person whose δερματωρ he is. Cf. LSJ: in Hom., a companion in arms, though inferior in rank; as Patroclus.
time, except when he is sent (by Achilles) to learn who is wounded (Λ 616ff.), or again to go into battle (Π 257ff.), he is hardly out of Achilles's sight for a moment. He is afraid not to obey him promptly (Λ 649—654)\(^{38}\). His own father instructed him, as the elder, to give Achilles good advice (Λ 786—789) — but the plan to go into battle disguised as Achilles actually originates with Nestor (Λ 790—803): Patroclus's emotional appeal to Achilles (Π 20—45), with its extravagant tears, is the product of his tender-hearted sympathy for the dying and wounded\(^{38}\); he does not himself conceive courses of action. The quality of that emotional appeal may be gauged from the famous simile employed by Achilles to describe it (Π 7—11) — and so may the quality of their intimacy. That one hero should compare another to a little girl (κούρη νηπία) in a tone of sympathy (τὸν δὲ Ἰδών φίλης τε, Π 5) is unparalleled in Homer, and virtually in ancient literature. Finally, when Patroclus appears to Achilles as a phantom, he recalls and expresses their intimacy: \(\text{‘You were not uncaring of me (οὐ μεν ἄχνης, Ψ 70); hold my hand, I am grieving (καλ μοί δές τὴν χειρί, δισφόροιμαι, Ψ 75); no more alive will we sit planning together, apart from our companions (Ψ 77f.); do not bury me away from you, but with you (Ψ 83f.; 91f.)’} \)

Patroclus calls himself only Achilles’ θεράπων (Ψ 90). But their special relationship is assumed by other personalities in the poem: cf. Nestor (Λ 765—793), Hector (Π 837—842), and Menelaus (Ρ 120—123). Zeus identifies him as Achilles’ ἄταρος (Ρ 204) and θεράπων (Ρ 271; Σ 152); the poet refers to him as Achilles’ φίλητας ἄταρος (Ρ 411); Athena, as his πιστός ἄταρος (Ρ 557); Telemonian Ajax, as his φίλος ἄταρος (Ρ 642) and his φίλητας ἄταρος.

\(^{38}\) An aspect of their relationship which occasionally works on critics to produce a certain amount of solemn nonsense (A tragic commentary on their friendship, W. Anderson, Achilles and the Dark Night of the Soul, Cj 31, 1956, p. 265). After all, Patroclus does delay in order to hear Nestor’s lengthy remarks; and for that matter, disobeys Achilles’ orders not to fight offensively in the field. More fundamentally, Achilles and Patroclus are not friends. They are lovers. Friendship is a limited relationship, in the sense that participants meet on an equal plane to enjoy one another’s company within the limits of shared interests and mutual advantage. Love is by no means necessarily a relationship of equals; but it is an unlimited one, in the sense that participants accept, and are themselves free to express, every aspect of character and personality, whether these are amiable or useful, or not. Achilles is by nature short-tempered and violent; Patroclus, gentle and passive (see below, n. 30). Patroclus accepts realistically (and indeed, himself defines, loc. cit.) what Achilles is, and refrains from exacerbating it. In the same way, Achilles accepts Patroclus’ soft-heartedness without reproach, and allows himself to be compromised by it (Π 20ff.); cf. his menacing, uncooperative reaction to Phoenix — surely a friend — in similar circumstances (I 667ff.). Both heroes endure and accommodate themselves to the extremes in each other’s character. That is the behavior of lovers, not friends.

(P 655). No other human being in the Iliad is so regularly perceived in terms of his relationship to another; none is so often spoken of as another's dear companion. The word itself, as we have seen (above, pp. 388f.), does not express especially deep relationship; it is the frequency with which it and related terms are used to tie Patroclus to Achilles that is unique here.

To turn from the usual attitude of Achilles to his attitude toward Patroclus is to turn from incredible arrogance and egotism to unprecedented tenderness and compassion. In his first recorded conversation with Patroclus, Achilles begins by addressing him, δια Μηνοτιάδη, τῷ ἐμῷ κεχαρισμένε δυμῷ (Λ 608; though this is a standard epithet, applied, e.g., by Agamemnon to Diomedes, Κ 234). He says later that he honored Patroclus above all his companions, equal to himself (Πάτροκλος τὸν ἐγὼ περὶ πάντων τῶν ἐκαστῶν, Ἡσοὺ ἐμῇ κεφαλῇ, Σ 81f. Here is that intense, exclusive quality, that suggestion that the two were one, that appears in Π 97—100; no hero except Achilles makes such statements about another.). He calls him his φίλατος ἐπάξος (Τ 315) and ἰδιϊν κεφαλή (Υ 94). When he sends Patroclus into battle, he is still jealous of his own honor; but on that occasion he also offers a long and passionate prayer to Zeus, with considerable ceremony, for the glory and safety of Patroclus, going off to fight alone, without him. This, too, is unparalleled.

His grief and guilt when Patroclus dies are expressed violently in the killing and abuse of Hector. That this grief and its consequences are both unprecedented is recognized by Apollo: ἂν ἰδίαν ἄρα πρὸ τοῦ μοι δίκαιον ἄδοικον ἀπήλθε, ἀρτι ἄκρην ἀκραῖον, ὑπεκτιθήκει τὸν ἄθλον ἐκαστῶν, Ἡσοὺ ἐμῷ κεφαλῇ, Σ 81f. But his relations are not dearer to Achilles than Patroclus, as he himself says: the death of his father or his son would not be worse to suffer than the death of Patroclus (Τ 321); no other sorrow will equal this one (Φ 46f.). It is precisely because the relationship is not a conventional one between companions that Achilles's grief is hysterical, his breakdown appalling, his sense of loss unhealed and unending, even in the midst of the famous resolution scene with Priam.

His furious rage at Hector and the Trojans is only one symptom of his grief. He refuses to eat (Τ 319f.) or bathe (Υ 44f.). He cannot get his fill of weeping, even after the funeral games have brought the normal period of mourning to an end (Ω 1—4). But most striking are the references to his desperate, tender handling of the corpse. When Thetis finds him, he lies emb-

---

81 Reference is made passim to Patroclus as, simply, Achilles' ἐπάξος.

82 Evidently for the first time: cf. especially Π 242—245.

racing Patroclus (Πατρόκλως περικείμενον, Τ 4); he lays his hands on Patroclus' breast (κεύρας θεμένος στήθεσαίν έταξον, Ψ 18); he implores the ghost to embrace him (διφροῦσιλόντε, Ψ 97); he holds Patroclus' head (καρη ξέν, Ψ 136).

The implications of this behavior have been almost universally ignored by modern scholars. None of the critics, quick to remind us that Homer makes no reference to physical contact between the heroes living, explains the provenance of these sudden embraces and fondlings and cries to cast arms about one another. Yet, if these are no more than conventional post-mortem theatrics, wrung out of a man by grief, why is it no other hero embraces the body of a fallen companion? It should be noted that the other major manifestations of Achilles' grief for Patroclus each has some precedent in his previous behavior; he has wept and slaughtered before. It is senseless to assume that Achilles would lie in the arms of a dead man (Τ 4; see above) whom, living, he had kept at the discreet distance appropriate to one who is no more than a companion. Here, more than anywhere else in their story, we are face to face with evidence for a physical relationship between the heroes. Here, if anywhere in the poem, is support for the implications of Ω 130.

Is this, all this, the behavior of companions? I think not. In every way it goes beyond all precedents for companionship set by the Iliad itself. It happens that we have a lengthy example of those precedents in the adventures of Diomedes and Odysseus (Κ 241—579)44. Diomedes expressly selects Odysseus to be his companion (έταξον, Κ 242); what follows displays the friendly, business-like partnership of two heroes, whose fundamental independence of one another is obvious here and elsewhere in the poem, but whose companionship serves their mutual needs and purposes quite well in this war action. The episode is too well-known to require further discussion. This, in Homer, is the relationship of έταξον. The relationship of Achilles and Patroclus is something more.

Are they lovers? Some physical expression of their feelings for one another seems virtually certain on the evidence of Achilles' behavior after Patroclus dies. But no sexual relationship is conclusively proved; and those whom the idea offends are free to reject it. The essential question, however, is not whether the heroes engage in sodomy, but whether they are in love. I believe it can be inferred that they are, and above all at the climax of the poem, with the help of a famous parallel.

---

44 On which Vergil drew extensively for the adventures of Nisus and Euryalus (Aen. 9), who are, however, lovers. Cf. also the remarks of C. Bowra, Tradition and Design in the Iliad, Oxford 1950, p. 209, about Glaucus and Sarpedon.

The strength of Achilles’s feelings for Patroclus is crucial to the climax of the *Iliad*, for there the poet reveals that only Patroclus living can persuade Achilles to forego his determination to keep his men from the fight, just as only Patroclus dead can persuade him to forego his anger at Agamemnon entirely. There is no parallel to this in the *Iliad*; or is there? In fact, there is a parallel, and a significant one, in the story of Meleager, told by Phoenix during the visit of the embassy (I 529—599). As long as Meleager fought for the Aetolians, the war went against the Kouretes (I 550f.). But in a rage he withdrew with his wife (I 553—556), and would not fight, because his mother had cursed him. His mother (I 584f.) and father (I 581) then implored him to return to the fight, but he refused. His dearest friends (φιλάρατοι, I 586) implored him to return, but he refused. Finally, when the Kouretes were firing the city itself (I 589), Meleager’s wife came to him in tears (I 590ff.), describing the imminent suffering. Then and only then Meleager yielded. This tale parallels the actual events in the *Iliad*. Achilles withdraws from the fight, with Patroclus, in a rage at Agamemnon, and the war then goes against the Achaeans. Agamemnon relents and asks him to return, but he refuses. His father’s entreaty that he not give vent to his anger is cited to him by Odysseus (I 254—258), but he refuses. The embassy — his dearest friends (φιλάρατοι, I 198) — implore him to return, but he refuses. Finally, when the Trojans are firing the Achaean ships, Patroclus comes to him in tears, describing the suffering of the men. Then and only then Achilles yields.\(^{44}\)

The fact that Meleager should yield to his wife is not, in the *Iliad*, surprising: any good and sensible man loves and cares for his wife — as Achilles himself says (I 337—342), citing the most famous example of all, Helen, for whom the war is being fought. His own protestations about Briseis have a hollow ring, since he will not lift a finger to get her back, though he might have her now with Agamemnon’s apologies and gifts to boot (see above, n. 27). The fact is that Achilles has no wife. He has Patroclus, whom he loves as other men love their wives; for only Patroclus can move him as Cleopatra moved Meleager in exactly similar circumstances.

It will be objected that this is still not the παιδεραστία of classical Greece, and I hasten to agree — provided that by παιδεραστία is meant the sort of relationship that survived, with its largely frivolous sensuality, to appear in book 12 of the *Palatine Anthology*. But homosexual love wore many masks in antiquity. Xenophon scoffed at Plato’s army of lovers; but the Sacred Band

\(^{44}\) The parallels between Meleager’s situation and Achilles’ have been much discussed, most recently by M. M. Wilcock, Mythological Paragigma in the *Iliad*, CQ 14, 1964, pp. 141—154. But scholars are unwilling to draw the logical conclusion about the relationship of Patroclus to Achilles from the Cleopatra-Patroclus parallel; so even Kakridis, Homeric Researches, Lund 1949, pp. 19—27, though he is aware of the rising *scale of affection* (his term) in which the suppliants approach Meleager.
Achilles and Patroclus in Love

395
did, in fact, fight and die honorably for Thebes. Even Plutarch (no friend of homosexual love) makes Protogenes distinguish between homosexual and heterosexual love in revealing terms (Amat. 751A—B). Love of boys is the real love, he says (εἶς Ἔφεος ὁ γνήσιος ὁ πατικός ἐστιν): it does not slicker with desire (πᾶθῳ στιλβών), as Anacreon says the love of women does, but is simple, uncontaminated by luxury (μερύν αὐτὸν ὑπερ καὶ ἄλημπτον), manly, and encouraging to excellence (ἐγκεκελομένον πρὸς ἰδρυτήν). Love of women, on the other hand, wallows in their bosoms and their beds (ἐν κόλποις διατρήσιν καὶ κλαυνίοις), and pursues unmanly pleasures (γυμναῖς ἀνάδροις), untouched by friendship (ἄδικοις). Who, reading these words with the Iliad in mind, could refrain from thinking of Achilles and Patroclus — and Paris and Helen27? To evaluate homosexual love in antiquity one must reckon with Plato as well as with Stratton of Sardis.

Most ancient writers and commentators assumed Achilles and Patroclus were lovers in every sense of the word. Why? They were well aware that Homer never expressly names the heroes’ passion. (Alcibiades, too, in Plato’s Symposium never says precisely what it was he hoped to get from Socrates, but did not get; but no one, then or now, doubts what it was.) The sexual question is in any case irrelevant. It is clear from the language, precedents and dramatic development of the Iliad that Achilles and Patroclus are not Homeric friends, but are lovers from their hearts. Patroclus lives his life only in the life of Achilles; and is in turn the only human being more important to Achilles than himself, than his own life, his own ego and honor. Aeschines said it well:

27 It may be objected that Hector is a more typical (i.e., better) example of heterosexual, certainly of conjugal, love in the Iliad. But is he? We have so often heard the tale of his virtues that we may overlook what he actually tells Andromache when she implores him to stay and protect his family by the figtree, where the city is most vulnerable to attack — note that she does not ask him to stop fighting (Z 407—465). He refuses her, on the grounds that he has learned, as he so frankly puts it, to win great glory for himself (μέγας κλέος ἔστων υἱόν, Z 446). He knows he is abandoning her to certain slavery; the thought troubles him, he says — but when he pictures her misery, it is chiefly to imagine someone pointing her out as the wife of himself, great hero that he was (Z 460f). Andromache in slavery will literally be his memorial. As for her personal agony when that happens, all he has to utter is the hope that he himself will be safely dead so that he need not hear her cries. It is impossible to imagine Achilles saying such things to Patroclus. We have all heard of the egotism of Achilles; in this speech Hector thinks throughout basically of himself, speaks of Andromache’s pain with a curiously unpleasant detachment, and is not deflected for one instant from the pursuit of his own glory. (Contrast the effect on Achilles of Patroclus’ pleas.) In view of what critics have done for years to Aeneas, who is under direct pressure from Jupiter to leave Dido, one can only wonder that Hector has never ceased to be praised. M. Arthur, Early Greece: the Origins of the Western Attitude toward Women, Arethusa 6, 1973, pp. 7—58, thinks that Homer elevates women and romanticizes love and marriage with them. If the actions of Achilles and Hector in respect to their women speak louder than their words, then in the context of the Iliad Arthur is wrong.
although Homer frequently writes of Achilles and Patroclus, their love, and the name of their friendship he conceals; assuming that what goes beyond the limits of goodwill is obvious to the educated among his readers.\footnote{\textit{Tim.} 142; cf. 143–150.} My reference to Alcibiades in Plato’s Symp. is not frivolous. The institution Plato discusses there and elsewhere involved, as everyone knows, sexual intercourse between lovers; yet Plato’s language is always discreet, and he never specifies the physical acts that were the usual consequence of the feelings he describes. Since Homer does specify the passion of men and women, but not of men and men, many have concluded that homosexuality does not exist in the \textit{Iliad}, did not exist in the Heroic Age, did not exist in Homer’s own age. But I believe I have shown that homoeroticism, if not homosexuality, does indeed exist in the \textit{Iliad}. The evidence for its presence is overwhelming; only the name is absent. It thus seems to me more reasonable to conclude that Homer himself felt, or wrote for an audience which felt, that names and descriptions of homosexual passion \textit{as such} are indiscreet in a serious work. This is not much more than what Plato felt. But every other element of such a relationship is present in Achilles and Patroclus. Sociological deductions are worthless until we know more about Heroic and Homeric society from other sources. \textit{In this poem} we see the reticence of the author, and presumably his audience, to label a love that, in any case, requires no name to be understood.