

Love in the Iliad

I think it fair to say that in most reader's minds *The Iliad* is about of men, pride, and war. However, in this essay I offer a somewhat counterintuitive analysis, arguing that love is a powerful force that has a significant influence on the characters and the epic's sequence of events. Of course, love was a contested concept in Classical Greece. In *Symposium*, Plato displayed a wide variety of ideas of love in debate with each other, and failed to come to a firm conclusion on the subject. Therefore, "Eros" a Greek word for true love, the erotic and desire, is a driving force that is also delivered in many different ways. In *The Iliad* I was able to find examples of familial love, erotic relationships, patriotism, and loving companionship. Not only are these forms of love portrayed, but aid in supplementing the plot and building the complexity of the epic. For instance, the relationship between Achilles and Patroclus is one not only of companionship, but is also believed to be one of homosexual tendencies. Achilles provides Patroclus with his renowned armor before he goes to battle, relating to the manner that when someone loves another, their "desire to preserve is the desire for Eternity" (Desmos, 341). Thus, Achilles wanted to preserve his lover, and did everything in his power to do so. However, Achilles attempt to save Patroclus was not successful, for Hector brutally murdered him during combat. Achilles did not react well to this at all, putting himself in a great state of agony: "My dear comrade's dead-Patroclus-the man I loved beyond all other comrades, loved as my own life-I've lost him..." (18.94-96). The man he loved more than his own life was slaughtered, and now agony transforms into rage. As a result, Achilles sought revenge to restore the honor of his beloved by callously killing Hector along with anyone who got in his way. Achilles devoted himself to a love considered to be worth dying for. Other characters in the epic devoted themselves as well to some representation of love that influenced multiple battles, the Trojan War itself, the persuasion of the gods, plots of vengeance, sacrifice, etc. Moreover, Homer encompassed love and these relationships within *The Iliad* in such way to convey a purpose. Love, though widely interpreted, is the hidden incentive behind many of the occurrences throughout the entirety of *The Iliad*.