Title: “Patroklōs\(^1\) as the Alter Ego of Achilles”

Announcements:

- The prompt for this week: your responses will be used to shape this week’s section.
- Postponing deadline of the paper. The topic of paper will be posted today. It will be due 11:59 on Wednesday two weeks from now. By that time you should have read all the Iliad, Prof. Nagy’s expository notes for all 6 hours, and minutes, and the handouts.

**Today’s key word: “therapon”**

The ancient Greek language borrowed this word from the ancient Hittite language, mid 2nd millennium BCE, originates from usage about ritual substitutes in the Hittite empire. Borrowed into song culture of ancient Greeks from very early time. Embedded in structure of Iliad. Seems to mean in Iliad: (1) Minister, attendant, “sidekick”, and (2) Ritual substitute (deeper meaning).

Story behind the word: Every year, king of Hittites, as embodiment of society, would have to die, so that he could therefore be renewed (a purification process). Practically, he doesn’t actually die. He has a ritual substitute die for him. Person who dies would have to be nearest and dearest to him. Or maybe someone who used to be your friend but isn’t anymore. Or a pet dog. Or bean-bread shaped like pet dog.

Liz: Patroklōs’ death is a dress rehearsal for Achilles’ funeral.

Patroklōs is Achilles’s therapon. He takes the hit for Achilles. Achilles doesn’t die in this epic. He dies later.

**Passage 1:** Achilles lets Patroklōs wear his armor and take Achilles’ place to save Achaeans. Achilles prays to Zeus. Patroklōs is going to be doomed – he’s going to die for the Achaeans in place of Achilles.

\(^1\) This is the short form of the name, which is conventionally used by modern researchers. But you are right, Patrokles is an alternative form, and reflects the longer form of the name in the original Greek. -GN
Hector puts on Patrokl’s armor after killing him. So Hector himself is a perverse body double of Achilles. When Achilles kills Hector, he’s killing his own alter-ego.

Preya: does Achilles realize to any extent that Patrokl is body double for Achilles? That Patrokl might die in place of him?

Prof. Nagy: No, he doesn’t realize it until end of the epic. That’s what makes him “the man of constant sorrow.”

Liz: Spoiler Alert! There’s a crucial scene in book 24: Priam confronts Achilles about Hector being body double as Achilles.

Passage B: Epithet “equal to Ares” it’s dangerous to equate yourself to a god, because that means you’re sealing your doom. Now that epithet sticks to him for the rest of the epic.

Macronarrative


Pearl Fishers by Bizet: Two men in love with one woman. (Baritone, tenor, in love with soprano. Tenor and Baritone fight over girl. One of them has to die. One gives up his life for the other. Ritual substitution. “Yes it is she! It is the goddess”. At that moment, she is a goddess. The two men can keep on being friends if they keep on loving this girl as a goddess.) To die for somebody else is greatest expression of love.

Focus passage C: Old man Phoenix is telling story of Meleager and Cleopatra. Achilles doesn’t get it yet how relevant this story is to him.

To understand the meaning of ainos (form of speech), people must be sophoi (wise), agathoi (noble), and philoi (near and dear).

Aristotle: Philos is also the other self (Freud called it alter ego)

What is at stake for Achilles? Love of a woman? Love of one’s own life? Love of comrades?

Phoenix is right in long range. We understand that Cleopatra is not just wife, but also “glory of ancestors”. So maybe it’s dying for what the name of this other self is – glory of ancestors.
Liz: Alternate translation of ainos is “riddle.” If you’re going to die for someone, they should be very special – transcendent.

Book/film - A Civil Action: “What is the price of a human life?” What is the moral value and are we wise enough to understand it?

Closing thoughts from Simone Weil. She starved herself to death. Wrote “The Iliad – a Poem of Force.” She was obsessed with the idea of evil – “Passing on your suffering to someone else” From Void and Compensation: “The wish to see others suffer exactly what we are suffering...That is a factor making for social stability.” Patrokles, instead of passing on the suffering to someone else, decided to die instead. Patroklos is a model for Achilles in a deeply emotional way.