

Iliadic *erôs*

On one view, the lyric distinguishes itself from the epic by valorizing the unheroic, feminine/feminizing experiences of *erôs*. (DuBois 1995; Lowrie 1997; Blondell 2013; Oliensis 2019) Within the context of archaic Greek literature, such a view, when taken too simplistically, tends to invite the unwelcome implication that *erôs* is an *ex nihilo* invention of the lyricists. This paper aims to nuance the epic-lyric distinction by inversely looking at several structurally prominent episodes in the *Iliad* that either explicitly feature *erôs* or have erotic undertones: the opening quarrel(s) between men over women; Aphrodite's transport of Paris that renews and sustains the Iliadic narrative; the Aphrodite-enabled *hieros gamos* that makes possible the great day of battle. These erotically inflected episodes indicate that not only is the *Iliad* aware of *erôs* as a literary phenomenon with recognizable generic properties (Calame 2013) but that the *Iliad* also establishes its own generic imperative – its claim to being what Richard Martin calls a super-genre (Martin 2009) – by reconfiguring or subordinating *erôs* so as to facilitate the poetic ideology of war heroism. The epic suppresses the lyric by (a) downplaying the erotic element in its portrayal of desired forms of intimacy (whether homosocial or heterosexual), and (b) characterizing *erôs* as a temporally/narratively regressive movement that serves as the background condition for presentifying war. Taking due notice of Iliadic *erôs* has two interpretive consequences. First, the archaic lyricists' valorization of *erôs* emerges as a more complex and ambitious attempt at refashioning what epic brands as regressive into presence. (Nooter 2023) Second, the *Iliad* plays a dangerous game of converting erotic elements into glorification of war; for it cannot help but give much of the *Iliad* an erotic hue and destabilizes its own generic claim. (Dué 2002; Lesser 2022)

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