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1 TWO OF US: BEYOND EROS

Homer's Iliad, composed in the mid-700s BCE, shows one of the most intense and loving relationships between two men in world literature. Though it is never made clear in the epic that this relationship is sexual, many later Greek authors read it this way. These passages from the Iliad show the most passionate moments between the pair: first Patroclus admonishes Achilles for his uncaring attitude toward the Greeks and his insatiable anger against Agamemnon, leader of the Greek army, who had taken the enslaved girl, Briseis, from Achilles after a quarrel. Patroclus begs for Achilles' armor, so that he can go into battle and help the Greeks, but Achilles longs to triumph in war with Patroclus alone. Nonetheless, he allows Patroclus to wear his armor into battle, only to have him die at Hector's hands. The final sections focus on Achilles' inconsolable grief after Patroclus's death.

HOW TO BE QUEER

16.1–100

“Ὡς οἱ μὲν περὶ νηὸς εὐστέλμοιο μάχοντο·
Πάτροκλος δ’ Ἀχιλῆϊ παρίστατο ποιμένι λαῶν
δάκρυα θερμὰ χέων ὥς τε κρήνη μελάνυδρος,
ἢ τε κατ’ αἰγίλιπος πέτρης δνοφερὸν χέει ὕδωρ.
τὸν δὲ ἰδὼν ᾤκτιρε ποδάρκης δῖος Ἀχιλλεύς,
καί μιν φωνήσας ἔπεα πτερόεντα προσηύδα·
τίπτε δεδάκρυσαι Πατρόκλεες, ἠὔτε κούρη
νηπίη, ἢ θ’ ἅμα μητρὶ θεοῦσ’ ἀνελέσθαι ἀνώγει
εἰανοῦ ἀπτομένη, καί τ’ ἐσσυμένην κατερύκει,
δακρυόεσσα δέ μιν ποτιδέρκεται, ὄφρ’ ἀνέληται·
τῇ ἴκελος Πάτροκλε τέρεν κατὰ δάκρυον εἴβεις.
ἢέ τι Μυρμιδόνεσσι πιφάυσκεαι, ἢ ἐμοὶ αὐτῶ,
ἢέ τιν’ ἀγγελίην Φθίης ἐξέκλυες οἶος;
ζῶειν μὰν ἔτι φασὶ Μενοίτιον Ἄκτορος υἱόν,
ζῶει δ’ Αἰακίδης Πηλεὺς μετὰ Μυρμιδόνεσσι;
τῶν κε μάλ’ ἀμφοτέρων ἀκαχοίμεθα τεθνηῶτων.
ἢε σύ γ’ Ἀργείων ὀλοφύρεαι, ὡς ὀλέκονται
νηυσὶν ἔπι γλαφυρῆσιν ὑπερβασίης ἔνεκα σφῆς;

TWO OF US

Homer, *Iliad*

And so they were fighting around the well-benched
ships.

But Patroclus approached Achilles, shepherd of men,
weeping hot tears, like a spring of black depths
that pours dark water down from the sheer rocks.

Swift-footed, godlike Achilles looked at him and felt pity,
and speaking said these winged words,

“Why do you cry, Patroclus, like some silly girl
who runs to her mother and begs to be picked up,
grasping at her robe, getting in her way,
and looking up at her with tears in her eyes until she is
picked up?

Just like this girl, Patroclus, you shed tender tears.

Do you have something to tell the Myrmidons? Or just
me?

Or have you alone heard some message from Phthia?

Do they not say that your father Menoetius, Actor’s son,
still lives,

and that Peleus, son of Aeacus, my father, is alive among
the Myrmidons?

We would indeed be very distressed by the death of either
of them.

Or do you weep for the Argives, that they are being
destroyed

by the hollow ships on account of their own
transgressions?

HOW TO BE QUEER

ἐξαύδα, μὴ κεῦθε νόῳ, ἵνα εἶδομεν ἄμφω.

Τὸν δὲ βαρὺ στενάχων προσέφησ Παιτρόκλεες ἱππεῦ·
ὦ Ἀχιλεῦ Πηλῆος υἱὲ μέγα φέρτατ' Ἀχαιῶν
μὴ νεμέσα· τοῖον γὰρ ἄχος βεβίηκεν Ἀχαιοῦς.
οἱ μὲν γὰρ δὴ πάντες, ὅσοι πάρος ἦσαν ἄριστοι,
ἐν νηυσὶν κέαται βεβλημένοι οὐτάμενοί τε.
βέβληται μὲν ὁ Τυδεΐδης κρατερὸς Διομήδης,
οὔτασται δ' Ὀδυσσεὺς δουρικλυτὸς ἠδ' Ἀγαμέμνων,
βέβληται δὲ καὶ Εὐρύπυλος κατὰ μηρὸν οἴστῳ.
τοὺς μὲν τ' ἱητροὶ πολυφάρμακοι ἀμφιπέπονται
ἔλκε' ἀκειόμενοι· σὺ δ' ἀμήχανος ἔπλευ Ἀχιλλεῦ.
μὴ ἐμέ γ' οὖν οὐτός γε λάβοι χόλος, ὃν σὺ φυλάσσεις
αἰναρέτη· τί σευ ἄλλος ὀνήσεται ὀπίγονός περ
αἴ κε μὴ Ἀργείοισιν ἀεικέα λαιγὸν ἀμύνης;
νηλεές, οὐκ ἄρα σοί γε πατήρ ἦν ἱππότη Πηλεΐδης,
οὐδὲ Θετίς μήτηρ· γλαυκὴ δέ σε τίκτε θάλασσα
πέτραι τ' ἠλίβατοι, ὅτι τοι νόος ἐστὶν ἀπηνής.

TWO OF US

Speak and do not keep it back in your mind, so that we
both may know.”

With a deep sigh, horseman Patroclus, you answered
him,

“O Achilles, son of Peleus, greatest of the Achaeans,
do not be angry. For such great hardship presses upon
the Achaeans.

Indeed all of them, as many who were the best before,
now lie in the ships, battered and wounded.

Strong Diomedes, son of Tydeus, has been hit,
and Odysseus, glorious with the spear, has been wounded
and Agamemnon too,

and even Eurypylus has been struck by an arrow in his
thigh.

The doctors, who know of medicine, are tending to their
wounds

to heal them. But you are implacable, Achilles.

May such anger as this never take hold of me, which you
so cherish,

you paragon of grim virtue. What will any of our
descendants ever gain from you,

if you do not defend the Argives from shameful ruin?

Cruel man, I do not think that the horseman Peleus was
your father,

nor was Thetis your mother. No, the gleaming sea
bore you

and the sheer rocks, so hard is your heart.

HOW TO BE QUEER

εἰ δέ τινα φρεσὶ σῆσι θεοπροπίην ἀλεείνεις
καί τινα τοι παρ Ζηνὸς ἐπέφραδε πότνια μήτηρ,
ἀλλ' ἐμέ περ πρόες ὦχ', ἅμα δ' ἄλλον λαὸν ὄπασσον
Μυρμιδόνων, ἦν πού τι φόως Δαναοῖσι γένωμαι.
δὸς δέ μοι ὦμοιιν τὰ σὰ τεύχεα θωρηχθῆναι,
αἶ κ' ἐμὲ σοὶ ἴσκοντες ἀπόσχωνται πολέμοιο
Τρῶες, ἀναπνεύσωσι δ' Ἀρήϊοι υἴες Ἀχαιῶν
τειρόμενοι· ὀλίγη δέ τ' ἀνάπνευσις πολέμοιο.
ῥεῖα δέ κ' ἀκμηῆτες κεκμηότας ἄνδρας αὐτῆ
ὦσαιμεν προτὶ ἄστυ νεῶν ἄπο καὶ κλισιάων.

ᾠς φάτο λισσόμενος μέγα νήπιος· ἦ γὰρ ἔμελλεν
οἷ αὐτῷ θάνατόν τε κακὸν καὶ κῆρα λιτέσθαι.
τὸν δὲ μέγ' ὀχθήσας προσέφη πόδας ὠκὺς Ἀχιλλεύς·
ὦ μοι διογενὲς Πατρόκλεες οἷον ἔειπες·
οὔτε θεοπροπίης ἐμπάζομαι ἦν τινα οἶδα,
οὔτέ τί μοι παρ Ζηνὸς ἐπέφραδε πότνια μήτηρ·

TWO OF US

But if in your mind there is some prophecy you are
avoiding discussing,
or something from Zeus that your mother has revealed
to you,
then at least send me forth swiftly, and supply me with
the rest of the army
of the Myrmidons, in case I can be some small light to
the Danaans.
And give me your armor to strap onto my shoulders,
in the hopes that the Trojans might, thinking I'm you,
back off
from the fighting, and the warlike sons of the Achaeans
might catch
their breath, for they are worn out. There's so little
breathing space in war.
Easily we who are not tired out can push back men
wearied
from the war-cry to their city, away from our ships and
tents."

So he spoke, beseeching him vehemently, fool that he
was. For it was fated
that it was his own evil death and fate for which he
begged.

Swift-footed Achilles, deeply upset, replied,
"O Zeus-born Patroclus, what a thing you have said!
I am not heeding any prophecy that I know of,
nor has my mother reported anything at all to me
from Zeus.

HOW TO BE QUEER

ἀλλὰ τόδ' αἰνὸν ἄχος κραδίην καὶ θυμὸν ἰκάνει,
ὄπποτε δὴ τὸν ὁμοῖον ἀνὴρ ἐθέλησιν ἀμέρσαι
καὶ γέρας ἄψ ἀφελέσθαι, ὃ τε κράτει προβεβήκη·
αἰνὸν ἄχος τό μοί ἐστιν, ἐπεὶ πάθον ἄλγεα θυμῶ.
κούρην ἦν ἄρα μοι γέρας ἕξελον υἴες Ἀχαιῶν,
δουρὶ δ' ἐμῶ κτεάτισσα πόλιν εὐτείχεα πέρσας,
τὴν ἄψ ἐκ χειρῶν ἔλετο κρείων Ἀγαμέμνων
Ἄτρεΐδης ὡς εἴ τιν' ἀτίμητον μετανάστην.
ἀλλὰ τὰ μὲν προτετύχθαι ἐάσομεν· οὐδ' ἄρα πως ἦν
ἀσπερχές κεχολῶσθαι ἐνὶ φρεσίν· ἦτοι ἔφην γε
οὐ πρὶν μνηθμὸν καταπαυσέμεν, ἀλλ' ὅπότε' ἂν δὴ
νῆας ἐμὰς ἀφίκηται αὐτὴ τε πτόλεμός τε.
τύνη δ' ὥμοιν μὲν ἐμὰ κλυτὰ τεύχεα δῦθι,
ἄρχε δὲ Μυρμιδόνεσσι φιλοπτολέμοισι μάχεσθαι,
εἰ δὴ κυάνεον Τρώων νέφος ἀμφιβέβηκε
νηυσὶν ἐπικρατέως, οἳ δὲ ῥηγμῖνι θαλάσσης
κεκλίεται, χώρης ὀλίγην ἔτι μοῖραν ἔχοντες
Ἄργεῖοι, Τρώων δὲ πόλις ἐπὶ πᾶσα βέβηκε
θάρσυνος· οὐ γὰρ ἐμῆς κόρυθος λεύσσουσι μέτωπον
ἐγγύθι λαμπομένης· τάχα κεν φεύγοντες ἐναύλους
πλήσειαν νεκύων, εἴ μοι κρείων Ἀγαμέμνων

TWO OF US

But this terrible pain comes to my heart and soul,
since that man was willing to deprive an equal
and take back my prize, for he overstepped in his power.
A terrible pain this is for me, and I have suffered in
my soul.

That girl whom the sons of the Achaeans picked out for
me as prize,

when by my spear I took and sacked that well-walled
city,

it was she that lord Agamemnon, son of Atreus, took
from my hands, as if I were some lowly vagrant.

But we will let these things be in the past. For not at all
did I mean

to rage unceasingly in my heart. But I did say
that I would not pause from my wrath at any point
before

the war-cry and the war itself reached my ships.

So then, put my famous armor on your shoulders,
and be a leader for the war-loving Myrmidons as they
fight,

if indeed the dark cloud of Trojans thickly surrounds
our ships, and the Argives are pushed back against
the surf

of the sea, with just a small portion of land left,
and the whole city of the Trojans presses on boldly.

For they do not see the top of my helmet
flashing nearby. Soon they would be fleeing and filling
their waterways with corpses, if lord Agamemnon

HOW TO BE QUEER

ἦπια εἰδεῖη· νῦν δὲ στρατὸν ἀμφιμάχονται.
οὐ γὰρ Τυδεΐδεω Διομήδεος ἐν παλάμῃσι
μαίνεται ἐγγεῖη Δαναῶν ἀπὸ λοιγὸν ἀμῦναι·
οὐδέ πω Ἄτρεΐδεω ὁπὸς ἔκλυον αὐδήσαντος
ἐχθρῆς ἐκ κεφαλῆς· ἀλλ' Ἔκτορος ἀνδροφόνοιο
Τρωσὶ κελεύοντος περιάγνυται, οἳ δ' ἀλαλητῶ
πᾶν πεδίον κατέχουσι μάχῃ νικῶντες Ἀχαιοὺς.
ἀλλὰ καὶ ὧς Πάτροκλε νεῶν ἄπο λοιγὸν ἀμύνων
ἔμπεσ' ἐπικρατέως, μὴ δὴ πυρὸς αἰθομένοιο
νῆας ἐνιπρήσωσι, φίλον δ' ἀπὸ νόστον ἔλωνται.
πεῖθεο δ' ὧς τοι ἐγὼ μύθου τέλος ἐν φρεσὶ θεῖω,
ὧς ἄν μοι τιμὴν μεγάλην καὶ κῦδος ἄρῃαι
πρὸς πάντων Δαναῶν, ἀτὰρ οἳ περικαλλέα κούρηγ
ἄψ ἀπονάσσωσιν, ποτὶ δ' ἀγλαὰ δῶρα πόρωσιν.
ἐκ νηῶν ἐλάσας ἰέναι πάλιν· εἰ δέ κεν αὖ τοι
δώῃ κῦδος ἀρέσθαι ἐρίγδουπος πόσις Ἥρης,
μὴ σύ γ' ἄνευθεν ἐμεῖο λιλαίεσθαι πολεμίζειν
Τρωσὶ φιλοπτολέμοισιν· ἀτιμότερον δέ με θήσεις·
μὴ δ' ἐπαγαλλόμενος πολέμῳ καὶ δηϊότητι
Τρῶας ἐναιρόμενος προτὶ Ἴλιον ἡγεμονεύειν,

TWO OF US

had known gentle ways. But now they battle around
the camp.

For not in the hands of Diomedes, son of Tydeus,
does the spear rage to save the Danaans from ruin,
nor yet have I ever heard the son of Atreus's voice
shouting

from his hateful head. But the shout of man-slaying
Hector

urging on the Trojans breaks all around me, and with
their war-cry

they hold all the plain as they conquer the Achaeans in
battle.

And so, Patroclus, enter the fray fiercely to save the ships
from destruction, lest they burn them with blazing fire
and take away our beloved return to home.

But listen to me so that I can place the purpose of my
plan in your mind,

that you may win great honor and glory for me
on behalf of the Danaans, and then they will send back
again

that stunning girl and also offer many glorious gifts.

But when you have driven them from the ships, come
back again.

If the husband of Hera should grant it that you win glory,
do not strive to win the war with the war-loving Trojans
without me. You would make me dishonored.

And do not, glorying in war and the battle-cry,
slaying the Trojans, take the lead against Ilium,

HOW TO BE QUEER

μή τις ἀπ' Οὐλύμποιο θεῶν αἰειγενετᾶων
ἐμβήη· μάλα τούς γε φιλεῖ ἐκάεργος Ἀπόλλων·
ἀλλὰ πάλιν τρωπᾶσθαι, ἐπὴν φάος ἐν νήεσσι
θήης, τοὺς δ' ἔτ' ἔαν πεδίον κάτα δηριάσθαι.
αἶ γὰρ Ζεῦ τε πάτερ καὶ Ἀθηναίη καὶ Ἄπολλον
μήτέ τις οὖν Τρώων θάνατον φύγοι ὅσοι ἔασι,
μήτέ τις Ἀργείων, νῶϊν δ' ἐκδῦμεν ὄλεθρον,
ὄφρ' οἴοι Τροίης ἱερὰ κρήδεμνα λύωμεν.

18.78–116

Τὴν δὲ βαρὺ στενάχων προσέφη πόδας ὠκὺς Ἀχιλλεύς·
μηῖτερ ἐμή, τὰ μὲν ἄρ μοι Ὀλύμπιος ἐξετέλεσσαν·
ἀλλὰ τί μοι τῶν ἦδος ἐπεὶ φίλος ὤλεθ' ἑταῖρος
Πάτροκλος, τὸν ἐγὼ περὶ πάντων τῶν ἑταίρων
ἴσον ἐμῆ κεφαλῆ; τὸν ἀπώλεσα, τεύχεα δ' Ἔκτωρ
δηώσας ἀπέδυσσε πελώρια θαῦμα ἰδέσθαι
καλά· τὰ μὲν Πηληϊῆ θεοὶ δόσαν ἀγλαὰ δῶρα
ἤματι τῷ ὅτε σε βροτοῦ ἀνέρος ἔμβαλον εὐνῆ.
αἶθ' ὄφελος σὺ μὲν αὖθι μετ' ἀθανάτης ἀλίησι
ναίειν, Πηλεὺς δὲ θνητὴν ἀγαγέσθαι ἄκοιτιν.
νῦν δ' ἵνα καὶ σοὶ πένθος ἐνὶ φρεσὶ μυρίον εἶη

TWO OF US

lest one of the everlasting gods from Olympus
steps in. For far-shooting Apollo, at least, loves them
well.

But turn back whenever you have given light to the ships,
and let them still battle on the plain.

O father Zeus and Athena and Apollo,
if only it might be that not one of the Trojans escape
death,

and not one of the Argives, but that you and I might
avoid destruction

so that we alone would dissolve the holy battlements of
Troy!”

• • • • •

Groaning heavily, swift-footed Achilles answered her,
“Mother, the Olympian one fulfilled my prayers.

But what pleasure is left to me when he is dead, my
beloved companion

Patroclus, whom I valued above all other companions,
equally to myself? I have lost him. Hector has slain him
and stripped him of my mighty armor, a wonder to
behold,

the gleaming gifts that the gods gave to Peleus
on that day when they placed you in the bed of a
mortal man.

If only you had stayed with the gods of the sea,
and Peleus had taken a mortal wife,
then you wouldn't now have ceaseless pain in your breast

HOW TO BE QUEER

παιδὸς ἀποφθιμένοι, τὸν οὐχ ὑποδέξειαι αὐτίς
οἴκαδε νοστήσαντ', ἐπεὶ οὐδ' ἐμὲ θυμὸς ἄνωγε
ζῶειν οὐδ' ἄνδρεςσι μετέμμεναι, αἴ κε μὴ Ἔκτωρ
πρῶτος ἐμῶ ὑπὸ δουρὶ τυπεὶς ἀπὸ θυμὸν ὀλέσση,
Πατρόκλοιο δ' ἔλωρα Μενoitιάδεω ἀποτίση.
Τὸν δ' αὐτε προσέειπε Θέτις κατὰ δάκρυ χέουσα·
ὠκύμορος δὴ μοι τέκος ἔσσειαι, οἷ' ἀγορεύεις·
αὐτίκα γάρ τοι ἔπειτα μεθ' Ἔκτορα πότμος ἐτοῖμος.
Τὴν δὲ μέγ' ὀχθήσας προσέφη πόδας ὠκὺς Ἀχιλλεύς·
αὐτίκα τεθναίην, ἐπεὶ οὐκ ἄρ' ἔμελλον ἑταίρω
κτεινομένῳ ἐπαμῦναι· ὃ μὲν μάλα τηλόθι πάτρης
ἔφθιτ', ἐμεῖο δὲ δῆσεν ἀρῆς ἀλκτῆρα γενέσθαι.
νῦν δ' ἐπεὶ οὐ νέομαί γε φίλην ἐς πατρίδα γαῖαν,
οὐδέ τι Πατρόκλῳ γενόμην φάος οὐδ' ἐτάροισι
τοῖς ἄλλοις, οἳ δὴ πολέες δάμεν Ἔκτορι δίω,
ἀλλ' ἦμαι παρὰ νηυσὶν ἐτώσιον ἄχθος ἀρούρης,
τοῖος ἐὼν οἷος οὐ τις Ἀχαιῶν χαλκοχιτώνων
ἐν πολέμῳ· ἀγορῇ δέ τ' ἀμείνονές εἰσι καὶ ἄλλοι.
ὥς ἔρις ἔκ τε θεῶν ἔκ τ' ἀνθρώπων ἀπόλοιτο

TWO OF US

for the loss of your child, whom you will never again
receive
returning home, since my heart no longer bids me
to live and remain among men, unless Hector
first, beaten by my spear, loses his life,
and pays the price for the death of Patroclus, son of
Menoetius.”

And Thetis replied to him, pouring out tears,
“You will indeed die soon, my child, since you have
declared this.

For immediately after Hector, your death will hang
over you.”

Swift-footed Achilles, much distressed, answered her,
“Then immediately may I die, since I was not there to
protect
my companion from being killed. Far away indeed from
his fatherland
did he perish, for he needed me to be his protector from
ruin.

So now I will not go back to my beloved fatherland,
and I was not at all a light for Patroclus nor for my other
friends, many of whom have been vanquished by brilliant
Hector,
but instead I sat by the ships, a useless burden on the
earth,

I who am such as no other of the bronze-clad Achaeans
in war, though there are others who excel in the assembly.
Thus may strife among gods and men be gone,

HOW TO BE QUEER

καὶ χόλος, ὅς τ' ἐφέηκε πολύφρονά περ χαλεπῆναι,
ὅς τε πολὺ γλυκίων μέλιτος καταλειβομένοιο
ἀνδρῶν ἐν στήθεσσι ἀέξεται ἤϋτε καπνός·
ὡς ἐμὲ νῦν ἐχόλωσεν ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν Ἀγαμέμνων.
ἀλλὰ τὰ μὲν προτετύχθαι ἐάσομεν ἀχνύμενοί περ,
θυμὸν ἐνὶ στήθεσσι φίλον δαμάσαντες ἀνάγκη·
νῦν δ' εἴμ' ὄφρα φίλης κεφαλῆς ὀλετῆρα κιχείω
Ἔκτορα· κῆρα δ' ἐγὼ τότε δέξομαι ὀππότε κεν δῆ
Ζεὺς ἐθέλη τελέσαι ἠδ' ἀθάνατοι θεοὶ ἄλλοι.

19.303–27

αὐτὸν δ' ἀμφὶ γέροντες Ἀχαιῶν ἠγερέθοντο
λίσσομενοι δειπνῆσαι· ὃ δ' ἠρνεῖτο στεναχίζων·
λίσσομαι, εἴ τις ἔμοιγε φίλων ἐπιπέιθεθ' ἐταίρων,
μή με πρὶν σίτοιο κελεύετε μηδὲ ποτῆτος
ἄσασθαι φίλον ἦτορ, ἐπεὶ μ' ἄχος αἰνὸν ἰκάνει·
δύντα δ' ἐς ἠέλιον μενέω καὶ τλήσομαι ἔμπης.
ὡς εἰπὼν ἄλλους μὲν ἀπεσκέδασεν βασιλῆας,
δοῖω δ' Ἀτρεΐδα μενέτην καὶ δῖος Ὀδυσσεὺς
Νέστωρ Ἴδομενεὺς τε γέρων θ' ἵππηλάτα Φοῖνιξ
τέρποντες πυκινῶς ἀκαχήμενον· οὐδέ τι θυμῷ
τέρπετο, πρὶν πολέμου στόμα δύμεναι αἱματόεντος.
μνησάμενος δ' ἀδινῶς ἀνενεῖκατο φώνησέν τε·

TWO OF US

and fury too, which makes even a wise man aggrieved,
and, much sweeter than honey dripping down
in the chests of men, grows like smoke.
So even now did Agamemnon, lord of men, infuriate me.
But, though it still pains me, I will let this be in the past,
and tame the dear heart in my chest by necessity.
And now I go to meet the murderer of that beloved man,
Hector. And I will accept the goddess of death
 whensoever
Zeus and the other deathless gods may wish it so.”

• • • • •

Around Achilles the elders of the Achaeans gathered,
begging him to eat. But he refused them, groaning,
“I beg you, if any of my dear comrades might comply,
do not bid me so soon to satiate my heart
with food and drink, since terrible grief sits upon me.
For I will wait till sunset and hold out even so.”

So he spoke and the others kings dispersed,
but the two sons of Atreus and divine Odysseus
 remained,
and Nestor and Idomeneus and the old man, Phoenix,
 horse-driver,
trying to cheer him, so deeply pained. But there was
 nothing
to cheer his heart until he might sink into the maw of
 bloody war.
And thinking back, he heaved a deep sigh and spoke,

HOW TO BE QUEER

ἦ ῥά νύ μοί ποτε καὶ σὺ δυσάμμορε φίλταθ' ἑταίρων
αὐτὸς ἐνὶ κλισίῃ λαρὸν παρὰ δεῖπνον ἔθηκας
αἶψα καὶ ὀτραλέως, ὅποτε σπερχοῖατ' Ἀχαιοὶ
Τρωσὶν ἐφ' ἵπποδάμοισι φέρειν πολύδακρυν Ἄρηα.
νῦν δὲ σὺ μὲν κεῖσαι δεδαῖγμένος, αὐτὰρ ἐμὸν κῆρ
ἄκμηνον πόσιος καὶ ἐδητύος ἔνδον ἐόντων
σῆ ποθῆ· οὐ μὲν γάρ τι κακώτερον ἄλλο πάθοιμι,
οὐδ' εἴ κεν τοῦ πατρὸς ἀποφθιμένοιο πυθοίμην,
ὅς που νῦν Φθίῃφι τέρεν κατὰ δάκρυον εἴβει
χῆτεϊ τοιοῦδ' υἱός· ὃ δ' ἄλλοδαπῶ ἐνὶ δήμῳ
εἵνεκα ῥιγεδανῆς Ἑλένης Τρωσὶν πολεμίζω·
ἦ ἐ τὸν ὃς Σκύρῳ μοι ἐνὶ τρέφεται φίλος υἱός,
εἴ που ἔτι ζῶει γε Νεοπτόλεμος θεοειδής.

22.385–90

ἀλλὰ τί ἦ μοι ταῦτα φίλος διελέξατο θυμός;
κεῖται παρ νήεσσι νέκυς ἄκλαυτος ἄθαπτος
Πάτροκλος· τοῦ δ' οὐκ ἐπιλήσομαι, ὄφρ' ἂν ἔγωγε
ζωῶσιν μετέω καὶ μοι φίλα γούνατ' ὀρώρη·
εἰ δὲ θανόντων περ καταλήθοντ' εἰν Ἀἴδαο
αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ καὶ κεῖθι φίλου μεμνήσομ' ἑταίρου.

TWO OF US

“Truly it used to be that you, ill-fated and most beloved
of comrades,
you yourself would lay out a lovely dinner in this tent
with speed and skill, whenever the Achaeans rushed
to bring doleful Ares against the horse-taming Trojans.
But now you lie torn up, and my heart
abstains from drink and food, though they are nearby,
because of my longing for you. For I could not suffer any
worse,
not even were I to learn that my father had wasted away,
he who I suppose now sheds tender tears in Phthia,
since he is missing such a son as me. For I am off in a
foreign land,
making war with the Trojans on account of ghastly
Helen;
or even if it were he who is raised in Scyros as my
own son,
if he is even still alive—godlike Neoptolemus.”

• • • • •

“But why does my own heart debate these things
with me?
For by the ships lies his corpse, unmourned, unburied—
Patroclus. I will not forget him, so long as I remain
among the living and my own knees can leap.
And even if the dead forget the dead in Hades,
yet even there I will remember my dear companion.”

HOW TO BE QUEER

23.35–107

Αὐτὰρ τόν γε ἄνακτα ποδώκεα Πηλεΐωνα
εἰς Ἀγαμέμνονα δῖον ἄγον βασιλῆες Ἀχαιῶν
σπουδῆ παρπεπιθόντες ἑταίρου χωόμενον κῆρ.
οἱ δ' ὅτε δὴ κλισίην Ἀγαμέμνονος ἴξον ἰόντες,
αὐτίκα κηρύκεσσι λιγυφθόγγοισι κέλευσαν
ἀμφὶ πυρὶ στῆσαι τρίποδα μέγαν, εἰ πεπίθοιεν
Πηλεΐδην λούσασθαι ἄπο βρότον αἱματόεντα.
αὐτὰρ ὃ γ' ἠρνεῖτο στερεῶς, ἐπὶ δ' ὄρκον ὄμοσεν·
οὐ μὰ Ζῆν', ὅς τίς τε θεῶν ὑπατος καὶ ἄριστος,
οὐ θέμις ἐστὶ λοετρὰ καρήατος ἄσπον ἰκέσθαι
πρὶν γ' ἐνὶ Πάτροκλον θέμεναι πυρὶ σῆμά τε χεῦαι
κείρασθαι τε κόμην, ἐπεὶ οὐ μ' ἔτι δεύτερον ὦδε
ἴξετ' ἄχος κραδίην ὄφρα ζωοῖσι μετείω.
ἀλλ' ἦτοι νῦν μὲν στυγερῆ πειθώμεθα δαιτί·
ἠῶθεν δ' ὄτρυνον ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν Ἀγάμεμνον
ὔλην τ' ἀξέμεναι παρὰ τε σχεῖν ὅσσ' ἐπιεικὲς

TWO OF US

• • • • •

Meanwhile, the kings of the Achaeans led the lord, the
swift-footed
son of Peleus, to brilliant Agamemnon, having
worked hard
to win over the heart in him that grieved for his
companion.

But when they came to the tent of Agamemnon,
straightaway they ordered the clear-voiced heralds
to set up a great tripod on the fire, in case they might
persuade
the son of Peleus to wash off the bloody gore of battle.
But he staunchly refused, and swore an oath on it,
“Not, by Zeus, who is the highest and best of the gods,
shall it be lawful for cleansing water to come near
my head
before Patroclus has been placed on the fire and a tomb
has been raised,
and my hair has been cut off, since not again a
second time
will such grief sit in my heart, so long as I remain among
the living.

But now then let us be convinced to turn to our hateful
meal.

At dawn, Agamemnon, lord of men, send men
to gather and bring back wood and whatever is fitting

HOW TO BE QUEER

νεκρὸν ἔχοντα νέεσθαι ὑπὸ ζόφον ἠερόεντα,
ὄφρ' ἦτοι τοῦτον μὲν ἐπιφλέγη ἀκάματον πῦρ
θᾶσσον ἀπ' ὀφθαλμῶν, λαοὶ δ' ἐπὶ ἔργα τράπωνται.

ᾠς ἔφαθ', οἳ δ' ἄρα τοῦ μάλα μὲν κλύον ἠδὲ πίθοντο.
ἐσσυμένως δ' ἄρα δόρπον ἐφοπλίσσαντες ἕκαστοι
δαίνυντ', οὐδέ τι θυμὸς ἐδεύετο δαιτὸς εἵσης.
αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ πόσιος καὶ ἐδητύος ἐξ ἔρον ἔντο,
οἳ μὲν κακκείοντες ἔβαν κλισίην δὲ ἕκαστος,
Πηλεΐδης δ' ἐπὶ θινὶ πολυφλοίσβοιο θαλάσσης
κεῖτο βαρὺ στενάχων πολέσιν μετὰ Μυρμιδόνεσσιν
ἐν καθαρῷ, ὅθι κύματ' ἐπ' ἠϊόνος κλύζεσκον·
εὔτε τὸν ὕπνος ἔμαρπτε λύων μελεδήματα θυμοῦ
νήδυμος ἀμφιχυθείς· μάλα γὰρ κάμε φαίδιμα γυῖα
Ἔκτορ' ἐπαΐσσων προτὶ Ἴλιον ἠνεμόεσσαν·
ἦλθε δ' ἐπὶ ψυχῇ Πατροκλῆος δειλοῖο
πάντ' αὐτῷ μέγεθός τε καὶ ὄμματα κάλ' ἐϊκυῖα
καὶ φωνήν, καὶ τοῖα περὶ χροῖ εἴματα ἔστο·
εὔδεις, αὐτὰρ ἐμεῖο λελασμένος ἔπλευ Ἀχιλλεῦ.
οὐ μὲν μευ ζῶοντος ἀκήδεις, ἀλλὰ θανόντος·

TWO OF US

for a corpse to have when he passes into the gloomy
darkness below,
so that tireless fire may burn him up, quickly
snatching him from our eyes, and then these men may
turn back to their work.”

So he spoke, and the others heard and obeyed him.
Quickly each man prepared and ate his dinner,
and no soul lacked at all for his fair share of food.
But when they had put away their desire for food and
drink,
then each man went to his tent to lie down,
but the son of Peleus lay on the beach of the loud-
roaring sea,
groaning deeply among the many Myrmidons,
in a clearing where the waves dashed against the shore.
When sleep snatched him, freeing him from the cares of
his heart,
pleasantly engulfing him—for indeed in his mind he was
still chasing
Hector to windy Ilium with his gleaming limbs—
then did the soul of wretched Patroclus come to him,
in every way like to the man himself, in build and
lovely eyes
and in voice, and he wore still the very same clothes.
“You sleep, for indeed you have forgotten me, Achilles.
When I was alive, you were not so uncaring, just now
that I am dead.

HOW TO BE QUEER

θάπτέ με ὅτι τάχιστα πύλας Ἀΐδαο περήσω.
τῆλέ με εἴργουσι ψυχαὶ εἶδωλα καμόντων,
οὐδέ μέ πω μίσγεσθαι ὑπὲρ ποταμοῖο ἐώσιν,
ἀλλ' αὐτως ἀλάλημαι ἀν' εὐρυπυλῆς Ἄϊδος δῶ.
καί μοι δὸς τὴν χεῖρ'· ὀλοφύρομαι, οὐ γὰρ ἔτ' αὐτίς
νίσομαι ἐξ Ἀΐδαο, ἐπὴν με πυρὸς λελάχητε.
οὐ μὲν γὰρ ζωοὶ γε φίλων ἀπάνευθεν ἐταίρων
βουλὰς ἐξόμενοι βουλευόμεν, ἀλλ' ἐμὲ μὲν κῆρ
ἀμφέχανε στυγερὴ, ἢ περ λάχε γιγνόμενόν περ·
καὶ δὲ σοὶ αὐτῷ μοῖρα, θεοῖς ἐπιείκελ' Ἀχιλλεῦ,
τείχει ὑπο Τρώων εὐηφενέων ἀπολέσθαι.
ἄλλο δέ τοι ἐρέω καὶ ἐφήσομαι αἶ κε πίθηαι·
μὴ ἐμὰ σῶν ἀπάνευθε τιθήμεναι ὅστέ' Ἀχιλλεῦ,
ἀλλ' ὁμοῦ ὡς ἐτράφημεν ἐν ὑμετέροισι δόμοισιν,
εὐτέ με τυτθὸν ἐόντα Μενοίτιος ἐξ Ὀπώντος
ἤγαγεν ὑμέτερόνδ' ἀνδροκτασίης ὑπο λυγρῆς,
ἤματι τῷ ὅτε παῖδα κατέκτανον Ἀμφιδάμαντος
νήπιος οὐκ ἐθέλων ἀμφ' ἀστραγάλοισι χολωθεῖς·
ἔνθά με δεξάμενος ἐν δώμασιν ἱππότη Πηλεὺς

TWO OF US

Bury me as quickly as possible so that I may pass through
the gates of Hades.

The souls, shades of dead men, keep far away from me
and do not allow me yet to mingle with them across the
river,

but in vain I wander about the well-gated house of
Hades.

Give me your hand. I grieve, for never again
will I return from Hades, once you have given me my
due in fire.

For when I was alive, we sat apart from our dear
comrades

and made our plans, but hateful fate has consumed me,
the death that was my fate already at my birth.

Even for you yourself, Achilles, like to the gods, it is
destined

that you will die beneath the walls of wealthy Troy.

But I will ask and enjoin for one more thing, in case you
may obey:

do not place my bones apart from yours, Achilles,
but together, even as we were raised in your house,
since when I was small Menoitius brought me from

Opoeis

to your land, due to my baneful act of manslaughter
on that day when I killed the child of Amphidamus,
stupidly, not meaning to, angered by a game of dice.
Then the horseman Peleus, taking me into his home,

HOW TO BE QUEER

ἔτραφέ τ' ἐνδυκέως καὶ σὸν θεράποντ' ὀνόμηνεν·
ὥς δὲ καὶ ὅστέα νῶϊν ὀμῆ σορὸς ἀμφικαλύπτοι
χρῆστος ἀμφιφορεύς, τόν τοι πόρε πότνια μήτηρ.

Τὸν δ' ἀπαμειβόμενος προσέφη πόδας ὠκὺς Ἀχιλλεύς·
τίπτέ μοι ἠθεῖη κεφαλὴ δεῦρ' εἰλήλουθας
καί μοι ταῦτα ἕκαστ' ἐπιτέλλει; αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ τοι
πάντα μάλ' ἐκτελέω καὶ πείσομαι ὡς σὺ κελεύεις.
ἀλλὰ μοι ἄσπον στήθι· μίνυνθά περ ἀμφιβαλόντε
ἀλλήλους ὀλοοῖο τεταρπώμεσθα γόοιο.

ᾠς ἄρα φωνήσας ὠρέξατο χερσὶ φίλησιν
οὐδ' ἔλαβε· ψυχὴ δὲ κατὰ χθονὸς ἦϋτε καπνὸς
ᾧχετο τετριγυῖα· ταφῶν δ' ἀνόρουσεν Ἀχιλλεύς
χερσὶ τε συμπλατάγησεν, ἔπος δ' ὀλοφυδνὸν ἔειπεν·
ὦ πόποι ἦ ῥά τίς ἐστι καὶ εἶν Ἀἴδαο δόμοισι
ψυχὴ καὶ εἶδωλον, ἀτὰρ φρένες οὐκ ἔνι πάμπαν·
παννυχίη γάρ μοι Πατροκλῆος δειλοῖο
ψυχὴ ἐφεστήκει γοόωσά τε μυρομένη τε,
καί μοι ἕκαστ' ἐπέτελλεν, ἔϊκτο δὲ θέσκελον αὐτῶ.

TWO OF US

raised me with care and named me your attendant.
So too let the same vessel surround the bones of us two,
a golden amphora, the one that your majestic mother
gave you.”

And answering him, swift-footed Achilles said,
“Why, my trusty friend, have you come here
to enjoin these things of me? But indeed I will do
all of this for you and obey as you command.
But come to me now! For just a little while, let us hold
one another and take comfort in our dreadful grief.”

So he spoke and stretched out his own hands,
but could not grasp him. The soul like smoke
vanished beneath the earth with a shriek. Astonished,
Achilles awoke,
striking at the air with his hands, and he spoke this word
of lament:

“Oh horror, that even in the house of Hades there exists
some sort of soul and phantom, but there is no mind
within it at all.

For all night long, the soul of wretched Patroclus
stood by me, wailing and lamenting,
and he enjoined me to do each thing, and he seemed
wondrously like him.”

HOW TO BE QUEER

23.138–53

Οἷ δ' ὅτε χῶρον ἴκανον ὄθι σφισι πέφραδ' Ἀχιλλεύς
κάτθεσαν, αἶψα δέ οἱ μενοεικέα νήσον ὕλην.
ἔνθ' αὖτ' ἄλλ' ἐνόησε ποδάρκης δῖος Ἀχιλλεύς·
στάς ἀπάνευθε πυρῆς ξανθὴν ἀπεκείρατο χαίτην,
τὴν ῥα Σπερχειῶ ποταμῶ τρέφε τηλεθόωσαν·
ὀχθήσας δ' ἄρα εἶπεν ἰδὼν ἐπὶ οἴνοπα πόντον·
Σπερχειί' ἄλλως σοί γε πατὴρ ἠρήσατο Πηλεὺς
κεῖσέ με νοστήσαντα φίλην ἐς πατρίδα γαῖαν
σοί τε κόμην κερεῖν ῥέξειν θ' ἱερὴν ἑκατόμβην,
πεντήκοντα δ' ἔνορχα παρ' αὐτόθι μῆλ' ἱερεύσειν
ἐς πηγάς, ὄθι τοι τέμενος βωμός τε θυήεις.
ὦς ἠρᾶθ' ὁ γέρων, σὺ δέ οἱ νόον οὐκ ἐτέλεσσας.
νῦν δ' ἐπεὶ οὐ νέομαί γε φίλην ἐς πατρίδα γαῖαν
Πατρόκλῳ ἥρωϊ κόμην ὀπάσαιμι φέρεσθαι.

“Ὡς εἰπὼν ἐν χερσὶ κόμην ἐτάροιο φίλοιον
θῆκεν, τοῖσι δὲ πᾶσιν ὑφ' ἴμερον ὤρσε γόοιο.

TWO OF US

• • • • •

When they came far enough to the place that Achilles
had settled on,
they set down his body and immediately heaped up a
plentiful pile of wood.
But then swift-footed, brilliant Achilles decided on
something else again,
and, standing apart from the pyre, cut off a lock of his
fair hair,
which he had kept flourishing for the river Sperchius.
But now, saddened, he spoke, looking toward the
wine-dark sea:
“Sperchius, in vain did my father Peleus pray to you
that if I were to return to there, my beloved fatherland,
he could cut my hair for you and perform a holy
hecatomb,
and on the same spot sacrifice fifty male sheep at your
waters,
where there is a sacred precinct and fragment altar
for you.
So did the old man pray, but you did not fulfill his intent.
So now since I will not return to my beloved fatherland,
I would rather give this hair to the hero Patroclus to
have.”
Speaking thus, he placed the hair into the hands
of his beloved friend, and stirred up the desire for lament
in everyone.

HOW TO BE QUEER

23.217–25

παννύχιοι δ' ἄρα τοί γε πυρῆς ἄμυδις φλόγ' ἔβαλλον
φυσῶντες λιγέως· ὃ δὲ πάννουχος ὠκύς Ἀχιλλεύς
χρυσέου ἐκ κρητῆρος ἐλὼν δέπας ἀμφικύπελλον
οἶνον ἀφυσσόμενος χαμάδις χέε, δεῦε δὲ γαῖαν
ψυχὴν κικλήσκων Πατροκλῆος δειλοῖο.
ὥς δὲ πατήρ οὔ παιδὸς ὀδύρεται ὅστέα καίων
νυμφίου, ὅς τε θανὼν δειλοὺς ἀκάχησε τοκῆας,
ὥς Ἀχιλλεύς ἐτάριοιο ὀδύρετο ὅστέα καίων,
ἐρπύζων παρὰ πυρκαϊῆν ἀδινὰ στεναχίζων.

24.1–12

Λῦτο δ' ἀγών, λαοὶ δὲ θοὰς ἐπὶ νῆας ἕκαστοι
ἐσκίδναντ' ἰέναι. τοὶ μὲν δόρποιο μέδοντο
ὑπνου τε γλυκεροῦ ταρπήμενα· αὐτὰρ Ἀχιλλεύς
κλαῖε φίλου ἐτάρου μεμνημένος, οὐδέ μιν ὕπνος
ἦρει πανδαμάτωρ, ἀλλ' ἐστρέφετ' ἔνθα καὶ ἔνθα
Πατρόκλου ποθέων ἀνδροτῆτά τε καὶ μένος ἦϋ,
ἦδ' ὅποσα τολύπευσε σὺν αὐτῷ καὶ πάθεν ἄλγεα
ἀνδρῶν τε πτολέμους ἀλεγεινά τε κύματα πείρων·