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Chapter 5

Queer Time for Heroes in the *Roman d'Enés* and the *Roman de Troie*

Romance time, Mikhail Bakhtin argues in *The Dialogic Imagination*, is first and foremost erotic time, characterized by a “random contingency” according to which “initiative is handed over to chance”;¹ it is what takes place between the meeting of a pair of young lovers and their eventual marriage. It is thus, explicitly, heterosexual time. Bakhtin, however, limits his consideration to the ancient Greek novels, with a brief gesture to chivalric romance. The *romans d'antiquité*, which initiate the medieval genre, betray a much more ambivalent attitude toward heterosexual relationships, suggesting an alternative temporality, one which is sometimes actually homoerotic, and always fundamentally queer.

The anonymous *Roman d'Enéas* (ca. 1160) and the *Roman de Troie* by Benoît de Sainte-Maure (ca. 1165) both anchor themselves in a particular legendary past, the era of the Trojan War. With its happily-ever-after ending in the wedding of Enéas and Lavine, the *Roman d'Enéas* stands as an early example of the marriage plot, albeit one which already exposes its ideological imperatives. The end of the *Roman de Troie*, however, is inevitably less upbeat. The Horse delivers its treacherous progeny, towers burn, streets run with blood, Pyrrhus slaughters Priam at the altar and Polixena upon the grave of Achilles; the Greeks stone Hecuba to death. Even for the victors, things don't go particularly well. Benoît provides a summary of the homecomings: Agammemnon is murdered by Clytemnestra; Neoptolemus dies mysteriously, perhaps because of his marriage to Helen's daughter; Ulysses is haunted by nightmares and eventually killed by Telegonus, his unrecognized son by Circe. For the heroes of Troy, it turns out, romance time is not all that it's cracked up to be. The return to domesticity and the embrace of family are only a return to death. While the *Roman d'Enéas* works hard to produce a positive and secure vision of the heterosexual bonds of marriage and courtly love, the *Roman de Troie*, ultimately, doesn't bother. Each text, moreover, proposes alternatives to romance time and the imperatives of heteronormativity, even if only to foreclose them. These alternatives take the form of queer characters, united in their belonging not to the world of

1 M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. and trans. Michael Holquist and Caryl Emerson (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982), 90.

marriage, procreation and genealogy, with its emphasis on a time that continues from the past through the present and on into the future, but instead on a time characterized by stasis, interruption, excess, and death.

In referring to queer characters, I mean those characters who in one way or another live outside of or defy the system of courtly love between men and women which undergirds patriarchal systems of land acquisition and inheritance. A discussion of such characters is part of a larger discussion of queer temporality, for though it may seem obvious, it needs to be said: queer characters and queer time are two different narrative functions which intersect but do not overlap. As Carolyn Dinshaw argues in *How Soon is Now? Medieval Texts, Amateur Readers and the Queerness of Time*, “queerness . . . has a temporal dimension” manifested in “forms of desirous, embodied being that are out of sync with the ordinarily linear measurements of everyday life, that engage heterogeneous temporalities, or that precipitate out of time altogether.”² Jack Halberstam elaborates the linear, genealogical qualities of heterosexual time:

The time of reproduction is ruled by a biological clock for women and by strict bourgeois rules of respectability and scheduling for married couples . . . wealth, goods and morals are passed through family ties from one generation to the next. It also connects the family to the historical past of the nation and glances ahead to connect the family to the future of both familial and national stability.³

The fundamentally gendered quality of many forms of time is buried, Halberstam argues, by the reluctance of philosophers and critics to see difference according to sexuality or gender as anything but a distraction from the real power-engines of history. Halberstam cites David Harvey’s *The Condition of Post-Modernity* as an example of an argument that “energetically deconstructs the naturalization of modes of temporality . . . with no awareness of having instituted and presumed a normative framework for his alternative understanding of time.”⁴ This framework fails to appreciate the degree to which the very concept of “naturalization” is the product of an understanding of the world dependent upon assumptions not just about gender but about sexuality. The subjection of the domestic space to the industrial space does not simply rely upon the subjection of women to men, that is, but also upon the fact that reproductive time, taken for granted as “natural” time, is inevi-

² Carolyn Dinshaw, *How Soon is Now? Medieval Texts, Amateur Readers and the Queerness of Time* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), 4.

³ J. Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 5.

⁴ Halberstam, *In a Queer Time*, 4.

tably imagined as heterosexual.⁵ Living outside of the nuclear family and its attendant logic of the accrual of capital is a choice either made by or imposed upon a great many queer subjects. Halberstam includes drag queens, sex workers, drug-dealers and the unemployed, among others, to whom I would add the mentally ill, families constructed around nuclei other than the married couple, the disabled, and others whose identities exist on the margins of normative, heterosexual society. For Halberstam, the alternative to repro-time, which is quite clearly congruent with romance time, is queer time.

Queer time is associated with death; it “emerges most spectacularly, at the end of the twentieth century, from within those gay communities whose horizons of possibility have been severely diminished by the AIDS epidemic.”⁶ But at least queer time seems honestly to admit this, to acknowledge the inevitable truth of individual death, rather than hiding this reality, as both genealogical time and romance time do, behind the promise of immortality in the form of offspring. In a discussion of Michael Cunningham’s *The Hours*, a rewriting of Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway*, Halberstam points out that the marriage plot is actually a “seemingly inexorable march of narrative time toward marriage (death).”⁷ Queer time, on the other hand, is, even under the shadow of death, “about the *potentiality* of a life unscripted by the conventions of family, inheritance, and child rearing.”⁸

The dominant heterosexual temporality of romance, with its emphasis upon the role of women and upon courtly love, clearly belongs to what Halberstam labels reproductive time. Its function in the *Roman d'Enéas* is to establish a dynasty beginning with Enéas and Lavine, and culminating, eons later, in Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine (the poem was composed before the fractures in their marriage became evident). Halberstam describes reproductive time, what I call romance time, as a fundamental mode of thinking about time and the human subject in the West:

In Western cultures, we chart the emergence of the adult from the dangerous and unruly period of adolescence as a desired process of maturation; and we create longevity as the most desirable future. . . . Within the life cycle of the Western human subject, long periods of stability are considered to be desirable, and people who live in rapid bursts (drug addicts, for example) are characterized as immature or even dangerous.⁹

⁵ Halberstam, *In a Queer Time*, 6–8.

⁶ Halberstam, *In a Queer Time*, 2.

⁷ Halberstam, *In a Queer Time*, 3.

⁸ Halberstam, *In a Queer Time*, 2, italics mine.

⁹ Halberstam, *In a Queer Time*, 4–5.

Halberstam does not explicitly make the point that these values have existed for centuries, even millennia, but this is indeed the case. Cicero's *De Senectute*, a treatise in the voice of Cato the Elder praising the virtues and especially the sobriety of old age, was popular not only in its own time but throughout the Middle Ages and into the Renaissance; writers like Marbod of Rennes (ca. 1035–1123) drew upon Cicero to argue that old age freed the mind from the vices of the body and granted wisdom and peace.¹⁰ As for periods of stability, the very notion of a *pax henrici* coming after the Anarchy of Stephen, suggests a nostalgia for the lost *pax Romana*.¹¹ Henry's rule, while not exactly peaceful in his French domains, did bring lasting peace to England. The twelfth century also witnessed the emergence of the tournament as a pastime for warriors between wars, one roundly condemned by the Council of Clermont in 1130, which qualified them as "detestable markets or fairs at which knights are accustomed to meet to show off their strength and their boldness and in which the deaths of men and danger to the soul often occur."¹² Similar rhetoric emerges in modern condemnation of night clubs, often associated with gay activity, by the Jehovah's Witnesses ("Youth dance clubs have become very popular in recent years. . . . Moshing often involves jumping up and down, violent head shaking, and mock head butting, as well as crashing into other dancers. Broken limbs and cuts are commonplace, and there have also been spinal and head injuries. Death has even resulted."¹³). I am not suggesting that knights were homosexual, of course, although some certainly were, but simply that the rhetoric against men coming together to commit sin is similar: it focuses on danger to the body as incorporating danger to the soul. While war was a necessary evil in the Middle Ages, and in the case of Crusade even a divine duty, tournaments, which pitched Christian knight against Christian knight for personal glory, for adrenaline, for the fun of it, were clearly "immature or even dangerous," like gay sex in the age of AIDS. Halberstam points out, quoting poet Mark Doty,

10 See Bruce C. Barker-Benfield, "A Ninth Century Manuscript from Fleury: Cato de senectute cum Macrobio," in *Medieval Learning and Literature: Essays Presented to Richard William Hunt*, ed. J. J. G. Alexander and M. T. Gibson (Oxford: Clarendon, 1976), 145–65; Juanita Feros Ruys, "Medieval Latin Meditations on Old Age," in *Old Age in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, ed. Albrecht Classen (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2007), 180–83.

11 *Anglo Saxon Chronicle*, entry for 1140: "And there was soon so good a peace as never was there before. Then was the king [Stephen] stronger than he ever was before. And the earl [Henry] went over sea; and all people loved him; for he did good justice, and made peace."

12 Richard Barber and Juliet Baker, *Tournaments: Jousts, Chivalry and Pageants in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1989), 17.

13 *The Watchtower*, Watchtower Online Library, <http://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/102004290>.

that for the first generation of gay men to live under the shadow of AIDS, the generation which was infected before it knew there *was* infection, “while the threat of no future hovers overhead like a storm cloud, the urgency of being also expands the potential of the moment.”¹⁴ The same is true for the medieval knight; what, after all, is a warrior, and more particularly a hero, except someone who has chosen to “live in rapid bursts,” as Halberstam puts it? Achilles, who chooses early death and eternal fame over a long and happy life without renown, is thus queer in ways that transcend his always ambiguous sexuality. Both the *Roman d'Enés* and the *Roman de Troie*, invested as they are in war as much as in love, celebrate even as they deny the queer time associated with Nisus and Euryalus, Pallas and Enés, Patroclus and Achilles by associating them with forms of excess that are both inevitably deadly and aesthetically compelling.¹⁵

The apparent problem of same-sex love in the *Roman d'Enés* has been much discussed, particularly in reference to the outburst of the queen (Amata in the *Aeneid*, nameless here) in which she accuses Aeneas in no uncertain terms of preferring sex with boys to sex with women.¹⁶

Cil cuivers est de tel nature
 Qu'il n'a de femmes gaire cure.
 Il prise plus le plain mestier,
 il ne veult pas bice chaucier,
 moult par aime char de mallon;
 il prisera mieux son garçon
 que toy ne autre acoler.
 A fumelle ne set voller, (jouer?)

¹⁴ Halberstam, *In a Queer Time*, 2.

¹⁵ The warrior women Camille and Pantesilee also live and die outside of reproductive time, as does the half-human Sagittary; but for reasons of time and space, I shall not treat them in this essay.

¹⁶ See, for instance, Simon Gaunt, “From Epic to Romance: Gender and Sexuality in the Roman d’Eneas,” *Romanic Review* 83.1 (1992): 1–27 on issues of gender and sexuality in the poem; see also Vincent A. Lankewish, “Assault From Behind: Sodomy, Foreign Invasion and Masculine Identity in *Le Roman d’Eneas*,” in *Text and Territory: Geographical Imagination in the European Middle Ages*, ed. Sylvia Tomasch and Sealy Giles (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), 207–44; Susane Hafner, “Coward, Traitor, Landless Trojan: Aeneas and the Politics of Sodomy,” *Essays in Medieval Studies* 19 (2002): 61–69, although Hafner deals primarily with the German *Eneasroman*; Noah D. Guynn, “Eternal Flame: State Formation, Deviant Architecture and the Monumentality of Same-Sex Eroticism in the *Roman d’Eneas*,” *GLQ* 6.2 (2000): 287–319; and William Burgwinkle, “Knighting the Classical Hero: Homo/Hetero Affectivity in *Eneas*,” *Exemplaria* 5.1 (1993): 1–43.

ne passera mie au guicet;
moult aime fraise de varlet.¹⁷

That pervert is of such a nature that he doesn't care for women. He much prefers the love of boys. He doesn't like to hunt does, he'd rather have male flesh; he will prefer to embrace his boytoy than you or any other woman. He doesn't know how to play with women; he'll not go through the little gate, he much prefers a boy's bud.

The queen goes on to remind Lavine of Enéas's mistreatment of Didon, and refers to him as a traitor and sodomite; this is a move that may seem counterintuitive to the modern reader, but medievals did not divide the world along the hard lines of hetero- and homosexual. The real point here is treachery, both to the individual and to the genealogical project that underlies romance time:

De cest sigle seroit tost fin,
se tuit li home qui i sont
erent autel par tot 10 mont;
ja mes feme ne concevroit,
grant sofrate de gent seroit;
ran ne feroit ja mes anfanz,
li siegles faudroit ainz cent anz. (8579–602)

It would be the end of everything if all the men in the world were like him; no woman would ever conceive, there would be great suffering of the people, no one would have children any more, it would be the end of the world.

According to Simon Gaunt, the accusation of homosexuality against Enéas “may reflect contemporary anxieties about homosexuality, but its main effect is to mark Eneas' conformity to a prescribed norm.”¹⁸ After all, the reader knows perfectly well that he will, in fact, marry Lavine. For Gaunt, who follows Eve Sedgwick here, homophobia emerges as a result of the conflict between an epic ideology founded on homosocial bonding and a romance ideology in which the status of the hero is measured through his relationship to women – or rather, as courtly lover, to *a* woman – instead of men.¹⁹ In the same vein, William Burgwinkle notes that, in the feudal period and, indeed, in the world of the *chanson de geste*, male–male love, erotic or not, is the norm. For him, the *Enéas* challenges “common assumptions about what distinguishes friends from lovers, men from women in love, and

¹⁷ *Roman d'Eneas: Edition critique d'après le manuscrit B.N.fr. 60*, ed. and trans. Aimé Petit (Paris: Lettres Gothiques, 1997), ll. 8621–30. All future references are to this edition, by line numbers. Translations are mine.

¹⁸ Gaunt, “From Epic to Romance,” 23.

¹⁹ Gaunt, “From Epic to Romance,” 21.

spirituality from sensuality.”²⁰ Burgwinkle further argues that, in the *Enéas*, heterosexual love is associated with land, procreation, and duty, whereas true companionship can only be manifested between warriors; and warriors, as the case of Camille demonstrates, can be female, so long as their military function is masculine: “gender transcends sex.”²¹ These arguments form a basis from which to consider the creation in the *Enéas* of a kind of queer temporality that is isolated within, even if it does not actively oppose, the heteronormativity of romance time.

The source of the *Enéas*, Vergil’s *Aeneid*, also confronts the issue of same-sex love, in the persons of Nisus and Euryalus, a fact noted by both Gaunt and Burgwinkle. Earlier scholars often attempted to banish the “erotic dimensions”²² of the friendship between Nisus and Euryalus, but in an eloquent and influential essay John F. Makowski argues that the only other place in the poem with so much erotic colour is Book IV and concludes that “it was [Vergil’s] genius to suffuse the raw material of Homer with Plato and so to fashion the second greatest love story of the *Aeneid*.”²³ The blending of the homosocial and the homoerotic is clearest, perhaps, in the simile describing the death of Euryalus:

Volvitur Euryalus leto, pulchrosque per artus
it cruor, inque umeros cervix conlapsa recumbit:
purpureus veluti cum flos succisus aratro
languescit ormiens lassove papavera collo
demisere caput, pluvia cum forte gravantur (Aen. IX 433–37)

Euryalus in death went reeling down,
And blood streamed on his handsome length, his neck
Collapsing let his head fall on his shoulder –
As a bright flower cut by a passing plow
Will droop and wither slowly, or a poppy
Bow its head upon its tired stalk
When overborne by a passing rain.²⁴

Here Vergil melds Homer’s image of a young man’s death in *Iliad* 8 308–10 with Sappho’s of a young woman’s virginity as a purple flower trampled on by men – a

²⁰ Burgwinkle, “Knighting the Classical Hero,” 7.

²¹ Burgwinkle, “Knighting the Classical Hero,” 35.

²² David Meban, “The Nisus and Euryalus Episode and Roman Friendship,” *Phoenix* 63.3/4 (2009): 239–59 at 244.

²³ John F. Makowski, “Nisus and Euryalus: A Platonic Relationship,” *The Classical Journal* 85:1 (1989): 1–15 at 15.

²⁴ Vergil, *Aeneid*, ed. R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969); future references are to this edition by line number.

conflation already made by Catullus in poem 11, where the poet compares his rejected love to a flower on the edge of a meadow, touched by the plow (“velut prati/ ultimi flos, praetereunte postquam/ tactus aratro est”).²⁵ The image, in other words, was ambiguously sexualized already by the time Vergil composed the *Aeneid*. In the next generation, Ovid would make it definitively queer by using it of the death of Hyacinth in *Metamorphoses* X, the book dedicated by Orpheus to the loves of gods and young men. Like Euryalus, the dying Hyacinth is compared to a flower: “ut, siquis violas rigidumve papaver in horto/ liliaque infringat fulvis horrentia linguis,/ . . . sic vultus moriens iacet” (as when in a garden violets/ Or lilies tawny-tongued or poppies proud/ Are bruised and bent . . . so dying lies that face).²⁶ Apollo then makes the simile literal by transforming his beloved’s body into the flower that goes by his name.

What interests me most in the description of Nisus and Euryalus, however, is the authorial encomium pronounced after their deaths, which declares them eternal heroes:

Fortunati ambo! Siquid mea carmina possunt
 nulla dies umquam memori eximet aevo
 dum domus Aenea Capitoli immobile saxum
 accolet imperiumque pater Romanus habebit. (IX 446–49)

Fortunate both! If in the least my songs
 Avail, no future day will ever take you
 Out of the record of remembering Time,
 While children of Aeneas make their home
 Around the Capitol’s unshaken rock
 And still the Roman Father governs all.

This praise makes it clear that the problem with the love of Nisus and Euryalus is not that it is between men. Rather, it is excessive, and in Vergil’s poem excessive passion is always destructive: the desperate love of Dido for Aeneas destroys her and that of Nisus and Euryalus destroys them both, just as the desperate rage of

²⁵ Catullus “11.” *Catullus. Tibullus. Pervigilium Veneris*, trans. F. W. Cornish (London: William Heinemann, 1921), 22–24. On the evolution of the image see Don Fowler, “Vergil on Killing Virgins,” in *Homo Viator, Classical Essays for John Bramble*, ed. Michael Whitby, Philip R. Hardie, and Mary Whitby (Bristol: Bristol Classical Press, 1987), 188–89.

²⁶ Ovid, *Metamorphoses* X, ll. 190–95, trans. A. D. Melville, *Ovid’s Metamorphoses* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986). The image retains its queerness in many poems of the First World War, not only the well-known “In Flanders Fields” by John McCrae, but also “Break of Day in the Trenches” by Isaac Rosenberg, “Ancient History” by Siegfried Sassoon, and a host of others. Many of the poets of the trenches had excellent classical educations, and of course quite a few of them, like Sassoon, were gay.

Turnus, paralleling that of *saevus* Achilles in the previous war, will destroy him in turn. Passion is what Aeneas, in order to become the *pious pater* that he is always promised to be, the perfect Roman hero, must sacrifice.²⁷ As Parry puts it, “the personal emotions of a man [are] never allowed to motivate action . . . [Aeneas] is man himself; not man as the brilliant free agent of Homer’s world, but man of a later stage in civilization.”²⁸ Nisus and Euryalus, whose love was too great for the nascent Roman world, live on in words, in the abstract memory of time; Aeneas will live on in the utterly concrete Capitoline Hill and in the race that he, as the original Roman father, will found. Nisus and Euryalus are thus marked as belonging to the Iliadic world of the past that must be left behind, and Aeneas to the new world of emerging history, of Roman futurity, a world in which romance brings only delay, despair, and death.

In the *Roman d'Enés*, by contrast, passion, so long as it is heterosexual and courtly, is not what hinders the hero’s destiny; it is what shapes it, even if it is also, as Burgwinkle argues, “a basically unpleasant initiation experience in which one loses one’s ‘self’ in return for a later reintegration into the larger community.”²⁹ Same-sex love, on the other hand, exists outside of this larger community and the future-oriented concerns with procreation and genealogy that motivate it. In the French poem, the Nisus and Euryalus episode follows the model of the *Aeneid* closely, and the language that characterizes their relationship similarly suggests an erotic dimension: Nisus addresses Eurialus (5156) as “bels dolz amis” (beautiful sweet friend), a term of affection which, if not explicit, is at least suggestive. As Huguette Legros notes, in the *romans d’antiquité*, the purely homosocial and feudal meaning of *amis* has begun a semantic slide towards courtliness, “contaminated,” in her words, by the vocabulary of love;³⁰ indeed, the very same words will be put by Benoît into the mouth of Briseida, as she addresses Troilus in her first speech in the *Troie*.³¹ Nisus’s accusation against the killer of Eurialus has a similarly erotic flavor:

27 This is, of course, why the ending of the poem is so disturbing, since in it a Turnus-like rage overcomes Aeneas, causing him to ignore the advice of Anchises and refusing to spare the conquered.

28 Adam Parry, “The Two Voices of Virgil’s *Aeneid*,” *Arion* 2.4 (1963): 66–80 at 79.

29 Burgwinkle, “Knighting the Classical Hero,” 42.

30 Huguette Legros, “Le vocabulaire de l’amitié, son évolution sémantique au cours du XIIIe siècle,” *Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale* 29.90 (1980), 135. She suggests an influence from the amorous (and heterosexual) *planhs* of the troubadour South.

31 Benoît de Sainte-Maure, *Le Roman de Troie*, ed. Léopold Constans, 6 vols. (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1904–1912), I. 13287. Further references are to this edition by line number.

Moult a dur cuer qui lui toucha
 quil veult occire onques n'ama
 onques de bonne amor n'ot cure
 qui toucheroit tel creature (5306–9)

Whoever touched him has a very hard heart – he who desires to kill him never loved. No one who knew the goodness of love could touch such a creature.

The image of the falling flower, so poignant in Vergil, is notably absent here; the death of Eurialus is brutal and unmetaphorized: “Vulcen . . . al damoïsel trencha le chief” (Vulcens . . . cut off the boy’s head). Both the Roman poet’s apostrophe and the lament of Euryalus’s mother (IX 481–97) are omitted in the medieval author’s retelling.³² Pathos is instead reserved for the death of Pallas, and especially for Enéas’s extraordinary lament over the young man’s body, which suggests a far more dangerously excessive affection linking the Trojan and the young Arcadian than that between the two acknowledged lovers.

Pallas’s queerness does not become apparent until after his death – in fact, as Halberstam might put it, death queers him, and Enéas too, apparently, projecting them into a temporality that is at odds with anything that occurs in Vergil’s poem. There is nothing queer at all about their initial meeting; Pallas is the first to greet and challenge the delegation of Trojans approaching Pallante in search of allies in the fight against Turnus, in a scene quite closely mapped on the *Aeneid*. His father Evandre, who is revealed as an old friend of Anchises, greets Enéas like a long lost relative, and the following morning Enéas participates in the knighting of Pallas, who will return with him to Montauban and the fight against Turnus. The next time we see Pallas, he is first fighting Turnus on the battlefield, and then lying dead at his feet; whatever relationship may have blossomed between the young man and Enéas did so off-stage. The first significant change from the *Aeneid* occurs at this point: Turnus takes a trophy from the young man’s body, but instead of a belt-buckle emblazoned with the story of the Danaids, it is a ring, a gift from Enéas.

The change seems slight, but curious. It is possible, of course, that the author feared his audience would not know the story of the fifty Danaids, all but one of whom killed their husbands on their wedding night, thus substituting the blood of murder for that of defloration. Don Fowler argues that in the *Aeneid*, it

³² Christopher Baswell argues that “The female, even the maternal, is thus wholly suppressed at this point in the French version, leaving all the more prominent its focus on male militarism and fidelity.” “Men in the *Roman d’Eneas*: The Construction of Empire,” in *Medieval Masculinities: Regarding Men in the Middle Ages*, ed. Clare Lees, Thelma Fenster, and Jo Ann McNamara (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 151.

is this very association that makes us recognize Pallas himself as a virgin, in spite of his gender.³³ The ring worn by Pallas in the *Enéas*, however, also encodes his sexuality. Its bezel takes the form of a lion-cub, suggesting Pallas's youthful masculinity, carved of *jagonce*. The word *jagonce* is sometimes rendered *jacinthe* in other Old French texts; it is one of the stones used in the walls of the city of Heaven, but in this context another association seems more important: *jacinthe* derives from hyacinth, the name of a flower, but also, as I noted above, the name of Apollo's lover. Thus, the association between dying youth and dying flower, displaced by the French poet from the death of Eurialus, reemerges here, transformed. Indeed, the language surrounding the dead body of Pallas will, from this point on, oscillate between two linked images: the flower, epitome of fragility, passing time, and lost youth, and the jacinth, eternal, impervious, indestructible, and yet somehow enfolding the fading flower.

Enéas's lament over the young man's body is significantly expanded in the medieval poem, and the register of its language is quite different. Vergil's hero speaks for sixteen lines (XI 42–58); his emphasis is on Evander's loss, and on the loss of a protector for Italy, an ally for Ascanius. The sight of Pallas's face, pale as snow, moves him to tears, but they are dignified tears. Not so the medieval hero, whose lament balloons to fifty-six lines; he begins by kissing the young man's corpse, and then goes on to address him in language that is positively overwrought, both more personal and more eroticized than that of Vergil's poem.

One of the most remarkable features of Enéas's speech over Pallas's body is that it consistently uses the informal *tu* rather than the formal *vous*. By the twelfth century, French had already developed the distinction maintained to this day in modern French,³⁴ according to which the *vous* form is used as a singular in formal addresses, with the *tu* form reserved for situations marked by distinction in age (a parent addresses a child) or in social class (a lord addresses his vassal); more rarely, given the stratification of courtly society, it is used between equals, either equals in power or equals in affection and intimacy. In Marie de France's *Fresne*, for example, the heroine's mother switches from *vous* to *tu* upon recognizing her long lost daughter³⁵ Other instances of the use of *tu* in the *Enéas* include Evander's

33 Fowler, "Vergil on Killing Virgins," 185–88. On the problem of male virginity, see Maud Burnett McInerney, "Like a Virgin: The Problem of Male Virginity in the Symphonia," in *Hildegard of Bingen: A Book of Essays*, ed. M. McInerney (New York: Garland, 1998), 133–54.

34 The modern French of the *hégagone*, in any case; the Québécois distinguish only between singular and plural, not between informal and formal in their use of the second person.

35 "Kar me dites kil vus bailla!" (Tell me who gave it to you!) (*Fresne* 435); "Tu es ma fille, bele amie!" (You are my daughter, lovely friend!) (*Fresne* 450). *Les Lais de Marie de France*, ed. Jean Rychner (Paris: Champion, 1981).

conversation with Enéas, the son of an old friend, the queen's lectures to her daughter, and Lavine's instructions to the archer, her social inferior, but also, significantly, Eurialus's plea to accompany Nisus: "Comment remaindrai je sanz toy,/ et tu comment iras sanz moy?" Eurialus is the younger of the pair, and therefore a different kind of intimacy is being invoked. Heterosexual lovers, constrained by the formalities of the courtly system and the power hierarchies inherent in it, rarely use *tu*; when Marie de France puts a virtually identical sentiment into the mouth of Tristan, he addresses Iseut with the formal pronoun: "Bele amie, si est de nus:/ Ne vus sanz mei, ne jeo sanz vus."³⁶ Enéas and Lavine, like Enéas and Didon, use *vous*.

Enéas's use of the informal pronoun could, of course, be dismissed as paternal, but it is not the only thing that suggests erotic desire for the dead Pallas, a desire which was never expressed for the living boy. Enéas kisses the body twice (6209, 6274), although neither of Pallas's parents do; he faints upon the body. And, even more significantly, his language is highly eroticized. He addresses Pallas as "flour de jouvente" (flower of youth, 6212), and goes on to develop the floral image some forty lines later:

moult par est fraille ceste vie;
 tant estiez bel hier matin
 soz ciel n'avoit plus bel meschin;
 en poy d'eure te voy müé,
 palli et tout descouloré:
 ta blanchour est toute nergie,
 et ta rouvours toute persie.
 Clere faiture, gentil chose,
 si com soleil flastrit la rose,
 si t'a la mort moult tost plessié,
 et tout flastri et tout changié! (6249–59)

This life is very fragile; you were so handsome yesterday morning, there was no more beautiful young man beneath the sky and now in a few hours I see you changed, pale and all discoloured. Your whiteness is all blackened and your rosiness is all bluish. Brilliant creature, noble being, just as the sun wilts the rose, so death has left you withered and faded and entirely changed.

The image of the falling flower, omitted from the death of Eurialus, blossoms fully here, and if the sentiment seems familiar, it is because it is. The author exploits the *carpe diem* topos according to which youthful beauty is linked to the ephemerality of flowers, and especially roses; the temporal markers fall thick

36 Marie de France, *Chievrefoil*, ll. 77–78.

and fast as Enéas invokes yesterday morning, the turning sky, the rays of the sun. Perhaps most familiar from Ronsard's poem ("Mignonne, allons voir si la rose/ qui ce matin avait desclose") the topos of the fading rose goes back to Horace (where it is homoerotic) and even to Anacreon, although it was probably best known in the early Middle Ages from a poem ascribed to the fourth-century Gallo-Roman poet, Ausonius, which ends with the oft-quoted line "collige virgo, rosas dum flos novus et nova pubes/ et memor esto aevum sic properare tuum" (So, girl, gather roses while their bloom and your youth are fresh, and be mindful that your time too hastens away).³⁷ In the Middle Ages, the poem was believed to be by Vergil, and so it may have seemed a reasonable way to expand on the brief image of fading flowers that occur (in the narrator's voice, not the hero's) in the *Aeneid*. When Pallas is loaded onto his bier, he is like a flower picked by a young girl, a soft violet or drooping hyacinth ("qualem virgineo demessum pollice florem/ seu mollis violae seu languentis hyacinthi," XI 68–69).

It is not only the language of flowers, and particularly of the hyacinth, that casts Pallas as the object of erotic love, however. The phrase "cler faiture, gentil chose" also resonates with the language of courtly love. *Faiture* can simply mean creation or person, and indeed some of the uses cited in Godefroy are religious. At least as common, however, are the erotic uses of the term. The lady in Marie de France's *Equitan* is possessed of "gent cors . . . et bele faiture," as well as a complexion "colur de rose";³⁸ Chrétien, a few decades later, will describe Perceval's beloved as "biaux de corps et de faiture," and the heroine of *Amadas et Idoine*, written shortly after 1200, is simply called a "bele faiture." *Cler*, too, crops up regularly with an erotic meaning, as in *Flor et Blancheflor* (like the *Lais de Marie*, dated to around 1160), "une pucele/ Clere come rose nouvele." *Gentil chose*, perhaps, is neutral – and yet, in this context, it cannot help but recall the Wife of Bath's sly reference to her "bele chose," some two hundred years later.

The real threat of all this excessive emotion to the heteronormative, genealogical purpose of the poem is encapsulated precisely and briefly when Enéas laments that, when he had won, he would have shared the whole country with Pallas: "quant eüsse le tout conquis,/ je te partisse le pays" (6232). Such a partition would have made nonsense of the grand imperial project according to which the sons of Enéas and Lavine and only the sons of Enéas and Lavine (Ascanius will be supplanted) must inherit Italy and become Romans, and

³⁷ The poem, now believed to be anonymous, is included in the appendix to the *Works of Ausonius*, ed. Hugh G. Evelyn White, Loeb Classical Library, vol. 2 (London: Heineman, 1921), 280.

³⁸ Marie de France, *Equitan*, ll. 33, 39.

eventually Angevins.³⁹ The text shuts off this possibility in the past subjunctive realm of what might have been, just as it will shut up Pallas's disturbingly desirable dead body in his tomb, and frees Enéas to move into the future by marrying Lavine.

In *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, Sara Ahmed underscores the way in which “the coupling of man and woman becomes a kind of ‘birthing,’ a giving birth not only to new life but to ways of living that are already recognizable as forms of civilization.”⁴⁰ Queer lives thus “become readable as the failure to reproduce, and as a threat to the social ordering of life itself.”⁴¹ Thus, in the *Roman d'Enéas*, characters such as Nisus and Eurialus and Pallas are evoked only to be disavowed, relegated to stasis, death, and the past. They are flies in amber, contained so that they may not hinder the forward progress of genealogical time. The *Roman de Troie*, on the other hand, is not about the birth of a new civilization, but about the death of an old one. It refuses to value the romance time upon which the *Roman d'Enéas* is founded, and also refuses to cordon off queer characters as its predecessor does. Instead, it multiplies not only deviant characters but forms of deviance, no longer simply defined by sexuality; the temporality of its narrative, existing as it does entirely under the shadow of death, always already part of a futureless past, is thus fundamentally queer; as Lee Edelman puts it, echoing Halberstam's insistence on the deadly and deluded quality of reproductive time, “[queer subjects] aren't, in fact, subjects of history constrained by the death-in-life of futurism and its illusion of productivity. We're subjects, instead, of the real, of the encounter with futurism's emptiness, with negativity's life-in-death.”⁴² Heterosexual couplings in the poem prove inevitably destructive rather than generative, leading both to the death of individuals (in the case of the love-affair between Troilus and Briseida) and of Troy itself (in the case of Paris and Helen).⁴³ The world of the poem is one of heterosexual failure, futurelessness and queer grief, multiplied across major and minor characters but all embodied most powerfully in the figure of Achilles.

³⁹ The lesson against partition is one Henry II was slow to learn; his insistence on dividing his realm (co-kingship for Henry, the Young King, Aquitaine for Richard, Brittany for Geoffrey) caused nothing but trouble.

⁴⁰ Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press, 2014), 144.

⁴¹ Ahmed, *Cultural Politics*, 145.

⁴² Carolyn Dinshaw et al., “Theorizing Queer Temporalities: A Roundtable Discussion,” *GLQ* 13.2–3 (2007): 177–95 at 181.

⁴³ The fact that women in the *Troie* are more likely to survive heterosexuality than men is a topic for another day.

One of the structural curiosities of the *Troie* is the series of character descriptions provided from ll. 5093–582. These are derived, for the most part, from Benoît's source, the late antique "eyewitness" account of the Trojan War by pseudo-Dares; in their expansions upon Dares's bald text, however, they form an index to Benoît's method of translation through expansion. Where Dares gives a list, proper name in the accusative, followed by a flat list of adjectives, like "Podalirium crassum valentem superbum tristum,"⁴⁴ Benoît elaborates:

Polidarius iert si gras
 Que a grant peine alot le pas
 En plusors choses iert vaillanz
 Mais toz jors iert tristes dolanz
 Ainz le cerchast par mainte terre
 Qui plus ergoillos vousist querre. (5257–62)

Polidarius was so fat that he could scarcely walk. He was worthy in several ways, but always sad and mournful. You could search the world over and never find a more arrogant man.

No longer merely "heavy, worthy, arrogant, and sad," Polidarius is now both obese and severely depressed. Similarly, Hecuba, who in Dares had a manlike mind (*mente virili*), actually looks like a man: "De cors senblot home bien pres/ N'aveit pas femenin talent" (Her body seemed like that of a man. She lacked feminine gifts) (5514–15). Memnon the Ethiopian, who does not appear in Dares (and is not given a physical description in Dictys), is not explicitly described as Black in this passage (although he will be later in the poem) but has dark blond frizzy hair and yellow eyes, suggesting a stereotypical description of a biracial man. And finally, the description of Patroclus is significantly altered. Dares tells us that Achilles's friend is "pulchro corpore, oculis vividis et magnis, verecundum, rectum, prudentem, dapsilem" (beautiful of body, with big bright eyes, modest, upright and generous). Benoît develops as follows:

Patroclus ot le cors mout gent
 E mout fu de grant escient.
 Blans fu e blois e dreiz e granz
 E chevaliers mout avananz.
 Les oilz ot vairs, n'ot pas grant ire
 Biaus fu mout, ce puet hon bien dire,
 Larges, d'ovraigne merveillos,
 Mais mout par esteit vergoindos. (5171–78)

⁴⁴ Dares Phrygius, *De Excidio Troiae Historia*, ed. Ferdinand Meister (Leipzig: Benedictus Gotthelf Teubner, 1873), 17.

Patroclus had a noble body and he was extremely wise. He was white-skinned and blond and stood tall and large, he was a most appealing knight. His eyes were grey and not wrathful, he was extremely handsome, it must be said, generous, wonderful in his actions, but also extremely shameful.

Vergoindos is etymologically descended from *verecundus*, but over the centuries the meaning of the word slipped from “modest, shy, easily ashamed” to include also “shameful” or “dishonorable.”⁴⁵ The other details that Benoît adds (grey eyes, white skin, blond hair) could easily describe a courtly lady; in fact, *blanc et blois* is what Tarchon calls Camille in the *Enéas*. Even in these rapid descriptive sketches, Benoît creates, from Dares’s much straighter (and more tedious) narration, a gallery of oddities: obese depressives, viragos, racial others, queers.

While medieval writers generally represent Achilles as heterosexual and the nature of his bond with Patroclus as non-erotic, Benoît’s depiction of the hero is much more ambiguous. As in the *Enéas*, there is from an enemy an accusation of sodomy. Hector taunts Achilles with the loss of his companion in terms that are less explicit than those of Lavine’s mother, but that nonetheless are clear:

L’ire grant que vostre cuers a
 Porriez vengier . . .
 E la dolor del cumpaignon
 Dont j’ai fet la desevreison,
 Que tante nuit avez sentu
 Entre vos braz tot nu a nu.
 Iclist jués est vils e hontos,
 Dont li plusor sunt haïnos
 As deus, quin prenent la vengeance
 Par la lor devine puissance. (13178–88)

You will be able to avenge the great wrath your heart feels, and the grief for that companion I separated from you, whom you have held naked in your arms so many nights. Such games are vile and shameful, and hateful to the gods who punish them with their divine power.

Hector is no courtly lover, as his brutal treatment of his wife makes clear (ll 15329–54); still, he speaks here for the reproductive, patriarchal order, invoking the gods as vengeful guarantors. Baumgartner notes that, in the Milan

⁴⁵ In their translation (which became available too late to be used more generally for this essay) Burgess and Kelly render this as “had very shameful ways”; they note that both Constans and Baumgartner also interpret the word as implying shame. *The Roman de Troie by Benoît de Sainte-Maure*, trans. Glyn S. Burgess and Douglas Kelly (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2017), 104 n.45.

manuscript, these lines are highlighted by a pointing finger in the margin, emphasizing (presumably) their shocking character.⁴⁶ Katherine Callen King notes that Benoît is one of the few medieval authors to “resurrect” the notion of Achilles as homosexual, but she restricts her discussion to this passage, thus leaving open the question of whether Achilles and Patroclus actually are lovers, or whether Hector is merely repeating gossip.⁴⁷ Achilles’s lament over the body of Patroclus, however, suggests a more than “Platonic” friendship, especially when read in the context of the *Roman d'Enéas*. Initially, it echoes that of Nisus over Euryalus: “Ne fis pas bien, biaux chiers amis,/ Quant je sans moi vos i tramis” (I did the wrong thing, beautiful dear friend, when I let you go without me) (10335–36); it goes on to emphasize Patroclus’s physical attributes, his beauty and his body, before promising to mourn for him forever:

En vois estoit mes cuers trestoz,
 Quar mout esteiez biaux e proz . . .
 Amis, por quei vos ai perdu?
 Vostre gent cors, tant mare fu!
 Quar je ere vostrë e vos miens.
 A plors, a lermes vos plaindrai
 A toz les jours mais que vivrai.

My heart was entirely yours, for you were so beautiful and brave . . . Friend, why have I lost you? Your sweet body, what has become of it? For I was yours and you were mine. With tears and weeping I will mourn you all the days of my life.

The emphasis here is on desirability, not, as might be expected, on courage or loyalty. Finally, Achilles faints on the body, moved by what the narrator calls *estränge duel*, strange or extraordinary or even queer grief.

In a discussion of queer grief centered primarily on the queer victims of 9/11 and the AIDS crisis, Ahmed argues that

the failure to recognise queer loss as loss is also a failure to recognise queer relationships as significant bonds, or that queer lives are lives worth living, or that queers are more than failed heterosexuals, heterosexuals who have failed “to be”. Given that queer becomes read as a form of “non-life”—with the death implied by being seen as non-reproductive – then queers are perhaps even already dead and cannot die.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Baumgartner, *Roman de Troie*, note p. 275; she points out too that the same marginalia are found at two other places in the MS, in different contexts.

⁴⁷ See Katherine Callen King, *Achilles: Paradigms of the War Hero from Homer to the Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 172–73.

⁴⁸ Ahmed, *Cultural Politics*, 156.

Hector's taunting of Achilles performs exactly this kind of denial of the value of queer lives and queer relationships and indeed echoes the rhetoric of those evangelicals who see AIDS as divine punishment for homosexuality. Even more tellingly, perhaps, the death of Patroclus makes all the other deaths in the poem, especially that of Achilles himself, inevitable.

In the *Enéas*, the hero's passion for Pallas was essentially a stage he had to get over before being fully initiated into the heterosexual world of heirs and descendants. The *Roman de Troie*, as I have noted, is much less sanguine than its predecessor about courtly love and the whole concept of dynastic, reproductive, romance time. Like Enéas, Achilles will fall in love with a perfect woman, beautiful, virgin, royal, the potential solution to prolonged war. Like Patroclus, Polixena is blonde and has grey eyes. Achilles's first glimpse of her, however, occurs as she weeps at Hector's tomb, and is immediately associated with death:

Veüe i a Polixenein
 Apertement en mi la chiere:
 C'est l'achaison e la maniere
 Par qu'il sera gitez de vie
 E l'ame de son cors partie. (ll.17540–44)

He saw Polixena he saw her face clearly, and it will be the cause and the manner of his departure from life, of the separation of his soul and body.

It is tempting to read yet another separation into this moment, the final separation of Achilles from his previous lover, since in falling in love with Polixena he allows himself to forget his promise to mourn Patroclus every day of his life.

Even as he declares his love for Polixena his language is shadowed by death and by forbidden forms of desire:

Cum est Amors seisiz de mei!
 Ne puis aveir por rien confort,
 Car mis cuers me pramet la mort. (17670–72)

How love has laid ahold of me! There is no comfort for me, my heart forebodes my death.

All courtly lovers claim that they will die of their affliction, but few first glimpse the beloved weeping over the perfectly embalmed body of her recently deceased brother. And, of course, Achilles is right: loving Polixena will be the immediate cause of his death, as her mother Hecuba baits a trap for him with the body of her youngest daughter, and sets Paris to murder Achilles when he comes to the promised betrothal. Oddly, though, Achilles also invokes the example of Narcissus to

describe the emotional condition in which he finds himself upon first beholding the Trojan princess:

Narcisus sui, ce sai e vei,
 Qui tant ama l'umbre de sei
 Qu'il en morut sor la funteine.
 Iceste angoisse, iceste peine
 Sai que je sent. Je raim mon onbre,
 Je aim ma mort e mon encombre.
 Ne plus qu il la puet baillier
 Ne acoler ne embracier,
 Car riens nen est ne riens ne fu,
 Ne qui ne pot estre sentu,
 Plus ne puis je avoir leisor
 De li avoir ne de s'amor. (ll. 17691–702)

I am Narcissus, I know it for certain, who so loved the shadow of himself that he died at the fountain. I know that I feel the same anguish, the same pain. I love my shadow, I love my death and my suffering. No more than he could grasp it or take it in his arms, embrace it, for it is nothing, was nothing, no more than he could feel it, no more will I be able to have her or her love.

In associating himself with the beautiful but self-absorbed young man from *Metamorphoses* III, Achilles invites identification with the epitome of queer desire: Narcissus's obsession with his own reflection is not only queer in the sense of same sex (the reflection that he adores is that of a beautiful young man), but queerer in that it takes him entirely outside of the norms of desire, either hetero- or homo-, since he desires not an other but himself. Such desire is inevitably deadly, and, like his equally queer counterpart, Hyacinth, Narcissus loses his human form, becoming a flower.

What does it mean for Achilles to define his love for Polixena as love for his own reflection? Alfred Adler notes the “affinity between narcissism and homosexuality . . . implied in the character sketch of Achilles,”⁴⁹ but this does not go quite far enough. There would have been a logic to comparing Achilles's love for Patroclus to that of Narcissus for himself, but that the comparison should arise when Achilles experiences (for the first time?) heterosexual love with all its courtly trappings suggests something more complicated. It establishes Achilles's love for Polixena as a phenomenon quite distinct from the Trojan princess herself; this new love, courtly love, is as deceptive

⁴⁹ Alfred Adler, “Militia et amor in the *Roman de Troie*,” *Romanische Forschungen* 72 (1960): 14–29 at 22.

and dead as Narcissus's reflection, and it is *out of time*: "riens nen est riens ne fu" (it is nothing and it was nothing). It has no existence, either in the present, or in the past.

Perhaps what the image of Narcissus reflects from within Achilles's self is precisely his own inescapable impulse toward death. That is, in allowing himself to fall in love with Polixena, not only does Achilles betray his promise to love Patroclus forever, but he also moves not toward heterosexual marriage and the possibility of a future dynasty – toward reproductive time, in Halberstam's phrase – but rather toward the ultimate queerness of death itself, of the end of personal, individual time. He fails to heterosexualize himself as Enéas does; where Enéas was "saved" by the love of a good woman, Achilles is damned by it. The *Roman de Troie*, indeed, proves to be a Romance in which romance, the heterosexual system of courtly love with its promise of creating and maintaining patriarchal structures down through the ages, fails. Romance time, and particularly its ethos of heterosexual courtly love, is instead revealed as a tyrannical and ultimately tragic temporality.

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