

Menelaus Supporting Patroclus

by Philip F. Clark

He grips his soldier
and stares, aghast,
at the road ahead.
The breath and the weight lessen.
 Foot stumbles to foot, he sweats.
The body, naked, uncoils in his grasp.
 He tightens his arm around
the flesh; feels the musculature
 and hears the breath.
He carries, he carries, he steps.
 Foot to foot and to future
he pushes against air
 and breathes. Waist to chest,
he holds, he holds,
 he remembers, he touches,
he lifts and kisses the mouth.
 Flesh to flesh the carrier
stumbles. The warriors gone,
 the spoils of war over, there is only
breath. Foot to foot, he bears the flesh.
 He listens, he looks, he looks.
The body sings and stiffens.

