Courtship Scenes in Attic Vase-Painting *

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(Pls. 24-28)

Abstract

Scenes of men courting youths on Attic black- and red-figure vases of ca. 560-475, first collected by Beazley in 1947, are re-examined within their historical and societal context. Their popularity during the Peisistratid period is seen as a reflection of aristocratic taste fostered by the Tyrrants, especially Hippias. In particular, close ties between Peisistratid Athens and Ionian Greece, exemplified by the presence of the poet Anakreon at the court of Hippias, suggest the creation of a cultural milieu in which the erastes/eromenos relationship and its depictions in art might flourish.

The gradual loss of interest in courtship scenes, starting about 510 and most marked after 480, is interpreted as a popular reaction against upper-class mores with Peisistratid associations, first under the new Kleisthenic democracy, and especially during the post-Persian movement toward radical democracy.

Sir Kenneth Dover’s recent study of Greek Homosexuality has provided us with a modern and judicious treatment of a subject long neglected in classical scholarship.¹ The core of the book is composed of a thorough scrutiny of Aischines 1 and other written sources, principally of the fifth and fourth centuries, which relate to the role of homosexual behavior in Greek society. Inevitably, a second important source of information for Dover is Attic (and occasionally non-Attic) vase-painting of the sixth and first half of the fifth centuries, which offers ample documentation of the homoerotic relationship between men and boys practiced in Athens. He gleanes some valuable information from the Attic “courtship scenes,” as Beazley first termed them,² in trying to correlate their content with the testimonia of Plato, Aristophanes and other writers, even though, as Dover himself recognizes, the bulk of the literary material is separated in time from the bulk of the artistic by roughly 100 years.³

The purpose of this paper is to re-examine the courtship as a genre scene, focussing in particular on a question not directly relevant to Dover’s inquiry or treated by earlier scholars. Assuming that the love relationship of men and boys was a conspicuous feature of Athenian society throughout the Archaic and Classical periods, what historical, social and political circumstances might account for its depiction in vase-painting during only a limited time period of a little less than a century, ca. 560-475 B.C.?⁴

First, let us take a brief look at the iconography of courtship scenes. In 1947, Beazley collected over one hundred examples, and subsequently others were added to his lists, principally by Schauenburg in 1965.⁵ Beazley recognized that the great majority of court scenes adhere, within rather narrow limits, to one of several artistic schemata, and on this basis he divided them into three main iconographic groups which he labelled alpha, beta and gamma.

One of the finest of all courtship scenes, on an amphora in Würzburg attributed to the Phrynos Painter (pl. 24, fig. 1),⁶ includes all the essential features of group alpha. The pair stand opposite each other, the erastes, or lover, on the left, his...

* Brief versions of this paper were presented to the College Art Association and at Columbia University in 1977. I am grateful to Christoph Gaimar for reading a draft and to Ewen Bowie for helpful comments.

¹ London 1978; hereafter cited as GH. References to illustrations in this book are given not by plate or figure number (for none are used), but by the numbers assigned in the List of Vases, pp. 266-25.


³ GH 7.

⁴ K. Schauenburg, “Erastes und Eromenos auf einer Schale...”

⁵ Würzburg 24; ABV 166,5; E. Langlotz, Griechische Vasen in Würzburg (Munich 1932) pl. 64-65.

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loved, the eromenos on the right. The erastes stands
with knees bent and arms in what Beazley dubbed
the "up and down" position: with his left hand he
chucks the boy's chin, a kind of diversionary tactic
while the lowered right hand zeroes in on its tar-
goal. Once, on an amphora by Lydos in Nicosia,6
the boy blocks the wooer's reach with a protective
gesture, but most often his only defensive reaction
is to grasp the older man's raised left wrist.7 Oftlen
in scenes of group alpha, including that on the
Nicosia amphora, the composition is completed by
the addition of dancing nude men on either side of
the central pair, to heighten the sense of excite-
ment.8

Beazley's group beta depicts the giving of love
gifts, which may be held either by the erastes or
their recipient, depending upon the exact moment
chosen in the encounter. In most cases the gift is a
gamecock, though hares are second in popularity
and several other animals, including dogs, stags,
even panther cubs, occur as well. On the front and
back of an amphora in Providence, for example
(pl. 24, figs. 2-3),9 an overzealous wooer bestows
a virtual bestiary of gifts on his young eromenos.

The significance of the cock as the standard love
gift may go beyond its practical value—cock-fight-
ing was a favorite game among the adolescent boys
who received such gifts—to assume a deliberately
erotic connotation. This is the apparent implica-
tion, for example, of a pyxis lid by the Eretria
Painter in Worcester, Massachusetts, on which
gamecocks are released from the hands of two
youthful Erotes.10 In addition, the cock's age-old
reputation as the exemplar of virile masculinity
among birds would bear a special relevance in the
present context.

6 Nicosia C 440; ABV 109,28; Beazley (supra n. 2) pl. 1.
7 This is illustrated on the Würzburg amphora, pl. 24, fig. 1.
8 On a fragmentary thurible in Boston, the youth defends himself
by grasping the wooer's lowered right hand; Boston 18,311;
ABV 454; GH B 342.
9 For example, the amphora Munich 1468; ABV 315-31; AA
1965, 856.
10 Providence 13,1479; ABV 314-6; G.F. Pinney and B.S.
Ridgway, eds., Aspects of Ancient Greece (Allentown 1979)
34-5.
11 Worcester 1936-148; ABV 159-33; Worcester Art Mu-
seum Annual 2 (1936) 28-31. The date is late fifth cent,
but as early as the mid-sixth, scenes of cock-fighting and
homosexual courtship occur together on a black-figure plate: Berlin
inv. 3627; ABV 90, 6; D. Callipolitis-Feytman, Les plats attiques à figures noires (Paris 1974) pl. 53,11. On the sexual
Group gamma represents the culmination of the
encounter, with man and youth intertwined. In
similar scenes on either side of a mid-sixth century
amphora in London (pl. 25, figs. 4 and 5),11 an
embracing couple in the center is surrounded by
other pairs of lovers who are still at the alpha or
beta stage. For the erastes the sexual climax is
reached interurally, that is, by rubbing his penis
between the thighs of the boy. As several scholars
have remarked,12 courtship scenes never become
more explicit than this, in striking contrast to the
relatively common and quite explicit scenes of het-
ervesexual intercourse on Attic vases, a point to
which I shall return later.13

The chronology and frequency of courtship
scenes, starting in about 560 B.C., have been care-
fully worked out. Using Beazley's lists, with a few
more recent additions, Jiří Frel tabulated the fol-
lowing figures by quarter century: 12 representa-
tions belonging to the second quarter of the sixth
century; 59 in the third quarter; 57 in the last quar-
ter, of which about half comprise a group of hastily
mass-produced skyphoi designated by Beazley the
CHC Group, because each has a courtship and a
chariot scene; and only nine for the years after 500,
mostly red-figure.14 The very latest fall in the de-
decade of the 470s and include a fine cup by the Iry-
gos Painter in Oxford (pl. 25, fig. 6)15 and a frag-
mentary pelike in Mykonos by the Triptolemos
Painter.16

Thus the florisue of courting scenes occupies the
years ca. 550-500, when Attic black-figure itself
reached its acme and then went into decline, in
quality though not quantity. Some iconographic
differences between earlier and later courtship
assessments of cock-fighting see also Herbert Hoffmann, "Hahn-
enkampf in Athen, zur Homologie einer attischen Bildformel,"
11 British Museum W 30; ABV 297-16.
12 Jiří Frel, "Kunstgeschichte," Archaische 6 (1973) 67, somewhat modified in GH 5
85.
13 See also GH 98-99 and infra p. 136.
14 Jiří Frel, "Griechischer Erotik," Lity Filologické 86 (1963)
61-62. The numbers would be greater with the additions made
by Schauenburg (supra n. 4), but the distribution roughly the
same.
15 Oxford 1967-394; Pandekomena 566.
16 ABV 2 362,21; C. Dugas, Déllos 21 (Paris 1952) pl. 37;
GH 8932. The scene on the reverse is not by the Triptolemos
Painter, but by the Flying Angel Painter; ABV 260,48.
scenes were first pointed out by Friis Johansen.\(^{17}\) By the late sixth century the erastes is often a beardless youth himself, and his eromenos also appears younger, sometimes barely pubescent. Both are now regularly at least partly draped, instead of entirely nude as before. The shifts are not absolute, however. The erastes on the late cup in Oxford (pl. 25, fig. 6) is mature, muscular and bearded, and his eromenos is quite naked.

Armed with this relatively precise chronology and rather neat typology of courting scenes, I should like to try to examine their origin, popularity, and decline and disappearance, as well as certain iconographic features, against the background of Athenian social and political history in this nearly 100-year period. This is not to say that the vases can always be treated as historical documents, rather than as works of art governed by purely artistic conventions, though they are often accurate reflections of daily life.\(^{18}\)

We cannot, for example, infer that because courtship scenes were first represented in Attic art in the second quarter of the sixth century, pederasty, as it became institutionalized in Athens, did not exist before this period. On the contrary, various sources, especially Aischines, attribute to the lawgiver Solon, in the early sixth century, legislation on male prostitution and homosexuality which presupposes certain well-established mores.\(^{19}\) Specifically, Aischines cites a law forbidding a slave to have a free-born youth as his eromenos or to undress or anoint himself at the palaistra, where such liaisons were probably most often formed. The intent of the law, as Plutarch (Solon 1.3) interpreted it, was "to incite the worthy to that which he forbade the unworthy," i.e. to encourage the pederastic relationship among citizen men and youths.

In his other metier, as Athens' earliest melic poet, Solon also attests to, and celebrates, the love of beautiful boys, in a single elegiac distich:

\["Εσθήσοι εραστήν εις ἰδικίον παιδοφιλίᾳ μηδὲν ἴμηρον καὶ γλυκερὸν στόματος."\]

Until in the lovely flower of youth he loves a boy,
Desiring the thighs and sweet lips.

We can, then, be reasonably certain that by the beginning of the sixth century (and possibly much earlier), the erastes-eromenos relationship was well established and generally accepted.

It remains to ask why these encounters are not documented in vase-painting before about 560. One thing seems likely, that the artistic formula of courtship scenes, at least of group alpha, was not invented by an Athenian artist or at this time. A vase found at Arkhades on Crete and now in Heraklion, dated to the late seventh century, shows a man wooing a woman, his arms in precisely Beazley's up and down position.\(^{20}\) It would seem, then, that an old artistic type was taken over by Attic painters to introduce into their repertoire representations of a long-established activity, some time not long before the middle of the sixth century. But why, and why then?

A date around 560 corresponds closely with the rise to power in Athens of the tyrant Peisistratos, whose first tyrant probably began in 561. This synchronism may in itself have little meaning, but it is perhaps more significant that the roughly half-century of Peisistratid rule (carried on by the tyrant's sons after his death in 528/7) is very nearly coextensive with the period of development and greatest popularity of courtship scenes.\(^{21}\)

Unlike most tyrants elsewhere in Greece, Peisistratos made it part of his benevolent policies to foster good relations with the old noble families of Attica, and in Athenian society the Peisistratids ap-

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17 K. Friis Johansen, "Attic Motives on Clazomenian Sarcophagi," From the Collections of the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek 3 (1942) 131.
18 Cf. the caveat set forth by Dover: "We do not know the attitude of the vase's owner to the painting on it, or what relation between painting and life was acceptable to him" ("Eros and Nomos," BICS 15 [1964] 40, n. 12). See also Dover's comments in GH 8.
19 The sources for Solon's law on pederasty are collected by E. Ruschenbusch, ΣΩΛΩΝΟΣ ΝΟΜΟΙ (Wiesbaden 1966) 97. Elsewhere (p. 55), Ruschenbusch argues for the somewhat extreme view that, whenever Attic orators refer to Solonian laws, the attribution is always unfounded and usually wrong. In this instance at least, Plutarch (Solon 1.6) and others all agree with Aischines in ascribing the same legislation to Solon.
20 Fragment 25 (Weck).
21 A. S. Long 10.12 (1937–39) 340, fig. 443d; GH CE33. The pair is often identified as Theseus and Ariadne, e.g. by A. von Salis, THESEUS AND ARIADNE (Berlin 1930) 9–11.
22 The whole period 561–511 is here referred to for convenience as Peisistratid, although the tyrant spent most of the early years in exile, before firmly establishing his rule, probably in 546. For a recent treatment of the problems of Peisistratid chronology, see J. Hind, "The Tyrannicide and the Exiles of Peisistratus," CQ 24 (1974) 11–18.
peared to some extent more as the first family among a prosperous nobility than as autocratic rulers. It is to precisely these leisureed, urban upper-class families that the *erastai* and *eremonoi* belong.23

There seems little doubt that the love relationship (as opposed to homosexual activity *per se*) was limited, by practical considerations of leisure time and the wealth that creates it, to the upper stratum of society. Though a man of good family may have owned property in the outlying demes of Attica, as Peisistratos did at Brauron, it was in Athens where his life was centered: civic and political life in the Agora; religious life on the Akropolis; and physical and intellectual life at the gymnasion and palestra, which served equally as the focal points for the education of the young. The vases testify to the high social status of *erastai* and *eremonoi* and to their predilection for urban places of exercise. On one side of the well-known cup by Peithinos in Berlin (pl. 26, figs. 7-10),24 for example, youths with incipient beards court younger boys amid all the paraphernalia of the gymnasion: sponges, strigils and small aryballoi which contained oil. Here, as in many earlier black-figure scenes (cf. pl. 24, fig. 1), the elaborate coiffures of the boys, as well as the wreaths and fillets they wear, mark them out as the youth of the upper class, the same boys who are praised as *kalos* in many vase inscriptions. For them the courtship was "a characteristic feature of the daily life of the fêted jeunesse dorée."25

The seemingly ubiquitous popularity of homosexual courting implied by this apt description and

23 On Peisistratos' good relations with the nobility see AchPol 16.5. Plato's *Symposium* ( Symposium 182B-C) says that (homosexual) love was discouraged in Ionia and other areas ruled by tyrants. But I believe he is wrong about the more enlightened tyrannies of Peisistratos and Polyeuktos of Samos.

24 Berlin 2379; *ARV* 115.2. The date is about 500, but anything that might be said about the setting and the figures, except for the garments they wear, would be true of many earlier scenes. What is, of course, exceptional about the vase is the opposition of the courtship scene on side A with that on side B, in which young men converse with girls. See infra n. 29.

25 Fritz Jahnsson (supra n. 17) 66.

26 Dover (supra n. 12) 66. On the question to what extent homosexual behavior was a lasting orientation or only an adolescent phase, see G. Devereux, "Greek Pseudo-homosexuality and the Greek Miracle," *SymPosio* 42 (1967) 69-92.

27 For example, a bawdy black-figure fragment of the mid-sixth century from the Akropolis: B. Graef and E. Langlotz, *Die antiken Vasen von der Akropolis zu Athen* 1 (Berlin 1925) pl. 85, no. 1639. On the cover of a white-ground, black-figure by the vases themselves contrasts with the relative scarcity of male/female encounters on late sixth century vases. The nature of Athenian society simply precluded romantic relationships between young men and women. The situation is well summed up by Dover: "Money may have enabled the adolescent boy to have plenty of sexual intercourse with girls of alien or servile status, but it could not give him the satisfaction . . . of being welcomed for his own sake by a sexual partner of equal status. This is what the Greek boy was offered by homosexual relations."

28 Here again the vases do seem accurately to illustrate a real-life situation. Explicit erotic scenes of men and women are especially popular on late Archaic red-figure vases, though they first occur much earlier. As Otto Brendel pointed out,29 starting about 530 erotic themes often form part of banquet or symposium iconography. The men may be wealthy, cultivated gentlemen, but the women are *hetairai*, slaves or foreigners hired for the occasion, often as flute players, for group entertainment and private enjoyment. Their profession and social status are regularly indicated by close-cropped hair, nudity (unthinkable for a respectable woman in this period), and, on close inspection, often a noticeably tired and shopworn look. Such erotic scenes are pornography in its literal sense, pictures of *pornoi* (prostitutes), and a certain element of deliberate fantasy seems apparent in the grotesque positions the participants sometimes assume.30

In homosexual courtship scenes, however, our same Athenian gentleman is paired with a youth of comparable free-born citizen status and equal

29 Cf. the cup Louvre G13; *ARV* 85; Brendel (supra n. 25) fig. 20. Brendel (p. 32) argues that some of these women, though prostitutes, may nevertheless have attained some of the "virtues of higher cultivation" and "the attraction of worldly refinement." He further argues that the girls who converse with boys on side B of the Peithinos cup (see supra n. 24: *GH* R1960) are the equals in social status of their companions. At the same time, though, the scene is hardly pornographic, and the girls are not *hetairai*. In fact the young men with them are far more reticent than the youths courting boys on side A (pl. 26, figs. 7-10). It is hard to imagine where the scene on side B could take place—perhaps at a religious festival, one of the few occasions on which a respectable girl might be seen in public.
social class. Favors are won with token gifts, rather than money, and the encounter takes place, at least in its initial stages, in a public place. It is, accordingly, governed by a keen sense of dignity and an almost mannered propriety, no doubt fostered and perpetuated by artistic convention.80

If we are to believe ancient biographers and collectors of anecdotes, virtually every prominent Athenian of the sixth and fifth centuries was involved in homoerotic liaisons at some time in his life, whether in his youth as the eromenos of some distinguished man, or later on as the erastes of a notable beauty, or often both. According to Plutarch (Solon 1.2), Solon was passionately in love with the young Peisistratos, to whom he was also related, on their mothers' side. Peisistratos, in turn, became the erastes of a youth called Charmos and at that time dedicated a statue of Eros in the Academy (Plutarch, Solon 1.4).81 And so it goes, down to the early fifth century, when Themistocles and Aristides were rivals for the same boy (Plutarch, Themistocles 3); and to the latter part of the century, with Sophokles philomorfoi,82 Sokrates the eromenos of his teacher Archelaos (Xenophon, Memorabilia 2.6.28) and sometime erastes of Alkibiades; and, in the best documented Athenian homosexual "marriage,"83 (a somewhat different phenomenon from the usual relationship), the playwright Agathon and Pausanias in Plato's Symposium (193B).

Why, then, are courtship scenes limited to a roughly 85-year segment of these two centuries, and what was it in the intellectual and political climate of Athens under the Peisistratids that made the courtship seem a fitting, even a favorite subject for the vase-painter's art?

Peisistratos and his sons were well known as patrons of the arts at a time when Athens experienced a marked commercial prosperity necessary for the enjoyment of such luxuries. In particular Hipparchos, the younger son of Peisistratos, interested himself in the arts and appears almost to have acted as an unofficial "minister of culture" under the rule of his elder brother Hippias after their father's death. Among the activities associated with this noble, whom Aristotle (Ath.Pol. 18.1) described as παιδικός καὶ τραπεζικός καὶ φιλόμορφος (playful, amorous, and cultivated), are the institution of recitations from Homer at the Panathenaic Games, the beginning of construction of the Olympieion, and the invitation to Athens of celebrated poets from other parts of the Greek world. In addition, Hipparchos himself wrote poetry, including a series of epigrams said to have been inscribed on boundary stones in Attica.84 Perhaps one of his couples was inscribed on the three-headed herm which the historian Philochorus said was set up by Hipparchos' erastes Prokleides.85

It is also no coincidence that the third quarter of the sixth century—the Peisistratids now at their height—saw first the high point of black-figure vase-painting, with Lydos, Exekias and the Amasis Painter, then the invention of the red-figure technique. The Athenian ceramic industry was a commercial success, exporting east and west, with great artists encouraged by prosperous and appreciative patrons. And this wealth of talent was matched by a rich variety of themes and depth of insight.

To see how courtship scenes fit into this artistic Weltanschauung, we must first go back a few decades. The most immediate inspiration for the appearance of these scenes on vases may be sought in the lyric poetry of Archaic Greece. The refined, aristocratic and essentially frivolous mood of the finest courtling scenes is that exact visual counterpart of the pederastic Greece composed by some of the best known elegiac and lyric poets of the sixth century. We have already heard Solon extolling the love of a beautiful boy.86 A much fuller expression of this sentiment is to be found among the verses attributed to Theognis, in the mid-sixth century,87 and about his eromenos Kyros.

A native of the nearby city of Megara, Theognis and his poetry were surely known in Athens, and archon of 496/5. He finds it plausible that this Charmos was married to a daughter of Hippias, and thus named his son after the boy's great uncle.

80 The epithet is recorded by Athenaeus 13.603E.
81 The phrase is Dover's, (supra n. 12) 72, n. 37.
82 (Plato), Hipparchos 218C.
83 Quoted by Suidas, s.v. πραγμα.
84 infra p. 138.
85 Suidas puts its form in the 59th Olympiad (544-541).

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his probable presence there at some time in his youth is attested by the inscription Θέανικας καλὸς Γαύρος, on a black-figure lip cup dated to the 550s and now in Palermo. Though amorous, Theognis' tone is at the same time consistently that of a conservative and slightly stuffy aristocrat, and much of the verse addressed to the youth which is not erotic contains rather long-winded admonitions about the character and behavior of a true gentleman. In a lighter moment of reverie, the poet described the "good life" of a gentleman of leisure (1335-36):

"Ολήθρος, διότι ἐπὶ γυαλὶ ηλικοῖ όμοίαν θαλάθων ἐν τοῖς ἐνηλίκοις παιδί παιδὶ γαύρην ἔπεισθα.

Happy the man while in love takes exercise, then comes home to sleep all day with a beautiful boy.

The interrelation of the gymnasion and the bedroom, reflected in so many courtship scenes, is interesting at this early date. But the essential nature of the courtship as a pastime of the upper class and as the chief instrument of the well-bred boy's initiation into manhood is epitomized in the relationship of Theognis and Kyrnos.

If Theognis' approach to romance seems at times a bit heavy-handed, the little century Athens was penetrated by a much different, Ionic spirit coming from East Greece, exemplified in the person of another lyric poet, Anakreon.

Peisistratos maintained cordial relations with the Ionian cities of Asia Minor and the islands of the eastern Aegean, and was particularly conscious of reaffirming Athens' ancestral ethnic ties with the Ionian Greeks. He installed his friend Lygdamis as tyrant of Naxos, after Lygdamis had aided in Peisistratos' second return from exile (Hdt. 1.61-64). Peisistratos' purification of the island of Delos (Hdt. 1.64), the most holy cult center of Ionian Greece, symbolized Athens' allegiance to Apollo, chief patron of the Ionian race.

The dichotomy between Ionian and Dorian pervaded almost every aspect of Greek life, from important matters of cult down to matters of temperament, social behavior and dress. The tradition that Athenian women gave up wearing the Doric peplos and adopted the Ionian chiton and himation some time in the sixth century probably had more cultural significance than Herodotos' amusing anecdote would suggest.88

One of Peisistratos' alliances was probably with Samos, under the rule of the tyrant Polykrates.69 When Anakreon came to Athens in 522, at the invitation of Hipparchos, he had already spent a number of years at Polykrates' court where, under tyrannical patronage, he had established his reputation as a refined and witty voluptuary with an avid interest in beautiful boys, all qualities shared by Polykrates himself. The poet was originally from Teos, north of Ephesos on the coast of Asia Minor, where he was born about 570. As a young man, he had emigrated to the new colony of Abdera in Thrace for a period, after having first been summoned to Samos to give Polykrates' young son music lessons.40 His second sojourn on Samos was abruptly ended by the assassination of his tyrant-patron.

Thus Anakreon arrived in Athens a middle-aged man at the height of his fame. More than any other of the Archaic lyric poets he was associated with the carefree world of wine, women and song —only in addition to women there were boys. Cicero (Tusculan Disputations 4.71) states drily, "nam Anacreontis quiadem tota poesis est amatotus' comment (5.69) that Kleisthenes, head of the Alkmeneid family which helped overthrow the tyrants, looked down on the Ionians and changed the names of the Attic tribes specifically so that they should not be the same as those the Ionians used.

Peisistratos' ally Lygdamis of Naxos had aided in the accession to power of Polykrates on Samos. See A. Andrews, The Greek Tyrants (London 1955) 112, 118.

The chronology and sequence of events are worked out by J.P. Barron, "The Sixth Century Tyranny at Samos," CQ 14 (1964) 321. According to Suidas, Anakreon was born in the 52nd Olympiad (572-570), and Barron prefers the earliest possible date, 572. On the dates of Anakreon's sojourns on Samos see also M.L. West, CQ 20 (1970) 307-308 and B.M. Mitchell, HJS 95 (1975) 80.
ria." There is, in fact, extant a hymn to Artemis (fr. 1 Gentili) which is perhaps the exception that proves the rule.

Apparently Anakreon, like most Greeks, was eclectic and interested in women as well as boys. The pitifully scanty fragments that survive include one addressed to a woman probably playing hard to get as "Thracian silly" (fr. 78 Gentili), and another concerns the poet's interest in a girl from Lesbos. But the numerous comments and anecdotes about the poet preserved in later writers refer again and again to his infatuations with one boy or another, never with women. Maximus of Tyre (24.9) catalogues the objects of Anakreon's extravagant praise: the hair of Smerdes, the eyes of Kleoeboulos, the youth of Batyllos. The most celebrated and often-repeated of the anecdotes concerns Anakreon's rivalry with Polyrates for a youth with especially beautiful hair (perhaps Smerdes'). The tyrant out of spite had the boy's hair cut off, and Anakreon responded by writing a poem in which he cleverly refrained from accusing his patron, but instead reproached the boy, with mock indignation, for taking up arms against his own hair.48

While Anakreon did not, of course, introduce pederasty into Athens from East Greece, he did, one can imagine, capture the fancy of Athenian high society—the circle of aristocratic men around Hipparchos—with the Ionian hair and sophistication with which he pursued this pastime and glorified it in poetry. His strongest romantic attachment during these years in Athens, recorded in a late source, was with a youth named Kritias, a member of one of the oldest noble families in Athens, which numbered among its members Solon and, two centuries later, Plato.49

At the same time he was enjoying the favor of the tyrants, Anakreon apparently won the hearts of the Athenian demos as well, for we find him again in Athens after the fall of the Peisistratids, even into the 480s, at the end of his long life.50 By the mid-fifth century, his memory was so beloved that a statue of him was set up on the Akropolis, beside that of his friend Xanthippos, the father of Perikles and hero of the battle of Mykal, in 479.51

Along with the elite and the common people, Anakreon caught the fancy of many vase-painters in Athens, and three labelled representations of the poet on vases made during his lifetime survive.52 In addition, nearly thirty other red-figure vases, many painted after Anakreon's death, show a bearded lyre-player in a long Ionic chiton, himation and sakkos, accompanied by similarly dressed male companions, whom Beazley tentatively identified as the poet himself with his "boon companions."53 If these figures are not actually Anakreon and his friends, they are nevertheless portrayed, in their costume, as "revellers of the good old days,"54 Athenians affecting the orientalized clothing and accessories no doubt worn and made fashionable by Anakreon and perhaps other Ionian visitors to Athens. Beazley believed that these men, who often carry parasols and occasionally wear earrings, were dressing up as women. But recently Keith DeVries has pointed out that the various elements of the costume all occur on men of the Near East, especially Lydians and Lycians, and were undoubtedly adopted from them by the Ionian Greeks.55

in Copenhagen: G. Hafner, "Anakreon und Xanthippus," Jd 71 (1956) 1-28. The figure seems in no way an attempt at an accurate likeness of the poet, but is instead idealized—in the heroic nudity and facial features—and "perikleanized,"—in the shorter hair and bearded fashionable in Athens by the mid-fifth century. Thus it bears no relation to the vase representations of Anakreon made during his lifetime.

45. chap. by Keates, London E18; ARV4 62,65; K. Schefold, Die Bildnisse antiker Dichter, Redner, und Denker (Bassel 1943) 51, figs. 1 and 2; 2, lekythos by the Gales Painter, Syracuse 29657; ARV4 36,21; Scheil, p. 51 bottom; 1, calyx-krater fragments, Copenhagen 13365; ARV4 185,131; Jd 69 (1969) pl. 42.

46. L.D. Caskey and J.D. Beazley, Attic Vase Paintings in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston ii (Boston 1954) 56-60.

47. Beazley (supra n. 43) 57.
48. E.g., on a krater, Cleveland 36,549; ARV4 36,93; CVA pl. 25-86.
There is, then, no reason to think that the "Anakreontic" costume was regarded as effeminate, much less transvestite, by Athenians of the late sixth century. It simply looked exotic and foreign, and partly for that reason so appealed to vase-painters. There is also no necessary connection between the poet's homosexual interests and his adoption of an appearance that might look at some periods and to some eyes effeminate. To suggest that would risk imposing a peculiarly modern prejudice on an ancient society. And in any case, Ionian δρότης and τρυφεία (softness, luxuriousness, effeminacy) were always well known to, and occasionally mocked or criticized by, the rest of the Greek world without any specific reference to sexual mores.

Nevertheless, though Anakreontic vases in general give no indication of the erotic interests of the revellers, this element is explicitly alluded to on the important black-figure eye-cup recently acquired by the Ashmolean Museum, the so-called Bomford Cup. Around a central Gorgoneion in the tondo, six male revellers recline on couches, three dressed in Anakreontic style (pl. 27, fig. 11). A lyre hangs in the background, and one of the men plays a double pipe. Another threatens a young nude attendant, who holds an oinochoe for serving the wine, with a sandal. The erotic and (in a mild form) sadomasochistic connotations of beating someone with a sandal in Archaic art are confirmed by other vase representations. And in this instance, that association, as well as the mood of the whole gathering, is betrayed by the cup's other singular feature: the foot on which it rests is moulded into the shape of a penis. The date of the Bomford Cup is about 520, the period of Anakreon's first stay in Athens. Its grand proportions (34 cm. diameter), the subject of the interior, and the rare and witty plastic feet all make one wonder if it was not a special commission, occasioned by an elite drinking party. Perhaps the host was Hipparchos himself, with the recently arrived, celebrated Ionian poet entertaining the guests with a selection of his erotic verse.

Such a suggestion is perhaps fanciful. But in more general terms, I think that in the late sixth century there surely existed a conscious connection between the cultivated Ionian manners and mores epitomized in Anakreon and those of an eastward looking Athenian aristocracy under the Tyrants, among whom a playful paederasty was an important component of daily life, and of art.

The refinement and polished wit of this Athenian/Ionian outlook (as seen, for example, in Hipparchos' παράκλησις και έρωτικό και φιλομανόν) are the keys to distinguishing it from the brand of male homosexuality current in Dorian Greek states, such as Sparta and Crete, and in Thebes. In these areas, paederasty was essentially a feature of the local form of military organization, often dictated and regulated by law. So, for example, on Crete a man and boy were paired initially for a period of two months together (Ephebos fr. 64), and in Sparta, where the relationship started when the boy was twelve, the lover was legally responsible for his upbringing and could be punished for the boy's shortcomings (Plutarch, Lycurgus 17A; 18E). The Theban Sacred Band based its military success on made fun of, Agathon replies that a poet should dress with Ionian refinement, like Bykos, Anakreon and Alkaios. (Bykos, though originally from South Italy, also settled, like Anakreon, at the court of Polykrates on Samos.) Having gone out of fashion several generations before, the Anakreontic outfit might well have seemed to the late fifth century audience strangely anachronistic and, especially on Agathon, effeminate.

See, for example, Xenophanes 3.


87 Listed by Boardman (supra n. 54) 286-87. See also Herbert Hoffmann, Sexual and Artistic Pursuit (Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, Occasional Paper 34. 1977) 9, n. 27, who suggests that on red-figure vases the sandal is a symbol of homosexual pederia. 88 Boardman (supra n. 54) 287, lists three other examples of a penis-footed cup. Two of the three have scenes of love-making, albeit heterosexual.
the principle that men fight most bravely when in the sight of their lovers. In short, the role in society of pederasty and the attitude toward it in the Dorian city-states, as opposed to the Ionian (including Athens), may be seen as but one characteristic manifestation of the fundamental difference in spirit and way of life summarized by Perikles in his famous comparison of Athens and Sparta (Thuc. 2.37 ff).27 Φιλοκαλοῦμεν τε γάρ μετ' ευτελεοῦ και φιλοσοφοῦμεν ἄνεν μαλακίας.

It should be stressed that the cultural influences did not always move from east to west, from Ionia to Athens, but could rather have been mutual and reciprocal. If love poetry about boys was more an Ionian and Aiolian tradition than an Attic one,28 in the visual arts it was the Athenians who were the innovators. When Anakreon came to Athens, the courtship motif in vase-painting was already forty years old, and at about this time we find the same subject, no doubt inspired from Athens, on the painted terracotta sarcophagi of Kloxomennai, on the coast of western Asia Minor just across a narrow peninsula from Anakreon’s birthplace of Teos.29

It was, ironically, an amorous intrigue of the playful Hipparchos that backfired and, as most later Greeks believed, precipitated the fall of the tyranny in Athens. In this instance, the object of his affection was the youth Harmodios, who rebuffed the advances of Hipparchos and remained faithful to his erwteis, Aristogeiton. Hipparchos retaliated by insulting Harmodios’ sister, and the whole affair ended with the lovers plotting the murder of the tyrant Hippias but instead, at the last minute, cutting down Hipparchos himself on the day of the Panathenais.30 This was in 514, and three or four years later Hippias was deposed, making way for the establishment of a democracy under Kleisthenes.

The actual role of the Tyrannicides in the overthrow of Peisistratid rule and the propagandistic value of their deed in subsequent generations are problematical and cannot be fully explored here.31 It is clear, however, that they very quickly became known as heroes and martyrs of the new democracy and were honored with statues in the Agora and were carried off by the Persians and replaced by a new pair in 477. One might almost expect that a new glamour and distinction would have attached to the homosexual love relationship on account of these patriotic exemplars, but the only evidence for this comes from a later period.32 The democratic supporters of Kleisthenes will have fostered the (probably false) belief that the Tyrannicides’ motive had been political from the start, as Brunnsäker has argued,33 and thus played down

was composing love poems to boys in the late seventh and early sixth centuries; see GH 195.

28 Fris Johansen (supra n. 17). He dates a sarcophagus in Berlin (inv. 30.103; fig. 1-3) with courting pairs of youth to the middle years of the last quarter of the sixth century (p. 128). Interestingly, Ionia was perhaps not the only area where Attic courtship scenes inspired imitation. The fragmentary interior of a Laconian cup recently excavated at Cerveteri shows a nude man and youth facing each other, each holding a hunting spear. C.M. Sibbe, who published the fragments and dates them 550-40, believes the scene is a Laconian variant of the Attic courtship type, though missing certain standard features, such as the woman’s bent knees and outstretched arms, and adding the hunting motif (there is also a dog behind each figure) so characteristic of Laconian ware: “Neue Fragmente lakonischer Schale aus Cerveteri,” Meded 38 (1927) 7-10 and pl. 1. I owe this reference to Christoph Claimont.

29 The story is most fully told by Thucydides, 1.19 and 6.54-57. Aristotle, AthPol 18, states that it was Thetatalos, the younger brother of Hippias and Hipparchos, who fell in love with Harmodios.


31 In the mid-fourth century, Aischines (1.135) suggests that Harmodios and Aristogeiton might be held up as examples of the virtues instilled by homosexual love.

32 Brunnsäker (supra n. 61) 26-27. By the same token, he
the slightly sordid private affair. This is the tradition reflected by Herodotos, who does not refer to the romantic quarrel narrated at length by Thucydides.

The ostensible purpose of this gentle distortion was to elevate, in the eyes of the Athenian demos, the status of this pair of heroes, whom some same democrats had taken the initiative of honoring with the statues and with free maintenance in the Prytaneion for their descendants. But perhaps the followers of Kleisthenes were also a bit embarrassed by the relationship of Harmodios and Aristogeiton if, as I believe, they were inclined to disparage the institution of paederasty because of its association with the old aristocracy that flourished under the Tyrants: not that the institution ceased in 510, any more than it had begun in 560. But the sharp decrease in courtship scenes from the end of the sixth century could well reflect a change in popular sensibility which made depictions of this upper class activity less acceptable in an essentially popular art form. A parallel phenomenon is suggested by the disappearance from vase-painting of scenes of hunting on horseback, clearly an aristocratic pastime, after the late sixth century. And in a similar, but more official, manner, a sumptuary law put an end to the elaborately carved grave

argues, the oligarchic opposition to Kleisthenes and the friends of the Peisistratids will have minimized the political importance of the Tyrannicide’s deed, a view picked up by Thucydides. 64. By contrast, scenes of heterosexual love-making, relatively rare before 500, are most popular in the first quarter of the fifth century, in the work of such painters as Douris, the Brygos Painter, and the Brygos Painter, before they abruptly stop, about 470.

68 See J.K. Anderson, Ancient Greek Horsemanship (Berkeley 1961) 100-101, pl. 30c illustrates a typical example of a mounted deer-hunt in the pedastyle of a black-figure hydria of ca. 520 (Louvre F 294; ARV 256,18). The body of the vase shows Hercules about to mount a chariot in which Athina holds the reins, a scene with distinct Peisistratid associations; see John Boardman, “Herkules, Peisistratos, and Sons,” RA 1972, 57-72. For an exceptional red-figure mounted hunting scene, see Konrad Schauenburg, Jagdwiedergaben auf griechischen Vasen (Hamburg 1969) pl. 17: mesomphalische phiale, Berlin (East) 3311.

69 The decree, for which only the reference in the ancient sources is Cicerno, de leg. 2.56,44, has been connected at different times with Kleisthenes (ca. 490) and Themistokles (ca. 487). See H. Hille, ionische Grabreliefs der ersten Hälfte des 5. Jahrhunderts v. Chr. (Tübingen 1975) 15-16.


64 This at least was the interpretation of Aischines, 1.142. 69 Olympian 1.36 ff. See GH 198.

68 Naples 3152; ARV 275.60. Fred (supra n. 14) 63 tabulated the frequency of Ganymede scenes as follows: 19 in the first quarter of the fifth century; none of them earlier than ca. 485; 14 in the second quarter, plus five in which Hermes is the pursuer instead of Zeus; and six in the third quarter, which Fred calls “nur ein Nachklang.” He attributes the disappearance of courtship scenes to the same sort of anti-aristocratic and anti-tyrannical sentiment I have suggested, only he connects it with the “Polieisgünstigkeit” of the Athenian democracy under Perikles (63-64). But in fact the noticeable falling off of courtship scenes several decades before the rise of Perikles indicates that the same objections already existed in the Kleistheneic period, when the memory of Peisistratid tyranny was most fresh. The evidence of Fred’s figures showing the Ganymede scenes on the wane after the mid-century suggests that during the radical democracy of Perikles, perhaps even these, in mythological guise, were too transparent an analogy to the old courtships (cf. Theognis likening himself and his companion to Zeus and Ganymedes, 1345-50) for the new egalitarian spirit in Athens.

71 Boston 93.311; ARV 443,3,2; Caskey and Beazley (supra n. 48) II pl. 71; Boston 13.04; ARV 570,30; GH R605; Berlin 2305; ARV 450,31; JdI 71 (1956) 120. All three are cups. The youths in these scenes have sometimes been called Zephyros and Hyakinthos, e.g. by Beazley (supra n. 2) 31, and most recently by S. Kästing-Dimitriadou, Die Liebe der Götter in der attischen Kunst des 5. Jahrhunderts v. Chr., AntK Bellett
As Brendel and others have observed, erotic scenes of any sort are very rare in Attic vase-painting between 470 and 400, and there are virtually none datable to the first thirty years of that period. It seems, then, that the latest few courtship scenes, in the 470s, are not only the last in a series that had been gradually dwindling, for particular political reasons, for a quarter century; they are also, together with their contemporary heterosexual counterparts, the last representatives of essentially Archaic genres that found no place amid the restrained expression and self-consciously elevated ideals of Classical Greek art.

Isolated homosexual scenes occur in the late fifth century, including the curious one by the Dinos Painter recently and convincingly interpreted by von Blankenhagen. But there are no courtships. It is an irony typical of the fragmented state of our evidence about antiquity that the fullest and most reliable written documentation of the erastes-eromenos relationship is in the dialogues of Plato, set in a period when no courtship scenes had been painted in over half a century. Yet when we consider the way sexual mores now seem drastically to change in the space of a single generation, it is remarkable how nearly some late Archaic courting scenes (e.g. pl. 26, figs. 7-10) seem to illustrate the opening scenarios of the Charmides and Lysis, and capture their spirit. The setting in the palaistra; the well-dressed and well-coiffed boys and youths, all well-bred scions of good families; the shy modesty of the boys and polite deference of their wooers—all emerge equally clearly from both written and painted scene. And above all, both Plato and the vase-painters, along with Anakreon and Theognis, in their different expressions of this quintessentially Greek institution, share a disarming openness and unabashed joie-de-vivre that would confound centuries of our Christians.

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11 (1979) 16. That interpretation was rejected by Sichtermann, “Hyakinthos,” JHL 71 (1956) 121, A. Greifenhagen, Griechische Eroten (Berlin 1957) 79-80, and E. Vermeule, “Some Erotica in Boston,” AmK 12 (1969) 14. These three all take the winged youth to be Eros, but are unable to identify the object of his affections, who holds a lyre in two of the three scenes, with a particular mythological figure. That the pursuer is indeed Eros is, I think, confirmed by the other scenes of the same period which show him chasing a boy, e.g. an aryballos by Douris, Athens 15375: ARV² 447.74; Greifenhagen 59 (Eros holds a whip).

12 Brendel (supra n. 38) 29; Frel (supra n. 14) 62.

13 See supra p. 134 and pl. 25, fig. 6.
Fig. 4. London, amphora. (Courtesy British Museum)

Fig. 5. London, amphora

Fig. 6. Oxford, cup by the Brygos Painter. (Courtesy Ashmolean Museum)