

Reconsiderations About Greek Homosexualities

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SUMMARY. Focusing his analysis on (mostly Athenian) vase paintings of the sixth- and early fifth-century and on a handful of texts from the late fifth- and early fourth-century (again Athenian), Dover depicted the pederastic relationship of *erastes* (age 20 to 30) and *eromenos* (age 12-18) as defined by sexual roles, active and passive, respectively. This dichotomy he connected to other sexual and social phenomena, in which the active/penetrating role was considered proper for a male adult Athenian

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[Haworth co-indexing entry note]: "Reconsiderations About Greek Homosexualities." Percy, William Armstrong. Co-published simultaneously in *Journal of Homosexuality* (Harrington Park Press, an imprint of The Haworth Press, Inc.) Vol. 49, No. 3/4, 2005, pp. 13-61; and: *Same-Sex Desire and Love in Greco-Roman Antiquity and in the Classical Tradition of the West* (ed: Beert C. Verstraete, and Vernon Provencal) Harrington Park Press, an imprint of The Haworth Press, Inc., 2005, pp. 13-61. Single or multiple copies of this article are available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service [1-800-HAWORTH, 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. (EST). E-mail address: docdelivery@haworthpress.com].

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doi:10.1300/J082v49n03_02

citizen, while the passive/penetrated role was denigrated, ridiculed, and even punished. Constructing various social and psychological theories, Foucault and Halperin, along with a host of others, have extended his analysis, but at the core has remained the Dover dogma of sexual-role dichotomization. Penetration has become such a focal point in the scholarship that anything unable to be analyzed in terms of domination is downplayed or ignored.

To reduce homosexuality or same-sex behaviors to the purely physical or sexual does an injustice to the complex phenomena of the Greek male experience. From Sparta to Athens to Thebes and beyond, the Greek world incorporated pederasty into their educational systems. Pederasty became a way to lead a boy into manhood and full participation in the *polis*, which meant not just participation in politics but primarily the ability to benefit the city in a wide range of potential ways. Thus the education, training, and even inspiration provided in the pederastic relationship released creative forces that led to what has been called the Greek 'miracle.' From around 630 BCE we find the institution of Greek pederasty informing the art and literature to a degree yet to be fully appreciated. Moreover, this influence not only extends to the 'higher' realms of culture, but also can be seen stimulating society at all levels, from the military to athletic games, from philosophy to historiography. An understanding of sexual practices—useful, even essential, to an appreciation of Greek pederasty—cannot fully explicate its relationship to these other phenomena; pederasty is found in many societies, and certainly existed before the Greeks. It is time that we move beyond Dover and recover the constructive dynamics of Greek pederasty. [Article copies available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service: 1-800-HAWORTH. E-mail address: <docdelivery@haworthpress.com> Website: <<http://www.HaworthPress.com>> © 2005 by The Haworth Press, Inc. All rights reserved.]

KEYWORDS. Homosexualities, lustful, male beauty, pederasty, pedagogy, Cretan revolution, warfare, political institutions. literature, art, learning, Greek "miracle"

It seems to me that something must also be said about the love of boys; for this too has a bearing on education.

—Xenophon¹

PROLOGUE

Certain inconvenient facts have plagued classicists ever since the development of *Altertumswissenschaft* in the late 18th century.² Their heroes and models, the ancient Greek elites, unlike other highly cultured peoples, exercised nude together in gymnasia and dined and drank without ladies in symposia from the 7th century BCE until the triumph of Christianity in the 4th century CE. Throughout that millennium, the art that was funded and produced by Greek males—and was later to be so greatly admired by the classically educated western elites—was dominated by the male nude, usually idealized, and not infrequently sensualized, as testimony to which stands the surviving sculpture (mostly Roman copies), described so lovingly in the 18th century by Winckelmann in his three-volume masterpiece.³

In addition, from the Renaissance on, Greek literature became the cornerstone of classical education. This was the case even more so in England and Germany, where Romantics, such as Byron, Shelley, and Goethe, embraced homosexuality, than in the Latin lands of France and Italy, where cultural pride, as well as linguistic inheritance, naturally gave rise to a greater admiration for Rome.⁴ Yet, however one construes the love between Achilles and Patroclus in Homer⁵—“[m]ost ancient writers and commentators assumed Achilles and Patroclus were lovers in every sense of the word” (Clarke, 1978, p. 381) and quite possibly “Homer” conceived them that way as well⁶—explicit homoeroticism gushed from the poets of the seventh and sixth centuries BCE until at least the time of Hadrian, when Strato collected pederastic epigrams, including his own, into what now has become Book 12 of the *Greek Anthology*.⁷

Classicists long refused to acknowledge this fundamental aspect of Greek life.⁸ Just as the private parts of statues were ‘modestly’ covered over by curators—often for clerical collectors—offensive texts were routinely bowdlerized—often by professors trying to “protect” youths;⁹ translators either simply omitted the objectionable passages altogether, or translated them from Greek into Latin or from Latin into Italian rather than English. Monographs claimed that Greek love was pure, ‘platonically,’ except among a few degenerates.¹⁰

Boldly tackling the issue in 1873, John Addington Symonds concisely summarized *Altertumswissenschaft*’s findings about Greek pederasty in *A Problem in Greek Ethics*, which he privately published in ten copies (1883).¹¹ A century later, K. J. Dover (now Sir Kenneth), while hypercritically disregarding late sources, demolished Symonds’ heroic

interpretation, substituting in its place a denigration of Greek homosexuality, and concentrating on the physical and purely sexual aspects.¹² Yet both sides of this debate ignore crucial and well-documented aspects of Greek pederasty, thereby oversimplifying an enormously complex phenomenon.

An entire constellation of causes gave rise to Archaic Greek culture and, at the same time, to the intertwining of pederasty and pedagogy, which in turn augmented that flourishing. With all the other early civilizations, the Greeks shared slavery, the seclusion and oppression of women (although, unlike the Egyptian, and Hebraic and other Asiatic cultures, they were not polygamous), and the poverty of the masses. However, athletic nudity, all-male symposia, and delayed marriage for men were unique to Greek civilization.¹³ These unique elements, along with the absence of religious taboos so prominent in the Abrahamic religions, may go some way to explaining why, in general, Greek men formed pederastic relationships. With very little religious intolerance and an ever growing reliance on reason, only the Greeks supported constitutions, freedom, rights, and even at times democracy—all of these features significantly influenced by the special form that their pederasty took. Although several of the factors contributing to liberty and progress, such as the development of the city-state, a non-obtrusive religion, the absence of caste, and the perfected alphabet, appeared before pederastic pedagogy, the Greek 'miracle' only occurred after pederasty was institutionalized.

In this article, I attempt a nuanced compromise. I recognize both the reality of the raw lust illustrated on Dover's vases and in the seamy lawsuits he privileges, as well as the inspirational pedagogy that Symonds admired in this unique institution. The pederastic pedagogy that Symonds traced in Plutarch, Lucian, Athenaeus and in the Greek historians, as well as in the Archaic and Classical authors that Dover restricted himself to, began around 630 BCE and was essential for the Greek 'miracle,' but lustful homosexualities coexisted with it, indeed preexisted and postdated it.¹⁴ My goal is not only to demonstrate the centrality of institutionalized pederasty existing alongside other forms of homosexuality, or rather homosexualities,¹⁵ through three key centuries from the late seventh century to the death of Alexander in 323 BCE, but also to trace the changes in their literary, artistic, and historical aspects from generation to generation, as far as the admittedly skimpy evidence allows.¹⁶ Just as styles in art and literature changed along with fashions, carried in part by interactions with other peoples and greater understanding of the world in the general, so too did views about peder-

asty.¹⁷ What follows is not meant to be in any sense comprehensive, but rather tentative, suggestive, and selective; texts and issues have been chosen to suggest some new perspectives for discussion.

**PART I:
BEFORE 630—THE AGE OF HOMER**

While certain pre-Archaic artifacts have been interpreted as evidence for specific kinds of homosexual behavior, these interpretations are not beyond refutation. Items like the Minoan Chieftain Cup depicting a youth and a boy facing each other in military garb, or the Cretan bronze Kato Syme figurine consisting of a pair of age-differentiated ithyphallic warriors holding hands (7th or 8th century BCE), have been interpreted as providing early proof of pederasty, or of initiation rites in which pederasty was prominent (Koehl). However, they are not at all obviously androphilic or pederastic in the way later vase paintings are. Some authors, such as Sergent, Patzer, and Bremmer, conjecture, by stretching these meager hints found in the scarce remains from this earliest period, that those remote societies 'constructed' some form of homosexuality, specifically intergenerational or pederastic. Certainly there were homosexual practices to be found among the Minoans, Mycenaeans and Dark Age Greeks since, in general, practices of this sort are found to some degree among all peoples, as well as among many other species, and most especially among the higher mammals.¹⁸ However, explicit evidence of *paiderastia* first appears only after 630.¹⁹

We do find implicit evidence about kinds of homosexualities in the *Iliad*, but there are several reasons why that evidence must be treated with some caution. Through Milman Perry and Albert Lord's pioneering work we now feel reasonably confident that the stories Homer tells were handed down orally (possibly for centuries) before ever being written down, and even afterwards they did not achieve a finalized or authoritative edition until the Hellenistic period. The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* notoriously contain material from the Mycenaean through the Archaic eras, perhaps even later. Furthermore, many myths (and not just ones contained in the Homeric works) were later 'homosexualized' after the institutionalization of pederasty and athletic nudity c. 630.²⁰ Given all this it may seem strange that, as Symonds and others have observed, there is no explicit *paiderastia* in Homer.²¹ However, Symonds' error (and one widely shared) was his failure to realize that there does exist evidence for other types of homosexuality in Homer.

In book 20 of the *Iliad*, four verses appear about Ganymede, “handsomest of mortals, whom the gods caught up to pour out drink for Zeus and live amid mortals for his beauty’s sake” (*Il.* 20.232-35; cf. 5.265f.). Traditional elements, like the rape by an eagle, are missing, but the story is only mentioned in passing so one cannot say what version(s) Homer knows. Dover (1989) argues that “if the original form of the Ganymede legend represented him as eromenos of Zeus, Homer has suppressed this important fact” (p. 196). Doubtless any professional storyteller ‘suppresses’ many stories and many details he knows perfectly well, but that are not germane to the current tale unfolding. Certainly the erotic aspects of the story appear in the seventh-century *Hymn to Aphrodite* (ll. 202-6) and in a sixth-century fragment of the lyric poet Ibycus (fr. 289). Dover ponders the question why Zeus would want a boy based solely on his beauty, but fatuously quips that perhaps the gods “simply rejoiced in the beauty of their servants,” like Muslim men in paradise (Dover, 1989, p. 196), impishly implying that these servants were not (necessarily) bedmates. By such non-argument, the intergenerational sex presumed by virtually all later Greeks in the myth of Ganymede is summarily dismissed from the Homeric world.

Yet the Ganymede story, whatever the interpretation, does not fit the mold of the later pederastic relationship. Zeus did not teach Ganymede the *arete* (virtue, courage, excellence) of a man, for he would never grow up to fight heroically or to become a good citizen. Thus there was no *pedagogy* involved, though there was pederasty. Whatever boudoir tricks the god may have taught the immortal boy, Ganymede would remain forever in the bloom of youth, lingering unchanged in the world of pederastic fantasy as his adolescent beauty has captured the imaginations of poets and artists for millennia.²² The *puer aeternus*—the boy who remains eternally at the peak of his adolescent beauty—finds its reflex in the preoccupation of the modern pederast with photographing his *eromenos*,²³ as a Greek lover could not do, but sculptors of *kouroi* and painters could and did, so as to catch and preserve that evanescent quality for all time. Afterwards, the homoerotic potential of the *harpagmos*—the abduction of the youth—only latent in the *epos*, was anachronistically pressed into the mold of institutional pederasty in its ritualized Cretan form (whereby the Homeric version can be deemed an etiological myth that sacralized the rite) and the later aristocratic Spartan and Athenian variants, but of these Homer had as little inkling as the Semitic and Hamitic ‘Orientals’ did.²⁴

The late date for the institutionalization of pederasty may account for the long passages describing the passionate comradesly love of Patroclus and Achilles. That form of male love, paralleled in the stories of Gilgamesh and Enkidu or David and Jonathan, was not identical with classical Greek pederasty. It was instead love between approximately coeval foster brothers, comrades-in-arms, not that between a god and a slave-like cupbearer in the setting of a Near Eastern banquet of the gods. (How often such bonding goes over into sexual action of any sort is anybody's guess, and has occurred among soldiers of all ages.)²⁵

Suffice it to say that from the Classical period on, most Greeks (and Romans) assumed that Achilles and Patroclus were lovers of the very sincere, everlasting, and heroic type that every honorable pair of upper-class *erastai* and *eromenoi* would have aspired to be. The problem for later authors was that in the idealized form the lover should be distinctly older than the beloved, while Homer made Patroclus the slightly older foster brother of Achilles (*Il.* 11.78f.; 23.84ff.). In Plato's *Symposium* (179e-180b), Phaedrus takes Aeschylus to task for making Achilles the *erastes*. Thus even the ancients had trouble fitting the love of Achilles and Patroclus into the pederastic model because Achilles was both the more beautiful and youthful of the two, features of the *eromenos*, as well as the more noble and excellent in warfare, ideal attributes of the *erastes*. Phaedrus questions how the pederastic model could be applied in any straightforward manner to the Achilles-Patroclus romance.

Already present in Homer, and impossible to deny, is an uninhibited appreciation of male beauty together with an acute sense of male bonding darkened by no religious guilt, and with no condemnation of intimacy between males.²⁶ The Homeric ideal of male beauty, however, tends to be ephibophilic (focused on young men), not pederastic, that is, directed towards teenagers, Ganymede being the exception. For instance, Odysseus says that Hermes met him, on the island of Circe, "in the likeness of a young man with the first down upon his lip, in whom the charm of youth is fairest" (*Od.* 10.276ff., Trans. A. T. Murray). The Greek vocabulary indicates a young man who has just become an *ephebe*. Later poets indicate that, when a boy grows facial or body hair, he is considered past the age of pederastic attractiveness.²⁷ Patroclus and Achilles, called the most beautiful of the Greeks, as well as Paris, famous for his beauty, and even Hector, whom Homer says was still in his youth (*hebe*) at his death (*Il.* 22.363), are all described as of the *ephebic* age in the *Iliad*. In general, there seems to be little reticence in Homer for a man to comment upon another man's beauty; Priam view-

ing the battle from the wall of Troy calls Agamemnon handsome (*kalos*) (*Il.* 3.69).

Of course, virtually all of Homer's heroes, including Achilles and Patroclus, enjoyed sex with women and indeed most upper class Greek males seem after 630 to have married at about 30. They also had access even when younger to flute girls, slaves, prostitutes, captives, and *hetairai*. The great majority of Greek males, like the majority everywhere else, preferred to have sex with females most of the time. Some Homeric heroes like Hector, who loved Andromache, and certain 'effeminate' like Paris, who probably also loved only women (Kinsey's 0's), seem to have lacked the Greek penchant for bisexuality as reflected in myths developed after 630 about almost all the gods and heroes—only Ares, of the major gods, seems to lack a pederastic affair. No exclusive homosexuals appear in any Greek epic or myth. Myths, however, continued to be homosexualized not only into the Hellenistic but even into the Roman period.

Inscriptions from the late eighth and seventh centuries in various Greek alphabets attest the establishment of colonies from Spain to the Black Sea, as do shards of vases and other artifacts. Unlike Mycenaean Linear B, which contain only archival and religious material, a very few of these record verses.²⁸ None, however, attest with certainty to any pan-Hellenic games, or to wrestling schools or gymnasia that sprang up to provide the athletes for these games. Shrines there were for sure, at Olympia and at some other places where games later took place, but the Olympic victor list compiled by Hippias of Elis, the late fifth-century polymath and sophist, seems to me to be an act of *campanilismo*, an attempt to make these games associated with the *poleis* near his birthplace more venerable and prestigious than rival pan-Hellenic contests, such as the Pythian, Nemean, and Isthmian games, which were founded after 600. In connection with this, I believe it is no coincidence that the "earliest evidence that the Greeks recognized themselves as a distinctive [and pan-Hellenic] culture comes from an inscription at Olympia dating from 600 BC which talks of the judges of the games as *hellanodikai* ('Greek judges')" (Freeman, 1999, p. 24).

The spread of literacy and the increase of population, trade and prosperity marked the earlier phase (800-630) of the Archaic age (800-500). In the new *poleis*, tyrants and hoplites appeared and multiplied to the horror and disgust of aristocratic families. The evolution of the hoplites is so shrouded in mystery as to defy description. If Pheidon, king of Argos (early 7th c.), did not develop coinage to pay his hoplites he may nevertheless have used hoplites. Cartledge argues persuasively that

Spartans became hoplites in the first half of the seventh century (perhaps in response to the threat from Pheidon and other Argives).²⁹ About tyrants and poets before 630, however, such as Archilochus, literally 'leader of the troop,' with a peg date based on the solar eclipse of 648, and Pheidon, who supposedly ejected the Elean controllers of the Olympic games in 668, we know little for certain.³⁰

**PART II:
630-600—THE CRETAN 'REVOLUTION'**

A revolution within the social system began around 630 on Crete. Because of the dearth of good land on that island to support the horses and other luxuries of a rapidly multiplying upper-class and even of estates large enough to support hoplites, marriages for males were postponed to 30 and pederasty institutionalized. Aristotle believed that this practice, aimed at limiting childbirth, began on Crete (*Pol.* 1272a):

The [Cretan] lawgiver has devised many wise measures to secure the benefit of moderation at table, and the segregation of the women in order that they may not bear many children, for which purpose he instituted association with the male sex. (Trans. Rackham) [Fewer males survived to 30 to become husbands than if they had married at 18 or 20.]

Institutional pederasty thus emerged along with delayed marriages for males, seclusion of upper class women and crude messes in Crete. These innovations created a radically new society without interrupting colonization, itself in part the result of overpopulation, and the process of *synoikisis*, the joining together of separate villages to form a unitary *polis*.

These practices spread north, probably first to Sparta, the nearest large Dorian area, where some ancients (e.g., Plato, *Laws* 636a, 836b) and many moderns have thought that these practices originated.³¹ It is likely in Sparta that pederasty became associated with gymnasia and athletic nudity; Spartans early on established a festival called the *gymnopaideiai*, when young boys would dance naked (*gymnos*). Spartans certainly developed its usefulness in the military training of adolescent boys. The coupling of young unmarried adult males with teenage youths had to stimulate homosexuality, whatever "Lycurgus" decreed and Xenophon believed.³² Not only did males benefit from a prolonged adolescence encouraging self-development and creativity, but each

young upper-class male had a teenager to educate and in this relationship of *paideia* he himself also learned. The fathers, relatively older than their sons compared to other societies that sanctioned marriage of males in their teens, were more distant from their sons in age and in interests and thus “big brothers” were more needed by their children.³³

Cartledge (2001) sees the *agoge* (educational system), gymnasia, adolescent beloveds, *syssitia* (common messes), and various other elements as part of what he calls the Spartan contest-system, which in many ways defined the citizen in what was a “quintessentially agonal society” (p. 103). All these elements, which had the goal of creating the ultimate fighting machine, came together and solidified, one might almost say ossified, in the second half of the seventh century and by the end of the sixth century. Cartledge states that it would be “remarkable, to say the least, if institutionalized pederasty had not been somehow linked to and expressive of the Spartan contest-system” (2001, p. 103). Other Greeks adopted gymnasia and pederastic pedagogy, but preferred the more elegant, voluntary dining clubs known as symposia—consisting mostly of the elite,³⁴ usually adults or at least those over 16 (with serving boys and/or flute-girls attending)—to the common mess hall (*syssitia*), which in Sparta bound together all ranks and ages of *homoioi* (equals).

In the late 7th century the first *kouroi*, idealized sculptures of nude young men, appear.³⁵ The artistic portrayal of nude male youths certainly does not begin with this development and thus cannot be completely a response to institutionalized pederasty, but the fact that these *kouroi* come into popularity at the same time as the emergence of the Olympic games as a pan-Hellenic phenomenon (linked with nudity in early gymnasia) and at the same time as these Cretan and Spartan reforms, cannot be mere coincidence. The stiff early *kouroi* are nude, but not yet very realistic, or to most straights very homoerotic. They form first attempts at an idealizing of the male form. Though exemplifying the nude adolescent or young man, their attitude is at odds with the raw lust depicted on the early black figure vases and with the languid homosexuality of the later red figure ones. None of the very few surviving large scale Greek sculptures are lewd and surely they deserve as much attention as the vases, certainly more than Dover gives them.

PART III: 600-560—THE AGE OF SAPPHO AND SOLON

During the generation from 600 to 560 these new institutions spread from Crete and Sparta to the other advanced parts of the Hellenic world,

perhaps even earlier to such places as Thera which like them was Dorian.³⁶ During this same period creativity surged and innovations proliferated. Henceforth we have more secure knowledge about real people and events; historical individuals emerge from the mists, although no sculptures of identifiable mortals were yet made. It was the age of Thales and the first attempts to describe the world rationally and without recourse to the divine. This same attitude can be seen in attempts to set the laws and constitutions of the various *poleis* on a more rational and civic basis, where previously regional or aristocratic interests had prevented greater unity within the state.

Along with the increase in symposia, crude gymnasia multiplied. Various pan-Hellenic and athletic festivals, so dependent on gymnasia, arose and began to assume a greater importance; three of the four major pan-Hellenic games, namely the Pythian, Isthmian, and Nemean games, were founded between 586 and 573 BCE. Even the games at Olympia, which probably antedate 600 as a small local religious festival, only take their classical form of nine key events, including running, wrestling, and chariot racing, in the late 7th or early 6th century. These major athletic events connected to religious festivals led to the spread of "an agonistic element in the major local festivals of pre-established cults" throughout Greece (Scanlon, 2002, p. 29). Thus these pan-Hellenic games initiated and accelerated the spread and/or development throughout Greece of gymnasia, nude athletics, idealization of the youthful male body, and institutionalized pederasty, all of which became mutually reinforcing, and to this new set of institutions, intellectual and moral instruction were often added to the physical and martial elements taught by *erastai* to *eromenoi*.

At private symposia, lyric poets sang of love and hate, and other personal feelings, creating for themselves poetic identities. Many of the archaic elegies, lyrics, and, iambs, like vase paintings from the same period, did indeed express lust for young males, concentrating on the physical attributes (notably the eyes, hair and smooth skin), with seemingly less concern for non-physical aspects such as character.³⁷ According to tradition, even Solon, the great Athenian politician and lawmaker, took time out from his political poetry to write of pederastic love: "while one loves boys among the lovely flowers of youth, desiring their thighs and sweet mouth" (fr. 25 West).³⁸

Among the melic poets the tradition surrounding Sappho is the most confusing. We can say with some certainty that she lived for a while in Mytilene on Lesbos (probably early 6th century) and that she composed love poetry that was greatly admired in antiquity. In fact, we cannot be

certain that even a single line now attributed to Sappho—we have only one such complete poem—was actually sung, much less written by her. Given that so little remains of her corpus, and that what remains is so fragmentary, and given that the surviving *testimonia* are so various, late, and contradictory, the reconstruction of her sexual orientation is problematic, to say the least.³⁹

Some ancients ranked Sappho with the greatest of poets. “The Parians glory in Archilochus, the Chians in Homer, and the Mytileneans in Sappho” (Aristotle *Rhetoric* 1398b). Plato called her the “tenth Muse” (*Anth. Pal.* 9.506), as did Antipater of Sidon (*Anth. Pal.* 9.66), who in another elegy said that just as Homer’s songs surpass those of other men, so too do those of Sappho surpass those of other women (*Anth. Pal.* 7.15). To Strabo she was a “marvellous woman; for in all the time of which we have record I do not know of the appearance of any woman who could rival Sappho, even in a slight degree, in the matter of poetry” (13.2.3; Trans. H. L. Jones).

About her sexual orientation and practice, however, they arrived at no consensus. Most ancients portrayed her as passionately heterosexual;⁴⁰ a few, notably Ovid, considered her bisexual (*Tr.* 2.365f.; *Her.* 15). In our times, the attention paid to her poetry as such pales in comparison with the vehement debates about her character and sexual activity. She has even been invoked in highly conjectural and improbable arguments that female homosexuality preceded male.⁴¹ She has been portrayed as a decorous schoolmistress, a chaste priestess, a proper matron, a lascivious tribade, a courtesan, a prostitute, and even a nymphomaniac, even though—or perhaps because—we possess so little and such contradictory information about her life, and so little and such ambiguous bits of poetry attributed to them. We must remember, also, that until recently almost all of the speculation about her life, sexual tastes, and place in society had been done by men. It is perhaps unsurprising that Sappho’s poems have often been interpreted along the model of Greek *male* pederasty.

Except for fifth-century Pindar, who clearly wrote his works, the only one of these lyric *corpora* which has come down to us in a complete manuscript is that of Theognis the elegist. This divan is allegedly the result of the scholarship of a ‘pious’ Byzantine scholar who reorganized the corpus into two books, with the not fully successful intent of relegating all of the homoerotic verses to Book II. “Theognis” lived sometime within the century from 650 to 550, but scholars are today virtually unanimous in seeing the poems collected under his name as a pot-

pourri of writings by various poets gathered together under the name of a single "author." He is particularly important for us because he does reveal explicit concern in his beloved's character and over his beloved's choice of friends, not merely lusting after physical beauty: "boy, you were born good-looking, but your head is crowned with stupidity. In your brain is lodged the character of a kite, always veering, bending to the words of other men" (2.1259-62; *HGR* 1.53). But then again "he" was realistic enough to know that "pretty boys get away with doing wrong" (2.1282; *HGR* 1.59).

Artistic progress accelerated after 600. Sculpture confirms that the appreciation of the youthful male body clearly advanced in this generation among both Dorians and Athenians. The *kouros* at the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art, dated 610-590 by Gisela Richter, is perhaps the earliest life-size *kouros*, and was probably Attic. The *kouroi* become less stiff and show greater diversity as sculptors work with the possibilities of that form. The stocky Argive nudes, for example, such as the heroic brothers Kleobolis and Biton dedicated at Delphi (c. 580), may be typical of the Peloponnese; they have on their rigid, muscled bodies large scrotums, the penises now missing. They seem more masculine than, for example, the delicate and smaller-penis, but fetchingly-buttocked, *kouros* from Sounion (590-580).

PART IV:

560-527—THE AGE OF PEISISTRATUS AND POLYCRATES

From 560 to 522 the wealthy tyrants Polycrates of Samos (d. 522) and Peisistratus of Athens (d. 527), both given to pederasty,⁴² subsidized intellectuals and poets, such as Ibycus and Anacreon. They also employed sculptors and architects with extensive building programs, which included civil engineering projects. It is even possible that they established libraries.⁴³ The Peisistratid editions of the Homeric works were preserved in Athens, at the very time that the Persians were overrunning the older centers of culture in Ionia, precipitating a flight of refugees westward, especially to Athens and to Magna Graecia.

Around 550 our most incontestable proof of sensual homosexuality, particularly pederasty, among the ancient Greeks began to appear and proliferate: the erotic vase-paintings that emphasized lust even more than their poetry did. The most important part of Dover's *Greek Homosexuality* was his use of Sir John Beazley's⁴⁴ incomparable archive of erotic vases (housed in the basement of the Ashmolean museum), and of

the work of Beazley's chief disciple, Sir John Boardman. Their various representations of pederastic courtship and other homoerotic scenes cannot, unlike the epics, the myths, and the lyric poetry, have been contaminated by later interpolations whether of rhapsodes, choruses, or editors.

One can certainly argue that these vases show no signs of pedagogical motivation on the part of the lover, nor any concern for the beloved's soul, as Dover does.⁴⁵ They do, without question, depict various levels of sexual desire. Most but by no means all of such erotic scenes, stretching from the early sixth to the early fifth centuries, portray bearded adults in their twenties courting beardless youths, positions described by Beazley. The earlier ones tend to be more lascivious. After 530, red figure vases from Athens tend to show younger beloveds in less crude lovemaking.

Martha Nussbaum (2002) has well described the tension that can be found on many of these vases. She believes that the vases sometimes do show (*contra* Dover) the two desires that may motivate the lover: the impulse to improve the beautiful youth and cultivate his character, and more carnal urges:

An older man stands close to a younger man, who looks up (or, as the case may be, down) at him, often with fond affection. The older man beams beneficently at the young man's beardless face, and with one hand cups the younger man's chin, in a gesture of tender personal affection. His other hand, however, has other ideas: it fondles the young man's genitals, which are usually exposed. The older man's penis is often erect, the younger man's almost never. The young man sometimes repels the groping hand, but often, too, contentedly allows it. In this highly conventional and popular ancient Greek image of sexual courtship—named by Sir John Beazley the “up and down position” and found on dozens on vases from the classical period—we see a tension in the Greek concept of *eros*. (p. 55)

Nussbaum then goes on to discuss the ways Platonic, Epicurean, and Stoic philosophy subsequently attempted to deal with this tension. Whether or not Nussbaum is correct in her understanding of the tension depicted on the vases is debatable; it could also be understood as just two levels of physical desire. But her essay does illustrate how the Greeks, in their philosophy, acknowledged and struggled to come to

terms with two major, often opposing, drives involved in the pederastic relationship.

In general, however, these homoerotic vases seem to have been passing fashions. They have been both overpriced in modern times, and their importance for ancient times scholars have exaggerated. They represent a relatively minor art form, and a private one intended to please the tastes of the aristocratic few, those who could afford or get invited to very exclusive dinner parties.⁴⁶ So while these vases are an important piece in our understanding of Greek pederastic practices, they show us a small portion of the full picture.

**PART V:
530-500—THE AGE OF THE TYRANNICIDES
AND CLEISTHENES**

Athens developed remarkably in the decades before and after it became democratic in 507. Thereafter we know so much about her (whence come most written sources, as well as our vases) that our perspective necessarily becomes one-sided. Her poets as well as her tyrants were enthusiastic lovers of youths. Hippias and his younger brother Hipparchus continued to patronize poets and the arts, and to undertake building projects, most especially temples. The pseudo-Platonic dialogue the *Hipparchus* lauds Hipparchus (228d-229d), whom it, however, denotes as the elder son, saying that he was the first to bring the poems of Homer to Athens and that he compelled the rhapsodes at the Panathenaea to recite these poems one after another in succession, a practice the author says is still current. Hipparchus surrounded himself with poets such as Anacreon and Simonides, and inscribed the herms (pillars about 5 feet high with bearded head and erect phalluses, to Attica as boundary markers) that he and his brother, insouciant, fun-loving, pederastic tyrants, set up with his own elegiac couplets.⁴⁷ All this, the author of the *Hipparchus* exclaims, he did in order to educate the citizens. Depictions on vases of the Ionic dress for males that became popular in Athens in the last decades of the 6th century led scholars in an earlier day to presume that the men were in drag, but we now understand that this was merely a passing fad (like the unisex styles of the 1970s).⁴⁸

Tyrants, however, came to fear the courage of pederastic couples. The Persians may have not learned pederasty from the Greeks as Herodotus claimed (1.135), but they banned it in Ionia because of its reputation for creating heroes and tyrannicides, if we can believe

Phaedrus in Plato's *Symposium* (182c). Certainly many pederastic couples can be found in stories of resistance to tyrants or assassinations of them. Hieronymus the Aristotelian writes that "love with boys was fashionable because several tyrannies had been overturned by young men in their prime, joined together as comrades in mutual sympathy." Athenaeus, who provides the preceding quote, goes on to mention several famous pederastic tyrannicides (13.602; *HGR* 2.21).

The aristocratic leaders of the revolution in Athens attributed the overthrow of the tyrants to a pederastic couple. Herodotus (5.62-65) and Thucydides (6.54-59) tell of how Hipparchus insulted Harmodius and his family after Harmodius, Aristogeiton's beloved, spurned his amorous advances. The plot to kill both Hipparchus and Hippias resulted only in Hipparchus' death and their own (514 BCE). A mythology quickly grew up around them, a sign of which is that soon after the fall of the tyranny bronze statues of the pederastic couple were erected in the agora, the first "political monument in Greek history. The Tyrannicides are the first historical figures so honored, and remained the only such figures for over 100 years" (Monoson, 2000, p. 43). Conversely, the fact that the couple did not actually end the tyranny, which became more oppressive during Hippias' remaining four years in power, faded from the public consciousness.⁴⁹ After Cleisthenes established Athens on a more democratic basis in 507, the heroes, receiving almost cultlike status, began to be toasted routinely at symposia, where drinking songs praising them were sung, and their descendants fed at the Prytaneum.⁵⁰ Thucydides, a century later, criticized the Athenians for getting important facts of the story wrong (1.20.2-3): "so little pains do the vulgar take in the investigation of truth, accepting readily the first story that comes to hand" (Trans. Crawley).

Athenian sculptors continued to present the male figure in very alluring ways. The Anavysos *kouros* (530-520) has a large scrotum and penis, and is rather voluptuously shaped; Stewart (1990, p. 122) believes that the unusually fleshy nature of the sculpture (especially noticeable in the hips, thighs, and buttocks) shows possible eastern influence. A beautifully erotic marble Theseus torso (520-510) from the Athenian Acropolis, in a semi-*kouros* pose, is shown in competition or combat, the paired opponent statue lost. This statue compares in sensuality with the homoerotic bronze Piraeus Apollo (530-520) excavated in 1959. These presage "the Kritias boy" (490-480), which is so named because its head so resembles that of Harmodius in the tyrannicide statues done by Kritias and Nesiotes about 479 to replace the original carried away by Xerxes in 480.