From Clay to Silver During the 5th Century

The art of homoerotic
Ancient Greek sympotic ware

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Preface

The prevailing opinion has been that the Greeks shifted from pottery to silver only after Alexander conquered the Persian Empire and brought its massive treasures into Europe. Herein I prove that the shift occurred in fact early on during the Classic Age (484-338 BC) rather than towards the beginning of the Hellenistic (period) (323-31 BC). Because so few examples survive, I do so by deduction and by citing written evidence. More sources for the classical age cite silver vases than (word?) statues of which none survive, though scholars have accepted their existence. Conquered by the Romans, the Greeks continued their own language and culture but inspired the Romans to become more refined to imitate many Greek styles including elegant tableware. The Warren Cup is the most spectacular find for the Roman Imperial age, although it may have been made for Greek or Hellenized Jews in Palestine.

The Archaic and Classical followed by the Hellenistic eras in Greece were the most dynamic in history, even exceeding the Renaisances and Reformations that they so much resemble. Overpopulation begot exploration and settlement as well as encouraging questioning and experimentation. Hundreds of city-states burgeoned, with a range of environments, constitutions, societies, cultures and economies as well as art, music, literature, science, and philosophy, to all of which mathematics was central. From c.630 to c.480 BC, the individual stood freer of family, clan, society, customs, and religion than in any time or place before about 1500 AD and maybe even later. Innovation became the rule!
Each generation and each individual vied with every other. Spurred by athletics and debates, competition encouraged excellence. The ideal of excellence, or bringing the best out of oneself (arete), and of aiming for "the beautiful and the good" (kalos kai agathos) invigorated innovation and self-fulfillment. Romans assimilated the Greeks’ creativity but, unlike even the Hellenistic Greeks, made no significant advances in math, science, or medicine. Behind almost every great Latin intellectual lurked a greater Greek, except in the applied sciences of law, government, engineering and the military. In philosophy and political science, too, the Romans failed to progress. Even in art and literature, although judgment will necessarily be subjective, Greek achievement must be considered superior unless the Satyric poets are to be counted.

One might suppose, therefore, that modern scholars would seek to understand Greek achievements as part of the cultural context in which they took place and which produced such exceptional and wide-ranging creative brilliance. One would not expect works of art and craftsmanship, in particular, to be evaluated in an historical vacuum, as though the particulars of history had nothing to do with their creation. But this has happened, as will be demonstrated through the case of sympotic ware, some which is so distinctive it can be dated and even assigned to particular masters in particular schools. In classifying and evaluating such work, antiquaries, aesthetes, collectors and curators, including such major connoisseurs as Edward Perry Warren and his lover John Marshall, John Beazley, John Boardman, Dietrich von Bothmer, and Michael Vickers, have allowed their minds to concentrate on form, pattern, design and colors at the expense of the historical context. This tendency is most explicit in Vickers’ absurd insistence that the elite always supped and dined from precious metalware and Boardman’s that they adopted metalware only after Alexander.

Neither side to this longstanding and bitter controversy comprehends the explosion in the availability of silver at Athens after 480 BCE. After that date, the elite went over to silver for the first time. Consequently, the ceramic ware produced after that time was not made for the elite and should not be thought of as highly today as that which preceded 480, which was made for the elite and produced to the high standards that their resources could command.

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1 The tableware used in a symposium. As will be discussed in more detail below, the minimum requirements for a symposium in Ancient Greece are debatable, but I mean more than just a mere drinking party. The term is here used to refer to the kind of elegant gathering described by Plato and Xenophon, a feast at which aristocratic males would enjoy performances of poetry and dancing as well as their own good conversation, reclining two by two on sofas in a refined setting with high-quality decorated tableware.
In fact, many generations made far less significant changes in taste of their own. For example, in the generation before 500, when Ionians were fleeing the Persians to Athens, males often appeared in what some scholars decades ago characterized as female costumes; but really they were wearing Ionian men’s clothing of the period and were not cross-dressers. Again, in another case, when the transition began from black-figure to red-figure vases\(^2\), some sympotic ware was classified as “bilingual,” with black figures on one side and red figures on the other (c.520-c.500). But these changes were minor in comparison to the major shift to silver after 480 BCE.

I use the word "boy", Greek Pais, but I mean adolescent/teenagers/youths. In my opinion infancy ends around 6 and childhood around 12 but we use the word 'boyfriend' for an 80 year-old pardoner of a 60-year old woman and in the South it was used for all black men no matter how old. So I'm going with the word 'boy' because it's of such common usage, though I don't mean what is truly a boy.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Typically, as connoisseurs, John Boardman and Michael Vickers have preoccupied themselves with the smallest details of form, shape, material, color and design. They fail to give adequate attention to changes over time caused by taste, politics, economics, or philosophy. Vickers has claimed that the elite always used fine metals for their symposia, but Boardman, specializing in ceramics, has insisted au contraire that the clay, whether black or red-figure, continued to serve the elite from their origins around 650 BCE until 338 BCE, the beginning of the Hellenistic period. Even he has admitted that silver thereafter replaced pottery on their tables. Sir Kenneth Dover was no connoisseur himself; as a philologist, he felt his own central achievement was as an historian of the Greek language; he specialized in Attic comedy and oratory. Coming to ceramics, he focused on homoerotic pottery, overemphasizing its importance beyond reason. He also failed to distinguish between true symposia, confined to the very rich, and drinking bouts involving the common people.

Quite how Vickers has managed to keep publishers interested in printing his babbling for three decades about how the colors of Greek ceramics supposedly imitated metals is beyond me. His

\(^2\) Black paint on red clay was replaced by more delicate red incisions on black-painted red clay. See Athenian Vase Painting: Black- and Red- Figure Techniques [http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/vase/hd_vase.htm](http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/vase/hd_vase.htm)
theory is that the lower orders aped the style of the elite as best they could, by making their cheap ceramics look as much as possible like “the real thing”, namely the expensive metalware that would always have been available (in his mistaken view) to the top echelons. True, at one time, briefly, in early Egypt, gold was relatively plentiful, to the extent that it was worth less than silver; and in the Bronze Age, long before the classical era, the Mycenaeans did indeed have some gold cups, such as the Vaphio cups found at the town of that name near Sparta. These are thought to date from c.1500–1400 BCE. But it is an unjustified leap to suppose, without evidence, that precious metals or even bronzes were always readily available for symposia, even for the most wealthy. Nor can a connection be assumed between the Bronze Age decorative tableware of the Minoan and Mycenaean civilizations and the dining culture of Greeks a thousand years later, after the passage of a long dark age. The art of the symposium in the archaic (800-500 BCE) and classical (500-338 BCE) periods of Ancient Greece is steeped in pederastic themes. Dorian pederasty was first institutionalized only after c.650 BCE. The famed Minoan Chieftain’s Cup (c.1650-1500 BCE), carved from soapstone in Crete by people not even speaking Greek, is definitely not related to Dorian pederasty despite some strained interpretation along those lines. The only connection between the two, a whole millennium apart, was their location on Crete.

The rhapsodes, professional reciters of epic poetry (c.750-500 BCE), were licenced by their trade to make their performances, well, epic, singing of ancient heroes who might be superhumanly strong but not immortal, and equally of tableware that was fabulously grand. The rhapsodes of the Dark Age (1200-800 BCE) and Early Archaic Age (800-650 BCE), whether Homeric or otherwise, could cover their imaginary tables as easily with golden and silver vases as with ceramic pots, which in fact had geometric designs from about 1100 to 750 BCE.

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3 The chronology of Minoan civilization is a complicated business. Its origins go back to 3000 BCE and beyond, with a flowering from around 1900 BCE to 1200 BCE, ending with its assimilation into Mycenaean culture, usually dated from around 1600 BCE to 1100 BCE.

4 In the Dark Age that followed the fall of the Mycenaean civilization, literacy was lost and the oral tradition of recitation was the sole means by which culture could be transmitted through language down the generations. Emerging from this period in the 8th century BC, the Greeks adopted the Phoenician alphabet, modifying it to create the Greek one. However, the transition from oral recitation to written literature as the principle vehicle of cultural memory and performance was not rapid. Socrates, hundreds of years later, still preferred the spoken word, and it remains an open question as to when key aspects of the culture, notably the Homeric epics, were first committed to writing. Milman Parry thought the first written version of Homer was the Pessistratid version in Athens around 520 BC. More recently Barry Powell has contended that an individual, boldly identified by name as the legendary Palamedes, adapted the Phoenician way of writing to Greek early in the 8th century BC. (Barry B. Powell, Homer and the Origin of the Greek Alphabet, Cambridge University Press, 1991.) This adaptor supposedly worked with Homer in a collaborative literary enterprise. Powell has proposed that Euboea may have been where the Greek alphabet was first employed, c. 775-750 BC, and that Homer may have spent part of his life on the
It should be interjected at this point that a chronologically very approximate distinction between Early Archaic (800-650 BC) and Late (650-500 BC) has been made by others and is useful for present purposes. Early Archaic is characterised by gaining the alphabet, the city state (replacing palace economies such as that of Mycenae), and figurative orientalising pottery. Late Archaic is distinctive as the age of the tyrants; symposia and gymnasia made their appearance; the age of marriage rose, especially for men, giving young unmarried men an incentive to bond with boys; and black figure pottery, including its pederastic imagery and scenes of masculine revelry, gives us, almost literally, pieces in the jigsaw puzzle of early symptic culture. Finally, hoplites replaced cavalry as the main type of warrior around 650. Whereas the earliest known context of institutionalized pederasty is the ritualized abduction and courtship of Cretan and Spartan boys by knightly figures on horseback, the rigorous training of hoplites provided a further military setting in which the Dorian culture of man-boy mentorship would flourish, and in which the communal military mess (sisistria) may be seen as a forerunner of the symposium.\(^5\)

Aginna (?), another Dorian city like Corinth without a hinterland, developed a system of weights that was not too different from Corinth's and like Corinth continued to thrive even after the Athenian symposia and measures came to predominate.

Unlike inland Sparta, with its fiercely-rulled serf economy, dominated by a warrior culture, coastal Corinth lacked a significant agricultural hinterland, or contado, and became prosperous through trade instead, being well placed for both sea and land connections. Although Corinth, like Sparta and Crete, had Dorian origins, it might thus be thought to have lacked the martial, hoplite-dominated basis for a mess culture and hence a place in the development of the symposium. But in fact Corinth contributed vividly to the style of the symposium through the

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5 In *Pederasty and Pedagogy in Archaic Greece* I said Aristotle was probably correct in claiming that segregation of the sexes and pederasty among knights had been instituted in order to diminish the number of their heirs (Politics, 127a 12). It was exceedingly difficult to provide estates large enough for the knights to support equestrian accoutrements, including fine steeds that require extensive pastures. I might have added that hoplites were also faced with the problem of estates being excessively divided. While hoplites did not require land for extensive grazing, they had to be men of some substance, with a thriving farm: they needed at least the wherewithal to equip themselves with expensive armour and weaponry.
role it developed as the centre for the production and export of black figure pottery – and the city’s connection with Spartan culture was maintained from 500 BC onwards when they were allied with Sparta in the Peloponnesian League. It has to be said, though, that Corinth, like so many port cities, provided heterosexual prostitution on such a significant scale that institutionalised pederasty was a lifestyle made mainly for export, as depicted on its pots, rather than for home consumption.

Returning to Vickers, surely he doesn’t believe that the geometric pots and the orientalizing ones that followed them from 750 to 630 were copies of metallic vases? He does insist, however, that the early black-figure ceramic cups (late 7th century and early 6th century BCE) were modeled on gold ones. He has maintained that red clay with figures painted in black signified gold, while black paint with red incision indicated silver. In fact, because most of the early black-figure cups were Corinthian, a lighter-color clay than the Athenian red would have had to imitate electrum (a natural amalgam of four-fifths gold and one-fifth silver sometimes used at the time).

Likewise, the earliest black figures could hardly have imitated gold, though silver pots by 550 were less unlikely to have existed than gold (red) ones. Copper, bronze, and brass, being cheaper, were far more likely, but the color purple (which Vickers mistook for imitating copper) was, in fact, very rare, and white (modeled, according to him, on ivory) absurd.

After 470, some clay pots did indeed imitate silver vases in shape and probably in scenes, but the red did not imitate gold any more than black imitated silver. In sum, Vickers’ thesis of colors on pottery imitating metals is utterly without merit.

On the other hand, Sir John Boardman, a far more learned and balanced antiquarian than Vickers, has also exaggerated. He has claimed that the painters of the ceramic cups (or vases, as he dubs them) were equal in talent to Michelangelo, Raphael, and other geniuses who painted during the Italian Renaissance, though no ancient author whose works have survived ever mentioned a single one of them. Pliny the Elder praised the great masters of gem cutting, Dioskourides and Tryphon, along with the leading sculptors, Phidias and Polykleitos, as well as master painters Zeuxis and Apelles. But neither Pliny nor any other Greek or Latin writers ever stooped to mention even a single pot painter or maker, apparently regarding them as little more elevated than carpenters or masons. Surprising as it may seem to us, however, Athenaeus and other epicures did spend a great deal of time extolling the finest chefs by name but never a potter or vase painter.
Ever since the homosexual Johann Winckelmann made the appreciation of Greek art central to European culture in the 18th century⁶, artifacts have increasingly rivaled texts as the major tool to document classical civilization; and recently archeologists have sought primacy for them over the written word.

“In the eighteenth century a new humanism competed with the traditional one. It was organized in learned societies instead of being centered in the universities; it was fostered by gentlemen rather than schoolmasters. They preferred travel to the emendation of texts and altogether subordinated literary texts to coins, statues, vases and inscriptions.” (Arnaldo Momigliano, Ancient History and the Antiquarian, Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes 12, pages 285-315, 1950)

Winckelmann himself had, in fact, argued that cameos and intaglios⁷, better preserved the visual culture than any Greek paintings, mosaics or statues, “because the stages of art are found to a much greater extent in a collection of engraved gems than can be discerned in the larger monuments that are left to us.” Thus, he deemed jewels the most accurate guides to Greek art although even they were few and far between.

Even before Winckelmann wrote, archeologists began uncovering masses of clay vessels and the volume of such artifacts has exploded exponentially ever since. This huge quantity is easily explained: although pots may be broken, their shards are virtually indestructible. Most of the discoveries have in facts been broken fragments except for those recovered from Etruscan tombs and long presumed to have been made by Etruscans – as reflected in Josiah Wedgwood’s “Etruscan ware,” produced at his famed Etruria Works.

The scientific documentation of the finds has also been made more precise, with the result that artifacts have become the main dating tool in reconstructing history. Carefully documented and dated ceramics, without doubt or rival, now constitute the principal artifactual source for classical culture. On that strong foundation, archeologists are now challenging the previous dominance of classical texts, themselves subject to ever better recensions and supplemented by new finds from papyrologists and epigraphers. Dover, by contrast, although he paid

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⁶ Winckelmann initially saw only Roman copies of Greek statues but wrote on the basis of more direct evidence of Greek culture after excavations at the Graeco-Roman city of Paestum in southern Italy began in earnest following the excavation of the Roman cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum. The remains at Paestum include the Temple of Hera, built around 550 BCE by Greek colonists.

⁷ A cameo is a relief image raised higher than its background. In contrast, if the artist carves down into the stone to hollow out a recessed image, the resulting work is an intaglio.
attention to painted ceramics, was far too narrow in his interpretation of Greek pederasty. His *Greek Homosexuality* (1980) was outrageously over-reliant on a single oration about a sex scandal, plus the depiction of pederasty in jokes and comedies. He believed pederasty was practiced via intercrural sex rather than anal, as the vase paintings seldom depicted penetration.


Even more than his mentor, Beazley, Boardman was impressed by the Arts and Crafts movement. Boardman also exaggerated the price of ceramic sympotic ware in ancient times and otherwise enthused wildly over their excellence on both black and red-figure vases. While it might be supposed that Beazley's homosexuality could have allowed his enthusiasm for this ancient homoerotic art to run away with him, the same could not be said of Boardman, who was straight. True, such vases were indeed made for upper-class Greeks from about 650 BCE until they were replaced by silver ones in 470. But the ceramics, however charming, were never really considered great works of art in antiquity, nor were they very costly when made. Not even the richest Greeks, however, except for kings and tyrants, were wealthy enough to afford silver sympotic ware before 470. After that time, the Athenian elite, newly enriched, set the tone for elites of other Greek metropolises by converting to silver sympotic ware.

This whole effort of mine sprang from my need to account for the virtual disappearance of explicitly homoerotic ceramic ware after about 470 BCE, as discussed in a somewhat crude footnote in my *Pederasty and Pedagogy in Archaic Greece* (1996), to which I would now make minor changes. I can hardly call it a work of my youth because in 1996 I was already 63; having trained as a medievalist, though, I was then still more or less a novice as regards classical scholarship. I wrote:

It is a puzzle why the erotic vases decreased noticeably c. 470, whereas pederasty continued unabated.\(^8\) In their 1994 study Michael Vickers and David Gill contend that the upper class

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\(^8\) The scholar who first realised this was the case was Jiří Frel, the curator who helped build the J. Paul Getty Museum into a major center for Greek and Roman art. He used Beazley's collection, plus a few other exemplars, to assign twelve pederastic courtship scenes to the period 575-550 (mostly after 560), fifty to 550-525, fifty-seven to 525-500, and nine after 500, with a very few in the 470s. After 510 they diminished in favour of heterosexual
always dined on plate of precious metal. For the symposia given by hoplites, they believe, ceramic pots were used and constituted cheap copies of the elegant silver vessels owned by the Athenian elite. This highly original notion requires that we accept as well that large numbers of hoplites possessed sufficient wealth to afford the cost of giving symposia, including the luxury of the special men’s dining room where these gatherings took place. I say “large numbers” because judging by the considerable remnants of Greek vases that have survived to the present day, the original output by potters for the hoplite symposia must have been considerable indeed. However, despite the unorthodox nature of their theory, Vickers provides no evidence that such wealth existed among the hoplite population. They do insist that the pottery was inexpensive, but ceramic tableware represented only a small portion of the cost of a proper symposium. Even more important is the absence in their text of any explanation as to why after 470 production of erotic ceramic pots became significantly rarer.

I believe that when the Athenians’ wealth grew as a result of their new predominance in trade, the discovery of silver at Laurion, and the booty taken from the Persians, aristocrats substituted silverware for the pottery that had previously appeared on their tables. (In so doing, they may also have been influenced by the Persians, who used metal tableware.) This reading of the known facts raises no difficult questions about the financial resources of the hoplite class and its purported interest in giving symposia. It also explains why ceramic pots disappeared after 470: they were simply no longer the tableware of choice among the upper-class, the only group rich enough to give symposia.

Sir Kenneth Dover maintained in a personal letter that by symposium could be understood any gathering of men for drink and song and that dividing a house into quarters for men and women was a normal practice, not one signifying particular wealth. I reject both observations. The passages used by Dover to illustrate these points—Theocritus 14, 12 and Lysias I, 9 respectively—belong to periods much later than the Archaic age, and Lysias’s comment about his two-floor dwelling refers to a time when Athens was far richer and more populous than it had been during the Archaic period. I use symposium to refer to the kind of elegant gathering described by Plato and Xenophon, that is, dinners on a scale mentioned in Aristophanes’ Acharnians (vv.1086-80) where a herald speaks of the “couches, tables, cushions, chaplets, perfumes, dainties, ... biscuits, cakes, sesame bread, tarts, lovely dancing women” that have

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1086-80) where a herald speaks of the “couches, tables, cushions, chaplets, perfumes, dainties, ... biscuits, cakes, sesame bread, tarts, lovely dancing women” that have

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sciences. The eromenoi, fully grown but beardless on the black-figure vases, became younger and smaller, and even the erastai often became younger on the red-figure ones. (“Griechischer Eros”, Listy filologické, Jiří Frel, 1963, pp.61-2)

9 Otherwise known as Laurion or Lavrio.

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been readied for the feast. At such events, where skolia were sung and boys courted, ceramic ware with pederastic scenes was hardly out of place, as it most assuredly would have been in just any gathering of men. Similarly, it is worth noting a passage from Aristophanes’ *Wasps* (vv.1122ff.), where we are treated to the portrait of a common man who does not understand how to behave at the kind of symposium I am concerned with. No doubt he attended many dinners in his life, but that was not sufficient to prepare him to know the ways of a proper, elegant symposium. He may even have been prosperous enough to possess his own cup, as apparently was sometimes the custom. (Aristophanes’ herald also says, “Come quickly to the feast and bring your basket and your cup.”) Still, this is no assurance that he could afford to host an event at which only metal tableware was used. (I might add that in our correspondence Jasper Griffin has expressed doubt as to whether the ability to give such symposia was widespread. Griffin has further written me of his agreement with my position that prior to 480 ceramic tableware prevailed. Before that time, he adds, “it is hard to imagine so much plate on Athenian tables as Vickers and Gill believe in.”)

The aristocrats’ preference after 470 for metal plate at symposia is pertinent to this study in that some have previously hypothesized that ceramic vases rapidly declined because Greek aristocrats did not dare flaunt their pederastic tradition in an increasingly democratic Athens. Since, as I argue here, the arrival of democracy in Athens did not spell the end of institutionalized pederasty, it is interesting to realize that the fate of ceramic pots can be understood in terms quite unrelated to the later history of Greek pederasty. (*Pederasty and Pedagogy*, Ch. 8, “Gymnasia, Symposia and Pederastic Art,” footnote 32, pages 208-209)

When I wrote Dover about the problem, he said that a symposium was wherever men drank together and not just a fancy occasion, exclusively for gentlemen, of the type Plato and Xenophon described. At first he also declined to review my book, claiming he had lost interest in the subject. A couple of years later, however, only after Paul Cartledge had written in a review that I was “the first to try to go beyond Dover,” he changed his mind and savagely reviewed it in the German classical journal *Gnomon*. Boardman, on the other hand, always a gentleman, wrote a polite letter, mildly opining that silver did not predominate in symposia until the Hellenistic era.

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10 The singular is skolion. Skolia were songs sung by invited guests at banquets, often in praise of gods or heroes. Improvised to suit the occasion, they were accompanied by a lyre, handed around from one singer another as the time for each scolion came around.

11 This refers to the period after the conquests of Alexander the Great during which Greek cultural influence and power was at its zenith in Europe and Asia, until Rome came to dominate the entire Mediterranean world. The
Alan Shapiro, now fast becoming the leading candidate to succeed Boardman as the doyen of the Greek vase, and Thomas Hubbard, another eminent authority, have tried to grapple with the dilemma. It has been a puzzle for some time now why the explicit erotic vases virtually disappeared c. 470.

Some, including Hubbard at a colloquium in Quebec City in April, 2010, where we both spoke, maintained that the aristocrats, fearful of the social disapproval of the envious but all powerful democrats, jealous that they could not afford trophy boys, gave up pederastic scenes after 470. But I claim in contrast that they switched to silver after that date.

Chapter 2: Modern interest in Greek vases: an overview

Collection and analysis of Ancient Greek ceramic vases has, so far, gone through five stages. The first mainly involved small-scale Italian collections made mostly by Neapolitans before 1760, when such vases were thought to be Etruscan. Anticipating the second stage, the genius Winckelmann suspected some of them were Greek. Sir William Hamilton, the British ambassador in Naples to the Bourbon Kingdom of the Two Sicilies (southern Italy and Sicily), who later became a member of the elite British club of aesthetes known as the Dilettanti, tried but failed to obtain the services of Winckelmann, and had to settle for the French scholar Pierre-François Hugues, the self-dubbed “Baron d’Hancarville.” In 1766–67 Hamilton published a volume of engravings of his collection, with text written by d’Hancarville and contributions by Winckelmann. A further three volumes were produced in 1769–76. Together, they introduced a

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Hellenistic era is often taken to date from the death of Alexander 323 BCE to the Roman conquest of Ptolemaic Egypt in 30 BCE.
new paradigm that finally recognized these “Etruscan” vases as actually being Greek. By selling their collection to King George III and his Parliament, they also made collecting such ceramic objects fashionable in Great Britain—in fact, *de rigueur* for collectors and curators—as reflected in the likes of John Keats’s “Ode on a Grecian Urn.” In the third stage, German scholars en masse, with characteristic Teutonic fastidiousness and precision, dominated analysis and scholarship in this and related fields throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries, from Eduard Gerhard (1795-1867) to Adolf Furtwängler (1853-1907) and beyond. They integrated the connoisseurship of the aesthete and antiquarians with the sound judgements of historians, forming a far better synthesis in what they described as *Altertumswissenschaft*, or the science of antiquity.

As many new finds were being scientifically excavated and documented with photography, the expatriate Bostonian connoisseur and collector Edward “Ned” Perry Warren (1860–1928), with the help of his lover John Marshall, conceived a fourth paradigm. They were joined after 1908 by their protégé, the young Oxford don John Davidson Beazley. He made such analysis “truly scientific” by employing the ingenious methods of 19th century Italian art historian Giovanni Morelli, who combined the observational and taxonomic skills of a Charles Darwin with the forensic logic of a Sherlock Holmes. He studied obscure details that revealed stylistic habits of which even the artists themselves may scarcely have been conscious but forgers never imitated. Thus, where an artwork bore no name he could make an attribution, and he could detect forgeries. Bernard Berenson, an American art historian, used Morelli’s methods to dominate the study of Renaissance painting for the next generation. His first trip to Europe was financed by two rival leading ladies of Boston’s cultural elite, Mrs Isabella Gardner and Mrs Susan Warren, Ned’s mother. But just as Hamilton had failed to obtain the service of Winckelmann and settled instead for the off-color propagandist d’Hancarville, Warren was unable to obtain the services of Berenson, whose time was thereafter monopolised by Mrs Gardner. Instead, he found a lifelong friend in the person of John Beazley, who, though homosexual (but married nonetheless), was finally knighted.

This new paradigm and its accompanying attitude of prizing such “vaaases” (in the English pronunciation) as objets d’art of the highest quality and scientifically analyzed by Morellian standards has continued to predominate in both the museum and the scholarly worlds. Beazley’s acolytes, particularly Sir John Boardman and the late Dietrich von Bothmer, Curator of
Greek and Roman Antiquities at the Metropolitan Museum until his death in 2010, still dominate the field. In an attempt to challenge this paradigm, the enfant terrible Michael J. Vickers, Keeper of Antiquities at the Ashmolean Museum, Senior Research Fellow in Classical Studies, and Professor of Archaeology at Jesus College, Oxford, along with his collaborator David Gill, demeaned the ceramics, so prized by Beazley et. al., as “worthless ballast” and “unrecyclable junk.” They dogmatically and discourteously insisted that the elites of antiquity had instead always supped and drunk from vessels of precious metal.

In their bitter quarrel with Beazley’s followers, Vickers et al. asserted that the pottery fetched very low prices in antiquity. True, the undecorated amphora and other cheap ware cost very little. They were exported full of wine and oil and, rather than being sold, did indeed often return empty to Attica, acting as a ballast. The decorated pots, in contrast, never returned and were clearly too light, in any case, to act as ballast, even on outward-bound voyages when some contained perfume. But this sale of painted pots to foreigners was far less significant economically than the silver vases Athenians began to export after 470 BCE. Their export of silver bullion fulfilled a demand from cities without their own source of silver to strike their own coins, which they did for political reasons, less than for profits from minting. The profits the Athenians made from these bullion exports far exceeded what they could have made from exporting silver vases. On the other hand, with their very own silver mines, the Athenians profited perhaps even more significantly from minting and exporting the silver drachmas that came to dominate Greek coinage.

Intolerant of the mystique of clay, which seems to have begun with d’Hancarville’s beguiling volumes, and reached its apogee in Boardman’s coffee-table book (Vases, 2001), the brazenly homophobic Vickers has tried to devalue and belittle all Greek ceramics. He abjured the rather precious term “vaaases,” and the attitude of high-aesthetic esteem it implies. Instead, he claimed that the clay “pots,” as he called them, however beautifully shaped and decorated, were always merely “cheap knockoffs” (copies of gold and silver masterpieces), “worthless ballast” made for a mass market of undiscriminating customers—a judgment he applied even to the high-point of such ceramic production, from 630 to 470 BCE.

In what follows, I establish a fifth stage, characterized by a nuanced awareness that only monarchs and tyrants had begun to dine on precious metals around 630; and not even they
before that during the Dark Ages and in the very early Archaic period. I maintain that after 470, the Athenian elite, newly enriched by the silver mines at Laurion, by Persian booty, by tribute from their Delian allies\textsuperscript{12}, and, most of all, by their virtual monopoly of trade in the Aegean, the Black Sea and much of the northern Mediterranean, could afford silver sympotic ware, sometimes even gilded. Thus, for the very first time, the potters and painters of the Kerameikos, as that quarter of Athens devoted to them was called, had the opportunity to see the far more precious sympotic ware, now produced in significant quantities in Athens for the first time. Thenceforth, they could—and from then on, very often did—model their pottery and even its painted designs on metallic originals. They did not, however, copy explicit homosexual scenes for their now exclusively middle-class market. Before then, Athenian ceramicists would have had virtually no access to the precious metalware that was then only available to monarchs and tyrants. Their tableware was presumably made for their court by silversmiths on location or imported from Lydia or Phoenicia. Who then would have had any way to inspire humble clay workers in Athens or Corinth with designs of precious metals?

Rita Oswald dismissed the quarrel between Vickers and Boardman about the price of Greek ceramics with: “fine pottery is unlikely to have formed of itself a complete cargo of any vessel, even those will admit who have championed a high value for it” (p. 285, Ch. 10, “Archaic Greece” CEHGRW, 2007). The export of silver sympotic ware after 470 could, however, clearly bring in much more money and, though occupying even less space than pottery, could, and I think did, affect the balance of trade and payments—to the great advantage of Athens. Unlike painted pots, silver vases mattered for the total value of exports, although to a far lesser extent than the export of drachmas.

Sitta von Redden continues the confusion:

\textsuperscript{12} The Delian League, founded in 478 BCE, was an alliance of Greek city-states under the leadership of Athens. Its purpose was to continue fighting the Persian Empire after the Greek victory in the battles of Plataea and Mycale in 479 at the end of the second Persian invasion of Greece. The name derives from its meeting place, the island of Delos, where congresses were held until Pericles changed the venue to Athens in 454 BC. Under his leadership, the league’s treasure would be used to restore the Acropolis, destroyed by the Persians. Athens also soon began to use the league’s navy for its own purposes, leading to conflict with the less powerful members. By 431 BCE, Athens’ domineering control of the Delian League prompted the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War; when the conflict ended in 404 BCE the league was dissolved.
Despite restrictions put on individuals, per capita consumption of wine was probably significantly higher than, for example, in mediaeval times. To judge from the numbers of drinking cups and transport amphoras found in excavations, the wine trade and wine consumption reached an unprecedented scale in the late archaic and early classical period. Most wine was marketed and consumed locally, but for connoisseurs it was shipped over long distances. Two explanations have been proposed for the increase in consumption. The first is that increasing democratization changed the symposium from an exclusive aristocratic gathering to a form of hospitality practiced by a wider group of citizens. Painted pottery replaced silver and gold containers, and its mass production in Athens in the late sixth and fifth centuries reflected the opening of the symposium and gymnasium to poorer people who emulated the former elite’s symbolic behavior. The second is that the symposium remained largely aristocratic, while ordinary people frequented public taverns (kapeleia) that seem to have been abundant in cities and villages. Whatever theory is more valid, by the fifth century there was an extensive drinking culture supplied by shops, local markets, and foreign trade. It is worth noting that ordinary wine was called after the measure in which it was sold, so it was largely regarded as a commodity rather than a subsistence food. (Sitta von Redden, chapter 14, “Classical Greek Consumption,” The Cambridge Economic History of the Greco-Roman World, pp. 393–94)

Von Redden’s first hypothesis, derived from Vickers’s extreme theories, is the more absurd of her two. In fact, “the Greeks” in general, and the Athenians in particular, after 480 grew much richer, especially in silver, than ever before. The elite first went over to the use of silver at symposia after that date. Before then, only tyrants had used it, and not even very many of them could afford it before about 580 BCE, roughly the midpoint of the Greek Renaissance. References to the use of gold in Homer and finds from before 1200 are very rare indeed; they are rarer still from the Greek Dark Ages (1200-800) and still very rare before 630.

The best pottery was made for symposia between 630 and 480 BCE. After this period, the elite supped and dined from silver. By then, however, many of the not so rich, being richer than before, were newly able to afford painted pots. For this large class, painted pots were produced in much greater quantities than ever before, but henceforth to please a bourgeoisie dining en
famille with wives and daughters. The elite thereafter bought silverware, which I believe was often homoerotic. Von Redden’s second theory is probably partially true, but hardly explains the huge amount of painted pots produced after 480. Some were doubtless for taverns, but most must have been for middle-class homes, which could thereafter have first afforded such luxuries on a large scale.

Another co-author of the same book, John K. Davis, did better. He maintained that silver became plentiful after 480. In the days of Pericles, Nicias, and Alcibiades, the Athenians actually controlled or sought to control not only the mines at Laurion in Attica, but also those near Amphipolis, on the coast of what was then Macedonia (unlike modern Macedonia, which is landlocked), and in the hinterland of Apollonia (located in modern Albania), Illyria, the former colony of Corcyra (Corfu), all of which brought about “a steep change in the quantity of accessible bullion.” Davis noted that, “the Athenian attempt in the 420’s to impose the use of Athenian coins, weights, and measures throughout the [Delian] empire.” soon followed. (John K. Davies, chapter 12, “Classical Greek Production,” The Cambridge Economic History of the Greco-Roman World, pp. 333–61)

Forgetting as the Old Oligarch\(^\text{13}\) had so rightly insisted that Athens made far more from trade than from any and all of its richest mines put together, Davies added:

> However, we can also identify ways in which the classical period saw increases in money supply. One was via plunder from warfare out of region, the most substantial being the gains made at the expense of the Persian empire between 480 and 450. A second source was mercenary service out of region. This was an old custom on a small scale, but grew in importance from the late fifth century when both the Persian empire and its adversaries resorted to hiring Greek soldiers. A third comprised spasmodic, politically motivated consignments from non-Greek rulers, such as the payments made by Persia to one side or another for a century from the 420s till Alexander’s conquest. Yet the impact of these three sources on the money supply was minor compared to new bullion

\(^{13}\) The “Old Oligarch” is the name assigned to the unknown author of a treatise hostile to Athenian democracy. The piece, included in the shorter works of Xenophon (c.430–354 BCE), is also known also known as Pseudo-Xenophon. The author, who appears to be an Athenian, regards democracy as undesirable on the ground that it gives the mob an undue voice in the state. Once thought to have been written by Xenophon himself, this is now considered unlikely because the style is not his. G.W. Bowersock, editor of the Loeb text, argues for a date of c.443 BCE, hence probably before Xenophon was born.
from the silver mines. The main sources exploited in the classical period after the flooding of the workings on Siphnos were Laurion in south-east Attica, the Pangaion range by Amphipolis in the north Aegean coast, Thasos, and the hinterland of Apollonia. Unfortunately, the rate of bullion flow into the Greek economy cannot be reliably quantified, and certainly experienced high annual variation, while the routes by which it entered circulation changed during the period under review. (p. 356).

Astrid Møller dodges the antitheses of Boardman and Vickers, trying some sort of weak avoidance, alleging that some of the amphorae were reused in Egypt “for bringing water into the desert—certainly not the only occasion for reuse.” However, she refuted Johannes Hasebroke’s “picture of the Greek trader” as poor, foreign, and illiterate, and also “that at Athens, mectics14 and foreigners exercised trade while Athenians financed it.” She got it right that: “Under Pericles, state revenues were no less than 1,000 talents a year (roughly 600 from the allies and 400 from Athenians sources). At its height, (probably in the 430s B.C.) Athens had a reserve of 9,700 talents of coined silver deposited on the Acropolis.” (Chapter 13 of CEHGRW, “Classical Greece: Distribution,” pp. 362–84)

The first to recognize that homosexually oriented pornographic silverware might have been plentiful in 5th-century Athens at roughly the time when such scenes were disappearing from painted ceramics (after 470 BCE) was perhaps Ned Warren, who intuited it. Alan Shapiro tried to explain the disappearance of homoerotic sympotic ware as the upper classes becoming more discreet over their pederastic vices in an era when they were becoming less acceptable. Democracy was on the rise, and popular sentiment did not favor elite practices in which the masses could not take part: hoplites were normally excluded from gymnasia, and oarsmen, from a yet lower class, were even further removed from this elite cultural scene. Thomas Hubbard has claimed the oarsmen envied rather than disapproved of their betters having trophy boys. That may be so. Homophobia was not endemic, as it has been in our own times, less so recently, and there is no reason to suppose oarsmen would have been hostile by instinct. In my view, though, neither hatred nor envy would have intimidated the aristocracy. Rather, they would have been driven by the allure of silver for their sympotic ware after 470 when it became much more readily available to those with the wealth to pay for it.

14 A metic was an alien having some rights of citizenship in the city in which he lived (from Greek "metoikos", which combines "meta", indicating change, and "oikos", dwelling). The metic was like a denizen in mediaeval common law.
Almost all such silverware was probably melted down during the last years of the great Peloponnesian War and the depredations that followed the surrender of Athens. The Thirty Tyrants would have made confiscations and, following their overthrow, further losses were to be expected. Some of these losses of erotic silverware were replaced with the return of prosperity in the 4th century, but further destruction followed in the struggles against Philip, Alexander and the Diadochi. Even Boardman admitted that sympotic ware was made of silver after Alexander’s conquest. (See also Eleni Zimi, Late Classical and Hellenistic Silver Plate from Macedonia, Oxford Monographs on Classical Archaeology, OUP, 2011)

In his survey of collectors in Greek Painted Pottery (1960), Robert Manuel Cook astonishingly omitted both Warren and his lover Marshall. The damnatio memoriae suffered by these two openly homosexual geniuses has not been properly corrected. Warren’s apparent hunch about the existence of silver sympotic ware was confirmed, in his mind, by the acquisition of the cup that now bears his name. It was authenticated by the British Museum and acquired by them in 1999 for £1.8 million. It is a skypbos that is probably not a 1st-century CE imitation of the 5th century BCE Athenian pornographic sympotic silverware. (See “The Warren Cup,” Figures 1 and 2). It seems less and less likely that it was a forgery, as a few, including Vickers, still claim, and as will be considered further below.

Cook cannot be faulted exclusively for such an omission: Warren has long been ignored. His masterpiece, the three-volume polemic A Defence of Uranian Love, privately printed in a tiny edition of 100 copies around the time of his death, was never recognized or quoted in any serious way after that and is still overlooked, as is J. A. Symonds’s magnificent A Problem in Greek Ethics (1883). Neither work was mentioned by G.W. Bowersock in his review in the New York Review of Books (September 2009) of two books dealing with Greek pederasty, The Greeks

From the Greek word for "successors", the Diadochi were the Macedonian generals and administrators who succeeded Alexander the Great, whose empire disintegrated in the course of a bloody power struggle among his successors.

The literal meaning of this Latin phrase, "condemnation of memory," expresses a judgment that a person must not be remembered. It was a form of dishonor that could be passed by the Roman Senate upon traitors or others who brought discredit to the state. The intent was to erase someone from history, a task somewhat easier in ancient times when documentation was much sparser.

A cup characterized by a deep bowl, two handles projecting horizontally near the rim, and either a flat base or a foot.
and Greek Love, by James Davidson and Images of Ancient Greek Pederasty, by Andrew Lear and Eva Cantarella. The Defence was not even listed in the catalog of any American library until I gave a xeroxed copy to the Boston Athenaeum in 2004. Warren’s apologia has only now been formally published for general distribution, in what Thomas K. Hubbard refers to as a “magnificent scholarly edition,” with a discerning introduction by Michael Matthew Kaylor, translations by Mark Robert Miner and a preface by me (Valancourt Books, 2009).

The Warren Cup cannot stand as a symbol for the lost body of Athenian homoerotic silver that the elites came to prefer to ceramics after plentiful silver was discovered at Laurion in the early 5th century, much less the silverware used before that time by kings and tyrants. It was not, as Miner imagined, an object granting some degree of visual access to the vanished sympotic customs of the past but only to those of the 1st century patron who commissioned it.

The Warren Cup(below, figures 1 & 2): Gracious skyphos or kiddie porn?
Figure 1

Figure 2
Chapter 3: The petulant squabbles of Oxford dons

Contemporary debates over the relative social status afforded those gold, gilded, and silver vessels continue, long after almost all of them have disappeared. Their status is pitted against that of the virtually indestructible clay vessels, found whole or fragmentary, that line the shelves of even the most obscure museums, about which Andrew Robert Burn dryly observed: “Those middle-class Attic cups and bowls [are] our museum-pieces” (Pelican History of Greece [1966], 262). Both Beazley’s high regard for clay pots and Burn’s deprecating attitude would find followers in the next generation.

John Boardman overemphasizes the high level of craftsmanship of the Greek sympotic pottery that has survived. Vickers and Gill (henceforth cited as “Vickers” for simplicity) have continued to deride the same as clay “pots,” as “cheap knockoffs” made for the lower-end market, as mere copies of the kind of refined gold and silver vessels on which the truly wealthy had always supped.

Because Warren’s aim was to provide his uptight and homophobic hometown of Boston with Classical culture, in the form of original artworks “illustrating all that we read about,” and because he felt it especially important to value the homoerotic materials his contemporaries deplored, he did not discriminate between clay and silver vessels in his collecting practices. Boardman, however, like his mentor Beazley, in accordance with his own professional focus on ceramics, and openly enthralled with the mystique of clay, has remained a strong advocate for the high esteem in which he supposed that ceramic ware was held in its own day, due to its exquisite craftsmanship and aesthetic appeal.

Boardman even argues that the clay workers who made and painted the ceramics must themselves have enjoyed significant prestige and social status. Under pressure from Vickers and his followers, however, Boardman retreated to a slightly more realistic position in his Vases (2001). He acknowledged that pot prices actually reflected a much lower cost for pottery than that implied by the modern rapturous appreciation of their artistic qualities. That inflated notion that can be traced back to the salesmanship of Hamilton’s publicist d’Hancarville, and also to the Arts and Crafts Movement of the early 20th century, which affected both Warren and Beazley. Boardman is clearly not very happy about the way Vickers’ analysis has forced him to bring his ideas of the value of Greek ceramics into accord with the economic reality of their prices.

The motives of the handful of scholars who dismiss decorated Greek vases as very cheap are open to question because their condemnation is extended to those who collect and study them.
and includes the “strange notion that monetary value in antiquity should determine our estimate of what antiquity has left us” (Boardman, *Vases* [2001], 158). Very well then: the conspicuous presence of ceramics in museums now is what must determine the value of ceramics. Clearly Boardman is much happier reasoning backwards than forwards; no doubt those Ancient Greeks who bought ceramics loved their pots as much as he does.

On the other hand, the brilliance of the Warren Cup renders plausible the metal-centered views of Gisela Richter, Burn, and to a certain extent Vickers, by reminding us of the powerful attractiveness that arises from the combination of glittering, precious metal and fine craftsmanship (we are referring here to “bright, polished silver” of the Warren Cup in its museum state; Vickers’ arguments, conversely, hinge upon the supposed blackness of tarnished silver, as will be discussed below). Warren’s interests span and indeed transcend this contemporary debate between Boardman and Vickers, inasmuch as he collected both precious metal and ceramic wares. For in addition to acquiring the silver cup that now bears his name (which he dubbed the “Holy Grail,” because he had so long searched for it, and found it in the Holy Land), Warren also subsidized and guided the man who would become the world’s authority on Greek pottery, John Davidson Beazley, Boardman’s teacher and predecessor in ceramic connoisseurship. Beazley was married but homosexual; his wife was a “beard,” a consort of convenience and camouflage who was also the photographer of his vases.

Vickers, too, has been forced to retreat from his original extreme position, admitting that silver sympotic ware was not always as prevalent as he had previously claimed, and in particular was much less common before 480 BCE. In comparing the original 1984 article “Artful Crafts: The Influence of Metal Work on Athenian Painted Pottery” to the nearly eponymous book of 1994 (co-written with David Gill), many scars, bullet holes, and patch jobs become evident, the result of Boardman’s attacks.\(^\text{18}\)

By pitting the views of Boardman and Vickers against each other, as well as against the evidence, I offer a nuanced compromise, in which Boardman’s ceramic perspective yields to Vickers’ metallic view. These disparate visions converge at the point when Athenians discovered abundant silver at Laurion in 482 BCE, and silverware began to appear on the tables of wealthy Athenians, not just in the more elaborate dining of monarchs and tyrants. Slightly and reluctantly, Boardman and Vickers have themselves recently moved toward a compromise between their earlier extreme views, such that Warren’s unified interest in metallic and ceramic vessels has begun to re-emerge as a more attractive perspective.

\(^\text{18}\) The book is titled *Artful Crafts: Ancient Greek Silverware and Pottery*. 

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I also consider the many sources of Greek silver and the diverse circumstances under which silverware was destroyed. To establish the context more fully, I cite literary references to the very limited use of silver vases by the Greeks before 470 BCE, to the incoming wealth of the silver mines, and to the increasing popularity of silver after 470, by which time Athens had been significantly enriched.

Virgil’s *Aeneid* testifies to the backward-looking power of silver tableware: it offers a connection to the archaic world of Homeric values; it operates to validate claims of aristocratic ancestry; it serves as a tangible symbol of culture, sophistication, and stability. Perhaps silver was given as a remembrancer to youths who had succeeded in reflecting aristocratic ideals and values back to their aristocratic elders, because it is mirror-bright when polished. (This tradition continues today, in the use of silver for athletic trophies and medals.) Such silver gifts cemented the personal bonds between young male aristocrats, as well as served to establish and further large-scale class loyalties.

Petronius’s *Satyricon*, contemporaneous with the Warren Cup, by contrast, satirizes those “rather Grecian” values in a “rather Roman” way. The mistreatment and abuse of silver by Trimalchio, a freedman and nouveau-riche host, mark him as crude, vulgar, lacking an aristocratic birth, comically grotesque because of his lack of education and culture, and one for whom homosexual liaisons always bespeak the most vulgar, common, and sordid kind of sexuality—hence, never approaching the noble patterning of “Greek Love.” Instead of showing esteem for the best, Trimalchio makes a pet of the worst available youth, a wretched, bleary-eyed creature: indeed, it is thematic that, in his house, silver is employed for various degrading and abject uses—as a toothpick, as a chamber pot—instead of being employed to express aristocratic friendship or some other grand sentiment. The Warren Cup indeed reflects this sort of orgy with an underage onlooker, just as some of the earlier ceramic ones do.

Those early ceramics, indeed, remind us that should not rush to sanitize the entire Greek depiction or experience of pederasty as compared with the Romans. The refinement and chaste spirituality of what a later age would call “Platonic love” was an evolved phenomenon. Even Plato’s own views, insofar as any can be imputed to him rather than to Socrates and others of whom he speaks, appear always to have been a work in progress. What may be asserted with far greater assurance is that orgies did not start with the Romans: the Greeks knew how to throw a wild party, and this feature of their culture is vividly depicted on their early ceramics, not least through vase painters in the black-figure style, some of whom specialised in depictions of the komos and have been dubbed the Komos Group. The Komos was a ritualistic drunken procession performed by revelers, whose participants were known as komasts. Pindar describes komoi taking place at the city festivals (Pythian 5.21, 8.20, Olympian 4.9); they have also been
associated with wedding parties and other banquets. Even the formal symposium tended to degenerate from high-minded conversation to boozily conviviality and drunken abandon, possibly ending in a komos as the night wore on.

An orgiastic sexual element is clearly depicted in the komos ceramics. Andrew Lear describes one scene in which “three youths engage in a complex sexual game: the youths on the left and right bend down and squeeze the central youth’s erect penis between their buttocks.” On another vase “actual intercourse is portrayed...where, at the far left of an orgiastic scene a crouching youth pulls another youth’s buttocks down onto his erect penis” (Lear, Images, pp.117-8). Lear is careful to associate such scenes with the tradition of the public revel rather than pederastic relationships, which more typically depicted a man giving a gift to a boy, with sexual interaction usually limited, if shown at all, to no more touching the boy’s naked genitals.

[Photo of komost cup: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Komast_Cup ]

This essay originates in a void—almost no silver vessels having survived from the 5th or 4th centuries BCE and none at all with homoerotic motives. I speculate about what was lost and attempt to correct the exaggerated conclusions others have drawn from today’s visual dominance of ceramics. I am deductive and argumentative. At times this impressionistic essay suggests images that are coordinated with literature. With a controlled, anachronistic playfulness I hope that the delight and revelation this technique might afford students of literature and culture will compensate for the aggravation and shock it will likely elicit among certain professional archaeologists, historians, classicists, curators and dealers.

Here is another such provocation: no chryselephantine\(^9\) statues survive today but, based on allusions in the classical literature, it is accepted that they used to exist. There are even more literary allusions to silver sympotic wares, so why doubt that they were once a reality? After a survey in the following chapter of ancient gold and silver tableware from such Near Eastern and Mediterranean civilizations as were generally known for their wealth I turn to the limited presence of gold and silver in early Greek contexts including the Age of Tyrants. Everything changed when silver first became plentiful among the Greeks with the discovery of significant amounts of silver at Laurion in 482 BCE, loot from the Persians, during the \textit{pentecontaetia}\(^20\) tribute from the Delian League, and, most of all, from trade after the Persian Wars.

\(^9\) Chryselephantine: overlaid with gold and ivory.

\(^{20}\) Pentecontaetia, meaning "the period of fifty years," refers to the period between the defeat of the second Persian invasion of Greece at Plataea in 479 BCE and the beginning of the Peloponnesian War in 433 BCE. The term...
A brief survey of precious metals in the ancient Mediterranean modeled after Marc Bloch’s “Le problème de l’or au moyen âge” (“The problem of gold in the middle ages”) will help clear the air. I will first consider examples, in roughly chronological order, of the use of gold and silver among the Egyptians, Mycenaens, Archaic Greeks of the Homeric Dark Age and Israelites. In Chapter 5 I will continue the survey with the Persians, and then return to the Greeks from the Age of the Tyrants (700 to 467 BCE), setting the stage for the upsurge in silver tableware that took place in Classical Greece after 470 BCE.

For a long time, in Egypt, gold was more plentiful than silver because of rich sources in Nubia and elsewhere. This is one reason the country was sought as a trading partner. In a letter received by Amenhotep III, the pharaoh was urged by the ruler of another country to send shipments of gold, asserting that in Egypt “gold is as plentiful as dirt” (Armana Letters, cited in Cline, 2014 p.57). We also find even more gold ornaments than silver ones in Mycenaean graves. The Phoenicians, however, extracted vast amounts of silver from Spain and other sites in the western Mediterranean after 1000 BCE. And ever afterwards around the Mediterranean, silver varied from one sixth to one twelfth the price of gold.

It is notable that Mycenaean shaft graves have yielded much treasure, including gold and silver cups, such as the following (see Figure 3):

This Mycenaean silver cup is dated 1400–1300 BCE, from Tomb 92, Enkomi, Cyprus. . . . This type of straight-sided cup with a single spool-shaped handle is called a Vaphio cup. . . . Very large examples are seen carried by Aegeans in tribute scenes on Egyptian wall-paintings. . . . There can be no doubt that large numbers of precious vessels have been lost through melting down and re-use of the metal. (British Museum Web site:

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originated with Thucydides. The Pentecostaetia was marked by the rise of Athens as the dominant state in the Greek world and by the rise of Athenian democracy.

21 Marc Léopold Benjamin Bloch (1886-1944) was a French historian who cofounded the influential Annales School of French social history. He is widely known for his unfinished meditation on the writing of history, The Historian’s Craft. He was captured and shot by the Gestapo at Lyon for his work in the French Resistance.
To judge from the shaft graves excavated by Heinrich Schliemann and Chrestos Tsountas, Mycenaean elites also had gold and silver cups, such as the one described below by Tsountas and James Irving Manatt in *The Mycenaean Age: A Study of the Monuments and Culture of Pre-Homeric Greece* (1897) (see Figures 4 and 5 below):

>Cauldrons] were placed in the grave as a form of stored wealth, perhaps without the special meaning which apparently attached to the gold and silver goblets. These are found chiefly with the bodies of men, and may be regarded as their proper insignia, to be used in the other world as well as this in their potations and libations. One of these, a gold goblet from Grave IV (Fig. 36) is not only a *depas amphikypellon*\(^{22}\), but it has a dove perched on each of the two handles,

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\(^{22}\) Homer uses the term *depas amphikypellon* for a two-handled cup. We owe its modern adoption to Heinrich Schliemann, the first major excavator of Troy.

http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight_objects/me/s/silver_two-handled_cup.aspx
thus recalling the famous cup of Nestor described by Homer. (Tsountas & Manatt, p. 99)

Figure 4

Figure 5
It was not uncommon for the surfaces of such vases to be worked in relief with scenes representing the glories and agonies of the heroic lifestyle (see Figure 6):

The vase, for which the large fragment is here reproduced (Fig. 95), was a wide-mouthed vessel of solid silver, save that the rim is plated with gold and the notched shield, riveted under the rim, is also of gold. The relief (as on the Vaphio cups) doubtless covered the entire surface, and might have afforded a complete profile of the hill-fort, with the entire array of its defenders and assailants. As it is, there remains enough to give us a most vivid conception of primitive warfare. (Tsountas & Manatt, pp. 212–13)

Figure 6

It would be beyond the scope of this paper to discuss how prevalent such precious cups were in Post-Mycenaean Greek cultures—in other words, whether “Homer” (that aggregate of the bards of the Dark Ages), with major emendations as late as the Peisistratids23, is simply

23 The three tyrants who ruled in Athens from 546 to 510 BC, Peisistratos and his two sons, Hipparchus and Hippias.
depicting the cultural reality of the time or embellishing it. It could be that Homer presented his audience’s heroic ancestors as having the types of table settings that other, richer, cultures of the time possessed and which his contemporary patrons doubtlessly wished to imagine their ancestors as having possessed. Poetic patrons in the Dark Ages may not have had on their tables any of the precious metals that Homer describes, since “Only very few craftsmen, in the employ of the lords of the cities, can have been engaged in making plate and, indeed, after about 1400 BCE gold and silver vessels were probably very rare” (Strong, Plate, 53).

Regarding Chryses’ staff being “golden” in Iliad, I, 15, Clyde Pharr’s remark on Homer’s representation is apt: “Of course it was of gold, if it is to appear decently in epic” (Homeric Greek: A Book for Beginners [1920], 32). The verbal austerity and concision of the Spartans was so famed it gave us the word “laconic”, and minimalist brevity is a prized feature of poetry; but the epic form is under no obligation to be pinched and ascetic, quite the reverse: it is expansive and luxuriant – which for a writer is an easy virtue, as it costs no more to describe a cup as “silver” than as “earthen.” Besides, as Pharr suggests, the Homeric audience would certainly have expected that the key accoutrements of the major figures of such stories be highlighted in silver and gold, a fundamental storytelling convention: a poet is more or less obliged to represent the gods and ancient heroes as holding cups and scepters of the most extravagant and attractive materials. Therefore, it is in such a light that we must approach Homer’s representations of precious tableware, such as the following:

> And beside them a beauteous cup, that the old man had brought from home, studded with bosses of gold; four were the handles thereof, and about each twain doves were feeding, while below were two supports. Another man could scarce have availed to lift that cup from the table, when it was full, but old Nestor would raise it right easily. (Iliad, XI, 632–37)

The Mycenaean cup depicted in Figures 4 and 5 is similar, although we can gauge the degree of poetic exaggeration in the Homeric passage above by observing that this “real cup” has but two handles and two doves. Such a two-handled silver cup is also mentioned several times as a prize in Iliad, XXIII. Of the 24 uses of the word “cup” in the Odyssey, 9 are golden; of the 24 uses of “cup” in the Iliad, only 5 are (Perseus text search).
By definition, the Dark Age is obscure to us in terms of history, as opposed to legend, offering little in terms of secure chronology or any other hard facts. Of no figure in the story of precious metals is this more true than King Midas—he of “the golden touch”. Midas appears to be the name of two kings of the royal house of Phrygia in Asia Minor. The most famous King Midas is popularly remembered for his legendary ability to turn everything he touched into gold. The Phrygian city Midaeum is thought to have been named after him. The legends told about this Midas and his father Gordias, credited with founding the Phrygian capital city Gordium and tying the Gordian Knot, indicate that they were believed to have lived before the Trojan War of Homer’s epics, sometime in the 2nd millennium BC. Homer does not mention Midas or Gordias, but does name two famed Phrygian kings, Mygdon and Otreus.

There was also an historical King Midas, though, whose reign in the late 8th century came long after. Midas had a sort of successor in King Croesus, ruler from 560 to 547 BC of Lydia, not far from Phrygia. The wealth of Croesus, like that of the original Midas, was legendary, and of course his name remains a byword to this day for riches beyond measure. Mentioning him in the same breath as “golden touch” Midas seems appropriate even though it does some violence to the roughly chronological order of this account. Referencing the reign of the historical King Midas of the late 8th century as a benchmark enables us to get a handle on that chronology again as this account progresses towards Egypt in the 7th century BCE. More will be said about Croesus in due course.

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24 Even the Greeks were unsure whether the Trojan War was myth or reality. The earliest literary references by those who thought it was an historical event dated it to the 13th or 12th century BC, and believed Troy had been located near the Dardanelles. The dates given by Eratosthenes, 1194–1184 BC, are often preferred. They roughly correspond with archaeological evidence of a catastrophic burning of the city. A number of 20th century writers thought Troy was destroyed earlier, in 1275 BC, probably by an earthquake.

25 A wealth of ancient sources for the legendary and historical Midas are discussed in Lynn E. Roller, “The Legend of Midas”, Classical Antiquity 22 (October 1983):299-313. Roller brings into question the view that there was more than one King Midas: “To the Greeks and Romans...Midas was primarily a character who appeared in several legendary tales. In several accounts he appears as a figure of ridicule; the most complete of the extant narratives, that in Ovid’s Metamophoses, presents him as the king who was foolish enough to wish that everything he touched might turn into gold, and who was made more comical by the addition of ass’s ears. As a result, the historical king of Phrygia and the legends associated with his name seem to be concerned with two separate characters, and several scholars have denied that one and the same man lies behind them. Nonetheless, clear, if indirect, links can be established between the ruler of the Phrygians and the character of Greek and Roman legend” (p. 299).
If there is any truth to Herodotus’s tale of Psammetichus and the Dodecarchy, then the Egyptians of the 7th century BCE drank from golden cups:

The twelve kings for some time dealt honorably by one another, but at length it happened that on a certain occasion, when they had met to worship in the temple of Hephaestus, the high-priest on the last day of the festival, in bringing forth the golden goblets from which they were wont to pour the libations, mistook the number, and brought eleven goblets only for the twelve princes. Psammetichus was standing last, and being left without a cup, he took his helmet, which was of bronze, from off his head, stretched it out to receive the liquor, and so made his libation. (*Persian Wars*, II, 151)

Psammetichus later reunited Egypt, founding a dynasty with five successors. His inventive and self-assured handling of the socially tricky golden goblets goof-up marks him out as a man of character and potential. This is no doubt the point of the story. The details, as so often with Herodotus, need to be taken with a pinch of salt, but his history is generally held to become far more reliable as it approaches his own times, and the 7th century was not in the remote past to him. Herodotus also records that in Egypt even crocodiles might be adorned with gold:

The crocodile is esteemed sacred by some of the Egyptians... Those who live near Thebes, and those who dwell around Lake Moeris, regard them with especial veneration. In each of these places they keep one crocodile in particular, who is taught to be tame and tractable. They adorn his ears with ear-rings of molten stone or gold, and put bracelets on his fore-paws, giving him daily a set portion of bread, with a certain number of victims; and, after having thus treated him with the greatest possible attention while alive, they embalm him when he dies and bury him in a sacred repository. ([http://classics.mit.edu/Herodotus/history.2.ii.html](http://classics.mit.edu/Herodotus/history.2.ii.html))

Here Herodotus is speaking in the present tense, about the customs of the Egyptians in his own times, with a specificity of place that suggests his story may well be true.

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Psammeticus, also known as Psamtik I, founded the Saite, or 26th, dynasty. "Dodecarchy" simply means "rule of 12" i.e. the 12 kings, or princes, referred to by Herodotus, none of whom had overall control of Egypt until Psammeticus emerged triumphantly dominant.

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The Bible’s limitations as a guide to history have been the subject of more scholarly attention and remark, by far, than even those of the entertainingly credulous Herodotus. Nevertheless, the scriptures have their place in this account for similar reasons to Homer: their contents reflect the concerns and aspirations of the cultures that produced and venerated them. They cast light on the times in which they were written, which, as regards some texts of relevance for present purposes, was the 6th and 5th centuries BCE. It should be borne in mind, in what follows, that the writers of such texts as Exodus were referring back to very distant times and to events that were hardly more than mythological if at all—and in the case of Genesis obviously so.

While the Bible cautions against the gold and silver idols of the pagans (Psalms 115:4, “Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men’s hands”), the Tabernacle in which the followers of Moses worshipped in the desert had twenty wall panels on each side, panels fitting into sockets of silver (Exodus 26:22-25). Another Bible story also reveals silver’s high symbolic value, this time in the form of a cup. Although the biblical Jews were certainly not known for an interest in pederasty, in this story Joseph’s silver cup serves to evoke the deepest intergenerational male-to-male feelings: a father’s love for his favored sons.

After Joseph, one of the sons of Jacob, rose to power as an overseer in Egypt, he played a cruel trick on the brothers who had sold him into slavery and who later came to Egypt to beg for grain during a famine: “Put my cup, the silver cup, in the mouth of the sack of the youngest, with his money for the grain” (Genesis 44:2, RSV, emphasis added). Here the values are clearly marked: the cup is a personal object, and a valuable one, and thus well suited to serve as a token in Joseph’s emotional game playing. The later discovery of the “stolen” silver cup becomes Joseph’s excuse to retain his younger brother Benjamin “as my slave.” The audience, of course, knows that Joseph and Benjamin are brothers sharing a common mother as well as a common father; but, for all the others know, their brother Benjamin, an attractive boy, has simply caught the eye of an official of a foreign court and is perhaps destined to become an Egyptian court eunuch, a sexual plaything for Joseph, a member of the Egyptian elite. Jacob the Patriarch’s original loss of his favorite son Joseph—by a trick played by his brothers—is mirrored by the “loss” of the treasured silver cup belonging to Joseph the Egyptian overseer—by a trick played on his brothers. This loss is reflected yet again in the possibility of Jacob’s loss
of a second favored son, one who is particularly dear to Jacob because he serves to remind him of his lost favorite, Joseph. However, this time the now vulnerable brothers are respectful of Jacob’s feelings and fearful of the consequences for themselves and the rest of their family:

Now therefore, when I come to your servant my father [Jacob], and the lad [Benjamin] is not with us, then, as his life is bound up in the lad’s life, when he sees that the lad is not with us, he will die; and your servants will bring down the gray hairs of your servant our father with sorrow to Sheol. (Genesis 44:30-32)

By creating such a dramatic reenactment—a reminder and a retraumatizing of Jacob’s original loss, centered on a silver cup as a material symbol of the love that a father has for a favorite son—Joseph forces his brothers to feel filial sympathy for their father, something that they evidently did not feel at the time when they sold him into slavery. This silver cup marks Joseph, favored by the Pharaoh for his insights regarding dreams, as part of the Egyptian court; thus, this Egyptian silver cup is a fitting symbol for the favored place under Jacob that Joseph has lost, and which he, in turn, causes Benjamin to lose, at least for the duration of his retributive charade.

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27 In the King James version of the Bible Sheol is rendered as “the grave”.
Chapter 5: Gold and silver: the Persians and the Greek tyrants

Did the Persians—under whose hegemony the Jewish scriptures took their final form—place a similar value on silver cups? Amid a discussion about precious cups, Athenaeus illustrates the relevant Persian attitude through the following remark about earthenware cups, a remark made by one of his deipnosophists (masters of dinner-table conversation\textsuperscript{28}): “We must beg to be excused from earthenware cups. For Ctesias says that ‘Among the Persians any man who falls under the king’s displeasure uses earthenware drinking-cups’” (Deipnosophists, XI, 464).

This is reinforced in the next section: “Speaking of the Persians in the eighth book of Cyropaedeia, Xenophon writes thus: ‘And what is more, if they own the greatest possible number of cups, they pride themselves on that; and, if they have openly contrived to get them by dishonest methods, they feel no shame at that. For dishonesty and avarice have grown to great proportions among them’” (ibid., 465). This anecdote does not explicitly mention silver or gold, but the Athenaean anecdotes that precede and follow it, the whole drift of the chapter, and the emphasis on avarice in this particular anecdote, all point to cups of precious metal.

\textsuperscript{28} From the Greek "deipnon" (meal) + "sophistai" (wise men). \textit{The Deipnosophists} is the title of a 3rd century CE work by Athenaeus, describing learned discussions at a banquet. From the Classical website Attalus: "It is a long and extremely diffuse work, which is presented as a series of erudite discussions over dinner. Athenaeus includes frequent quotations from earlier authors, especially from the writers of comedies, which give us a fascinating glimpse of a wide range of ancient Greek life and literature that would otherwise be unknown. Naturally, food and drink are the most common topic of conversation throughout, but often that is merely the starting point for long digressions. \textit{The Deipnosophists} is traditionally split into fifteen books, some of which have survived only in an abbreviated form." http://www.attalus.org/old/athenaeus.html
At great length, Herodotus testifies to the wealth of King Croesus of Lydia (Persian War, I, 50–51), introduced above in connection with King Midas. From among Croesus’s extensive treasures are mentioned his dedications at Delphi, which included golden goblets, two enormous bowls of gold and silver, four silver casks, two lustral vases, and a number of round silver basins. Judging from these items dedicated at Delphi, under Croesus Lydia must have had plenty of gold and silver plate, recalling “the golden touch” of Midas.

Croesus is believed to have struck the first coins ever, but of electrum, a local ore containing a mixture of gold with silver. None of them survive. The Greeks of western Asia Minor, however, whom Croesus had dominated to a greater or lesser degree, produced the first silver coins, a few of which survive from a little before 500. They probably mined the silver locally, but the Homeric epics indicate that most silver in the Dark Age came into Hellas from the Phoenicians. Croesus was captured and Lydia annexed in 546 BCE by Cyrus the Great, the Shah of Persia.

The Persians, in their vast empire, the largest before Alexander, accumulated much more gold and silver from sources in Asia and Africa than had any previous empire. Because they controlled the Phoenicians, they acquired silver, even from the parts of Europe that those mariners had colonized. The Greeks themselves, those of Anatolia, having also been overrun by the Persians, were dazzled by Persian wealth. Persia’s golden coins, called darics, were minted by Cyrus’s second successor, Darius I, who reigned from 522 to 486 BC. Known to history as Darius the Great, the shah of shahs, his currency was a potent expression of his greatness, the like of which the world had never seen – that coin is even mentioned several times in the Bible.

Darius, known more as an organizer than a conqueror, nevertheless ordered a march through Thrace, the part of Europe adjoining the Dardanelles, around the edge of the Black Sea, in order to subdue the nomads there who were threatening his Transoxianan provinces east of that sea. His expedition, begun in 514, proved a disaster, and he returned to the Danube defeated,

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29 Transoxiana is the Latin name used for the portion of Central Asia corresponding approximately with modern-day Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, southern Kyrgyzstan and southwest Kazakhstan. Literally, the name means “across the Oxus River”, Oxus being the Greek name for the Amu Darya. The Latin term, and its Greek equivalent, located the region adequately from the viewpoint of the Greeks and Romans. The name Transoxiana stuck in western consciousness following the exploits of Alexander the Great, who extended Greek culture into the region with his conquests of the 4th century BC; Transoxiana was the most north-eastern point of the Hellenistic culture.
where he had left some Greek auxiliaries to defend his crossing point. The Greek rearguard there included Miltiades, vassal of Darius, married to a Thracian princess. Those Greeks, learning of the defeat, discussed at Miltiades’ instigation destroying the bridge before Darius could escape to safety, but were overruled by another Greek, Histiaeus, the tyrant of the greatest Anatolian city Miletus, on the south western coast of Asia Minor.

Until then, the “Greeks,” whether in Asia Minor or Europe, had been relatively poor, in spite of their far-flung colonies and extensive trading networks. By about 630, they had become wealthier than ever before, and tyrants first emerged among them about that time. Aristotle mentions the phenomenon with particular reference to the earliest known tyrant, Pheidon of Argos (ca. 700–650; regnal dates unknown), of whom we will be hearing more below:

For almost the greatest number of tyrants have risen, it may be said, from being demagogues, having won the people’s confidence by slandering the notables. For some tyrannies were set up in this manner when the states had already grown great, but others that came before them arose from kings departing from the ancestral customs and aiming at a more despotic rule and others from the men elected to fill the supreme magistracies (for in old times the peoples used to appoint the popular officials and the sacred embassies for long terms of office), and others from oligarchies electing some one supreme official for the greatest magistracies. For in all these methods they had it in their power to effect their purpose easily, if only they wished, because they already possessed the power of royal rule in the one set of cases and of their honorable office in the other, for example Pheidon in Argos and others became tyrants when they possessed royal power already, while the Ionian tyrants and Phalaris arose from offices of honor, and Panaetius at Leontini and Cypselus at Corinth and Peisistratus at Athens and Dionysius at Syracuse and others in the same manner from the position of demagogue. *(Politics, 1310b)*

Some of the tyrants came to use silver tableware (perhaps first in eastern Hellas, the area most under Lydian influence). They also may have begun to strike the first silver coins. But Greeks, other than tyrants, were still far too poor to dine off anything but fine painted pots, which began to be exported from Corinth at about this time—the famous black figures painted onto a
yellowish clay mined near that emporium. They soon began to be imitated, challenged, and
outdone by the Attic black-figure ones (both were often homoerotic) on the reddish clay of
Attica. Silver, however, was still scarce throughout Hellas, the relatively prosperous eastern
Greeks being increasingly pressed for even more tribute by the Persians after their annexation
of Lydia in 546.

The Anatolian Greeks, wearying of Persian tyranny and demands for tribute, and contemptuous
of Darius after his defeat by the barbarians in 514, revolted in 500, led by Histiaeus, the Tyrant
of Miletus, who had thwarted the attempt by Miltiades to destroy the bridge over the Danube,
a tale told most dramatically by Herodotus. The richest and most intellectual of all the Ionian
cities,²⁰ Miletus was brutally sacked, as dramatized in The Sack of Miletus, by Phrynichus.
Herodotus tells us (6.21.10) that the audience was moved to tears by the play, and its author
fined for bringing “familiar misfortunes” back to mind. It was also decreed that no play on the
subject should be produced again. The Sack of Miletus was written 21 years before Aeschylus’s
tragedy The Persians, which reflected on the subsequent defeat of Persia – a less hazardous
theme than Phrynichus’s tragedy insofar as, from the point of view of the audience, it was
about a glorious victory not a painful defeat: Persia’s undoing was attributed to Xerxes’ hubris
in building a bridge across the Hellespont, an action said to have angered the gods. Both plays
were unusual, though, in depicting events from contemporary history: The Persians is the only
surviving example. Aeschylus actually had what we might in our own times consider a rather
compelling reason to write about the defeat of the Persians: he had personally contributed to
it, both at the Battle of Marathon in 490 and ten years later against Xerxes’ invading forces at
the Battle of Salamis. Upon his death, around 456 BC, his epitaph commemorated his
participation in the victory at Marathon rather than his success as a playwright.

²⁰ In the 6th century BC, Miletus was the site of origin of the Greek philosophical, and even scientific, tradition.
Thales, followed by Anaximander and Anaximenes, known collectively to modern scholars as the Milesian School,
began to speculate about the material constitution of the world, and to propose naturalistic explanations for
various natural phenomena, in a break with traditional supernatural explanations.
Before the brutal suppression by the Persians of the Ionian revolt in 500, Samos, hardly more than a mile off the Anatolian coast, flourished as never before under its greatest tyrant, Polycrates. Encouraging pederastic poetry and as well as pederastic art and philosophy, he set a new standard of luxury in Hellas until he was lured to the mainland by the treacherous Persians and crucified by them in 522, shortly before they annexed Samos. Thereafter, the Persians continued to extend their power into Aegean islands and Thrace.

A contemporary of the dazzling Polycrates, the Athenian tyrant Hippias, like his own younger brother, Hipparchus, a lover of luxury, had sent Miltiades, a scion of the powerful Athenian clan the Philaidai, to regain control of the Thracian Chersonese, which we now know as the Gallipoli peninsula in European Turkey, betwixt the Aegean and the Dardanelles. While there, Miltiades married the daughter of the Thracian king, Olores, but after a while recognized the suzerainty of Darius, whom he had advocated undermining after that shah’s disastrous Scythian expedition of 514. Expelled shortly afterward from the Chersonese (which simply means “peninsula”) by the Scythians, he went back when those nomads withdrew. At that time, he apparently seized control of the offshore island of Lemnos with its rich silver mines, but after joining the Ionian revolt, he had to escape to Athens when the Persians put it down.

Acquitted there from the charge of exercising tyrannical power in the Chersonese, he was elected Strategos in 490 (i.e. one of ten such generals, or strategoi, chosen) assuming command of the spectacular Athenian triumph at the battle of Marathon. I believe he was the very first Athenian, except for tyrants, to use silverware at his symposia. In fact, he was the first private citizen of any Greek city to do so, certainly on the mainland, and probably even in the relatively richer eastern and western Hellenic cities, such as Syracuse. Thus, he set the pace for high fashion in Athens, soon to be immensely enriched by the well documented events beginning in 482 when the silver mines opened at Laurion.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tyrant</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>Reign</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pheidon</td>
<td>Argos</td>
<td>ca. 700–650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thrasyboulos</td>
<td>Miletus</td>
<td>7th C.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cypselus</td>
<td>Corinth</td>
<td>657–627</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Periander</td>
<td>Corinth</td>
<td>627–587</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peisistratos</td>
<td>Athens</td>
<td>546–527</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hippias</td>
<td>Athens</td>
<td>527–510</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polycrates</td>
<td>Samos</td>
<td>538–522</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miltiades</td>
<td>Thracian Cher.</td>
<td>516–489</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aristagoras</td>
<td>Miletos</td>
<td>505–496</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gelo</td>
<td>Syracuse</td>
<td>491–478</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hiero</td>
<td>Syracuse</td>
<td>478–467</td>
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“The well-known bowl found at Olympia [Figure 7] bears an inscription declaring it to be the thank-offering of the sons of Cypselus, tyrant of Corinth [from c. 657 to 627 BCE], from the spoils of war” (Strong, Plate, xxv). He probably captured it from another tyrant, perhaps even Pheidon of Argos (Aristotle, Politics, 1310b), who had silver sympotic ware. The rich Ionian tyrants, whether totally independent or under Lydian or Persian domination like their royal master, probably also had silver at their tables. The Peisistratids likely had silverware, too, and so almost certainly did Polycrates, the tyrant of Samos, from c. 538 to 522 BCE.

Because it was harder to extract, for some centuries silver was more valuable than gold. The Phoenicians, who discovered rich deposits of silver in Spain, employed it more widely than their neighbors, as can be seen from Homeric references to Sidonian silverware (Odyssey IV, 593). Xenophanes attributes the earliest coins to the Lydians, but these were forged of electrum, which, as already noted, was a naturally occurring mixture of silver and gold. The earliest known surviving coins were of Greek origin, made of silver and deposited at the Temple of Artemis at Ephesus (one of the Seven Wonders of the World) around 600 BCE. These early coins—whose prototypes may date to a generation earlier—were used for large-scale transactions, being little more than “ingots of the same weight” (pace Richard Seaford, who
fails to note in his *Reading Money*\(^{31}\) (1993) the slow transition from barter to coin, via ingots and weighted dust). According to Ephoros (Strabo viii, vi), Aegina was the first polis to adopt silver coinage, equating it to the value of iron spits.

Pheidon was mistakenly thought to have been the “first of all people who coined money” (*Etymologicum Magnum*, s.v. *obeliskos*). He is also said to have exchanged new money for old iron spits, and to have dedicated the obsolete spits to the shrine of Hera at Argos, for use as a general standard of weight. Although some have found it convenient to claim that Pheidon invented coins in order to pay his hoplites, almost all now date his *floruit*\(^{32}\) to 680–660 BCE, which is too early for this to have been possible. The *Etymologicum Magnum*, a compilation by a 12th-century antiquarian, includes the following brief account:

Pheidon of Argos was the first of all people who coined money, in Aegina; and giving the coins and taking the spits in return, he dedicated them to Hera of Argos (*Etymologicum Magnum*, s.v. *obeliskos*). (As quoted in David M. Schaps, *Invention of Coinage*, 101)

Small silver coins “for daily use” are only well attested after 450 BCE, by Aristophanes, who cites the Athenian rather than the Aeginetan\(^{33}\) or the Corinthian standard for the weights of drachmae. However, of particular significance here is the opening of very rich silver veins at

\(^{31}\) In a later work, *Money and the Early Greek Mind*, Seaford talks about the potential of iron spits as money, and discusses their possible value (Seaford 2004, p.105).

\(^{32}\) The Latin term *floruit*, meaning “flourished”, is used here in its technical sense (albeit somewhat ungrammatically!), to indicate a period in which a person, or a movement, historical epoch, school of art, etc., was known to be either flourishing or at least, as it were, as "a going concern". Broadly, the term denotes the peak of such activity. More specifically, it is often used in genealogy and historical writing when a person’s birth or death dates are unknown, but some other evidence exists that indicates when he or she was alive. In art history, the term is used when dating careers. It denotes the period of the artist’s creative activity, not lifespan.

\(^{33}\) According to Herodotus (v. 83), Aegina was a colony of Epidaurus. Ephorus, as noted above, has it that Pheidon of Argos established a mint in Aegina. From this mint’s output Kydonia on Crete began minting coins by over-striking Aeginetan ones. Thus it was the Aeginetans who, within 30 or 40 years of the invention of coinage in Asia Minor by the Ionian Greeks or the Lydians, introduced coinage to the Western world. Wealthy Aegina became a serious and uncomfortably close rival to Athens. The island colony lay only 12 miles off the Athenian coast. Pericles called it “the eyesore of Piraeus” – a hostile presence on the horizon, as viewed from Athens’ main harbor. Aegina was a Dorian city, like Sparta and Corinth. With a predominantly trading economy it had more in common with the latter but its decline has been attributed to an overreliance on slaves, who, as in Sparta, came to vastly outnumber the free inhabitants.
Laurion in 482 BCE, which made Athens the principal producer of silver throughout Hellas, and drove down the value of that metal in relation to gold, bronze, and iron, in much the same way that the Spanish silver mines in Mexico and Peru would do so two millennia later. Not only did the drachmae stamped with the Athenian owl become the dominant Greek silver currency after 470 BCE, but there was plenty of ore left over for sympotic ware. Athenian silversmiths then added the value of their craftsmanship to the surplus of a newly abundant, raw material.

Meanwhile, silver objects adorned only the tables of the symposia hosted by tyrants, who dictated style, manners and taste. Perhaps the Bacciaidei, a ruling clan at Corinth, used silver even before the tyrants, but most of the great tyrants almost certainly used it. These included early proto-figures such as Pheidon of Argos; later came Thrasybulus, Aristagoras and Histiaeus, all of Miletus; Cypselus and Periander of Corinth; the Peisistratids of Athens; and finally Miltiades, who, though an Athenian citizen, not tyrant, also ruled as a kind of Persian-supported tyrant in the Thracian Chersonese and arrived in Athens with “portable wealth” in 492 BCE (Burn, *Greece*, 159); then especially Polycrates of Samos, as well as perhaps Gelo and Hieron of Syracuse, and several others of Sicily, Magna Graecia, and especially Sybaris.
Chapter 6: From Miltiades through Alcibiades to the Roman Conquest

During the long 5th century, from the expulsion of the Tyrants in 512 and the very successful constitutional reforms of Cleisthenes that subordinated tribes to demes in 508 to the execution of Socrates in 399, Athens came to dominate Hellenistic culture. Athens rose from its early poverty to spectacular wealth by 532. Michael Ivanovitch Rostovtzeff’s Greece (Oxford University Press, 1963; originally in Russian) offers short, convenient summaries from his extensive monographs and articles. Prior to the Persian Wars, Athens was not particularly significant among Greek city-states. Both Athens and Sparta were “far poorer and less civilized than Miletus, Ephesus, Samos, and Lesbos in the east, or than Sybaris, Croton, Gela, Acragas, and Syracuse in the West,” according to Rostovtzeff (Greece, 131). Athens lacked the agricultural and mercantile power of these cities and suffered from smaller markets for its goods, except for its pots.

After 470, Syracuse and Athens became the first polies to function as metropolises—that is, as polies with a population of more than 100,000, controlling other cities. Corinth, by contrast, never reached 100,000 and never controlled its colonies for very long, despite the wealth it had gained through extensive commercial ventures. This was, in part, because it remained within the Peloponnesian League (hence, somewhat subordinate to Sparta). Although Pheidon may have been the first tyrant, Argos never became a metropolis mainly because Sparta beat it in several battles. Sparta, despite having perfected the Peloponnesian League by 500 BCE, remained merely an aggregate of five villages and not even a “proper city.” By 500 BCE, despite its lack of walls, Sparta had completed the transition to a unified oligarchy, banning luxuries, commerce, and coinage, and retaining iron spits. It became a society that shunned culture and commerce in favor of martial prowess and agricultural abundance. Nor did any of the Anatolian poleis attain the rank of metropolis. Even the greatest, Miletus, declined because of Lydian and Persian pressures, all the more abruptly after 500 when the Persians sacked it. The Euboian cities of Eretria and Chalcis had virtually self-destructed during the drawn-out Lelantine Wars of
the 7th and 6th centuries. Samos, even at its peak under Polycrates, crucified in 522 by the Persians, was simply on too small an island to become a metropolis.

There was no census at Athens before that of Demetrios of Phaleron, who had absconded with Alexander the Great’s treasure in the late fourth century. It listed only 21,000 citizens, 10,000 metics and 400,000 slaves at that time (Athenaeus 1: 6.272C); no one believes the 400,000 slaves. We can surmise that, during the fifth century, Athens had only a few dozen aristocratic families capable of holding elegant symposia. It had from one to two thousand equestrian families whose males made up the majority of the guests at symposia and also most of those frequenting gymnasia. Although, with the expansion of the gyms, especially after Pericles came to power in the 450's, some hoplites could attend the three public ones: Academy, Lyceum, and Kynosargás. Their households numbered from approximately five to approximately fifteen thousand by 432. Additionally, slaves and metics may have grown to about twenty or thirty thousand each. Attica, however, had a population that may have reached four hundred thousand. There were maybe thirty thousand citizen males too poor to buy armor and thus excluded from the hoplite class. This, by far the largest class of citizens, provided the rowers of the fleet.

Wed to a Thracian princess and formerly a vassal of Darius, Miltiades was the first Greek commoner to have introduced silver at symposia, although earthenware would still have been used alongside it. His example set a standard for other Athenians. After 470 Athens was flourishing as no other polis ever had, and its socialites began using ever more silver, encouraging wealthy Greeks of other cities to follow suit.

As a result of its conduct during the Persian Wars, Athens emerged very rapidly as Greece’s leading city-state. The Athenians were the first mainland Greeks to understand the threat posed by Persia’s incursion into Hellas. They alone, except for their new small ally Plataea, which sent two, sent twenty triremes, to aid the Ionian rebellion of 500; it was too little and too late. When the enraged Darius sent marines to avenge this aid, it was the Athenians who won the dramatic victory against the Persians at Marathon in 490 BC, supported only by the Plataeans. This triumph earned Athens the admiration of the other Greek states. After 480, Athens’s strong navy was financed by the mines at Laurion at the insistence of the far-seeing statesman Themistocles, a new man, not one of its aristocrats. After the dramatic naval victory
at Salamis in 480, and another in 479, Athens became the natural leader of the Delian League. That triumph was followed by another at Mycale under Xantippus, the father of Pericles, the following year, which left the Persian and Phoenician navies in a poor state. Athens, with its strong navy and well-earned prestige, was poised to assume leadership of the Greek world. Xantippus then prosecuted Miltiades. Aristides the Just made the first assessment on the allies that formed the Delian league, but he was also ostracized (Rostovtzeff, Greece, 121–32).

Before the cessation of the annexation of Greek cities from Persia, Athens gradually became a powerful imperial democracy. Politically stable at home, it was able to use its new mastery of the seas to penetrate new markets. Themistocles, who had led Athenian forces to victory at Salamis, built long walls around Athens and its port city Piraeus, which protected it enough from assault by land to free up its navy for lubricating economic expansion. Because the Athenians were so good at building and equipping navies, its allies began to petition to substitute money payments for triremes.

After Miltiades and the great victories of Themistocles came his son, Cimon, grandson of a Thracian king, and married to an Alcmaeonid. An ancient noble family of Athens, the Alcmaeonids claimed descent from the mythological Alcmaeon, great-grandson of Nestor. Cimon was proxenos for Sparta and Thessaly, a role that entailed hosting foreign ambassadors. After Miltiades died, Cimon had to pay a huge fine of twenty talents. The most successful of all Athenian military leaders, he commanded most of the Delian campaigns from 476 to 463. Cimon had a very large villa where he entertained lavishly. Like the gymnasia, the Academy and the Lycaeum, it was outside the walls. Cimon defeated a Persian force at the mouth of the River Eurymedon in Asia Minor c. 466 BCE, further cementing Athenian naval supremacy but after that, no more Greek cities remained to be liberated from Persian control so the offensive had to cease. This resulted in unemployment for both the rowers and the builders of ships, creating a social crisis and upsetting the Athenian order. He was ostracized in 461 after leading an army to help Sparta to suppress a Helot revolt, a gesture, which resulted in humiliation because the Spartans, able to suppress the rebellion themselves without help, haughtily refused the Athenian help offered. He led Athenian society until his ostracism, followed shortly afterward by the democratic revolutions of Ephialthes and Pericles.
Athens began under Pericles to exact tribute from its former allies—now more accurately called “subjects”—in the Delian League (Rostovtzeff, *Greece*, 140–44). In Athens itself, trade and industry flourished. Non-citizen merchants and craftsmen, often metics, settled in the city, in addition to an influx of refugees and slaves, a usual occurrence after all victories. Slaves, like pelts (the golden fleeces), were readily available along the shores of the Black Sea. This influx was actively encouraged by the Athenian government because its citizens were too busy with agriculture and politics. The alien workers directly contributed to Athens’ prosperity. Over time, many of these workers gained citizenship. The city became a focal point for industry. Agriculture flourished as did viniculture and horticulture—grapevines for wine and olive trees for oil, products that require great investments of time and wealth before they yield profits that hoplites could not afford.

Among other outposts, Athenians annexed Euboea, sent out cleruchs (Athenian settlers) and farmed it intensively with slaves. Meanwhile, expanding markets led to expanding demand, and Athenian products, as well as its currency, glutted the Mediterranean. Notably, Athenian pots displaced local and Corinthian pottery, even in Italy and Sicily: “If imports from Athens grew thus, the exports from Italy and Sicily,” writes Rostovtzeff, “would soon pour exclusively into the Piraeus [the port of Athens]; and then Athens would have an ascendancy, not merely commercial but political also, in all the north and west of the Peloponnese.” As if to seal its economic hegemony, “Athens made the use of her silver coins, measures, and weights obligatory in her empire. In this way her dominion became a common trade market.”

Meanwhile, Athens’ colony Sigeum, on the Hellespont, assured its access to the Black Sea, a source of slaves, grain, and furs. (*Greece*, 144, 176)

Within this context, Athens—and Hellas more generally—saw an increase in expendable wealth; an increase which, along with the discovery of silver at Laurium, facilitated the transition from earthenware to silverware on the tables of the elites. Also, those of somewhat lower economic standing were becoming able, for the first time, to acquire the decorated earthenware that had formerly been the reserve of the wealthy, though with decorations other than blatantly homoerotic. [ADD FOOTNOTE] The purchasing power of those outside the elite, despite its increase, never reached a level sufficient to foster the sort of domestic conditions conducive to hosting proper symposia or developing its attendant, pederastic, traditions.
Thucydides claims that there was a change of fashion in masculine dress shortly before his own time when the Spartans, then the Athenians, adopted new modes of dress in contrast with the more lavish customs of displaying wealth and aristocratic values through the dress of the ‘old days’:

The older men of the prosperous families with luxurious lifestyles not long ago gave up wearing linen garments [chitons] and tying their hair behind their heads in a knot fastened with a clasp of golden grasshoppers; and from them though kinship, the older men among the Ionians adopted the same fashions for some time. It was Spartans who first began to dress moderately and in contemporary fashion, with the rich practicing a lifestyle that was for the most part like that of ordinary people. (Thuc. 1.6.3-4)

Greek houses, however, remained small:

The houses of eminent Romans, enormous by the standards of most classical and Hellenistic Greek houses, were build with designated spaces intended to be fully ‘public’ (at least at specific times) in a political and civic sense, and other areas where access was restricted to invited guests or members of the household. ... Athletic training and participation in games were largely restricted to the wealthy in many cities from the archaic period onwards. However, there are indications that, in Athens at least, by the fifth and fourth centuries BC the gymnasium had become ‘democratized’ to some extent and that a wide range of Athenians participated in both physical training and state-sponsored athletic events to some degree. The places in which athletic training took place are called both gymnasion and palaistra in ancient written sources, although how much and in what ways they differed is not always clear – sometimes the terms appear to be used almost interchangeably (Hobden)

Pericles, the most famous of all the Athenian democrats, of whom remarkably neither a lover nor a beloved was ever mentioned, entertained less regularly and less spectacularly than his predecessor Cimon. He apparently never even attended symposia and as an adult may not even have frequented gymnasia. He was a say-at-home with his mistress – a straight-laced heterosexual. But the prosperity of Athens reached its peak during his lifetime. It is likely that
the most precious silver symptic wares were made during his *floruit*. He was elected *strategos* for every year but one after 459 until his death during the plague in 429.

From an ancient aristocratic family himself, Pericles had married the widowed mother of Alcibiades, who became his ward and nephew. It may even have been under the flamboyant, tradition-shattering Alcibiades, Pericles’s successor after 415, that Athenians enjoyed their most extravagant symposia. Some of them featured the attendance of Socrates, as portrayed by Xenophon and Plato. They may have featured the most homoerotic silverware.

*Phaedrus*, believed correctly by the Victorians to be an early dialog, is now widely thought to be from Plato’s Middle Period. I believe that Plato reworked it in his Middle Period. Plato’s *Symposium* also dates from his Middle Period. In both those dialogs, Plato is favorable to pederasty, although he prefers restraint from actual sexual activity. In Plato’s *Laws*, his last unfinished dialog, he condemned not only same sex, but even music and poetry. I agree with the interpretation of the influential German immigrant teaching at the University of Chicago, Leo Strauss. In The *Argument and Action of Plato’s Laws* (1973), he claimed that this was meant ironically. In the *Laws*, an elderly, loquacious Athenian was lecturing a Spartan and a Cretan on how to establish laws for a new colony to be set up on Crete. The Athenian elites, including Plato, actually admired both the Cretans and the Spartans.

Plato never spoke in his own voice, unless one accepts as genuine some of his letters and his love poems to the youth Aster. His own opinions are therefore difficult to ascertain. He attributes views to Socrates and various others, including sophists, orators, politicians, playwrights, etc., often ironically. For example, to get back at Aristophanes, who had parodied Socrates in *The Clouds*, Plato ascribes to that comedian the old Semitic-inspired myth that originally all humans had four arms and four legs split into two parts. Heterosexuals, from a body half-male and half-female, seek their opposite half, but homosexuals entirely masculine originally endlessly seek other ones like themselves, whether pederast or from totally female halves lesbians.

Plato like the Uranians of the late 19th and early 20th century, whom Plato inspired, became cagey because he did not want to much upset an increasingly bourgeois society dominated by family values as well as by an easily changeable and enraged proletariat. Demagogues could
persuade juries to execute Socrates as well as Plato’s relatives Critias and Charmides, who played leading roles among the Thirty Tyrants, whom the Spartans put in charge of Athens in 404.

Coins both large and small (but especially the smaller ones that followed in the wake of the larger) greatly facilitated trade and industry; they also served to measure and store accumulations of wealth. A modern parallel would be the substitution of paper money for bullion; or, in even more contemporary terms, the economic revolution that has resulted from the vast extension of credit. Thus, the use of coinage was fundamental to “the Greek miracle,” and almost as fundamental to it as the alphabet. A quotation from Lysias, the earliest of the ten “Attic Orators,” illuminates the relative values that they attached to precious metals and to clay. It will be seen that no ceramic item is considered worth so much as a mention in this itemization of valuable goods plundered in the civil strife under the Thirty Tyrants before the restoration of democracy in 403 BCE:

They had seven hundred shields of ours, they had all that silver and gold, with copper, jewelry, furniture and women’s apparel beyond what they had ever expected to get; also a hundred and twenty slaves, of whom they took the ablest, delivering the rest to the Treasury; and yet to what extremes of insatiable greed for gain did they go, in this revelation that they made of their personal character! For some twisted gold earrings, which Polemarchus's wife had in her possession when she first came into his house, were taken out of her ears by Melobius. And not even in respect of the smallest fraction of our property did we find any mercy at their hands but our wealth impelled them to act as injuriously towards us as others might from anger aroused by grievous wrongs. (Lysias XII, Against Eratosthenes, ca. 400 BCE, sections 19-20)

Alcibiades will serve for us as a symbol of free-flowing silver. Diodorus Siculus (13.3.2), in his index of sources, testifies that the Athenians had plenty of plate, even gold cups, available in the days before Alcibiades’ Sicilian Expedition of 415 BCE:

And the expedition [to Sicily] was already fully prepared when it came to pass that in a single night the statues of Hermes which stood everywhere throughout the city were mutilated . . . On the next day . . . the triremes lay at anchor over
the whole harbor, embellished with their insignia on the bows and the gleam of their armor; and the whole circumference of the harbor was filled with censers and silver mixing-bowls, from which the people poured libations with gold cups, paying honor to the gods and beseeching them to grant success to the expedition.

The explosion of what Aeschylus’s Persian chorus calls the Athenian “fountain of silver” (The Persians, line 238; the tragedy was performed in 472 BCE), more prosaically known as the silver mine at Laurion, also explains why explicitly homoerotic ceramic pots disappeared after 470 BCE. The wealthy, the only class capable of hosting proper symposia where such homoerotic representations would have had their fitting place, had all switched to dining on silver plate, a change made possible by the new abundance of silver. This effectively gutted the market for homoerotic scenes depicted on clay (Percy, Pederasty, 208). This process was, of course, a gradual one, beginning perhaps as early as 482 BCE, but completed, as far it went, by 470. Ceramic sympotic ware remained in use to some extent simply because some drinks and food tasted better in clay. It should also be noted that bronze and even brass, as well as silver, was used for sympotic ware. As Amy Sowder, Bothmer Fellow, Department of Greek and Roman Art, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, has noted, several different vessels for wine were produced in bronze and which may have been reserved for symposia: “Kraters, used for mixing wine and water, could be elaborately decorated. Psykters, a fairly unusual shape with a full, bulbous body above a tall, narrow foot, held wine and were floated in kraters filled with cold water to keep the wine cool. Situlai, wine buckets, were particularly popular in the fourth century B.C. and later. Oinochoai, jugs used for pouring, were produced in a variety of shapes and sizes, many in bronze. Drinking cups also appear in several different shapes.” (Ancient Greek Bronze Vessels: http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/agbv/hd_agbv.htm) This expansion of Athens until 432 attracted people from everywhere. The Sophists flooded in and began teaching rhetoric. Socrates, whom Aristophanes mis-described and satirized in The Clouds as a sophist, really wasn’t one but he tried to set limits and bonds to physical pederasty, which is reflected in the writings of both Xenophon and Plato.

Increasingly, under Pericles, the poor were less often paid to row the fleets, which were no longer sent out every summer, as they had been under Cimon, but only when needed to enforce payment of tribute. He had them paid to sit on juries, some as large as 1001, and even
to attend theaters. They benefited from his public works such as the rebuilding of temples and statues on the Acropolis that the Persians had destroyed and also improvements to the port of Piraeus. No wonder that they re-elected him (Pericles) every year. He provided them with livelihoods, but he did so at the expense of the Delian allies who he turned into tributaries. He moved the treasury of The League from Delos to Athens where he began using it, converting the (erstwhile) voluntary league into an empire. This largest class of citizen voters (the rowers) was never invited to symposia or to gymnasia. They were the backers of imperialism, even after the Pericles’ death. The upper classes feared because they realized that it might result in the discontent and revolt of the allies.

After the ostracism of Cimon, the oligarchs did not disappear. The most famous, the "Old Oligarch", who has not been definitively identified, bragged about the profits that Athens derived from its domination of trade. There was always an oligarchic opposition that challenged Pericles's imperialistic politics. They idolized the oligarchy in Sparta, which Cimon had tried to reinstate after the earthquake sparked the Helot Revolt when the Spartans proved that they did not really need help. The aristocrats, including Cimon’s descendants, continued to host symposia, often at their country houses, and to flirt in gymnasia out of the view of the proletariat and most of the hoplites.

The drastic loss of population in 429 was primarily due to the plague. Ironically, it carried away Pericles, who might be properly classified as a demagogue. It caused such an acute shortage of males that early marriage and frequent pregnancies became desirable. This killing-off was temporarily stopped in 421, by the Peace of Nicias, the richest Athenian. In the second phase of the Peloponnesian War (416-404) the greatest event was that caused by Pericles's nephew and successor Alcibiades, Socrates's favorite pupil. Alcibiades envisioned a conquest of Syracuse. The Athenians set off with grand plans but he was recalled, and instead of coming back to stand trial before his enemies, he defected to Sparta. The greatest military disaster the Athenians experienced was when Syracusians captured their armies and fleets. In 411, there had been an aristocratic reaction of "the 400," but the democracy was quickly restored.

But then there were the later defeats of Athens, one after another, in the closing years of the war. The Spartan navy was then financed by the Persians. Finally came the siege of Athens and the turning out over to the Thirty Tyrants, who in turn were killed or driven out. During this
slaughter, there began to be earlier marriages, and the age of 30 was no longer honored among the Athenians. This analysis was partly inspired by Hubbard’s unpublished paper “Diachronic Parameters of Athenian Pederasty.” In that article, Hubbard never mentioned the Old Oligarch.

Conan helped establish a second Delian league after 390. That soon became preoccupied with the growth of Macedonia. Demosthenes and Aeschines dueled, each saying how they were "good pederasts," not "bad pederasts." The Macedonians, partly Hellenized since the reign of Archelaus II (396-393), under Alexander and his successors, spread Macedonians and Greeks including many Athenians, from Egypt to Bactria and India. All these Greek settlements did establish gymnasia and symposia, but they were hardly like those in classical Athens. There was however some pederastic pedagogy.

By 360, Athens population had shrunk. In one of the houses described by Demosthenes, would not have been able to host a symposium: “Demosthenes’ speech 47(Studying Gender in Classical Antiquity, Cambridge, 2013; p.52-62), portrays the people of one wealthy Athenian household when the house was invaded during the day by men to whom the speaker owed money. This speech gives an idea of the numbers of people who might be household members and some of their roles. Where they were, and what they were doing at the time of the attack, breaks down along lines of gender first and foremost, but age and status were also relevant such as the husband (the speaker), out of the house in the Peraeus at the time, the wife, at home eating in the courtyard, the children, at home earing in the courtyard, an elderly freedwoman, who had once been a household slave serving as nanny to the husband when he was a child, at home eating in the courtyard, various agricultural workers working in the fields, a young slave boy outside running an errand, a number of female slaves inside the house, cowering in the tower.

Estates tended to be divided unlike those in feudal Europe that practiced primogeniture, which made it difficult for great families to long endure. But Athenians prescribed endogamy, even having uncles marrying nieces.

“And if someone should die, the city houses and whatever there is in those houses in which a serf living in the country does not reside, and the cattle, small and large, which do not belong to a serf, shall belong to the sons; but all the rest of the property shall be

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fairly divided and the sons, no matter how many, shall each receive one part. And the maternal property, if she should die, shall be divide the same way as the paternal property; but if there should be no property except the house the daughters shall receive their share as prescribed. And if the father, while living, should wish to give to the married daughter, let him give according to what is prescribed, but not more. Any (daughter) to whom he gave or pledged before shall have these things, but shall obtain nothing aside from the paternal property. (Great Code of Gortyn, IV.31-55-V.1; Willetts 1967:2)

This passage from the mid-fifth-century BC ‘Great Code’ of Gortyn, Crete, presents the essential principles of the transmission of property followed, as far as we know them, in most ancient Greek cities, though specific practice varied from place to place, and we usually do not have enough evidence to ascertain the precise details.

In Sparta, as in Gortyn, women seem regularly to have inherited a share of the property, including real estate, but a girl’s share might also be given as a dowry. Even in cities where women regularly inherited land, they generally owned less land overall than men. The one possible exception to this is the case of Sparta in the later fourth century BC. Aristotle (Politics 2, 1270a-b) claimed, with considerable disapproval, that almost two fifths of the land was owned by women because of large dowries ...

Then the Roman conquest and the Roman civil wars further devastated most Greek cities, spurring earlier marriages for many. After Augustus brought peace for two hundred years in the Pax Romana, probably the age of marriage among Greeks in Greece and in other Greek-speaking colonies in Asia went back up to 30. But bathing became more common in Greek cities in Greece itself and in Greek cities in Asia and Africa.

Daily bathing was a social occasion which shaped the routine of many Romans, though bathing habits clearly varied regionally, over time, and with socio-economic status and personal preferences. We find moralistic diatribes in some sources suggesting that ‘contemporary’ bathing habits were over-indulgent and made people soft. For example, Seneca (Ep. 86) unfavourably compared what he saw as unnecessarily luxurious baths of his own day with the simplicity of the private baths in the villa of the famous general Scipio Africanus 250 years
earlier. Tacitus (Agr. 21) suggests that bathing (along with Roman dining habits) irritated the indigenous British. Other sources claim that the atmosphere, leisure pursuits and nudity of the baths encouraged moral laxness and out-of-control behaviour (a particular danger for women). The resort surroundings of the Baiae baths on the Bay of Naples supposedly encouraged the staid and virtuous wife Laevinia to abscond with a younger man (Martial I.62). Traditional Roman values concerning nudity, that fathers and sons should not bathe together, nor fathers-in-law with sons-in-law, were still advocated by Cicero (de Officiis I.35), but this appears to be a thing of the past by Plutarch’s time (Roman Questions 40 [Moralia 274]), about 150 years later. However, these disapproving views are countered by a wide range of other sources testifying to the popularity of bathing pleasures. The epitaphs of the lower-status individuals and freedmen/women are a particularly rich and interesting source, as the social and moral values they present do not always map precisely onto the values promoted in elite literary sources.

‘Baths, wine and sex (balnea, vina, Venus) are regularly mentioned together in this almost proverbial formulation as the pleasures of life left behind at death. This extract from an epitaph from Ostia, perhaps second century BC in date, is typical of these sentiments, reveling in the pleasures of life with no indication that this was morally problematic:

The spirit of the departed C. Domitius Primis. I, the well-known and famous Primus, am in this tomb. I lived on Lucrine oysters; I often drank Falernian wine. Baths, wine, and sex aged with me through the years. If I managed this may be the earth be light on me. (CIL 14.914; tr Fagan 1999:320)

During the second Sophistic in the second century Greek writers like Lucian of Samosota and Plutarch of Chaeronea described debates about whether conjugal love was better or worse than pederastic love. Some conditions went back to being (how they had been) in places like Athens and Caledonia, likely not too different than how they had been in the Archaic and early Classical period.
Chapter 7: Lost Greek treasures, recovered Roman ones

After most Athenian silver sympotic ware, during the last desperate days of the Peloponnesian War, had been melted down to make coins, Lysias found himself in a situation in which he was forced to reveal the treasure chest that held his most prized possessions:

When he had sworn, invoking annihilation upon himself and his children if he did not save me on receipt of the talent, I went into my bedroom and opened the money-chest. Peison noticed it and came in; on seeing its contents he called two of his underlings and bade them take what was in the chest. Since he now had, instead of the agreed amount, gentlemen, three talents of silver, four hundred cyzicenes, a hundred darics and four silver cups, I begged him to give me money for my journey; but he declared that I should be glad enough to save my skin. (Lysias XII, 11)

It may be observed, as also noted earlier, that no clay objects appear in Lysias’s treasure chest, nor, for that matter, in the treasure chest of any other Athenian that we read about. Peison—the thug sent by the Thirty Tyrants—displays no interest in collecting “precious clay objects” as ransom; and we do not find Lysias following Boardman’s lead and lauding the wonderful plastic qualities of clay or appealing to Peison to raid the cupboards of his kitchen. If Peison and his contemporaries had been Boardman’s disciples, they would have valued “clay objects” to such an extent that Lysias would have used such, had he had them, to bargain for his life: but alas! Peison and Lysias were Athenians rather than Oxbridge scholars, with very different values.

As for the preponderance of ceramics and dearth of silver in the archaeological record, Vickers provided a simple and convincing explanation: it was caused by the combined vicissitudes of looting, war, and greed, not to mention Christian iconoclasm (Artful Crafts, 1994, chap. 3). Little silverware survives simply because the metal itself was too valuable, and was melted down well before Christian demonization. Although sanctuaries such as the one at Delphi served as repositories for objects made of precious metals, when faced with hardship, money was more useful than relics, and this plate was often melted down for currency. Another fate—common to both sanctuaries and cities—was looting. Examples include the repeated sackings of Miletus, when Xerxes looted its temple, the repeated looting of Delphi by Philomenus during the Sacred War, then later by the Gauls and by the Roman general and statesman Lucius Cornelius Sulla. Like other valuables, silver cups and vessels were seized by the victors, then over time recast, much as the Spanish did with the Inca and Aztec treasures and the Greeks did with what they
had seized from the Persians. Gold and silver jewelry was also often melted down and recast—every generation in some periods, and at times even more frequently—as fashions changed. As a result, very little silver has survived in its original form . . . but such has been the fate of valuable commodities throughout history (See Artful Crafts, 1994, pp.55–66).

The main melting down of most of the best silver—perhaps even the gold—can be connected with confidence to the last desperate stages of the Great Peloponnesian War of 431-404 BCE and the period directly following it, the time of the Thirty Tyrants and their overthrow. The less ornate silver sympotic ware produced later (after 394 BCE, when Athenians created the Second Delian League) was also melted down, to fund the desperate attempt to fend off Philip of Macedon, and later Alexander. The fate of silver sympotic ware was the same at Thebes and at Corinth, as it was also in the western cities of Syracuse and Tarentum, and in Ionia and the Aegean Islands. Few such items survived into the Hellenistic Age, much less the Roman Imperial period. Fake antiques were doubtless foisted off Hellenistic and Roman collectors and connoisseurs. But hardly any of these or of the authentic ones survived Christian hostility to “sodomy.”

The confident Athenians of the 5th century who made a lavish display of silver kraters to celebrate the launching of the great expedition against Syracuse in 416 BCE (Diodorus Siculus 13.3.2) saw their silver dwindle by 403, so much so that in extremis, they were even forced to coin gold and bronze instead (Burn, Greece, 297). The display of kraters in 416 marked the high point of the elaborate use of silverware in symposia. The Athenians melted down gold and bronze for the first time amid their desperate last stand before surrendering to the Spartans. As for silver, two details reveal its absolute scarcity, and both show the difficult conditions into which Athens had fallen: first, it ran out of silver because its slaves had escaped to Deceleia, leaving its mines no longer productive; second, there was no more silver plate available to melt down. While the Thirty Tyrants left in charge of Athens by Sparta (including two of Plato’s

34 Thebes was destroyed by Alexander the Great in 335 BC and Corinth by the Roman general Lucius Mummius in 146 BC. Syracuse (212 BC) and Tarentum (209 BC) were both plundered by the Romans in the course of the wars against Carthage. Tarentum, modern Taranto, is a port city in the heel of Italy.

35 A krater was a large vessel used to mix wine and water. At a symposium, kraters were placed in the center of the room. Being large, they were not easily portable when full. Thus, the wine-water mixture would be withdrawn from the krater with other vessels. At the beginning of each symposium a symposiarch, or “lord of the common drink”, was elected by the participants. He would then assume control of the wine servants, and thus of the degree of wine dilution and how it changed during the party, and the rate of cup refills. The krater and how it was filled and emptied was thus the centerpiece of the symposiarch’s authority. An astute symposiarch should be able to diagnose the degree of inebriation of his fellow symposiasts and make sure that the symposium progressed smoothly and without drunken excess.
uncles) and the other pro-Spartan oligarchs were in a good position to preserve some of their silver plate, everything else the city could collect—including the gold plating that covered Phidias’s colossal statue of Athena in the Parthenon—seems to have been melted down. That the city could find no more silver is strongly evinced by its sudden use of gold and bronze for coinage.

Although we know less about Hellenistic dinnerware, often described when paraded in Roman triumphs, we know about Roman Imperial. Wealthy Romans had fewer qualms in depicting erotic, including homoerotic, scenes than the somewhat restrained Greeks of the classical era; in their lack of inhibition these Romans had more in common with the painters of Archaic Greece, whose black-figure work depicted orgies with boys. Clarke discusses the finding of the explicitly erotic “Menander Cups” mingled together with the other table silver in Pompeii: “In particular, the secure archaeological context of the cups from the House of the Menander—found intact as their owner left them, together with 116 other silver articles—implies that such silver vessels with sexual representations could belong quite usually with the serving ware of a wealthy household” (Clarke, Lovemaking, 70).

It might be added, in passing, that the premises were dubbed the Menander house on account of a painting there: a portrait of the Greek playwright Menander. This is just one among countless demonstrations of homage to Greek culture found in Roman life, a fashion that reached its apogee in the life and art of the emperor Nero. Some would say the word art, in his case, needs to appear between ironic quotation marks, but the same could be said – and was said in satirical writing at the time – about the vulgar pursuit of all things Greek among the nouveau riches.

The outstanding, and arguably unique, example of homoerotic Roman silverware (depending on what is to be judged as “erotic”), is of course the Warren Cup, which will be considered in detail in the context of other silverware of its era, and much else, in the remaining chapters here. This may be the place, though, snobbishly separated, as it were, from the luxurious banquet that lies ahead, to consider the art-enhanced dining of the sub-elite classes in Roman times: it will give us a tasty if modest hors d’oeuvre. Early Greek ceramics, as noted many times already, were decorated for elite symposia; the elite later switched to silver; and, as we have seen, Vickers mistakenly maintained that decorated ceramics were always merely cheap imitations of luxury vessels made of precious metals.

If Vickers had been describing the decorated ceramics of the Augustan era he would have been much nearer the mark. This is hugely important because the cheap imitations reveal much
about the luxury ware they were intended to replicate in a less costly medium. Both Clarke and Dyfri Williams refer to the glossy red Italian pottery known as Arretine ware. The finest production of Arretine pottery, says Williams, dates to the last quarter of the first century BC and the first decade or two of the first century AD. A couple of fragments match a scene on one of the silver cups of this period found at Hoby, in Denmark, while a number of fragments of vessels and moulds – the products of two different Arretine workshops – repeat the elaborate scene on a silver vessel found in London, the Chryses kantharos. Similarly, a series of fragments of vessels and moulds of Arretine pottery match luxury glassware of the time. Although the figures are sometimes very similar, there are differences in details and in some poses so the potters cannot have been simply taking casts directly off the silver vessels. As Williams suggests, “Perhaps both potters and silversmiths drew on a common repertoire of images and scenes enjoyed by the educated elite.” Such pottery, although often of high quality, was mass-produced in moulds and far less expensive (Williams, The Warren Cup, pp.39-42).

Clarke notes that when the Boston Museum of Fine Arts reprinted a 1916 catalogue of the Arretine ware in 1975, the editors illustrated the pieces with sexual scenes from Warren’s collection that had been described, but not illustrated, in the earlier work.

Two compositions alternate images of male-female with male-male copulation. Clarke describes them:

In the first composition a statue of Eros standing on a fluted column separates the four scenes of lovemaking. The second composition is similar, but more complex and detailed: here herms sporting huge phalluses hold garlands that festoon behind the couples. The artist who created this composition exerted great care in details of modeling and fashioned beds with headboards ending in satyr’s heads. He enlivened the herms by representing them in contrapposto having them actively gaze at the couples making love while grasping their buttocks with their right hands. Rather than passive spectators, they seem ready to leap out of their decorative roles and join the lovers. It is clear that this artist’s originality rests in his depiction of the herms and the creative use of satyr head-boards for both male-male and male-female couples are in essentially the same poses as in the first composition.

The scene of male-female lovemaking in both compositions is the most graphic of such erotic types on Arretine ware, picturing the female about to squat on the erect penis. She wears a breast band (strophium), a feature of many scenes of male-female lovemaking. Although the positions of the male-male lovers are approximately the same in both compositions, there are two variants, in the first variant the two males, one an
adult, the other a boy, gaze at each other on a bed. The man prepares to enter the boy while supporting himself on his flexed right knee, which appears below and behind the boy’s right knee. The boy’s left arm rests on the edge of the bed, while his right hand touches the man’s right arm near the elbow. In a modified version of this pose the man seems more relaxed: rather than kneeling bolt upright, he inclines toward the boy, who reclines as if floating or swimming, all the while locked on his lover’s gaze. One fragment shows the man kissing the boy...

Because Arretine ware was an affordable, and widely exported, substitute for silver and gold vessels, examples have been found as far away as London and Asia Minor. Although sexual scenes form only a small part of the imagery, their sources must have been in the decoration of the expensive objects. After all, says Clarke, “it was Arretine ware’s ability to mimic the style and subject matter of expensive silver that made it so attractive to consumers.” (Clarke Lovemaking pp.73-5)

Bronze, too, should be mentioned, if only for one extraordinary find over a century ago that is often overlooked these days – or worse, wilfully ignored. In a book review a few years ago, Bowersock briefly noted a bronze cup showing “four sober philosophers in a bookish environment who reappear in the object’s upper register in four vivid scenes of copulation with boys.” (G.W. Bowersock, “Men and Boys,” NY Review of Books, September 24, 2009). Actually, penetration is depicted clearly in but one of the scenes; another shows man-boy love-making in which the couple’s limbs seem arranged to facilitate the man and the boy rubbing their genitals together; a third might be intended to depict anal intercourse in a different position to the first; and the boy in the fourth is offering his mouth to be kissed by the man. Although the precise activities are not entirely clear, what is most assuredly “vivid” is the imaginatively varied nature of the love-making between these naked couples, and its pederastic nature.

The cup, dated to the first century AD, was discovered by chance in an exposed trench during building work in Herstal, near Liege, in 1900. An unguent vase, over two feet tall, it quickly became famous, or infamous, for its erotic decoration. Franz Cumont, who brought out the first paper on the “Herstal Vase” in the same year, alluded to the stir the piece had caused: “The newspapers are again busy, and one of them, at the risk of offending readers, did not even hesitate to publish a sketch, fortunately indistinct.”

Cumont said nine photogravures had been taken, which would allow the detail to be studied in a way the piece itself could not show. Photogravure was at that time the most sophisticated technique available for reproducing the detail and continuous tones of a photograph. However, the one photogravure he published with his paper was murky and unrevealing: judging by his
comment above, this was surely intentional. Cumont’s description of the vase was almost comically coy: he wrote that “even in Latin” he could not bring himself to say exactly what the couples were depicted as doing. Scandalously, good photographs of the vase do not appear to have been issued by the Museum of Brussels, which acquired the cup, and even scholarly access is very restricted. (“A propos du Vase de Herstal,” Annals of the Archaeological Society of Brussels, Vol. 14, 1900)

http://bibnum.enc.sorbonne.fr/gsdl/collect/tap/archives/HASH0159/080427f0.dir/0000005402274.pdf

Of particular interest here is how we know the naked figures are intended to depict philosophers and why the learned would be singled out in this way in early Roman imperial times. Regarding the first point, the cup itself is sufficiently revealing. Bowersock’s “four sober philosophers” appear on a frieze below the scenes of pederasty. One of them is bald on top, but with hair falling in curls on his shoulders, while his long beard fans out over his chest. In Cumont’s words, “He presses the index finger of his right hand against his cheek in a meditative attitude, and looks at a calculating device (abacus) which he supports with his left arm; at his feet is a repository or box (capsa) containing books; further on a celestial sphere is suspended, divided by two meridians and, behind him, a package of waxed tablets (polyptycha) designed to hold notes, is hanging on a hook attached to the wall.” The calculating, the books (or scrolls) and the sphere with stars on it, indicating an interest in astronomy, all point to interests of the philosopher, or the scholar engaged in “natural philosophy”, which we would now call science. Open book shelves on a pedestal also characterize the other three philosophers.

Cumont tells us the overall scene is meant to depict a street scene in which the philosophers appear in open-fronted shops, which often served as schools. “If we pass from the ground floor to the attic,” he continues, “I mean the height at which the body of the vase bends towards the scene above, we are suddenly transported to the study rooms above the alcoves – and what alcoves! We again find four men, including three bearded ones, like those downstairs, and a beardless fourth. But they no longer have a dignified demeanour… Stripped of their garments, they are spread out on couches, where they are not alone. They each have with them a young boy, in different but equally expressive poses. The effeminate forms of these adolescents, their long hair tied in a bun, leave no doubt about the nature of their profession. To describe these erotic couples it is necessary to use the language of Petronius, and a phrase from the Satyricon gives a rough idea of two of them. As for the others, I am not even going to use Latin to describe them.”

This “singular mixture of wisdom and folly, gravity and depravity,” at first puzzled Cumont, but his friend and colleague Monsieur J. Demarteau offered an ingenious solution: he suggested the
philosophers were representatives of the school of Cyrene, the Cyrenaics being an ultra-hedonist school of philosophy founded in the 4th century BCE, supposedly by Aristippus of Cyrene. On the ground floor, says Cumont, “we see famous representatives of this system, teaching their theories, and happy couples frolicking with mistletoe above their heads, showing their morality in action.”

During consultations with other scholars, notably Hermann Diels, a renowned historian of Greek philosophy, and the great classical scholar Theodor Mommsen, then nearing the end of his long life, the theory was developed to include the possibility that Plato, Aristotle and Epicurus were three of the philosophers depicted; a tidy mind might propose Aristippus as the fourth. The schools of philosophy represented, according to Cumont, identified by the symbolism of the objects depicted, are the Stoic, Academic, Peripatetic and Neo-Pythagorean, associated respectively with Zeno, Plato, Aristotle and Pythagoras, of course, as the original inspiration for a school in which Apollonius of Tyana and Moderatus of Gades were prominent in the 1st century AD. By no means all of these schools were associated with hedonism, but the message could be “a plague on all your houses”.

The purpose of the decoration, it was suggested, was not pornographic but satirical. The sex scenes were meant to prompt amused derision, much as Aristophanes did with his comedies. The Romans emphasised practical learning. They had no use for philosophy. There was fun to be had from contrasting the pretended virtues of the philosophers with their actual lives.

Cumont compared the Herstal Vase with two silver cups that were part of the then recently uncovered hoard of silver treasure stashed in a wine tank at the Villa Boscoreale, on the slopes of Vesuvius, prior to the eruption that buried the region of Naples in AD 79. The cups, in the Louvre, are among 109 items of very fine silverware in the hoard. The cups are described by the museum as depicting “the skeletons of tragic and comic poets and famous Greek philosophers, beneath a garland of roses. Greek inscriptions engraved in dots form captions, and are accompanied by Epicurean maxims such as: ‘Enjoy life while you can, for tomorrow is uncertain.’ The main message of the cups' decoration is that life should be enjoyed to the full: Zeno and Epicurus, the founders of the Stoic and Epicurean philosophies in the 4th century BC, confront each other before two mating dogs – a detail of some significance, as it represents the triumph of Epicureanism.” [http://www.louvre.fr/en/oeuvre-notices/boscoreale-treasure-0]

In another image, Epicurus reaches out to a huge cake topped by Greek legend: "The supreme good is pleasure.” In the same vein, says Cumont, the artist of the Herstal vase wanted to emphasize the futility of all science and that the only certain good thing was enjoyment. As
Cumont realised, this was a vulgar misrepresentation of Epicurianism, an error that became so deeply embedded in the popular imagination that we have inherited it two millennia later.

The only coins in the Herstal find were from the reign of Domitian (81-96 AD), says Cumont. This prompts the thought that the Herstal Vase may have been inspired by this emperor’s expulsion of philosophers from Rome. The historical consensus now is that Domitian was an efficient and effective ruler in the mould of Augustus, with a keen appreciation of the need to project a favourable image of himself. Among the army and the people he succeeded as a popular leader whose cultural, economic and political program provided the foundation of the peaceful 2nd century. Considered a tyrant by the elite, though, including writers such as Tacitus, Pliny the Younger and Suetonius, he was assassinated by court officials and condemned to oblivion by the Senate. He had nominated himself perpetual censor, which cannot have gone down well with the literary classes, and had sought to control public and private morals – despite, according to Juvenal’s bitter satire, having incest with his niece (Sat II). We cannot be sure of the truth of that, but he certainly had young male attachments – the poet Statius even wrote in praise of Earinos, the emperor’s beloved eunuch-boy.

What matters here is that Domitian had to worry about those among the elite who opposed him, as his eventual assassination shows. This was what lay behind his expulsion of all philosophers from Rome. The erotic poet Sulpicia (the second of that name) is credited with authorship of On the State of the Nation and the Age of Domitian, which laments this deed. Sulpicia’s Complaint, as it has come to be known, defends the Greek philosophical tradition in terms suggesting that Domitian was hostile to all philosophy. In reality, though, his expulsions were a response to political opposition from a particular clique of aristocrats associated with the Stoics.36

In summary, what the Arretine ware and the Herstal Vase tell us, is that tableware decorated, in the Greek tradition, with homoerotic scenes was familiar to Romans of the Augustan age and beyond, but in more graphic and frankly hedonistic representations than the works that typify the high watermark of classical Greece. Additionally, the silverware from Boscoreale reveals

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36 The later Sulpicia, who lived during the reign of Domitian, should not be confused with the earlier one, who is said to have lived in the reign of Augustus. The first Sulpicia’s verses were preserved with those of Tibullus and were for a long time attributed to him. The authorship of Sulpicia’s Complaint is also problematic. It is now thought to be possibly a work of the 5th century. The later Sulpicia genuinely was a 2nd century poetess, though, whose verse was praised by Martial; the Complaint may or may not be an accurate reflection of her sentiments. C.U. Merriam. “The Other Sulpicia”. Classical World. Vol. 84, No. 4 (March - April 1991), pp. 303-305; James L. P. Butrica, Epigrammata Bobiensia 36, Rheinisches Museum für Philologie (2006), pp. 310-349
http://www.jstor.org/stable/41234682
that beautifully crafted silver dining vessels, elaborately decorated, were available at this time. This is part of the context in which the Warren Cup will be discussed in due course.
Chapter 8: Boardman vs. Vickers

Even with “Artful Crafts” (1984), his first argument for the importance of metalware in Greek elite society, it is clear that Vickers is as fascinated with metals as Boardman is with clay. Later, in *Artful Crafts* (1994), he and co-author David Gill cited references from Plato and Plutarch, among others, regarding tableware made of precious metal being used by aristocrats. In particular, he drew attention to the passage in which Plutarch recounts a visit paid by Alcibiades, the most audacious and flamboyant of Athens’ “golden youths”, to the home of Anytus, a wealthy tanner and social climber in love with him. To emulate the customs of the well-born, Anytus (ironically, later one of the prosecutors of Socrates) decided to host a symposium, and, of course, extended an invitation to the young and ravishing aristocrat whose eyes widened at the sight of the numerous cups made of glistening silver displayed by his host. Becoming even more roguishly drunk after his arrival, Alcibiades ordered his own servants to carry off half the table silver! Plutarch relates that, when Anytus’s astonished guests complained about this boorish, criminal act, the love-struck Anytus dreamily replied that Alcibiades “had shown great consideration and tenderness in taking only a part, when he might have taken all” (*Alcibiades*, IX).

Vickers also cited Plato’s *Symposium*, an ironic dialogue occasioned by Socrates’ attendance at a symposium held for the effeminate tragedian Agathon, the eromenos of Euripides, and sometimes ranked with him, Sophocles and Aeschylus. All the guests, in turn, elaborate on the theme of Love. Perhaps not surprisingly, Alcibiades—that avid collector of other people’s silverware and hearts—arrives unannounced, uninvited, drunk, and dangerously confessional:

> A moment later they heard Alcibiades shouting in the courtyard, very drunk and very loud. He wanted to know where Agathon was, he demanded to see Agathon at once. . . . “Good evening, gentlemen. I’m plastered,” he announced.  

(*Symposium*, §212)

He proceeds to express his admiration for Agathon’s beauty and intelligence, as well as his own annoyance with Socrates, who, like everyone else, is in love with him. In order to reinvigorate the convivial atmosphere, Alcibiades downs the contents of a large wine cooler and orders it refilled for Socrates, who is then said to have drunk from a “silver well.” Vickers observed:

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If Socrates did indeed drink from “a silver well” . . . then it is likely that the rest of the symptic furniture used on that occasion, including the wine-cooler drained by Alcibiades at one go, was also of precious metal. (Artful Crafts, 1994, p. 39)

The logic here is spurious. Insofar as Vickers was willing to jump to the conclusion that all the vessels at the party were made of silver, he becomes a Midas, creating precious metals everywhere he goes. This assumption contravenes culinary practice: the fact that some dishes taste better served on ceramics and that they can be served straight from the oven on them. Vickers is nonetheless convincing that most tableware used in proper symposia was, at this time, made of silver.

Such is the anecdotal quality of much of Vickers’ literary evidence, to which he added citations from Aristophanes, Aeschylus, and Pindar, among others. In discussing Athenian income, however, he cited specific economic considerations, with the disparity between the rich and the poor summarized by the coinage they generally used, the rich using talents and minae (1 talent = 60 minae); the poor, drachmae and obols (1 drachma = 1/100 of a mina; 1 obol = 1/6 of a drachma, about US $1). For example, after Miltiades failed to retake the Cyclades, he was convicted of “deceiving the people”; however, “in view of [his] past services,” instead of the death penalty he was fined 300,000 drachmas, or 50 talents. One talent equals 6,000 drachmae (Burn, Greece, 163). Because a comic character in Aristophanes recommends settling a 200 drachma debt with a silver cup, Vickers made the reasonable claim that a silver cup could be valued for as much as 2 minae (about $1200, as calculated). At the other end of the scale, cheap pots were valued at 3½ obols for 4 items (a bit less than $1 apiece); and for some pots sold in quantity, the prices were even less. “The highest recorded price for any Athenian painted pot is 3 drachmas: the equivalent of [$18]. But not only is this price exceptionally high, but the two pots which are thus inscribed are rather large . . .” (Artful Crafts, 1994 pp. 85–86). The 600-fold ratio between the prices of a 1-obol clay cup and a 200-drachmai silver cup suggests the vast difference in economic and cultural significance that existed between the materials used.

Skilled laborers earned only 1 drachma a day; in comparison, “the sources show that the rich at Athens conducted their business in minae (1 mina = 100 drachmas), and that among the really
rich, a drachma was considered a ‘trifling sum’” (Artful Crafts, 1994 p.33). Implied here is the assertion that the wealthy would hardly have bothered with ceramics—“the detritus of antiquity,” as Vickers quipped—since they counted their money in silver minae and even talents. In a social context where a generous aristocrat could easily bestow an expensive silver cup on his young male favorite—to express his affection, to honor the boy, to affirm and acknowledge the boy as a member of his own social class—giving such a boy a cheap clay cup would be interpreted, by the boy and by others, as an insult, an insult that would likely reduce his self-worth and social worth in the eyes of others, implying that he was essentially made of worthless, common materials, that is, born of common parents and unlikely to amount to much in the future (see Artful Crafts, 1994, pp. 33–45).

Further evidence of the low regard in which clay was held is taken from Aristophanes’ portrayal of the troublesome character Nicarchos, an informer (a class of individual especially despised during the Peloponnesian War) who is, for comic effect, packed up in excelsior37, or straw, like a fragile ceramic vase ready to be shipped. The commonness, fragility, and worthlessness of clay are repeatedly emphasized here (Acharnians, pp. 900–940):

Dicaeopolis: Shut his mouth. Give me some hay; I am going to pack him up like a vase, that he may not get broken on the road.  
Chorus: Pack up your goods carefully, friend; that the stranger may not break it when taking it away.  
Dicaeopolis: I shall take great care with it, for one would say he is cracked already; he rings with a false note, which the gods abhor!  
Chorus: But what good is . . . this vase?  
Dicaeopolis: This is a vase good for all purposes; it will be used as a vessel for holding all foul things, a mortar for pounding together law-suits, a lamp for spying upon accounts, and as a cup for the mixing up and poisoning of everything.  
Chorus: None could ever trust a vessel for domestic use that has such a ring about it.

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37 Softwood shavings used for packing fragile goods or stuffing furniture.

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Dicaepolis: Oh! it is strong, my friend, and will never get broken, if care is taken to hang it head-downwards.

Chorus: There! It is well packed now!

Boeotian: Marry, I will proceed to carry off my bundle.

Chorus: Farewell, worthiest of strangers, take this informer, good for anything, and fling him where you like.

The opinions of John Boardman, such as summed up in *The History of Greek Vases: Potters, Painters and Pictures* (2001), form a striking contrast with those of Michael Vickers, such as those articulated in his seminal article of 1984: “Artful Crafts: The Influence of Metalwork on Athenian Painted Pottery,” and republished in book form, incorporating much scholarly debate, with David Gill as *Artful Crafts: Ancient Greek Silverware and Pottery* (1994). In reading the most recent statements, it is possible to observe the scars made by years of bitter, pedantic, but ultimately productive quarreling, in the form of sniping, name-calling, wound licking, and bullet holes. Indeed, both parties have made concessions that move, though without seeming to recognize it, toward what I assume were Warren’s insights about the existence of homosexual pornographic silverware, insights that have inspired this paper.

Born in 1927, Sir John Boardman, the doyen of the field and even now as we write in 2013 still a presence at Oxford, maintains a conventional position established by his mentor John Beazley, the professor who applied Morelli’s methodology to vases. Beazley worked alongside Warren’s lover and assistant John Marshall. Boardman still maintains that the Greeks considered ceramic vases to be extremely valuable objects of art, objects which, due to their intrinsic aesthetic worth, commanded considerable prices when new, despite the low value of clay, their principal material. Conversely, Vickers, the enfant terrible of the field, and his collaborators have asserted precisely the opposite: that such ceramic vases were no more than cheap and uninspired “knockoffs,” “worthless ballast,” “unrecyclable junk,” objects offered to the common folk as pale imitations of the gold and silver status tokens that only the elites could afford. In his view, discerning tastes naturally preferred exquisite original designs rendered in silver or other precious materials, with an accordingly superior price for precious metal vessels; Boardman and Beazley, in this view, mistakenly ascribe this high value to common ceramic ware, even after it was, as I claim, for the most part upstaged by silver in Athens after 470 BCE.
Both of these positions are incomplete and fragmentary: they ignore the influence of politics and economics on a society’s arts and crafts, and assume that the values ascribed to certain materials and methods of production remain static, even in the face of significant, fundamental changes, as if the tastes of fashionable society were independent of the vicissitudes of history. It was Warren’s particular merit to intuit that some homosexual pornographic vases must have been wrought from silver, despite the absence of any surviving examples. The presence of such explicitly homoerotic objects in literature from the 5th and 4th centuries buttressed this interpretation. Numerous references from the classical period to the use of silver sympotic ware describe its decoration. Like Schliemann—who pursued an intuitive vision of a real, archaeologically verifiable Troy and Mycenae, and who dug until he discovered metallic treasures such as the “Agamemnon Mask”—Warren relentlessly pursued his own vision of a silver cup with homoerotic imagery until he had located and acquired one. In the following, I intend to make a similar leap via intuitive vision, and to posit that there must have been a change in the materials that elite Athenians had their vases made from after 470 BCE (which corresponds with explicitly homosexual scenes disappearing from ceramic ware).

If significant change regarding the use of homosexual silver sympotic ware did occur after 470 BCE (due to the unprecedented prosperity that followed the end of the Persian Wars), then it is possible, by establishing the importance of this date, to synthesize the opinions of Boardman and Vickers along these lines: Boardman is basically correct, although he exaggerates, for the period before 470; Vickers, for the period thereafter. The Athenian elites—followed soon after by the elites of other leading city-states such as Corinth and Syracuse—established a new sympotic style, switching over to silver when they became wealthy enough to do so in the 5th century. This theory thus acknowledges the partial truths contained in the theories of both Boardman and Vickers.

A question that long stumped me is whether the silverware after 470 continued to portray scenes as specifically homosexual as the ceramic ware had done before that date, or whether the silverware in common use after 470, like the ceramic ware of the same period, was also more modest in portraying homosexual acts. Scholars from Ehrenberg onwards have suggested that, after the democratic takeover, the elites
quit displaying their pederastic interests - or vices as they were coming to be seen - because they were intimidated. I think not. I believe many of them would have arrogantly continued to disregard any possible popular disapproval or jealousy. The silverware after 470 would have imitated the earlier ceramic illustrations, with unbridled displays of homosexual activity; the ceramic ware after 470, by contrast, became more restrained, on account of its increasing use for “bourgeois” dinners with ladies present. This is not to say that aristocratic tastes went wholly uninfluenced by the changing spirit of the times, a theme to be discussed further shortly, when I turn to the views of Thomas Hubbard.

Prior to 470 BCE, in a society that was still fairly poor (monetarily, though not culturally), ceramic pots were still relatively valuable, expensive, and cutting-edge objets d’art, and many featured the kinds of sexual scenes dear to the hearts of the relatively wealthy who comprised the ranks of the symposiasts, reflecting their tastes, both heterosexual and homosexual.

On the other hand, once the Athenian elite accumulated greater wealth, after 470, they were able to afford silver. Soon afterwards their rich emulators in other leading poleis38 did so as well, especially Syracuse, which also adopted democracy after the time of Hiero, and Corinth, Athens’s main maritime rival but Sparta’s ally, never did. Hence, silver vessels became, for the first time, standard accoutrements of symposia. Vickers claimed erroneously that precious metals had always been used. Many ceramic objects made subsequent to this date might well have been imitations of the silver vessels then being routinely used by wealthy symposiasts, who, of course, continued to serve certain dishes—especially those that came straight from the oven, such as soufflés, casseroles, seafood and fowl—on ceramics.

Boardman based part of his argument regarding the price of decorated ceramic pots on the fact that they were major commercial commodities, imagining that a “trade war” between Athens and Corinth emerged in the early 6th century, with “each vying to attract the prime attention of carriers and customers” (Vases, p. 48). Potters and painters from rival cities copied each other in an effort, presumably, to make their

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38 City states, plural of polis.
products more appealing in their own and foreign markets, with Athenian ware surpassing Corinthian around 550 BCE. If these vases were indeed the expensive commodities Boardman believed them to have been, this must have been because they were beautifully decorated and exquisitely shaped; thus, artistic considerations were clearly given “pride of place” and established the price in those markets. Put simply, they were not, as Vickers has insisted, “worthless ballast” (though empty, undecorated large amphorae exporting wine and oil could indeed serve as ballast on return voyages).

Consequently, the choice of subject matter must have contributed to a pot’s worth; and, for Boardman, the importance given to subject matter—to a painter’s choice of a mythological scene and, most important, to his subtle handling of it—suggests that “the clay vase [had] come into its own as a field of really ambitious narrative” by 570 BCE (Vases, p. 53). In his view, artists would hardly have wasted their time crafting arresting and poignant images on a cheap medium that was held in low esteem. Because of the effort artists expended on them, painted vases could hardly have constituted “unrecyclable junk” (as Vickers labeled them). Instead, a few were important artworks used in prestigious social contexts—for example, filled with the finest oil as prizes for the winning athletes at the Panathenaic Games. Hence, an artist such as Exekias, working after the mid-6th century, could be said to “represent archaic art in vase painting coming of age, and aspiring to more than mere decoration and narrative” (Vases, p. 61). Boardman sees the artistic rivalry between vase painters as further evidence for his claims, a thesis that was first proposed by his mentor Beazley, the “connoisseur” who attributed vases to various artists through Morelli’s methods and who grouped works together and named them in accordance with the current location of one of the artist’s famous works (“The Berlin Painter”) or to a famous or frequent subject painted by the artist (“The Niobe Painter”) or to an inscribed name (“Euphronius”).

A convenient summary of Giovanni Morelli’s methods—as applied to Japanese woodblock painters in addition to Greek vase painters—is given in Boardman’s Vases. Morelli looked for and compared small details, such as ears in Japanese prints and ankles in Greek vases, details in which an artist unconsciously reveals his identifying characteristics: “It becomes clear that each artist can be betrayed by his drawing,
just as we may be by our handwriting even to the satisfaction of the law and our banks” (Vases pp. 133-37).

Boardman attributed “well-known artist” status to these humble workers in clay, the kind of status possessed by famous Greek painters, architects, and especially sculptors such as Phidias, and even suggests there was a patronage structure in place reminiscent of that which encouraged Renaissance figures such as Michelangelo. However, not even a single pot painter or potter is mentioned in any surviving list or catalog of Classical artists, or indeed in any literary fragment from Greek or Latin antiquity, in contrast to famous sculptors in metal and marble, and painters on wood or walls. The greatest were in gold and ivory by Phidias, chryselephantine; but none survive, and despite the many references to them in literature there are more to silver vases in texts from as early as the 5th and early 4th centuries and many more afterwards in later texts.

The following account testifies that painters did become famous in antiquity. Aristides of Thebes (floruit ca. 350 BCE) received 1,000 minae for a painting of a scene of the Persian Wars containing 100 figures, the agreed-upon wage being 10 minae per figure (Pliny, Natural History, XXV, 98-100). The central group of his most famous picture represented a mother dying of a wound, and holding back her infant, who is creeping to her bosom, that it may not drink blood instead of milk. No such testimony exists for pot painters.

A group of painters working at the end of the 6th and beginning of the 5th centuries, a cluster dubbed by Beazley “The Pioneers,” seem to have formed a “real artistic coterie” competing to produce the most exquisitely painted vases. Boardman implied that it would be illogical for such an effort to be expended on worthless pots: “In the Pioneers’ apparently conscious pride and rivalry we perhaps for the first time come close to a recognition by the painters that what they practice can be more than a craft”—and discriminating thus, connoisseurs must have prized the consummate craftsmanship that had turned mere clay into objets d’art (Vases, pp. 53-83), a prizing which facilitated the fact that Greek ceramic vases were indeed traded throughout the Mediterranean basin.
As a result, Boardman glorified the individual inspiration—indeed, the genius—that he discerned in such consummate craftsmen, even claiming Greek potters and painters took “precious little” account of their markets while choosing shapes and decorations. He believed they were more concerned with expressing themselves artistically than with appealing to consumers, even though “Pots were expensive enough and travelled in sufficient numbers to have been taken seriously by merchants” (Vases, 166).

Following Beazley’s lead, Boardman and other subsequent scholars have likewise employed the analytic techniques delineated by Morelli in works such as Italian Painters: Critical Studies of Their Works (translated into English in 1892) to recognize, on multiple vases, the styles of individual artists—those unique subject choices and identifying stylistic quirks that allow those vases to be properly grouped and subsequently attributed to a single artist or school of painters.

“This suggests,” asserted Boardman, “that for the most part the choice of subject lay with the painter, and the subjects involved do not indicate that they were chosen to serve any special demand in either the home or the export market.” This amounts to being a claim that Greek “vaaases,” especially Athenian, were held in such high esteem that market pressures had no real impact upon the artists, and that the artistic value of these vases generated market value, just as high prices would later be commanded by the works of the Italian or Dutch masters (Vases, 153, 156, 226).

This respect for the artist and his personal vision echoes the fin de siècle philosophy of “l’art pour l’art” (or “art for art’s sake”), an attitude popularized in the Anglo-American world through Walter Pater’s The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry (1873), an argument that Bernard Berenson, a disciple of both Pater and Morelli, successfully applied to Renaissance painters who truly did become recognized geniuses during their lifetimes—unlike the Greek potters or vase painters who make no appearance in the historical record. (About the influence of Pater on Warren and Berenson, see Kaylor, “Introduction,” Defence, c; ciii-cv; especially ciii, footnote 2. See also Waynes Dynes, on Pater, Morelli, Warren, Berenson, Beazley and others: http://dyneslines.blogspot.co.uk/2009/07/morelli-wolfflin-beazley.html)

Against the commonsense notion that clay is the cheapest and commonest of raw materials, Boardman counterintuitively saw a special value attached to clay, claiming that its unique plasticity “gives it a special place in the hierarchy of artists’ materials” (Vases, p. 269)—one, however, that is neither recognized by Pliny the Elder in his encyclopedia nor considered as such in any other textual survey of Classical
origin. Modern sculptors often make the design for marbles or bronzes in clay. Did their Greek predecessors also do this? Did they go beyond the lost wax process?\(^{39}\)

Although it is far more logical, from an economic point of view, to place a higher value on works crafted from precious materials such as silver, Boardman has insisted on “the extraordinary qualities of clay, which can present itself as liquid or hard as rock, can be handled with full plasticity but also molded or carved, and provides an essential tool in the preliminary stages of other crafts such as metalwork and sculpture” (ibid.). Boardman’s veritable “Paean to Clay” even includes references to the Judeo-Christian god creating man from the dust of the earth and to other myths, leaving us to interpolate that Mediterranean merchants must have pondered long the spiritual and other aspects of such tales before pricing vases, and that the ease with which a craftsman’s genius could manipulate and decorate raw clay for his wares must have contributed decisively to the market value of his pottery. In what amounts to an “enthusiasm for mud,” Boardman even attempted to place this pottery in the same artistic realm as great chryselephantine marble sculptures, such as Phidias’s *Athena Parthenos* and *Zeus Olympios*, and monumental, architectural marvels such as the Parthenon. While many scholars have noted that some vase painters imitated the Parthenon’s frieze, Boardman goes as far as to suggest that “it is a question of a shared idiom and shared principles of composition” (*Vases*, 269-73).

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\(^{39}\) First, the craftsman made a wax model and covered it in clay. The clay was fired, and at the same time, the wax melted out. Molten bronze was then poured into the cavity of the clay mold. After cooling, the clay mold was removed and the surface of the bronze was polished smooth. The wax model often could be shaped into animal or figural motifs or decorated with geometric or floral patterns before firing. In Ancient Greece bronze vases were made primarily with a combination of two techniques, molding and raising. The handles, mouths, and feet of the vessels often were cast from a mold. Bodies of the vases usually were made by raising, which involved repeated heating, hammering, and cooling. The cast parts were attached to the hammered body of the vase with rivets, solder, or a combination of the two methods. Several different vessels for wine were produced in bronze, which may have been reserved for symposia. Kraters, used for mixing wine and water, could be elaborately decorated. Bronze vessels are significant, original works of art made over an extended period of time and in a material important to the Greeks. The vases are among our best evidence for ancient Greek metalworking techniques and decorative preferences. In ancient Greece, vessels were made in great quantities. Many more bronze ones must have existed in antiquity because they were less expensive than silver and gold, and more have survived because they were buried in tombs or hidden in hoards beneath the ground. See Amy Sowder, *Ancient Greek Bronze Vessels*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art.  

[http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/agbv/hd_agbv.htm](http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/agbv/hd_agbv.htm)
The arguments and evidence above constitute what is now the “standard view,” even among contemporary scholars, curators, connoisseurs, and collectors. Ever since the days of Hamilton and d’Hancarville Greek painted vases have been considered intrinsically valuable as works of art, both to the society that produced them and to our own. This has given them an astounding prominence and price since the 18th century, when they first appeared on the market in large quantities because of the excavations at Pompeii and Herculaneum, and, after 1828, from tombs in Etruria. This does not represent, however, the entire scholarly opinion on this matter: some scholars dissent from and even denounce this standard view.

After considering Boardman’s rhapsodic appraisal of the remarkable glories of clay, let us turn to Greek attitudes toward precious metals, because the question of the essential value of an object was very important to the Greeks. However exquisite or shoddy its former decorated state, when melted down, a silver vase was still worth its weight in silver, whereas clay potsherds could not even be recycled into new pots (The canvas and frame of an Old Master painting could be recycled and often, like vellum or parchment, were palimpsests, but the commercial value would of course be slim indeed compared to the value of the painting itself). Hence, a clay pot had no essential value beyond the grace of its shape and the appeal of its designs—the sort of value that can evaporate as fashions change. How much value did the Greeks put on precious metals? And in what forms and under what social circumstances were such metal objects exchanged?

The Greek word customarily rendered as “treasure” is keimelion [e.g., Odyssey IV, 560], literally something that can be laid away. In the epics treasure was of bronze, iron, or gold, less often of silver or fine cloth, and usually it was shaped into goblets, tripods, or cauldrons. Such objects had some direct use value, and they could provide aesthetic satisfaction, too . . . but neither function was of real moment compared to their value as symbolic wealth or prestige wealth. The twin uses of treasure were in possessing it and in giving it away. (Moses Finley, World of Odysseus [1999], 60-61)

In Artful Crafts (1994), Vickers claimed that the Greek ceramics Boardman and modern collectors find so valuable were not held in such high esteem by the Greeks who made or used them. By citing period references to metals and ceramics, to their prices, and
to the manufacture that produced and the trade that circulated them, Vickers has drawn into question the claims of Boardman and others who still follow the fashion set in the 18th century by Hamilton and d’Hancarville. Against that tradition, Vickers deploys the scientific analysis of such ceramics and surviving silver, asserting that the exported pots, especially those sent to Etruria, were considered, in the period of their making, “worthless ballast.” Vickers ended his book with a definitive pronouncement: “There is no evidence to suggest that ceramic was ever regarded as a serious artistic medium in antiquity.” After Boardman’s earlier glorification of the artistic possibilities of clay, the poignant use of the word “ever” by Vickers has a devastating, metallic ring. If ceramics were not considered valuable because of their artistry, those works must have been worth very little, inasmuch as clay is a cheap material with little if any intrinsic worth, even the fine red clay of Attica.

Nevertheless, “other explanations need to be found to account for the high standards consistently achieved by potters and pot-painters.” The provocative explanation offered by Vickers is that potters and pottery painters were busy copying the products of smiths working with silver, bronze, even gold, copper, and ivory, and that they were familiar with such examples, thus could readily use them as models (Artful Crafts, 1994, p. 191). Vickers portrayed the ceramicists of the day as keen followers of current fashions in metal, under the ever-present threat of losing their fashion-conscious yet relatively impecunious customers to more accommodating competitors. This claim is far-reaching, if not reckless: it portrays these ceramicists as desperate slaves to fashion, haunting the workshops of the metalsmiths to snatch up discarded drawings to use as models for their own designs. More realistically, it seems unlikely that common Corinthian or Athenian potters would ever have had the opportunity to visit the symposia of tyrants, whether foreign or domestic, or to sketch, for later use in their own studios, the designs fashionable thereon (though there may have been more opportunity for appropriating silver designs after the much wider manufacture and distribution of silverware in Athens after 470 BCE).

More than literary evidence is required to make a convincing statement about the standing of such artifacts in an ancient society: the archaeological record must also be considered. If it is to be concluded that the Greek ceramics of this period derived from silver originals, Vickers needs to demonstrate how the shape and composition of Greek silverware influenced the works of the corresponding potters. Although he cited
a number of ceramic vases that are obviously based on specific silver originals that have been recovered and identified, the bulk of his evidence focuses on the controversial claim that the colors found on ceramics were meant to evoke or mimic the metallic tones present on their metallic counterparts. To this end, a subtle scheme of equivalences is contrived, equating the metallic tones in metalwork with the colored glazes used in ceramics. This scheme is then deployed in an attempt to prove that the materials and techniques chosen by potters and pottery painters directly imitated those used by metalsmiths.

According to this scheme, the “black gloss” used on a group of ceramics known as “Arethusa Cups” was meant “to evoke not simply the form, but the surface appearance of silverware” (Artful Crafts, 1994, p. 124). Likewise, it is claimed that the “red” in the red figures of certain Greek clay vases—a color commonly thought to be natural to the clay itself, but very rarely a separate slip—was employed to imitate the gold plating of the gold figures on silver specimens.40 Vickers offers a full list of such substitutions: black figures for silver figures, purple for copper, and a background of white slip for ivory (since the rich had lekythos41 made of real ivory, of course.) (ibid., pp. 149-51). They consider this evidence as indicating that the makers of fine Greek ceramics followed standards set by contemporary silversmiths (ibid., summarizing pp. 117-51).

“It has been argued that the fine ceramic vessels made in archaic and Classical Greece, the black-figure, red-figure, and white-ground wares which fill museums from Stockholm to Sydney, and Mykonos to Malibu, are the products of highly skilled craftsmen whose special expertise lay in evoking both the shapes and decorative schemes of vessels made in more precious materials: silver, gold, bronze, copper, and ivory” (ibid., p. 153). Boardman’s independent potters—with their sensitive hands taking advantage of the uniquely yielding plasticity of clay, and their artistic sensibilities gloriously free to paint their finished vases with whatever scenes they pleased, for their own artistic fulfillment or even mere amusement—have become

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40 The “red” is a property of naturally occurring ferric oxide i.e. the color of rusty iron. As for “a separate slip”, a slip is a suspension in water of clay and/or other materials used in the production of ceramic ware.

41 Plural of lekythos. This was an oil flask used at baths and gymnasia, and for funerary offerings. The flask has a long, cylindrical body gracefully tapered to the base, and a narrow neck with a loop-shaped handle.
instead Vickers’s “slaves to fashion,” keeping an ever-watchful eye on the local metalworkers, and snatching up from these superior craftsmen every detail of form, design, and color they can, in order to please a public that judges works of ceramic by the conventions of fashionable metalworking.

As a result, Boardman found it convenient (“Silver,” p. 294) to taunt Vickers for being a Midas, incapable of caring for anything save precious metals. He snidely claims that “Midas’ touch was not his only disability,” but that swipe, clearly directed at Vickers, is vague. What exactly is Boardman implying? Vickers would be justified in retorting in a similar fashion that Boardman resembles the ugly old hag Poverty in Aristophanes’ Wealth: he never knew a Greek born before the time of Alexander who had not dined from humble clay.

Vickers’ theory runs into trouble when the scope of inquiry is narrowed to specifically sympotic vessels, and extended backwards to before 480 BCE. If the elites were, as Vickers claimed, busy using silver at that time, then who were the individuals using all that fine clay sympotic ware that still survives in impressive quantities? Since symposia were expensive, such elegant parties could only have been hosted by the wealthy. Because many of the surviving homoerotic clay vessels depict scenes from such symposia, wealthy individuals must have been their intended purchasers and audience.

If Vickers’ theory were correct and applicable to sympotic vessels before 470 BCE, then clay vessels must have been used by individuals far down the social strata, such as knights or even hoplites: the sufficiently wealthy would have been using silver instead. This novel notion also requires that we imagine large numbers of knights possessing wealth sufficient to host symposia, including the great luxury of having a special “men’s dining room,” the space where such gatherings traditionally took place. We say “large numbers” because, judging by the considerable remnant of Greek ceramic vases that has survived, the original output of ceramic materials for such symposia—as we are supposing for the moment—must have been considerable.

Despite the unorthodox nature of his theory, however, Vickers provided no evidence that such a degree of wealth, as well as interest in hosting symposia, ever existed among the equestrians, much less the hoplites. Although Vickers emphasized that
such pottery was relatively inexpensive, putting it within reach of the average knight, he failed to emphasize that ceramic tableware represented only a small portion of the cost of a symposium, which also required expensive food and wine, excellent chefs, entertainers and servants, not to mention spacious facilities, elegantly furnished. Of course, it is not impossible that knights and hoplites simply did their drinking in imitative, “down-market” symposia, in which the proper sympotic features were scaled down to fit within their limited budgets: clay vessels instead of silver, cheaper wines and simpler foods, fewer dancing girls or none, all held within rented taverns, etc. But, can such events, events unconcerned with and uninfluenced by the perpetuation of aristocratic traditions, actually be labeled, even formally, symposia?

There is a world of difference, after all, between the balls held in the 19th century by the celebrated Mrs Astor’s “Four Hundred” (the most elegant families of New York City) and the gatherings of their middle-class compatriots who came together to “have a ball.” Future cultural historians will doubtless write about the cultural significance of the varieties of plastic bowls used for “chips & dip” at Super Bowl parties held by American football fans in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. And, indeed, the attitude of many a football fan, as he sits before his television watching a game, mirrors that displayed in the conclusion to Semonides’ misogynistic satire on women:

42 Writing in the 18th century, the English essayist and poet Joseph Addison identified this work by Semonides of Ceos (c. 556 – 468 BC) as the oldest extant satire. Women are unflatteringly likened to animals, including pigs, dogs, asses and apes. Woman, for instance, is a bitch: “A man can’t stop her barking; not with threats, not (when he’s had enough) by knocking out her teeth with a stone, and not with sweet talk either; even among guests, she’ll sit and yap.” Esteemed as a wise man, even by Plato, and with a canonical place as a lyric poet, Semonides here presents a dim view of women that might be thought to represent a wider misogyny among Greek men – and a vicious, wife-beating, brand of misogyny to boot.

The violence of his language, though, is cartoon-like and humorous, with Man cast as the long-suffering victim of domineering Woman, rather than the other way around. Also, Greek women were taken seriously in Homer and in Greek drama as Hugh Lloyd-Jones emphasised in his book *Females of the Species: Semonides on Women*. Reviewing this book, Mary R. Lefkowitz agreed, but pointed out that “the inherited myths from which the epic bards and the dramatists drew their plots reiterate that women’s proper place is in the service of their husbands or nearest male relative. Heroines merit support and attention only in the process of searching or waiting for their allotted men.”

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Just when a man most wishes to enjoy himself at home, through the dispensation of a god or the kindness of a man, she finds a way of finding fault with him and lifts her crest for battle. Yes, where there is a woman, men cannot even give hearty entertainment to a guest who has come to the house. (Females of the Species: Semonides on Women, Hugh Lloyd-Jones’s trans., p. 54)

Ordinary Greeks of the Classical period, such as the man described by Semonides above, could only envy those who, like the gods, were able to entertain their guests at proper symposia: in sumptuous spaces reserved for gentlemen, where tables abounded in gold and silver plate holding exquisite wines and exotic dishes, where entertainment and conversation were equally elegant, and where the body, the soul, and the mind could feast at leisure, in luxury. Not only were ladies excluded, their ensured separation from the gentlemen required supervision. It would take at least three house slaves to sequester women: a man and two females, one to draw water, wash clothes, keep house, and another to cook. How many could afford this?

This is not the place for a thesis on the status of women in Greek society but it may be noted in passing that modern feminist hostility towards the supposed misogyny of classical Greece and Rome is unhistorical insofar as it ignores the direction of travel. It is beginning to look from modern scholarship as though Bronze Age Greece was in the vanguard of higher regard for women, and their better treatment, than had pertained in other cultures of the time. A strong claim can be made that through continuation of the western Indo-European tradition, the Greeks, archaic then classical, and later the Romans, became the first major civilizations in which a man was restricted to only one wife at a time. This culture of monogamy, or, more strictly, monogyny, did not apply for instance in the Jewish culture of biblical times. Many important biblical figures had more than one wife: Esau, Moses, Jacob, David, Solomon, Herod. Nor does there appear to have been a prohibition against polygyny among Jewish commoners.

A further implication of the changing status of women is also worthy of at least brief mention. When men begin to acknowledge the unique status of a particular woman in their lives and households, the expectation thus created of sexual fidelity has secondary effects. Whereas a wife may become jealous in guarding her monopoly rights of sexual engagement with her husband against other women, vigilance in which she might find community support, she may be more tolerant of her husband having a sexual outlet with boys. After all, such contacts present no threat to her position as the sole begetter of her husband’s children, a role which guarantees her place in the household and secures good prospects for herself and her offspring. Accordingly, it may be no accident that in ancient Greece the tentative beginnings of monogyny were accompanied by the flourishing of pederasty to the point of its being institutionalised through symposia, gymnasia, and a culture of pederastic pedagogy.

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Another problem Vickers does not resolve is space. Before the Persian invasion, Athens’ walls were insignificant and the population sparse. After the erection of the spectacular walls by Themistocles and the exponential increase in the population, space for houses within the city walls became alarmingly expensive. In such circumstances, even the reputable equestrians could hardly have afforded a capacious dining room designed for symposia, whether for 7 or 11 couches arranged along 4 walls to accommodate 14 or 22 symposiasts (12ft x 12ft or 18ft x 18ft), and with the space of one couch-length left empty, to allow for the comings and goings of guests, servants, and entertainers. (See Bergquist, “Symptic Space,” for further details.) Unlike in Rome, where walls were not vital in the period between the defeat of Hannibal at Zama (202 BCE) and the reign of Emperor Aurelius (271-276 CE), Athenian town houses always remained small. Only the very wealthy could afford rooms for symposia, though some of the more gentrified knights, those who could afford a fine warhorse, did have rooms into which their womenfolk could be sequestered for the duration of symposia. This was a luxury beyond the means of the hoplites—those men who fought in standard heavy armor, that is, who had land and oxen but no warhorse—and was an expense probably beyond that of almost all knights. A symposiast would need at least twelve servants for a bash.

While Vickers provided no explanation as to why the production of explicitly homoerotic ceramic pots became extremely rare and may actually have ceased after 470 BCE, the above reading does. Drawing on the known facts about the financial resources of the equestrian and hoplite classes, it suggests that, since only the elites could afford sumptuous symposia and only they had domestic spaces enabling them to sequester away their women, only they could continue to buy or commission the homoerotic tableware that “only men should see,” tableware they now preferred to have cast in silver rather than molded from clay. On the other hand, the non-elites, with their womenfolk in the same rooms, seem to have eschewed the sexually explicit tableware that the elites no longer sought or valued. Put another way: before 470, only a few among the richest of the oldest families would have had any silver; but that was not particularly problematic, since the aristocrats of that period saw their values reflected not in homoerotic cups made of silver, but of clay. Meanwhile the equestrians, the hoplites, and the common folk drank out of the sort of undecorated ceramic cups that museums do not particularly prize or exhibit. After 470, aristocrats could afford silver homoerotic cups designed to mirror their values, and the upper
middle class could afford decorated pots, if they chose to buy them. Nonetheless, despite this increase in spending potential, the commoners still never possessed wealth sufficient to afford the private spaces necessary for the holding of symposia or other exclusively masculine activities—like the man in Semonides’ diatribe, they had no way to keep the ladies out, or to retain, as private possessions for private use, the erotic cups that had always been a staple of symposia.

Others have argued that images of pederasty merely became taboo after 470 BCE. One of the individuals who advocated this position is my friend Thomas Hubbard, whose conclusions in this regard are influenced by Victor Ehrenberg’s *The People of Aristophanes*. This idea is mentioned in Hubbard’s article on Laius, “History’s First Child Molester: Euripides’ Chrysippus and the Marginalization of Pederasty in Athenian Democratic Discourse” (2006), and more recently serves as part of his spectacular reviews of Andrew Lear and Eva Cantarella’s *Images of Ancient Greek Pederasty: Boys Were Their Gods* (2008) and of James Davidson’s *The Greeks and Greek Love: A Bold New Exploration of the Ancient World* (2009), a volume which makes the preposterous, unsupported claim—designed to please the Puritans of today—that Greek *erastai* waited for their beloved *eromenoi* to turn 18 before engaging in sexual intercourse with them.

Hubbard warmly praises Lear’s sound conclusion that some of the *erastai* were only after sex (Kenneth Dover had earlier insisted that all were), while others wished primarily to improve the character and learning of their younger beloveds. Lear also published, as an appendix, Keith DeVries’s long-awaited list of vases, many of which show same-age couples. Hubbard claimed that after the Persian Wars the ascendance of the hoplites and oarsmen during the flourishing of democracy resulted in increasing prudery and a distaste for pederasty, or jealousy of the gilded youths. Democracy led to a “privileging of middle class taste,” evident in “the decline of erotically-based pedagogy and the marginalization of explicit sexuality in art” (Hubbard, “Review of Lear & Cantarella”). From this perspective, some forms of sexuality in general—and homosexuality in particular—as well as their depiction in art, had become socially unacceptable. Athenian society must indeed have become fearsomely intolerant and the hoplites and oarsmen remarkably influential if they could shame aristocrats into censoring images that had been present on their tableware for centuries.
A variation of Hubbard’s theory may, however, be reasonably entertained, as noted in Chapter 2: the aristocracy would have been not so much intimidated by the lower classes as ideologically undermined by the dramatists and philosophers: those who would continue the old ways without regard to the new thinking would increasingly be dismissed as boorish dinosaurs, poorly educated and with little to offer to civic life - a limitation that would itself stand as a damning indictment in a society not of representative democracy, such as we have in modern times, where the politics are left to politicians, but of direct democracy, in which the elite needed to participate personally as speakers and office holders in order to advance their status and prospects. As in any democracy, such figures could not afford to conduct their lives, or hold opinions, drastically at odds with public sentiment.

As this paper has argued at length, though, it is plausible that the production of pederastic tableware continued uninterrupted through the democratic period, though it did so in silver rather than in ceramics. The silverware of the “dinosaurs” would have remained graphically and un inhibitedly homosexual; the more refined and politically astute among the elite would have displayed that refinement and astuteness in somewhat subtler symposium displays: more like red figure work than black. As for Greeks other than aristocrats, dining in the presence of their wives and daughters, they simply had no interest in having explicitly homoerotic scenes on their dinner tables. Athenians of this period were far from homophobic, however; in fact, they may have been quite jealous of their betters’ “trophy boys,” as Hubbard acknowledges (“Review of Lear”).

A similar phenomenon was at work in Europe in the 17th century: Flemish and Dutch artists painted scenes of middle-class life for middle-class patrons, consciously avoiding the mythological and religious subjects—often heteroerotic or homoerotic—that were prized by Renaissance and Baroque elites in Italy, France, and England. The middle classes of Flanders and the Netherlands constituted a very different market, with very different expectations, than those of the Italian elites. A still life by Michelangelo, or a Sistine Chapel ceiling by Brueghel, would be equally comical: different venues and audiences require different techniques, media, and themes, which was also true in Ancient Greece.
As we saw in Chapter 2, Sitta von Redden, in *The Cambridge Economic History of the Greco Roman World* (2008) offers two alternative explanations, neither of them satisfactory, about symposia and sympotic ware, but is more accurate about the money supply. To recapitulate:

Despite restrictions put on individuals, per capita consumption of wine was probably significantly higher than, for example, in mediaeval times. To judge from the numbers of drinking cups and transport amphoras found in excavations, the consumption and trade of wine reached an unprecedented scale in the late archaic and early classical period. Most wine was marketed and consumed locally, but for connoisseurs it was shipped over long distances ... Two explanations have been proposed for the increase in consumption. The first is that increasing democratization changed the symposium from an exclusive aristocratic gathering to a form of hospitality practiced by a wider group of citizens. Painted pottery replaced silver and gold containers, and its mass production in Athens in the late sixth and fifth centuries reflected the opening of the symposium and gymnasium to poorer people who emulated the former elite’s symbolic behavior. The second is that the symposium remained largely aristocratic, while ordinary people frequented public taverns (*kapeleia*) that seem to have been abundant in cities and villages. Whatever theory is more valid, by the fifth century there was an extensive drinking culture supplied by shops, local markets, and foreign trade. It is worth noting that ordinary wine was called after the measure in which it was sold, so it was largely regarded as a commodity rather than a subsistence food.

However, we can also identify ways in which the Classical period saw increases in money supply. One was via plunder from warfare out of region, the most substantial being the gains made at the expense of the Persian empire between 480 and 450. A second source was mercenary service out of region. This was an old custom on a small scale, but grew in importance from the late fifth century when both the Persian empire and its adversaries resorted to hiring Greek soldiers. A third comprised spasmodic, politically motivated consignments from non-Greek rulers, such as the payments made by Persia to one side or another for a century from the 420s till Alexander’s conquest.

The first of these theories, that increasing democratization changed the symposium to a less exclusive gathering, probably contains an element of truth, but it is misleading in the present context. The tendency of aspiring middle class individuals to imitate those at the top of society is a commonplace of history. There is no reason to suppose that fine dining with all the trappings would have been exempt as a desirable aspiration in Ancient Greece. But it had to be affordable, and silverware would have been beyond all but the elite. And, as we have seen,
the middle class home was increasingly a locus for the expression of “family values”, which meant that some of the “symbolic behavior” of the elite would not have been imitated there, including the use of the symposium as a site of homoerotic conviviality, replete with tableware explicitly depicting orgies. At some sort of watered down, democratized - and inevitably feminized - symposium, we may expect that scenes of graphically sexual pederastic initiation would not have been welcome, albeit representations of chastely pedagogic encounters between man and boy would more readily have passed muster as a nod to tradition. While the gymnasium, as a public space, does indeed appear to have been a site for the extension of the elite’s “symbolic behavior” to the less well off, especially as regards the tradition of pederasty, the private space of the home was a different matter.

As regards the second theory, that the symposium remained largely aristocratic, while ordinary people frequented public taverns, there is reason to suppose this is nearer the mark, but this in itself tells us nothing about how the symposium was conducted, including the all-important switch to silver.
Chapter 9: the Warren Cup: authenticity

Far removed by time, place, and material, the 1st century AD silver cup acquired in 1911 by Edward Perry Warren—a skyphos featuring scenes of homosexual pedication and thought to come from Bittir, a town near Jerusalem—has few, if any, iconographical connections with the well-known erotic Greek ceramic vases of half a millennium earlier. The significance of the cup will be considered in the next chapter. However, questions have been raised as to its authenticity, so it makes sense first to consider its provenance, iconography and context in some detail.

The photographs of the Warren Cup shown in an earlier chapter will already have given the reader an appreciation of its appearance, including the decorative scenes. A verbal description at this point will assist the discussion that follows.

Dyfri Williams, whose extensive description I draw on here, tells us the cup is made of 95% pure silver with a little copper, and small traces of gold and lead. This alloy, he says, “is perfectly consistent with other known ancient Roman silver vessels, while the corrosion products that remain in the cracks even after both its twentieth-century cleanings prove its antiquity.” The cup originally had five parts: a thin-walled bowl with high relief scenes, raised by hammering from inside (repoussé), and given further definition and detail by careful chasing from outside. In addition, there is an inner liner of silver, twice as thick as the bowl, with a solid, projecting rim hammered out in one piece with the liner. The cup originally had a pair of vertical handles to be soldered on to the top of the rim, thus holding the decorated bowl and plain liner together. Finally, there is an elaborately profiled foot, soldered to the base.

There are two scenes in low relief, with figures, both set against a background created by a large textile hung over a cord or pole. On each side of the cup two males share a mattress and are shown in sexual intimacy. The front (Side A) features an older, bearded, figure and an open door on the right. The bearded figure wears a myrtle wreath tied at the back with a ribbon, while his companion is a beardless youth who has no wreath. There is an open chest on the extreme left, on the edge of which rests a musical instrument, possibly a lyre, with eleven strings. On the right a
young slave boy, short-haired and wearing an unbelted, sleeved tunic, is seen opening one leaf of a double wooden door. On the other side of the cup (Side B) the older figure is this time a beardless youth, similarly crowned with a myrtle wreath tied with a ribbon, while his companion is a boy. On the extreme left is an open chest with a lock: more textiles decoratively spill out of it. Up on the extreme right of the scene, a pair of pipes is suspended over the background textile by means of a cord.

For present purposes it is not necessary to describe the love-making on either side of the cup in the great detail to which Williams attends. For the most part, the photographs should suffice. Regarding the couple on Side A, it need only be noted that the youth has eased himself onto the lap of his older partner with the aid of a strap that appears to hang from the pole supporting the curtain-like background. Such straps are to be seen on some other representations of lovemaking in both Greek and Roman art.

On Side B, the difference in size between the two figures is obvious, the younger one appearing no more than pubescent, at around 12 years old, perhaps 13, with no pubic hair. Williams speaks of the boy being “almost cradled” by the youth, whose right hand - although we see only the thumb, the rest hidden by the boy’s body - offers a “supportive and intimate gesture.” As on the front of the cup, says Williams, “there is an air of tender calm and concentration.”

The hair is important, as we shall see. Writes Williams: “The boy has an extra long lock of hair that emanates from the crown of his head and falls in a thick multiple wavy strand down onto his spine. The other youth has a similar lock, but differently treated. It has been braided and lies flat along the crown of his head: it is clearly visible just above the regular contour of his skull and has slight, chased markings cut into the very low relief to indicate its braiding.”

Turning to the cup’s provenance, John R. Clarke quotes Strong: “A cup with scenes of homosexual love recently on the London Market is said to have been found in Palestine together with coins of Claudius, and R. V. Nicholls informed me about its provenance” (Lovemaking, 288, note 9); John Pollini is more tentative: “Although his Roman skyphos is said to be from the Greek East or Pompeii, its true provenance is unknown” (“Warren Cup,” 21). As regards the quality of the piece, Clarke labels it a
“Roman luxury object” of “high quality” (*Lovemaking*, 3; 61) and even uses it to decorate the cover of his book, *Looking at Lovemaking: Constructions of Sexuality in Roman Art, 100 BC to AD 250* (1998). Pollini describes it as “One of the most exquisite works of toreutic” 43 art to have been created in the early Roman Imperial period” (“Warren Cup” [1999]. Whitney Davis refers to “the extraordinary Roman silver goblet” (“Homoerotic Art Collection” [2001].

In 1999 the cup was acquired by the British Museum. Dyfri Williams, Keeper of Greek and Roman Antiquities at the museum, has written an excellent book, *The Warren Cup*. Regarding the cup’s findspot, he says a list found in Warren’s possessions after his death contains not only a clear description of the silver cup, but also a precise statement as to its reported findspot: “Said to have been found at Bittir, six miles from Jerusalem, 20 feet underground.”

In addition, Warren’s friend Beazley preserved a report that the cup had been found with coins of the emperor Claudius (reigned 41-54 AD). Williams tells us the dealer who sold Warren the cup was probably Ludwig Pollak, who had very good connections with Palestine and the Jerusalem area in particular. The find context of the cup was more likely that of a hoard hidden in a time of danger, either during or after Claudius’s reign, than a domestic or funerary one. This danger may well have been the growing unrest that led to the first Jewish Revolt 66-44 AD. The hiding spot could have been a cave in one of the escarpments typical of the area. Williams speculates that the cup was hidden by a Roman, or a Greek, fleeing Jerusalem along the Roman road that headed west past the town, terrified at the wave of violence that culminated in the complete take-over of the city by the Jews in August 66 AD. Alternatively, the damaged state of the cup and its apparent solitariness might indicate that it was part of the haul of one of the lawless gangs of cut-throats who were ambushing travellers on such roads at that time. With every justification, Williams here allows his imagination to take flight:

> It is extraordinary to imagine that the Warren Cup might have been taken to Judaea by a wealthy Roman official of some sort, that it was there during the years in which Pontius Pilate was Governor of the province (26-37 AD), and that its owner could have witnessed the various religious crises of Pilate’s administration and those leading up to the fall of Jerusalem.

The scenario he sketches here, in his 2006 book, is indeed a fascinating possibility. But there is now another, for which we have evidence more recently discussed by Dr

43 Toreutics is a term for artistic metalworking, by hammering gold, silver or other metals, engraving, Repoussé and chasing to form minute detailed reliefs or small engraved patterns.
Susan Walker, of the Ashmolean Museum. She has pointed to a key detail of the cup’s decoration that ties the figures depicted on it to the Hellenistic population of Egypt. This opens up the intriguing possibility that the cup had been commissioned by a wealthy Greek from, say, Alexandria, or even a Hellenized Jew living there who had abandoned the Mosaic prohibitions against homosexuality: there was even a gymnasium on Jerusalem’s Temple Mount. Walker’s observation would not explain how the cup came to be in that city without further and more strained speculation, but her evidence, as we shall see in due course, is far more interesting for quite different reasons.

Thus far, then, a provenance of sorts has emerged. How, and from whence, the cup came to be in Warren’s possession a century ago has not been proven but has at least been credibly explained. Also, Williams has given a plausible historical scenario for the proposed findspot. What of the wider context? Are there other drinking vessels with which the Warren Cup can be compared? Such vessels in material other than silver were discussed in Chapter 7, principally the Arretine pottery and the bronze Herstal Vase, both of which are decorated vividly with uninhibited scenes of pederastic love-making, albeit for very different reasons, the Arretine ware being simply pornographic whereas there is good reason to believe the Herstal depictions were primarily satirical.

As for silverware, much of the Roman silver that has survived was sealed by the eruption of Mt Vesuvius in 79 AD, especially the material at the Villa Boscoreale and the House of the Menander at Pompeii. These two locations were discussed in Chapter 7, the former in relation to silverware celebrating hedonism in a philosophical way, the latter for examples of silver showing graphically erotic scenes. Neither of these sites, however, turned up silverware with any homoerotic or specifically pederastic themes. Unlike the Warren Cup, there was thus nothing to link back to the Greek sympotic tradition in even the vaguest of ways.

What takes us tantalisingly a little closer, though, is the Hoby cups. A pair of skyphoi, these were a diplomatic gift that was placed in a chieftain's tomb at Hoby in Denmark. Dyfri Williams points out that the growing demand for silver vessels in the second half of the first century BC led to the employment of craftsmen from all over the old Hellenistic world. Many were Greeks, as indicated by the craftsmen in between the figures on the two skyphoi from Hoby: “Cheirisophos made” on one cup in Greek and on the other transliterated into Latin. The name
(“skilled with the hands”) suggests to Williams that the maker was a slave or freedman of Greek origin, but working for a Roman clientele. “There were no doubt a number of workshops in Rome itself,” says Williams, “and there may have been workshops or travelling craftsmen elsewhere throughout the Roman world, including the Hellenized south of Italy and some of the cosmopolitan centres in the eastern Mediterranean. The general uniformity of the style of the more elaborate pieces, however, suggests that almost without exception they were all created in Rome.

The Hoby cups date to between the years 15 BC and 20 AD when the Arretine pottery factories were at their height and, as Williams enthuses, “there was an astonishing flowering of Roman art.” These cups have been dated on the basis of the owner inscriptions underneath the feet. The Warren Cup, he says, seems to match this late Augustan phase and probably belongs late in Augustus’s reign or very early in that of his successor Tiberius (ruled 14—37 AD). At this point Williams adds a fascinating thought: “Indeed, the style of the relief scenes is so close to that on the Hoby skyphoi that one is much tempted to wonder if they might not have been made by the very same master silversmith, the Greek Cheirisophos.”

Others, though, have been “much tempted to wonder”, in the absence of other silver vases with similar images, whether the Warren Cup is a fake. It is the only extant definitely homoerotic silver cup. One of the Hoby cups, depicting men dressing a foot wound of the Greek warrior Philoktetes is arguably homoerotic in sensibility, but not in activity. The two central figures in the scene, adult males, are naked. One of them, sitting on a low couch, is Philoktetes, with his wounded leg stretched out in front of him. The other kneels behind him offering support by holding the injured man’s back just beneath the arm pits. But it is not obvious upon casual observation that the warrior has been hurt, nor that the clasping gesture is one of support: the figure offering “support” could just as easily easily be about to draw the figure towards him in an erotic embrace. There are, to be sure, two other male figures in attendance, one of them carrying a bowl, the other a sponge, for cleaning the wound, but to anyone unfamiliar with the story of Philoktetes they could easily be dismissed as slaves going unobtrusively about their tasks.

A less literal view of homoerotic sensibility is available to us here, though, and it is the one to be preferred: what we see on close inspection is tender concern rather
than sexual arousal. Philoktetes would later become a hero of the Trojan war, but at this point, as varying versions of the legend relate, it is not a war wound he is suffering, but a swollen, stinking mess of suppuration that has long refused to heal following a poisonous snake bite inflicted through divine - and malign - intervention.

This is hardly, then, a scene to compare with the homoerotic orgies depicted on archaic Greek sympotic ware, or the scenes of pederastic courtship so typical of classical Greece. Instead, it is part of the ubiquitous homage paid by Roman art to a much wider culture of Greek myth and legend. So, although it is possible this Hoby cup may have been created by the very same craftsman who fashioned the Warren Cup, it gives us no comparable iconographic context.

There remains one other source of contextual comparison: not silver but glass. A cameo glass flask in a Swiss private collection, found in Spain, features a scene of a youth and a boy quite similar to the one on the Warren Cup. Williams notes: “On one side of this flask a male and a female are about to make love. On the other side, a youth kneels as he enters a boy, who holds a garland in one hand. Furthermore, a fragment in the British Museum from what was once a superb cameo skyphos, made of six layers of coloured glass, follows the form of the scene on the flask in a Swiss collection (but without the garland).” (Williams, Warren Cup, p.39).

Glassware, like ceramics, made use of cheap materials, but the cameo glass in question was a luxury item on account of the novel and difficult technique involved in its production. Glass blowing, invented in the second half of the first century BC, enabled glass-makers to experiment with a variety of decorative systems. Cameo glass required careful carving away of the outer layers and was one such novel technique. Like silver vessels, cameo glass travelled widely, from Spain to Iran. It is thought to have been produced over roughly the same period as Arretine pottery, and, as Dyri Williams notes, “there may at this time have been considerable rivalry and artistic interchange between craftsmen, whether working in clay, glass or silver.”

Williams adds that by the middle of the first century AD the elite were faced with something of a dilemma: which precious material to dine with? Glass as a material was still intrinsically cheap, which might make it not the most prestigious thing. But the craftsmanship and artistry involved in making high-quality cameo glass products
were exquisite. There was also a question of good taste in the literal sense, as Trimalchio remarked at his dinner party: "You may forgive me if I say that personally I prefer glass; glass at least does not smell. If it were not so breakable I should prefer it to gold, as it is so cheap."

Returning to the questionable provenance of the Warren Cup, given Warren’s obsession it may well even have been fabricated by a skilled forger of ancient art objects who was bearing this particular connoisseur’s tastes in mind.\(^4\) In *Roman Sex*, however, Clarke claimed to have found a detail that clinches the cup’s authenticity. He said the hairstyle of the young boy in the love scene on the back of the cup (youth-boy, as opposed to man-youth on the front) was unusual in a critical way: “Like the other figures on the cup, he has short-cropped hair combed in the typical Augustan style. But he also has a long lock of hair at the nape of his neck. I could not find this feature on the Arretine cups, or anywhere else, until I happened upon an extremely rare and beautiful perfume bottle in a Swiss private collection. There it was! On one side, a man penetrating a girl; on the other, a man penetrating a boy - and the boy has an even more pronounced “neck lock” than the one on the Warren Cup. What is more, this bottle was found in excavations at Estepa, Spain (near Seville), shortly before 1986. This was just the kind of evidence I was looking for. The fact that the boy wears the same long lock of hair on both the Ortiz flask and on the Warren Cup was proof that the Warren Cup was authentic. No forger working in the nineteenth century could have known about this feature since the first time archaeologists saw it

\(^4\) As indicated earlier, this has been strongly asserted by the ever-combative Michael Vickers. In the online history forum H-Net in 2010 Vickers was quoted thus: "The Warren cup is now thought to be a work of the early 20th century. See M.T.M. Moevs, "Per una storia del gusto: riconsiderazioni sul calice Warren", Bolletino d’Arte 146 (2008) 1-16. The dealers saw poor old Warren coming and made something to his taste." http://h-net.msu.edu/cgi-bin/logbrowse.pl?trx=vx&list=H-Histsex&month=1006&week=d&msg=wD65CPz1oHC/tjKB5/s4zw&user=&pw=
Whatever the merits of the case, it would seem Vickers’ own distaste for the Warren Cup may have influenced the acclivity with which he reached this conclusion: as Curator of Greek and Roman Antiquities at the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, he once notoriously captioned the Warren Cup "Paedophile and victim." The Ashmolean eventually agreed to change the label to read: "Man and boy making love. The nature of Greek homosexual love is the subject of current academic debate."
The website of the Italian journal that published the article cited by Vickers, the *Bollettino d’Arte*, includes an Abstract in English: http://www.bollettinodarte.beniculturali.it/opencms/export/BollettinoArtelt/sito-BollettinoArtelt/Contributi/Editoria/BollettinoArte/Abstracts/visualizza_asset.html_867032972.html

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was when they dug up the Ortiz bottle in the 1980s. If a forger had made the Warren Cup, he never would have included an anomaly like the long lock, since at that time it was unknown in the repertory of Augustan-period silver and ceramics. In the nineteenth century, the only known images showed men and boys with uniformly short hair.”

He adds that literary sources show that slaves, and especially young male slaves used for sex, often had long hair. The boy’s flowing lock at the back, he says, “is a conservative Augustan version of the more ample flowing tresses worn by male slaves used for sex. The hairdo is a combination of the short in front with the provocative lock behind...” I would just comment that the neck-lock is just as Clarke says but we may not agree that the figure sporting it is meant to represent a boy as opposed to a youth, or even a young man.

The Estepa perfume bottle: the youth’s long nape-lock is clearly visible.  
http://www.nationmaster.com/encyclopedia/Greek-style
What if the Warren Cup (whether genuine or forged) is read as an attempt by the artist to imagine a scene from classical Greece rather than to depict the styles of the Augustan era? Would this affect Clarke’s argument? The issue would then become what a forger would or would not have known about classical hairstyles. If he “wrongly” depicted an Augustan one, would that indicate a forgery? Not really, because an Augustan craftsman-artist would not necessarily have got it right either. In fact it may be thought that his most likely mistake would be to imitate the current Hellenistic style, especially if (as seems entirely possible) the cup had been made in Rome.

Vickers is of the opinion that the cup was forged in conformity with what Warren would have expected in such a cup. So did Warren expect to see classical hairstyles or Augustan ones? Presumably, as the most sophisticated connoisseur of his time, he would have expected to see an Augustan attempt, possibly imperfect, to depict the classical past. In that case, just as Clarke says, it would indeed be a clincher if Augustan details appeared that the forger could not possibly have known about, provided that those details could not have been guessed at, or are unique to the period – which in the case of something as changeable as hairstyle is a very big if. Clarke’s interpretation does not appear to have convinced Dyfri Williams, who refers to the peeping little boy at the door as a slave, but implies that the two pairs of lovers are all of the elite.

An interesting detail was disclosed around ten years ago in a private discussion with Dr Susan Walker, then deputy keeper of Greek and Roman antiquities at the British Museum. My informant tells me she suggested that the boy in the youth-boy scene is no more than pubescent, “his hair following a convention seen in painted mummy portraits of boys belonging to (locally) elite Greek families in Roman Egypt”. She added: “The scenes evoke the symposia of classical Greece though (following Roman taste) they are much more sexually explicit...” This view, based on recent work on Roman Egypt, contradicts Clarke’s suggestion that the nape-lock worn by the two figures in the youth-boy scene indicate they are slaves. Walker is the co-author with M. L. Bierbrier of Ancient faces: mummy portraits from Roman Egypt. One particular 3rd

45 The conversation was with Thomas O’Carroll, a writer and editor who has helped considerably with the preparation of the present volume.
century Fayum mummy portrait illustrates Walker’s point about the neck lock very well.

![Portrait of a young boy, early 3rd century, Antikensammlung, Berlin.](image)

Walker used the word “recent” to describe scholarship on these mummy portraits, but it is also clear that their existence has been known about in the modern world for centuries, and extensive finds generated a lot of excitement in the 19th century, thanks largely to the work of British archaeologist W. M. Flinders Petrie, just a decade or two before the Warren Cup came to light in 1911. If that is the case, it could be that a forger may have been able to use a mummy portraits of a boy with a neck-lock as his model of an elite Hellenistic boy’s hairstyle – provided, that is, the forger had some means of knowing that the Greeks in places such as Alexandria adopted Egyptian burial practices. According to Walker, the early Ptolemaic Greek colonists married local women and adopted Egyptian religious beliefs, and by Roman times, their descendants were viewed as Egyptians by the Roman rulers, despite their own self-perception of being Greek.

Marabini Moevs, in her 2008 paper “A history of taste: the Warren chalice reconsidered”, does not rely on the Egyptian mummy paintings, although Egypt does come into her account. Instead, with the help of an appendix by silversmith Claudio Franchi, she focuses on the cup’s style. She maintains it was made by “a very skilful
artisan familiar with the linear forms of the Italian Liberty style, but ill at ease with the iconographic and stylistic models presented to him: Attic red-figured vases and Arretine ceramics, authentic and falsified, by the workshop of Perennius. The voyeuristic meaning attributed by scholars to the principal scene is an erroneous interpretation of an Alexandrian love epigram in the decorative repertory of the same workshop.”

The suggestion that a modern forger of the Warren Cup was “ill at ease” with the ancient models he was supposedly trying to copy is an easy claim to make but the evidence needs to be strong in order to cast significant doubt on the weight of contrary scholarly opinion. Moevs really needs to point out things that a genuine Augustan craftsman-artist simply could not have done, for example if there is incontrovertible evidence, or strong reasons to suspect, that modern methods unavailable in the ancient world had been used. Also, the point about the voyeuristic interpretation, even if correct, is merely a criticism of a single point of modern scholarship, not a finding that the cup is a forgery.

Dyfri Williams, as noted earlier, cites Ludwig Pollak as a dealer likely to have alerted Warren to the cup’s existence. Moevs, though, claims it was commissioned by an Italian intermediary, Fausto Benedetti, who moved within Warren’s circle known as the Lewes House Brotherhood. The fact (if it is a fact) that Warren paid Benedetti a high price for the cup at least shows that he bought it in good faith, she says, believing it to be genuine. Benedetti, though, was known as an unscrupulous excavator and dealer. Moevs goes hunting for anachronisms and concludes that sufficient stylistic, iconographic and technical sources needed for making a fake first century cup of the sort bought by Warren would have been available to an Italian in the late 19th century.

The boy in the half-open door, she says, is a recurring theme in Arretine ceramics. The National Archaeological Museum in Arezzo has an example of it on a mold signed

46 Marcus Perennius Tigranus was the owner of the most important pottery firm at Arezzo, in the time of Augustus. He had at the outset a staff of Greek potters, and the product made by his concern, and certain lesser firms in the town, is called Arretine ware, as discussed earlier. See Christine Alexander, “The Workshop of Perennius,” Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin 2, no. 5 (January 1944), pp. 166–72.
by Nicephorus, who was active in the workshop of Perennius. A woman, whose lover is asleep, gestures to a young servant, warning him off after he has come to tell her another would-be lover (or client, if she is a prostitute) is waiting. The theme of the exclusus amator (shut-out lover) appears a number of times in ancient Greek poetry. The creator of the Warren Cup copied this pattern, says Moevs, without understanding the context, reducing the role of the little boy to that of a voyeur.

The boy wears a linen tunic with wide sleeves falling to the waist, clothing of pharaonic times. The hairstyle of the young lovers on the back of the cup, we are told, is that of Young Horus (with a ponytail) from Egyptian mythology. What Moevs herself apparently failed to understand, though, is that what she calls the Young Horus style, evoking very archaic, indeed mythological, Egyptian times, was still in fashion in the Augustan age. Also, the “voyeur” interpretation is a modern notion, which may not at all have been the perception of the cup’s original users. In this instance, it is Moevs who is being anachronistic.

The Archaeological Museum in Arezzo, says Moevs, has in its collections molds and punches which were used in the late nineteenth century precisely to make modern imitations of ancient decorative themes, of which the boy at the door is one in question. But, as she admits, Warren was aware of this. He even acquired some of the tools in question and donated them to the museum in Boston: it thus seems - as he is admitted to have bought the cup in good faith - that he did not see any reason to associate them with forgery in the case of the cup that now bears his name.

Whoever created the Warren Cup, Moevs says, had a talent for rendering facial features but appeared indifferent to anatomical naturalism, unlike the classic Augustan artists he is attempting to imitate. His taste for flowing lines, by contrast, is a stylistic sensitivity practised and valued by those working in the Liberty style in the early twentieth century i.e. the Italian version of Art Nouveau. The “sinuous line of the drapery” on Side A is said to be unique in Augustan art. Franchi, in the Appendix, sees it as the signature of an Italian artist working in the Liberty style in the early twentieth century, which would have added a personal touch.

As for tools of recent origin, Franchi suggests that a small modern torch was used. Two mild swellings of the surface are visible where the handles should be set.
Examination shows that the handles had not been removed, so they had never been soldered on. Franchi thought the swellings had been made using a small modern torch. An analysis conducted at the British Museum in 2004 showed that the foot soldering is indeed modern. However, this work may date from long after its purchase by Warren, when the cup was cleaned between 1929 and 1931 to remove the patina of age and burial for nearly two millennia in Palestine. Franchi’s other observations are merely speculative.

Moevs thus brings Egypt into play, though it is not clear why Benedetti or anyone else trying to fool Warren would have opted for hairstyles and clothing based on Ancient Egypt rather than the Hellenistic world of the Augustan era. A genuine cup, on the other hand, could well have featured Hellenistic Egyptian styles, which may or may not have been known about in Warren’s day from the mummy paintings. Research nailing down whether a forger a century ago could have known about the mummy paintings would be useful. Moevs only muddies the waters of the Nile, as it were, by unconvincingly adding that older Egyptian styles might have been imitated.

The latest development in the controversy as this book goes to press, has been a public debate staged by King’s College London, in March 2014 between Dyfri Williams, defending the cup’s authenticity, and Luca Giuliani challenging it. Giuliani, professor of classical archaeology at Humboldt University in Berlin reportedly relied upon the uniqueness of the Warren Cup and its close fit with Warren’s tastes in order to suggest that it could be explained only as a forgery. But he appears to have offered no proof. Williams, by contrast, did present hard evidence when he pointed out that a fake cup made around 1900, the date suggested by Giuliani, would have been made with “virtually pure silver” because that would have been the silver available to whoever made it. From the middle of the 19th century onwards silver had been increasingly refined. The Warren Cup, though, was made of less pure metal. Also, the inner side of the cup had signs of ancient corrosion and showed an image. (“German archaeologist suggests British Museum’s Warren Cup could be forgery”, Dalya Alberge, The Guardian, 12 March 2014 http://www.theguardian.com/science/2014/mar/12/british-museum-warren-cup-forgery )

So what are we left with? The Warren Cup may have been fabricated by a skilled forger of ancient art objects with Warren’s tastes in mind but not if the forensic case
made by Williams holds good. Warren, from his extensive reading had learned that the Athenians and other elites of the 5th and 4th centuries had dined from silver, but no pornographic silver cups were known in Warren’s day (nor indeed have any been found since, even through the Hellenistic period, up to 30 BCE, the death of Cleopatra).

Even Beazley acknowledged, and Boardman still maintains, that from 323 onwards the Greek elite supped from silver, but Warren had to settle for an item from the first century CE. Contrary to the high-minded Platonic idealization of pedagogic eros, Hellenistic Greeks often sought out slaves, street urchins, shop boys, or other working-class youths, as both The Greek Anthology and the Anacreontia
demonstrate. In the Roman age, the Herstal Vase bears comparison with the Warren Cup in terms of its uninhibited depiction of pedication, while in literature analogies are to be found in the Satyricon of Petronius, the Satires of Juvenal and the Epigrams of Martial. Plutarch and Lucian, on the other hand, demonstrate that classical symposia continued in Greece and throughout the Hellenistic East, with some imitation in Italy.

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47 The ever-combative Michael Vickers has been aggressive in asserting this. In the online history forum H-Net in 2010 Vickers was quoted thus: "The Warren cup is now thought to be a work of the early 20th century….The dealers saw poor old Warren coming and made something to his taste." Whatever the merits of the case, it would seem Vickers’ own distaste for the Warren Cup may have influenced the alacrity with which he reached this conclusion: as Curator of Greek and Roman Antiquities at the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, he once notoriously captioned the Warren Cup "Paedophile and victim." The Ashmolean eventually agreed to change the label to read: "Man and boy making love. The nature of Greek homosexual love is the subject of current academic debate." The website of the Italian journal that published the article cited by Vickers, the Bollettino d’Arte, includes an Abstract in English: http://www.bollettinodarte.beniculturali.it/opencms/export/BollettinoArteIt/sito-BollettinoArteIt/Contributi/Editoria/BollettinoArte/Abstracts/visualizza_asset.html_867032972.html

48 Anacreon (582 BC – 485 BC) was a Greek lyric poet, notable for his drinking songs and hymns. Later Greeks included him in the canonical list of nine lyric poets.
Chapter 10: the Warren Cup: significance

The Warren Cup, as noted in the previous chapter, lacks any strong iconographic connections with the Greek ceramic vases of earlier times. The iconographic sequence laid out by Beazley includes gift giving, the up-and-down gesture\(^49\), and intercrural intercourse. Depictions of anal sex—pedication—in the early ceramics are extremely rare, with only some five specimens showing this activity out of around 1,000 known; and of the silver sympotic ware that replaced ceramic after 470 BC not one example has survived. Pedication was conceptualized as “treating the youth like a woman.” The proportion of incidents of actual anal sex to the number of such acts depicted was doubtless far greater, as extant literary references suggest.

The Greek symposiasts might well have felt it prudent not to display scenes that would disincline youths to come to their symposia – and \textit{a fortiori}, their fathers to allow them to attend! Aristotle tells of an incident that could have precipitated the revolt against Periander, the tyrant of Ambracia: while drinking at a symposium with his \textit{eromenos}, Periander wondered aloud if the \textit{pais} wasn’t already \textit{pregnant} – a clear and insulting reference to the boy’s status as the tyrant’s object of pedication.\(^50\) Evidently such matters were considered \textit{obscene}, not for public display. The Romans were less scrupulous since their young male sexual partners were usually slaves: liaisons with free youths were illegal in Rome, whereas in Ancient Athens it was only forbidden for a youth of the citizenry to \textit{sell} his sexual availability.

\(^49\) The \textit{erastes} reaches for, or touches, the boy’s chin and genitals simultaneously.

\(^50\) Aristotle’s \textit{Politics} provides the primary evidence for democracy in archaic Ambracia, which was ruled by Periander, nephew of a Corinthian tyrant of the same name, until the constitutional change described in Aristotle. In the course of listing revolutions, Aristotle says “And similarly again in Ambracia, the demos joined with the tyrant Periander’s enemies to throw him out and then took over the constitution itself” (1304 a31). This event is dated to 580 or a few years earlier. Attempting to show how a ruler’s insolence can spur attacks, Aristotle relates that plots began against Periander because of a rude question he asked of his lover — whether he had conceived yet (1311 a39). Eric Robinson, writing on the first democracies, observed that, whatever the provocation, Periander inspired a coalition of the \textit{demos} and its opponents, which threw him out. As a result, the \textit{demos} took control of the state. Robinson adds, though, that “\textit{Demos} at that time had a number of meanings including the sense of the ‘more moderate’ — and thus not necessarily democratic — party in the factional struggle of a polis.” (Robinson, 1997, p.80)
Some have argued, as we have seen, that the Warren Cup is a fake, a view given credence by its uniqueness: no other silver cup with comparable erotic imagery has survived. Others, though, find the Warren Cup all the more precious, and beautiful for its rarity, imagining it as representing what may have been in Greek and even Roman times a popular type of tableware. While it is possible other examples may yet be unearthed from the Augustan era, or thereabouts, we simply cannot use the Warren Cup to reconstruct the lost body of Classical Greek homoerotic silver, tempting as that prospect may seem. Red-Figure ceramics normally depict noble, well put-together couples engaged in culturally permitted courtship behaviors. Only satyrs and sileni, gross and ugly figures, in those times engaged in sodomy as well as other uncivilized behaviors. The Warren Cup, by contrast, shows beautiful couples engaged in exactly the same form of copulation but doing it with style, as it were, in a dignified and graceful way, characterised more by tenderness than the cruder aspects of lust.

The Warren Cup, in short, is not at all typical of what silver sympotic ware might once have been like in Classical Greece. The cup’s existence makes the use of such silverware in classical times more plausible, presenting possibilities in a lively way to the imagination; but that is all. Its iconography is not alone, having much in common with Arretine ware and the cameo glass perfume bottle found in Spain, the so-called Ortiz flask, but this iconography is stylistically as well as chronologically quite distinct from that of Classical Greek times.

Revisiting those earlier times in the light of the broad chronological survey of sympotic ware that has now been essayed here, it is now time to draw attention to considerations overlooked by both Boardman and Vickers. Historians, vital though their work has been, were initially over-reliant on the surviving literature from ancient times. The study of artefacts added a new dimension of understanding, to which Boardman and Vickers have made their contribution. Neither of these scholars, though, sufficiently incorporated the further – and equally vital – dimensions of understanding afforded by paying attention to modern studies, largely rooted in

51 Silenus was a companion and tutor to the wine god Dionysus. Unlike the goatish satyrs, Silenus derived from a man of the forest who had the ears, tail and legs of a horse. The later sileni were drunken followers of Dionysus, usually bald and fat with thick lips and squat noses – somewhat like Socrates! A notorious consumer of wine, Silenus was usually drunk and had to be supported by his fellows or carried by a donkey. He was described as the oldest, wisest and most drunken of the followers of Dionysus. This puts him in a company of phallic or half-animal tutors of the gods, a group that includes Priapus. When intoxicated, Silenus was said to possess special knowledge and the power of prophecy.
archaeology, of the demographic, economic and social contexts in which the artefacts were made and used.

This is not the place to explore those complex contexts in any detail, but it will help to sketch some of the key variables affecting the historical dynamics of the times as they relate to why all-male symposia developed, what materials were used for symposium ware, what iconography was featured and why it changed over time, especially as regards homoerotic and specifically pederastic scenes. Economic issues have already been touched upon, particularly as regards the growing wealth of Athens following the discovery of silver at Laurion, and hence the availability of silver for elite dinnerware.

The truth seems to lie between the contradictory positions adopted by Boardman and Vickers. When Athenian elites began regularly using more and more silver items after 470 BC, their tableware bearing erotic scenes intended for use at symposia increasingly were silver, while that of ceramics diminished. The gradual and never complete switch to silver is thus explained by economics. None of the silverware has survived, which is true of most ancient objects cast from precious metal, especially gold and ivory, even more valuable than silver, such as the two greatest statues by Phidias. So the lack of survival does not prove a lack of use.

Ceramic vases were not as prominent in symposia after 470 or in later ages as they are in the museums of today – the museum displays of ceramics, impressive and extensive as they are, can easily dazzle and blind us with a false impression. We see the spectacular items on view, not the unspectacular absences, equally important though they may be. They remain out of sight and out of mind, a distorted view which this paper has attempted to correct, if only by putting up a few empty display cases of the imagination and giving captions, as it were, to the missing exhibits of silverware I am confident should be honoured there.

Economics, then, played a key role in affecting the switch from ceramic to silver sympotic ware. Demographic and social factors, underplayed by both Boardman and Vickers, played equally significant roles. These unseen forces molded sympotic ware as fundamentally as the hands that shaped the clay that made them, or beat out the precious metal.
The most fundamental of these changes was a shift in Athens from a need in Archaic times to control the population because resources were limited – a priority which favoured late marriage, at least for males, and the diversion of male sexuality into pederasty – to an opposite need, for population growth, in wealthier Classical Athens when greater manpower was needed in order to support the growing maritime dominance of the city and its emerging empire after the defeat of Persia.

Hubbard has explored this theme. He has claimed that respectful pederasty, based in the schools and gymasia, such as was glorified in late sixth century vase painting, was already obsolescent by the last quarter of the fifth century. Pederasty in the archaic period offered a satisfactory romantic and physical outlet for sexually primed young men and adolescents: marriage was delayed because population growth was in danger of exceeding the limited environmental resources available in what was still a largely agrarian economy of scarcity. Prosperity and aggressive expansion changed the social pressures: the state’s political leadership had an interest in encouraging larger families in mid-fifth century Athens so marriage became a priority, as evidenced in Xenophon’s *Symposium* and other literary sources. Hubbard is by no means alone in noting this trend. Sue Blundell and Rabinowitz have also

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52 In literature, well before the refined, high-minded discussion of ethical pederasty attributed to Socrates and his circle by Plato, respectful pederasty had been evidenced in lyric poetry. Among the most prolific of these sources is Theognis, which may be the name of a particular sixth century poet, although the surviving work is now thought to represent several generations of wisdom poetry gathered together at Megara: people and events mentioned in the text extend from 580 to 490 BC. Theognis has been criticized as pompous and hectoring rather than respectful, unlike contemporaries Ibycus and Anacreon. However, the many scores of maxims addressed to Cyrnus, the poet’s beloved boy, do focus on high-minded ethical concerns. From an aristocratic standpoint, Theognis berates Cyrnus for flirtations and infidelities. Replete with advice on friendship, loyalty, and gentlemanly conduct, the poems provided a model for traditional pederastic-cum-pedagogic pair-bonding. The maxims served as a manual of ethical conduct, teaching statesmanship while emphasising the intellectual and moral formation of youth.

Theognis composed elegies to be sung to the flute at symposia. Perhaps the most important aspect of the compendium for the present work is that this extensive corpus of ethical thinking in relation to pederasty extends back into archaic times: hedging boy love around with a demand for high standards was not merely a response to later democratic distaste for an aristocratic vice. On the other hand, the particular standards invoked were indeed distinctly aristocratic: complaints abound in Theognis that Megarian politics, even in those times, were succumbing to the influence of allegedly unworthy “new men” whose wealth was based on trade and commerce. Others may decide whether these concerns were truly ethical, or just a matter of self-serving snobbery, but lines such as the following show we should be wary of superficial judgement:

*There is no longer an equitable division in the common interest, but the carriers of merchandise rule, and the base are on top of the noble.*

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discerned a “growing cultural emphasis on marriage in the fifth century”. James Robson suggests this becomes particularly evident in the war-ravaged years of the late fifth century, when the changing role of women is discussed by numerous contemporary sources, including Thucydides and Aristophanes. There is a marked trend, say the authors, for artists to depict women in domestic settings and being adorned for weddings. [Blundell & Rabinowitz 2008 p.137; Robson 2013, p.34]

Not that the pressing economic and military need for greater manpower went without resistance. The lower echelons of the citizenry, especially, had a vested interest in restricting the number of new citizens. The humble but vital task of rowing for the Athenian fleet, for instance, was restricted to the citizenry: making this job a “closed shop” helped keep it a secure and well-paid one, and each voting citizen had more influence in the political assemblies than would have pertained had citizenship been easy to gain. Thus it was not for nothing that the demos passed a law in Pericles’ time which that limited the citizenry to those who could claim both their parents were Athenians of the citizen class. The cost of the privileges of Athenian citizenship was restricted to those both of whose parents were Athenians. That law reduced the number of citizens. Pericles' sons by Aspasia, his Ionian mistress, had to have a special law passed to make them citizens. To Hubbard and others who believe the lower social classes among the citizenry were becoming increasingly hostile to pederasty in the fifth and fourth centuries, the implication was clear: these lower orders, by restricting their own numbers, were able to become politically powerful: their votes would have been needed and courted; the aristocratic elite would not be able indefinitely to associate themselves with unpopular sexual practices.

Whether Hubbard is right about this is another matter. For the moment, we should note that he does not confine his argument to literature. Additionally, he draws upon archaeological evidence from what appears to have been an example of early town planning, with the provision of generously spaced family-size houses in housing estates near the port of Athens, the Piraeus. Archaeologists, he notes, have excavated and studied mid-fifth century housing estates near the Piraeus. Their evidence suggests that average house sizes were both much larger than before the Persian Wars, and also more uniform, suggesting that all social classes enjoyed comfortable single-family housing. It may be, he says, that the city's urban planners wanted to encourage larger citizen families with more Athenian children. Non-marital sexuality still occurs, he writes, “but one does not want to see it depicted on the family china”. This explains its quite abrupt disappearance after the 460s. Also:

...it is no coincidence that pornographic and pederastic themes disappear from vase painting at about the same time that the quality of Athenian vase painting
generally goes downhill. Painted vessels were no longer a luxury that only the elite could afford, but over the course of the fifth-century became commonplace and mass-produced, as Athens’ population and demand grew so rapidly. It is possible that the elite turned to silver vessels, which may have appealed to the specialized tastes of the purchaser. But producers of painted pottery would aim to create decorative motifs that were uncontroversial, thereby maximizing the customer base who might be willing to buy them in shops. Hence, we no longer see intercrural sex or even a man and boy kissing, but instead we merely see a man and youth seated on a banquet couch or one youth crowning another...I believe that the evidence of a diachronic shift in Athenian sexual values shows up first in vase painting because, unlike the literary evidence, vases are a commodity and thus especially sensitive to changes in public taste and demand.

What was once a rather formalized aristocratic practice increasingly became an odd fit in Periclean Athens, where all extravagant display of private wealth or class privilege was discouraged. Public gymnasia and large material awards for athletic victors in the Panathenaea and other games aimed to open up to all social classes what had once been the closed pederastic preserve of elite education and competition in the palaestra\textsuperscript{53}, and by the late fifth-century we do begin to see competitors from a wider range of class-backgrounds. Even the advanced intellectual education of the sophists became available to anyone with the money to pay, rather than being the product of an emotionally embedded involvement between loving mentor and beloved student...

Hubbard goes on to say that “Within a ubiquitously monetized and commodified economy, any relationship between a man and boy could become suspect of prostitution,” which perhaps takes his argument too far. The monetization at issue here, after all, was that of parents seeking to advance their sons’ education, an objective (or “commodity”) generally associated with lofty ideals, not with corruption and venality. The British ruling classes have long sent their offspring to be educated privately, on a paying basis, at the great, albeit misleadingly named, “public” schools. In the heyday of empire, inspired by ancient Roman and Greek precedents, these

\textsuperscript{53} The palaestra was the ancient Greek wrestling school. The events that did not require a lot of space, such as boxing and wrestling, were practised there. The palaestra functioned both independently and as a part of public gymnasia; a palaestra could exist without a gymnasium, but no gymnasium could exist without a palaestra.
schools taught the classical languages and practised mentorship imbued with a significant element of pederastic pedagogy. The extent to which the erotic element was kept within purely “Platonic” bounds is a moot point. What is hardly to be doubted, though, is that paid-for education neither precluded the possibility of a loving mentor nor brought with it even the faintest hint of prostitution.

It was pointed out in Chapter 1 that “spacious housing” would not have been among a number of necessary conditions for conducting a proper symposium. Perhaps the Piraeus, at least, if not elsewhere in Athens, began to have accommodations that would not have allowed the middle class to ape elite symposia in some style, had they chosen to do so, even though silverware remained beyond their means. Also, spacious as they were, these houses would not have been large enough to include a dedicated men’s room (andron) that would take eleven couches, and hence potentially twenty two participants (two per couch), which is thought to have been the most usual space allotted to a traditional aristocratic symposium (Birquist, 1990). Xenophon mentions ten couches. Also, as Hubbard points out, in a family-oriented environment the men would not have felt able to dine in the old style, with house-based dining and drinking as the setting for chatting up boys (or “grooming” them, in the more accusatory language of our times), and dropping heavy hints of their homoerotic interests through the medium of dinnerware depicting pederastic courtship.

This does not, however, mean that pederasty abruptly disappeared, or even that it lost its place of high honour in the culture under pressure from a hostile demos, as Hubbard has maintained. Even he concedes, as we have seen above, that elite symposia could have continued in the large houses of the aristocracy, replete with silverware adorned with pederastic iconography. Some aristocrats would doubtless have carried on with their old ways in defiance of popular opinion had such hostility been a factor: aristocracy often comes with a whiff of disdain for the beliefs and manners of social inferiors, as exemplified in the fifth century by the arrogant Alcibiades.

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54 Hubbard’s comments are interesting, but those houses in the Piraeus had foundations more solid than the arguments he builds upon them. It is often the way with archaeology. Adam Gopnik, in a book review for The New Yorker, had a telling phrase: “the silent conspiracy of stones”. Writing about the Bronze Age, he noted that architecture, as it tends to survive longer and better than other evidence, conspires, as it were, to give a false impression. Palaces discovered apparently in the middle of nowhere, for instance, give no clue to their connectedness with what is now known – from other evidence – to have been a “globalized” economy of the times. (“Of Hippos and Kings”, Adam Gopnik, The New Yorker, March 19, 2014) That housing development in the Piraeus was just one part of the port of Athens. It may not have been representative of anything other than itself.

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Undoubtedly, also, there was no shortage of aristocrats who carried on with their old ways in defiance of popular opinion: aristocracy often comes with a whiff of disdain for the beliefs and manners of social inferiors, as exemplified in the fifth century by the arrogant Alcibiades. The symposium as a site of resistance has been noted by many scholars, including Ian Morris. He describes it as an aristocratic space where elites tried to preserve their privileges in the face of a growing "community of ‘middling’ citizens" who saw citizen birth as the great thing about Athens. "To call a man rich or poor, to deny his middling status," says Morris, "was to cast him out of the ideal polis. But some aristocrats happily cast themselves out, forming alternative fellowships outside (and in their view above) the polis. They wanted to be a privileged supra-polis elite, dining and loving with the gods..." (p.19, Morris, I., "The Strong Principle of Equality and the Archaic Origins of Greek Democracy" in Ober, J., and C. Hedrick Demokratia: A Conversation of Democracies, Ancient and Modern, Princeton, NJ 1996: 19-48). Oswyn Murray likewise notes how Aristophanes’ Wasps shows that to the fifth-century Athenian audience the symposium is "an alien world of licence and misbehavior". The drunkenly riotous komos, or processional “painting the town” into which the sophisticated symposium tended to degenerate as the night wore on, expressed the bravado of the officer’s mess, and was intended to show "an undemocratic contempt for the laws". (Oswyn Murray, "The Affair of the Mysteries: Democracy and the Drinking Group" in Murray 1990. See also Fiona Hobden, The Symposium in Ancient Greek Society and Thought, Cambridge University Press, 2013)

There is no substantial evidence, though, that popular sentiment ran strongly against pederasty per se in democratic Athens, as though it were solely an aristocratic leaning, or vice. Against Timarchus, in 346 BC, gives us a famous prosecution speech by Aeschines against a man’s alleged sexual misconduct. In order to keep the sympathies of a mass jury of ordinary citizens, he had to make sure he did not appear to attack ordinary sexual enthusiasm for boys. Thus he tackled pederasty directly, declaring himself to be a boy lover – hardly something he would do if he thought it would generate hostility. He won his case. The sexual misconduct in question was not pederasty but prostitution, an offence associated with political corruption, which is why he argued that Timarchus should be stripped of his right to political participation. Indeed, the case was entirely political. The sex was a smoke screen. Aeschines only brought this private prosecution to forestall an attempt by Timarchus to prosecute him for corruption in office.

Nor should it be overlooked that even after more than a century of democratic sentiment supposedly hostile to pederasty and its association with the refined exclusivity of the aristocratic symposium, there was no law in Athens against it. There was no age of consent. The law only intervened when money changed hands or force was used (Robson, 2013, p.56).
Fascinating as legal cases can be, their inevitable focus on conflict, and things going wrong, can distract from sunnier scenarios that are just as real. Literally sunnier: male nudity, and enthusiasm for it, was a sun-kissed affair in Athens, in which bronzed, athletic youth disported itself naked to the delectation of the entire citizenry – all classes were caught up in crazy enthusiasm for the body beautiful and physical prowess. Whereas the exclusive, closed-door world of the elite symposium might attract the whiff of impropriety as a site at which cliquish and corrupt connections might be forged – with pederasty implicated as the binding agent for life-long personal loyalties – the open-air world of the gymnasion was a culture everyone could enjoy. Not all could attend the gymnasium, to be sure: that required money, although both the physical and mental education offered by the gymnasium did become steadily less exclusive as the city grew in prosperity. But all citizens could attend athletic competitions, and when it came to admiration there were no class barriers: the poorest could cheer as heartily as their betters in support of the gilded elite youth whose long hours under tuition and training in the gym made them admired competitors.

We do well to remember, when contemplating the status of pederasty, that it was bound up with legitimate pedagogy in two ways. Derived from the aristocratic military ideal of being “handsome and brave”, to be “beautiful and good” (“kalos kai agathos”) came to stand for a balanced education of body and mind – precisely what the gymnasium were about. Whereas the exclusive symposium might attract a degree of political suspicion, the qualities of body and mind encouraged through mentorship in the gymnasium bore fruits that were readily apparent to citizens across the social spectrum.

As the rather erratic and controversial scholar James Davidson has noted in one of his more insightful passages, “It was not as some have argued, that the ordinary people of Athens rebelled against the elite aristocratic practices of the gymnasion... even in the second half of the fourth century BC, attacking sex-sex eros was not a vote-winner”. He calls it the true paradox of Athenian homosexuality: a radical democracy that erotically worshipped a tiny elite whose members might be hostile to its democratic values and even try to overthrow it. “There seems no doubt at all,” he writes, “that Athenian love had a deeply elitist or even aristocratic colouring, but there are very few signs of popular antipathy to the phenomenon and plenty of indications that the Athenian eros that flourished only in the exclusive world of the gymnasion was thought to belong to Athens as a whole” (Davidson, 2007, pp.458-60).

Paramount in this paradoxical sentiment is the fact that the legendary founding heroes of democracy in Athens were a pair of pederastic lovers, Aristogeiton and Harmondius, whose supposedly valorous (though the deed may have been more personal than political) assassination of the tyrant Hipparchus was widely thought to have inspired the idea of
government by the people. Athenaeus recorded a well-known fifth century drinking song that praised these lovers:

Harmodius and Aristogeiton, hail!
You will have eternal glory;
Because you laid the tyrant low,
And to Athens gave equality. [Athenaeus, *The Deipnosophists*, 695]

Athenaeus states that “Hieronymus the Aristotelian says 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.” He gives the Athenians Harmodius and Aristogeiton as an example of a pederastic couple. [Athenaeus, *Deipnosophists*, 602]

But is it really pederasty that is being celebrated in the skolion? Revisionist historians have objected to the traditional characterisation of couples such as Harmodios and Aristogeiton as being in a pederastic relationship. The task of tyranicide, after all, is men’s work, not a job for a man and a boy. Likewise war: the pairs of lovers who fought together in the fabled Sacred Band of Thebes were necessarily men, not merely fledgling warriors. So-called pederastic love in Ancient Greece, they say, was actually homophilic, between adults, or near-adult youths of equal age.

However, this is to ignore much of the literature and the iconography of the surviving sympotic ware. It is true that equal age, or near-equal age, couples featured in the more archaic, black-figure, material, alongside man-youth imagery. In the later red-figure work, though, man-boy courtship is more prominent. Accordingly, it is perfectly reasonable to suppose that relationships such as that of Harmodios and Aristogeiton would have their origins in a mentorship between a young man and a boy just a few years his junior: it is in that relationship, forged during a boy’s most impressionable years, when he looks up to the young man as his hero and teacher, that we have reason to suppose a particularly strong bond of loyalty would be forged.

This is not to deny that Athens changed rapidly in the fifth century, and the expression of pederasty along with it. In earlier times the need for an intense training relationship between
man and boy was most urgently felt in terms of hunting and war. In the wealthier and more urban setting of democratic Athens, new types of mentorship were in the ascendant, with the gymnasium its primary setting for training the mind as well as the body: education, especially for elite youth, would now include formal training in such subjects as rhetoric. The symposium was still there to sharpen their wits and sophistication, but mentorship would start earlier. Boys from 12 upwards began to attend the *palaestra*, whereas attendance at the symposium would not have started until about 14.

As we saw from Hubbard, above, these expanding forms of mental and physical training were also drawing in a newly wealthy middle class. Education was no longer the preserve of an exclusive elite. The “family values” of this widening intake appears to have begun to constrain the nature of the mentor relationship, or at least the ways in which it was depicted and talked about. Those who discuss man-boy love in Plato’s *Symposium* do so in high-minded terms, with an emphasis on the spiritual rather than the physical side of the relationship: hence so-called Platonic love. In *Against Timarchus*, Aeschines is at pains to validate “modest” or “chaste” pederasty - though there is a case for saying he meant not full abstention from sexual acts but rather the avoidance of anal intercourse in favour of intercrural. Anal sex was undeniably stigmatised in classical Athens (Robson, 2013, p.62).

It is no accident, in these circumstances, that the iconography of ceramic symposium ware had changed by the late fifth century: heterosexual pornographic themes had disappeared by around 450 BC; boys, along with older youths, were now being featured more than before, in accordance with the fact that they were being mentored from as young as 12 in the gymnasium. The scenes, however, were becoming more chaste, in line with family values and the Platonic view of love.

The scenes on the vases might have been chaste, but we may be sure the boys were still chased: what appears to have happened, and what is attested in the literature, is that pederasty, unwelcome in the middle class home, nevertheless found its enthusiasts in the gymnasium: men could admire the naked boys they saw in the *palaestra*, and perhaps try their luck, although *Against Timarchus* gives a lively impression that a watchful eye was at least *supposed* to be kept against hanky panky. Quite what would constitute transgression, though, is less clear. We know anal...
intercourse was considered shameful, especially if continued into adulthood, as was prostitution at any age; forced intercourse would have amounted to *hybris*, an offence meriting death; but not all erotic attachments - and certainly not all admiring courtship - were prevented or even necessarily frowned upon. In *Against Teisis*, for instance, Lysias “seems to indicate a pederastic relationship which was conducted openly and with the full approval of the boy’s family” (Ronson, 2013, p.57).  

One might suppose that on average boys in those days would have been prepubescent at age 12, or in the first stage of pubescence, before the onset of pubic hair. It should be emphasized that there is nothing in classical literature or in the surviving sympotic ware to suggest that prepubescent boys were ever regarded as fair game sexually in Ancient Greece; institutionalized pederasty never extended down to true childhood; paedophilic acts would have been considered child abuse then as now. No doubt it went on to some extent, as mentorships (and hence opportunity) began at the cusp of adolescence, when some boys would visibly have been filling out and on the way to manhood, while others would still be more childlike than manly in appearance.

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55 At issue in this discussion are those aspects of Greek pederastic culture that would have had a bearing on the iconography of any sympotic silverware that existed in classical times. The use of such silverware would of course have been solely an elite affair, so the sexual ethics and practices of wider society are only of pressing importance here to the extent that they did or did not impact upon the elite. It might be noted in passing, though, that the masses who hero-worshipped the top athletes and admired the burnished bodies of those privileged youths who could afford attendance at the gymnasia, did not necessarily need either symposia or gymnasia in order to ape the sexual practices of the elite. Man-boy erotic bonds, which were likely forged deep in prehistory in the contexts of hunting and warfare, in the absence of women, have also been expressed in historical times through a range of apprenticeship situations, as is known, for instance, from Renaissance Florence. Whereas the knightly class in ancient Athens could attend the gymnasium, the hoplites were drawn from the ranks of citizens of relatively modest means, many of them small farmers who lacked the resources to travel from their rural homes to the city. But they may well have engaged a boy’s labour, and practised a sort of apprenticeship. It seems unlikely, though, that pederastic relationships developed in this context would have been justified as educational in the manner of the city sophisticates, the aristocrats and the philosophers, with their “pedagogic” pederasty. One may speculate that some such encounters would have been cruelly exploitative, and some genuinely caring and affectionate. Either way, these engagements would perhaps have been more honestly carnal than the Platonic protestations of pure love we hear so much about in the philosophy and poetry of the elite. When it comes down to it, the elevated, highfalutin, ethical pederasty of the Greeks may not have been all that different in its everyday expression to the more matter-of-fact master-slave sex and commercial prostitution of the Romans. Legal oratory suggests as much. In *Against Timarchus* we hear that Timarchus lodges with a certain Euthydicus ostensibly to learn a profession but also with a pederastic relationship between them. We might agree with Robson’s speculation: “So did engaging an apprentice routinely mean mixing business with pleasure?” (Robson, 2013 p.57)
Hubbard mentions a work of particular interest in this connection, a treatise attributed to Pseudo-Aristotle in *Problems* (Hubbard, 2003, p.262-4). “Although probably not an authentic work of Aristotle,” he says, “the [treatise] certainly comes from his school, reflecting the methods and assumptions of Aristotelian biology.” Assuming it also reflected the mores of the time, it contains one fascinating sentence. The writer outlines a biological theory of sexual desire that need not concern us. The important thing is that he talks about habit becoming nature, saying (about males), “On account of this, whoever has not been accustomed to be a passive partner in sexual intercourse before puberty, but starts around puberty, because memory is generated during the activity and pleasure comes along with the memory, on account of their habit they desire to be the passive partner as if they were naturally so constituted - frequency and habit bringing it about just as if they were naturally so inclined.”

This suggests (1) that the Greeks of the Aristotelian school opposed anal intercourse for adolescent boys (because it would lead to passive sex in later life, which was frowned upon); and (2) that being a passive partner before puberty could be talked about as though it were something common enough to be rather unremarkable. The tacit assumption is that a small boy would be unlikely to experience pleasure from the act, but an adolescent might well.

It should be noted that we do not know the average age of puberty in Ancient Greece with any certainty. Aristotle was clear in his view that for boys it usually began at age 14; but there is more to be said on the topic. He wrote:

When twice seven years old, in the most of cases, the male begins to engender seed; and at the same time hair appears upon the pubes, in like manner, so Alcmaeon of Croton remarks, as plants first blossom and then seed. About the same time, the voice begins to alter, getting harsher and more uneven, neither shrill as formerly nor deep as afterward, nor yet of any even tone, but like an instrument whose strings are frayed and out of tune; and it is called, by way of by-word, the bleat of the billy-goat. Now this breaking of the voice is the more apparent in those who are making trial of their sexual powers; for in those who are prone to lustfulness the voice turns into the voice of a man, but not so in the continent. [The History of Animals, Book VII, Part 1]
Some may feel Aristotle undermines his own authority in this passage when he refers to the sexually continent adolescent boy: the term is an oxymoron. Such boys do not exist, except as castrati or rare freaks of nature. Should this assertion be contested by elderly moralists who have managed to repress all memories of their own youth, a reminder of reality is to be found in Alfred Kinsey’s famous large-scale survey in the US published in 1948, which found that over 95% of 15-year-old boys were sexually active. Bearing in mind that many of those surveyed in mid-twentieth century America would have been coy about admitting to such socially unacceptable activities as masturbation and homosexuality, which for most boys were the only sexual outlets available in those days, the true figure would probably disclose only about 1% of adolescent males who were genuinely “continent”. (Kinsey, Human Male p.219).

Nor does modern scientific investigation leave Aristotle beyond challenge over the age of puberty. The British pediatrician James Tanner was the first to identify a dramatic fall in this age in modern times. In every decade from 1840 to 1950, he found, there was a drop of four months in the average age of menarche among Western European females. Recent work shows a falling trend also applies to boys. [“Onset of puberty in girls has fallen by five years since 1920”, Robin McKie, The Observer, 21 October 2012. “Like Girls, Boys Are Entering Puberty Earlier”, Patti Neighmond, NPR Health News, December 24, 2012 – study from the American Academy of Pediatrics http://www.npr.org/blogs/health/2012/12/24/167735056/like-girls-boys-are-entering-puberty-earlier ]

This trend has since continued and been confirmed across the world and is strongly associated with richer and more reliably available nutrition as countries become more developed. Latest studies show that the average age (though it varies by race) for the onset of pubic hair in boys in the US is now down to about 11. A hundred years ago it would have been around 14, in line with Aristotle’s estimate for his own times. Back in 1840, if Tanner’s trend for girls from that date onwards holds good for boys, the average age of puberty for boys would have been 5-6 years higher than it is now, i.e. 16-17.

This great variability in the age of puberty leaves open the possibility that in Ancient Greece it may have been higher than we suppose. If diet is the primary cause, as seems likely, Aristotle’s estimate could have been skewed downwards: he would have
seen plenty of naked young Greeks in public athletics festivals and at the gymnasium but these would have been almost entirely from the well-fed families of the elite, or the prosperous middle class.

The gay historian James Davidson has even suggested that the average age of puberty would have been as high as 18 in Ancient Greece. It was acceptable, he says, to admire boys below that age, but because they were pre-pubertal they were off-limits as sexual partners for men. In what looks like a politically correct attempt to sanitise the Greeks for a modern audience, he insists that institutionally approved pederasty did not commence in Ancient Athens until a youth was 18, in line with the modern age of consent in many states of the US today.

The consensus among classicists has firmly rejected Davidson’s revisionism. Hubbard, in particular, in a detailed and devastating critique, reduced Davidson’s magnum opus The Greeks and Greek Love to a ruin so flattened it would take an archaeologist to make sense of the remains. The overwhelming evidence, Hubbard and others insist, is that pederasty with boys much younger than 18 was socially acceptable, at least in pre-democratic Athens. But what would it mean if boys’ puberty was even just one or two years later than Aristotle’s estimate of 14?

Mentorships, remember, began typically when the boy was around 12. Thus the mentor might guide a boy for three or four years, from age 12-15 or 12-16, before the latter reached puberty. Any “pederastic pedagogy” at this stage would thus have been with a boy who was probably more than a child in terms of social, intellectual and sexual sophistication - and hence in a strong sense an adolescent - but nevertheless yet to acquire pubic hair.

Back to the Warren Cup, or rather to Warren himself. Given the importance of his role as a collector of Greek vases, a role that has been overlooked since his death in 1928 (the same year that saw the private printing of the first and third volume of his Defence), we would do well to consider to some extent the motivations and circumstances behind his acquisition of what would be dubbed “The Warren Cup,” motivations and circumstances that are provided in Dr Kaylor’s insightful biographical introduction to Warren’s “magnum opus,” A Defence of Uranian Love, as well as in some of the sources on which he draws: Osbert Burdett’s Edward Perry Warren: The Biography of a Connoisseur (1941; completed by E. H. Goddard), Martin Green’s
Warren pursued his life’s work of art collecting with the discipline and organization of an athlete in training. His family’s money and cultural interests afforded him the proper background and resources; his strong personal interest in the Classics, along with his independence of mind and aesthetic disposition, gave him the necessary discipline and focus; his money and connoisseurship allowed him to recruit the proper experts to keep him on track and to help him build a network of contacts across Europe and elsewhere; his lover John Marshall provided him with archaeological expertise, inspiration, and encouragement; and, at the right moment, a pinch of luck that always seems, to such an individual, almost divine, gave him the last push. It is a tribute to his particular genius as a collector that he acquired the cup he had been seeking, a unique masterpiece of erotic art: it almost seems a Pindaric moment of divine grace in which mortal clay is transfigured by the eternal gleam of silver.

Whenever, by whomever, and for whomever the Warren Cup was wrought, it is nonetheless significant, and was especially so for Warren, for whom it served as a “silver key” granting him access, at least visually, into an otherwise inaccessible palaestra where sexy, hard-bodied athletes displayed themselves without physical inhibitions, and where a puny boy’s fantasies of union with tough men was not reviled, but was instead fulfilled ad aeternitatem. Having acquired it after such a lengthy quest, he gave it a special, symbolic dub: “In the company of his intimates at Lewes House, Warren, with a flourish of his trademark paederastic wit, always referred to this cup as ‘The Holy Grail.’ This hits close to the bone, not only because of its plausible proximity to the realities of Christian myth…but also because it is a signal example of his subversive agenda of collecting religious symbols that reflect his own concerns…on a palimpsestic basis, if necessary” (Miner, “Afterward,” in Defence, 319, citing Williams, The Warren Cup [2006]).

Kaylor’s description of an early Warren purchase—a ceramic cup—testifies to his intention to subvert upper-class Boston norms:
In May 1892, the Adolphe van Branteghem sale was held in Paris, and Warren made several exquisite purchases there—the most notable being an Attic red-figure kylix, or drinking cup, fashioned and signed by Euphronios\(^56\) (perhaps the greatest Greek potter) and decorated by Onesimos. At this sale, Warren, assisted by Marshall, began a decade-long career as a prominent collector, a collector so astute that “He and Marshall had the market so effectively in their hands that [Alexander] Murray of the British Museum could observe: ‘There is nothing to be got nowadays, since Warren and Marshall are always on the spot first.’”\(^57\)

However, since “Greek pots were not then much appreciated in Boston,” his Euphronios purchase elicited little interest on the other side of the Atlantic. In fact, Warren felt compelled to justify this and similar purchases to his mother, which he does in a letter from autumn 1892, this young connoisseur expounding to her the significance of such Greek vases: “They are particularly needful for an American museum because only in vases and coins can it hope to obtain a collection representing all phases and times, and illustrating all that we read about.” (‘Introduction,’ in Defence, lv–lvi)

The kylix\(^58\) in question—signed “Euphonius made [me]” and inscribed “Panaitios is beautiful”—is now cataloged as MFA 95.27 at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, which describes its exterior as a “Procession (komos) of eleven men intoxicated, dancing and staggering” (Figure 8).

\(^{56}\) Euphronios was active as a painter and potter in Athens in the late 6th and early 5th centuries BCE. As part of the so-called "Pioneer Group," (who pioneered the change from black-figure pottery to red-figure), Euphronios was one of the most important artists of the red-figure technique. The discovery of the first signature of Euphronios in 1838 revealed that individual painters could be identified and named, so that their works might be ascribed to them.

\(^{57}\) Kaylor is here quoting Burdett & Goddard pp.78-9.

\(^{58}\) The kylix (a word from which "chalice" is derived) is a type of wine-drinking cup with a broad, relatively shallow, body raised on a stem from a foot and usually with two symmetrical horizontal handles. The almost flat interior circle on the interior base of the cup, called the tondo, was the primary surface for painted decoration in the black- and red-figure styles. As the representations would be covered with wine, the scenes would only be revealed in stages as the wine was drained. They were often designed with this in mind, with scenes created so that they would surprise or titillate the drinker as they were revealed.
Regarding such acquisitions, Kaylor adds that, seen in a larger context, this collecting was motivated by the same impulse that infused his paederastic apologia, *A Defence of Uranian Love*. He cites Warren’s own words, from an autobiographical fragment, on the origin of both, which arose from:

... rebellion against [my brother] Sam and against all to whom I had objected from youth, the worldly wisdom which was inconsistent with love and enthusiasm....I have always said and believed that it was hate of Boston that made me work for Boston...The collection was my plea against that in Boston which contradicted my (pagan) love. (*Defence* p. lx)

In a footnote on the same page, Kaylor adds an observation from Martin Green’s *The Mount Vernon Street Warrens*: “Green glosses this as: ‘Ned openly hated all that “Boston” stood for and intended his nude Greek sculptures to lead to the subversion of Boston values.’” (*Defence* p. lx).

Warren’s “love and enthusiasm” is a coded expression for pederasty, similar to Walter Pater’s famous “To burn always with this hard, gem-like flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in
life” (*Renaissance* [1893 (1873)], 189). However, Warren’s expressions of “pederastic interest” extended beyond his collecting and writings, for he intended his legacy to be more than a tribute to the representations of Greek pederasty found in art and literature. He endowed a Praelectorship in Greek at Corpus Christi College, Oxford. This academic position was to be filled by a man, preferably a bachelor, who specialized in passing Grecian values on to his male students, a scholarly Hercules of the sort that populate his *Defence*, a figure offering inspiration and comfort to fainthearted and confused youths resembling Warren while a student at Harvard. Ned stipulated that the praelector was to live in college annex comprising some houses nearby:

... and was to have his house connected to the college by means of an underground tunnel. The tunnel was never built and due to the slump in the stock market at the time of Ned’s death (the beginning of the Depression), the value of his shares plummeted. No appointment to the praelectorship was possible until 1954. The first holder of the position was Hugh Lloyd-Jones who says he was “supposed to connect with the young men as Socrates did with the young Athenians. I don’t think I could quite manage that; I was a kind of Senior Research Fellow... Clearly the praelector was an image of Warren himself as he was during the first war when Case gave him rooms in college.” (Sox, *Bachelors*, 102)

Despite his other acts or intentions, it is likely that the boldest and most significant of Warren’s acquisitions—the silver *skyphos* now dubbed “The Warren Cup”—will remain his lasting tribute to the Greco-Roman pederastic interests that dominated his life.

For this reason, the importance of the Warren Cup, and the genius of Ned Warren who intuited its existence, sought after it, and acquired it, need to be acknowledged with caution and circumspection. Consider the atmosphere of *damnatio memoriae* that surrounds Warren, and what Warren called “love and enthusiasm,” even today. Given the magnitude and quality of Warren’s efforts on behalf of his hometown, Boston, and its Museum of Fine Arts, this

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59 At Oxford, a praelector is a tutor responsible responsible for running an honours school in place of a fellow, though a praelector may hold a fellowship elsewhere.

60 Thomas Case, president of Corpus Christi College from 1904-1924.
deliberate neglect serves as a poignant example of Puritanical ingratitude directed toward one of New England’s leading cultural patrons. David Sox, for instance, delivers a subtle, yet damning observation about Boston’s coldness towards Warren, noting that, although the major focus of Warren’s collecting had always been Boston’s Museum of Fine Arts, it was neither Boston, nor its museum, nor its neighbor, Harvard University (Warren’s alma mater), that has properly valued or appreciated him . . . but rather Bowdoin College, a small liberal arts college in Brunswick, Maine, to whose Walker Art Gallery Warren donated a flurry of choice items: “A third of Warren’s 600 gifts are on view in the college’s museum, and nowhere in America is he more honored” (“Bachelors,” 253–255, emphasis added). To show their appreciation, “In 1926, Bowdoin College awarded Warren an honorary degree—Doctor of Humane Letters (Litterarum humanarum doctor, or L.H.D.)” (Kaylor, “Introduction,” in Defence, cxiii–cxiv).

Because Warren is—as Thomas Hubbard noted in a comment on the back cover of Kaylor’s edition of Warren’s Defence of Uranian Love—”the most important American collector and connoisseur of Greek art” and “the man whose enthusiasm laid the foundation for the great collections of Boston and New York,” why has Warren been so ignored by Boston, its Museum of Fine Arts, and Harvard University? What prompted Robert Manuel Cook in his Greek Painted Pottery (1960) to leave Warren and his lover John Marshall unmentioned? What has prompted similar decisions—in the museums and academic institutions of America—to diminish or ignore Warren’s role as “the most important American collector and connoisseur of Greek art” and “the man whose enthusiasm laid the foundation for the great collections of Boston and New York”? Perhaps the answers reside in a certain aversion to the homoeroticism that infuses the antiquities he collected, studied, and prized, an eroticism that also infused his life, for he ever cast his role and that of his acquisitions as “a paederastic evangel,” as he phrases this himself ("Introduction," in Defence, lxi).

There have, however, been rare and notable exceptions to this aversion. In her article “Some Erotica in Boston” (1969), Emily Vermeule, a great niece of Emily Dickinson and wife of Cornelius Vermeule, who was Curator of the Greek and Roman Collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, from 1957 to 1996, paid the following fine and subtle tribute to Warren’s taste as a collector and his importance to Boston’s cultural life, though it is notable that her article was published in a European periodical, Antike Kunst—thus not made readily available to the “general reader” in Boston:

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Mr. Warren’s gifts to the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston formed the core of the collection in the years between 1885 and 1910, and his personal collection of classical erotica shows the same high quality as many famous objects he once acquired. The Warren Gift Collection had the reputation of being one of the finest of such groups outside the Vatican and Naples; the majority of pieces described here were donated by the owner in 1908 and were kept in dark storage for over fifty years. Museum officials may have felt they would be offensive to the eyes of the Boston public, but since they went on public exhibition in 1964, along with many master bronzes whose themes are allied, no protest has been registered with the museum staff or with local arbiters of taste. On the contrary, the possibility of viewing the fragments, like the removal of over-paint from such famous vases as the name-piece of the Pan Painter, has elicited approval from scholars and laymen alike. It seems safe to assume, then, that the delicacy of earlier generations has been replaced by a sturdier capacity to enjoy original works of art without intervention by extraneous ethical views, and that the Warren Collection may be studied with direct appreciation of its fine Greek quality and humor. (“Some erotica in Boston”, Emily Vermeule, Antike Kunst 12. Jahrg., H. 1. (1969), pp. 9-15)

It is a pleasure to observe Vermeule’s sophisticated awareness of the deliberate, measured, way in which Warren’s legacy was slowly unfolding in the consciousness of “the Boston public.” It is this slow unfolding, reminding one of Walter Pater, that Kaylor considered at the close of his introduction to Warren’s Defence:

About Warren’s benefactions to Bowdoin College in Brunswick, Maine, his friend John Davidson Beazley, Lincoln Professor of Classical Archaeology at Oxford, commented insightfully: “A coin, a gem, a vase, a statuette, would speak of Greece in the heart of Maine; and sooner or later there would be a student whose spirit would require them. There was no hurry: an acorn in the forest.” Warren’s Defence of Uranian Love is another of those precious acorns—planted alongside such volumes as John Addington Symonds’s A Problem in Greek Ethics, Edward Carpenter’s Ioläus: An Anthology of Friendship, William Paine’s New Aristocracy of Comradeship, and the anonymously edited Men and Boys: An
Anthology. Eighty years after Warren’s death, the time has come for this oak to sprout, as he knew it eventually would. (Defense, cxiii–cxiv)

Because it was addressed to the select readership of Antike Kunst, an art journal headquartered in Basel, Switzerland, rather than to the readers of the Boston Herald or another local paper, Vermeule could, in an article given the wonderfully casual title “Some Erotica in Boston,” address and dismiss American Puritanical values with phrases such as “extraneous ethical views.” The “local arbiters of taste” are here evoked, then circumvented. She posed the concepts of “delicacy” versus “sturdiness” in a way that makes “delicacy” seem laughable and highlights the ways that the eroticism inherent to Warren’s 1908 donations proved too much for the “delicacy” of those silly “local arbiters of taste,” such that those items needed to be “kept in dark storage for over fifty years.” The naughty glee of corrupting Boston, little by little, with erotic art—and getting away with it—is demurely covered by the bland locution: “No protest has been raised” (well, at least, not yet). If Emily Vermeule were alive today she would also see that the publication of Warren’s Defence has passed without provoking a storm of protest, but that probably owes more to the obscurity of its publication than to public acceptance. Received with excitement by interested scholars it may have been, but its arrival was most definitely not trumpeted from the roof of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts nor even mentioned in the Boston Globe. The latter eventuality, in the climate of the early 21st century, would surely only have come in the context of a savaging.

Just because something is hidden or ignored, though, does not imply its nonexistence—or its inability, like that proverbial acorn, to take root, put forth roots and leaves, and in time mature into the most solid of oaks. The same is perhaps as true of our understanding of Ancient Greek erotic silverware as it is for Warren’s Defence and the neglected collection of erotic artworks that he donated to the Museum of Fine Arts. By placing the Warren Cup where it properly belongs, by aligning it with the world and values it was meant to evoke and to which it emotionally corresponds, it can reveal much, not only about sympotic objects—whether cast in silver or molded from clay—but about pederasty and the stylistics of Hellenistic and Roman eroticism. These are two topics that many Americans today, with their residual Puritanism and newfound demonization of pedophilia (understood nowadays to embrace pederasty), hope will forever remain “in dark storage,” rather than publicly displayed in all their polished, silvery shimmer.
Having, then, considered the Warren Cup in some detail, and also the extraordinary man in whose honour it is named, we have seen that this wonderful piece of silverware stands apart and may not even be genuine. It dazzles and fascinates, but should not distract us altogether from the main thesis of this book. What, then, in general conclusion, may be said?

From the classical age, silver largely replaced ceramics at symposia. If it is reasonable to suppose that the silver erotic cups featured the same proportion of types of erotic scenes as the ceramic ones did before 470, it would constitute proof, now sadly unavailable for reasons discussed above, that the aristocratic tradition of pederasty lived on. If so, more silver erotic cups would have been homosexual rather than heterosexual, and of the homosexual ones, like their earlier ceramic models, probably more would have represented pederastic (age-disparate, intergenerational) relationships than age-equal ones. Since the scenes of intergenerational pedication were the rarest type of all in ceramic, less in the later Red Figure than in the earlier crude Black Figure, it is likely that they were also extremely rare in silver during the classical age. Because so few of the ceramic vases from classical times showed pedication, and no museum currently contains from that era a single metallic example, it is highly unlikely that such an example from that era ever will be found. The Warren Cup, then, even if genuine, cannot be said to reflect a lost body of Golden Age Greek homoerotic silver.

However attractive and full of symbolic meaning Warren may have found it, his cup may reflect the era of the Satyricon of Petronius, the Satires of Juvenal and the Epigrams of Martial, with their mercenary sexual relationships and youths trained to wriggle their hips for their patrons’ pleasure. Despite its superficial appurtenances of music, wreaths, and drinking, it fails to function as a window into an idealized Golden Age of Greece with traditional symposia and athletic competitions—much less the even more distant world of Homeric competition and Cretan ritual abductions.
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