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When they asked the poet Anacreon why he wrote hymns to boys instead of the gods, he replied "because boys are our gods."
(Footnote to an ancient edition of Pindar's second Isthmian Ode (iii 213 Drachmann))

En Cantarella
Interaction to
Incessant Ancient Greek Pedershty

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INTRODUCTION

SECTION 1 TEXTUAL EVIDENCE

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We begin with the texts. We begin, that is to say, with the kind of evidence upon which most efforts to understand pederasty have hitherto been largely based.¹ These texts differ greatly, belonging to many different literary genres, from epic poetry to lyric poetry, from history to philosophy, from courtroom oratory to comedy . . . and they come from historical epochs that are widely separated from one another, often by centuries. Even so, they present, as a whole, a largely coherent picture of the pederastic relationship, which we will attempt to synthesize in this chapter.

Before going on, however, it is necessary to point out that this book will focus on the city of Athens, as have most previous studies on this topic. We do not do this because pederasty was an exclusively Athenian custom; although the non-Athenian evidence is scantier, there is certainly enough to show that the custom was by no means limited to this one city. The laws governing the gymnasium in Berea (on which see below), for instance, show that this type of love was sufficiently widespread to require protective regulation in various parts of Greece; outside of Athens, however, the references are too few to allow us to properly judge the diffusion of the custom, and more importantly its social and cultural value.

Athenian sources, on the other hand, offer the historian of sex and sexuality an astonishingly rich body of evidence on the custom of pederasty, in terms both of quantity and quality. Not only did the Athenians—as we will make clear below—portray this custom on their drinking-ware, they talked about it when writing poems, discussing philosophy, telling stories from history or myth, and debating law cases of the most disparate kinds. In this introduction, we will consider these non-visual sources, from which we will attempt to derive the general characteristics of the pederastic relationship.

As is well known, to define it simply as a “homosexual relationship” (as

was customary in the past) would be to falsify reality, attributing to the Greeks a concept which did not exist in their world. Today, it is generally accepted among scholars that an adult man in ancient Greece could, with little or no risk of social disapproval, express sexual desire for another male, so long as the desired male was an adolescent (*paidi*), whom the adult loved within the context of the socially codified and positively valued relationship which we call pederastic. This kind of relationship took place, then, between an "active" adult and a "passive" boy, though by "activity" and "passivity"—this is an important aspect of the question—the Greeks understood not necessarily and not only sexual roles, but also and above all intellectual and moral roles.

The couple composed of two individuals of the male sex, in other words, was socially and culturally accepted if it was "asymmetrical"; but not in the sense, often wrongly understood, of a couple in which only one person (the adult) experienced desire and sexual pleasure and the other (the boy) was merely the object of it. From this point of view, we believe that in the pederastic relationship there was at least potentially a greater degree of reciprocity than our ancient texts admit or than most modern scholars believe.

The "asymmetry" consisted of other inequalities within the relationship. The first and most decisive of these (from which the term "pederasty" derives) was the difference in age between the adult "lover," called the *erastes*, and the adolescent "beloved," called the *eromenos*.² This difference brought with it another important element of asymmetry: the adult transmitted to the boy, who obviously did not already have it, his experience in every field, assuming in their encounters a formative role at the moment in which the boy—a potential citizen—prepared himself to become an actual citizen, able to exercise his civil and political duties. The *erastes* taught, the *eromenos* learned. As has been said, the *paideia* (education) of the Athenian boy was entrusted to his relationship with the *erastes*.³

These were the conditions which rendered socially acceptable, in Greece (more specifically, although not only, in Athens) a type of relationship which today—with terms and concepts which, as we have already said, were unknown to the Greeks—we would describe as homosexual. Far from being an expression of sexual freedom, the pederastic couple was accepted only when it respected a social code which, from the texts, can be delineated in a way that is quite clear in its major outlines, and which we will seek to trace.

The age of the *erastes*

The *erastes*, we have said, had to be an adult. But at what age could a male begin to be an *erastes*, and up to when was it permitted to have this role?

We begin with the fact that at Athens a man reached adulthood at the age

of eighteen, at which point he was inducted into civic service, as an *ephebe* (something like a cadet), for two years. It seems safe to assume, therefore, that it was not appropriate to be an *erastes* before the age of twenty. But it also seems possible to say that it was considered preferable, before assuming a role so important in the formation of a youth, that the new citizen should consolidate, thanks to his experience in the adult world, the qualities necessary to properly carry out the duties connected with his sexual role (Cantarella 2002a.36–41).

Although its source is a city other than Athens, and it comes from the second century BC,⁴ a period later than that on which we focus in this book, a law engraved on a stele discovered in the city of Berea, in Macedonia, tells us that certain categories of people were forbidden to frequent the local gymnasium: slaves, freedmen, freedmen's sons, *aphelastotrioi* (those who could not exercise in the gymnasium, perhaps due to weakness or physical infirmity), *belaitenkotes* (prostitutes), those who were engaged in commercial activity, drunkards, and the insane. And finally, the *neaniskoi* (young men who were about to reach adulthood or had reached it within the past few years) were forbidden from speaking with boys inside the gymnasium (Cantarella 2002a.28–33). Evidently, therefore, at Berea, the authorities sought to prevent boys at the gymnasium from having conversations with persons considered unfit to be *erastai*, and also with people who, while not being unfit, were not yet mature enough to perform the pedagogical duties of an *erastes*.

So much for the minimum age for an *erastes*. But what—if it existed—was the maximum age, the age above which the role of *erastes* was unbecoming? According to some, the Athenian man customarily had an *eromenos* only until the time when he took a wife.⁵ The sources, however, appear to contradict this hypothesis.

Socrates, for example, did not cease to court beautiful boys following his marriage to Xanthippe. Sophocles, though married to Nikarete (by whom he had a son named Iophon, also a tragic poet), loved beautiful boys all his life. In a story told by his contemporary, the poet Ion of Chios (Athenaeus 603f–604d), when Sophocles was appointed to be a general, in 441, he went to Chios, where he participated in a banquet. He was already fifty-five years old, but his age did not prevent him from promptly beginning to court a very beautiful boy who was pouring wine for the dinner companions. "Do you want me to drink the wine with pleasure?" Sophocles asked him. "The boy said yes, and Sophocles asked him to bring the cup slowly to his lips and slowly take it away. The boy blushed, and Sophocles, after citing a verse of Phrynichus ("the light of love shines on his crimson cheeks"), asked the boy to blow on the cup, to push away a speck floating in the wine, and while the boy did as he was told, Sophocles kissed him.

Nor did Sophocles' habits change even when he reached an advanced age: when he was already fifty-five years old, he led a beautiful boy outside the walls of Athens and there, sheltered from prying eyes, he invited him to bundle

up with him in his cloak, which he had spread on the ground. But at the end of the encounter, the boy fled, robbing him of his cloak (Athenaeus 604d).

We could offer many more examples but will limit ourselves to two other cases. Aeschines, in his oration *Against Timarchus* (1.135–136), which he wrote at the age of forty-two—an advanced age for Classical antiquity—said that he still had *eromenoi* and the unnamed client for whom Lysias wrote the speech *Against Simon* (Lysias 3), who had already reached middle age, spoke explicitly of his love for the young Theodorus while expressing only the slightest concern about his age (Lysias 3.4).

If an age limit existed, it seems clear that it was not tied either to assuming the role of a husband or to reaching a specific, defined age. The limits presumably varied from case to case, and depended partly upon the individual's physical condition and above all on his social and economic status. Those who surpassed the limits may have the kinds of problems that Sophocles had outside the walls of Athens, or be objects of laughter, more or less good-willed. There were, however, no absolute social or legal limits on the maximum age of the *erastai*. Indeed, in contrast to the situation in Rome, at least in the Imperial period, in Greece laws regarding sexual relations between men, and in particular pederastic ones, were very rare.⁶

The age of the *eromenos*

The *eromenos*, we have already seen, was a *pais*, a boy. What age was meant by this term, in this specific context? When did one begin to be a "boy," and when did one cease to be one? Did minimum and maximum ages exist for the *eromenoi*?

The most precise indications on the lower limits for age come from the poetry collected in the *Palatine Anthology*, written well after the period this book covers. In the absence of other sources, however (while recognizing that this information must be treated with great caution), we must consider these sources.

The most explicit poet on this point is Strato of Sardis, in *P.A.* 12.4. The correct age is from twelve to seventeen:

I delight in the bloom of a twelve-year-old boy, but the boy of
thirteen
Is far more desirable still;
The fourteen-year old is a sweeter flower of Eros,
But the one who is starting his fifteenth year is more delightful;
The sixteenth year belongs to the gods; it is not for me
To seek the seventeenth: it belongs to Zeus.
But if a man has a desire for older boys than these, he is no longer
playing:
Instead he is looking for one who can "answer him back."⁷

Moreover, if a twelve-year-old sought to provoke him, Strato (*P.A.* 12.205) implies that he would refuse his advances:

A wholly tender boy—the neighbor's—turns me on
Not a little. He giggles like one who is knowing and willing,
But he isn't more than twelve. The unripe grapes
Are unguarded now. When he's ripe, there will be watchmen and
fences.

To take advantage of the inexperience of a child, says the poet (*P.A.* 12.228.1–2), is an infamous thing for an adult to do:

If an immature boy makes an error before he has reason,
It brings a greater disgrace to the friend who persuades him . . .

From reading Strato, one would say that the kind of sanction that falls upon an adult who loves a boy less than thirteen years old would be of the social type. Some, however, have thought that these relationships were forbidden and punished by law. Cohen (1991.179–180), in particular, has argued, albeit very cautiously, that a relationship with a boy under thirteen could be punished as statutory rape.

The ancient texts do not, however, preserve any trace of a law of this kind. The only directive on the subject of sexual violence is a law cited at Lysias 1.32 (*On the Murder of Eratosthenes*), though some would also adduce a law cited at Aeschines 1.16 (*Against Timarchus*). In reality, however, the law cited by Aeschines has nothing to do with rape. Aeschines states that "if an Athenian commits *hybris* with a free boy, the *kyrios* of the boy must enter an action before the *thesmobetai* requesting a punishment."⁸ But the punishable behavior is defined as *hybris*, and the term *hybris*, in techno-juridical language, while it can include sexual violence, does not only indicate that (Cantarella 2001). The law mentioned in Lysias (1.32), on the other hand, does in fact refer to sexual violence: it asserts that "if someone commits violence against a free man or a boy or one of the women in defense of whom it is legal to kill a lover, he will be condemned to double damages." Nonetheless, though it speaks of possible sexual violence in relations with a boy, this law does not contain any reference to an established minimum age, and does not provide even minimal support for a hypothesis about statutory rape. To conclude on this point: the minimum age is around twelve or thirteen years of age, but the sanction that applies to those who don't respect that are entirely social.

There remains the problem of the maximum age: at what age did it become inappropriate to continue to be a "beloved?" Strato indicates a precise age: seventeen. But he was not referring to a legally established age; he was referring to the age at which the boy ceased to be desirable because he lost his attractions. At seventeen, more or less, his body assumed the characteristics

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of an adult male, the most obvious of which was the hair that grew on his face, his thighs, and his chest. At this point, no one would court him any more: he had ceased to be a *pais kalos* (beautiful boy).

The theme often recurs, in the Anthology, as a warning to boys who obstinately refused the advances of their *erastai*. An anonymous poet writes the following, for instance, about Nicander (A.P. 12.39):

Nicander's light has gone out, all the bloom has departed
From his complexion; not even the name of the graces is left to
him—

Him whom we used to count as one of the gods. Never think
You are higher than mortals, boys: body hair comes . . .

Meleager repeats the same threat to Polixenides (12.33), as does Strato to Menippus (12.176), and Asclepiades to a boy whose name he doesn't mention, although he is already undesirable, for the same reason (12.36).

Whether this rule (like all the rules presented here) was respected is another problem. It indicates, nevertheless, what the ideal model was for a pederastic relationship: a relationship of complex definition, which, based on the sources provided so far, seems to have been problematic (or "problematized," as Foucault called it),⁹ for the individuals involved and society at large—and for this reason, perhaps, the subject of much debate in modern scholarship. In the following section, we shall consider the principal issues in this debate, beginning with the question of the custom's origins.

The problem of pederasty's origins

According to a majority of scholars, the pedagogical function which pederasty carried out in the Archaic period and (if in a less evident or powerful way) in the Classical period as well, can be explained in the light of the custom's origins. In other words, the custom's origins does not coincide with the birth of the *polis* but must be sought in a prior epoch; for some, indeed, it must be sought elsewhere as well.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, a celebrated article appeared by the scholar Erich Bethe; if unintentionally, it showed the academy a way to avoid the embarrassment caused by the presence, in Greek sources, of too many undeniable references to sexual relationships between men. Pederasty, Bethe wrote (1907), was not a Greek custom; it was imported by the Dorians, at the moment that became defined as this northern population's "invasion" of Greek territory. Thanks to the Dorians, the Greeks and their mythified and superior civilization could be purged of the regrettable defect.

Around the middle of the twentieth century, however, another hypothesis became more popular. In 1950, Henri Marrou argued that pederasty was a relic of the so-called feudal Middle Ages, that is to say, the Homeric age; it

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was military in nature and consisted of a comradeship of warriors, joined together in a masculine environment which, due to the absence of women, tended to become a closed all-male system, with the sexual consequences that follow from that.

The question remains of interest. Whether or not Marrou's hypothesis of military origins is sound—and, in this writer's judgment, it is not convincing, for reasons we shall soon come to—Marrou was correct in saying that pederasty had no particular connection with the Dorians (see Dover 1989.185–196).

Nonetheless, the question that Marrou asked—and which is far from being clearly resolved—is "why?" For Marrou, the love of boys was linked to the absence of women. And at a distance of a half-century, if on different grounds and in a different way, there are still those who believe in this connection. David Cohen (1991.186), for example, explains pederasty starting from the concept of the inaccessibility of respectable women in Classical Athens. Other women were available for sex, but an Athenian man—who spent much of his life in all-male settings, such as the assembly, the gymnasium, the symposium (where again, respectable women were absent)—had no access to women whom he needed to court. According to Cohen, courtship is an unusual social practice, in that it is linked to a fundamental human need, the need to court and be accepted; and since in Athens the only woman that one courts—respectable ones—were not accessible, this need was, as it were, "deviated" toward (and satisfied by) the courtship of boys.

But the hypothesis of a substitutional pederasty is not supported by the sources, even in its latest, most sophisticated version.

In the first place, in fact, women, at least in Athens, became inaccessible (and, therefore, not courtable) only after the law of Draco, which in 621–620 set extremely strict rules for respectable women.¹⁰ In earlier times and other places rules were more fluid, and women's lives more free. This appears clearly in the Homeric poems, and in particular the *Odyssey* (Blundell 1995.74–77); as is well known, women were also less segregated in Sparta than in Athens. And pederasty certainly existed in these earlier times and other places.

The antiquity of pederasty emerges, firstly, from the evidence of many myths in which pederastic couples appear, such as Zeus and Ganymede, Poseidon and Pelops, Apollo and Hyacinth.¹¹ These myths, furthermore, may point further into history, toward the origin and original function of pederasty. Indeed, according to a hypothesis which although controversial is, to this writer's mind, not without merit, these myths reproduce the three key moments of the initiation ceremonies which in tribal cultures mark a boy's coming of age (see Brelich 1969). The first of these is the separation of the initiate from the group. The second is the period of "segregation" in which the initiate lived apart from the group: this period, which both in ritual and myth is often portrayed as the youth's death, includes in some cultures a period of "apprenticeship" to an adult male, often including a sexual

relationship between the two. The third, finally, is the moment of reintegration, in which the individual, now no longer a youth but, instead, an adult in possession of the necessary qualities and tools for taking on his role as a warrior, a husband, and a father, rejoins the community. Thus these myths may well reflect both the practice of initiation rituals in prehistoric Greek society and the pederastic component of these rituals.

Along with the information from myths there are also authors such as the historian Ephorus (cited by the geographer Strabo at 10.4.21 = *Geographia* 70 F149.21), and Plutarch, who speak respectively of the customs of Crete and of Sparta. In Crete, according to Ephorus, the adult men kidnapped their *eromenoi* and, after having led them outside the city, lived with them for two months (the period of segregation), following rules that established the obligations and rights of each in relation to the other, and at the end of this period they returned with the youths to the city and gave them a prescribed set of gifts, including military equipment, that symbolized the entry of the youth into the community of adults.

As for Sparta, Plutarch (*Lycurgus* 7.1) writes that the boys, when they became twelve years old, were entrusted to *erastai* chosen from among the best of the adults, and they learned from them how to be true Spartans, that is to say, citizens.¹²

Last but not least, a confirmation of the existence of initiatory pederasty comes from a series of inscriptions discovered at the end of the nineteenth century on the island of Thera, a few dozen meters from the place where the temple of Apollo Karneios stood—a god frequently connected with the coming-of-age of youths.

These inscriptions, which were dated to the Geometric period by the excavators (and more recently by Jeffery [1990.318–319] between the late Geometric and the seventh century), contain explicit references to the existence of pederastic couples on that island. One reads for example in one that (IG 12.3, 537a) "here Krimon sodomized his boy, the brother of Bathycles." It is difficult to believe in the hypothesis, advanced by some, that we are dealing here with "obscene inscriptions."¹³ Obscene inscriptions are, as a rule, anonymous; in these, by contrast, the writer declares his name, and seeks to make it known that the boy sodomized by him, defined as his *pais*, is the brother of Bathycles, unknown to us but evidently a person of note. The impression it conveys to us is that the author of the inscription wants it known that he has had a relationship—and not a casual one—with a boy from a socially important family.

The inscriptions, in sum, appear to preserve the memory of a socially important moment in the life of boys (indeed, their initiation phase) which involved a relationship, including sex, with an adult man.

We can conclude on this point that even if it is impossible to offer a certain solution to the problem of the origin of pederasty, the sources discussed show that the initiatory hypothesis does not lack an evidentiary basis.

This does not alter the fact that the debate which it has created merits further reflection—among other things, because of its connection to the much-discussed question of reciprocal desire (or the lack thereof) in pederastic relations.

Asymmetrical relationships and desire: the construction of "frigid love"

In 1990, David Halperin (1990.54–71) challenged the initiatory hypothesis: he argued that the true function of this theory was political, in that it allowed the consideration of pederasty as a survival of a social ritual with no connection to sexual desire. In Halperin's opinion, Bethe, followed by Parzer (1982), put forward this thesis in order to separate the Greek relationship between two individuals of the male sex from eroticism, with the goal of restoring heterosexuality to its role as the only legitimate sexuality. The problem of pederasty's origins, therefore, is linked by Halperin to that of sexual reciprocity, which has since then been at the center of an important debate.

Beginning with Kenneth Dover, in fact, many writers have proposed the image of an *eromenos* who is in principle always the object and never the subject of erotic desire. Authors as different as Claude Calame and David Cohen, for instance, have argued that the *eromenos'* goal in the pederastic relationship was to elude the *erastes'* seduction.

Between the *erastes* and *eromenos*, says Calame (1996.35–42), there was a relationship of *philia* (love/friendship), but within this relationship there was only one subject who desired, the adult; the youth limited himself to permitting the *erastes* to desire him, and if he yielded, he did so only to please his *erastes*, without expecting to feel or feeling pleasure.

According to David Cohen, the absence of sexual reciprocity stemmed from pederasty's origins as a kind of replacement or equivalent: as this masculine courtship was a substitute for heterosexual courtship rendered impossible by the absence of women, the boy would have to resist every attempt at seduction, in order to avoid accepting the role of a woman. The courtship, in short, was a zero-sum game: if the *erastes* prevailed, the boy lost. What was at stake in the game was his honor.

As this writer has already stated more than once, it is difficult to believe that such a strong asymmetry existed between the lovers in actuality.¹⁴ Certain ancient authors imply that it does. In Xenophon's *Symposium*, for instance (8.19–22), Socrates says that, unlike a woman, a boy, when he has sex with a man, does not feel the pleasures of love, but rather regards his *erastes* as a sober man regards one who is drunk with love: it is thus no surprise if the *eromenos* comes to despise his lover. This does not differ greatly from what Lysias says (or is said to have said) in Plato's *Phaedrus* (240C–E). These, however, are contrarian speeches, intended to reform their listeners'

customs; they should not be accepted at face value as statements of common Athenian opinion.

To demonstrate this, beyond the findings of the studies conducted in subsequent chapters, it suffices to point to DeVries' seminal—though too often ignored—article (1997), which shows that declarations such as those of Xenophon and Lysias are refuted by the iconography, which clearly shows that sexual emotions were not the monopoly of the *erastes*. Recently, moreover, Varuone (2004:197–223) has attacked this view of pederasty as “anaesthetic,” i.e. as an attempt to make pederasty seem less unacceptable by modern standards.¹⁵

Indeed, it is important to observe that the initiatory hypothesis, with which we began this discussion, does not, *pace* Halperin, necessarily exclude sexual desire from pederastic relations, either in the *erastes* or in the *eromenos*. Instead, if accepted with the necessary caveats, this hypothesis has different consequences for the study of pederasty: it helps us to understand the fundamental nature of the pederastic relationship and the reasons why, after losing the institutional character that it had had for centuries, it continued to play an important social function and to be not only culturally valorized, but often even idealized. In the following sections, we will present the textual evidence for pederasty up to the Classical period, organizing it in chronological sequence. We hope, in this way, to verify if and until when the original pedagogical function continued to exist, and in what manner pederasty came to be perceived socially as the centuries passed.

Epic poetry: Achilles and Patroclus

Epic poetry (like lyric poetry, which we will consider next) is not Athenian. But when one turns one's attention to early Greek literature, Athens is not the source of the texts. However, because we know that both genres were essential in Athenian culture, it seems not only permissible, but necessary, to take these texts into consideration.

The presence of references to pederasty in epic poems is a controversial topic, and not easily resolved. At first reading, indeed, one could think that neither the *Iliad* nor the *Odyssey* contain references to this type of love. But a closer reading reveals evidence of male friendships whose nature and intensity seems different from that which joins two comrades in arms: for example, the well-known friendship between Achilles and Patroclus.

Patroclus was, beyond a doubt, the person to whom Achilles was most attached. His relationship with him was certainly stronger, emotionally, than his relationship with Briseis, his concubine, slave, and war trophy. As is well known, she was taken away from him by Agamemnon, who had been compelled to return *his* concubine, Chryseis, daughter of Chryses, priest of Apollo, and who wanted to make up for his loss. The reaction of Achilles

need not be described: beside himself with rage, he withdrew from combat, with dire consequences for the Greeks.

This reaction was, however, in the first place, due to a question of prestige. Briseis (as was the fate of captive slave women) had been assigned to him as a prize, in recognition of his valor; to take her away from him was to diminish *his time*, his honor as a warrior.

The nature and intensity of his reaction to the death of Patroclus, killed in combat by Hector, was quite different. Achilles' grief was uncontrollable. Patroclus was irreplaceable in the hierarchy of his affections. He did not limit himself to weeping for his friend; instead, he held sumptuous funeral games in his honor and gave him the honors of a princely funeral, including the sacrifice of twelve young Trojan princes (*Iliad* 23, in particular 175–176). With Patroclus dead, his life had one aim: to kill Hector and avenge the death of his friend and then lie with him in the same grave, forever, beside him in death as he was in life.

I would say that the bard who composed the *Iliad* considered Achilles and Patroclus a pederastic couple.¹⁶ Faced with her son's desperation over Patroclus' death, the hero's mother, Thetis, exhorts him to continue living: for, she says to him (*Iliad* 24, 128–130), “it is good to sleep with a woman.” The meaning of the line is not entirely clear: does she mean that it is *also* good to sleep with a woman? Most scholars today argue against this interpretation (see for instance Parzer 1982:93–95). Nonetheless, a relationship with a woman is presented as an alternative to the relationship with Patroclus; thus his former relationship is inherently an erotic one. Furthermore, Thetis admonishes her son for not having respected the rules of the pederastic relationship: his relationship with Patroclus has gone on too long; he has passed the point at which, having reached adulthood, he should have taken on the role of a husband, bringing an end to the time in which the pederastic relationship could be exclusive.

In any case, that Achilles and Patroclus were lovers was taken for granted in the Classical period (Skinner 2005:43–44). For example, in Aeschylus' *Myrmidons* (to which we will return later), Achilles, in front of his friend's cadaver, shouts out his desperation in language only a lover would use (frs. 135–136 Radt): “You did not respect my pure reverence for your thighs/ ungrateful for our intense kisses.” Aeschines, in his oration *Against Timarchus* (1.142), also cites the two heroes among the couples celebrated by lovers, as does pseudo-Lucian (*Evotas* 54). Achilles and Patroclus were one of the heroic models for pederasty, like Harmodius and Aristogeiton, to whom we will return.

Achilles and Patroclus, however, gave rise to a debate that is very interesting for our purposes: the Greeks vigorously discussed the topic of this model couple, seeking to establish which of the two was the *erastes* and which was the *eromenos*. According to Aeschylus, as one can deduce from the verses cited above, Achilles was the *erastes*, but Plato held a different opinion: Aeschylus

erts, Phaedrus says in the *Symposium* (180A), when he says that Achilles was the *erastes* of Patroclus; Achilles was much younger and did not yet have a beard. The title of a lost drama by Sophocles, *Achilles' Erastai*, leads one to believe that Sophocles was of the same opinion.¹⁷

What can be deduced from this controversy? According to some, this uncertainty about the roles indicates that in the Homeric age, the relationship between two men did not follow the pederastic norms. But the fact that, in the fifth and fourth centuries, the leading intellectuals viewed these greatest heroes as a pederastic couple, however they resolved the question of their roles, indicates, at any rate, that in these centuries pederasty was not only accepted but viewed as part of a model life.

Lyric poetry

An anthology of 1,388 verses, gathered in two books and attributed to Theognis of Megara, can be read as a story of love between the poet and a boy, often called Cynrus. Whether the author of the verses (or all of the verses) was Theognis, or Cynrus was a real boy, are secondary questions for our purposes.

For those who seek to reconstruct the social history of pederasty, the verses attributed to Theognis are important because they explicitly confirm what emerges clearly, but only implicitly, from other sources: the *erastes* provided the *eromenos* with a civic and ethical education. Theognis (27–28) says to his boy that he will teach him traditional elite values:

Wishing you well, I will teach you the things,
Cynrus, that I myself learned as a child from the noble.

It would be difficult to find a clearer affirmation of the pedagogical ethic. Verses 1049–1050 voice analogous sentiments:

As a father to his son, I myself will teach you
Noble things . . .

The poet teaches the boy virtues such as moderation. The most important of these, however, is loyalty: loyalty to the poet/*eraster* and to the political faction into which he is inducting his *eromenos*. This is most often carried out by complaining about the boy's (or a boy's) disloyalty. Indeed, betrayal is possibly the most important theme of the collection, and it is hard (or often impossible) to distinguish erotic betrayal from political betrayal. In lines 1311–1318, for instance, the boy has betrayed his lover: the poem concludes by saying that his actions have cast being a lover of boys (the verb *paide-erasthai*) in a bad light; however, the lover refers to the boy as a "comrade" (*hetairios*)—a political term—and the boy has not abandoned him for another lover, but a plural group, "those men," i.e. another faction.¹⁸

You haven't got away with cheating me, boy—for I am after you—
With those men whose close friend you now are,
Having dropped my friendship without regard.
You weren't friends with them before:

It was I who thought I could make you my trusty
Comrade—but now you have another friend,
And I, for the kindnesses I've done you, am thrown over. Let no
man,
Seeing you, desire to love a boy.

This political and pedagogical kind of love is superior to other kinds. In Theognis a theme first appears that will return (sometimes with different solutions) in later Greek literature: the comparison between love for a boy and love for a woman. As the poet tells us at 1367–1368, the love of women is inferior, because, specifically, women do not have the key virtue of loyalty:

A boy shows gratitude: a woman is a loyal companion
To no-one. She always loves the one who is at hand.

It is important, however, not to lose sight of the fact that this superior love is not only pedagogical and political, but also erotic. This is clear in verses 1299–1304:

Boy, how long will you flee from me? How I pursue you
And search for you. May I reach the end of your anger!
But you flee, with a faithless and arrogant spirit
And the ways of a pitiless kite.

Wait for me, instead, and grant me your favor(s): you will not long
have

The gift of violet-crowned Aphrodite, the Cyprus-born.

Here too the boy is uncooperative. The erotic context is, however, clearer. What the teacher/poet/*eraster* wants is the boy's "favor," and if it is possible to be unsure of what kind of "favor" this is, the last line and a half make it clear: it is a "favor" that the boy can only give while he has "the gift of violet-crowned Aphrodite," that is, his boyish beauty. Any favor other than a sexual one he could as or more easily give when he has grown a beard.

The beauty of boys is even more central in other poets. In Ibycus (fr. 288), for example, the boy's seductive attractiveness is his only characteristic:

Euryalos, offshoot of the Graces, darling
Of the beautiful-haired Hours, Aphrodite
And gentle-eyed Persuasion
Raised you among rose-blossoms.

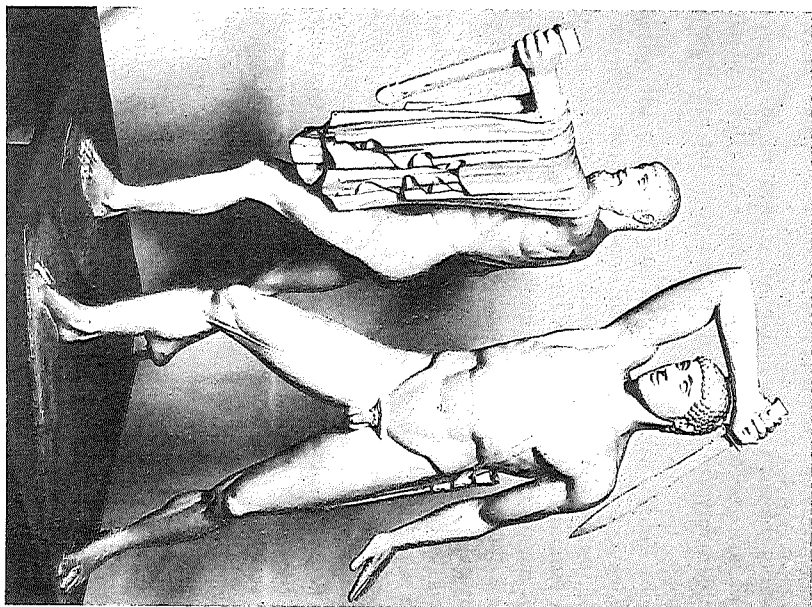


Figure 0.1 Plaster reconstruction of the Tynandides, statue-group by Kritios and Nesiotes. Rome, Museo dei Gesi. Photo: DAL—Rome (neg. no. 84.331).

self-sacrifice that it generated were the only true guarantors of that freedom's continued existence."

The remaining evidence for Athenian attitudes prior to Aristophanes tallies well with this suggestion: these are the fragments, already quoted, from Aeschylus' *Myrmidons*. They are only two verses, yet they are important for the history of tragedy, because (aside from the issues discussed above), they make clear that in the early fifth century, the erotic aspect of the pederastic relationship could be explicitly presented—and associated with the greatest Greek heroes—in a civic performance such as tragedy.

Scanty as they are, the related sources from the first half of the fifth century are thus very interesting; in the light of what they say, it is difficult to deny that the Athenian democracy, in its early years, participated in the idealization of pederasty.

Philosophy

After the middle of the fifth century, the Greek or at least Athenian attitudes toward pederasty seem to change. The documents which have survived from this period are from many different literary genres, and they must be compared to each other with great caution; but in their totality they offer a view of pederasty—and of attitudes towards it—more complete than can be found for any other period.

Among these texts, first of all, the philosophical sources are of special interest for our study, beginning with those that help us understand the attitude of Socrates: first, Plato, and secondly Xenophon and Aeschines of Sphettus.

What was Socrates' attitude toward beautiful boys, the *paides kaloi*, the object of pederastic desire? That Socrates shared his fellow citizens' passion for adolescents seems evident.

In Xenophon's *Symposium* (8.2), he says that he does not remember a moment of his life when he was not in love; in Plato's *Meno* (76C) he recognizes that he cannot resist beauty, and, again in Plato, in the *Charmides* (155C–E), he admits that he is attracted to the beauty of the boy from whom the dialogue takes its name (admired, incidentally as much by adults, who, like Socrates, go to the palaestra to admire and discuss the beauty of the boys, as by the boys themselves, all subject to his charm). His awareness of the beauty of Charmides is such that, when his glance slips inside Charmides' tunic, he confesses, blood rushes to his head, he is no longer master of himself, and he feels as if he finds himself in the claws of a wild beast.

But this does not mean that he gives into temptation. This is shown by his relations with the young, shameless and beautiful Alcibiades. While seduced by Alcibiades' beauty into feeling a true and real passion for him,¹⁹ he resists every attempt at seduction (Plato *Symposium* 219B–D). Alcibiades, the transgressor as always, breaks the rules of pederastic courtship, taking the initiative for himself, courting the man he wishes to make his *erastai*. But Socrates does not yield; what is the reason for this resistance?

In the first place, and generally, Socrates attributes fundamental value to continence as a model for life. Sexual continence, for him, is included in a general model of comportment which imposes self-control in every field. This more general reason, however, is linked with another, which has to do specifically with pederasty.

Socrates firmly believed in the pedagogical value of the love of boys, as, moreover, he explicitly declares, in Aeschines of Sphettus (fr. 11), in connection with the subject of his relations with Alcibiades: he claims to have hoped, by spending time with Alcibiades, to exercise an improving influence by means of his love, convincing him to give up his dissolute ways for a more moderate manner of living. In the case of Alcibiades, obviously, the hope was vain; but this does not alter the fact that for Socrates the task of the *erastai* was to improve and educate the *eromenoi*.

In contrast to the lyric poets, however, for Socrates pedagogy and passion could not coexist. Socrates maintained that the physical aspect of the pederastic relationship should, if possible, be eliminated. But this does not mean that he disapproved of pederasty. On the contrary, he held it to be the highest form of personal relationship (*Symposium* 208E–209C) and at the same time the most exposed to temptation: for this reason it needed to be protected, by separating it from the passionate element.

While not being entirely a misogynist, like some of his fellow citizens,²⁰ Socrates made a distinction between and a hierarchy among homo- and heterosexual relations. Pederasty gives birth to ideas and ideals; heterosexual relations give birth to bodies. Relationships with boys, therefore, could and should exist without sex, even though this rule was not binding. There are some men, says Socrates in the *Phaedrus* (225E–226B), who have sexual relationships with boys, and are of a noble nature. But only those who do not are philosophers.

It is true that in Xenophon, or at least in his *Symposium*, Socrates' opinions about pederasty seem very different from those of the Platonic Socrates. But these different attitudes are not hard to understand, if, as seems most likely, this work was written a few years after Plato's work of the same name, precisely with the aim of establishing distance from the ideas propounded in that work, and to convince the Athenians of the advantages of marriage, in contrast to the love of boys.

In Xenophon, matrimony was exalted because of its reproductive role. The most important issue for him was the reproduction of citizens—and not by accident. Thirty years after the end of the Peloponnesian War, Athens needed soldiers. The Athenians needed to reproduce, and pederasty, almost inevitably, came to be seen as a danger; some, moreover, thought that the decline of the noble institution into a purely sexual and vulgar practice was the cause of Athens' decadence. Such ideas will appear in the discussion of comedy and courtroom oratory below. Before turning to these genres, however, we would like to conclude by discussing two of the speeches in Plato's *Symposium*, speeches by figures who—according to Plato—shared an idealistic vision of pederasty, Pausanias and Aristophanes.

Originally, says Aristophanes (189C–193C), there were three sexes. At that time, human beings were different: they had the form of a sphere, and they moved by rolling along on four hands and four feet. Each one had two faces, on opposite sides of the sphere, and, also on opposite sides, two sexual organs. Some had two masculine sexual organs, others had two female sexual organs, and still others (the hermaphrodites) had one male organ and one female organ. However, one day, they became too arrogant and attacked Olympus; as a result, they were punished by Zeus, who cut each one in half; from that moment on each half began to search for its lost half. Those that were originally completely men began to look for another man. Those that were completely women began to search for another woman. Those that were

hermaphrodites began to search for the opposite sex. The speaker's judgment on the three groups is very different. Those that come from hermaphrodites are lovers of women: in our culture this group would undoubtedly be the object of praise, but Aristophanes instead points out that most adulterers come from this group. The women who seek other women—unsurprisingly—he dismisses with an extremely harsh term (*betairiai*). In describing the men who seek other men, he fails to follow the implications of his own story: instead of same-age male-male couples, they are described as *erastai* and *eromenoi*, though he conceives of them as having a tendency to prefer the love of men or boys, according to their age: they enter into marriage for social reasons, but are happy to live among themselves, without women. Of the three categories, this is the only one that is the object of praise. Having been completely men, in fact, they best express virility, and when they become adults, they are the best suited to being leaders.²¹

Pausanias (180C–185C) is even more explicit. In Pausanias' opinion, two types of love exist: one is inspired by Heavenly Aphrodite, the other by Vulgar Aphrodite, and the main difference between them is the fact that he who is inspired by Vulgar Aphrodite loves either men or women, without making a distinction, while he who is inspired by Heavenly Aphrodite loves boys.

It is, furthermore, Pausanias who formulates the opinion that, as far as we can tell, seems closest to the common Athenian view on the delicate problem of physical relations between lovers. Which physical expressions of love were socially acceptable, and which met with disapproval? Was it, or was it not, permitted for the *eromenos*, after having put up the obligatory resistance, to yield to the desires of the *erastes*? In Athens, Pausanias says, fathers have their sons guarded by *paidagogoi* (slaves who accompanied the boys to school and back) in order to prevent them from talking with *erastai*, and this could make one think that a love relationship between a boy and an man was considered shameful. But this is not the case. The love of boys can be a beautiful or ugly thing, good or bad, depending on how the affair is conducted. To yield one's favors to a wicked man, that is to say, a vulgar *erastes*, who loves the body more than the soul, is a shameful thing. Those who love the body more than the soul are, among other things, inconstant; their love vanishes with the fading of the beauty of the beloved body. This is why, says Pausanias—as we have already seen—our law holds that boys should not yield quickly to courtships, but should put an *erastes* to the test. There is, however, a way in which a boy can honorably yield, and that is when he is convinced that he will gain wisdom from his *erastes*. When the lover and beloved have the same objective—the *erastes* leading the boy to wisdom, the boy seeking to attain it—then yielding to the *erastes* is a good thing (184C–185C).

Comedy

A characteristic of the work of Aristophanes is the bitter, despairing irony with which the great satirist denounces the tragedy of his deeply beloved Athens, the city which, in his youth, he had seen in its splendor, and now, sadly, after a few decades, he sees in its decline. Aristophanes has a lucid awareness of how Athens has turned toward—and in his judgment is largely following—the road to ruin. And he denounces what he sees as the cause: the government is in the hands of opportunists and incompetents—it is superfluous to recall his opinion of Cleon—and immorality is rampant.

To Aristophanes, his fellow citizens have acquired the habit of yielding themselves to other men. The ancient, noble custom of pederasty has degenerated, for him, into a collective vice. Most contemporary scholars, following Dover (1989, 135–153), believe that Aristophanes' attacks concern exclusively those who allow themselves to be sodomized: the *kataphrones* (buggers), *enuphrōktoi* (wide-assed), or *lakekataphrōktoi* (cistern-assed), as Aristophanes calls them, among other terms. The adult who took on the active sexual role—even, in contradiction of the rules of pederasty, with another adult—was outside the reach of criticism. This has recently been called into question. Hubbard (1998, in particular 55–59) argues that the active and passive sexual roles were perceived in a more fluid and interchangeable way, and that blame could also fall upon the active partner. In this writer's judgment, this hypothesis is not completely convincing; certainly the passive partner receives the lion's share of barbs. What is certain, at any rate, is that Aristophanes did not restrict his criticism to adults. He also included the boys, who, according to him, had, for their part, forgotten every rule, and yielded themselves in an impudent, dissolute way, without shame and without respect for convention.

The *agon* (debate) between the characters Better Argument and Worse Argument in *The Clouds* (lines 889–1104) is perhaps the moment in which, beneath the usual irony, the poet expresses in the most explicit way his bitterness, at the same time revealing an important aspect of his attitude: what he disapproves of, clearly, is not pederasty itself.

In his defense of old-fashioned education, Better Argument points out that boys in the past were modest and reserved, going to the palaestra not only to improve the body, but also the spirit. In silence, organized and trained, they went to their lessons, without coats even when it snowed, to temper body and spirit; they did not visit the hot baths, and unlike modern youths, they did not simmer in order to provoke lovers; no boy, furthermore, would anoint himself with oil below the navel, as the boys now do in order to excite sexual desire.

But Worse Argument mocks his adversary without pity. What you say is simply ridiculous, he replies; you live outside the world, you are antiquated, times have changed. You describe principles of austere living which no one

has ever followed: even Hercules, the strongest of the heroes, allowed himself to take hot baths.²² And then, above all, why do you condemn with such severity the *enuphrōktoi*? Today the prosecutors, the tragedians, the politicians are *enuphrōktoi*—as is the entire public seated at this moment in this theater! The Better Argument can just give up, as nobody is restricted by shame any more. And indeed, he does give up; at the end of the debate, he admits defeat and goes over to the side of the *binomēnoi*—the sodomized.

Whether and to what extent Aristophanes' view corresponds to reality is not a problem that we can or want to address. What is certain is that in the late fifth century, as the debate between Better Argument and Worse Argument clearly shows, the Archaic, noble model of pederasty (in the double sense that it was practiced by the nobility and was, ethically speaking, noble) was in a state of crisis. Probably, Aristophanes painted a darker picture than the reality (in part, perhaps, out of personal conviction; in part, certainly, to meet the conventions of the comic genre): it is difficult to believe that all Athenian adults were *kataphrones* and all the boys corrupt. In any case, however, his exaggerations bring out, by contrast, the positive value of the noble model of pederasty, which Aristophanes, as a good conservative, looks back to with nostalgia.

Courtroom oratory

Aeschines' speech *Against Timarchus* is from the era that follows the chronological limits of this study. But it is a text which it is useful to examine, however briefly, as we seek to complete our brief portrait of pederasty.

A political ally of the famous orator Demosthenes, and, like him, an enemy of Alexander the Great's father King Philip of Macedon, Timarchus had accused Aeschines of betraying the interests of the city when he (among others) negotiated the so-called Peace of Philocrates in 346. But according to Aeschines, Timarchus did not have the right to speak before the tribunal. In his youth, he had been a prostitute, and the law on *hetairias* (prostitution) (Aeschines 1.21) declared that if an Athenian was or had been a prostitute, he could not be one of the nine archons (the city's highest council), or serve as a priest, or as a public advocate, or as any other magistrate. He could not be dispatched as a herald, or express his opinion in the assembly, or assist at public sacrifices, or publicly carry any honorary crown, or enter into the sacred enclosure in the Agora. If he did any of these things, after having been found guilty of *hetairiazis*, he would be punished with death.

Essentially, according to this law, those who prostituted themselves lost their civil rights. As the text of the oration clearly shows, the prostitute was guilty of a grave fault: that of having acted the role of a woman. Indeed, Aeschines (1.110–111) recounts how, when Timarchus and an associate had plotted to steal public funds, a citizen denounced him in the assembly,

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warning the Athenians that "a man and a woman are about to rob you of a thousand drachmas." And when someone asked him who the woman was, the citizen had answered "the woman was this man Timarchus."

And later in the oration (1.185), turning to the jury, Aeschines asks, "Will you have the affrontery, Athenians, to absolve this man, who has committed the worst infamy? This man who has, with his man's body, committed the sins of a woman?"

But perhaps the most interesting thing that emerges from the words of this oration is something else: the observation that in the fourth century, notwithstanding the anxiety which it clearly caused in this period, pederasty still continued to be culturally valued in a positive way, and this positive valuation was shared not only by the elite, but by the majority of the population. In fact, after having accused Timarchus of prostitution and described Timarchus' questionable erotic affairs, Aeschines fears being misunderstood by the jury who were to decide the case. I would not want, he says to them, Timarchus' defenders to accuse me of wanting to (1.132) "open an epoch of terrible barbarity," asserting that I want to mark anyone who has *erastai* with infamy. To discredit me, they will cite famous pairs of lovers, such as Harmodius and Aristogeiton, or, from earlier times, Achilles and Patroclus, insinuating that I don't recognize the value and the importance of these loves. And, indeed, I don't deny my own love affairs, I admit to having written erotic poems, and I declare, too, that I continue to love boys. Carrying on with the speech, Aeschines (1.136) says explicitly to the Athenians that he is careful not to condemn honorable love: what he condemns, as do the laws, are only mercenary relationships.

Achilles and Patroclus, Harmodius and Aristogeiton, therefore, were still models of ideal couples in the fourth century: Aeschines explicitly says that by declaring disapproval of pederastic love in this period one would risk being considered barbaric.

And this is not all: after praising the great lovers of earlier times, Aeschines goes on to praise recent ones (1.156),

you know, Athenians, Criton, the son of Astisos, and Periclides of Perithoidai, and Polemagenes and Panthalones, the son of Cleagoras, and Timesitheos, the runner; they were the most beautiful not only in their city, but in all of Greece, and for this reason, had the most and the wisest lovers, and no one has ever cast blame upon them.

The oration continues with a list of some of the beautiful boys, courted and loved, who lived at that moment in the city (1.157):

among the youths and boys of today, I will mention in the first place the nephew of Iphicrates, the son of Teisius of Rhamnos, who has the same name as the defendant . . . and also Anticles, the stadium run-

ner, and Pheidias, the brother of Melesias, and I could also mention many others. But I will stop, because I don't want it thought that I praise them in order to court them.

We have here a statement which does not require any comments. Pederasty no longer enjoyed the unquestioned status that it had in the Archaic period. Aristophanes made that clear. In Classical Athens, it caused anxieties and concern, whether for good reason or no. It continued, however, to be a model of a social relationship that was not only accepted, but idealized.

INTRODUCTION

SECTION 2 THE ICONOGRAPHY OF PEDERASTIC SCENES

Andrew Lear

What is iconography?

Although we are only at the very beginning of this book, the words "iconography" and "iconographical" have already occurred a number of times. The study of iconography is the principal focus of this book; in fact, the study of iconography is both a focus in itself and the method by which we arrive at many of our non-iconographical conclusions. Thus, it seems a good idea, at the outset, to define for our readers our use of the word.

"Iconography" is a Greek word, although a late and rare one: it derives from the verb *grafain*, "to draw" and the noun *eikon*, "image" (which in its English derivative "icon," has been restricted to mean "holy image"). Thus "iconography" seems to mean the drawing of an image, and in its modern use, it has come to mean the way in which artists communicate through images, or perhaps—to put it more objectively—the language in which images communicate.²³ Cultures, periods, genres each have their own iconographies. Thus Athenian vase-painting has an iconography, but we may also define sub-iconographies within it, such as the iconography of scenes of women's toilettes, athletic scenes, or courtship scenes. Each of these genres or sub-genres has a vocabulary of elements and groupings of elements which an artist can repeat, combine, or vary—or leave out when a practiced viewer would expect them—thereby giving the viewer his version, or his view (at least at that moment) of the genre and/or the subject of the genre.

These are precisely the things that we explore in this book: the elements of which Greek images of pederasty are composed, how these elements are combined and varied, and what these elements, combinations, and variations show or imply about pederasty or the ideals associated with pederasty.

This focus has one very clear implication: by saying that we consider each painting as a recombination of elements from a repertoire of image-parts, we

show that we do not consider the images to be drawn whole directly from the reality of ancient Greek life. This will perhaps seem an obvious point: vase-paintings are not snapshots of life in ancient Greece. Yet it is surprising how often even the most highly trained scholars lapse into considering vase-paintings in some sense a trustworthy record of historical reality.

Perhaps this is due to a (no doubt unconscious) belief that visual media are, at least when representational, inherently more realistic than literary genres. Or perhaps, in this context, it derives from the fact that, while literary sources on pederasty are often so idealizing as to mention sex either not at all or only indirectly, vase-paintings often portray sex or at least evident sexual interest. Indeed, much of what we can surmise about the sexual practices of Greek pederasty derives from vase-painting.

However, a careful consideration of vase-painting will make clear that it represents actual ancient Greek life only in an indirect way. The representation of pederasty follows quite precise sets of conventions, although there are exceptions to these conventions, and the conventions change over time. It is possible that the practice of pederasty (or the conventions of actual pederasty) was sometimes or in some ways reflected in the conventions of vase-painting. There are, however, many cracks in the wall created by this set of conventions: cracks that allow us to see that these standard modes of representation exist to some extent independently of their relationship to reality. They are the way that pederasty was represented on vases, regardless of whether they always or even ever reflected actual practice.

There is a fine example of the distance between iconography and reality—to jump right into the sexual matters that are at the heart of this book—of which even readers who have until now paid ancient art only the slightest attention are probably aware: the size of male genitalia as portrayed in Greek art. Most Greek statues and most vase-paintings portray male genitalia as smaller than mature genitalia really are. It has been pointed out (Steiner 1998, 132–133), for instance, that the so-called *kouros* statues of young men that were produced throughout the Greek world in the seventh and sixth centuries portray an impossible human form: they have a muscular development that is possible in males only from adolescence on and the genitalia of children. The same is true of most of the men portrayed in this book, and indeed of almost all men in pederastic vase-painting. Of course some Greek men may have had small genitalia. However, as Kenneth Dover points out (1989, 124–134), the high percentage of Greek men portrayed with small genitalia in art shows that the portrayal of their genitalia does not vary in relationship to a necessarily variable reality.

Why is this? Dover points out that we know from several references in Greek comedy that the Greeks considered small genitalia preferable and associated them with certain preferred behaviors or ways of being: for instance, in Aristophanes' *Clouds* (1014), the Better Argument, defending the traditional, heroic/athletic Athenian education system, claims that one of its

advantages is that it will give a boy "big buttocks and a little dick." It is thus probable that the small genitalia of Greek men in art are an idealization: these men are portrayed as having small genitalia because such genitalia were considered preferable. In fact, a comparison of the men and youths in pederastic courtship scenes to Satyrs (see vase 3.11) and men and youths in orgy scenes with prostitutes (see vase 3.10) will make this even clearer: small genitalia are one of the set of conventions of the portrayal of pederastic courtship (or of respectable behavior in general), while over-size genitalia are an option an artist may choose when he wishes to portray other aspects of masculinity.

Undeveloped male genitalia are an element in certain iconographies. In this book, again, we explore the elements of the iconographies with which Athenian vase-painters portrayed the practice of pederasty, the iconographies that these elements build, and their implications.

Elements of iconography

Given our focus on iconographies and their elements, it also seems a good idea to introduce, at the outset, some of the elements, or categories of elements, that we consider in our interpretations of vase-painting. There is no commonly agreed terminology for such matters; we therefore use what seem to us the simplest and most comprehensible terms for the elements that we consider: scene-type, figure, costume, posture, gesture, prop, synecdoche, symbol, inscription, and decorative program.

As we mentioned above, Sir John Beazley, in the first classification of pederastic vase-paintings, classed the paintings he considered by scene-type. The three scene-types that he devised were: a, courtship scenes in which the *erastai* makes what Beazley called the "up and down" gesture, that is, reaches for or touches the boy's chin and genitals simultaneously; b, courtship scenes in which the *erastai* offers his *eromenos* a courting-gift or the boy holds a gift that he has accepted;²⁴ and c, scenes which, as Beazley says, are "later" in the courtship, in which the lovers engage in a kind of sex which has more recently been defined as "intercrural" intercourse.²⁵

In this work, we will consider these scene-types and several others: scenes of kisses (which Beazley regards as a later version of scene-type a) (chapter 1), scenes in which two *erastai* compete for an *eromenos* (chapter 1), scenes of lovers reclining together at the symposium (chapter 1),²⁶ scenes of Zeus and Ganymede (chapter 4), various scenes in which Eros appears (chapter 4), and so on.

A scene-type may be broadly defined as a certain set of figures in a certain, typical relation to each other: in the courting-gift scene, for instance, a male figure marked as older holds out a gift toward a male figure marked as younger. Even these most basic elements can vary: there can be more than one *erastai*, the youth can hold the gift, and even the gift or the difference in

age-markings can (as we will argue below) be absent. However, the schema of gift-giving *erastes* and gift-receiving *eromenos* facing each other is frequently enough repeated that, despite variation, this schema itself is an important element in vase iconography.

The elements of which each scene of the scene-type is composed mostly come from a standard repertoire associated with it. These too, however, vary; elements from other scene-types or even whole other scene-types can be added; and most of the basic elements can be left out. To follow these variations, it is necessary to pay attention to elements that a casual observer might ignore. One way to do this is to regard the figures in the scenes as paper dolls, or perhaps Ken and Barbie dolls. Like Ken and Barbie (or perhaps more appropriately, Ken and Bobby), the figures in these paintings can be put in different postures, make different gestures, wear different costumes, and use different props. All of these elements are variable and open to interpretation.

Synecdoche, the representation of a whole by a part of that whole, is a common technique in vase iconography.²⁷ This is particularly true in the case of the gymnasium, which, as Bérard and Durand point out (1989, 31–34) may be represented (or symbolized) by a number of objects, such as an athlete's gym-kit (see vases 0.5, 1.1, 1.13 and so on) or the *terma* (the marker at the end of a race-course) (see vase 1.6).²⁸ Synecdochic elements abound, however, in every kind of vase-painting. Certain elements can, furthermore, be detached from the scene-type in which they habitually occur and become a kind of symbol for that scene-type or for its subject (see and discussion of the hare below). We call such elements too synecdoche, not symbol, in order to maintain a distinction between them and those elements, such as the god Eros, that are symbols created by means other than synecdoche.

Two further elements of interest are inscriptions and decorative program. What vase scholars call inscriptions are in fact not inscriptions, in the strict sense of the word: they are not inscribed texts, but rather words or groups of words painted on the vase by the vase-painter before firing as part of his original design.²⁹ There are several different types of such inscriptions. The most common simply name the objects next to or on which they occur or give a name to a figure in a scene (see chapter 5). Others represent what the figures in the scene are saying, like modern cartoon bubbles (see vases 0.6, 3.1, and 7.2). The inscriptions that interest us most in this study praise a boy by proclaiming his beauty. There is some variation in the wording of these inscriptions, but almost all consist of a name plus the adjective *kalos* (beautiful) or the words *ho pais kalos* (the boy is beautiful).³⁰ The relationship of these inscriptions to the scenes in which they occur is the subject of much discussion. Often, it is ambiguous, and in any case, as Dover (1989, 116–121) shows, it clearly varies. Some seem to refer to a figure in the scene (see for instance vases 1.5, 1.18, 2.12, 4.16), while some clearly do not: Dover

(1989, 118) points out, for instance, a scene of a bald man copulating with a woman and the inscription *ho pais kalos*.

A further element of interest is what we call “decorative program”: this is the relationship (of complement or contrast) that often exists, or seems to exist, between the images on a vase's various surfaces. A book like ours might tend to exaggerate the importance of such relationships in vase-painting, in that we only illustrate more than one image from a vase if there is a meaningful relationship between them. Such relations are not, however, present on all vases with several scenes;³¹ indeed, on some vases, the scenes are even by different painters. Yet many cases in which there are, or may be, such relationships, will be illustrated in the pages that follow and will (we hope) shed much light on the meaning of pederastic iconography.

In order to introduce the reader to the elements listed above, we will discuss three scenes of Beazley's type a¹, scenes in which the central motif is the up-and-down gesture, or as we might prefer to put it, a couple engaged in up-and-down courteship. The three vases (0.2, 0.3 and 0.4) are all listed by Beazley in his comments on Cypriot vases.³²

The first, vase 0.2 (Würzburg 241) which Beazley (1947, 201) calls “the finest of these paintings” represents his up-and-down scene simply and clearly. The *erastes* is making the aforementioned *gestura* (or gestures): with his left hand, he touches the *eromenos*' chin, while with the right, he touches his genitals.³³ We will discuss these gestures further in chapters 1 and 3: in our view they do not represent a gesture-set actually used by Greek *erastai*, but rather two gestures combined by vase-painters (like a boy's penis on an adult's body) for symbolic purposes.

The two figures' *postura* convey a great deal about their roles in the erotic situation. The *erastes*' bent knees indicate his hope or intention of engaging in the kind of intercourse, called “intercrural,” portrayed in Beazley's type c, which takes place with the *erastes*' knees bent (see chapter 1). The *eromenos*' unbent posture will also be discussed more completely in chapter 3. It too indicates something: not a refusal to engage in intercourse, but a disinterest in it which the Greeks considered the appropriate attitude for the *eromenos*.

Both figures are nude, as is typical for pederastic couples on black-figure vases (while on red-figure, *erastai* are usually clothed).³⁴ Greek men in fact exercised naked in the gymnasium, and the nudity of these figures thus corresponds to a real-life version of this scene. Nudity is, however, far more widespread in Greek art than it was in Greek life, and it has been suggested (Bonfante 1989) that this nudity be regarded as a *costume* that identifies the men who wear it as athletes or heroes. We would like to expand this concept and suggest that the figures' massive chests and thighs be considered part of this athletic/heroic costume. The figures' non-erect penises, clearly unrealistic under the circumstances portrayed, could also be considered part of a costume (although one might also class their non-erection as a negative

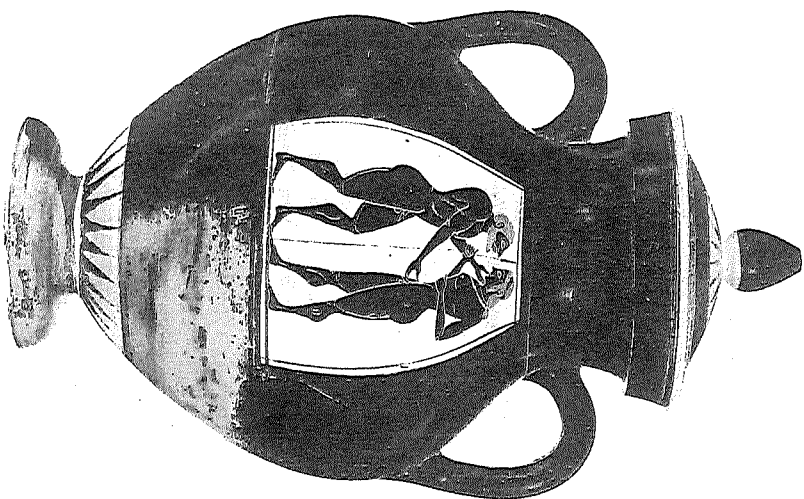


Figure 0.2 Amphora by the Phrynos Painter. Photo: Martin-von-Wagner Museum der Universität Würzburg.

gesture). Further, the *erastes*' beard (again, typical mainly in black-figure) and the *eromenos*' beardlessness might be seen as part of the costume, or even as a *mask*. The *eromenos*' hairlessness, with long hair at the back and a long side-lock, is also typical of black-figure *eromenoi* and might be considered part of the mask.³⁵ This idea may seem exaggerated, but it will seem less so if one thinks of the Greek theater rather than the modern theater as the point of comparison: Greek actors wore masks, and in comedy, the actors wore grotesque padding with large erect penises attached to the front—in effect, the opposite of the muscular builds and non-erect penises of our figures.

The figures are also carrying *proptis*. Both have wreaths, which could well be prizes for athletic victories: the *erastes*, in particular, has a wreath over his arm, which is characteristic of prize-winning athletes in vase-painting (see vases 2.16–18). The spear the *eromenos* carries is most likely, like a javelin,

a gymnasium implement as well. The figures' muscular development, the wreaths and the spear are pieces of a gymnasium scene (see chapter 2); they are, separately or together, enough to convey an athletic/gymnasium setting. It is this depiction of a setting or an activity by an element or elements from or of it that we call *synecdoche*.

The next vase, vase 0.3 (Providence 13.1479), again presents an up-and-down scene, although the up-gesture takes an unusual form: the *erastes* seems to be parting the *eromenos*' head—or stroking his hair—rather than chucking his chin. The down-gesture has not yet reached its goal. These differences demonstrate the variation that can exist within a scene-type, even as to its most fundamental elements. This scene also makes clear that scene-types can mix: it is both an up-and-down scene and a courting-gift scene at the same



Figure 0.3 Small neck-amphora by the Painter of Louvre F 51. Photo: Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design. Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radtke. Photography by Erik Gould.

time. The *eromenos* here is holding a courting-gift of two hens. It is interesting to note that the courting-gift too can vary (see chapters 1 and 2). This vase has a simple *decorative program*. On the other side of this vase, there is a similar scene of courtship, with courting-gifts but without the up-and-down gestures. The *eromenos*, like the one on the side that we illustrate, is carrying the courting-gift he has accepted, but it consists of fighting-cocks. On the side that we illustrate, the *erastai* also seems to be bringing a stag (an animal which occurs as a love-gift, as in vases 0.4 and 2.9) as well. The stag, along with the dog the *erastai* holds on a leash on the other side (another prop), connect these scenes, by synecdoche, with hunting rather than with the gymnasium (see chapter 2).

In vase 0.4 (Munich 1468), an up-and-down scene is also the center of the composition. Many elements are standard ones that we have seen before,

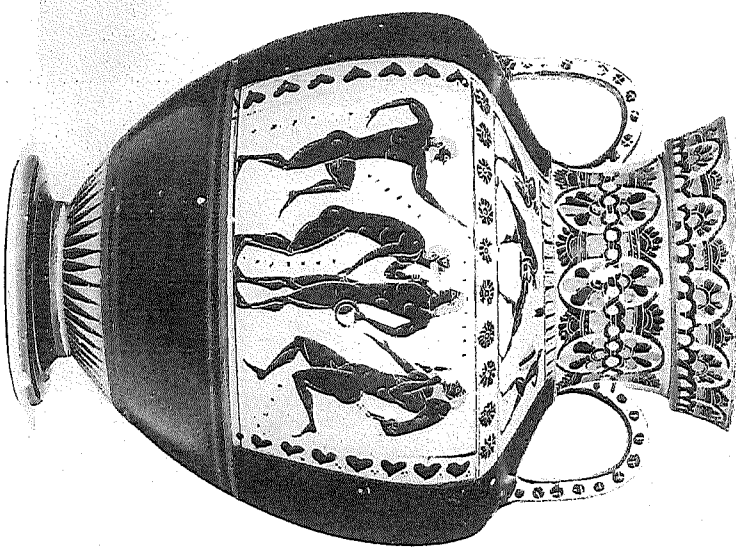


Figure 0.4 Amphora by the Painter of Cambridge 47. Photo: Staatliche Antikensammlung und Glyptothek München.

particularly in vase 0.2: the figures have similar degrees of beardedness and hair length, both are nude, the *erastes* touches both the *eromenos'* chin and genitals, the *erastes* is in the pre-intercrural posture, the *eromenos* is upright. The scene is more complex than our previous two in a number of ways, however. While, for instance, the *eromenos* on 0.2 merely holds his spear, the *eromenos* here makes potentially communicative gestures. With his right hand, he is holding the *erastes'* left wrist: this gesture has traditionally been viewed as one of resistance, but as DeVries has shown (1997.14–24), it is more likely to be one of acceptance.³⁶ With his left hand, he is holding a wreath in what is possibly another gesture of acceptance (see vase 1.9). The *erastes'* knees are bent more deeply here, and the *eromenos* is even more rigidly upright and looks straight over the *erastes'* head: this is the typical posture of an *eromenos* in intercrural scenes (Beazley type c'). Thus we have here a mixture of elements from all three of Beazley's scene-types, up-and-down, courting-gift (although it is a side figure who carries a gift), and intercrural.

There is also a more complicated decorative program on this vase than we have previously seen. There are paintings on both sides of this vase, both on the belly of the vase and the shoulder. The large belly scene on the other side portrays a youth in a chariot. The connection here is of a kind common in vase-painting. As Schnapp (1997.254) points out with respect to vase 2.4, the two scenes represent different aspects of a life-style, that of elite males. But what of the scenes on the shoulders? On both sides, these represent wrestling. The parallels between the upper and lower scenes on the side that we illustrate are unmistakable: there are four figures in each scene, of whom the central two are a bearded man and a youth engaged in a kind of contact. Indeed, one could see this parallel as supporting the theory (Barringer 2001.85) that vase-painting portrays *erastes* and *eromenos* as competing with each other. There is, however, no such possible connection between the upper and lower scenes on the other side, and we think it unlikely that this connection is present on our side either. Instead, it seems more likely that there is the same kind of programmatic connection that links all of the other images on the vase: the wrestlers in the upper panel convey a connection between the lower scene and the gymnasium, which is, as we have already seen, so often the locus of pederastic scenes. In effect, on our reading, the upper scene is a synecdoche for the gymnasium.

There are also two elements in the main scene on our side that are not present in the other two scenes that we have examined. First, in this scene, alone of the three, there are *inscriptions*: that is, the painter has included words in his composition. As sometimes occurs in black-figure, however, these inscriptions, though they might seem, from their position, to name the figures, are instead nonsense strings of letters.³⁷

Finally, there are the side figures in the courtship scene. Framing figures are a common motif in vase-painting, particularly in black-figure, and their relationship to the scene is often, as here, ambiguous (see Kaefer 1990.153).

Are they participants in the scene, or is their significance purely symbolic? If the former, they may be competitors of the *erastes*—the right-hand figure not only brings a courting-gift but makes a down-gesture of his own—or they may just be other participants in a party. If symbols, they may indicate the exciting nature of the central action. In either case (or if, as is most likely, both are the case), they are elements of a different iconography, the iconography of scenes of komastic dancing (see chapter 3), and they relate the central couple to scenes of the symposium, or the *komos*, a wild party into which the symposium often (by tradition) degenerated. Thus they add to the mixture of pederasty and athletics another aspect, or activity, of the elite—and the deer hanging over the right-hand side-figure's shoulders also brings in an association with the hunt. Indeed, while vase 0.2 associated pederasty with athletics, and vase 0.3 associated it with hunting, vase 0.4 associates it with athletics, the symposium, and hunting.

Thus we have seen how the elements of an iconography function in several scenes within a scene-type. Each scene adheres to the basic arrangement of figures that identifies the scene-type and contains elements standard to that scene-type. Nonetheless the scene-type comes in any number of different versions, with any number of different elements, including elements that come from other scene-types and bear with them different associations.

Further definition of decorative program and of the use that we make of the term "symbol" will be found, among other places, in the discussion of vase 1.10. Before concluding this introduction, we would like to dedicate some special attention to the role of synecdoche in vase-painting, as this concept may be the least familiar to our readers and also is, along with scene-type, the center of our interpretative method. It would be hard to exaggerate the importance of synecdoche in vase iconography. For example, when a scene is indoors, this is usually indicated by the presence not of an entire building but by a single column (see vase 1.18). An outdoor scene will be indicated by a single tree. Many of the locational synecdoches in this book, as previously noted, stand for the gymnasium.

Beazley's scene-type b¹, the courting-gift scene, is overall the most common type of pederastic scene.³⁸ These scenes have a particular relationship to synecdoche. In a sense, they themselves are a synecdoche. There is little evidence for gifts in pederastic courtship outside of vase-painting; indeed there are only four references to it in textual sources, all in comedy.³⁹ In any case, giving gifts can only have been one step in a courtship, not to speak of an entire relationship. Yet in the world of vase-painting, these scenes were for many years the main image of pederasty: this scene-type is a part which represents the whole of pederasty. Further, the animals which were commonly given by *erastai* to *eromenoi* in these scenes—of which the commonest are the fighting-cock and the hare or rabbit⁴⁰—are so associated with pederasty in vase-painting that they serve as a kind of synecdoche for pederasty; they break loose from their original significance as props with a concrete role

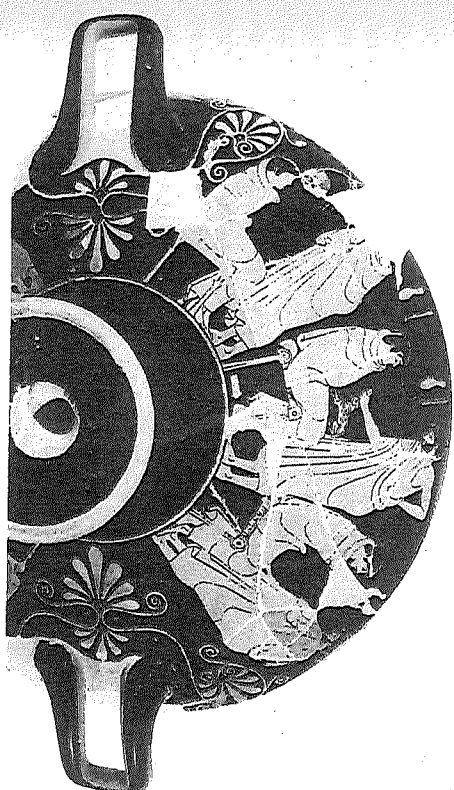


Figure 0.5A Kylix by Douris. Exterior. Photo RMN © Musée du Louvre—Les frères Chuzeville.

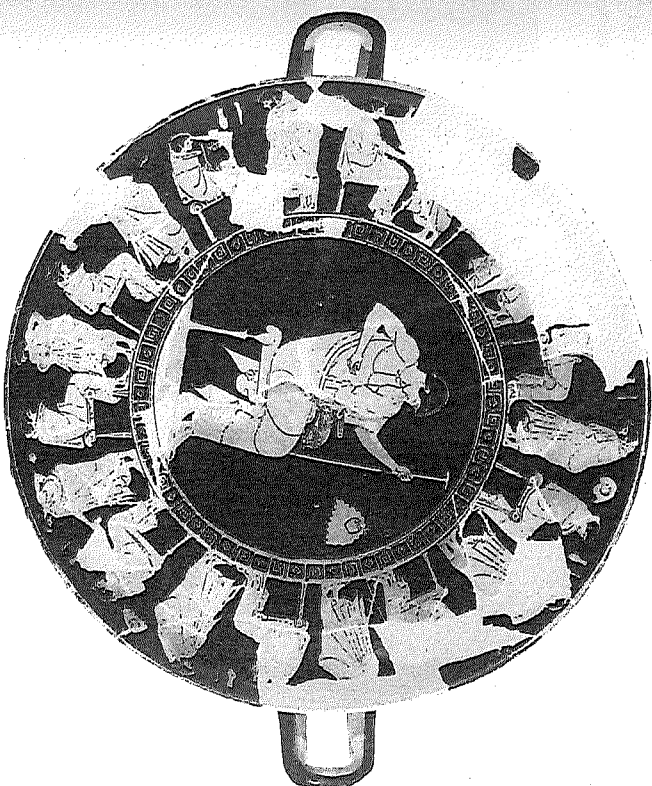


Figure 0.5B Kylix by Douris. Interior. Photo RMN © Musée du Louvre—Les frères Chuzeville.

in courtship scenes and become an independent indicator of pederastic interest.

In vase 0.5 (Paris G 121), we can see the hare functioning in both ways: as an element in courtship scenes and as a relatively independent synecdoche.⁴¹ In the courtship scenes that form a frieze around the cup's inner and outer sides, the hare serves as a prop: three of the *erastai* offer hares to the *eromenoi* they are courting. In the tondo,⁴² a youth holds a hare on his lap. It is beyond doubt that there is a programmatic connection between the tondo and the scenes on the sides: in the frieze, the *erastai* put hares on the youths' laps, and here we see a youth with a hare on his lap. In effect, the tondo scene, although more carefully painted, is a synecdoche from the frieze. We do not see the *erastes*, but he is unnecessary to convey the scene's meaning. The hare in the frieze marks clear where hares come from, and here the youth has a hare. The hare marks the youth as an *eromenos* just as the gym-kit of sponge and *aryballos* (oil-flask), hanging on the "wall" to the right, marks him as an athlete.⁴³

Another scene that makes clear this use of the hare as a synecdoche for pederastic courtship is the tondo of vase 0.6 (Athens 1357). Here we do not see an *eromenos*: there is only a bearded man (reclining on a couch, and therefore at a symposium) stroking a hare. The gesture alone already hints at a pederastic connection: it is far more usual in vase-painting for a youth to pet a hare than for a bearded man to do so—and we have seen the meaning of a



Figure 0.6 Kylix. Photo: National Archaeological Museum, Athens.

scene in which a youth pets a hare. But the inscription in the scene makes the connection even clearer. The man's head is tilted back in a gesture which indicates singing, and the words he is singing are painted, as if coming out of his mouth, in an arc along the top of the vase. He is singing a phrase that we also know from a collection of poetry traditionally attributed to the poet Theognis: "oh most beautiful of boys." Thus we see clearly what the connection is in the world of Greek vase-painting between a bearded man and a hare: the *eromenos* is not present here, because, like the missing *erastes* in the tondo of vase 0.5, his presence is unnecessary to convey the scene's significance. A hare is enough to convey the existence of a lover, *erastes* or *eromenos*, in the world of vase-painting.⁴⁴

The hare becomes an even more independent signifier in the tondo of vase 0.7 (Munich 2656). Here, again, in the frieze on the cup's outer sides,



Figure 0.7 Kylix by Makron. Photo: Staatliche Antikensammlung und Glyptothek München.

the hare appears as a gift in courtship scenes. In the tondo, on the other hand, the *erastes* (here a youth, as is common in red-figure) has a different courting-gift, a kind of sack which some believe contains money (see discussion of vases 2.10–2.12). The hare hangs on the wall, as if unattached to the scene: the *erastes* neither looks at it nor touches it. What is its role here? Clearly, it connects this *erastes* to the scenes on the cup's sides; perhaps it tells us that the beloved to whom he is offering the sack (which would more typically be a gift for a woman) is a boy.

This argument can be taken farther. It was developed far more fully than we have done here, in a book that has unfortunately never been translated from the German, *Knabenliebe und Tiergeschenke* (Boy-love and Animal-gifts) by Gundel Koch-Harnack (1983). Koch-Harnack (in particular pp. 83–97) points out several other Athenian vase-paintings where hares appear and contends that the hares in the scenes function as a connection between them and pederasty. In some cases, this may be exaggerated: hares occur in hunting scenes as well as pederastic scenes and are not invariably a marker in pederasty. Yet in some cases, the hare seems to function exactly as Koch-Harnack argues. In vase 0.8 (Berlin 2292), for instance, where a group of bearded men converse in the gymnasium (yet again, identified by rub-down kits hanging on the wall), she claims that the hare also hanging on the wall indicates that the men are talking about their *eromenoi*. This interpret-

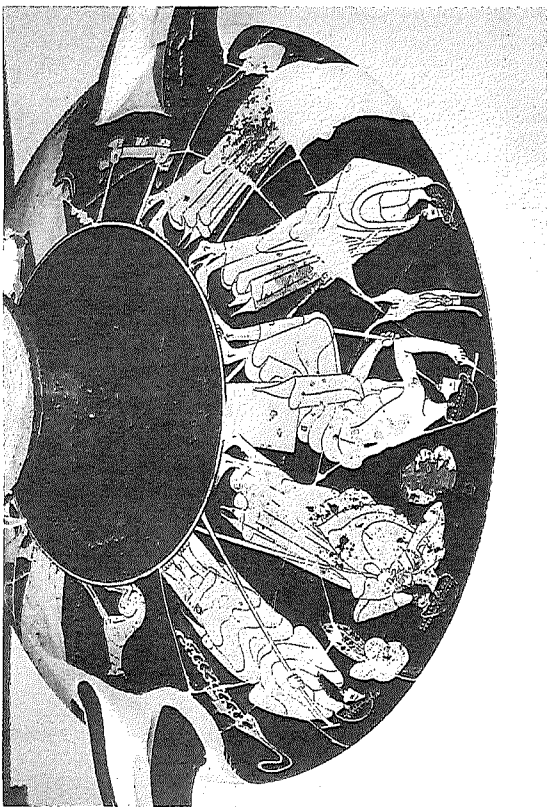


Figure 0.8 Kylix by Makron. Antikensammlung, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin. F 2292. Photography by Jutta Tietz-Glagow, Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz.

action seems to us quite secure: hares most often appear in the gymnasium as courting-gifts, so the hare in that context seems quite surely pederastic; also, the standing man in the right-hand pair is holding the same kind of sack as the *erastes* in vase 0.7, and, given that there is nothing to buy in the scene, this must surely also be a courting-gift awaiting the appearance of his beloved (male or female). There are also ambiguous cases. In vase 2.18, for instance, where an athlete, already wreathed and about to be crowned again, has (along with his *aryballos*) a hare hanging from his wrist, Koch-Harnack argues that the hare is a proof that the *eromenos* has learnt to hunt from his *erastes*. This is not impossible. As we will show in our discussion of vases 2.16–2.18, the figure of the athlete and that of the *eromenos* are often indistinguishable, so it would not be surprising if this figure represented both types simultaneously.

However, before we can turn to ambiguous cases, we must first show the reader how the elements discussed in this chapter build up the commonest of pederastic iconographies, the courtship scene.

1

COURTSHIP

Andrew Lear

SECTION 1 COURTING-GIFT SCENES

Despite the great importance of pederasty as a theme in the remains of Greek literature, the actual modalities of courtship are hardly mentioned outside of comedy. In vase-painting, the situation is far different. Courtship scenes are the vast majority of the pederastic scenes we know today. In our appendix, for instance, the two main courtship iconographies comprise over half of the scenes, while scenes of intercourse comprise under 10 percent (see note 38, p. 237).

However, a short caveat is in order. When we say that these scenes are the majority of the scenes we know, what we mean is that they are the majority of the scenes that we recognize as pederastic. This is so not only because there are many courtship scenes, but also because we are only able to recognize these specific types of courtship in vase-painting.

If one bears in mind the audience for which vases were made, however, one can see that there are connections between pederasty and other iconographies as well. The vase shapes and iconographies represented in this book were developed for use at the symposium. Respectable citizen women did not attend the symposium; the only women present were *hetairai*, musicians, and slaves.¹ As these were not the purchasers of drinking-vessels, they were unlikely to be considered important by the potters/painters who made the vases: the vases' intended audience consisted of men. If one considers this fact, one might consider many vase-paintings implicitly pederastic. For example, a cup on which an athlete is depicted and called, in an inscription, *kalos* (beautiful), although it does not portray an erotic activity, would fit into the category: it presents an idealized or typified *eromenos* for the admiration of the adult male user whom it thus puts in the position of *erastes*. Scenes of beautiful young athletes (with or without *kalos*-inscriptions) are even more common than courtship scenes and might thus be considered the most common pederastic scene-type.

However, courtship scenes remain the most common explicit representation of pederasty; they are therefore more informative for the viewer today,

and they seem to us the best group with which to set off on our exploration of pederastic relations.

We start with the most common of courtship iconographies, the courting-gift scene, Beazley's type b¹. Many different gifts are possible in these scenes, as we have already seen. As we said above, the commonest gifts in these scenes are the fighting-cock and the hare. Other animals also, however, appear as gifts: deer/stags, foxes, a kind of cat (probably a cheetah, see Ashmear 1978), and possibly hunting-dogs (see vases 0.3, 1.6, 2.4, 2.9).

There are also many non-animal gifts: musical instruments, mainly lyres; gymnasium apparatus, in particular strigilis (a scraper used for personal hygiene); toys; fronds, flowers, fruit; legs of meat, loaves of bread, and various sacks, some of which clearly contain *astragaloi* (knucklebones which the Greeks used in a game like rolling dice) and some of which, as mentioned above, may possibly contain money.

Of these we have already seen cocks/hens (vases 0.2 and 0.3), stags/deer (vases 0.3 and 0.4), hares (vases 0.5–8), a cheetah (vase 0.8) and sacks (vases 0.7 and 0.8). Most of the other gifts mentioned appear later in the book, as do such exceptional gifts as a fish (see vase 4.9) and a writing-tablet (vase 2.7).

It has been argued that the different gifts *erastai* offer have particular meanings: gifts of animals, in particular, have been seen as reflecting the connection between pederasty and pedagogy that is a theme of the literature on this topic, or as implying that the *eromenos* has the role of prey in the pederastic relationship.² Gifts of greater value (in particular the sacks which in this argument are seen as containing money) distance either courting-gift scenes in general or those scenes where these particular gifts are offered from such ideals/idealizations. We will consider these ideas in chapter 2, section 2.

For the moment, we will concern ourselves with a different kind of variation in courting-gift scenes: the way in which many different phases and facets of courtship are expressed through the offer of gifts. As will be seen, the courting-gift serves in these scenes as what T. S. Eliot called an "objective correlative"³ for courtship. It is a visual embodiment of the *erastes'* offer, and it can be manipulated in various ways in an image to express a variety of meanings.

In vases 1.1–3, we see three different phases of courtship, portrayed through the relation of the two courting figures to a courting-gift—or through the gestures and so forth that express it.⁴ The scene in the tondo of vase 1.1 (Würzburg 482), set in the gymnasium by a rub-down kit hanging to the right of the couple, represents an early phase of courtship: the *erastes* has not even shown the *eromenos* his courting-gift. The bearded *erastes* stands in front of his *eromenos*, leaning down toward him and supporting himself on his cane. As many examples in the book will show, this is an arch-typical posture/prop set for an *erastes* in red-figure vase-painting; perhaps one could say that it symbolizes the *erastes'* leisured status and/or the leisuress of courtship (Kaiser 1990.154). With his left hand, he makes a gesture that looks like the modern gesture of holding one's hand on one's heart. We do