

BEYOND PEDERASTY: FINDING MODELS FOR ADULT MALE  
HOMOSEXUALITY IN CLASSICAL ATHENS

by  
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## ABSTRACT

KAITLYN ELIZABETH BARNES: *Beyond Pederasty: Finding Models for Adult Male Homosexuality in Classical Athens*  
(Under the direction of Molly Pasco-Pranger)

Modern discourse on homosexuality in Classical Athens has been dominated by the discussion of pederasty, a homoerotic relationship between a younger boy and an older man. Scholars base their work on a huge body of ancient evidence, especially vase imagery and textual sources. Little has been said about how Athenians viewed non-pederastic erotic relationships between adult male peers. I have considered this question, attempting to set aside the pederastic framework which scholars have used almost exclusively. To narrow the range of ancient evidence, I have looked closely at the development of two pairs – Achilles and Patroclus and Harmodius and Aristogeiton – through images and texts from the Archaic and Classical periods in Greece. I propose that the stories of these mythohistorical characters possibly reflect a tolerance for adult male homosexuality in Classical Athens.

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## Introduction

Most modern discourse on Greek homosexuality has been dominated by the discussion of pederasty. For the ancient Greeks, the term, literally meaning “boy-love,” seems to have described a particular kind of relationship between two men. Modern scholars, using the framework and terminology established by Kenneth Dover, the leading scholar in Greek homosexuality of the twentieth century, have understood it to be an erotic relationship in which an adult male citizen mentored a younger man or boy. The older man, who would actively pursue the younger man, is called the *erastes*, the lover.<sup>1</sup> The younger man, expected to fill a passive role, was given the appropriately passive title *eromenos*, or beloved.<sup>2</sup> These identifiers suggest the ages of the men to whom they were attributed in the vaguest of terms; it is uncertain what the acceptable ages of those involved in pederastic relationships were. Certainly, studying this practice is essential for any understanding of Greek sexuality. The topic appears in numerous ancient sources, from vase painting to literature to historical accounts. However, because of its controversial nature, it was not until the twentieth century that modern scholars gave concerted attention to the role that pederasty played in Greek culture.

The richest ancient source for the study of pederasty and homosexuality in general in Greece is vase imagery. We have hundreds of vase paintings featuring courting scenes as well as sex scenes, first appearing around the same time that the black-figure technique

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<sup>1</sup> Kenneth Dover, *Greek Homosexuality* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978), 16.

<sup>2</sup> Dover, *Greek Homosexuality*, 16.

was developed, around 570 B.C.<sup>3</sup> Pederasty also shows up in mythology, though not as predominantly as in vase painting. The oldest and best-known instance of the practice in mythology is the relationship between Zeus and Ganymede. Though the practice appeared on vases and in stories from the Archaic period and beyond, it is important to remember that representations of pederasty in vase painting and stories were only that: simplified and idealized examples of a complex social practice that evolved over time and was adapted from one *polis* to another.

Tracing the development of pederasty is not easy, and scholars have suggested several explanations of the origins of the practice. An early theory which has since been dismissed claimed that pederasty was imported to Greece by the Dorians.<sup>4</sup> Another suggests that the origins of Athenian pederasty lie in Sparta, a highly militarized state that promoted homosexual relationships among warriors who, from a young age, were removed from their family households and put under the constant supervision of older men.<sup>5</sup> Another describes pederasty in the Archaic and Classical ages as a vestige of a complex initiatory practice.<sup>6</sup> Finally, one scholar has argued that pederasty was borne out of systematic sex segregation; this theory has also been dismissed considering the likelihood that pederasty existed well before Draco's law that set "extremely strict rules for respectable women."<sup>7</sup> Though there is no consensus among modern scholars on the

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<sup>3</sup> Dover, *Greek Homosexuality*, 4; William Armstrong Percy III, *Pederasty and Pedagogy in Archaic Greece* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 118.

<sup>4</sup> Erich Bethe, "Die dorische Knabenliebe," *RhM* 62 (1907): 438-75; Andrew Lear and Eva Cantarella, *Images of Ancient Greek Pederasty* (London: Routledge, 2008), 6.

<sup>5</sup> Bruce S. Thornton, *Eros: The Myth of Ancient Greek Sexuality*, (Boulder: Westview, 1997), 103.

<sup>6</sup> Lear and Cantarella, *Images*, 7.

<sup>7</sup> David Cohen, *Law, Sexuality, and Society: The Enforcement of Morals in Classical Athens*, (Cambridge: Cambridge, 1991), 186; Lear and Cantarella, *Images*, 7.

details of the origins of pederasty, most agree that it existed both before it first appeared on Attic vases and outside of that region.

Though we have found a vast quantity of pottery featuring scenes of pederasty from throughout the sixth century, the first important historical example of pederasty does not come until later in the century: Harmodius and Aristogeiton, the tyrant-slayers whose political action is linked to their roles as *eromenos* and *erastes* respectively. Pederasty then appears frequently in a variety of literary sources in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. Its final significant appearance in Classical literature comes in Aeschines' speech against a certain Timarchus in 346 B.C.<sup>8</sup> It is from this text that modern scholars, especially Dover, have drawn many of their conclusions regarding the nature of pederasty. Aeschines, accusing Timarchus of prostituting himself in his youth, quotes several laws restricting the behavior of adults in order to protect boys. Teachers could only hold class during daylight hours, the only adult men who could enter the school were the teacher's immediate family members, no adults were allowed to participate in the festival of Hermes with boys, and chorus producers had to be at least forty years old.<sup>9</sup> The penalty in some cases could be death.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, prostitution by Athenian citizens was forbidden.<sup>11</sup> According to these laws, protection against corruption of the youth was of the utmost concern to Athenians.

While the interactions between *eromenoi* and *erastai* were restricted, the practice of pederasty persisted, primarily as a pedagogical social institution. Cantarella describes

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<sup>8</sup> Christopher Carey, *Trials from Classical Athens* (London: Routledge, 2012), 165.

<sup>9</sup> Aeschines, 1.12.

<sup>10</sup> Aeschin., 1.16.

<sup>11</sup> Aeschin., 1.21.

this aspect of pederasty quite simply: “The *erastes* taught, the *eromenos* learned.”<sup>12</sup> The older man shared with the youth everything that he had learned from experience in every field of Athenian citizenship.<sup>13</sup> He was responsible for preparing the youth to perform his civic duties.<sup>14</sup> Beyond this pedagogical quality, the nature of pederasty was quite disputed by ancient writers. Plato himself presents varying opinions on the matter from one work to the next: some interlocutors in the *Symposium* praise the practice and another speaker in the *Laws* condemns it.<sup>15</sup> Though these ideas cannot necessarily be considered Plato’s own opinions because they are spoken by characters in his dialogues, they probably do reflect the variety of opinions held by men in Classical Athens.

Similar to ancient writers and due to the variety in the primary sources, modern scholars have not come to a consensus on the nature of pederasty or homosexuality more broadly in ancient Athens. In general, scholarship from the time of Dover’s *Greek Homosexuality* has either built on his *eromenos-erastes* framework or challenged it. An example of a theory based on Dover’s work is Bremmer’s connection between the passive role of the *eromenos* in sex to the possible initiatory aspect of pederasty as a social institution.<sup>16</sup> Bremmer proposes that because “the passive, anal role in a homosexual relationship was considered to be absolutely unacceptable for an adult,” the youths were forced into this role in order to teach them their low position in the world.<sup>17</sup> On the other hand, Davidson has dismissed many of Dover’s conclusions because he sees them as based in an inappropriate obsession with the physical sexual aspects of pederasty

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<sup>12</sup> Lear and Cantarella, *Images*, 2.

<sup>13</sup> Lear and Cantarella, *Images*, 2.

<sup>14</sup> Lear and Cantarella, *Images*, 2.

<sup>15</sup> Plato, *Symposium*, 178a-185c; Pl., *Laws*, 835e-842a.

<sup>16</sup> Jan Bremmer, “Greek Pederasty and Modern Homosexuality,” in *From Sappho to De Sade: Moments in the History of Sexuality*, ed. Jan Bremmer (London: Routledge, 1989), 11.

<sup>17</sup> Bremmer, “Greek Pederasty,” 11.



and an omission of all other aspects of the relationship.<sup>18</sup> Davidson's work is particularly relevant to my work here, and I will return to his theories in my conclusion.

Recognizing that the discourse on homosexuality in ancient Athens is complicated by the nature and quantity of primary sources and the conflict among modern scholars, I have chosen to explore the topic by focusing on two particular pairs of men from mythology and history: Achilles and Patroclus during the Trojan War and Harmodius and Aristogeiton whom I mentioned above as the assassins of Hipparchus. I will use these stories as case studies and will argue that the development of their mythic relationships through the Archaic and Classical periods suggests that pederastic relationships, with a strict age difference, were not the only acceptable homoerotic relationships in Athens.

In my initial survey of ancient sources on pederasty, these two couples stood out in particular for a number of reasons. First of all, they appear in close association with each other in two ancient texts which offer some of the most valuable discourse on homoerotic love: Plato's *Symposium* and Aeschines' prosecution speech against Timarchus. Secondly, the couples, both of them semi-historic and semi-mythic, held huge cultural significance for Athenians; these were neither minor characters from myth nor easily-forgotten names from history. To associate a trait or behavior with them would be to elevate that trait or behavior to their honored position. In both texts their names are invoked as a powerful rhetorical device to give the ultimate support for the speaker's argument about ideal homosexual relationships. Furthermore, based on their earliest depictions – Achilles and Patroclus in Homer's *Iliad* and Harmodius and Aristogeiton in the "Tyrannicides" statue group – the difference in age within each

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<sup>18</sup> James N. Davidson, *The Greeks and Greek Love* (New York: Random House, 2007), 127-145.

relationship was not very great, and all four men are depicted as mature adults. This observation has significant implications for our understanding of homoeroticism in ancient Athens and allows for the possibility that Athenians were accepting of homosexual relationships between adult men. Finally, the stories of both couples evolved over time, as shown by their varied characterizations by different ancient writers.

In Homer's *Iliad*, the friendship between Achilles and Patroclus is central to Achilles' development as a Greek hero as well as to the development of the battle plot. It is Achilles' deep love for Patroclus that motivates his furious revenge against Hector, the Trojan hero responsible for Patroclus' death, and the Greek's vengeful act determines the fate of Troy and her people. The two Greeks are terribly close, having known each other for most of their lives in Phthia. While Achilles is characterized generally as arrogant and indignant, he is thoroughly affectionate toward his old friend and advisor. But the *Iliad* never implies that there was any sexual nature to the friendship. In fact, the only implication of any sexual behavior Achilles' part is between him and his slave-girl war prize, Briseis. Furthermore even if the relationship between the warriors could be construed as more than friendly, it could not be categorized as pederastic according to how the two are characterized with respect to their ages in the *Iliad* alone.

Yet, by the early fourth century, when Plato wrote his *Symposium*, Achilles and Patroclus have indisputably become lovers in Athenian tradition. In his speech at Agathon's drinking party, Phaedrus discusses the love between *erastes* and *eromenos* in the most idealistic terms.<sup>19</sup> According to Phaedrus, pederastic love compels men to act in the most honorable way, to avoid seeming cowardly to their beloveds, and that lovers

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<sup>19</sup> Pl., *Smp.*, 178a-180b.

would give their lives for the sake of their companions.<sup>20</sup> Phaedrus explains the prophecy that said Achilles would live a long and happy life if he did not return to battle and praises the warrior for making the sacrifice so he could avenge the death of his *erastes*, Patroclus.<sup>21</sup> Phaedrus characterizes the love between Achilles and Patroclus not merely as erotic but also as pederastic, insisting that Achilles is νεώτερος πολὺ (much younger) than Patroclus.<sup>22</sup>

The couple is also referred to by Aeschines in his speech from 346 B.C. In the course of his lengthy oration, Aeschines cites Homer, whom he describes as among the oldest and wisest of poets – ἐν τοῖς πρεσβυτάτοις καὶ σοφωτάτοις τῶν ποιητῶν.<sup>23</sup> He states that, though the poet does not explicitly describe the friendship between Achilles and Patroclus as erotic, educated men ought to understand it that way.<sup>24</sup> These two important sources, Plato's work and Aeschines' speech, serve as proof that, by the middle of the fourth century, some Athenians commonly thought of Achilles and Patroclus as lovers. But theirs is not the only relationship that is altered in time.

Thucydides, in his *History of the Peloponnesian War*, describes a convoluted tale of unrequited love, public insult, and jealousy that led to the assassination of Hipparchus, a son of Peisistratus, by the lovers Harmodius and Aristogeiton, only a few years before the restoration of democracy in Athens.<sup>25</sup> But the story of Harmodius and Aristogeiton, like that of Achilles and Patroclus, is widely disputed by ancient writers. Thucydides' discussion of their deed is polemic and indicates that conflicting versions already exist.

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<sup>20</sup> Pl., *Smp.*, 179b.

<sup>21</sup> Pl., *Smp.*, 179e-180a.

<sup>22</sup> Pl., *Smp.*, 180a.

<sup>23</sup> Aeschin., 1.142.

<sup>24</sup> Aeschin., 1.142.

<sup>25</sup> Thucydides, 6.54-59.

While the historian explicitly condemns any claim that the lovers were responsible for the fall of the tyranny, the pair is characterized frequently by later authors as the saviors of Athenian democracy.<sup>26</sup> For instance, in the *Symposium*, Pausanias explains that tyrannical governments have declared pederastic relationships to be disgraceful, learning from the downfall of the Peisistratid tyranny, which Pausanias attributes to the strong love between Harmodius and Aristogeiton.<sup>27</sup> Though Pausanias does not say so explicitly, readers should understand that whatever is considered disgraceful by foreign tyrants is probably held in high esteem by Athenian democrats.

This historical pair is also mentioned by Aeschines alongside Achilles and Patroclus. He gives credit to Harmodius and Aristogeiton for saving the city from the tyranny, describing them as his city's benefactors – τούς εὐεργέτας.<sup>28</sup> He goes on to say that their loyalty to one another and their deed turned out well for the city.<sup>29</sup>

Though it was the appearances of these two couples in the works by Plato and by Aeschines that caught my attention, I found that many ancients – historians, poets, playwrights, philosophers, orators, vase painters, and sculptors – depicted these men in their works. There is variety not only in the genres in which they appear but also in the ways in which they, their relationships, and their deeds are described. Though I cannot mention all of these sources, I will present a selection that covers the major points of dispute among the ancients. These points include the issue of age for both couples as well as the nature of the relationship between Achilles and Patroclus and the rightful legacy of Harmodius and Aristogeiton. I will begin with the first textual appearances of

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<sup>26</sup> Th., 1.20.

<sup>27</sup> Pl., *Smp.*, 182b-182c.

<sup>28</sup> Aeschin., 1.132.

<sup>29</sup> Aeschin., 1.132.

both couples, move through later sources that are significant to the development of their stories, including images in art, then finish with Plato's and Aeschines' treatment of them.

## Chapter 1

### Achilles and Patroclus: Friends or Lovers?

Though many heroes play significant roles in Homer's *Iliad*, the development of the end of the Trojan War is dependent on the actions – or rather the inaction – of the Phthian hero Achilles. Achilles is acknowledged to be the greatest warrior fighting on the side of the Greeks and the only man who can match the Trojan warrior Hector. However, Achilles sits on the sidelines for the vast majority of the poem. Agamemnon has taken his war-prize, the slave-girl Briseis, and, in a spiteful response, Achilles refuses to fight. It is not until his closest friend Patroclus is killed by Hector that Achilles returns to the battlefield for revenge. In his rage, he slays the Trojan hero in the climax of the poem.

The relationship between Achilles and Patroclus, which ends with their deaths before the city of Troy, began when the two were very young in the kingdom of Phthia. Achilles' father, Peleus, was king there, when Menoetius brought his own son Patroclus from Opous to be raised alongside Achilles.<sup>30</sup> They had been close ever since. While mourning the loss of his friend, Achilles remembers all the deeds they did together and all the struggles they suffered, from the crossing of the sea to the war itself.<sup>31</sup> These were things that bound them as friends and comrades, despite the difference in age, status, and ability between them, differences explicitly laid out in Book 11. Nestor, trying to

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<sup>30</sup> Homer, *Iliad*, 23.84-85.

<sup>31</sup> Hom., *Il.*, 24.3-8.

empower Patroclus to persuade Achilles back into battle, describes the conversations Peleus and Menoetius each had with his own son when the Greek troops were gathering for the war.<sup>32</sup> Peleus told Achilles that he must be the greatest of all the warriors.<sup>33</sup> Menoetius on the other hand spoke frankly with Patroclus. Though Achilles is the younger of the two friends, he said, he is the higher-born and the stronger; Patroclus, being the older, must advise his friend well.<sup>34</sup> As Menoetius describes it, their relationship is divided but equal: Patroclus is the brain, and Achilles the brawn. But it is common knowledge among the Achaeans that Achilles taught Patroclus the lessons he learned from the centaur Chiron.<sup>35</sup> Homer seemed to imagine that in their long friendship the two men often learned from and advised each other, in a reciprocal relationship.

When Patroclus comes to Achilles from the battlefield, weeping over the great losses on the Greek side and begging Achilles to act, Achilles compares him to a little girl pulling on her mother's dress.<sup>36</sup> In this simile, Patroclus is the younger and Achilles the older. They exchange advice, Patroclus suggesting that he wear his friend's armor to intimidate the Trojans and Achilles empowering his friend to continue the fight.<sup>37</sup> This moment demonstrates that the two Greeks are not in defined hierarchical roles for each other. In fact, just before his death, Patroclus dons Achilles' armor and leads his comrades to believe that he is Achilles, effectively becoming the other man.<sup>38</sup> Clearly the men move fluidly in and out of roles, supporting and depending on each other

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<sup>32</sup> Hom., *Il.*, 11.764-769.

<sup>33</sup> Hom., *Il.*, 11.783-784.

<sup>34</sup> Hom., *Il.*, 11.786-789.

<sup>35</sup> Hom., *Il.*, 11.831-832.

<sup>36</sup> Hom., *Il.*, 16.7-11.

<sup>37</sup> Hom., *Il.*, 16.40-43.

<sup>38</sup> Hom., *Il.*, 16.65, 275-283.

equally. It is this balanced friendship that gets them through most of the ten years of war and even affects the outcome of it. While the poem makes it clear that Patroclus and Achilles are as close as any two friends could be, it never characterizes them as lovers, either explicitly or implicitly. There are, however, elements present that would be easily interpreted by later readers as pointing to an erotic relationship.

First, the structure of the poem establishes a parallel between Achilles' relationships with the slave girl Briseis and with Patroclus, both of whom he loses. When Briseis is taken from him by Agamemnon, Achilles is so livid that he refuses to fight in battle. Though modern retellings of the story have emphasized the relationship between Achilles and Briseis, turning the story into one about a man in love with a woman, this is certainly not how it plays out in the *Iliad*. The obvious explanation to modern readers for Achilles' extreme reaction to losing the girl might be that he is deeply in love with her. Certainly, Achilles says as much in the poem, proclaiming that he loved the girl and cared for her, despite the fact that he won her by his spear.<sup>39</sup> But their relationship is a complicated one. The girl was given to him as a war-prize, property he earned in battle.<sup>40</sup> Agamemnon shows Achilles great public dishonor when he takes the girl from the young warrior. So his reaction, choosing to remove himself from battle, is motivated as much by indignation towards Agamemnon as love for Briseis.

If Achilles' loss of Briseis and his subsequent exit from battle is the opening book end of the poem, then his loss of Patroclus and re-entrance into battle is the closing book end. Some may argue that Achilles' explicit love for Briseis precludes any possibility for an erotic relationship between him and Patroclus. On the contrary, because Briseis and

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<sup>39</sup> Hom., *Il.*, 9.341-343.

<sup>40</sup> Hom., *Il.*, 16.56-57.



Patroclus are juxtaposed by the parallel roles they play in Achilles' development in the *Iliad*, the nature of Achilles' relationship with Briseis can be reasonably imposed on his relationship with Patroclus. It is entirely possible that Achilles would maintain a sexual relationship with a slave-girl, as was his privilege as a great warrior, as well as an erotic friendship with Patroclus. Furthermore, classical Athenians thinking of Achilles and Patroclus as pederastic lovers would have easily dismissed Briseis; the *erastes* in pederastic relationships were not uncommonly married men and also engaged in sexual intercourse with female prostitutes. But this consideration should not diminish the effect of the parallel between the two characters: Patroclus is linked to Briseis and thereby to the eroticism that she embodies, and his relationship with Achilles is given the utmost importance.

Another meaningful element is Achilles' behavior following Patroclus' death. His need for revenge drives him back into battle, where he finally slays the Trojan warrior Hector who killed Patroclus. Even after avenging his friend's death, he still cannot find peace:

τῶν μιμνησκόμενος θαλερὸν κατὰ δάκρυον εἶβεν,  
ἄλλοτ' ἐπὶ πλευρὰς κατακείμενος, ἄλλοτε δ' αὖτε  
ὑπτίως, ἄλλοτε δὲ πρηγής: τοτὲ δ' ὀρθὸς ἀναστὰς  
δινεύεσκ' ἀλύων παρὰ θῖν' ἄλός: οὐδέ μιν ἠὼς  
φαινομένη λήθεσκεν ὑπεῖρ ἄλα τ' ἠϊόνας τε.<sup>41</sup>

Remembering these things he was shedding thick tears,  
at one time lying outstretched on his sides, and at another time  
on his back, and again on his front: then having gotten up  
grieving he wanders along the shore of the sea: dawn did not  
elude him, appearing over the sea and shore.

So he searches for solace by outraging Hector's corpse.

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<sup>41</sup> Hom., *Il.*, 24.9-13.

ἀλλ' ὅ γ' ἐπεὶ ζεύξειεν ὑφ' ἄρμασιν ὠκέας ἵππους,  
Ἔκτορα δ' ἔλκεσθαι δησάσκετο δίφρου ὄπισθεν,  
τρὶς δ' ἐρύσας περὶ σῆμα Μενoitιάδαο θανόντος  
αὐτίς ἐνὶ κλισίῃ παυέσκετο, τόνδε δ' ἔασκεν  
ἐν κόνι ἐκτανύσας προπρηνέα...<sup>42</sup>

But when he had harnessed his swift horses under his chariot,  
he bound Hector so he would drag behind it,  
and having dragged him three times around the grave-mound of the dead son of  
Menoitius  
he rested back in his tent, and he left Hector alone  
having stretched him out on his front in the dust...

For so long, Achilles heard the reports from the battlefield about the great losses suffered by the Achaeans yet did nothing. Though so many died and even the Achaean camp was threatened, Achilles remained inactive until the death of one man drove him back onto the field. Furthermore, slaying Hector was not merely a great feat, but also a great sacrifice. Achilles knew that it had been prophesied that if he stopped fighting and left Troy, he would return to his home to grow to an old age, and that if he did return to battle, he would die on the field before Troy.<sup>43</sup> To avenge Patroclus' death, Achilles was willing to sacrifice his own life. Anyone arguing that Achilles and Patroclus were lovers might point to these aspects at the conclusion of the poem and claim that only the loss of a lover could drive Achilles to act as he did.

Nonetheless, for Athenians of the Classical age, complications arise when attempting to make the relationship between Achilles and Patroclus a typically pederastic one between an older and more experienced man and a younger one. First there is the issue of age. As we have seen, Menoetius states explicitly that Patroclus is older than Achilles, but the age difference is probably minimal, as Patroclus makes it seem like they

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<sup>42</sup> Hom., *Il.*, 24.14-18.

<sup>43</sup> Hom., *Il.*, 9.410-416.

grew up together.<sup>44</sup> Then there is the matter of ability and experience. It is generally accepted that Achilles, the younger of the two, is the better fighter and more knowledgeable.<sup>45</sup> But, as has already been explained, it is more likely that they were equally experienced. Furthermore, considering the way that Patroclus comes to Achilles, like a girl to her mother, and the way Achilles mourns Patroclus, it might make sense that Achilles is the *erastes*, the dominant figure in a pederastic relationship, more closely associated with a caretaker role. But this behavior cannot be reconciled with his age relative to Patroclus', if the two are meant to be pederastic lovers. While it is not much of a stretch to consider them lovers, the pair, as the men are characterized in the *Iliad*, does not easily fit into a pederastic model.

Considering how central the relationship between Achilles and Patroclus is to the progression of the plot and the development of themes in the *Iliad* and the abundance of textual references to the pair as lovers from the Archaic and Classical periods and beyond, it is surprising that there are so few images of the pair alone on vases. However, there is one intriguing extant piece of pottery explicitly depicting the two heroes alone together. It appears on a red-figure kylix, dated to about 550-475 B.C. and signed by the potter Sosias (Figure 1). Around the outside, Heracles is greeted on Olympus by all the gods and goddesses gathered there. Painted on the interior of the wide and shallow cup is Achilles tending to Patroclus' battle-wounds, with the warrior's names inscribed around the border. Achilles kneels in front of Patroclus, between his sprawled legs, and is carefully dressing an injury to his comrade's left arm. While both men are dressed in armor, their legs and Patroclus' genitalia are exposed. This may indicate to some viewers

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<sup>44</sup> Hom., *Il.*, 23.83-92.

<sup>45</sup> Marilyn B. Skinner, *Sexuality in Greek and Roman Culture* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014), 53.

an erotic tone. However, in general it was nothing special for an artist to include nudity in an unlikely situation.<sup>46</sup> On the other hand, the exposure of the men's thighs may contribute an erotic tone. Later in this chapter, I will discuss a fragment from a tragedy by Aeschylus in which Achilles and Patroclus are portrayed as lovers. In these lines, Achilles speaks of kisses on his lover's thighs, attributing eroticism to the same part of the body that is exposed on the kylix.<sup>47</sup> While the scene lacks overtly erotic aspects, it is significant that it includes no typical markers of a pederastic vase scene at all.<sup>48</sup>

The scene could easily be described as intimate but could also be typical of any fellow soldiers and old friends. However, it is just this kind of scene, showing deep caring between the two heroes, that later Greeks, like Aeschines, will consider indicative of an erotic relationship. What is especially interesting is how the artist depicts each man's age and role in the relationship. Achilles is beardless, though his bushy sideburns are prominent coming down from under his elaborate helmet. Patroclus has more facial hair than his comrade, but it is still sparse and short. It seems then that Achilles is younger than Patroclus but not by many years. This fits closely with Homer's characterization of the pair. Furthermore, though one might expect the older man to be the experienced mentor looking after his comrade, Achilles, the younger man, is the one actively caring for his friend. On the other hand, it is Patroclus' genitalia, not Achilles', that are exposed in what Keuls describes as a "compositional stereotype...of a crouched man facing the viewer with his legs apart."<sup>49</sup> This position allows the artist to draw

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<sup>46</sup> Lear and Cantarella, *Images*, 99.

<sup>47</sup> Aeschylus, *Myrmidons*, fr. 135.

<sup>48</sup> Lear and Cantarella, *Images*, 99.

<sup>49</sup> Eva C. Keuls, *The Reign of the Phallus: Sexual Politics in Ancient Athens*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1985), 70.

attention to the genitalia in an effort to emphasize Patroclus' masculinity. Patroclus is at the same time weak, as he is injured and in need of assistance, and virile, and his portrayal on the vase in this way further complicates any attempt to read the scene as pederastic. On the other hand, it is possible that the image alludes to an erotic relationship between two men of equal status. Though the nature of this scene is not easily defined, it certainly reinforces Homer's version of the relationship.

In these early appearances, in the *Iliad* and on the kylix, no overt sexual intimacy is made reference to between Achilles and Patroclus. By the time Plato wrote his *Symposium* in the early fourth century, the idea that Achilles and Patroclus were lovers was likely wide-spread. The work features seven men seated at the house of Agathon for a drinking party and taking turns speaking on the nature of love. Phaedrus speaks first, asserting that Eros is the oldest god and the source of the greatest benefits for men.<sup>50</sup> Love engenders honor in lovers for they, both men and women, are willing to die on behalf of their beloveds.<sup>51</sup> First he gives as an example Alcestis who sacrificed her own life to spare her husband, King Admetus, from the Fates.<sup>52</sup> He then contrasts her story by mentioning Orpheus, who was too cowardly to sacrifice himself and thus suffered greatly.<sup>53</sup> Phaedrus ends with Achilles and Patroclus. Though he only speaks a few sentences regarding the two, much information can be reasonably extrapolated to learn how Classical Athenians may have considered the relationship.

First Phaedrus retells how Achilles sacrificed his own life, according to the prophecy, to avenge the death of Patroclus and kill Hector. This retelling adheres to the

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<sup>50</sup> Pl., *Smp.*, 178c.

<sup>51</sup> Pl., *Smp.*, 179b.

<sup>52</sup> Pl., *Smp.*, 179b-d.

<sup>53</sup> Pl., *Smp.*, 179d-e.

original story as told by Homer. What Phaedrus adds to the story, which is not in the *Iliad*, is that Patroclus is Achilles' lover.

... οὐχ ὥσπερ Ἀχιλλέα τὸν τῆς Θέτιδος υἱὸν ἐτίμησαν καὶ εἰς μακάρων νήσους ἀπέπεμψαν, ὅτι πεπυσμένος παρὰ τῆς μητρὸς ὡς ἀποθανοῖτο ἀποκτείνας Ἑκτορα, μὴ ποιήσας δὲ τοῦτο οἴκαδε ἐλθὼν γηραιὸς τελεθῆσοι, ἐτόλμησεν ἐλέσθαι βοηθήσας τῷ ἐραστῇ Πατρόκλῳ καὶ τιμωρήσας οὐ μόνον περαποθανεῖν ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐπαποθανεῖν τετελεθηκότι· ὅθεν δὴ καὶ περαγασθέντες οἱ θεοὶ διαφερόντως αὐτὸν ἐτίμησαν, ὅτι τὸν ἐραστὴν οὕτω περὶ πολλοῦ ἐποιεῖτο.<sup>54</sup>

... but the gods were honoring Achilles the son of Thetis in a different way and sent him off to the Isles of the Blessed, because though he had learned from his mother that he would die if he killed Hector, and if he did not do this he would end his life as an old man after coming back home, Achilles dared to choose to die not only for his lover but after him as well, having aided and avenged Patroclus; for this reason indeed the gods, exceedingly pleased, were honoring him differently, because he valued his lover so much.

Though he will later refer to the poet's rendition of the story, Phaedrus ignores completely the fact that Homer never described the characters as lovers, suggesting perhaps that at least some of his listeners would not have objected to this alternative version.

He does however spend some time defending his belief regarding the men's respective ages. Phaedrus insists firmly that Achilles is the *eromenos* to Patroclus' *erastes*: ὅς ἦν καλλίων οὐ μόνον Πατρόκλου ἀλλ' ἅμα καὶ τῶν ἡρώων ἀπάντων, καὶ ἔτι ἀγένειος, ἔπειτα νεώτερος πολὺ, ὡς φησιν Ὅμηρος.<sup>55</sup>

[Achilles was more beautiful than not only Patroclus but also all the heroes, and he was

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<sup>54</sup> Pl., *Smp.*, 179e-180a.

<sup>55</sup> Pl., *Smp.*, 180a.

still beardless and much younger, as Homer says.] While it is true that Homer establishes Patroclus as the older of the two, there is nothing in the poem to suggest that the age difference between them is very great, as Phaedrus implies. Phaedrus then provides us some evidence that his portrayal of the pair is not the only version that differs from Homer's portrayal. He mentions briefly that the playwright Aeschylus wrote Achilles as the older *erastes* and Patroclus as the younger *eromenos*. Though Phaedrus accuses the playwright of speaking like a fool (φλυαροῖ), it is possible that Aeschylus' version was as popular as Phaedrus'.<sup>56</sup> Dover informs us that it was likely a trilogy by Aeschylus to which Phaedrus is referring.<sup>57</sup> Unfortunately, most of the trilogy, consisting of the plays *Myrmidons*, *Nereids*, and *Phrygians*, does not survive. One fragment, which I briefly introduced above, is especially striking.

σέβας δὲ μηρῶν ἄγνον οὐκ ἐπηδέσω,  
ὦ δυσχάριστε τῶν πυκνῶν φιλημάτων.<sup>58</sup>

You were not ashamed in the pure worship of thighs,  
O you are thankless for the frequent kisses.

Regardless of the differences between Phaedrus' and Aeschylus' depictions of the erotic relationship between Achilles and Patroclus, the most important implication is that their relationship was being forced into a pederastic model in significant works of different genres.

The thesis for Phaedrus' speech is that Eros brings out the best in men and that this is best exemplified when people sacrifice themselves to save the ones they love. This thesis depends on the assumption that such a sacrifice is a very noble act. It is not until

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<sup>56</sup> Pl., *Smp.*, 180a.

<sup>57</sup> Dover, *Greek Homosexuality*, 197.

<sup>58</sup> A., *Myrmidons*, fr. 135.

the end of his speech that Phaedrus confirms this assumption to be true. He uses the ultimate proof: the act is noble because the gods honor it. As an example of this, he tells his listeners that Achilles, after dying, was sent to live on the island of the blessed.<sup>59</sup> Furthermore, Phaedrus states that Achilles was honored even above Alcestis, which implies that, though both are honorable, a man's sacrifice for his male lover is greater than a woman's sacrifice for her husband.<sup>60</sup>

Phaedrus is prepared with three examples of lovers sacrificing their lives for the sake of their partners. Though they all have that basic theme in common, each has its own implications. Phaedrus is not merely piling up redundant evidence for his argument but is providing enough examples to show the range of Eros' power, which serves to strengthen his claim that Eros is the greatest of all the gods. Alcestis is included to show that even the love of women is honorable. Orpheus' story is the negative argument: his is an example of a love that is not virtuous because he was not willing to sacrifice himself. Achilles' sacrifice proves that true love enhances the virtue of the beloved, not just the lover. Phaedrus' encomium to Eros is very well-organized, with its three examples affirming his argument in individual ways. Furthermore, Hunter compares Phaedrus' use of three mythological and poetic examples to the common poetic structure of supporting an assertion of truth with such examples.<sup>61</sup> A significant aspect of this typical structure is that the last example, Achilles and Patroclus in this case, is the most important of the three. It is likely that Phaedrus is familiar with this poetic device and intentionally places the warriors in a position of special importance. Moreover, in a culture propagated by

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<sup>59</sup> Pl., *Smp.*, 179e.

<sup>60</sup> Pl., *Smp.*, 180b.

<sup>61</sup> Richard Hunter, *Plato's Symposium* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2004), 39.



poetry, Phaedrus' use of such a prominent poetic device confers upon him a special authority on his subject matter. So Phaedrus cites Homer, the most important poet for the ancient Greeks, provides proof that the gods share his opinion of love, and adopts a common structure from the most culturally important literary medium. These aspects of his speech, compounded by its prominent position at the very beginning of the dialogue, confer upon it a great cultural authority, perhaps to suggest that the ideas promoted here by Phaedrus are free from doubt or criticism.

In his analysis, however, Hunter challenges the legitimacy of some of Phaedrus' speech. For example, Hunter explicitly calls Phaedrus out for inventing the story about Achilles in the afterlife.<sup>62</sup> But a popular skolion that predates the *Symposium* by more than a century places Achilles in the Isles of the Blessed, and it is quite possible that Plato was familiar with the song or at least the idea.<sup>63</sup> (I will return to further analyze the skolion in the next chapter.) This part of the story is essential in showing the gods' approval of sacrifice for the sake of love and is his strongest piece of evidence, but it seems he made it up for that very purpose. Hunter also discredits the speaker's characterization of the men as lovers because it is not found in the *Iliad*.<sup>64</sup> Again, however, to suggest that Phaedrus invented this new version is short-sighted. Phaedrus himself tells us that Aeschylus portrayed the heroes as lovers in one of his tragedies, and we find similar versions of the story in a number of other extant literary sources from the period. It is clear then that by the time the *Symposium* was written, Achilles and Patroclus were considered by some to be lovers. It is important to note, however, that at

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<sup>62</sup> Hunter, *Plato*, 40.

<sup>63</sup> *PMG*, 893-896.

<sup>64</sup> Hunter, *Plato*, 40.

least one other writer, Xenophon, rejected this idea. In his *Symposium*, the Socrates character argues that it was only their friendship, not erotic love, that bound Achilles and Patroclus.<sup>65</sup> This firm assertion reinforces the fact that the topic was hotly debated.

The pair's next major appearance comes just a few decades later in a speech by Aeschines. The context in which Aeschines, a statesman and orator, wrote and delivered his speech *Against Timarchus* was politically and historically complex. The conflict between Aeschines and Timarchus began in 346 B.C. when the former was sent as an ambassador with nine other Athenian men to broker a peace deal with Philip of Macedon, who had been gaining ground across Greece for more than a decade.<sup>66</sup> Among the envoys was Demosthenes, another important politician, who favored only a temporary peace treaty to give Athens time to build strength against Philip.<sup>67</sup> Aeschines was more interested in a permanent treaty with the Macedonian king.<sup>68</sup> Upon return to Athens, in a political move against Aeschines, Demosthenes accused the man of misconduct.<sup>69</sup> Demosthenes was joined in his attack by Timarchus.<sup>70</sup> It was Timarchus whom Aeschines targeted in his response to the accusation by challenging the man's right to speak to the assembly based on past behavior in a process known as *dokimasia rhetoron* or the scrutiny of public speakers.<sup>71</sup> In this case, the act of prostitution, which Athenians considered an outrage inconsistent with citizenship, is the behavior that Aeschines attributes to Timarchus.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Xenophon, *Symposium*, 8.31.

<sup>66</sup> Carey, *Trials*, 164.

<sup>67</sup> Carey, *Trials*, 164.

<sup>68</sup> Carey, *Trials*, 164.

<sup>69</sup> Carey, *Trials*, 164.

<sup>70</sup> Carey, *Trials*, 164.

<sup>71</sup> Carey, *Trials*, 164.

<sup>72</sup> Carey, *Trials*, 164.

Aeschines begins by explaining at length several laws relevant to the case: a set of laws about protecting young men from moral corruption, a law criminalizing prostitution, and a law regulating appropriate behavior for the Assembly.<sup>73</sup> He goes on to give proof that Timarchus behaved contrary to these laws and, having done so, ought to suffer the punishment. This involves an extensive tracing of the man's movements and associations over the years of his life. Aeschines then shifts to predict his opponent's argument in response to his own speech and to address each of his opponent's points with his own counterpoints. In this list, Aeschines predicts that Demosthenes will argue that erotic relationships between men are not criminal but honorable and will cite Homer's portrayal of Achilles and Patroclus as evidence.<sup>74</sup>

οὐκ ἀφέξεται δέ, ὡς φασιν, οὐδὲ τῶν Ὀμήρου ποιημάτων οὐδὲ  
τῶν ὀνομάτων τῶν ἥρωικῶν, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὴν λεγομένην γενέσθαι  
φιλίαν δι' ἔρωτα Πατρούκλου καὶ Ἀχιλλέως ὑμνήσει.<sup>75</sup>

And he will not spare, as they say, either the poems of Homer or the names of the heroes, but he will praise the love between Patroclus and Achilles that is said to have been born of desire.

That Aeschines can so confidently assume that Achilles and Patroclus' erotic relationship will be a key point in Demosthenes' argument is testament to how popular the concept was. Furthermore, Aeschines does not challenge the idea that the two heroes were lovers. He does admit that Homer did not explicitly describe their relationship as erotic.<sup>76</sup> But he believes that Homer expected his educated audience to be able to read between the lines and understand that they had a deeper connection than was explicitly described in the

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<sup>73</sup> Aeschin., 1.12, 16, 21, 35.

<sup>74</sup> Aeschin., 1.132-133.

<sup>75</sup> Aeschin., 1.133.

<sup>76</sup> Aeschin., 1.142.

poem.<sup>77</sup> So Demosthenes and Aeschines, two experienced politicians, skilled orators, and fierce opponents, have no quarrel over the existence of an erotic relationship between Patroclus and Achilles. It is also important to note that legal arguments were written to persuade juries of hundreds of Athenian citizens. If Aeschines was presenting this discussion as evidence, it must have been generally accepted by a sizable portion of the citizenry. Unlike in Phaedrus' speech, there is no discussion regarding their respective ages or roles in the relationship.

Furthermore, in this section, Aeschines makes it clear that he does not condemn homosexual or pederastic relationships, as long as prostitution is not involved. Indeed, he speaks very highly of such relationships and considers it noble to love and to be loved.<sup>78</sup> He returns to Achilles and Patroclus as a model for noble love and describes the three scenes in which it was most clear to him that Homer intended them to be understood as lovers. First, in an excerpt from the scene in which Achilles mourns his lost comrade, the Greek hero remembers his promise to Menoitius to return Patroclus safely home and feels the utmost regret: ὡς ἔν τι τοῦτο τῶν λυπηροτάτων ἀναμνησκόμενος [recalling this as if it were the most painful thing].<sup>79</sup> Aeschines continues saying, “ὧ καταφανής ἐστίν, ὡς δι' ἔρωτα τὴν ἐπιμέλειαν αὐτοῦ παρέλαβεν” [It is clear from this that it was on account of love that he took great care of Patroclus].<sup>80</sup> In this scene, Achilles appears as a caretaker, responsible for the wellbeing of Patroclus, which is just how he appears on the kylix. By including this excerpt,

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<sup>77</sup> Aeschin., 1.142.

<sup>78</sup> Aeschin., 1.137.

<sup>79</sup> Aeschin., 1.143; Hom., *Il.*, 18.323-327.

<sup>80</sup> Aeschin., 1.143.

Aeschines assigns value to this characteristic of a lover and perhaps suggests that Achilles is the dominant figure in the relationship. Then, Aeschines quotes Thetis, Achilles' mother, when she explains the prophecy that would allow Achilles to live a long life if he would not return to battle.<sup>81</sup> Like Phaedrus, Aeschines is recalling here how their noble love empowered Achilles to make such a sacrifice:

οὕτω δὲ μεγαλοψύχως ἠπείγετο τὸν φονέα τὸν ἐκείνου  
τιμωρήσασθαι, ὥστε πάντων αὐτὸν παραμυθουμένων καὶ  
κελευόντων λούσασθαι καὶ σῆτον προσενέγκασθαι, ἀπόμνυσι  
μηδὲν τούτων πράξειν, πρὶν ἂν τὴν τοῦ Ἑκτορος κεφαλὴν ἐπὶ  
τὸν τοῦ Πατρόκλου τάφον ἐνέγκῃ.<sup>82</sup>

And with a great spirit he was so eager to seek vengeance against Patroclus' killer that, when all the men encouraged him and urged him to bathe and to accept food, he swore to do none of those things until he carried the head of Hector to Patroclus' grave.

Finally he emphasizes how very close the two men are by quoting the request of Patroclus' ghost that he and Achilles share a grave ὥσπερ καὶ ἐτράφησαν καὶ ἐβίωσαν ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ [just as they grew up and lived in the same place].<sup>83</sup> For the orator, these are the scenes in which the erotic love between Patroclus and Achilles is most obvious. However, he does not use these Homeric lines only to prove that they were lovers but to provide an example for noble love, as opposed to disgraceful love which would involve payment. He is attempting to create a stark contrast between the love shared by these two heroes and the prostitution committed by Timarchus.

Though Aeschines discusses the heroes for only a short part of his long speech, he provides some significant information regarding the development of their story. First, as

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<sup>81</sup> Aeschin. 1.150.

<sup>82</sup> Aeschin., 1.145.

<sup>83</sup> Aeschin., 1.146; Hom., *Il.*, 23.91-92.

with Phaedrus in the *Symposium* about a century earlier, there is no real conflict over whether Achilles and Patroclus were lovers; it seems that there is popular consensus on that question. Certainly, Aeschines gives his own evidence from the *Iliad* that proves their love, but for a purpose beyond proving it to his audience. Secondly, though the orator, early in his speech, is deeply concerned with the age of boys entering into pederastic relationships as *eromenoi*, he does not once address the respective or relative ages of Achilles and Patroclus. He does not attempt to force them into the perfect pederastic model: for Aeschines, what makes their relationship admirable is the true love they share. In a speech with the primary purpose of arguing what kind of relationships and behavior are right and wrong for Athenian citizen men, to leave out age as a factor, which has been definitive in modern understandings of homosexual relationships in ancient Greece, is not insignificant. From his emphasis on the protection of youths to his exalting the relationship between two similarly-aged adult men, it seems Aeschines might be promoting loving sexual relationships between (non-paying) men. At the very least, nothing in his speech rules out the possibility that homosexual relationships between adult men were socially acceptable.

Evidence of the cultural development of Achilles' and Patroclus' story is unfortunately fragmentary. Before the advent of Athenian literature, the pair was part of an extended oral tradition, the stories of which, with the exception of those attributed to Homer, do not survive. There were two centuries between the likely original date of the *Iliad* and the first extant appearance of the pair as lovers in Athenian literature. It is unlikely that this appearance was wholly unprecedented. It is plausible that the characterization of Patroclus and Achilles as lovers was borne out of an existing tradition,

for which we have no evidence. Of course, speculation on the existence of such stories or what possible versions of their relationship those stories might portray is fruitless and not worth the while. It is worthwhile to point out that though no stories that fill the gap remain for us to examine one cannot automatically assume that these stories did not exist. The versions of the relationship after the *Iliad* that have been preserved for modern readers are widely varied: Achilles as Patroclus' *eromenos* in the *Symposium*, Achilles as Patroclus' *erastes* in Aeschylus' trilogy, Achilles and Patroclus as equals in Aeschines' speech, and Achilles and Patroclus as nothing more than comrades as Xenophon asserts in his own *Symposium*.<sup>84</sup> I have attempted to show that the development of their relationship is too complex to consider it solely within the framework of pederasty, as ancient writers and modern scholars alike have tried to do.

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<sup>84</sup> Dover, *Greek Sexuality*, 199.

## Chapter 2

### Harmodius and Aristogeiton: Lovers or Heroes?

The story of Harmodius and Aristogeiton comes to us in three important historical texts: Herodotus' *Histories*, Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War*, and the Aristotelian *Athenaion Politeia*. In his history of the conflict between Athens with her allies and Persia, fifth-century historian Herodotus only mentions the pair as the murderers of Hipparchus, brother to tyrant Hippias.<sup>85</sup> He emphasizes that the murder effectively strengthened the tyranny by exacerbating Hippias' despotic actions.<sup>86</sup> He also explicitly rejects the idea that Harmodius and Aristogeiton were responsible for the dismantling of the despotic government; for that he gives full credit to the Athenian political family, the Alcmaeonidae, and the Spartans, who conspired to overthrow the tyrant.<sup>87</sup> Nowhere does he describe the pair as lovers, but this early discussion of their actions introduces the argument over their role in establishing democracy in Athens.

The pair first appears in Thucydides' history in a brief discussion of the nature of writing and reading about history. The historian, writing about the conflict between Athens and Sparta in the late fifth century B.C., acknowledges that some of what he will write will contradict what his readers already believe.<sup>88</sup> As an example, he explains that some people incorrectly believe that Harmodius and Aristogeiton were responsible for

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<sup>85</sup> Herodotus, 5.55.

<sup>86</sup> Hdt., 5.55.

<sup>87</sup> Hdt., 6.123.

<sup>88</sup> Th., 1.20.



overthrowing the tyrant, when in reality Hippias, not Hipparchus, was the more powerful brother.<sup>89</sup> Thucydides, like Herodotus, by explicitly contradicting the idea that Harmodius and Aristogeiton played a significant part in the overthrowing of tyranny, suggests that the idea was a popular one.

Thucydides raises the issue again later in his work to comment on how what is popularly considered to be historical fact is sometimes inaccurate. Here he relates the full story, which began when Hipparchus flirted with Harmodius, who was of a bright young age (ήλικίας λαμπροῦ).<sup>90</sup> Harmodius rejected the man and told his *erastes* Aristogeiton, a citizen of middle age (μέσος πολίτης), about the incident.<sup>91</sup>

Aristogeiton became enraged and began plotting the death of the man who wished to steal his *eromenos*.<sup>92</sup> Meanwhile, Hipparchus in his humiliation and anger chose to publicly insult Harmodius by inviting the young man's sister to participate in a procession then, when the day for the procession came, declaring the girl to be unworthy of the role.<sup>93</sup> Now that Hipparchus had upset both Harmodius and Aristogeiton, the lovers conspired with a few others to kill the man during the Panathenaia.<sup>94</sup> When the day came, the two abandoned the established plan, seeing one of the conspirators speaking with Hippias and fearing that the secret had been revealed, and rushed up to Hipparchus and killed him with daggers.<sup>95</sup> Aristogeiton escaped, while Harmodius was killed on the spot.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Th., 1.20.

<sup>90</sup> Th., 6.54.

<sup>91</sup> Th., 6.54.

<sup>92</sup> Th., 6.54.

<sup>93</sup> Th., 6.54, 56.

<sup>94</sup> Th., 6.56.

<sup>95</sup> Th., 6.57.

<sup>96</sup> Th., 6.57.

Thucydides also emphasizes how the tyrant Hippias became more oppressive after the death of his brother.<sup>97</sup>

Thucydides states clearly that it was on account of a pained love affair (δι' ἐρωτικὴν λύπην) that the two men committed the assassination.<sup>98</sup> However, in a minor contradiction, he also claims that they chose to act at the Panathenaia, one of Athens' most significant festivals, in the hope that their brave deed would inspire the many people present to take up arms and join them in a fight for freedom (ξυνελευθεροῦν).<sup>99</sup> Though Thucydides insists that the two were not responsible for the eventual fall of the tyranny, he does concede that there was some political motivation for Harmodius and Aristogeiton, at least in the choice of a venue, in addition to the personal motivation. Overall, he maintains that the pair was primarily driven by their shared love, suggesting perhaps that he believed that their goal was not necessarily to overthrow the tyranny but merely to kill the man who offended them. Many scholars have argued, offering a variety of explanations, that Thucydides uses the story of Harmodius and Aristogeiton, which is not exactly relevant to his topic, to parallel the story of the mutilation of the herms before an important military expedition, which failed, in 415 B.C.<sup>100</sup> If this is true, then it is possible that he emphasized certain aspects of their story to reinforce his version of the later incident, which was an important topic of his history. Thus, even though Thucydides is considered an historian, his version of Harmodius and Aristogeiton's deed

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<sup>97</sup> Th., 6.59.

<sup>98</sup> Th., 6.59.

<sup>99</sup> Th., 6.56.

<sup>100</sup> Elizabeth A. Meyer, "Thucydides on Harmodius and Aristogeiton, Tyranny, and History," *Classical Quarterly* 58.1 (2008): 14.

should not be read as objective or necessarily accurate. As is true for the other ancients who discuss the pair, his work contributes to the discourse on the pair but should not define it.

Perhaps what is important about his treatment is how carefully Thucydides characterizes each man according to his age; he distinguishes the two, describing Harmodius as a man in the prime of his youth and Aristogeiton in the middle rank of life. He makes it clear that there is an age difference, but we cannot be sure from his vague descriptive terms what their respective ages are. The age difference must be significant, however, because in this short narrative the historian does not mention the ages, in any terms whatsoever, of any of the other players, including Hipparchus.

The story of Harmodius and Aristogeiton appears again about a century later in the *Athenaion Politeia* (*Athenian Constitution*) written by Aristotle or one of his students. The work covers several centuries of Athenian political and legal development and includes a version of the tyrannicide story slightly different from that of Thucydides. The author confirms that Hippias and Hipparchus came to power after the death of their father, with Hippias being the head of the regime. However, according to this author, it was the younger brother Thessalus who solicited Harmodius and, after being rejected, publicly insulted the young man's sister.<sup>101</sup> The rest of the story proceeds as expected, with Harmodius and Aristogeiton conspiring with a small group of men, then attacking and killing Hipparchus on the day of the Panathenaic festival.

This later writer includes several aspects which were left out by both Herodotus and Thucydides. First, he states that Harmodius and Aristogeiton were lying in wait for

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<sup>101</sup> Aristotle, *Athenian Constitution*, 18.2.

Hippias when they saw one of the conspirators speaking to him, leading them to believe that the plot was ruined and driving them to kill Hipparchus while they had the chance.<sup>102</sup> That they were waiting to kill Hippias and the possibility that it was not even Hipparchus who insulted the two of them suggests that their target was the family in general. This scenario allows a greater possibility for a political motive than does Thucydides' version. That possibility is made more likely by the author's inclusion of what happens to Aristogeiton after the assassination. While Harmodius is killed immediately, Aristogeiton escapes only to be captured later and tortured for the names of the other conspirators.<sup>103</sup> Some of the men whose names he offered were considered friends of the tyrants.<sup>104</sup> The writer makes a general reference to some democratic writers who claim that Aristogeiton gave the names of innocent men knowing that the tyrant would have them captured and executed and hoping that this would incite rebellion among the Athenians.<sup>105</sup> If this is not true, then those men he named were involved in the plot, contrary to their public support of the tyranny.<sup>106</sup> Either way, it seems likely that the conspirators, including Aristogeiton, were politically motivated.

Interestingly, this author does not once mention that Harmodius and Aristogeiton, the only two conspirators whose names he gives, were lovers. Thucydides attributes Aristogeiton's involvement to his love for Harmodius, treating the man's personal interests and any political motivation he might have as mutually exclusive. The author of the *Athenaion Politeia* gives no reason whatsoever for Aristogeiton's involvement in the

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<sup>102</sup> Arist. *Ath.*, 18.3.

<sup>103</sup> Arist. *Ath.*, 18.4.

<sup>104</sup> Arist. *Ath.*, 18.4.

<sup>105</sup> Arist. *Ath.*, 18.5.

<sup>106</sup> Arist. *Ath.*, 18.5.

matter. It is unlikely that the author was not aware of the pair's erotic relationship; Aeschines, writing at about the same time, describes the couple as lovers in such a way as to suggest that his audience was familiar with the idea. Perhaps the author did not include it in his work because it was too obvious to bear mentioning. Perhaps he deemphasized the relationship between Harmodius and Aristogeiton in order to emphasize the political ramifications of the assassination, which are more relevant to his purpose of recording the political development of Athens. His reasoning is unclear. What is clear is that ancient historians living and writing about a century after Harmodius and Aristogeiton slew Hipparchus could not agree on the facts of the incident and the motivation of the people involved.

A final important takeaway from the *Athenaion Politeia* is the brief and vague mention of the cult of Harmodius and Aristogeiton. The author provides no other details regarding the cult aside from the fact that the polemarch is responsible for carrying out the rites, but modern scholars have found them from other sources.<sup>107</sup> A public tomb and an annual sacrifice were dedicated to the couple, and during Pericles' prominence an act was passed guaranteeing meals at the city's expense in the Prytaneum to all of the men's descendants.<sup>108</sup> The best-known dedication to the couple is a statue group which held significant value for the Athenians.

Shortly after the assassination in 514 B.C., a pair of statues depicting Harmodius and Aristogeiton was erected in the Agora. It was the first political monument in Athenian history and would be the only one for a century to honor specific individuals.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Arist., *Ath.*, 58.1.

<sup>108</sup> S. Sara Monoson, "The Allure of Harmodius and Aristogeiton," in *Greek Love Reconsidered*, ed. Thomas K. Hubbard (New York: Wallace Hamilton, 2000), 43-44.

<sup>109</sup> Monoson, "The Allure," 43.

The original statue group, sculpted by Antenor, was removed and confiscated under orders of the Persian King Xerxes in 480 B.C.<sup>110</sup> After the Battle of Salamis in which the Athenians defeated the Persians, a new statue group, featuring Harmodius and Aristogeiton in the very moment of the murder, was sculpted by the artists Kritios and Nesiotes and dedicated in the Agora.<sup>111</sup> Though this statue group did not survive, a Roman copy of it has (Figure 2). Each statue, on its own base, shows a nude man with one foot stepping forward and one arm outstretched. Each has in its hand the marble hilt of a sword, though the blades, probably made of bronze, have been lost. From the neck down, the bodies are nearly identical with defined musculature and detailed genitalia. The figures, of equal height, are posed mid-action, with their back heels lifted off the ground suggesting forward motion. The primary difference between the two statues is the presence of facial hair: one figure has a full beard, implying an older age, and the other's face is hairless, implying youth. This is the only marker of a difference in age between the two men. Harmodius, though beardless, is obviously a mature adult. He is as tall as his companion, with a large build and fully developed genitalia and pubic hair. Though he is certainly still young, this is not the image of a boy but of a man. Of course, none of the historical accounts precisely describes the man's age, but that he was a mature adult is expected given the nature of the deed for which he is famous. Finally, in this moment of action, apart from their nudity which is typical of statuary, there are no traits of the group that suggest that the pair was involved in a sexual relationship.

The original sculptures were important enough to be specifically targeted by the foreign king Xerxes when he invaded the city, but it seems that the statues themselves

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<sup>110</sup> Monoson, "The Allure," 43.

<sup>111</sup> Monoson, "The Allure," 43.

were not highly valued by the Athenians who made no immediate effort to retake them. Rather, the value was held in the images of the tyrant-slayers, which were quickly recreated and reinstalled in the Agora, a sacred civic space. In addition to the placement in the Agora, the image of the two men at the moment of the assassination, their body positions identical to the statue group, appears in all but one of the seven extant vase paintings that feature the pair.<sup>112</sup> The couple's cultural significance is further reflected by the fact that they were the first people to be honored with sculpted images in the Agora.<sup>113</sup> More telling still is that no one else was so honored for more than a hundred years.<sup>114</sup> These were not just the first examples of a popular trend; they were unique.

The placement of the original statue group coincided with the emergence of a series of skolia telling the popular version of Harmodius and Aristogeiton's story. We have one complete skolion, which was likely circulating shortly after 507 B.C.<sup>115</sup>

ἐν μύρτου κλαδὶ τὸ ξίφος φορήσω,  
ὥσπερ Ἀρμόδιος καὶ Ἀριστογείτων,  
ὅτε τὸν τύραννον κτανέτην  
ἰσονόμους τ' Ἀθήνας ἐποίησάτην.

φίλταθ' Ἀρμόδι', οὐ τί που τέθνηκας:  
νήσσοις δ' ἐν μακάρων σέ φασιν εἶναι,  
ἵνα περ ποδώκης Ἀχιλεὺς,  
Τυδεΐδην τέ φασι τὸν ἐσθλόν.

ἐν μύρτου κλαδὶ τὸ ξίφος φορήσω,  
ὥσπερ Ἀρμόδιος καὶ Ἀριστογείτων,  
ὅτ' Ἀθηναίης ἐν θυσίαις

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<sup>112</sup> Lear and Cantarella, *Images*, 101-102. The one outlying vase portrays the couple with their robes on, instead of nude, and includes Hipparchus standing between the Aristogeiton and Harmodius (Figure 3). Even these distinctions are relatively minor; the vase image is clearly based on the statue group.

<sup>113</sup> Monoson, "The Allure," 43.

<sup>114</sup> Monoson, "The Allure," 43.

<sup>115</sup> Hubbard translates the first stanza on page 53 in *Homosexuality in Greece and Rome: A Sourcebook of Basic Documents* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003) and says that it was popular shortly after Cleisthenes instituted his reforms.

ἄνδρα τύραννον Ἴππαρχον ἐκαινέτην.

αἰεὶ σφῶν κλέος ἔσσεται κατ' αἶαν,  
φίλταθ' Ἀρμόδιε καὶ Ἀριστόγειτον,  
ὅτι τὸν τύραννον κτανέτην  
ἰσονόμους τ' Ἀθήνας ἐποίησάτην.<sup>116</sup>

In a myrtle branch I will carry my sword  
Just as Harmodius and Aristogeiton,  
When they killed the tyrant  
And made Athens of equal laws.

Most beloved Harmodius, surely it cannot be that you have died  
But they say you are in the Isles of the Blessed,  
There too is swift-footed Achilles,  
And the noble son of Tydeus, they say.

In a myrtle branch I will carry my sword,  
Just as Harmodius and Aristogeiton,  
When in sacrifice to Athens  
They killed the tyrant man Hipparchus.

Always your fame will be on earth,  
Most beloved Harmodius and Aristogeiton,  
Because they killed the tyrant  
And made Athens of equal laws.

Though it would be several decades before Pericles instituted important cult practices to honor Harmodius and Aristogeiton, this text shows that it was already a popular sentiment to celebrate them as defenders of Athenian democracy only a few years after their deed and deaths. Each stanza makes mention of their assassination of Hipparchus, and twice they are credited with making Athens of equal laws, meaning democratic. This is perhaps the most extreme rendition of the story: where other writers describe the pair as mere benefactors for the city or dismiss them all together, in this song they are given complete and explicit credit for restoring Athenian democracy. As the story is told here,

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<sup>116</sup> *PMG*, 893-896.



there is no room for the work of the Alcmaeonidae, the Spartans, or Cleisthenes the reformer. Certainly, this song represents the public sentiment that Thucydides challenges so vehemently in his history. More than that, this song and others like it likely played an important role in the dissemination of this version of events. In song form, the story would have been easily remembered and passed down the generations; it might have even transcended class boundaries to reach beyond the aristocratic elite.

This song, at least this version of it, is especially interesting because, unlike most of the other texts in this section, it does not refer explicitly to the homoerotic relationship between Harmodius and Aristogeiton. In fact there are only two words in these four verses that even suggest romance. First there is the image of the myrtle, which Thornton tells us is a symbol associated with Aphrodite and as such signifies the love between the men.<sup>117</sup> Then there is the epithet used twice to describe Harmodius as most beloved (φιλιταθ'). There are a number of possible implications for the absence of emphasis on the erotic relationship between Harmodius and Aristogeiton. Either their love was deemphasized by the author and subsequent singers because they deemed it inappropriate to the genre or insignificant, or there was no need to be more explicit because most people were familiar enough with the pair's story. It is also possible that this skolion was unique in understating their homosexuality and that other versions, which have not survived, gave more attention to their relationship. Regardless, the civic cult which began with the erection of the statue group in the Agora and the public sentiment represented by this drinking song contributed to the elevation of Harmodius and

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<sup>117</sup> Thornton, *Eros*, 199.

Aristogeiton to an honored position. It was in this context that Plato and Aeschines wrote about Harmodius and Aristogeiton later in the Classical period.

In Plato's *Symposium*, the older of the two texts, the couple is mentioned briefly by the interlocutor Pausanias. He begins by describing two different kinds of love that derive from the two different love goddesses. One version of Aphrodite is younger, the daughter of Zeus and Dione, and the love she engenders in men is considered vulgar (πάνδημος) and can be directed toward men and women alike.<sup>118</sup> The other Aphrodite is older and without a mother, and the love she inspires is described as heavenly (οὐρανίαν).<sup>119</sup> Moreover, according to the speaker, women have no part in this heavenly love as no woman was involved in the creation of the heavenly motherless Aphrodite; such love can only be given by men to other men, and the men involved must be noble and intelligent.<sup>120</sup> Then the speaker moves into a discussion of the customs regarding pederastic relationships in different regions of Greece. Some places like Athens and Sparta have complex laws governing sexual relationships between males, while other places have no such laws.<sup>121</sup> Still other places, those ruled by barbarian tyrants, have strict laws prohibiting such relationships because, he argues, heavenly love engenders in men a kind of courage that threatens a despotic government.<sup>122</sup>

As evidence that erotic relationships between men are dangerous to tyrants, he names Harmodius and Aristogeiton and claims that their strong love destroyed the power of the tyrants in Athens.

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<sup>118</sup> Pl., *Sym.*, 180d, 181b-c.

<sup>119</sup> Pl., *Sym.*, 180d.

<sup>120</sup> Pl., *Sym.*, 181c-d.

<sup>121</sup> Pl., *Sym.*, 182a-c.

<sup>122</sup> Pl., *Sym.*, 182b-c.

τῆς δὲ Ἰωνίας καὶ ἄλλοθι πολλαχοῦ αἰσχρὸν νενόμισται, ὅσοι  
ὑπὸ βαρβάροις οἰκοῦσιν. τοῖς γὰρ βαρβάροις διὰ τὰς τυραννίδας  
αἰσχρὸν τοῦτό γε καὶ ἡ γε φιλοσοφία καὶ ἡ φιλογυμναστία· οὐ  
γὰρ οἶμαι συμφέρει τοῖς ἄρχουσι φρονήματα μεγάλα  
ἐγγίγνεσθαι τῶν ἀρχομένων, οὐδὲ φιλίας ἰσχυρὰς καὶ  
κοινωνίας, ὃ δὴ μάλιστα φιλεῖ τά τε ἄλλα πάντα καὶ ὁ ἔρως  
ἐμποιεῖν. ἔργῳ δὲ τοῦτο ἔμαθον καὶ οἱ ἐνθάδε τύραννοι· ὁ γὰρ  
Ἀριστογείτονος ἔρως καὶ ἡ Ἄρμοδίου φιλία βέβαιος γενομένη  
κατέλυσεν αὐτῶν τὴν ἀρχήν.<sup>123</sup>

And in Ionia and many other places the love of youths is considered disgraceful, wherever people live under foreign rule. For this as well as the love of wisdom and the fondness for sports are disgraceful to foreigners on account of the tyranny. For it is not, I think, advantageous to the rulers that great spirits be born in the governed people, nor strong love and friendships, all of which indeed love very much tends to engender. And even the tyrants here learned this by experience; for Aristogeiton's desire and Harmodius' love, having become steadfast, destroyed their rule.

This characterization of the couple is a far cry from that of Thucydides. Pausanias gives them full credit for the dismantling of the tyranny, which was the first step in the reestablishment of democracy. Furthermore, he portrays them as noble whereas Thucydides, in dismissing the popular belief that they were acting on behalf of the city, characterizes them as petty. Most importantly, Plato through his character Pausanias presents the couple as more than just two historical figures. The couple's elevated position, from two mortal men with mundane concerns to a symbol of Athenian excellence, is confirmed here by Plato. He fuses the couple's personal motivations, namely their strong love for each other, to a politically significant result, the defeat of tyranny. While his depiction of the couple contributes to the discourse regarding their involvement in the restoration of democracy, it also suggests important cultural beliefs

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<sup>123</sup> Pl., *Sym.*, 182b-c.

regarding erotic relationships between men. Plato illustrates that Harmodius and Aristogeiton were excellent Athenians by describing their commitment to defend Athens against tyranny, which was the city's greatest collective fear following the Peisistratid reign. If it was their love that drove them in their great deed, as he claims, then certainly their love is especially honorable. Theirs is a heavenly love, rather than a vulgar one, to borrow Pausanias' framework from the beginning of his speech.

A century later, the idea that the lovers Harmodius and Aristogeiton were closely linked to the fall of the tyranny and the rise of democracy was still popular. Aeschines in his speech condemning the behavior of his prosecutor Timarchus invokes the names of the lovers. He does so in the same context in which he mentions Achilles and Patroclus, predicting the arguments that his opponent will present: παραφέρων πρώτον μὲν τοὺς εὐεργέτας τοὺς ἀλλήλους πίστιν καὶ τὸ πρᾶγμα ὡς συνήνεγκε τῇ πόλει διεξιῶν.<sup>124</sup> [Mentioning first the benefactors, detailing their faithfulness to one another and how their deed was advantageous for the city.] With just the word εὐεργέτας, meaning benefactors, he reinforces the couple's reputation as the men responsible for saving Athens from tyranny. He uses the word again a few lines later, after discussing some of the ways that Athenian laws protect young boys from corruption.

Τοιγάροτι τοὺς τῆς πόλεως μὲν εὐεργέτας, ταῖς δ' ἀρεταῖς  
ὑπερηννοχότας, Ἀρμόδιον καὶ Ἀριστογείτονα, ὁ σώφρων καὶ  
ἔννομος, εἴτε ἔρωτα εἴτε τρόπον χρῆ προσειπεῖν, τοιούτους  
ἐπαίδευσεν, ὥστε τοὺς ἐπαινοῦντας τὰ ἐκείνων ἔργα  
καταδεεστέρους δοκεῖν εἶναι ἐν τοῖς ἐγκωμίοις τῶν ἐκείνοις  
πεπραγμένων.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Aeschin., 1.132.

<sup>125</sup> Aeschin., 1.140.

Thus as in the case of the benefactors of the city, outstanding in excellence, Harmodius and Aristogeiton, the chaste and lawful matter – it is useful to name it either love or custom – reared men so great that the people who praise their deeds seem to be lacking in their eulogies of the deeds.

Though his language is not as strong as Pausanias', his characterization of the couple clearly follows in the same tradition. As in the *Symposium*, this brief illustration of the couple does contribute to a discussion on the significance of Harmodius and Aristogeiton's act in the broader history of Athenian government, especially considering the highly politicized nature of the speech. But Aeschines also closely associates the couple's excellence with their proper homosexual love.<sup>126</sup> Here Aeschines portrays them as exemplary Athenian lovers, just as Plato's Pausanias did in his own speech.

Harmodius and Aristogeiton appear in a variety of ancient sources, and their story is different in each source. But collectively these sources tell of a pair of men, probably lovers, who played some role, either significant or otherwise, in the dismantling of the Peisistratid tyranny. Unfortunately, the magnitude of their deed has overshadowed the men themselves, so we do not know much about their lives or their relationship before their famous tale began. Certainly, their deed has attracted more interest than their relationship, and it is difficult to discern much about it from the existing sources. The most interesting issue, aside from their place in history, is the issue of their ages. Of course, the Tyrannicides statue group portrays two adult men, though it should not be understood as a completely accurate representation. And none of the extant textual sources offer any clear clues as to what their ages might have been. Finally, it is hard to imagine Harmodius as a young boy plotting and carrying out the assassination of a

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<sup>126</sup> Aeschin., 1.140.

political figure. Based on the evidence that we have, there are a number of possibilities regarding the nature of the couple's relationship.

We cannot, and none of the ancients attempt to, fit the pair into a typical pederastic relationship. At the time of the assassination, Harmodius probably would have been too old to be an *eromenos* as we understand the role. Perhaps the pair had been involved in a pederastic relationship when Harmodius was younger; in this case, it is possible that the erotic aspect had faded but the relationship had remained. This might explain why some sources deemphasize the love between them. It might also be possible that they had continued a sexual relationship into Harmodius' adulthood. But there is no need, based on the source material, to associate the pair with pederasty at all. Though some scholars argue that homosexuality between adult men was not acceptable in ancient Athens, Harmodius and Aristogeiton may be an historical example of such a couple.

## Conclusion

The evidence used to create a complete picture of ancient Athenian homoeroticism is extensive: poetry, prose, comedy, tragedy, and vase imagery spanning several hundred years. The modern scholarship on the topic has also been quite extensive but in general has been dominated by the pederastic model. In fact, Dover, the authority in Greek homosexuality, used the terms pederasty and homosexuality interchangeably, though modern readers should not equate the two. His work has defined the field for decades, with some criticism. Recent work by Davidson challenges the frameworks established by Dover and utilized by many other scholars. Davidson's two primary criticisms of Dover's work are quite relevant to my proposal. First, he dismisses the emphasis Dover placed on the physical act of sex and his characterization of that act as being one of domination.<sup>127</sup> He called this obsession "sodomania." Though he says that he does not accuse scholars like Dover of being homophobic, he certainly associates sodomania with homophobia.<sup>128</sup> Such an association is not, I believe, unfounded. Dover reduces complex relationships to only one of their many components then describes that component in altogether negative terms. It is in this broader context of scholarship that I

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<sup>127</sup> Davidson, *Greek Love*, 127-145. See also Davidson's discussion of George Devereux's homophobic concept of pseudohomosexuality that significantly influenced Dover's work, 151-158.

<sup>128</sup> Davidson, *Greek Love*, 147.

have, as Davidson did in his massive work *The Greeks and Greek Love*, returned to the primary sources and viewed them outside of the pederastic framework.<sup>129</sup>

By working with these two pairs in particular, I have had to analyze a variety of sources ranging in style and genre. But my method has allowed me to focus a broad and not easily-answered question – whether homosexual relationships between adult males were acceptable in ancient Athens – down to a manageable study. Certainly, I have barely scratched the surface of the relevant ancient source material, but it was not my intention to answer the question definitively. Rather, I have attempted to understand and present these two stories, chosen for their cultural significance and their dissimilarities to the typical pederastic model, with that question in mind.

Some of what I have found has not been altogether surprising. A prominent but not unexpected lesson has been that there is no singular or even dominant version of either story; each source presents a version that conflicts with or differs from the others. But I have found value in their differences. Because Plato's *Phaedrus* is so concerned with the respective ages of Achilles and Patroclus, Aeschines' complete disinterest in this aspect of their relationship caught my eye especially. The orator's silence on the ages of the two warriors, which was clearly a hot topic a few decades earlier, and on the ages of Harmodius and Aristogeiton for that matter, is significant. He names the couples as

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<sup>129</sup> Thomas K. Hubbard, review of *The Greeks and Greek Love: A Radical Reappraisal of Homosexuality in Ancient Greece*, by James Davidson, and *Images of Ancient Greek Pederasty: Boys Were Their Gods*, by Andrew Lear and Eva Cantarella, H-Net Book Review, February 10, 2009. Hubbard is quite critical of the tone of Davidson's work as well as his mix of "fact, fantasy, speculation, mistranslation, misleading paraphrase, and arguments of ... impenetrable convolution and improbability." But he does say that "this is a genuine shame, as there are actually many valuable observations within the book." I agree that Davidson's presentation is flawed, but the theories I have paraphrased here are thoughtful and important not just to my work but also to moving forward the current discourse.



examples of the ideal relationship between men, implying that such a relationship exists between adults who, in the case of Achilles and Patroclus at least, are of similar ages.

On the other hand, I was surprised to find some similarities between the two couples. The most striking shared aspect of their stories that Plato and Aeschines both highlight was the bravery, inspired by love, that motivated daring deeds in time of conflict. Achilles, a literal warrior, knowingly sacrificed his own life by returning to battle to avenge the death of his companion, Patroclus. Aristogeiton, in the midst of either a personal conflict or a civic one, risked his life to bring to justice the man who had dishonored his companion, Harmodius. In both cases, their love – whether it was homoerotic, pederastic, or just friendly – drove them to the deeds for which they are still famous. The significance of the love between the men cannot be denied, but it begs for a definitive statement on the nature of their relationships.

Though such a statement cannot safely be made, Aeschines' speech especially provides some powerful evidence. The very purpose of his speech is to demonstrate unacceptable forms of male homoerotic relationships. To do so, he lays out a few laws that restrict the actions of adult men in order to protect young boys. The first law he cites addresses which men can interact with boys in schools, in the gymnasium, and during chorus production.<sup>130</sup> The second law allows for any man convicted of outrage against a free boy to be punished by death.<sup>131</sup> The third law describes the *atimia* (literally meaning dishonor but manifested as disenfranchisement) to be enforced against any Athenian man convicted of prostituting himself.<sup>132</sup> Not only do none of the laws he describes prohibit

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<sup>130</sup> Aeschin., 1.12.

<sup>131</sup> Aeschin., 1.16.

<sup>132</sup> Aeschin., 1.21.

erotic relationships between adult men, but when he gives examples of the best kind of relationship between men, he chooses two couples, both comprised of adult men and one of similarly-aged men. In other words, I have found that Aeschines' idea of a perfect relationship is not pederastic at all. This observation, compounded by the fact that this speech is central to Dover's framework, makes this source the most vital to my work here.

I have found in my sources compelling evidence to support the argument that the two pairs represent adult male homosexual couples. There have, however, been some points that complicate the argument and at the very least prove that that representation was not accepted by the Athenian people entirely. Namely, the effort by Classical writers to fit Achilles and Patroclus into a pederastic model, as evidenced by the discourse on their ages, and the silence of some writers on the erotic nature of Harmodius and Aristogeiton's relationship do not strengthen my argument. But the various stories together create a larger cultural tradition for each couple. Unfortunately those traditions are fragmentary, and their development through time rather surprisingly does not seem to follow a predictable pattern. These reasons, particularly the varied and fragmentary nature of the body of evidence, make impossible an inarguable statement on how a majority of Athenians at any given time considered these four men. By analyzing each tradition completely on its own, I have been able to explore one alternate interpretation. I have found that, though some of the sources challenge that interpretation, there is ample evidence to allow for the possibility that the traditions surrounding Harmodius and Aristogeiton and Achilles and Patroclus represented and idealized adult male homosexual couples outside of the pederastic framework.

## APPENDIX



Figure 1. Inside of a black-figure kylix. Antikensammlung, Berlin, Schloss Charlottenburg, F 2278.

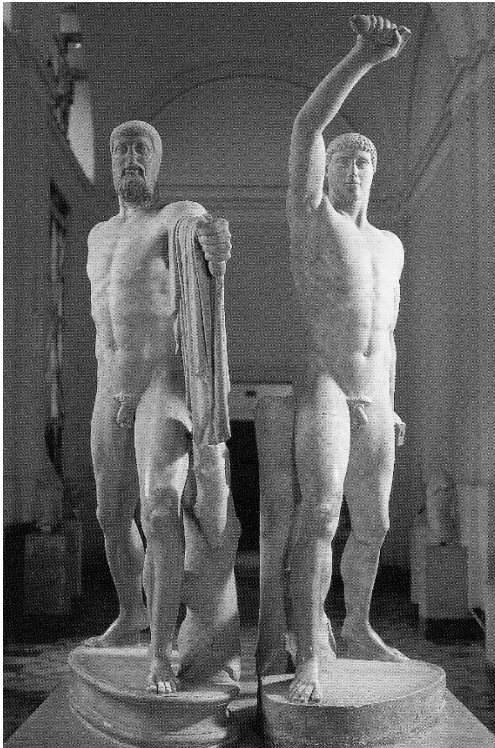


Figure 2. Roman copy of the Tyrannicides statue group.



Figure 3. Red-figure stamnos. Wurzburg, Universitat, Martin von Wagner Mus., 515.

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