

In a much-cited 1998 article, Thomas Hubbard argues against the consensus established by Dover and Foucault, which holds that the ancient Greeks condemned adult males who took the passive role in anal intercourse, but not those who took the active role or boys involved in pederastic relations. Hubbard claims that there was instead (1998.48) a wide-spread, popular “condemnation not merely of adult passivity or effeminacy, but of the institution of pederasty more generally.” One of the main planks in this argument is his revival of the view (see for instance Henderson 1975/1991.57-78) that Attic comedy (1998.50) associates “homosexual acts of any sort...with elite self-indulgence and corruption.”

In this paper, I argue against Hubbard's view of pederasty in comedy. I restrict my survey largely to Aristophanes, for reasons of space. I argue that Aristophanes represents pederasty in a way that deflates the idealistic discourse about it found in such Archaic sources as the Theognidea and common, on Plato's report (see for instance *Symposium* 178A-185E), in elite circles in Athens of the late fifth century: rather than a largely pedagogical relationship involving limited sexual contact, pederastic relations in Aristophanes' comedies involve hypocritical erastai penetrating mercenary eromenoi anally.

Pederasty is not, however, an important object of Aristophanes' humor. If (as I argue one must) one separates it from attacks on effeminate or degenerate men, it plays an important role only in the agons of *Knights* (725-1253) and *Clouds* (889-1104). Otherwise it appears only in a few scattered references. Attacks on it also tend to be indirect or relatively mild. The grotesque parody of pederastic courtship in the *Knights* agon targets not pederasty (though it undoubtedly besmirches it), but the vulgar politicians who *claim* to be erastai. In the *Clouds* agon, pederasty, or the rhetoric of pedagogical pederasty, is the direct target: it is shown as a flimsy form of hypocrisy underlain by obsessive desire. One need only compare this with Aristophanes' criticism of Cleon, however, to see how mild such mockery is.

As Dover points out (1989.137), furthermore, pederastic desire is characteristic, in Aristophanes, not of the elite but of the everymen who are the heroes (as it were) of his comedies. Philocleon (*Wasps* 578) desires boys, as does Pisetaerus (*Birds* 137-42), and the Demos itself, who, at *Knights* 1388, responds to the present of a boy sex-slave by saying, “Happy me, I'm getting back to the good old days!”

The core of Hubbard's argument is the connection that he attempts to establish between the effeminate men who are, as he says, the objects of (1998.59) “the greatest scorn in Aristophanes” and the practice of pederasty. Hubbard argues that in the comic world-view, elite boys, by taking the role of eromenos, became “pederasticized” and thus, as adults, erastai and effeminates. He bases his case on an unattributed comic fragment (Adesp. 12 K), which he translates “there is no long-hair who is not pollinated with the gall-fly.” In Hubbard's view (1998.53), “the reference is to the...practice of placing branches of a wild fig next to a blooming cultivated fig, so that the gall fly native to the wild species will pollinate the other: ...the active partner infects the other, as in the process of pollination.”

There are, however, three versions of this adespoton, and the other two (from Macarius and Photius) argue that the line was understood in antiquity as meaning simply “there is no long-hair who is not bugged” (see *Knights* 877-80 and *Ecclesiazousae* 112-3 for similar sentiments). I would argue, furthermore, that it is significant that in all of the complete or fragmentary Greek comedies, there is no line that makes an explicit connection between the common themes of pederasty and adult effeminacy. I argue, with Dover (1989.143-5) that Aristophanes called men effeminate for a variety of reasons. It is unsafe to connect all or indeed any of these accusations with pederasty without further evidence. As a result, we must consider Aristophanes' attitude toward pederasty on the basis of his explicit references to it, and these do not rise above the level (by Aristophanic standards) of gentle mockery.