

*Happy is he who has a boy-friends (paidēs), whole-hooved steeds,  
hunted hounds, and a friend in foreign parts... till in the flower  
of youth he love a lad with the desire of thighs and sweet lips.*

*-Solon, 23,25*

Solon was an Athenian poet, statesman and lawmaker. He is remembered for his efforts to legislate against economical, political and moral decline in archaic Athens (1). Solon was one of the first prominent Athenian poets of his day and utmost significant Greek legislators of the period. He effectively appealed for the conquest of Salamis throughout the conflict with Megara (2). This helped to urge Athenians to use the paraenetic poetry style, which can be recognized now by their polis and helped characterize Solon's poetry as well as his political career. He was also supposedly related to Peisistratus through the maternal line (3).

Solon's poetry and work (like most ancient literature and sources) have been passed down to the modern day in fragments and fragmentary quotations by other ancient authors like Demosthenes and Plutarch (4). From remaining fragment of his work called "Brothers", known to us by the comic playwright Philemon, he established public funding brothels in Athens to introduce a democratic principle to the obtainability of sexual pleasure (5).

According to ancient authors, Solon also regulated pederastic relationships in Athens (6). He safeguarded freeborn boys in pederastic relationships from being controlled and abuse by drawing up a set of laws (7). There are suggestions from ancient readers that Solon preferred the company of boys due to the nature of his erotic poetry (8). According to some, the tyrant Peisistratos as a boy was Solon's eromenos, although this has never been proven and is not known whether it is factual or fabricated.

These lines from his poem describe a type of contentment a man might feel towards a young boy he has taken as his lover. Solon speaks of the love from a young boy being like a delicate flower and the longing to be with him is too much. It's Solon's way of describing how a man might feel for his eromenos in a pederastic relationship. This piece is definitely a type of appreciation for the boy and the relationship they have together. This is more of a sexual relationship rather than just mentoring the youth. I can tell this from the obvious yearning Solon describes for the boy's "*thighs and sweet lips*".

In conclusion, from my resources, I can see that Solon supported and promoted the concepts and performances of a pederastic relationship in ancient Athens to the point where he even helped protect and safeguard the males and boys within the relationships through legislations and laws. The poem is a physical and visual evidence that he was very much so sympathetic to pederasty. Although it is just a suspicion that he also participated in pederasty, it can be more than likely said that he agreed with the act of taking a young boy to mentor and participate in sexual acts. I have concluded that this piece of the poem is one of desire, and evidence that pederasty was common and highly spoken about whether it was controversial or not.

## ***Bibliography***

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- (4) Demosthenes 19 (On the Embassy) 254–55
- (5) Rachel Adams, David Savran, The Masculinity Studies Reader; Blackwell, 2002; p. 74
- (6) Bernard Sergent, "Paederasty and Political Life in Archaic Greek Cities" in Gay Studies from the French Culture; Harrington Park Press, Binghamton, NY 1993; pp. 153–154
- (7) Aeschines, Against Timarchus 6, 25, 26 [8]; compare also Plutarch, Solon 1.3.
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