

# EXAMPLES OF LOVE

## HARMODIUS AND ARISTOGEITON

*Dr. D's note: The story of Harmodius and Aristogeiton is perhaps the most famous example in Athenian history of the intensity and commitment of male lovers; Aristogeiton was the adult, and Harmodius the young man. They killed the brother of the tyrant Hippias, and began a revolution, although apparently from personal rather than political reasons. But their story, preserved over time, came to emphasize their role as leaders of a rebellion rather than their personal reasons for undertaking it. A statue of them (representing not a portrait, but an idealized depiction of the adult/young man heroic bond) was dedicated at Athens shortly afterwards, and after it was taken as war spoils by Persians, a replacement (which still survives in Roman copies) was dedicated in 477/6 BCE. The story is told in several versions.*

### THUCYDIDES

*The classic narrative:*

54. Indeed, the daring action of Aristogiton and Harmodius was undertaken in consequence of a love affair, which I shall relate at some length, to show that the Athenians are not more accurate than the rest of the world in their accounts of their own tyrants and of the facts of their own history.

[2] Pisistratus dying at an advanced age in possession of the tyranny, was succeeded by his eldest son, Hippias, and not Hipparchus, as is vulgarly believed. Harmodius was then in the flower of youthful beauty, and Aristogiton, a citizen in the middle rank of life, was his lover and possessed him. [3] Solicited without success by Hipparchus, son of Pisistratus, Harmodius told Aristogiton, and the enraged lover, afraid that the powerful Hipparchus might take Harmodius by force, immediately formed a design, such as his condition in life permitted, for overthrowing the tyranny. [4] In the meantime Hipparchus, after a second solicitation of Harmodius, attended with no better success, unwilling to use violence, arranged to insult him in some covert way....

56.1: To return to Harmodius; Hipparchus having been repulsed in his solicitations insulted him as he had resolved, by first inviting a sister of his, a young girl, to come and bear a basket in a certain procession, and then rejecting her, on the plea that she had never been invited at all owing to her unworthiness. [*Since basket-bearers were virgins, this essentially implied that the girl wasn't.*] [2] If Harmodius was indignant at this, Aristogiton for his sake now became more exasperated than ever; and having arranged everything with those who were to join them in the enterprise, they only waited for the great feast of the Panathenaea, the sole day upon which the citizens forming part of the procession could meet together in arms without suspicion. Aristogiton and Harmodius were to begin, but were to be supported immediately by their accomplices against the bodyguard. [3] The conspirators were not many, for better security, besides which they hoped that those not in the plot would be carried away by the example of a few daring spirits, and use the arms in their hands to recover their liberty.

57.1 At last the festival arrived; and Hippias with his bodyguard was outside the city in the Ceramicus, arranging how the different parts of the procession were to proceed. Harmodius and Aristogiton had already their daggers and were getting ready to act, when seeing one of their accomplices talking familiarly with Hippias, who was easy of access to every one, they took fright,

and concluded that they were discovered and on the point of being taken; [3] and eager if possible to be revenged first upon the man who had wronged them and for whom they had undertaken all this risk, they rushed, as they were, within the gates, and meeting with Hipparchus by the Leocorium recklessly fell upon him at once, infuriated, Aristogiton by love, and Harmodius by insult, and smote him and slew him. [4] Aristogiton escaped the guards at the moment, through the crowd running up, but was afterwards taken and dispatched in no merciful way: Harmodius was killed on the spot.

58.1 In this way offended love first led Harmodius and Aristogiton to conspire, and the alarm of the moment to commit the rash action recounted.

Thucydides. *The Peloponnesian War*. London, J. M. Dent; New York, E. P. Dutton. 1910. Digitized by the Perseus Project:

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0200%3Abook%3D6%3Achapter%3D55%3Asection%3D2>

## ARISTOTLE

*In this version, a cousin, Thettalus, rather than Hipparchus, is the offending party, and the nature of the insult is different.*

Affairs were now under the authority of Hipparchus and Hippias, owing to their station and their ages, but the government was controlled by Hippias, who was the elder and was statesmanlike and wise by nature; whereas Hipparchus was fond of amusement and love-making, and had literary tastes: it was he who brought to Athens poets such as Anacreon and Simonides, and the others.

[2] Thettalus was much younger, and bold and insolent in his mode of life, which proved to be the source of all their misfortunes. For he fell in love with Harmodius, and when his advances were continually unsuccessful he could not restrain his anger, but displayed it bitterly in various ways, and finally when Harmodius's sister was going to be a Basket-carrier in the procession at the Panathenaic Festival he prevented her by uttering some insult against Harmodius as being effeminate; and the consequent wrath of Harmodius let him and the Aristogeiton to enter on their plot with a number of accomplices.

[3] At the Panathenaic Festival on the Acropolis they were already keeping a watch on Hippias (who happened to be receiving the procession, while Hipparchus was directing its start), when they saw one of their partners in the plot conversing in a friendly way with Hippias. They thought that he was giving information, and wishing to do something before their arrest they went down and took the initiative without waiting for their confederates, killing Hipparchus as he was arranging the procession by the Leocorium.

[4] This played havoc with the whole plot. Of the two of them Harmodius was at once dispatched by the spearmen, and Aristogeiton died later, having been taken into custody and tortured for a long time. Under the strain of the tortures he gave the names of a number of men that belonged by birth to families of distinction, and were friends of the tyrants, as confederates. For they were not able immediately to find any trace of the plot, but the current story that Hippias made the people in the procession fall out away from their arms and searched for those that retained their daggers is not true, for in those days they did not walk in the procession armed, but this custom was instituted later by the democracy.

[5] According to the account of people of popular sympathies, Aristogeiton accused the tyrants' friends for the purpose of making his captors commit an impiety and weaken themselves

at the same time by making away with men who were innocent and their own friends, but others say that his accusations were not fictitious but that he disclosed his actual accomplices.

[6] Finally, as do what he would he was unable to die, he offered to give information against many more, and induced Hippias to give him his right hand as a pledge of good faith, and when he grasped it he taunted him with giving his hand to his brother's murderer, and so enraged Hippias that in his anger he could not control himself but drew his dagger and made away with him. After this it began to come about that the tyranny was much harsher; for Hippias's numerous executions and sentences of exile in revenge for his brother led to his being suspicious of everybody and embittered.

*Aristotle in 23 Volumes*, Vol. 20, translated by H. Rackham. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1952. Digitized by the Perseus Project:

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0046%3Achapter%3D19%3Asection%3D1>

## **CALLISTRATUS**

*A drinking song in honor of Harmodius and Aristogeiton:*

I will bear my sword wreathed in myrtle,  
Just as you, Harmodius and Aristogeiton, did,  
when you killed the tyrant  
and gave Athens fair government.

Beloved Harmodius, you never died,  
but they say you are in the Isles of the Blessed,  
just as swift-footed Achilles is,  
and the worthy son of Tyndareus, Diomedes.

I will bear my sword wreathed in myrtle,  
Just as Harmodius and Aristogeiton did,  
when at the festival of Athena,  
you killed the tyrannical Hipparchus.

Your fame will endure forever,  
beloved Harmodius and Aristogeiton,  
since you killed the tyrant,  
and gave Athens fair government.

## **PLUTARCH**

*In recounting his stories of heroism under torture, Plutarch mentions the story of the hetaira Leaena, their good friend and shared lover?) who had known of the conspiracy of Harmodius and Aristogiton, yet refused to betray any information about the other conspirators.*

### **The Heroism of Leaena**

8. Zeno, that he might not be compelled by the tortures of his body to betray, against his will, the secrets entrusted in his breast, bit off his tongue, and spit it in the tyrant's face. Notorious also was the example of Leaena, and signal the reward which she had for being true to her trust and constant in her taciturnity. She was a courtesan with whom *Harmodius* and *Aristogiton* were very familiar; and for that reason they had imparted to her the great hopes which they had upon the success of the conspiracy against the tyrants, wherein they were so deeply engaged; while she on the other side, having drunk freely of the noble cup of love, had been initiated into their secrets through the God of Love; and she failed not of her vow. For the two paramours being taken and put to death after they had failed in their enterprise, she was also apprehended and put to the torture, to force out of her a discovery of the rest of the accomplices; but all the torments and extremities they could exercise upon her body could not prevail to make her discover so much as one person; whereby she manifested to the world that the two gentlemen, her friends, had done nothing misbecoming their descent, in having bestowed their affections upon such a woman. For this reason the Athenians, as a monument of her virtue, set up a lioness (which the name *Leaena* signifies) in brass, without a tongue, just at the entrance into the Acropolis; by the stomachful courage of that beast signifying to posterity the invincible resolution of the woman; and by making it without a tongue, denoting her constancy in keeping the secret with which she was entrusted. For never any word spoken did so much good, as many locked up in silence. Thus at one time or other a man may utter what heretofore has been kept a secret; but when a secret is once blurted forth, it can never be recalled; for it flies abroad, and spreads in a moment far and near. And hence it is that we have men to teach us to speak, but the Gods are they that teach us silence; silence being the first thing commanded upon our first initiation into their divine ceremonies and sacred mysteries. ...

Plutarch, *Plutarch's Morals*, vol. 4 > Of Garrulity, or Talkativeness, digitized at [http://oll.libertyfund.org/index.php?option=com\\_staticxt&staticfile=advanced\\_search.php](http://oll.libertyfund.org/index.php?option=com_staticxt&staticfile=advanced_search.php)

## EPAMINONDAS AND PELOPIDAS

*Epaminondas and Pelopidas, the Theban statesmen and generals, were celebrated for their devotion to each other. In a battle (B.C. 385) against the Arcadians, Epaminondas is said to have saved his friend's life. Plutarch in his Life of Pelopidas relates of them:--*

"Epaminondas and he were both born with the same dispositions to all kinds of virtues, but Pelopidas took more pleasure in the exercises of the body, and Epaminondas in the improvements of the mind; so that they spent all their leisure time, the one in hunting, and the pelestria, the other in learned conversation, and the study of philosophy. But of all the famous actions for which they are so much celebrated, the judicious part of mankind reckon none so great and glorious as that strict friendship which they inviolably preserved through the whole course of their lives, in all the high posts they held, both military and civil. . . .

For being both in that battle, near one another in the infantry, and fighting against the Arcadians, that wing of the Lacedæmonians in which they were, gave way and was broken; which Pelopidas and Epaminondas perceiving, they joined their shields, and keeping close together, bravely repulsed all that attacked them, till at last Pelopidas, after receiving seven large wounds, fell upon a heap of friends and enemies that lay dead together. Epaminondas, though he believed him slain, advanced before him to defend his body and arms, and for a long time maintained his ground against great numbers of the Arcadians, being resolved to die rather than desert his companion and leave him in the enemy's power; but being wounded in his breast by a spear, and in his arm by a sword, he was quite disabled and ready to fall, when Agesipolis, king of the Spartans, came from the other wing to his relief, and beyond all expectation saved both their lives."

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/lgbt/iol/iolo4.htm>

## THE BANQUET OF XENOPHON

*[Dr. D's note: Xenophon, like Plato (see the Symposium) makes Socrates the main speaker in his philosophical dialogs. While the love of older and younger men is designated as the most heroic variety in most Greek accounts, Xenophon discusses the nature of love in more general terms, and raises the possibility that noble love is not tied to gender.]*

[Socrates:] "Truly, to speak for one, I never remember the time when I was not in love; I know too that Charmides has had a great many lovers, and being much beloved has loved again. As for Critobulus, he is still of an age to love, and to be beloved; and Nicerates too, who loves so passionately his wife, at least as report goes, is equally beloved by her. . . . And as for you, Callias, you love, as well as the rest of us; (or who is it that is ignorant of your love for Autolycus? It is the town-talk; and foreigners, as well as our citizens, are acquainted with it. The reason for your loving him, I believe to be that you are both born of illustrious families; and at the same time are both possessed of personal qualities that render you yet more illustrious. For me, I always admired the sweetness and evenness of your temper; but much more when I consider that your passion for Autolycus is placed on a person who has nothing luxurious or affected in him; but in all things shows a vigor and temperance worthy of a virtuous soul; which is a proof at the same time that if he is infinitely beloved, he deserves to be so.

I confess indeed I am not firmly persuaded whether there be but one Venus or two, the celestial and the vulgar; and it may be with this goddess, as with Jupiter, who has many different names though there is still but one Jupiter. But I know very well that both the Venuses have quite different altars, temples and sacrifices. The vulgar Venus is worshipped after a common negligent manner; whereas the celestial one is adored in purity and sanctity of life. The vulgar inspires mankind with the love of the body only, but the celestial fires the mind with the love of the soul, with friendship, and a generous thirst after noble actions. . . .

Nor is it hard to prove, Callias, that gods and heroes have always had more passion and esteem for the charms of the soul, than those of the body: at least this seems to have been the opinion of our ancient authors. For we may observe in the fables of antiquity that Jupiter, who loved several mortals on account of their personal beauty only, never conferred upon them immortality. Whereas it was otherwise with Hercules, Castor, Pollux, and several others; for having admired and applauded the greatness of their courage and the beauty of their minds, he enrolled them in the number of the gods. . . .

You are then infinitely obliged to the gods, Callias, who have inspired you with love and friendship for Autolycus, as they have inspired Critobulus with the same for Amandra; for real and pure friendship knows no difference in sexes."

*Banquet of Xenophon § viii. (Bohn). Digitized at <http://www.sacred-texts.com/lgbt/iol/iolo4.htm>*