XENOPHON (c. 428-c. 354 BCE), SOLDIER, MILITARY COMMANDER, AND WRITER. Born into the Athenian aristocracy, Xenophon combined a long and successful career as a soldier and mercenary with producing texts in a variety of genres, including history, biography, and treatises on domestic economy and horsemanship. He was a close friend of Agesilaus, king of Sparta, whom he served for many years. His famous works include Anabasis, Cyropaedia, Memorabilia (‘The Memorable Things of Socrates’), and Hellenica, a largely personal account of his times.

Editions:
For selected early modern and modern translations of Xenophon’s works, as well as a brief account of his early modern reception, reputation, and translation, see the essay ‘Xenophon’ in “Classical Writers, their Early Modern Reputations and Translations” (Online Companion)

From Hiero: or, The Condition of a Tyrant (1713)¹

[...]  

“It should seem then,” replied Simonides, “that this desire of rule is excited in a tyrant’s mind for the sake only of venereal² pleasures, since in this case it is in his power to enjoy whatever he fancies to be most beautiful.”

“You have now mentioned the thing,” said Hiero, “wherein you may be most assured that tyrants are much inferior to private persons. For, in the first place, that marriage which we contract with a person who is richer and more powerful than ourselves seems, of all others, to be most desirable, and brings along with it both honour and pleasure to the husband. Next to this, is the marriage between those of equal conditions. But the marriage with those of an inferior rank is always looked upon as infamous and unprofitable. Unless therefore a tyrant marries a stranger,³ he must necessarily undermatch himself, by which he loses all that is most desirable in marriage. The respects and services which are rendered us by women of noble births and generous minds are beyond all others extremely pleasing to us, but such as we receive from slaves do not at all affect us, and yet, if they should leave them unperformed, they would very much excite our grief and resentment.

“As to what concerns our love to our own sex, a tyrant’s happiness is still much less in this respect than in the other, since everyone knows that enjoyments of this kind are much more transporting when they are accompanied with the passions of love, which will not easily fix its residence in a tyrant’s heart. Love delights not in pleasures of easy procurement, but in such as depend only upon hopes and expectations. For as a man takes no great satisfaction in drinking unless he be athirst, so he that is without love is deprived of the most ravishing of all enjoyments.”

Thus spoke Hiero; to which Simonides, not without a smile, thus answered: “How say you, Hiero? Would you go about to persuade that tyrants are not susceptible of this kind of

¹ 2nd edn. London, 1713. The translator is unknown. Xenophon’s Hieron presents a dialogue between Hieron I, tyrant of Syracuse (reigned, 478-467 BCE) and Simonides of Ceos (c. 556–468 BCE), Greek lyric poet, who served several powerful rulers before arriving at Hieron’s court around 476.
² venereal  sexual.
³ stranger  i.e., a person from another nation (in this context, a person of royal or noble blood).
passion? How happens it then that you are so much in love with Dailochus, surnamed ‘the Beautiful’?”

“Alas!” replied Hiero. “What I chiefly desire from him is not, I protest and vow, that pleasure which I can procure with the greatest ease and readiness, but that only, which of all others is least in the power of a tyrant to obtain. It is true, I love Dailochus, for the sake of such things which the nature of man is necessitated to solicit from those who are handsome; but what I would chiefly aim at is, that he would, in this case, gratify my desires out of pure friendship and goodwill. I would by no means make use of violent methods and should sooner be capable of suffering myself an injury than of going to wrest it from him by force. To take away from one’s enemy what they are unwilling to part with is, in my opinion, a very great pleasure; but from those we love, the most acceptable favours are, in my esteem, such as are voluntary. From those who return us love for love, everything they say or do is delightful and most pleasing: their counter-looks and glances; their very questions and answers; and more than all, their most agreeable quarrels and pretty contentions. But to force an enjoyment by a strong hand from those we love seems to me rather the part of a pirate than a lover, and yet the pirate receives some satisfaction, at least, from the thoughts of his own gain and his enemy’s loss. But to tease and vex continually with odious addresses of love a person altogether averse, to treat him as an enemy under the pretence of friendship, and to torment him with amorous purposes against his inclination must needs proceed from a disposition most impertinent and inhumane. But whenever any private subject receives a favour from the person he loves, he may depend upon it as an infallible token of true friendship, since he very well knows that this person lay under no necessary obligation to gratify him in that manner. (h) But a tyrant has no right to think himself beloved, for we very well know that those who comply through fear only make it their business to imitate, as much as they are able, the duties and offices of a true and real friendship; nor are tyrants so often liable to be ensnared by any, so much as those who most of all pretend to love them.”

[…]

[INTERPRETIVE NOTES FROM HIERO: OR, THE CONDITION OF A TYRANT]

[…]

(h) That a tyrant has no right to think himself beloved.

[In a long footnote, the translator comments on how “Nature […] has in this manner balanced the exorbitant power of tyrants, by abridging them of all the chief privileges and advantages of a humane state.” He then applies this general observation to King Charles II, whose many mistresses, the translator asserts, only pretended to love him, saving their true devotion for “some private lover.” Charles received nothing in return, not “so much as the duties and offices of a common friendship.” Near the middle of this note, the translator directly addresses the same-sex love of Hiero for Dailochus.]

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4 needs of necessity.
5 impertinent insolent, arrogantly presumptuous.
6 There are a number of interpretive notes in the original, but only (h) has been reproduced, below.
7 humane after the manner of human beings.
As for what is said here of Dailochus and Hiero’s passion for him, it was no more than the common irregularity of those times and places, as it is now also in many Christian countries, though not so frequently practiced in the Tramontane parts of Europe. Nor can I find any proper application of this passage to any of our British kings, unless it be to the person of the above-mentioned monarch’s royal grandfather, this being a monstrosity of the first impression amongst our English potentates, and can hardly be thought the product of a northern climate as that of Scotland. Upon which account it hath been thought by some, not without reason, to proceed from an Italian humour running in his veins. But be that as it will, we shall find this observation of Xenophon fully made good in the character of this wise and worthy prince, whose two chief favourites soon grew weary of his awkward and unnatural caresses, and disgusted him to the utmost in rescuing themselves by marriage from his odious solicitations. And it is well known that the murder of Overbury, though in a way most horrid and barbarous, was not near so great a crime as the marriage with the countess, which he never forgave, though he seemed sufficiently to approve the shameless, unlawful and adulterous manner in which it was accomplished. And it is more than probable that he owed his death to the black plaister and powder secretly administered to him by his other catamite, at a time when the physicians-in-ordinary were absent; for which he was afterwards questioned in the successor’s first parliament (whose elder brother was thought by many to have died long before by poison) which was dissolved upon that very account; and all persons disgraced and banished the court who had any hand in the prosecution. If therefore this assertion of our author be so plainly verified, even in limited monarchs, and such who would be tyrants if they could, how much more must it needs appear in those who

8 Tramontane parts of Europe those parts of Europe that are beyond Italy and the Alps; by extension, those barbarous, uncouth, and foreign parts of Europe.

9 the above-mentioned monarch’s royal grandfather Charles II’s grandfather was James I and VI (1566-1625), king of England (reigned, 1603-1625) and Scotland (reigned, 1567-1625), whose erotic preference for young men was widely known.

10 Italian humour i.e., Italian inclination, since the English had long considered Italy the birthplace and hotbed of sodomy. The statement may also refer to the long-standing rumour that James I and VI was actually the illegitimate son of Mary, Queen of Scots and her Italian secretary, David Rizzio.

11 whose two chief favourites ... odious solicitations The reference is probably to James’ two chief English favourites: Robert Carr, 1st earl of Somerset (1585/6-1645), and George Villiers, 1st duke of Buckingham (1592-1628). The former married Frances Howard, countess of Essex (1590-1632) in 1613, and their marriage was scandalous, involving as it did the divorce of Frances from her first husband Robert Devereux, 3rd earl of Essex on the grounds of non-consummation, but also the murder of Thomas Overbury, Carr’s close friend and advisor, contrived by Frances and Carr when Overbury proved an adamant opponent to their union. James I granted the couple a royal pardon for their roles in the murder in 1624, although they had both been freed from the Tower even earlier in 1622. Buckingham married Katherine Manners (1603?-1649) in 1620, and in fact both marriages were fully supported by James. His letters to Buckingham, in particular, show James’ sincere affection for his favourite, his favourite’s wife, and their growing family; Buckingham’s letters suggest his love for James. For selections from James and Buckingham’s correspondence, see the print anthology, pp. 102-07.

12 black plaister and powder A 1642 tract has James I assert that the illness which eventually claimed his life was due to the medicines given him (powder) and the black plaister (plaister) or bandage that was affixed to his stomach; the tract suggests that James believed his death was not natural, but the result of poison.

13 catamite a youth kept to sexually service his master.

14 physicians-in-ordinary i.e., those physicians who served in the king’s household staff; his usual physicians.

15 And ... the successor’s first parliament After James I’s death in 1625, his successor Charles I called a parliament and this body immediately began impeachment procedures against the powerful Buckingham. One of the charges was that Buckingham had poisoned James. There was and is no evidence that this was the case.

16 elder brother Charles I’s elder brother Henry Frederick, prince of Wales (1594-1612) died after falling ill very suddenly. The manner of his death and its suddenness led quickly to the widespread rumour that he had been poisoned.

17 all persons ... prosecution Charles I took a very dim view of attacks on Buckingham, who had not only been his father’s closest friend and advisor, but also his own close friend and confidante.

18 limited monarchs those whose powers are confined or limited by law/custom.
are actually such, and consequently much farther removed from the participation of all liberal enjoyments?

EDWARD BYSSHE (fl. 1702-1714), WRITER AND TRANSLATOR. A member of the Sussex gentry, Bysshe’s early life and parentage are uncertain. This obscurity is surprising since he produced a highly influential and frequently reprinted treatise on English prosody, *The Art of English Poetry* (1702), which influenced poetic practice and theory for more than a hundred years.

From *The Memorable Things of Socrates* (1722)¹⁹

**BOOK I**

[... he²⁰ said, That the gods watch over men more attentively than the vulgar²¹ imagine, for they believe there are some things which the gods observe, and others which they pass by unregarded, but he held, That the gods observe all our actions and all our words, that they dive even into our most secret thoughts, that they are present at all our deliberations, and that they inspire us in all our affairs. 'Tis astonishing therefore to consider how the Athenians could suffer themselves to be persuaded that Socrates had any ill thoughts of the deity, he who never let slip one single word against the respect due to the gods, nor was ever guilty of any action that savoured in the least of impiety; but who, on the contrary, has done and said things that could not proceed but from a mind truly pious, and that are sufficient to gain a man an eternal reputation of piety and holiness. What surprises yet more is, that some could believe that Socrates was a debaucher of young men!²² Socrates, the most sober and most chaste of all men, who cheerfully supported both cold and heat; whom no inconvenience, no hardships, nor labours could startle, and who had learnt to wish for so little that though he had scarce anything, he had always enough! Then how could he teach impiety, injustice, gluttony, impurity, and luxury?

[...] And yet he might have been accused with reason, had he but approved the vices from which himself was free, but he never fell into so base a complacency; and perceiving once that Critias was fallen in love with Euthydemus, and endeavoured to obtain of him the last favour that the voluptuous seek after,²⁴ he tried immediately to dissuade him from his design, representing to him that it was unworthy of a noble mind or of a man of honour to importune incessantly him whose esteem we would gain, and to become a beggar to him to obtain a

¹⁹ The full title reads: The Memorable Things of Socrates. Written by Xenophon. In five books. Translated into English. The second edition. To which are prefixed the life of Socrates, from the French of Monsieur Charpentier ... And the life of Xenophon.’ The work is more commonly known today as ‘The Memoirs of Socrates’ or The ‘Memorabilia.’

²⁰ he i.e., Socrates, the Greek philosopher

²¹ vulgar common people (usually connoting those who are ignorant or uneducated).

²² BYSSHE’S MARGINAL NOTE: “Refutation of the 2d article of the accusations, concerning the corruption of the youth.”

²³ BYSSHE’S MARGINAL NOTE: “Socrates blames severely the impurity of Critias who takes offence at it.”

²⁴ the last favour ... after i.e., sexual intercourse.
thing that is not honest. And Critias, neglecting this gentle chastisement, ’tis reported that Socrates in the presence of several persons, and even of Euthydemus himself, said, That Critias had a swinish itch, and wanted to rub himself on Euthydemus, as hogs are wont to rub themselves against stones. From which moment Critias always bore him a grudge, and during the Tyranny of the Thirty, of which he was one, when together with Charicles he had the care of the civil government of the city, he failed not to remember this affront, and in revenge of it, made a law to forbid teaching the art of reasoning in Athens. And having nothing to reproach Socrates with in particular, he laboured to render him odious by aspersing him with the usual calumnies that are thrown on all philosophers.

[...]  

As to love, his advice was to avoid carefully the company of beautiful persons, saying it was very difficult to be near them and escape being taken in the snare. And having been told that Critobulus had given a kiss to the son of Alcibiades, who was a very handsome youth, he held this discourse to Xenophon in the presence of Critobulus himself:

“Tell me, Xenophon, what opinion hast thou hitherto had of Critobulus? Hast thou placed him in the rank of the temperate and judicious, or with the debauched and the impudent?”

“I,” says Xenophon, “have always looked on him to be a very virtuous and prudent man.”

Socrates replied, “Change thy opinion, and believe him more rash than if he threw himself on the points of naked swords or leapt into the fire.”

“And what have you seen him do,” said Xenophon, “that gives you reason to speak thus of him?”

“Had he not the temerity,” answered Socrates, “to kiss the son of Alcibiades, who is so beautiful and charming?”

“And is this all?” said Xenophon. “Methinks I too could willingly expose myself to the same danger that he did.”

“Wretch that thou art!” replied Socrates. “Dost thou consider what happens to thee after thou hast kissed a beautiful face? Dost thou not lose thy liberty? Dost thou not become a slave? Dost thou not engage thyself in a vast expense to procure a sinful pleasure? Dost thou not find thyself in an incapacity of doing what is good, and that thou subject’st thyself to the necessity of employing thy whole time and person in the pursuit of what thou would’st despise, if thy reason were not corrupted?”

“Great Gods!” cried Xenophon. “This is ascribing a wonderful power to a kiss!”

“Art thou surprised at it?” answered Socrates. “Are there not some small animals whose bite is so venomous that it causes insufferable pains, and even the loss of the senses?”

“I know it very well,” said Xenophon, “but these animals leave a poison behind them when they sting.”

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25 Tyranny of the Thirty  The ‘Thirty’ was a group of thirty pro-Spartan tyrants who seized control of Athens after the city’s defeat in the Peloponnesian War (404 BCE); they placed severe restrictions on the rights of Athenians to participate in government and civic life, murdering or driving into exile those who opposed them.

26 One of these common calumnies was that philosophers sought out lovely boys as students in order to have access to them as sexual partners. See Lucian, ‘Chelidonium and Drose,’ Dialogues of the Courtesans, Online Companion.

27 BYSSHE’S MARGINAL NOTE: “Excellent discourse of Socrates on occasion of a kiss.”
“And dost thou think, foolish man as thou art,” added Socrates, “that kisses of love are not venomous, because thou seest not the poison? Know that a beautiful person is a more dangerous animal than scorpions, because these cannot wound unless they touch us, but beauty strikes at a distance. From what place soever we can but behold her, she darts her venom on us, and overthrows our judgement. And perhaps for this reason, Loves are represented with bows and arrows, because a beautiful face wounds us from afar. I advise thee therefore, Xenophon, when thou chancest to see a beauty, fly from it without looking behind thee. And for thee, Critobulus, I think it convenient that thou shouldst enjoin thyself a year’s absence, which will not be too long a time to heal thee of thy wound.”

From Book 2

[Towards the end of a discussion of friendship, Socrates exhorts Critobulus to seek out relationships with honourable and virtuous men, offering his advice on how to engage the affections and devotion of such men.]

“However it be, Critobulus, take courage. Endeavour only to become virtuous and then boldly pursue the friendship of honest men; this is a sort of chase in which I may be helpful to you, because I am naturally inclined to love. I attack briskly those I love, and lay out all my skill to make myself beloved by them. I endeavour to kindle in their minds a flame like mine, and to make them desire my company as ardently as I long for theirs. You stand in need of this address when you would contract a friendship with anyone. Hide not then the secrets of your soul from me, but let me know who they are for whom you have an inclination, for having made it my study to please those who were pleasing to me, I believe I have gained some experience in the pursuit of men.”

“I have longed a great while,” said Critobulus, “to learn this art, chiefly, if it may be employed to gain those who are desirable for the beauty of the body, as well as those who are valuable for the graces of the mind.”

Socrates replied, “But my method forbids to use violence and I am of [the] opinion that all men fled from the wretch Scylla, because she detained them by force, whereas the Sirens did no violence to any man and employed only their tuneful voices to detain those who passed near them, so that all stopped to hear and suffered themselves so to be insensibly charmed by the music of their songs.”

“Be sure,” said Critobulus, “that I will use no violence to them whose friendship I would gain, and therefore delay no longer to teach me your art.”

“And will you give me your word likewise,” said Socrates, “that you will not approach your mouth to theirs?”

“I promise you,” said Critobulus, “I will not, unless they are very beautiful persons.”

“You mistake the matter,” replied Socrates. “The beautiful permit not those liberties, but the ugly grant them freely enough, knowing well that if any beauty be ascribed to them, it is only in consideration of that of the soul.”

“I will not transgress in this point,” said Critobulus.

[...]