

Love among the Ruins

THE EROTICS OF DEMOCRACY
IN CLASSICAL ATHENS

Victoria Wohl

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS

PRINCETON AND OXFORD

Copyright © 2002 by Princeton University Press

Chapter III

PERVERSE DESIRE: THE EROS OF ALCIBIADES

THEORIES OF PERVERSION

Alcibiades was sexy. All the sources agree on that: he was charming and gorgeous and seductive. He aroused desire, and that desire was enmeshed with his political authority. He was said to have carried a shield emblazoned with a thunder-bearing Eros: a fitting symbol, for in him power and eros are never far apart. But what was his eros? A sexually aggressive youth, a sexually passive adult, a demagogue with the life-style of a tyrant, a Greek man with affinities for the female and the foreign, Alcibiades seems to transgress all the boundaries that bolstered Athenian masculinity and democratic citizenship. And still the demos loved him. While Cleon's debased erotics subverted the Periclean ideal of a noble lover of the city, Alcibiades' eros challenged the very notion of an ideal democratic masculinity. The eros of Alcibiades—the desire he represented and the desire he aroused—fits only uneasily within the norms of citizen sexuality and forces us to rethink not just those norms themselves but the very idea of sexual normativity, as well as the relation between the normative and the perverse.

In the study of ancient sexuality, as I noted in the introduction, much of the recent focus has been on the norms of eros, “the proper phallogocentric protocols” and “Greek canons of sexual propriety.”¹ Following Kenneth Dover's *Greek Homosexuality* and Michel Foucault's *History of Sexuality*, scholars have traced the lineaments of legitimate eros and the legitimate erastes, documenting the subtle and often conflicting pressures on his sexual behavior, attitudes, positions, and longings. We have already seen the force of normativity at work in the *Epitaphios*, a speech that hails its audience as Athenians only to the extent that they comply, or at least attempt to comply, with certain ideals of masculinity, citizenship, and Athenianness. And even if such ideals were impossible to achieve in practice, Pericles' proposal that to aim for them is the highest goal of the citizen suggests the hold they had on the Athenian psyche. To the extent

¹ Halperin 1990b.23, 36n; cf. 1997.49. Winkler also starts from the idea of sexual “protocols” (1990b.4–5) but goes on to complicate them. Cf. Dover 1978.60–109; Foucault 1985; Winkler 1990a; Halperin 1990a, 1990b; Cantarella 1992.17–53 (“the etiquette of love”); and now Williams 1999. D. Cohen 1991.171–202 criticizes these scholars but also from the standpoint of laws and norms. See also the suggestive comments of Zeitlin 1999.58–64.

that he internalized such ideals and desired to live up to them, the citizen was normativity corporealized.

The analysis of normativity has made for many important insights into the sexual mores of ancient Athens; more important, it has rescued the study of ancient sexuality from the realm of pure empiricism, allowing it to be approached as a symbolic system with an internal logic (and politics or ideology) of its own. But within this pervasive system of sexual and political norms, what is the place of transgression or perversion? In studies of ancient Greek sexuality, the perverse is often treated as the “exception that proves the rule”—a temporary transgression that ultimately (by its very illegitimacy) serves to resecure the boundaries it crosses—or else as an example of Foucault’s “perverse implantation,” the idea that power does not prohibit but in fact incites and proliferates perversions as objects, surfaces of operation, and hence supports for its ever more penetrating and wide-reaching control.² Either way, perversity is generally seen as fully contained by the norms it apparently challenges. So, for example, Winkler views the *kinaidos* as a “scare-image” that helped enforce the protocols of citizen masculinity. Similarly, Halperin examines prostitution as a perverse implantation (although he does not use that term) of the Athenian democracy, a quasi-institutional prop to the phallicism of the democratic citizen; male prostitutes, he writes, “embody all the social liabilities from which the citizen himself, by virtue of being a citizen, had been freed.”³ Although both recognize that some individuals—whether through choice or necessity—occupied these ideologically debased positions, those positions always remain in a relation of strict subordination to Athenian laws, norms, and ideals, and the very transgressions that might seem to challenge the universality or hegemony of those norms are shown in fact to reaffirm them.⁴ There would seem to be no way to act or to think beyond the normative and in a manner that is not fully subservient to it.⁵

² Foucault 1978.36–49: “The implantation of perversions is an instrument-effect: it is through the isolation, intensification, and consolidation of peripheral sexualities that the relations of power to sex and pleasure branched out and multiplied, measured the body, and penetrated modes of conduct” (48). Cf. Silverman 1992.186: “For Foucault . . . perversion has no subversive edge; it merely serves to extend the surface upon which power is exercised.”

³ Halperin 1990a.18, cf. 13–16; Winkler 1990b.46.

⁴ Dover acknowledges that “we do not fall in love only with those whose specifications are in the pattern-book” (1978.80); however, he does not theorize the ways in which we do fall in love or what relation that love bears to the pattern-book. For him perversity is purely a matter of personal taste (see “Predilections and Fantasies,” 1978.124–35). Davidson 1997 describes with great brio the “gray areas” between and around sexual norms, but does not offer a theory of these zones; he seems to view perversion as a failure of decorum (e.g., 1997.163).

⁵ D. Cohen 1991 argues this point most vehemently. He posits that because every action refers to norms, even those that transgress them reinforce them: “Having to take into ac-

Alcibiades invites us to reconsider the relation between sexual norms and their transgression, for the very essence of Alcibiades' character for the authors who discussed him was *paranomia*, abnormality, transgression, illegality, perversion. What was the relation between Alcibiades' *paranomia* and the *nomoi* (laws, customs) he transgressed? Was Alcibiades a mere anomaly, an isolated exception to Athenian sexual norms who, by his very singularity, renaturalized the normative and reaffirmed its force and necessity? There is good ancient precedent for viewing him in this way, and up to a certain point it is surely valid to see Alcibiades' flirtations with the tyrannical, the feminine, and the foreign—all marked as *paranomia*—as clarifying the boundaries that defined the Athenian citizen. After all, it was largely because of his *paranomia* that Alcibiades was driven from Athens in 415 (Thuc. 6.15.4). We might think of Alcibiades, then, as a scapegoat who bears into exile with him all that was banished from the realm of legitimacy and who, through his sacrifice, resecures the hegemony of the normal.

And yet perhaps his role is not quite so straightforward, for after banishing him from Athens, the *demos* later begged him to return; it hates him but also “loves him . . . and wants to possess him” (as Aristophanes put it, *Frogs* 1425). Moreover, the *demos* seems to have loved Alcibiades for exactly the same reason it hated him: his *paranomia*. If Alcibiades is no more than a scapegoat of illegitimacy or a “perverse implantation” of normalizing power, what of the desire he aroused? Does Alcibiades' eros “break the rules” of Athenian citizen sexuality or does it reaffirm them?

Judith Butler offers a model that will help us to escape the reductive alternatives of normativity or transgression, of obeying the “rules” of sex or breaking them. Drawing on Foucault's notion of the productivity of power, she argues that power, by virtue of its fertility, can produce consequences that it did not anticipate and that exceed or even distort its original intent.⁶ Sexual norms are regulatory ideals materialized over time through compelled performances: one has no choice but to comply with them if one is to live as a legitimate and intelligible subject.⁷ However, because these normativizing ideals are themselves generative (of practices, of subjects, of desires), they can give rise to discontinuities and contradictions; and because they are impossible to comply with fully—so that, for example, one could never obey all the contradictory injunctions to mascu-

count the norm or normative expectations in formulating a strategy of, or excuse for, deviance shows the strength of the normative structure” (23).

⁶ Butler 1990.42, 93; 1993.10, 94–95, 122; 1997.18. Now see also Žižek 1999.247–312.

⁷ Butler 1990.139–41; 1993.1–2, 13–15, 94–95, 232. Cf. Silverman 1992.185–88.

linity or femininity—they open a space for miscompliance, performances that not only fail to live up to their demands but actually displace or contest those demands.⁸ Perversity, within Butler's terms, is generated by norms and defined in relation to them but not, for that reason, completely determined by them.

Desire is a case in point. Foucault argued that prohibition creates desire: to that extent desire is merely a construct, even a modality, of power. But in Butler's rereading, not only does prohibition generate desire, but it may generate a desire that it did not expect and one that exceeds its grounding taboo.⁹ Although desire is an effect of the norms that govern it, it always exists in a productive (rather than submissive) relation to those norms. This productive interaction allows us to move beyond the either-or logic of norms and their transgression to a logic of both-and, in which perversion is generated and constrained by norms but at the same time exceeds and challenges them. Following this logic, we might accept Alcibiades as an anomaly who reaffirms the sexual and political norms he transgresses and, at the same time, view the desire he arouses as a displacement of those same norms. This does not mean that the norms cease to exist—far from it—but that within their very working a space may be opened for *paranomia*. In this space, those objects that should (within the “protocols” of sex) be most despised can become invested with a desire that, if revealed, queers not merely the erotic norms but also the sexual and political subject who defines himself by them.

The eros of Alcibiades, I suggest, is such a case. Alcibiades was the wayward son of Athens's sexual and political *nomoi*. This scion of an illustrious family was adopted by Pericles and entered Athenian politics under his auspices. A skilled orator and general, wealthy and well-connected, handsome, charismatic, he was in many ways the perfect Athenian. But with these qualities most admired by the Athenians he combined many they most despised: the violence and extravagance of a tyrant, the passivity and depravity of a *kinaidos*. Born from the same norms that generated the Epitaphios's ideal citizen-lover, Alcibiades combines within himself the legitimate and the illegitimate and blurs the distinction between the two. This son of Athens does not reproduce faithfully the ideals of his parent; nor is his a childish rebellion firmly put down by paternal chastisement. His oedipality is of a different sort.¹⁰ Aeschylus in Aristophan-

⁸ Butler 1990.141–45; 1993.121–37, 230–42. Halperin approaches this view in his argument (derived from Foucault) that heterosexuality has produced homosexuality, but he does not pursue the positive possibilities, instead concluding that “homosexuals are, in this sense, casualties of the cultural construction of exclusive heterosexuality” (1990b.45).

⁹ Butler 1993.97–99; 1997.55–61, 101–3.

¹⁰ On Alcibiades as a disobedient son, see B. Strauss 1993.148–53. Plato hints at his rivalry with Pericles (Pl. *Alc.* 105b; cf. Plut. *Alc.* 6.4) and even suggests in the (probably spuri-

anes' *Frogs* compares him to a lion cub, which Athens raises to its ruin (Ar. *Frogs* 1431–32). The adorable lion cub becomes a ravaging lion. And while this development is hardly unexpected, it takes the Athenians by surprise: they cannot control their own creation. In his waywardness, Alcibiades calls into question the very genealogy that engendered him, the lineage by which just laws produce just citizens and an unmistakable mark distinguishes the law's legitimate heir from its bastard.

Not only did Alcibiades mix inseparably within himself the ideal and its inverse; he also infused this mixture with desire. The people loved him and he loved them, and theirs was a love, as we shall see, not easily assimilable to the *dikaïos erōs* (just love) of Athens's erotic norms. Was Athens's romance with Alcibiades chaste and honorable or was it, too, *paranomos*? And what of the politics of this affair: what did it mean politically for the *demos* to love Alcibiades or to be loved by him? If Athenian sexuality was not quite so law-abiding (*dikaïos*) and rule-bound as ancient authors liked to claim (and modern scholars like to believe), then how are we to reenvision the subject of this sexuality: what sort of democratic citizen is characterized by such perverse desire?¹¹

This chapter tells three interlocking love stories. The first is the story of the man Athens loved to hate: it catalogs the transgressions that made Alcibiades such a popular object of outrage and seeks to understand their underlying logic. The second is the story of the man Athens hated to love but loved nonetheless. This is not a romance that turns out well for Athens, and its traumatic effects taint not only the city's present but also its past, revealing there too a *demos* that cannot resist what it most despises. A cure for this fatal passion will be offered from an unexpected quarter, Socratic philosophy, and this is our third Alcibiadean love story. Socrates, too, loved Alcibiades and his love promised a happier ending for both lover and beloved than that of the *demos*. But here too we will find that Alcibiades is easier to love than to hold, and in the end his *eros* eludes the embrace of philosophy no less than democracy.

These were among the stories the Athenians themselves told about Alcibiades, for they clearly took pleasure in thinking and talking about him.

ous) *Second Alcibiades* that Alcibiades might take it into his head to kill Pericles (143c8–d1). Rivalry does turn murderous with Alcibiades' other surrogate father: Socrates was put to death for his supposed corruption of youths like Alcibiades. Forde 1989.95: "Alcibiades is a true son of the Athenian regime, but the city is not big enough for the both of them."

¹¹ I do not wish to prejudge the relation of perverse desire to the law (social or psychic). In psychoanalytic theory, although perversion is not necessarily subversive as a practice, it may raise subversive theoretical questions. See Miller 1996.311: by pressuring the notion of sexual normalcy, "perversion throws the very concept of sexuality into question." On the issue of perversion and the law, see further Freud 1953b [1905].149–72; Lacan 1992.191–203; Silverman 1992.185–88; Butler 1997.83–105; Žižek 1999.47–57; Gunder-son forthcoming.

His bizarre behavior was the subject of contemporary discussion across genres—indeed, there was a whole subgenre of literature defending or, more often, reviling his various misdeeds—and remained an object of fascination for centuries afterward.¹² This tradition is remarkably consistent: Plutarch (always a problematic source for the fifth century)¹³ embellishes, but clearly does not invent wholesale, anecdotes that we find already in Aristophanes and Thucydides. The proliferation of tales of transgression around Alcibiades attests to his tremendous fecundity as a topos of ancient thought. For the Athenians, as well as for us,¹⁴ Alcibiades was a repository for fantasy: to think about him—and even more, to love him—was to reflect upon the desire that lay subjacent, but not necessarily parallel, to democratic politics. His manifold perversions, sexual and political, were one of the ways in which the Athenians thought through the force and extent, as well as the limits and exclusions, of their prevailing norms. The eros of Alcibiades, then, was more than just a naughty anthology of sexual improprieties: it offered a theory of sexual propriety and democratic normativity, a way of drawing the parameters around *nomos* and contemplating all that existed within those boundaries and beyond them.

PARANOMIA

Paranomia was the essence of Alcibiades' imagined biography.¹⁵ In Thucydides first Alcibiades' enemies and later the demos as a whole fear his "undemocratic *paranomia*" (ὁ δὲ δημοτικὴν παρανομίαν, 6.28.2) and the

¹² There were speeches both for and against Alcibiades; there were philosophical treatises on him, comic lampoons, historical treatments, biographies. The defense or abuse of Alcibiades' behavior may even have been set as a school exercise in the fourth century, if theories about the composition of Pseudo-Andocides' *Against Alcibiades* are right (see note 44). Gribble 1999.30–43 offers a diachronic account of the Alcibiades tradition and discusses the problem of the sources (cf. 149–53 on the lost rhetorical works).

¹³ Wade-Gery 1932; Stockton 1959; Stadter 1965.128–40; Wardman 1974.154–61; Andrewes 1978; Pelling 1979, 1992; Ameling 1985. On Plutarch's characterization of Alcibiades and sources for this characterization, see Stadter 1973.115–17; Russell 1995; Gribble 1999.263–82.

¹⁴ For enthusiastic endorsements of Alcibiades' charm, see, e.g., Cornford 1965 [1907].188; Ellis 1989.18 ("His actions were outrageous, yes, but they were performed with panache"); Nussbaum 1986.165–99; de Romilly 1995.17–33. Brunt 1952.95 suggests that he even charmed Thucydides ("Thucydides' judgement may have been warped by the charm and brilliance of Alcibiades' personality"); cf. Delebecque 1965; Westlake 1968.259; Pouncey 1980.115: "Thucydides, like so many of his contemporaries, was caught up against his better judgment by the fascination of the maverick genius."

¹⁵ Thuc. 6.15.4, 6.28.2; Plut. *Alc.* 2, 6, 16.2; Ps.-And. 4.10; Antiphon fr. 67 Thalheim. I say "imagined" to distance what was said about Alcibiades from what he actually did: the latter must always remain suspended in reading our gossipy and biased sources. My object here, then, is Alcibiades the discursive construct, not Alcibiades the man.

“magnitude of his *paranomia* with respect to his person” (τὸ μέγεθος τῆς τε κατὰ τὸ ἑαυτοῦ σῶμα παρανομίας, 6.15.4). On the one hand, his transgressiveness is *kata to sōma*: somatic, personal, sensual.¹⁶ On the other hand, it is political and, in particular, antidemocratic (*ou dēmotikē*): in both passages, the implication the Athenians draw from his *paranomia* is that Alcibiades is aiming at tyranny. These two aspects—the personal (specifically the sexual) and the political (specifically the antidemocratic)—are inseparable in Alcibiades. We may think of his shield with its thunder-bearing Eros: Zeus in his most authoritarian or even tyrannical form is conflated with Eros.¹⁷ So Alcibiades’ sex appeal carries with it political authority, even tyrannical power. By the same token, that authority is always imagined in sexual terms: his power makes him desirable and to desire him is to desire to be ruled by him. It is as Eros that he wields his political thunder.

At Olympia Alcibiades took first, second, and fourth place in the chariot races.¹⁸ So, too, throughout his life he occupied all possible positions—legitimate and illegitimate—at once. And just as the Athenian ideal united norms of sexuality, ethnicity, and citizenship (so that a good Athenian is a good man and a good democrat), Alcibiades, in evoking one illegitimacy, summons them all: his sexual excess, for example, implies tyranny and foreignness, while his tyrannical leanings intimate an effeminate and un-Athenian luxury. His various *paranomiai* are indiscreet, then, in more senses than one. Hence the anecdotal exhaustiveness of the biographical tradition: it is impossible to tell just one anecdote about Alcibiades, because each one implies all the others in an always expandable litany of transgressions, a fertile discourse characterized by a logic of noncontradiction and a supplemental inclusiveness: not “either-or” but “both-and . . . and.”

Let’s start with sex. An adored eromenos courted by many powerful lovers, an erastes of legendary prowess, Alcibiades was also a whore, an effeminate, a *kinaidos*. In his youth, Alcibiades was a sexually aggressive eromenos. In the *Symposium*, he himself tells of his failed attempt as a boy to seduce Socrates: how he had first arranged to spend time alone with him, then to wrestle with him at the gym, and finally to sleep with him on the same couch—all to no avail; Socrates could not be induced to

¹⁶ For Plutarch the phrase implied susceptibility to pleasure, πρὸς ἡδονὰς ἀνάγκη (Alc. 6.2). Cf. Antiphon fr. 67 Thalheim, where *paranomia* is yoked to *akolasia*, profligacy or licentiousness. Antisthenes (fr. 29 Caizzi = Ath. 5.220c) called Alcibiades *paranomos* “both in relation to women and in the rest of his habits.”

¹⁷ Plut. Alc. 16.1–2; Ath. 12.534e. On this image, see B. Strauss 1993.149–50. Munn 2000.111 suggests that Alcibiades claimed Eros as his patron deity.

¹⁸ Thuc. 6.16.2. Cf. Plut. Alc. 11.1–3; Isoc. 16.34; and the epinician written by Euripides for the occasion, quoted in Plut. Alc. 11.3 and discussed by Bowra 1960.

make a move. In his account—tongue in cheek and directed at a very specific audience—Alcibiades behaves more like the adult lover, and Socrates his young beloved (217c7–8).¹⁹

Such youthful aggressiveness opened Alcibiades to a variety of moralizing attacks. An overeager eromenos, as we saw in *Knights*, might evoke the figure of the boy-whore. Lysias, speaking against Alcibiades' son, paints the entire family with a broad brush as prostitutes (14.41) and imagines the son (imitating his father by showing himself a "most depraved young man") spending his youth lying under a cloak with his lover, drinking (14.25). In the *Symposium*, Socrates teases Alcibiades for offering his body in exchange for wisdom (218e2–219a1): intellectual enthusiasm becomes prostitution. And far from seeing him as a "scare-figure" who taught others to be good by his bad example, worried fathers feared Alcibiades' allure for their sons: in the first reference to him in extant literature (in Aristophanes' *Daitales*, performed when Alcibiades was about twenty-two), a father accuses his son of picking up his cheeky back talk from Alcibiades (Ar. fr. 205 K-A).²⁰ In the bad example he sets, Alcibiades seems not to resecure the line between charming precocity and juvenile delinquency but to shift it.

This wayward youth presages a lifetime of sexual *paranomia*, for Alcibiades continued to be a love object into adulthood. His beauty, says Plutarch, "flowered in every age and season of his physical development and as a boy, a youth, and a man made him adorable and sweet [*erasmion kai hēdun*]" (*Alc.* 1.4).²¹ Plutarch considers such "autumnal beauty" rare and expends no little energy in explaining the anomaly.²² The cause of

¹⁹ This story works within a specifically Platonic erotics, to which we will return in the final section of this chapter. Its general point is backed up, though, by an anecdote related by Antiphon, where the young Alcibiades runs away from home to live with his lover (Antiphon fr. 66 Thalheim = Plut. *Alc.* 3.1).

²⁰ Pseudo-Andocides concurs: it is because of Alcibiades that boys today spend their time in the lawcourts, not in the gymnasia, and make speeches while the older men fight wars (4.22; cf. 39). Compare Pl. *Prt.* 320a, where Socrates says Pericles separated Alcibiades from his younger brother for fear that he would corrupt the boy. Cf. Eup. fr. 385 K-A; Lys. 14.26. B. Strauss 1993.148–53 views Alcibiades as a representative of the "new youth" lampooned in Aristophanes' *Clouds*, a boy who beats his parents, disregards traditional authority, and "pimps himself with his eyes" (Ar. *Clouds* 977–80; cf. 981–83, 998–99). Vickers 1993 argues more specifically that Alcibiades was the model for Aristophanes' Pheidippides; cf. Vickers 1997.22–58; Hatzfeld 1951.34–35.

²¹ *Erasmion* and *hēdu* themselves describe a distinctly unmasculine appeal. At Aes. Ag. 605, Clytemnestra contemptuously calls Agamemnon *erasmion polei*, "the darling of the city." Ephorus uses the word of the boys in the Cretan pederastic seduction ritual of the *harpagē* (FGrH 70 F149.21). Cf. Plut. *Pomp.* 2.1.3; Lucian *Navig.* 43.1. In Orphic Hymn 58.1, Eros is *erasmion* and *hēdu*.

²² At the opening of Plato's *Protagoras*, a friend notes to Socrates that his eromenos Alcibiades is growing a beard: he is now a *kalos anēr*, a beautiful man. Cf. Ath. 12.534c,

Alcibiades' enduring appeal, he conjectures, was his "good character and physical excellence" (δι' εὐφύιαν καὶ ἀρετὴν τοῦ σώματος, *Alc.* 1.5); thus while other men were struck by his physical beauty, Socrates loved him for the *aretē* that he saw shining clearly in his face (*Alc.* 4.1). Socrates in the *First Alcibiades* (attributed to Plato) takes a similar tack: the true lover, he says, loves the soul, not the body of his beloved, and this is why he alone of Alcibiades' admirers continues to hang on even after Alcibiades has begun to lose the bloom of youth (131c–e). This moralization is an attempt to legitimate Alcibiades' sex appeal by leeching it of its sex, but in distinguishing so firmly between philosophical desire and common desire, it merely highlights the fact that Alcibiades was attractive to adult men in a way that adult men were not supposed to be.²³

A comic lampoon of Alcibiades' son—and through him of Alcibiades himself—intimates the scandal of Alcibiades' "adorable sweetness." "He walks wantonly, dragging his robe, so that he may seem as much like his father as possible, and he holds his neck at a slant and lisp" (βαδίζει διακεχλιδῶς, θοιμάτιον ἔλκων, ὅπως ἐμπερῆς μάλιστα τῷ πατρὶ δόξειεν εἶναι, κλασσαυχενεύεται τε καὶ τραυλίζεται, Archippus fr. 48 K-A = *Plut. Alc.* 1.7). Each of these details cries out sexual impropriety. First, the wanton walk.²⁴ *Diakēkhlidōs* (wantonly) is defined in Hesychius's lexicon as "leading a dissolute life through luxury" (διαρέων ὑπὸ τρυφῆς). Its root, *khlidē* (delicacy, luxury, effeminacy, wantonness), generally a pejorative term in classical Attic, describes the self-indulgence and softness that results from excessive wealth and its use for personal luxuries.²⁵ Artic-

where Socrates' disciple Antisthenes is said to have commented upon Alcibiades' lifelong youth. In Thucydides, too, Alcibiades' youth is always an issue (5.43.2, 6.12.2–13.1, 6.17.1); cf. *Pl. Alc.* 123d4–7. De Romilly 1995.30 remarks that "Alcibiade n'a jamais été vieux."

²³ Cf. *Plut. Alc.* 24.5: "Alcibiades melted every disposition and captured every heart with the charm of his day-to-day company and conversation. Even for those who feared and envied him, being with him face-to-face provided pleasure and good cheer" (ταῖς δὲ καθ' ἡμέραν ἐν τῷ συσχολάζειν καὶ συνδιαιτᾶσθαι χάρισιν οὐδὲν ἦν ἄτεγκτον ἦθος οὐδὲ φύσις ἀνάλωτος, ἀλλὰ καὶ <τοῖς> δεδιόσι καὶ φθονοῦσιν ὅμως τὸ συγγενέσθαι καὶ προσιδεῖν ἐκεῖνον ἡδονὴν τινα καὶ φιλοφροσύνην παρεῖχε). The metaphors are sexual: Eros itself is said to capture and melt hearts. Melting: Archil. fr. 196W; Sappho fr. 130 *PLF*; Alcman fr. 3 *PMG*; Carson 1986.7, 39–45, 115. Capturing: *Pl. Phdr.* 252c.

²⁴ On gait as a determinant of masculinity, see Bremmer 1991 (esp. 16–23); Gleason 1995.55–81, esp. 60–62; Gunderson 2000a.155 (cf. 59–86).

²⁵ Xenophon, for example, contrasts the boy who "revels in luxury and gives himself airs with daintiness" to one who shows "force, endurance, manliness, and modesty" (οὐχ ἀβρότητι χλιδαινομένου οὐδὲ μαλακίᾳ θρυπτομένου, ἀλλὰ πᾶσιν ἐπιδεικνυμένου ῥώμην τε καὶ καρτερίαν καὶ ἀνδρείαν καὶ σωφροσύνην, *Xen. Symp.* 8.8). *Khlidē* is often linked with *truphē* or *habrotēs* (*Pl. Symp.* 197d6–7); with expensive ornaments (*Eur. Ion* 26; *Rhes.* 960); and with insolence (*Aes. PV* 436; *Soph. OT* 888). See also *Hdt.* 6.127; *Aes. PV* 466; *Eur. Cycl.* 500 (of a hetaira); *Ar. Lys.* 640.

ulating bad sexuality to bad sociality, *khlidē* connotes the inverse of the hard and manly warrior we saw in the Epitaphios. There the Athenians “love beauty with frugality [*met’ euteleias*] and love wisdom without softness [*aneu malakias*].” Alcibiades is notorious for both *malakia* (Plut. *Alc.* 16.1) and *poluteleia* (Plut. *Alc.* 16.1, 23.5; Ps.-And. 4.31; Thuc. 6.12.2) and Alcibiades *filis*, imitating Alcibiades *père*, combines these qualities in his wanton walk.²⁶

Khlidē’s effeminate luxury characterizes everything about the young man’s bearing in this comic passage. He drags his robe behind him. Aristotle sees this as a sign of *malakia* and an enervating luxuriousness (*Nic. Eth.* 1150b1–5). In comedy it indicates both profligacy and affectation: the sort of man who drags his cloak is also liable to anoint his skin and be much admired by teenagers.²⁷ The poet is slandering the younger Alcibiades, but the father, too, was known to drag his robes behind him, and purple robes at that. This spectacle Plutarch offers as a sign not only of his extravagance but also of effeminacy (καὶ θηλότητας ἐσθήτων ἀλουργῶν ἔλκομένων δι’ ἄγορας, καὶ πολυτέλειαν ὑπερήφανον, *Alc.* 16.1).²⁸ The younger Alcibiades also lisps, an affectation he gets from his father, whose own lisp, says Plutarch, “gave his speech a persuasion that brought pleasure” (*Alc.* 1.6).²⁹ And to hold one’s neck at a slant—that is a sure sign of a *kinaidos*.³⁰

²⁶ For another abusive comparison of the father and the son, see Lysias 14, composed in 395 against the younger Alcibiades. As a child, Lysias says (25), he imitated his father in drinking and partying until daybreak, causing such a scandal that he was even taken to task by his father, who himself taught such things to others (26). The son should have attempted to redeem the crimes of his father, not to rival them (29–30); he deserves the death penalty merely for being the son of Alcibiades (30). See Gribble 1999.93: Alcibiades Jr. is “presented in our texts as a facsimile, a rhetorical adjunct, of his father.”

²⁷ Ehippus fr. 19 K-A; cf. Dem. 19.314. Eup. fr. 104 K-A, which parodies the trope, may refer to Alcibiades: “O Miltiades and Pericles, no longer allow those young buggers to rule, dragging the generalship around their ankles” (καὶ μηκέτ’, ὦ Μιλτιάδῃ καὶ Περικλέεσσι, ἔασσατ’ ἄρχειν μετράκια κινούμενα, ἐν τοῖν σφυροῖν ἔλκοντα τὴν στρατηγίαν).

²⁸ Cf. Lib. fr. 50b. Satyrus also speaks of him entering the theater as choregos in purple robes, “admired not only by men but even by women” (Ath. 12.534c, on which P. Wilson 1997.102).

²⁹ For this famous lisp, see Ar. *Wasps* 44–46; cf. Anon. schol. ad Arist. *Rhet.* 1412a28. Vickers believes Alcibiades’ lisp was parodied throughout Aristophanic comedy (e.g., Vickers 1989a.47–50; 1989b.267–70; 1993.606–8; 1997.xvii–iii, 24–26). In antiquity lisps seem to have betokened age more than gender: children lisp (Anon. ad Arist. *Rhet.* 1404b15; cf. Arist. *Probl.* 902b16–29; *HA* 492b32–34, 536b5–8; *PA* 660a26–28; Callicles at Pl. *Gorg.* 485b7–c2 judges a grown man speaking like a child to be ridiculous and unmanly and deserving of a beating). Thus we can see his charming lisp as part of Alcibiades’ role as eternal eromenos.

³⁰ Arist. *Phgn.* 808a12–13. Compare the unidentified comic fragment, Adespota 137 K-A: “I don’t know in the least how to whisper or walk around like a degenerate, holding my neck at a slant like all those other *kinaidoi* I see around here in the city, smeared in pitch

When Alcibiades Jr. walks around with his robe trailing, lisping, and holding his neck aslant, he is reenacting within his own bodily hexis his father's entire sexual history, which united the two complimentary extremes of effeminate luxuriance and indiscriminate sexual voracity.³¹ A comic poet cited by Athenaeus speaks to this combination, referring to "that dainty Alcibiades . . . whom Sparta wants for adultery" ('Αλκιβιάδην τὸν ἀβρὸν . . . ὃν ἡ Λακεδαίμων μοιχὸν ἐπιθυμεῖ λαβεῖν, Adespota 123 K-A = Ath. 13.574d). The joke is that Sparta simultaneously wants to capture this adulterer (who scandalously seduced the Spartan queen, Plut. *Alc.* 23.7) and wants to "take" for its own pleasure this "adorable and sweet" Athenian. Pherecrates pushes the paradox one step further in his pithy line: "Although he is not a man, Alcibiades, it seems, is now the man [husband] to many women" (οὐκ ὢν ἀνὴρ γὰρ Ἀλκιβιάδης, ὡς δοκεῖ, ἀνὴρ ἀπασῶν τῶν γυναικῶν ἐστὶ νῦν, fr. 164 K-A). Aristophanes encapsulates this unsavory combination of passivity and depraved excess in a single word: Alcibiades is *euruprōktos*, a sexual degenerate (*Ach.* 716; cf. *Eup.* fr. 385.4 K-A).³²

Luxuriance, extravagance, and incontinent pleasure associate Alcibiades not just with masculine excess but with the female, for it was women who were thought to be, as Plutarch says of Alcibiades, "easily swayed toward pleasures" (πρὸς ἡδονὰς ἀγώγιμος, *Alc.* 6.2).³³ Plutarch tells an anecdote about a wrestling match in which the young Alcibiades bit his opponent. This unsportsmanlike conduct his opponent called the behavior of a girl; Alcibiades responded that it was rather the act of a lion (*Alc.* 2.2–3). Around Alcibiades such distinctions collapse: is he a girl or a lion? Plutarch compares Alcibiades to Helen, not for his effeminate beauty and

[i.e., by angry husbands who caught them *in flagrante*]." See further Lucian *Rhet. Disc.* 11, where the guide on the easy road to rhetoric is said to have a wiggle in his walk and a slant in his neck (as well as a feminine look in his eye and a sweet voice). On this passage and the logic of "bent" and "straight" manliness in oratorical theory, see Gunderson 2000a.155–59. Further references to the effeminacy of a slanted neck are cited by Gleason 1995.63 nn.37, 38.

³¹ Foucault 1985.47: "For a man, excess and passivity were the two main forms of immorality in the practice of the *aphrodisia*." Cf. Davidson 1997.167–82.

³² For similar sentiments, see *Eup.* fr. 171 K-A (Ath. 12.535a–b): "A. Let Alcibiades come out from the women. B. Why don't you stop talking nonsense and go home and give your wife a workout" (A. Ἀλκιβιάδης ἐκ τῶν γυναικῶν ἐξίτω. Β. τί ληρεῖς; οὐκ οἶκαδ' ἐλθὼν τὴν σεαυτοῦ γυμνάσεις δάμαρτα;); D.L. 4.49: "Bion blamed Alcibiades, saying that when he was a young man he led husbands away from their wives, and when he was older, he led wives away from their husbands" (τὸν Ἀλκιβιάδην μεμφόμενος ἔλεγεν ὡς νέος μὲν ὦν τοὺς ἀνδρας ἀπάγοι τῶν γυναικῶν, νεανίσκος δὲ γενόμενος τὰς γυναῖκας τῶν ἀνδρῶν); Xen. *Mem.* 1.2.24: Alcibiades was chased by many haughty women for his beauty and ruined by many men for his power. Cf. Davidson 1997.165–66; Gribble 1999.73–79.

³³ Foucault 1985.83–86; Padel 1992.88–113; Davidson 1997.176.

desirability but for his changeable nature (*Alc.* 23.6).³⁴ Like Helen imitating the voices of their wives to lure the Greek soldiers out of the wooden horse (Homer *Od.* 4.277–79), Alcibiades can make himself a reflection of every man's desire: "When acting naturally was likely to upset those he happened to be with, he always put on an artificial exterior suited to them" (Plut. *Alc.* 23.5). Like a woman, Alcibiades hides his true nature behind a seductive but false exterior.³⁵ This cosmetic *kharis*, Plutarch says, was his greatest resource in his "hunt for men" (*Alc.* 23.4).

As this hunt crossed national boundaries, Alcibiades changed character. In Sparta he "conquered the people by his demagoguery and bewitched them by his Spartan life-style" (τοὺς πολλοὺς τὸτ' ἔδημαγάγει καὶ κατεγοήτευε τῇ διαίτῃ λακωνίζων, Plut. *Alc.* 23.3). The "spell" he exerts is not merely political but also sexual; the very next anecdote Plutarch relates has Alcibiades seducing the Spartan king's wife and fathering a child by her (*Alc.* 23.7; cf. Eup. fr. 385 K-A; Ath. 12.535b). His adoption of Spartanness is so alluring to the Spartans that he is even able to insinuate himself into their royal line. Likewise, in Persia Tissaphernes is so beguiled by Alcibiades' *kharis* that he names his garden resort after him, something Persian potentates usually do for their wives.³⁶

Throughout his career Alcibiades shows an opportunistic ability to change ethnic identity, as if this were just another robe he trailed behind him. "In Sparta he was athletic, frugal and austere-looking; in Ionia he was sybaritic and relaxed; in Thrace, a heavy drinker; in Thessaly, an avid horseman; and when he was staying with the satrap Tissaphernes, he surpassed Persian magnificence with his pomp and extravagance" (Plut. *Alc.* 23.5; Athenaeus attributes the same sentiment to Satyrus, Ath. 12.534b). In the Epitaphios, Pericles posited certain characteristics—free-

³⁴ Germain 1972.268 n.43 suggests that Alcibiades was nicknamed Helen because of his beauty and morals. Vickers 1989a sees references to Alcibiades in Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazousae* and Euripides' *Helen* and argues that "when Aristophanes parodied *Helen* he probably . . . lampooned Alcibiades in the role of the heroine" (53). Cf. Munn 2000.133–34. On Helen's indeterminability, see Bergren 1983; Suzuki 1989.18–91; Bassi 1993; Austin 1994.83–89, 114–17; Worman 1997.

³⁵ On artificiality and femininity, see Bergren 1983; Zeitlin 1996.361–63, 375–416. Alcibiades was said to "change his *phusis* more than Proteus" (Lib. *Decl.* 12.42). Plutarch clearly feels some anxiety on the question of Alcibiades' *phusis*. He posits that the mutations are just a false front to suit changing circumstances; his *tropos* and *ēthos* do not change (*Alc.* 23.5). This would be more convincing, however, if the terms Plutarch uses for Alcibiades' essential nature did not also bespeak artificiality: he puts on his artificial appearance (*skhēma*) whenever he fears offending others with the nature that he uses (τῇ φύσει χρώμενος, 23.5). The contrast between his true essence and his adopted persona is lost, and his own "nature" becomes just another tool at his disposal.

³⁶ Plut. *Alc.* 24.5; Pl. *Alc.* 123b3–c3. Even as a youth, Alcibiades was sought by foreigners as well as citizens, all vying to please him (Plut. *Alc.* 4.1). Proclus (Pl. *Alc.* 114.14–17) says he was called the *eromenos* of all Greece.

dom, autarky, nobility—as inherent to the Athenian character: these are a birthright of *phusis*, as ineradicable for the Athenian as they are unattainable for the non-Athenian. But for Alcibiades the difference between Athenian and Spartan (or Ionian or Thracian or Thessalian or Persian) seems to have been one not of essence but of performance. If a man can so easily and persuasively imitate foreignness, can he equally imitate Athenianness?

Alcibiades' speech before the Spartans in Thucydides is illustrative.³⁷ There Alcibiades implies that, although he lived in Athens and was a prominent leader of the democracy, he was really a crypto-Laconian. His participation in the “acknowledged folly” of democracy, he claims, was simply a matter of conservatism (this was the constitution handed down to him, and one under which Athens had prospered) and pragmatism: “As the city was run democratically, it was necessary for the most part to conform to the prevailing circumstances” (6.89.4). In Plutarch's anecdotes, Alcibiades changes his habits and life-style to match those of his foreign hosts; in Thucydides, Alcibiades represents his Athenian identity as precisely the same sort of assimilation. Of course, the rhetoric here is manifestly self-serving; still, when read against the similar quick-change acts recounted by Plutarch, it calls into doubt the very idea of an essential national character.³⁸

If “Athenian” is a matter of appearance, not essence, so too, it seems, is “democrat.” Just as Alcibiades combined within himself both *erastes* and *eromenos*, both aggressive masculinity and effeminacy, both Athenian and foreigner, so too he was simultaneously democrat and tyrant. On the one hand, Alcibiades was a child of the democracy: he curried favor with the *demos* and longed for a political preeminence even beyond that of Pericles (Pl. *Alc.* 105b). In this, his ambition, while so avid as to arouse suspicion, still runs in democratic channels. On the other hand, we hear that from the first he was looking for a larger venue for his glory, taking as his rivals not the other Greek demagogues but the kings of Persia and Sparta (Pl. *Alc.* 105b5–c6; cf. Pl. *Alc. II.* 141). His enemies charged that he was aiming at tyranny (Thuc. 6.15.4; Plut. *Alc.* 16.2; Isoc. 16.38). But to the extent that his ultimate desire was, as Plato's Socrates says, “to

³⁷ On this speech, see Cogan 1981.113–19; Forde 1989.96–108.

³⁸ A fragment of Antiphon says the youthful Alcibiades learned *paranomia* and *aselgeia* (wantonness) in Abydos and brought these habits back with him to Athens (fr. 67 Thalheim): even his most native qualities are imported. Note, too, the jarring juxtaposition of the Athenian and the Spartan in the description of Alcibiades' influence in Sparta: “He conquered the people by his demagoguery . . . and by his Spartan life-style” (τούς πολλούς τότε ἔδημαγώγει . . . τῇ διαίτῃ λακωνίζων, Plut. *Alc.* 23.3). He is simultaneously an Athenian demagogue and a Spartan. J. Hall 1997 addresses the issue of ethnic identity in the ancient world.

fill all men with his name and power” (Pl. *Alc.* 105c3–4), he was relatively indifferent to political forms. His enemy Phrynichus said (and Thucydides agrees) that Alcibiades did not care about either democracy or oligarchy (Thuc. 8.48.4; cf. Plut. *Alc.* 25.6). He was exiled by the democracy but, after its dissolution, was made no more welcome by the oligarchy (Thuc. 8.68.3); his aristocratic life-style alienated the demos, while his populist appeal antagonized the elite. Politically, as well as personally, he seems to have been *paranomios*, to have fit only ambiguously within the political forms of the day.³⁹

Pseudo-Andocides complains that Alcibiades had the words of a demagogue and the deeds of a tyrant (4.27), and many of his political ventures might indeed be considered to show a tyrannical contempt for the laws of the city: his conducting state business as though it were his personal affairs, for example, or initiating private negotiations with Athens’s enemies.⁴⁰ But more than his politics, it was his life-style that aroused animosity and opened him to charges of tyranny. His extravagance, effeminacy, sexual voracity, and foreign affiliations all chime with the Athenian imagination of the tyrant: self-indulgent and sybaritic, emptying state coffers to pay for his pleasures, making the polis an instrument of his own insatiable enjoyment.⁴¹

Paranomia in and of itself was a cause for concern. “The majority feared the magnitude of his *paranomia* in regard to his own person in his daily life and the state of mind in which he performed every single action he undertook; as a result they turned against him, thinking that he desired tyranny” (φοβηθέντες γὰρ αὐτοῦ οἱ πολλοὶ τὸ μέγεθος τῆς τε κατὰ τὸ ἑαυτοῦ σῶμα παρανομίας ἐς τὴν δίαιταν καὶ τῆς διανοίας ὧν καθ’ ἕν ἕκαστον ἐν ὧτ’ γίγνεται ἐπρασσεύειν, ὡς τυραννίδος ἐπιθυμοῦντι πολέμιοι καθέστασαν, Thuc. 6.15.4).⁴² Alcibiades’ personal *paranomia* itself seems to indicate tyranny, to be nondemocratic (*ou dēmotikēn paranomian*,

³⁹ Cf. Forde 1989.114, who argues that Alcibiades’ political ambition was so pure, it was almost apolitical (cf. 198–99); contra, Pusey 1940; Hatzfeld 1951.135, 355–56. Such indifference to constitutional forms in itself opened him to the charge of tyranny, for only a tyrant is above politics.

⁴⁰ Thuc. 6.89.2; Plut. *Alc.* 14.2–3, 15.5. On Alcibiades’ tyrannical leanings, see further Thuc. 6.15.4, 6.28.2; Isoc. 16.38; Pl. *Alc.* 105c; Ps.-And. 4.16, 23–24, 27–28; Plut. *Alc.* 16.2, 16.7; Seager 1967; Palmer 1982.121–24; Forde 1989.92–94, 184–87; Gribble 1999.140–41; Munn 2000.112–14. Cf. Lib. *Decl.* 12.51, addressing Alcibiades: τυραννίδος ἐπραστής τυγχάνεις.

⁴¹ On luxury, effeminacy, and tyranny, see Schmitt-Pantel 1979; Bushnell 1990.20–25; Kurke 1992; Griffith 1995.84–85. I return to this in chapter 5.

⁴² Cf. Plut. *Alc.* 16.2: Alcibiades’ prominent rivals fear “his contempt and *paranomia* as tyrannical and alien” (τὴν ὀλιγωρίαν αὐτοῦ καὶ παρανομίαν ὡς τυραννικὰ καὶ ἀλλόκοτα). On Thuc. 6.15.4, see Forde 1989.76–77; Peremans 1956. Paranomic desires characterize the tyrant in Plato’s *Republic* (571b5).

6.28.2). If being an Athenian means conforming to certain norms of sexual and political behavior, then disregard for those norms signals not only bad masculinity but also a skewed relation to democracy. *Paranomia* is by nature *ou dēmotikē*, for only the tyrant lives beyond custom or law.

Alcibiades' *paranomia*, moreover, often took the form of *hubris*, contemptuous acts of violence against other citizens.⁴³ Pseudo-Andocides in the speech *Against Alcibiades* recounts with a certain relish the specifics of his innumerable crimes.⁴⁴ The oration opens with mock aporia: where to begin amid such a throng of adulteries and rapes and other acts of violence and *paranomia* (Ps.-And. 4.10)? The author manages to find a foothold and goes on to detail quite a number of prejudicial anecdotes. Alcibiades struck a rival choregos and then bribed the judges (Ps.-And. 4.20; Plut. *Alc.* 16.5; Dem. 21.147), imprisoned a famous painter in his house and forced him to paint it (Ps.-And. 4.17; Plut. *Alc.* 16.5; Dem. 21.147), won his Olympic victories in a chariot stolen from a fellow Athenian (Ps.-And. 4.25–27; Plut. *Alc.* 12.2–3), plotted the murder of his wealthy brother-in-law (Ps.-And. 4.15; Plut. *Alc.* 8.2–3).⁴⁵ What won't he do, Pseudo-Andocides asks in conclusion, "having shown the Greeks that they should not be surprised if he attacks one of them, because he does not treat his fellow citizens as equals, but robs from some, strikes others, imprisons some, and extorts money from others. He shows that democracy is worthless, practicing the words of a demagogue but the deeds of a tyrant" (Ps.-And. 4.27).

Not only is *hubris* in itself associated with tyrants, but Alcibiades' *hubrismata*, like those of the legendary tyrants, often took a particularly sexual cast.⁴⁶ We hear from Plutarch and Pseudo-Andocides about his

⁴³ Xenophon calls him "the most uncontrolled and violent man in the democracy" (τῶν ἐν τῇ δημοκρατίᾳ πάντων ἀκρατέστατός τε καὶ ὑβριστότατος, Xen. *Mem.* 1.2.12). On Alcibiades' *hubris*, see Fisher 1992.87–88, 97–98, 148–49.

⁴⁴ See also Dem. 21.143–51; Lys. 14.30, 37, 41. *Against Alcibiades* is almost certainly not by Andocides, but it is probably classical (fourth or even fifth century): Raubitschek 1948; Burn 1954; Gomme, Andrewes, and Dover 1970.287; Edwards 1995.131–36; Gribble 1997, 1999.154–58. Furley 1989 argues that it was composed in 415; Gribble (1997.386–89, 1999.34) places it in the late fourth century. Constructed as a debate over who should be ostracized in 415, Alcibiades, Nicias, or the speaker, the speech is widely considered to be a rhetorical exercise.

⁴⁵ Plutarch recounts all of the same crimes and also adds to the list: he struck a teacher (7.1), slew one of his attendants in a palaistra (3.1), struck his future father-in-law Hipponikos just for a laugh (ἐπὶ γέλωτι, 8.2). On the relation between Plutarch and Pseudo-Andocides, see Burn 1954; Gribble 1997.389–91. There is also a story told in the testimonia to Eupolis that Alcibiades, angered by the comic poet's portrayals of him, threw him into the ocean and killed him: see the testimonia to Eupolis's *Baptai* in PCG; Vickers 1997.xvii–iii.

⁴⁶ On tyranny and *hubris*, see, e.g., Soph. *OT* 873; Fisher 1992.27–31, 128–29, 328–42, 361–67; McGlew 1993.52–86. Aristotle (*Pol.* 1310a40–1313a17) makes sexual *hubris* a defining feature of tyranny.

disgraceful treatment of his many erastai and about the countless women, slave and free, he had debauched; when his long-suffering wife tried to sue for divorce, he abducted her from the archon's office and carried her through the streets.⁴⁷ He was even rumored to have had sex with his mother, sister, and daughter—a sexual proclivity often associated with tyrants.⁴⁸ Pseudo-Andocides is particularly outraged at his taking a Melian woman as a mistress and having a child by her after he had been responsible for the destruction of her island and the murder of all its male citizens (Ps.-And. 4.22–23; cf. Plut. *Alc.* 16.5). He begot a child whose mother he had enslaved, whose relatives he had killed and city he had destroyed, a child whose birth was more unnatural (*paranomōterōs*) than that of Aegisthus (Ps.-And. 4.22). The analogy is rather forced (Aegisthus was the product of incest), but it suits the author's bilious purpose, painting Alcibiades—vaguely but vividly—as a mythic tyrant, capable of any imaginable sexual horror, be it rape, incest, or even worse. “When you watch such things in tragedies you're horrified,” he chides the Athenians, “but when you see them happening in the city, you think nothing of them” (Ps.-And. 4.23). His Alcibiades is a stage tyrant, a monster of illegality, insolent violence, and sexual aberration.

While for this author (probably writing after his death) Alcibiades is a figure from myth or tragedy, for his contemporaries his tyrannical aspirations had a more concrete political valence. David Gribble (1999) has argued in depth that Alcibiades' biography was essentially a story of the relation between the superlative individual and the democratic city and that the ambivalence the Athenians felt toward him reflected their general unease toward their “great men.”⁴⁹ *Philotimia*, the thirst for honor that leads aristocrats to use their wealth for the good of the city, was a passion

⁴⁷ Plut. *Alc.* 8.4–5; Ps.-And. 4.14. Pseudo-Andocides considers this treatment of his loyal wife the most egregious *hubris*, but Plutarch excuses Alcibiades' behavior, speculating that the divorce law was designed for this purpose (*Alc.* 8.6; cf. Russell 1995.198–200). On Alcibiades' *hubris* toward his erastai, see Plut. *Alc.* 4.4–5, and on his sexual *hubris* more generally, Plut. *Alc.* 8.4; Littman 1970.

⁴⁸ Antisth. fr. 29 Caizzi (= Ath. 5.220c); Lys. *Pros Alcibiaden peri Oikias* (fr. 5 Thalheim); Lys. 14.28, 41. See also Pl. *Alc. II.* 138b, 143d, where Alcibiades is compared with Oedipus. Alcibiades was also rumored to have had an erotic relation with his uncle, who was also his fellow debaucher. He shared a hetaira with this same uncle and, when a daughter was born from the peculiar union, shared the daughter, too, each claiming the other was the father when he was with her (Lys. fr. 5 Thalheim = Ath. 12.535a); cf. Gribble 1999.76 n.207.

⁴⁹ Gribble 1999.29: “The key to understanding the presentation of Alcibiades lies in civic discourses about the relationship between individual and city, discourses which portrayed him as the sort of figure who could not be incorporated in the city, as ‘outside’ the city.” Thus for Gribble, too, “the problem of Alcibiades” is a problem of the city's relation to what it perceives as exceeding its boundaries, although he conceives of those boundaries in purely political and sociological terms.

with Alcibiades and drove him to extravagances that evoked tyranny: horse breeding, lavish houses, Olympic victories.⁵⁰ In his speech in support of the Sicilian Expedition, he unabashedly argues for the public benefit derived from his quest for personal honor (Thuc. 6.16).⁵¹ His exorbitant Olympic victory, he argues, brought glory to Athens as well as to himself and his family (Thuc. 6.16.1).⁵² His opponent Nicias has a different interpretation: Alcibiades wants to glorify himself and raise money for his costly pleasures at the public expense, to “show off his personal brilliance to the detriment of the city,” and to reap private benefit from disastrous public policies (Thuc. 6.12.2).⁵³

Managing the hazy line between socially beneficial *philotimia* and personally aggrandizing *megaloprepeia* was a tricky business at the best of times. Alcibiades was imagined to live his life on this line, and on which side of it he falls at any given moment depends on whom you ask: Plutarch says that *philotimia* was a euphemism with which the Athenians excused Alcibiades’ serious misdemeanors (*Alc.* 16.4). Meanwhile, many of the actions Plutarch attributes to *philotimia* Pseudo-Andocides sees as a profound insult to democracy.⁵⁴ And while his extravagant and hubristic life marked him as potentially tyrannical in the eyes of the people, no less disturbing to his elite rivals was his influence with the demos: why would a man of his status court the masses unless he were aiming at a populist tyranny?⁵⁵

⁵⁰ Thuc. 6.12.2, 6.15.3; Isoc. 16.32–34; Xen. *Mem.* 1.2.12–14; Plut. *Alc.* 16.4. On Alcibiades’ *philotimia*, see also P. Wilson 2000.152. *Philotimia* is one of the organizing principles of Plutarch’s biography, a unifying thread in a life of constant change.

⁵¹ On this speech and its negotiation of *megaloprepeia*, see Macleod 1975; Kohl 1977.83–108; Forde 1989.78–95; Yunis 1996.105–7; Ober 1998.110–11. Kurke 1991.171–77 points out how closely it skirts tyranny.

⁵² He personally entered seven chariot teams (something never done before by king or private citizen, Plut. *Alc.* 11.1; cf. Thuc. 6.16.2) and won three of the top four prizes; although he competed as an individual, his personal tent was bigger than the state tent (Ps.-And. 4.30), and his success, Plutarch says, “outstripped in splendor and renown all the love of glory possible in these affairs” (*Alc.* 11.2). Further, his victory was underwritten by all the cities of Greece: the Ephesians equipped his tent, the Chians gave him animals, the Lesbians provided wine (Plut. *Alc.* 12.1). Athenaeus puts it bluntly: Alcibiades used the allied cities as though they were his slave girls (Ath. 12.534d).

⁵³ Thucydides implicitly endorses this evaluation when he offers only personal motives for Alcibiades’ enthusiasm for the Sicilian Expedition: enmity for Nicias, desire for military command and glory, and the expectation of personal profit, both in wealth and reputation (6.15.2). Cf. Ar. *Frogs* 1429: Alcibiades is “resourceful for himself, but at a loss when it comes to the city.” On Alcibiades’ confusion of public interest and private, see Gribble 1999.55–89, 135–36; Balot 2001.166–68.

⁵⁴ Compare, for example, their two versions of the anecdote about Alcibiades’ kidnapping of Agatharchus, Plut. *Alc.* 16.5; Ps.-And. 4.17.

⁵⁵ Thuc. 6.29.3; Isoc. 16.38. On this strategy for tyranny, see Arist. *Pol.* 1310b15–17; Andrewes 1956.100–115.

For the demos and elite alike, then, Alcibiades' *paranomia* seemed to point toward tyranny and it was for this that he was exiled. Alcibiades' name was linked to the affair of the Mysteries and the Herms in 415.⁵⁶ His enemies exploited this opportunity: at their instigation he was recalled from the war front; however, he fled rather than face a trial before the demos and was condemned in absentia (Thuc. 6.61). Whether or not he was actually involved in these crimes, his life-style made the association seem plausible, even irrefutable. A man who collapsed the public interest and the private, who used public utensils at his own table (Ps.-And. 4.29; Plut. *Alc.* 13.3) and made private treaties with Athens's enemies (Thuc. 5.43, 45; Plut. *Alc.* 14), who made a mockery of every canon of Athenian propriety—such a figure might well be thought to parody the Mysteries in his own home: this gesture occupies the same confused space between public and private, legality and transgression as Alcibiades' imagined behavior.⁵⁷ Likewise, a man whose constant *hubris* smacked of tyranny might justly be linked with the mutilation of the Herms: this act of public vandalism was taken by some as part of “a conspiracy plotting revolution and the overthrow of the democracy” (Thuc. 6.27.3), an “oligarchic or tyrannical conspiracy” (6.60.1). Others saw it as the drunken prank of youths coming from a symposium (Thuc. 6.28.1; Plut. *Alc.* 18.8, 19.1; And. 1.61): private pleasure-making results in public violence—another perfectly Alcibiadean trope.

⁵⁶ The connection between Alcibiades and the mutilation was forged in the Athenian imagination. The mutilation was seen as part of an antidemocratic conspiracy; in the search for the conspirators, it was discovered that certain individuals had also parodied the Mysteries, among whom Alcibiades was named (Thuc. 6.28.1). His enemies seized on this chance to get rid of him, and thus charged him with the mutilation as well, “offering as proof his otherwise undemocratic lawlessness in his daily life” (6.28.2). The demos, desperate for answers and already fearful of Alcibiades' *paranomia* and what it perceived as his desire for tyranny (6.15.3–4), was willing to credit his involvement in the affair. Although Thucydides is careful to distinguish the Mysteries (in which he thinks Alcibiades was involved, 6.61.1) and the Herms (in which case he reserves judgment as to Alcibiades' involvement), he suggests that the thinking of the demos—encouraged, of course, by Alcibiades' enemies—was not so clear. Thus some twenty years later Lysias can present the whole family as profaners of Mysteries and mutilators of Herms (14.41–42). On Alcibiades' implication in these two blasphemous acts, see And. 1.11–16 and MacDowell 1962 ad loc.; Isoc. 16.6–7; Lys. 14.41–42; Dem. 21.147; Plut. *Alc.* 19.1, 20.3, 22.3–4; Hatzfeld 1951.158–205; MacDowell 1962.192–93; McGregor 1965.34–36; Westlake 1968.221–22; Gomme, Andrewes, and Dover 1970.264–88; Marr 1971.328; Bloedow 1973.15–17; Palmer 1982.112–15; Rhodes 1985.11; Nussbaum 1986.171 n.17; Ellis 1989.58–62; de Romilly 1995.101–23; Gribble 1999.81–82; Munn 2000.95–126.

⁵⁷ Cf. And. 1.36; Plut. *Alc.* 20.4–5. McGlew 1999.2: “Both actions [the mutilation and the parody of the Mysteries] seem to cross—indeed, they seem designed to confound—distinctions between private and public that allowed the democracy to believe that its citizens could function as political equals despite the obvious economic and domestic disparities that divided them.” Cf. Munn 2000.106–11.

But while his enemies cast Alcibiades as ringleader of an “oligarchic or tyrannical conspiracy” against the polis, others could cast him not as the tyrant but as the tyrannicide. In his speech before the Spartans after his exile from Athens, Alcibiades claims to come from a long line of tyrant haters and to be a democrat only inasmuch as “everything opposed to single rule is called ‘demos’ ” (Thuc. 6.89.4). He is less prodemocratic, as he represents it, than antityrannical. Much later, the Athenian army at Samos elected him general and urged him to lead them to put down the tyranny of the Four Hundred (Plut. *Alc.* 26.3). Instead, he prevented them from marching on Athens and so saved the city (Thuc. 8.86.4; Dem. 21.145; Plut. *Alc.* 26.4), thus playing the tyrant-slayer to two tyrants (the tyrannical Four Hundred and the *turannos dêmos*) in a single episode. Thucydides further suggests that the popular analogy of Alcibiades to a tyrant was faulty and the cause of great suffering for Athens: fearing his tyrannical *paranoia*, the demos removed him from command, and so within a short while brought about the city’s downfall (6.15.3–4). Was Alcibiades a tyrant, justly slain by the vigilant demos? Or was he, rather, one of those “useful” elite (*khrēstoi*) whom Thucydides says were unfairly condemned in the affair of the Mysteries and Herms (6.53.2)?

A democratic tyrant, an effeminate womanizer, a chameleon who played the role of Athenian as well as that of Spartan or Persian: all the paradoxical elements of Alcibiades’ life come together in the fantastic story of his death. Plutarch narrates the scene (*Alc.* 39), which takes place in a village in Phrygia where Alcibiades was living with his hetaira Timandra. One night he dreamed that he was wearing his mistress’ clothes and that she was making up his face; others say his dream was that his head was being cut off and his body burned. Soon after, his enemies attacked, burned down his house, and killed him. His dream came true when Timandra wrapped his body in her own clothes and buried him lavishly (*lamprōs kai philotimōs*).⁵⁸ This version of his death is a parodic replay of his life: the extravagance, effeminacy, luxury, and foreignness that had characterized him become in the end obscene and pathetic. Alcibiades lived his life along the boundaries of Athenian masculinity; in death he crosses those boundaries, becoming a foreigner and a woman. But Plutarch also gives an alternate account, in which it is not his Persian or Spartan enemies who kill him but the brothers of a noble girl he had debauched. It is typical of Alcibiades that politics and sexuality cannot be segregated even in his death: he dies first as a general, then as a libertine. In this latter version, Alcibiades becomes the tyrant, assassinated in revenge

⁵⁸ Even the hetaira’s name, Timandra, speaks to Alcibiades’ problems with *timē* and *andreia*. Nussbaum 1986.177 draws a further parallel between Timandra and the *Symposium*’s Diotima. On Alcibiades’ death, see Perrin 1906; Littman 1970.269; Gribble 1999.281–82.

for a lawless act of sexual *hubris*. And if in this story he is a tyrant, in the other version he himself takes the place of the Herms he was accused of mutilating: he dreams of his own beheading.

In his death, as in his life, Alcibiades combines every sort of *paranomia*. He is imagined to transgress all the limits—sexual and gender, national, social, and political—that define Athenian citizenship. His behavior breaks all the “rules” of sexuality: the distinction between erastes and eromenos, the stigma against male passivity, the essential divide between masculine and feminine. Likewise, his political behavior blurs the line between democratic ambition and tyrannical aspirations. What are we to make of these multiple perversions?

The problem of Alcibiades’ *paranomia* is not simple: one cannot understand him simply by dividing him down the middle, although this is often what the ancient biographical tradition tries to do, either defending his aristocratic splendor, political ambition, and bon-vivant high spirits, or reviling his sybaritic extravagance and tyrannical violence.⁵⁹ This bifurcation of Alcibiades’ character in the speeches for and against him reflects the ambivalence of his contemporaries: when Timon the misanthrope said to Alcibiades, “You do well to grow, child, for you will grow to be a great pain to all the Athenians,” some who heard laughed, others cursed, and some took it very much to heart (Plut. *Alc.* 16.9). Even Thucydides seems unable to resolve his contradictions. He presents Alcibiades now as the cause of Athens’s downfall—the paradigm of the self-interested post-Periclean demagogue (2.65.10, 6.15.3)—now as Athens’s would-be savior, if only the demos had let him lead (2.65.12, 6.15.4). Plutarch, too, is undecided and blames his uncertainty on Alcibiades himself: “Public opinion was so divided about Alcibiades because of the inconsistency of his own nature” (οὕτως ἄκριτος ἦν ἡ δόξα περὶ αὐτοῦ διὰ τὴν τῆς φύσεως ἀνωμαλίαν, *Alc.* 16.9).⁶⁰ But although Alcibiades’ behavior often provokes a split reaction—either praise or blame, condemnation or exculpation—this logic of either-or is in the end precisely what his biography resists. The problem with Alcibiades is that he is not tyrant *or* democrat, not active *or* passive, not Athenian *or* foreign, but both, and all, simulta-

⁵⁹ Gribble (1999) documents the ambivalence throughout the ancient discourse on Alcibiades: in the rhetorical tradition (117–43), in Thucydides (175–93), and in Plutarch (263–82).

⁶⁰ Compare Nepos *Alc.* 1.1, 4: “It is agreed by all who wrote his history that no one surpassed Alcibiades either in faults or in virtues . . . so that all marvelled that so inconsistent and diverse a nature existed in a single man” (*Constat enim inter omnes, qui de eo memoriae prodiderunt, nihil illo fuisse excellentius vel in vitiis vel in virtutibus . . . ut omnes admirarentur in uno homine tantam esse dissimilitudinem tamque diversam naturam*). Cf. Plut. *Nic.* 9.1: Alcibiades was a mixture of good and evil, like the Egyptian soil that produces both good and deadly drugs.

neously. It is this promiscuity—this logic of “both-and . . . and”—that defines his *paranomia* and leaves his biographers so baffled.

The spatial metaphor implicit in Alcibiades’ *paranomia* can thus be reconfigured. It is not that he himself is beyond the law (after all, he can escape prosecution only by fleeing Athens); it is rather that he brings that beyond within and settles it uneasily alongside (*para*) the normative. He brings what should be marginal to the center of Athenian political life—no wonder that this ward of Pericles was also associated with Socrates and Timon, marginal figures who haunted the Agora as Athens’s internal outsiders—and in this way sullies the center. In the process, he not only exposes the exclusionary logic that grounds the democratic subject but combines the legitimate and the illegitimate within his own person in a way that makes them impossible to disentangle. When the demos elects him general and grants him political power, for example, is it responding to his masterful oratory and civic munificence or his purple robes and seductive lisp? In his promiscuous mingling of categories, he neither fully obeys the norms of Athenian citizenship nor overthrows them. Instead, he exists to one side of them (*para*), referring to them, challenging them, and displacing them.

DĒMERASTIA

If Alcibiades contains within him the exclusions that ground the Athenian subject, then his banishment could be seen as a reiteration of that grounding repudiation. With his exile Athens would seem to have resecured its boundaries against illegitimacy, to have expelled the *paranomia* that he had embodied. But only ten years later, the demos wanted Alcibiades back and looked to him for salvation. The repressed returns, and returns not against the people’s will, but precisely in compliance with their desire. What is the nature of this desire, and what are its implications for the democracy?

Dionysus in Aristophanes’ *Frogs* voices the ambivalence the Athenians felt toward Alcibiades in 405. They “long for him and hate him and want to possess him” (*pothei men, ekhthairei de, bouletai d’ekhein, Frogs* 1425). They long for him: when he is absent from Athens, he seems like the city’s only hope, but the verb comes from the realm of erotic lyric more than that of political deliberation. *Pothos* is the yearning desire for what is absent, for an elusive and perhaps unattainable object.⁶¹ A scholiast tells us that this Aristophanic line parodies one from Ion’s *Guards*, where it probably refers to Menelaus’s feelings for Helen. Like Menelaus

⁶¹ See, e.g., Pl. *Crat.* 420a and Ehrenberg 1947.66 for other references. Carson 1986 suggests that lack and distance are the essence of Greek desire and thus eros is, quintessentially, *pothos*.