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**Victoria Wohl: Love among the Ruins**

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## *Introduction*

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### IDEOLOGICAL DESIRE

#### THE EROTICS OF DEMOCRACY

Lover of the city, lover of the people: the metaphor of eros is remarkably common in the political discussions of classical Athens. Pericles urges the people to fall in love with Athens and its power, to become its “lovers.” His successor Cleon reconfigures this love as a more intimate bond: he claims to be the people’s “lover” and woos them with political gifts. Alcibiades loves the people and they love him back, even as they sentence him to death. Eros suffuses the political relationship between the demos and its leaders. International relations are also a love affair: Aristophanes tells of a Thracian king so enamored of the city that he went around writing “Athens is beautiful” on the walls, just as one would of a pretty young boy. And Athens is not only love object but also lover: Thucydides speaks of its pursuit of imperial power as a diseased passion and shows imperial politics, like democratic politics, driven by lust.

But what does it mean to be a lover of the people, or a lover of the city, or a lover of empire? Was this just a “dead metaphor,” as we might say today “I love my country” and mean no more by it than an ill-defined sense of attachment? For Aristophanes and Thucydides, at any rate, the metaphor is clearly “alive”: Aristophanes literalizes it to comic effect, imagining Cleon not just as a lover but as a prostitute to the people; Thucydides develops a complex imperial psychology around the notion of eros. If we can assume that the idiom was not meaningless, what did it mean? What was the erotics of Athenian democracy? What desire underpinned patriotism and bound the demos to its politicians and the polis? Conversely, what was the politics of eros in Athens? What political relations were implied by the citizen’s sexual relations and what political fantasies were played out in his sexual fantasies? What desires propelled the thrust of Athenian ideology?

Politics and sexuality were mutually defining in democratic Athens. Because only men were citizens, citizenship was a sexual as well as a political category. To be an Athenian always also entailed to “be a man,” with all the injunctions and prohibitions that implied. Likewise, if sexual relations in Athens were organized by issues of mastery and self-mastery (as many have argued), then every sex act was implicitly a political act: some sexual practices were appropriate for citizens and some were not. Moreover, eros

bound individuals together into a political community: eliciting love was a primary goal of anyone who would influence democratic politics. To the extent that democracy is the collective decisions of the citizen body, and those decisions are driven by desires—whether rational or irrational—then democratic politics can be described as the movement of desire. But more than binding citizens to one another and to their leaders and city, desire constituted the citizen as such. It was through a passionate attachment to certain ideals that the citizen was forged: the Athenian citizen-subject is coterminous with his political eros. Finally, desire was a suture between the fantasy life of the individual and the political structures of the polis, and this suture—an erotic cathexis with political implications—formed the basis of Athenian ideology.

The erotics of democracy is not merely a figure of speech then, but a dense point of convergence within Athenian social relations and subjectivity; it is what Jacques Lacan calls a “quilting point,” a node that binds together the diverse and often contradictory layers of ideology. The language of political eros may be metaphorical, but the metaphor was more than a rhetorical trope to be manipulated by orators to their own ends. Although much name-calling and political jockeying went on, this is not a study of what sort of things one could accuse one’s enemies of doing, being, or enjoying.<sup>1</sup> Far less is it a study of practice, an effort to recreate the sort of things Athenians actually did, were, and enjoyed. Instead, this study attempts to illuminate the erotic imaginary that underlay—supported and subverted—the Athenian political imaginary.

This attempt requires, on the one hand, taking eros seriously as a complex system in its own right: it is not a simple analogy employed to explain the more important and difficult realm of politics.<sup>2</sup> The Athenians had a philosophy of eros as sophisticated as their political philosophy, and as they theorized it, eros’s domain was broad, encompassing not just “love” (romantic or otherwise) but also sex and sexuality, gender, desire, and pleasure.<sup>3</sup> Thus, although I draw on Foucault, I resist his impulse to reduce sexual relations to a special instance of power relations: power, as we will see, arouses eros but does not fully circumscribe it. On the other hand, this project involves accepting that the political, too, has an uncon-

<sup>1</sup> Scholtz 1997 examines erotic imagery in political contexts from a rhetorical perspective. His guiding question is: “What semantic or rhetorical work was this figure intended to perform, and how would audiences have responded?” (2).

<sup>2</sup> Monoson 1994 offers an insightful analysis in this vein, exploring the metaphor of eros in Pericles’ Funeral Oration in order “to illuminate the Athenian understanding of the demands of democratic citizenship” (254).

<sup>3</sup> For the scope of the word, see Fischer 1973; Müller 1980; Carson 1986. Of course, Eros was also a god, who continued to be worshiped into the classical period: Rosenmeyer 1951; Vernant 1990b; Shapiro 1992.64–72; Calame 1999.

scious, that day-to-day political relations are only the most overt form of politics, which in its wider sense also includes citizen subjectivity and the citizen psyche. Today we are accustomed to think of sexual desire as the essential stuff of the human soul, and politics as epiphenomenal. For the Athenians perhaps the reverse is true, and man is first and foremost a political animal. But more important, I think, for the Athenians, the two are inseparable: love arises from power relations and implicates lovers in power relations. Politics is a form of ideological desire, a desire both governed by and directed toward ideology. Eros permeates the public life of the city and stokes the intimate political fantasies of the citizen.

At first blush, the political passions of the democratic citizen may seem relatively straightforward: he loved equality and freedom; he hated tyranny and enslavement. Our ancient sources proclaim such sentiments, and we tend to take them at their word: why would they lie? Such a naive view, pleasing though it may be, becomes untenable once we begin to take the erotic metaphor seriously. Although eros and politics do often run in tandem, sometimes they move in opposite directions, contesting rather than corroborating one another: one loves in ways citizens should not; one secretly desires what one professes to hate; one loves and hates at the same time. Eros is notoriously wayward, if not downright perverse, and it leads us into strange territory. Pursuing the metaphor of eros, we find political fantasies that contradict or complicate the simple declarations of love of the good Athenian citizen. Within such fantasies, the despised and repudiated (tyrants, effeminate, whores) become objects of desire. Illicit modes of being (excess, passivity, slavishness) become indistinguishable from legitimate masculinity. The normative and the perverse are intricately enmeshed, bound by confused and inadmissible desires. It is not a question, then, of bad faith—of “lying”—on the part of the ancient text or the modern exegesis. Instead it is a question of reading for a different sort of truth than those neat declaratives, the ambiguous truth of longings the Athenians would not or could not speak aloud, of desires that, as Freud says of the unconscious, they know but do not know they know.

#### “JUST LOVE”: THE ORIGIN OF DEMOCRATIC EROS

We begin with a foundation myth.<sup>4</sup> In 510 B.C.E., Athens was ruled by tyrants, the sons of Pisistratus, Hippias and Hipparchus. Hipparchus tried to seduce a young nobleman named Harmodius and, when his advances were rebuffed, insulted him by banning his sister from marching in the Panathenaic procession. Angered by the insult, Harmodius and his lover

<sup>4</sup> The narrative is recounted most fully at Thuc. 6.53–59 and Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 18. For a list of other ancient sources, see M. W. Taylor 1981.199–201.

Aristogiton assassinated the tyrant, an act hailed in the fifth century as the death of tyranny and the birth of democracy.

This tyrannicide not only inaugurated the democracy but also enshrined within democratic discourse a specific mode of male sexuality. Harmodius and Aristogiton were lovers as well as tyrant-slayers, and so from this founding moment the political and the erotic are inseparably entwined. Democratic freedom is sexual freedom, freedom from the sexual, as well as the political, domination of tyrants. The Athenian citizen is characterized by both his political and his erotic autonomy—he lives and loves as he wishes—and by his willingness to risk his life to preserve that autonomy. Democracy and democratic eros are coterminous.

The Harmodius and Aristogiton story gives us a familiar version—one might even say the “authorized version”—of love between well-born Athenian men and inserts that love into the very foundation myth of the democracy. Aristogiton is the adult lover of the noble young Harmodius. Their relationship is sexual and pederastic; the tyrannicides are never co-evals, never “just friends.” Although homosexual relations between an older man and a younger man had a long tradition in Greece, this myth makes such relations a defining feature of the Athenian character, as Athenian as hating a tyrant.

K. J. Dover in his classic 1978 study, *Greek Homosexuality*, traced the basic lineaments of this eros: an older gentleman (the *erastēs*, or lover) pursues a young boy (the *erōmenos*, beloved); the boy submits with a show of reluctance to the attentions of his lover and, in return, receives an education in civics, learning all the things a well-bred Athenian man needs to know. This sort of homosexual relationship was seen as beneficial—even essential—to the polis, constituting a form of social education and guaranteeing cultural continuity. “Just Argument” in Aristophanes’ *Clouds* (961–83) gets rather overheated as he describes the decorous and delightful young boys whose seduction made Athens great. Phaedrus also waxes lyrical on this theme in Plato’s *Symposium* when he pictures an army of lovers and beloveds, a productive, happy polity composed entirely of erastai and eromenoi (178e3–179b3). Harmodius and Aristogiton are the prototype for this socially productive erotics: Aeschines offers them as an example of *dikaïos erōs*, “just love” (1.136), and as proof of the boons such love brings the city (1.132–40).

The democratic city in particular reaps the rewards of this eros: the tyrannicidal lovers were honored in cult in the fifth century as the liberators—practically the founders—of the democracy.<sup>5</sup> Fifth-century drinking

<sup>5</sup> On the tradition of Harmodius and Aristogiton as “founders of the democracy,” see Thomas 1989.238–82. She illustrates the complexity of the fifth-century tradition of Athens’s liberation from tyranny. The fact that the Athenians knew a variety of traditions (in-

songs toasted them for killing the tyrants and making Athens *isonomos*, egalitarian. Pausanias in Plato's *Symposium* even goes so far as to suggest that the pederastic relationship is in essence democratic, which explains why it was not practiced in monarchical Persia: "And our own tyrants here in Athens also learned this by experience," he says. "It was the love of Aristogiton and the loyal fondness of Harmodius that ended their rule" (182c4–7). The statues of the tyrannicides that stood in the Agora allude to this foundational democratic eros: a young (beardless) Harmodius and older (bearded) Aristogiton stand, weapons in hand, ready to strike down the tyrant; beneath them were probably inscribed the telling words: πατρίδα γῆν ἐθέτεν, "they established the fatherland."<sup>6</sup> These statues, as Andrew Stewart says, "not only placed the homoerotic bond at the core of Athenian political freedom, but asserted that it and the manly virtues (*aretai*) of courage, boldness, and self-sacrifice that it generated were the only guarantors of that freedom's continued existence."<sup>7</sup>

Now, it has been argued that the pederastic homosexuality enshrined in this myth was in practice largely an elite affair, and the extent to which it describes the sex life of "the average Athenian" is the subject of much debate.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, the literary sources for this eros are mostly elite and situ-

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cluding that in which the Spartans freed Athens) does not vitiate the tyrannicide legend as a foundation myth, as she points out (1989.251–52, 257–61). Such mythical traditions are not exclusive (cf. Dougherty 1996), nor do they require strict historiographical logic. On the tyrannicide legend, see further Ehrenberg 1950.531–33, 1956; Fornara 1968, 1970.159–70; Ostwald 1969.121–36; Buffière 1980.108–13; M. W. Taylor 1981; Fehr 1984; Lavelle 1993.50–58; Monoson 2000.21–50; Raaflaub forthcoming. See also Hdt. 6.109.3; Ar. *Knights* 786–87; Dem. 19.280, 20.159–62. On the public cult of the tyrannicides, see Vlastos 1953.339–44; Podlecki 1966.129; Fornara 1970.155–59; Brunnsåker 1971.120–21; M. W. Taylor 1981 ch. 1; Monoson 2000.26–27. Harmodius and Aristogiton were included in sacrifices for the war dead (Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 58.1; Hyp. 6.39), and their descendants enjoyed special civic privileges (*IG* I<sup>3</sup> 131.5–7; Dem. 19.280, 20.29, 20.159–62; Din. 4.101; Is. 5.47).

<sup>6</sup> The detail of the statues' facial hair, while it does not necessarily denote a pederastic relation, does emphasize the age difference between the two men; ancient viewers would surely have known—especially with this famous couple—what that implied. See Stewart 1997.73. On the statue group, see further Brunnsåker 1971.33–164; M. W. Taylor 1981 ch. 2; Fehr 1984; Hölscher 1998.158–160. On the inscription, Raaflaub forthcoming, with bibliography.

<sup>7</sup> Stewart 1997.73. He further suggests that in looking at these statues and reading their inscription, the viewer was drawn to identify, both erotically and politically, with the figures, and thus himself to become a tyrannicide. Cf. Monoson 2000.37–39.

<sup>8</sup> Dover 1964.36–39, 1978.149–50; Shapiro 1981, 1992; Halperin 1986a, 1990a.4; Winkler 1990b.60–62; Bremmer 1990; Thornton 1997.193–212; Hubbard 1998; Fisher 1998. By elite I mean all those who were considered (or considered themselves) superior to the masses (the definition of which is also part of elite self-positioning), whether by virtue of wealth, birth, cultural or moral attainment, or political influence. I leave the term deliberately vague, as its more precise definition will be the stakes in many of the discussions that follow. On the contested category of the elite in antiquity, see M. Finley 1973.45–68; de Ste.

ate it within a leisured life-style of athletics schools (*palaistrai*) and drinking parties (*symposia*). It seems to have been one component of the Athenian caricature of a comically outdated and implicitly antidemocratic elitism, if we are to judge by Aristophanes' boy-crazed "Just Argument" or the crusty old general in Aeschines' speech *Against Timarchus*.<sup>9</sup> But, in fact, this latter text shows just how important this brand of eros was to the demos, as well as to the elite: whereas his opponent, the general, lauds Harmodius and Aristogiton's as a specifically elite sort of love, Aeschines—in a move that he hopes will appeal to his democratic jury—offers the tyrannicides as the paradigm for a democratic eros that is prudent and just (*sōphrōn* and *dikaíos*, 136–40). Even the blue-blood general extends this eros to the demos when he assumes that the jurors would want the benefits of a pederastic relationship for their own sons (133–34).<sup>10</sup> Similarly, the tyrannicide skolia, drinking songs that were staples of the upper-class symposium, are sung by the distinctly nonaristocratic old men in Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* as they try to save the city from the "tyranny" of the women (631–35).

These democratic heroes clearly belonged not just to the elite but to the entire citizen populace, and their love, regardless of who actually practiced it, was part of the sexual ideology of the democracy as a whole. As a myth of origins—the origins not only of democracy but of democratic eros—the tyrannicide legend thus belongs to what Josiah Ober calls "democratic knowledge."<sup>11</sup> Circulating broadly throughout the fifth cen-

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Croix 1981.81–98; Ober 1989a.11–17, 192–205, 248–59. The word "demos" is similarly complex. In Athenian usage it can refer to the poor, largely urban, free population of Athens or to the Athenian citizenry as a whole. The slippage between the two meanings is ideologically invested, as is the attempt to distinguish them. My own usage reflects this ambivalence: at times the demos is contrasted to the elite; at other times it stands as a synonym for the citizen body.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Ar. *Wasps* 1023–28; *Knights* 1384–87. In Aeschines (1.132), the general who defends pederasty is pictured strutting into court "as if into the palaistra to pass some time." On pederasty at the palaistra and symposium, see Bremmer 1990; Fisher 1998; Calame 1999.91–109. Hubbard 1998 argues that class resentment was the basis for a broad condemnation of pederasty on the part of the average Athenian. Fisher 1998, by contrast, emphasizes the extent to which the demos identified with and participated in the life-style of the elite. He sees pederasty as a potential mode of social advancement for a boy who was poor but handsome. Cf. Fehr 1984.27–33.

<sup>10</sup> Fisher 1998.100–101. Aeschines claims this love for democracy by articulating it to the distinction between free citizen and slave (138) and by bringing it within the purview of the law and Athens's original lawmakers (138–40). The generalization of pederastic eros to the demos as a whole is signaled by the fact that it was prohibited to slaves: slaves were banned from the palaistra, and a slave who acted as erastes to a free boy was subject to public whipping (Aesch. 1.138–39; cf. Plut. *Mor.* 152d, 751b, *Solon* 1.6). Later there was also a law against naming slaves Harmodius or Aristogiton (Aul. Gel. 9.2.10; Lib. *Decl.* 1.1.71). See Golden 1984 on the ways in which pederasty differentiated citizens from slaves.

<sup>11</sup> Ober 1994.103, 1998.33–36.

ture, the legend was part of the story the Athenians told about themselves.<sup>12</sup> Thucydides introduces his account of the legend by situating it within oral tradition: the demos knew the story from hearing about it (ἐπιστάμενος γὰρ ὁ δῆμος ἀκοῆ, Thuc. 6.53.3). Thucydides' version of the story is problematic, as we shall see, and leaves it unclear precisely what details the demos knew; but at least by the time of Aeschines' speech against Timarchus in the mid-fourth century the sexual relationship was common knowledge, and the tyrannicides could be cited casually by both sides of the case as a familiar example of *dikaios erōs*. Through the tyrannicide myth, then, the people could think about their own political identity. The qualities that characterize the tyrannicides—a passion for freedom, hatred of tyranny, “just love”—also define their political descendants, the Athenian citizens.

How did this sort of love—associated as it seems to have originally been with the elite—become so central to the Athenian democratic imagination? An odd detail in Thucydides' account may help explain the dynamics of identification at work here: “Harmodius was illustrious in the prime of his youth; Aristogiton, a citizen and man of middling social status, possessed him as his lover” (γενομένου δὲ Ἄρμοδίου ὄρα ἡλικίας λαμπροῦ Ἀριστογείτων ἀνὴρ τῶν ἀστῶν, μέσος πολίτης, ἐραστῆς ὧν εἶχεν αὐτόν, 6.54.2). This introduction not only emphasizes the age difference between the two men (Aristogiton is an *anēr*, a man, and Harmodius a youth) but also hints at a class difference. While Herodotus makes both men members of the elite clan of Gephyraioi (5.57), in Thucydides' account, Harmodius is clearly well-born: he is “illustrious” (*lampros*, an adjective common for the aristocracy)<sup>13</sup> and belongs to that social class whose daughters were basket bearers in the Panathenaia. Aristogiton, on the other hand, is characterized as a “middling citizen.”<sup>14</sup> Why does Thu-

<sup>12</sup> Jacoby 1949; Lang 1954; Fitzgerald 1957; Podlecki 1966; Fornara 1968; M. W. Taylor 1981.193; Thomas 1989.242–51; Lavelle 1993; Monoson 2000.28–42. On the dissemination of elite values and ideals within the democracy, see Fehr 1984.27–50; Ober 1989a.259–70; Fisher 1998.

<sup>13</sup> *Lampros* does not always carry class connotations; its basic meaning when used of individuals is “brilliant, illustrious, splendid.” Here (modified by ὄρα ἡλικίας) it also refers to Harmodius's physical magnificence (his “youthful bloom,” as LSJ take it, III.1). We cannot separate the two denotations, however, as physical and social preeminence often went hand in hand for the Greeks (as in the case of *kalos*: beautiful, but also socially elevated). As P. Wilson 2000.138–43 suggests, the dazzle of *lamprotēs* helped mystify social inequality. In this passage there seems to be a double contrast (between youth and adulthood and between a superior and an average social position) in which the adjective *lampros* does double duty.

<sup>14</sup> Morris 1996 argues for the importance of the “middling citizen” and the “middling tradition” in the development of Athenian democracy. See also Lavelle 1986.320 and n.7; Rawlings 1981.103–5 (who translates *astos* as “a commoner” and sees in the phrase a



cydides go out of his way to draw attention to Aristogiton's middling social status—especially in contrast to his aristocratic young beloved?

As a *mesos politēs*, an average Athenian, Aristogiton becomes a figure with whom all Athenians, regardless of status, could identify. There is perhaps corroboration for this in the opening lines of Thucydides' digression (where he sets the tyrannicide legend against another version of Athens's liberation). The people knew, he writes, "that the tyranny had not been ended by themselves and Harmodius, but by the Spartans" (6.53.3). In the popular imagination of the tyrannicide, the Athenian demos takes the place of Aristogiton, fighting at Harmodius's side to end the tyranny.<sup>15</sup> The representation of Aristogiton as a middling citizen offers an easy conduit for the fantasied identification—one characterized, to be sure, by a good dose of wish fulfillment—of the demos as a whole with this foundational narrative. At the same time, his love for the aristocratic Harmodius makes the *mesos politēs* himself an aristocrat by association. Through this identification the demos can imagine itself as both an erotic and a political elite, lover of pretty aristocratic boys and slayer of tyrants.

In this way the tyrannicide narrative, a story about an elite love affair, provides a model for a particularly democratic mode of sexuality: every Athenian was an Aristogiton. The norm of adult male sexuality in Athens (as several recent studies have shown) was active, aggressive, dominant, and phallic; passivity was associated with foreigners, women, slaves, and children—noncitizens.<sup>16</sup> Homosexual relations between two adult men were treated with derision and disgust, as they required one man to play the passive role, and an Athenian citizen who submitted willingly to penetration risked charges of prostitution and the loss of citizen privileges.<sup>17</sup> The pederastic relation, with its distinction between active erastes and

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strong slur against Aristogiton's social and political status); Neer 1998.236–49; and on the meaning of *astos*, E. Cohen 2000.50–63.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. skolion 894 (PMG), addressed to Harmodius; one wonders whether there were also songs addressed to Aristogiton. Cf. Ar. *Ecc.* 682–83, and contrast Ar. *Lys.* 631–35, where the old men are going to make their tyrannicidal stand next to Aristogiton. Loraux 2000.68 and n.7 comments on the prominence of Aristogiton in Thucydides' account. Of course, the demos did play an important role in the revolution that followed the assassination (Ober 1996.32–52) and in this sense earned the right to identify with the tyrannicides.

<sup>16</sup> Dover 1978; Foucault 1985; Keuls 1985; Winkler 1990b.39–40, 45–70; Halperin 1990a, 1990b.29–38, 1997; Cantarella 1992.17–53. Halperin characterizes Athenian sexuality as "a socio-sexual discourse structured by the presence or absence of its central term: the phallus" (1990b.35). But see the recent critique of E. Cohen 2000.155–91.

<sup>17</sup> It was the attempt on the part of one who had prostituted himself to address the Assembly that incurred loss of citizenship, but see Halperin 1986a.68 n.17: a man who sought out sexual passivity risked inquiry into his motives. Cf. Dover 1978.103–9; Keuls 1985.291–98; Halperin 1990a; D. Cohen 1991.171–202; Cantarella 1992.44–53; Calame 1999.134–41; Sissa 1999.156–62; E. Cohen 2000.156–59. Hubbard 1998 argues against this rigid dichotomy between active and passive; cf. Poster 1986.212–14.

passive eromenos, fits logically into this correlation between sexual dominance and democratic citizenship. Pederasty, then, no matter what the social status of its actual practitioners, becomes a neat metaphor for democratic sexuality. Through this homosexual relationship, the whole Athenian demos can be imagined as a polity of erastai: elite, active, and sexually potent, penetrating as they desire a variety of socially inferior eromenoi—boys, women, slaves. The eros of Harmodius and Aristogiton thus not only founds the democracy but also constitutes the democratic citizen as a dominant and active lover, an Aristogiton.

At the same time as it defines the ideal citizen-lover, though, the myth also adumbrates a shadow world of illegitimate others and illegitimate sexualities. The tyrant figures in this story as the antithesis of and a threat to the citizen. The lust and sexual license of tyrants were a common trope in the Athenian imagination of tyranny: absolute political power was thought to have its natural end in unbridled sexual aggression.<sup>18</sup> Given free reign, the tyrant becomes the sole erastes, monopolizing the sexual potency that in the democracy should belong equally to all Athenian men. And if the tyrant becomes the city's only erastes, he transforms the entire demos—youth and adult alike—into potential eromenoi.

Whereas the tyrant marks one excluded extreme of citizen sexuality, the other extreme is occupied by the figure of the *katapugōn* or *kinaidos*, the sexual degenerate. Lacking the manly self-control and moderation of the citizen-lover, the *kinaidos* is sexually profligate: morally lax, easily seduced, often effeminate, he will even take the passive role to satisfy his sexual “itch” (to borrow a Platonic metaphor).<sup>19</sup> Morally he is everything the citizen is not, and that ethical exclusion from the citizen body could become official if his self-humiliation was traced to prostitution. This figure, as Jack Winkler argues, haunts the citizen-lover as a “scare-image,” an example of bad sexuality, just as Harmodius and Aristogiton are an example of good sexuality.<sup>20</sup> In Aristotle the tyrant Hipparchus, when his overtures are rejected, insults Harmodius, calling him *malakos*, “soft” (*Ath. Pol.* 18.2). Not man enough to defend himself against the tyrant's desire, Harmodius becomes passive, emasculated: the insult reiterates the sexual assault, and both demand immediate vengeance.

<sup>18</sup> Hdt. 3.80.5; Eur. *Suppl.* 452–54; Xen. *Hieron* 1.26; Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 18.1–2, *Pol.* 1311a28–b23; Isoc. 2.29–31, 3.36–44. I return to this topos in chapter 5.

<sup>19</sup> Pl. *Gorg.* 494d–e. The shameful indulgence of the *kinaidos* is there presented as the *reductio ad stuprum* of the happy life of the man who scratches every itch; the metaphor of the “sexual itch” is thus my extrapolation. On the *kinaidos*, see Winkler 1990b.45–70; Gleason 1990; Richlin 1993; Thornton 1997.99–120. Davidson 1997.167–82 argues convincingly for a broader semantic range for the word.

<sup>20</sup> Winkler 1990b.46.

The tyrannicide legend thus defines *dikaïos erōs* by eliminating its illegitimate alternatives: the sexual violence of the tyrant, the softness of the *kinaïdos*. Between these two extremes stands Aristogiton, lover and tyrant-slayer, a model of democratic eros for all the citizens of Athens. This lover—elite yet democratic, authoritative, manly, and free—was the “dominant fiction” (in Kaja Silverman’s term) of democratic Athens, an ideological fantasy in which the entire community could believe and which bound it together within a common reality.<sup>21</sup>

This book is a study of that fiction, and of its fictionality. Chapter 1, a reading of Pericles’ Funeral Oration in Thucydides, looks in depth at one expression of the political and erotic ideal of the citizen-lover. Pericles urges the Athenians to become lovers of their city and of the noble men who died fighting for it. He formulates an ideal of citizenship and encourages his audience to both identify and fall in love with it. Through this bond of desire and identification, Pericles constructs not only a new polity, united around a shared “dominant fiction,” but also a new citizen, for whom this fiction provides the basis of his subjectivity. This chapter traces the outlines of Athens’s *dikaïos erōs* and also shows how that norm structures the very being of the Athenian citizen-subject. In the process, it highlights the political implications of this erotic identification: when the people fall in love with a vision of themselves as elite lovers, they also subscribe to a broader elite hegemony. Pericles’ speech, recapitulating the logic of the tyrannicide legend, makes an elite erastes into a democratic hero and a model for democratic citizenship, but it also offers Pericles himself as the ultimate lover and beloved. Love for the ideal thus becomes inseparable from love for Pericles. *Dikaïos erōs* has a politics of its own.

Whereas chapter 1 analyzes the ways in which the “dominant fiction” was dominant, the chapters that follow emphasize the ways in which it was fictional. Taking the tyrannicides and Pericles’ idealized lover as touchstones, they go on to explore the deviations from this norm, the parodies, perversions, and travesties of *dikaïos erōs*. Chapters 2 and 3 treat different imaginations of the love affair between demos and demagogue. Chapter 2 looks at Cleon as a parodic revision of Pericles’ noble lover and asks about the relationship between that parody and the Periclean ideal. Cleon is represented in Aristophanes’ *Knights* as a whore, and prostitution is there the model for a debased politics, but in Cleon’s pandering can we see not merely a failure of Periclean politics but an alternative to it, a different mode of democratic eros and democratic subjectivity? Alcibiades, the focus of chapter 3, likewise challenges the norms of *dikaïos erōs* and the political relations predicated upon them. Both tyrant and *kinaïdos*, Alcibiades arouses a perverse desire that makes the

<sup>21</sup> Silverman 1992.15–51.

demos long to be tyrannized by him. Embodying illegitimacy, he calls into question the relation between the normative and the perverse, exposing the complex desire that runs beneath, but not necessarily parallel to, Athens's manifest political desires.

From Alcibiades I turn to imperial politics. Chapter 4 focuses on Thucydides' narrative of the Athenian expedition against Sicily, an expedition he characterizes as a "morbid passion for what is absent" (6.13.1). In their empire, the Athenians seek the virility and autonomy enshrined in the tyrannicide legend and Funeral Oration. All they find in the end, though, is slavery, impotence, and castration. This imperial episode exposes the frailty of the ideal of *dikaïos erōs* and the exorbitant cost of either attaining that ideal or failing to do so. But if Sicily betrays the futility of Athens's longing for an invulnerable mastery and absolute freedom, that longing persists in the democratic imagination of tyranny. Chapter 5 thus turns to the figure of the tyrant. From the tyrannicide on, all good Athenians hate a tyrant, yet tyrants are also objects of intense erotic investment, as democratic Athens imagines the pleasures of being a tyrannical lover or, more surprisingly, a tyrant's beloved. These fantasies always end reassuringly in murder, the tyrannicide that inaugurates democracy, but the dying tyrant leaves to Athens an ambiguous bequest: a dream of absolute power and of a joy, both political and erotic, beyond the bounds of *dikaïos erōs*.

Throughout the challenge will be to approach these perversions and parodies not as failures of the ideal but as alternatives to it. Thucydides presents Pericles' reign as a moment of unique perfection in Athenian politics and everything that came after as a falling away from that acme. It is easy to reproduce Thucydides' judgment and to blame the demos for democracy's failures. Already in the mid-fifth century, one senses a certain disappointment with the demos: one can understand why it loved Pericles, but what did it see in the vulgar and buffoonish Cleon or the luxuriant and tyrannical Alcibiades? This bafflement often leads to (when it does not proceed from) an antidemocratic logic: the demos does not know what is good for it and cannot be trusted with its own desire. Rather than play yet another censorious parent to a love-struck and irresponsible demos, I would like to inquire about the demos's positive investment in "debased" figures like Cleon or Alcibiades. Yes, these figures certainly are different from Pericles, and yet the demos loved them. Why? What alternatives did they allow the Athenians to imagine—alternate political relations, but also masculinities and modes of citizen subjectivity? How does the demos's love for these demagogues (or for tyranny or empire) critique, not just fall short of, the ideal of *dikaïos erōs*?

Taking the demos's love seriously and attending to its perversities as well as its normativities will, I hope, reveal the complexity both of that

democratic eros and of Athenian thought about it. The Athenians may have believed their myths—Pericles’ address fails if they do not—but they did not believe them blindly. They could envision the possibilities (both terrifying and exhilarating) of “unjust love” and could speculate upon the challenges they posed to “just love.” If we are reluctant ourselves to consider these challenges, perhaps we need to examine our own investment in the Athenian ideal of the elite citizen-lover and his virile, democratic eros.<sup>22</sup>

#### NORMATIVITY AND ITS DISCONTENTS

Until quite recently, the main focus of scholarship on ancient Greek sexuality has been on normativity, on what I have been calling the dominant fiction of *dikaios erōs*. Dover was the first to explicate these norms systematically, laying out the basic “rules” of homosexuality in Greece: the ideal of sexual dominance and the stigma against both passivity and excess; the generally positive attitude toward pederasty; the strong distinction between active (penetrating) lover and passive (penetrated) beloved. As a description of “homosexual behaviour and sentiment” (1978.vii) in Greece, it has been refined and debated but not surpassed, and the terms of the discussion today are still Dover’s.<sup>23</sup>

Michel Foucault’s *The Use of Pleasure*, the volume of *The History of Sexuality* dealing with classical Greece, places a similar emphasis on the norms of desire and expands those norms to cover the entire social field. Indeed, his original project in *The History of Sexuality* was “a history of the experience of sexuality, where experience is understood as the correlation between fields of knowledge, types of normativity, and forms of sub-

<sup>22</sup> Ironically, one of the few ancient critics to take the demos’s desire seriously is the author of the *Athenaion Politeia*, the so-called Old Oligarch. Unhampered by Platonic distinctions between real and apparent goods, he argues that the demos acts in accordance with its own advantage, condemnable though that may seem from the perspective of the elite (e.g., *Ath. Pol.* 1.8, 2.19–20). He thus posits—albeit in extremely pejorative terms—a sort of democratic pleasure principle, in which the aim of the demos is to satisfy its own desires, primarily the desires for freedom and power. It elects those politicians whom it believes will further that goal. See Ober 1998.14–27.

<sup>23</sup> This is emphasized by D. Cohen 1992.150–51; cf. Halperin 1990b.4–5. For reviews of Dover, see Demand 1980; Schnapp 1981. Heterosexuality, of course, was also a site of normalizing sexuality for the Athenian citizen. But because the predominant sexual dynamic underlying Athenian political discourse is homosexual, I treat heterosexual eros only glancingly. Even in cases where the love object is feminine (as in Pericles’ injunction to the citizens to become lovers of the polis), an ostensibly heterosexual love turns out to be a conduit for homosocial relations. Likewise, women will get short shrift in my study. Politics was a male world in Athens and although Athenian women no doubt did have a libidinal relation to their polis, the nature of our sources makes it extremely difficult to reconstruct. Loraux (1993, 1995) explores the imaginary relation of Athenian women to the polis.

jectivity in a particular culture.”<sup>24</sup> In *The Use of Pleasure*, Foucault situates *aphrodisia* within a broad moral discourse and asks about the elaborations of the self allowed by this discourse. For him the distinction between penetrator and penetrated was part of a larger moralization of the self: to be the penetrator meant being in control of oneself, taking up an active and masterful relation to the world; to be penetrated signaled an ethical failure, slavery to one’s pleasures.<sup>25</sup> Sexuality, then, was part of a stylization of the individual as a *kaloskagathos*, a “good and noble man.” The ethical man was one who practiced the moderation and moral virility of *dikaïos erōs*.

Foucault’s abstract philosophical study of moralized pleasures and the ethical subject is brought back to the practical experience and historical specifics of ancient Greece by David Halperin and Jack Winkler. Drawing on the work of both Foucault and Dover, these two scholars (independently and sometimes together) detailed the role of sexuality in the larger system of rules and norms that made up Greek culture. Winkler’s focus is on recovering “the usually unspoken premises or protocols governing the force of public utterances”; these protocols, however arbitrary, were nonnegotiable and, in practice, he argues, were “both never seriously questioned and yet never taken literally.”<sup>26</sup> As he explores the way they governed behavior in the “zero-sum competition” of men’s lives, Winkler is always attentive to the artificiality of these norms: the fact that they were social, not natural; that they could be selectively applied; that practice was generally more fluid and nuanced than ideology.

Starting from the same protocols of masculine dominance, Halperin articulates these sexual norms to Athens’s democratic ideology of a citizen-elite. In his important article “The Democratic Body: Prostitution and Citizenship in Classical Athens,” he points out the isomorphism of sexual and social polarities, with the citizen (sexually dominant, politically powerful, personally inviolable) on one side and the noncitizen (politically

<sup>24</sup> Foucault 1985.4. Although in volume 2 he shifts from this original project toward a genealogy of desire focused around a hermeneutics of the self (1985.5–6), the linking of knowledge, normativity, and subjectivity persists throughout volumes 2 and 3. There is a tendency in critiques of Foucault to conflate volume 1 of *The History of Sexuality* with volumes 2 and 3 (the “ancient” volumes) and to take this project as typical of Foucaultian theory. But the final two volumes of *The History of Sexuality* are in many ways anomalous, as some readers have noted (Poster 1986; Cohen and Saller 1994.56–59; Black 1998). Later I deploy the theory of power in early Foucault (as elaborated by Judith Butler) against the normative ethics of later Foucault. See further the reviews and critiques by Lefkowitz 1985; Halperin 1986b; Golden 1991; Richlin 1991; Cohen and Saller 1994; Goldhill 1995, esp. 110–11, 146–61; Sissa 1999.148–53; Zeitlin 1999.55.

<sup>25</sup> Foucault 1985.63–93.

<sup>26</sup> Winkler 1990b.4–5.

disenfranchised and sexually subordinate) on the other.<sup>27</sup> Further, he argues that the privileges of the former depended on the subordination of the latter: the ideal of a free and manly citizen body required a class of noncitizens whom the citizen could dominate, both socially and sexually. The phallicism of the Athenians identified by Dover had not only an ethical dimension (as Foucault had argued) but also a politics; masculinity was a political as well as a sexual ideal.

Among them, these four scholars defined the study of ancient sexuality as a field of inquiry and set the terms of debate. Their work has been widely influential (not least on the present study). In its assumption of the systematicity of sexuality (i.e., its assumption that sexuality is a symbolic system, not just a matter of biological fact or individual urges), this scholarship has made it possible to analyze ancient sexuality in the first place. By linking sexuality as a system to other symbolic systems within Greek society (politics or ethics), it has made sexuality an integral part of the study of Greek culture. The focus on sexual norms and protocols has thus been extremely fruitful and now—a decade or, in Dover’s case, a quarter century on—represents a status quo in the study of ancient sexuality.

The past decade, though, has seen some disenchantment with this description of the norms of Greek sexuality, a dissatisfaction with specific norms but also with the general theorization of normativity these foundational works offer. This critique has come from a number of directions. Winkler himself, working within an anthropological model, stressed the practical limitations on enforcement of and compliance with erotic protocols: “Simply knowing the protocols does not tell us how people behaved,” he comments. “We must attempt to see through and beyond social prescriptions, however widely held and publicly unquestioned, to that usually unspoken fund of knowledge about their application, their bending, their observance ‘in the breach,’ and the hidden agenda they sometimes concealed.”<sup>28</sup> Despite this proviso, Bruce Thornton attacks what he terms the “constructionist approach” of Foucault, Halperin, and Winkler from the standpoint of the humanist subject; their vision of power and sexuality, he charges, “does not recognize the complexity of human emotion and motive, the ways people can transcend political status and social restraints and create alternative meanings. This disregard of both the potential autonomy of individual subjects and their power of choice and

<sup>27</sup> Halperin 1990a, reprinted in 1990b.88–112. See also Halperin 1990b.29–38.

<sup>28</sup> Winkler 1990b.45. Hexter commends Winkler’s “acute ear for evasion both devious and playful” (1991.148). D. Cohen 1991 likewise elaborates an anthropological theory of the practical relation of individuals to social norms. His reminder of the contradictory and conflictual nature of all norms is salutary (cf. D. Cohen 1987).

spontaneity vitiates the constructionist position.”<sup>29</sup> Like Thornton, James Davidson charges Foucault and his followers with oversimplification: their emphasis on rigid polarities (active citizen vs. passive other; wife vs. prostitute; penetrator vs. penetrated) ignores the broad gray area between the poles. He brings to bear a huge weight of evidence to show that “what the Greeks said about pleasure is much messier and much more varied than what you would expect from Foucault.”<sup>30</sup> Others have similarly criticized the inadequacy of the “protocols” to describe the lived experience of sexuality in antiquity, offering as qualifications to the schema of *dikaïos erōs* those places where we hear about people doing (and often getting away with) precisely the things that the “rules” of eros seem to forbid.<sup>31</sup> Matthew Fox (1998) has wondered about the very enterprise of reconstructing social norms, not only because of the uncertain relation any norms we reconstruct would bear to psychic or social reality, but because,

<sup>29</sup> Thornton 1991.186. His attack is broad and scattershot. He accuses Foucault of confusing discourse with practice and of failing to clarify the ontological status of sex and of the subject; he accuses Halperin and Winkler of oversimplifying Foucault and failing to understand the philosophical contradictions inherent in his theories. The often perceptive critique of Foucault in the first half of the article devolves by the end into a familiar attack on theoretically informed scholarship in general: “‘Traditional philology’ need not fear enemies such as these” (191). The limitations of a practice founded upon such an antitheoretical stance are clear in Thornton 1997, which aims “to get back to what the Greeks actually say without burying it in polysyllabic sludge” (xiii). There the Greeks are posited as “genuine” subjects who stood in a primary relation to nature and experienced the emotions of love more vividly than we (for whom its violence or madness is nothing more than a cliché); eros is meanwhile deified as a timeless, chaotic force that resists rational or cultural (not to mention interpretive) constraint.

<sup>30</sup> Davidson 1997.xxiv. Davidson presents himself as a critic of Foucault, but the very guiding principles of his book are Foucaultian, not only the emphasis on discourse (as he acknowledges, xxi–xxii) but also the idea of pleasure as a key element in the struggle for self-mastery within a culture that prized moderation (the entire book might well be titled, after Foucault, “The Moral Problematization of Pleasures”). This is a common phenomenon: the spirit of Foucault’s work mobilized to critique the letter.

<sup>31</sup> Their most common target is the distinction between erastes and eromenos, which has been subject to a number of reappraisals: the age differences were not always so great; the line between active partner and passive was not always so rigid; there was more room for reciprocity, affection, and love than has been recognized; penetration was not the defining feature (or not the only one) of the relationship; the whole affair may have been the preserve of a small elite anyway. See, e.g., Demand 1980; Poster 1986.213–14; D. Cohen 1987, 1991.171–202; Hexter 1991; Thornton 1991.185–86, 1997.99–120; Cantarella 1992.17–53; Thorp 1992; Goldhill 1995.46–111; DeVries 1997; Davidson 1997.167–82; Kilmer 1997; Sissa 1999; E. Cohen 2000.155–91. Many of these qualifications are valid and important, but I do not think individually or cumulatively they serve to dismantle the basic opposition as an (idealized) norm. Instead, they remind us of the large gap that often exists between norms and practice: to the extent that no one can ever fully comply with all of a society’s contradictory sexual protocols, practice is necessarily more diverse than the norms. This does not mean, though, that the norms did not exist: see D. Cohen 1991.



he suggests, in our pursuit of the symbolic system of normativity we necessarily sacrifice the (unsymbolizable) totality of the real.

From their diverse positions, all of these recent studies voice a discontent with what they perceive as the “standard line” on ancient sexuality.<sup>32</sup> Each senses that the usual description of the norms in some way fails to capture the variety of sexual experience in antiquity, the vast multiplicity of things that people were doing, thinking, saying, or desiring. Whether they wish to redefine the norms or to open them up to include other behaviors, all believe that there was a world of sexuality that lay outside of *dikaïos erōs* as it is usually described: behavior that broke the rules, desires that contravened the protocols, predilections that fell between the polarized categories—in short, *adikos erōs*. I share their discomfort with the standard description of Athenian sexual norms—not so much with the specific norms that have been privileged as with the often exclusive focus on the normative as the essence of ancient sexuality. This focus, to my mind, underestimates the complexity of individuals’ psychic relation to norms and fails to theorize adequately the interactions between the normative and the nonnormative. As a result, I think, it impoverishes eros and does not do justice to the Athenians’ sophisticated thinking about it. Thus I purpose to attempt a reading that is attentive to perversity as well as normativity, to the psychic as well as the social, and to *adikos erōs* alongside *dikaïos erōs*.

Normativity is a necessary starting point: when viewed as an open, heterogeneous, and always contested set of dispositions (not as a single set of rules), norms are the indispensable grounding for any discussion of eros, as David Cohen (1991) has most strongly asserted. Despite the insistence of Thornton and others on the “complexity of human emotion and motive” and the individual’s “power of choice and spontaneity” (Thornton 1991.186), love is not ruleless, and its complexities follow some sort of logic (even if one does not think it is the logic Foucault et al. identify). By looking at the perverse, then, I am not advocating that we retreat from the theorization of desire to a meditation on the private stirrings of the individual heart. To do so would be to turn our back on all the advances made by the scholars of sexual normativity and to find

<sup>32</sup> My brief survey of the state of this ever expanding field is necessarily partial and selective: I discuss other works as they become relevant to my argument. Moreover, it should not be taken to imply that no interesting work has been done in languages other than English: this is far from true. Beside Foucault, one might cite, for example, Buffière 1980; Schnapp 1981, 1988; Rousselle 1988; Sissa 1990; Loraux 1990, 1993, 1995; Cantarella 1992; Calame 1999; and, of an earlier generation, Brandt 1934; Flacelière 1962. But the topic seems to have attracted particular attention in Anglophone scholarship, perhaps due to the influence of Halperin and Winkler. A geographically and temporally more extensive survey can be found in Halperin, Winkler, and Zeitlin 1990.7–16; see also Arthur-Katz 1989.

ourselves, ultimately, with nothing to say. Nor am I proposing to set against normativity the infinite permutations of practice, although I take it as a granted (and relatively uninteresting) fact that people then, as now, did and desired everything human ingenuity could devise.<sup>33</sup> Finally, my aim is not to take issue with the specific norms described by Dover and his followers: I provisionally accept, for example, a distinction between *erastes* and *eromenos* and the valorization of a sexually dominant masculinity, although I see these norms more as vital (and vulnerable) fictions than as social realities and hope in the end to complicate them.

Instead, I am trying to advance from these studies of normativity and open them up by asking about the tension between social norms and their elaboration within the Athenian unconscious. The guiding questions of my study are not about the Athenian citizen's practical relation to norms (did he obey them? did he disobey them?), or about his discursive relation to them (did they adequately describe his attitudes and beliefs?), but about his psychic relation to them. What are the unconscious figurations of *di-kaios erōs*? What sort of fantasies did this eros arouse and what sort did it suppress? What investments (positive and negative, normative and perverse) did it encourage? What sort of civic imaginary did it structure?

To begin to answer these questions, I would like to return to the original premise of Halperin, Winkler, and Foucault: the implication of sexuality in a larger social and political matrix and the idea that power works in and through eros. For Foucault sexuality is shaped by power within a normative discursive framework. But power for him is never merely prohibitive. Instead it is always fertile: it operates through the proliferation of new discourses, new practices and desires, new subjects, even new perversities. Repression incites speech, norms generate perversions, prohibitions arouse desire.<sup>34</sup> Foucault's original emphasis on the productivity of

<sup>33</sup> Practice-oriented studies of antiquity often beg vital theoretical questions: on the one hand, they generally understand the subject as an autonomous and self-determining agent and thus fall into sheer voluntarism (we each love in our own way, rules be damned); on the other hand, even as they postulate a subtheoretical realm of practice (blissfully free or cannily forgetful of ideology), they hypostasize norms as something separate from the subject, existing outside of him, which he can freely choose to obey or disobey. These common problems are addressed by Bourdieu, whose theory of habitus solves "the paradoxes of objective meaning without subjective intention" (1990.62).

<sup>34</sup> Foucault 1978.17–49. His entire project, as he sets it out at the beginning of volume 1, is a study of this proliferation that takes place under the cloak of repression: "In short, I would like to disengage my analysis from the privileges generally accorded the economy of scarcity and the principles of rarefaction, to search instead for instances of discursive production (which also administer silences, to be sure), of the production of power (which sometimes have the function of prohibiting), of the propagation of knowledge (which often cause mistaken beliefs or systematic misconceptions to circulate); I would like to write the history of these instances and their transformations" (1978.12).

power has been developed by Judith Butler (1993), who argues that precisely because power is generative, it can generate results that it did not anticipate, results that have the potential to challenge or skew their own founding principles.

I return to Butler's theorization of power and pursue its implications for ancient erotics in chapter 3, where I trace the unsettling desires generated by the figure of Alcibiades. In that chapter, Butler's understanding of power provides the basis for a theory of the relation between normativity and perversion. What should be clear already, though, is that imagining norms as productive—and productive in unpredictable ways—allows us to accept the assumption of Foucault and his followers that norms are constitutive, without necessarily having to abandon (as Thornton and others fear) the “complexity of human emotion.” Power shapes eros but does not predetermine its final contours and thus potentially allows for—creates and constrains but does not fully contain—perversity. A space is opened within the very architecture of *dikaïos erōs* for an *adikos erōs* that, although produced by and dependent on social “protocols,” is not reducible to them. Desire is generated and structured by power but, thanks to power's fertility, also always exceeds it.

For Butler it is when power takes on a “psychic life” within the individual that it becomes most unpredictably fertile.<sup>35</sup> Therefore, while returning (via Butler) to Foucault's idea of the fertility of power, I would like at the same time to pick up a lost thread in the current discussions of ancient sexuality: the unconscious. Foucault was notoriously hostile to psychoanalysis, which he characterized as a disciplinary apparatus “more servile with respect to the powers of order than amenable to the requirements of truth.”<sup>36</sup> Foucault's “sexuality” is decidedly not Freud's:

Sexuality must not be described as a stubborn drive, by nature alien and of necessity disobedient to a power which exhausts itself trying to subdue it and often fails to control it entirely. It appears rather as an especially dense transfer point for relations of power. . . . Sexuality is not the most intractable element in power relations, but rather one of those endowed with the greatest instrumentality: useful for the greatest number of maneuvers and capable of serving as a point of support, as a linchpin, for the most varied strategies. (Foucault 1978.103)

<sup>35</sup> Butler 1997.19–21.

<sup>36</sup> Foucault 1978.53–73, 111–13 (the quotation is on p. 54); a somewhat different view emerges from Foucault 1970.374–80. Black 1998 contains an intelligent discussion of (and bibliography on) Foucault's antipathy toward psychoanalysis; cf. Sissa 1999.148–50. On the need to read psychoanalysis and Foucault through one another, see Toews 1994; Butler 1997.83–105. DuBois 1988 offers a critique of psychoanalysis by way of a Foucaultian reading of ancient material (see esp. 1–36).

Joel Black even suggests that the impetus behind the last two volumes of *The History of Sexuality* was Foucault's attempt to conceptualize sexuality in terms other than those of psychoanalysis and, especially, to describe a nonpsychoanalytic subject of sexuality. But this attempt, Black argues, also accounts for the failings of these two volumes: Foucault pursued a "strategy of demystifying sexuality by eliminating all that is illusory, imaginary, and phantasmic about it, namely, sex. Yet the discourse of sexuality can only become intelligible precisely by attending to those representations, fantasies, and scenes in which sex itself appears to speak."<sup>37</sup>

For all their antagonism toward him, classical studies of ancient sexuality have tended to share Foucault's wariness of psychoanalysis. They have preferred to interrogate ancient sexuality as to its power relations and polarities, its normativities and their transgression, not its desires, fantasies, and perversities. Is it possible to ask about the desire of the Greeks without succumbing to the biologism and ahistoricism of the "stubborn drive"? Is it possible to analyze eros as "an especially dense transfer point for relations of power" without fully subordinating it to power (as Foucault often does) so that sexuality is stripped of desire? Can we engage with psychoanalytic theories of sexuality in such a way that they help us to exploit the more positive aspects of Foucault's notion of power, to theorize a desire that, if not "by nature alien and of necessity disobedient" to power, at least maintains a productive relation to it and thus offers a possibility not of escaping power but of rethinking its specific articulations?

With Freud, I view desire as perverse. By this I mean not the intractable drive Foucault ridicules but rather the productive resistance Butler posits. Desire exists within power, shaped by its norms. This implies, first, that perversity is not a timeless and ahistorical force of the unchanging human libido: because it has meaning only in relation to norms (which are always culturally specific), the shape it takes at any moment is deeply structured by larger cultural schemes. It also means that perversity often reaffirms normativity: if desire is perverse only in relation to norms, then by its very reference to those norms it in some sense reproduces them and attests to their potency.

But, at the same time, desire has the potential to disturb the norms that generate it. Over the course of this book, our sources will show us a manly Athenian demos falling in love with tyrants and *kinaidoi*, loving passively and embracing castration, fantasizing with longing about all that is excluded from *dikaïos erōs*. Does this perversity merely reaffirm the proto-

<sup>37</sup> Black 1998.59. A similar double bind attends the effort to formulate a "hermeneutics of the self" that strips the self of the unconscious: one is left with a hollow fiction, a rational "ethicist" driven by a simple imperative to self-mastery, any deviation from which can only be considered a failure of will.

cols of sexuality? In a certain sense, of course, it does, and they persist. But I argue that these fantasies also pose a challenge to those protocols: by imagining alternate masculinities and modes of eros, they expose the artificiality and question the inevitable hegemony of existing norms. They do not thereby overturn these norms but instead displace them, shifting their emphasis and skewing their intent. Through such perverse fantasies, desire takes up an active relation to power: neither “by nature alien and of necessity disobedient” to it, nor merely instrumental (“an especially dense transfer point”) for it, but instead productively engaged with it in a dialectic that may on occasion yield surprising results.

“Desire is the desire of the Other,” writes Lacan. Desire comes to us from without, from the site of the Other (law, language, society) and takes its shape from forces we do not control. It is also other to us: we never fully own our desire, not only because its origins are outside us but because its locus within us is the unconscious, that “other scene” (as Freud called it) separate from and inaccessible to the self. Perverse desire, then, does not necessarily imply a “perverse” subject, a willful transgressor of protocols or rebel against sexual norms in the name of exotic pleasures (indeed, sometimes a cathexis to the norm can be perverse and, conversely, transgression can work in the service of normativity). Nor is perversion kinky. This is not pornography. Desire as I mean it is not primarily about sexual arousal: it is about libidinal attachments. Penetrator and penetrated, lover and beloved—those terms for me describe not sexual positions but psychic positions. Perversity describes a psychic relation to the law. Athens’s fantasies are a figuration of its ideology, and in studying the former, we are necessarily studying the latter: desire is always ideological.

#### SYMPTOMATIC READING

How are we to uncover these fantasies, though? Ancient texts are relatively forthcoming with norms: someone will always tell you what was *dikaïos* and what was not. Weighing such statements, evaluating their meaning and force, reconciling them with others—this is difficult enough. But fantasy poses evidentiary problems of a different order, as it draws us inevitably away from the manifest level of the text—that which is spoken and acknowledged—to the unconscious, the unsaid, the unthought, the unthinkable. How does one read for what is not there?

Again, the tyrannicides may afford an inroad. The tyrannicide myth seems to have been much in people’s minds in the years between 415 and 412, the years of Athens’s great expedition against Sicily.<sup>38</sup> Thucydides traces this heightened interest in the story to a remarkable incident. Just

<sup>38</sup> M. W. Taylor 1981, ch. 6.

as the fleet was preparing to sail to Sicily, in a single night, all the Herms in the city were mutilated. These statues—rectangular blocks with a face and a phallus that stood at crossroads and in front of houses—had been cut about the face and, Aristophanes hints (*Lys.* 1093–94), castrated. This act of sacrilege caused great consternation: it was taken as a grave omen for the expedition just departing for Sicily and also, Thucydides says, as part of “a conspiracy plotting revolution and the overthrow of the democracy” (6.27.3). This vandalism had far-reaching consequences for both the Sicilian Expedition and the war against Sparta. Thucydides describes in some detail the panic that ensued and how suspicion came to rest on the general Alcibiades. The demos recalled Alcibiades from the war front to face charges; as a result, Thucydides suggests, it brought on defeat in Sicily and ultimately ruined the city (6.15.3–4).<sup>39</sup>

In the midst of this important discussion, though, Thucydides makes a strange and sudden digression. The mood in Athens after the mutilation of the Herms was one of frenzied suspicion, he says,

ἐπιστάμενος γὰρ ὁ δῆμος ἀκοῆν τὴν Πεισιστράτου καὶ τῶν παίδων τυραννίδα χαλεπὴν τελευτῶσαν γενομένην καὶ προσέτι οὐδ’ ὕφ’ ἑαυτῶν καὶ Ἀρμοδίου καταλυθεῖσαν, ἀλλ’ ὑπὸ τῶν Λακεδαιμονίων, ἐφοβεῖτο αἰεὶ καὶ πάντα ὑπόπτως ἐλάμβανεν.

For the people had heard about the tyranny of Pisistratus and his sons and how harsh it became toward the end. They also knew that the tyranny had not been ended by themselves and Harmodius, but by the Spartans. They were thus always afraid and approached everything with suspicion. (6.53.3)

With this the historian launches into a lengthy excursus on the famed tyrannicide.

This digression is puzzling: why at this important juncture in his narrative does Thucydides turn aside to recount this familiar story? Why does he juxtapose the mutilation of the Herms and the tyrannicide, two seemingly unrelated events? The tyrannicide digression is remarkably long and detailed—so much so that it is more of an interruption than an explanation of contemporary affairs. Moreover, the motivations Thucydides himself offers for it are uncharacteristically vague. The tyrannicide story is first introduced to explain Athenian anxiety after the mutilation of the Herms: the demos knew that the tyrannicides had not ended the tyranny. A sentence later it becomes proof that “the Athenians are no more able than anyone else to speak accurately about their own tyrants and their

<sup>39</sup> On the mutilation of the Herms, see And. 1; Plut. *Alc.* 18.6–22.5; D.S. 13.2.3–4; Hatzfeld 1951.158–95; MacDowell 1962.192–93; Gomme, Andrewes, and Dover 1970.264–88; Marr 1971.337–38; Powell 1979.21–25; Keuls 1985.385–403; R. Osborne 1985.64–67; de Romilly 1995.101–8; Furley 1996, esp. 13–30; McGlew 1999; Munn 2000.103–6.

history” (6.54.1). By the end of the digression, Thucydides says only that the people “had this in mind and recalled the stories they knew about it” as they zealously prosecuted the conspirators (6.60.1). The weak motivation, surprising length and detail of the digression, and the odd tension between what the demos knew about the tyrannicide and what it did not know all beg further explanation.<sup>40</sup>

Scholars have proposed different justifications for the tyrannicide digression. Some have viewed the problem as merely editorial, an inconsistency between different periods in the composition of Thucydides’ history.<sup>41</sup> Others have attributed it to the author’s intellectual punctiliousness, his compulsion to correct a historical error, even at a cost to narrative cohesion.<sup>42</sup> More convincingly, many have argued that the digression reflects the contemporary situation in Athens, illustrating the daring of the Athenian character, democratic anxiety about tyranny, the often flawed nature of democratic decision making, and the conditions under which governments are (as that of Athens will soon be) overthrown.<sup>43</sup>

This is a suggestive line of inquiry and we pursue it further when we return to this crux within the context of Alcibiades’ putative tyranny and the disastrous eros of Athenian imperialism. For the time being, though, I wish less to pose a solution to this problem than to view it precisely *as a problem*, and to let it exemplify a certain methodological approach. Why is the text so hazy about the motivations for this long digression and its significance for the surrounding narrative? Why do we have this crux here, at the junction of these two particular narratives? What is the connection between Herms and tyrannicides, and why does the text not spell

<sup>40</sup> I leave to one side the parody of the Mysteries that was exposed at this same time and is linked in Thucydides’ account to the mutilation and the tyrannicide legend. I agree with R. Osborne 1985.67 that “in fact the two acts had very different implications, and if they become muddled in the ensuing witch-hunt that is no reason to suppose that they were muddled in the execution.” This profanation does not speak to the sexual thematics of the tyrannicide legend (as I suggest the Herms do) but instead to the tension between public and private, sacred and profane. Thus it serves as a good reminder that no event has a single meaning. See also Furley 1996.41–48, who notes that Thucydides keeps the two acts of sacrilege separate, and they are only linked by Alcibiades’ enemies in an attempt to implicate him in both (Thuc. 6.61.1; Plut. *Alc.* 20).

<sup>41</sup> Schwartz 1929.180–86; Hirsch 1926.139; Ziegler 1929.58–59; Jacoby 1949.158 n.47; Fitzgerald 1957.278–80.

<sup>42</sup> Gomme, Andrewes, and Dover 1970.329; cf. Lang 1954.398–99; Scanlon 1987.291–92; Thuc. 1.20.

<sup>43</sup> Münch 1935; Pearson 1949; Momigliano 1971; Parry 1972; M. W. Taylor 1981.161–75; Palmer 1982.106–9, 114–15; Forde 1989.33–57; Munn 2000.114–18. On the digression, see further Schadewaldt 1929.84–94; Jacoby 1949.158–64; Diesner 1959; H.-P. Stahl 1966.1–11; Gomme, Andrewes, and Dover 1970.317–29 (esp. 325–29); Hunter 1973–74; Connor 1977.107–9, 1984.176–80; Rawlings 1981.100–117; Ridley 1981.27–28; Allison 1989.98–101, 1997.182–86; Loraux 2000.65–82.

it out? If silence is an essential part of discourse (as Foucault shows), what is the quality of the silence at work in this moment? How is the text's refusal (or inability) to articulate a connection related to the Athenians' own uncertain knowledge of their past? In this inarticulate juxtaposition, what is not being spoken? What is the text resisting?

Perhaps it will seem that I am making too much of these few lines or else turning my own interpretive failure into Thucydides'. But in asking these questions I am not accusing Thucydides of sloppiness, caginess, or bad faith, but instead suggesting that the surface juxtaposition, with all its oddities, should be read as a symptom of something left unexpressed—and perhaps inexpressible—within the terms of the text; it is a manifestation at the conscious level of the text of a repressed connection, an unacknowledged association. The passage is interesting to me precisely for its obscurity, for its nonexplanation of its own motivation. Taking it at its surface meaning fails to address this obscurity: we may find a way to fill the gap left in the text, but we cannot explain the existence of the gap in the first place. But if we read it symptomatically, the passage opens up a space in the text between the said and the unsaid, between what the text can speak and what it cannot, between what the demos knows and what it does not. It exposes a resistance, both in the text (which does not make itself clear) and in the demos (which knows the story of the tyrannicides but does not know it accurately). This resistance suggests that there is something in the text more than the text, a textual unconscious, as it were.<sup>44</sup>

It is in this space, I think, that we can begin to look for the psychic elaborations of *dikaios erōs*. This historical moment brings together politics and eros in a particularly impacted way. Jack Winkler proposed reading the Herms as an idealized representation of the democratic male subject: their rigid stances and lack of differentiation symbolized the notional equality and individual autonomy of all citizens in the democracy; their erect phalloi represented the sexual dominance that was one marker of citizenship in Athens.<sup>45</sup> Stationed in public places throughout the city, the Herms symbolized, memorialized, and perpetuated the *dikaios erōs* of

<sup>44</sup> The point is not to uncover “the” hidden meaning of the passage or “the” one latent connection. As Žižek points out (1989.12–14), in Freud's interpretation of dreams, it is not the secret content of the dream that is crucial, but the dreamwork (the displacement, condensation, etc.) through which that content is expressed. Compare Foucault's project in *The Order of Things*: “to reveal a *positive unconscious* of knowledge: a level that eludes the consciousness of the scientist and yet is part of scientific discourse” (1970.xi). On symptomatic reading, now see also Kurke 1999.24–25, who aptly stresses the politics of textual silences. Cf. F. Jameson 1981.47–49.

<sup>45</sup> Winkler 1990a.35–36. Cf. R. Osborne 1985; Halperin 1990a.16–17; Humphreys 1999.129. On Herms: Lullies 1931; Crome 1935–36; Goldman 1942; Devambez 1968; Wrede 1985.



the Athenian citizen. Given this significance, the mutilation of the Herms becomes a serious attack on both the sexual and the political autonomy of the demos. In the sexual register it is a castration; in the political, a potential act of tyranny, but the political and erotic here are inseparable: if the Athenian citizen is, virtually by definition, sexually dominant, castration is political disenfranchisement.<sup>46</sup>

As a piece of political symbolism, then, this incident actively deploys the thematics of democratic eros. It speaks in the language of an eroticized politics that the demos immediately understood: an assault on the citizen body presaged a conspiracy to overthrow the democracy. But what does it mean to juxtapose this mutilation with the tyrannicide? What is the effect of placing a drama of civic castration next to the legend of *dikaios erōs*, an attack on the democracy next to the foundation of the democracy? In this juxtaposition we glimpse the dim psychic half-life of Athens's sexual and political normativity. The mutilation of the Herms is a tacit acknowledgment—both at the level of the text (which juxtaposes it with the tyrannicides) and of the demos (for which it evoked memories of the tyrannicide)—of the fragility of *dikaios erōs*. Murdered tyrants can return, their violent eros unmanning the demos. The citizens, those manly lovers, are never free from the terror of castration and their dominance is always vulnerable to attack. Indeed, the very ideal of *dikaios erōs* is secured by that vulnerability, for in Thucydides' account it is the mutilation that makes the demos look back to the tyrannicide, as if seeking a solid foundation upon which to reground its political and sexual dominance. The mutilation regenerates the ideal. It also taints it, as we shall see, revealing the mere fictionality of this dominant fiction.

In a sense, this book as a whole radiates from this murky textual moment, attempting to read its silences and repressed associations. In this inarticulate crux it finds written the love affair between the demos and its demagogues; the demos's paradoxical hatred of, love for, and identification with tyranny; the eros for imperialism and the mutilation that eros

<sup>46</sup> There are good reasons, I think, to associate the Herms with the Athenians as citizens (and not just residents of Attica). First, these statues were located in public (i.e., political) spaces of the city and in front of houses (generally only citizens owned property); they also stood as markers on the roads between the city and the demes, thus delineating “the city” (and hence the idea of “the civic”). Second, the Herms are thought to have originated at the end of the Pisistratid regime, which makes them temporally coterminous with the democracy (see my discussion in chapter 5). Winkler (1990a.36) further cites the Eion monument as evidence of the Herms' democratic ideology: three Herms erected in the Agora memorialize the victory of the Athenians over the Persians at Eion, but without mentioning the names of individual generals (cf. R. Osborne 1985.61). For the civic connotations of the Herms, see also McGlew 1999.17–19. This is not to say, of course, that this was the only significance of the Herms, or even that it would be the primary association in every context. R. Osborne 1985 charts the heterogeneous (religious, political, semiotic) significance of the Herms.

entails; the impossibility of living up to the ideal of citizen masculinity and the impossibility of failing to; the unspeakable kinship between the citizen-lover and the castrated Herm. If, as Winkler suggested, the Herm embodies Athenian masculinity and stands as a monument to the virility of the citizen body, the mutilated Herm represents the abject to that citizen-subject, all that he must repudiate in order to secure his own being: failed masculinity, compromised integrity, threatened autonomy.<sup>47</sup> That abject, as we shall see, is banished again and again in a reiterated gesture of exclusion that defines the margins of possibility and propriety for the citizen and consolidates the realm of his political and sexual normativities. But that exile can never be final—for the subject needs the abject as “its own founding repudiation”<sup>48</sup>—and the abject persists alongside the subject, like mutilated Herms alongside noble tyrannicides, in an obscure but intimate symbiosis. This persistence means that there is always an instability within *dikaïos erōs*, a space of potential perversion or abjection that troubles this empire of legitimacy and its legitimate subjects. Norms (generative as they are) may generate this potential but do not fully determine it, and it abides as a vague unease, revealing itself obliquely in textual silences and inconsistencies.

Uncovering this intimacy between the citizen-lover and the castrated Herm is important not only for what it tells us about the psychic life of the Athenian citizen, but also because it is precisely in this tension between norms and their phantasmatic figuration that Athenian ideology takes shape. Ideology does not stand fully on the side of normativity (as a coercive ideal), but it arises in the space between norms and fantasy; nor is it wholly on the side of politics (“propaganda”), but it exists in the link between politics and eros or, more specifically, in the eros that binds the subject to the political. Slavoj Žižek defines ideology as an essentially imaginary entity—which does not mean that it does not “exist” or have material effects, but rather that its primary locus of operation is at the level of the unconscious.<sup>49</sup> Drawing on Althusser’s famous dictum that

<sup>47</sup> On the abject, see Kristeva 1982.1–31; Butler 1993.3: “The abject designates here precisely those ‘unlivable’ and ‘uninhabitable’ zones of social life which are nevertheless densely populated by those who do not enjoy the status of the subject, but whose living under the sign of the ‘unlivable’ is required to circumscribe the domain of the subject.”

<sup>48</sup> Butler 1993.3.

<sup>49</sup> See, e.g., Žižek 1989.11–53. I use the term “imaginary” throughout to refer to the register of fantasy. For the most part, I do not adopt the technical Lacanian meaning of the word, which limits it to images (the imago of the mirror stage being the prime example). The imaginary I trace is predominantly textual and therefore closer in some ways to the Lacanian symbolic. Further, because fantasy is an enactment of wish fulfillment, the imaginary will often figure as a space of unconscious desire (another feature of the symbolic in Lacanian theory). For discussion of these terms, see Laplanche and Pontalis 1973.210–11, 314–19. Compare Berlant’s notion of the “National Symbolic,” by which she means some-

“ideology represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence,”<sup>50</sup> Žižek argues that “the fundamental level of ideology . . . is not of an illusion masking the real state of things but that of an (unconscious) fantasy structuring our social reality itself.”<sup>51</sup> Ideology, in Althusser’s model, reproduces itself through the constitution of subjects, whom it hails into being as subjects in and subject to ideology. The individual must answer ideology’s call if he or she is to be a legitimate subject, but that assent takes place not at the conscious level but at the level of unconscious fantasy. Fantasy transforms ideology—a contingent and artificial, “fictional,” set of social arrangements—into reality and grants it its material force. Fantasy covers over the logical inconsistencies of ideology and bridges the gap between the demands of normativity and the individual psyche.<sup>52</sup> For the subject (as Silverman stresses),<sup>53</sup> this ideological fantasy *is* reality, and ideological struggle is the struggle to define a society’s reality through the medium of fantasy, by arousing and directing the communal libido. Ideology works, in other words, only if you fall in love with it.

Thus eros is not merely a metaphor for politics but also its object and arena and part of the mechanism of its operation. The study of democratic eros is a study of the ways in which citizens fell in love with Athens and the ideology that both incited that love and was perpetuated by it. Ober has argued eloquently that the basis of the Athenian democracy (and the reason for its remarkable stability over time) was not its constitution or institutions but a shared ideology.<sup>54</sup> Athens, he contends, was an “imagined community” built around the ideological principle (we might call it a dominant fiction) of *Demos*, the people as source of political authority and agent of political will.<sup>55</sup> The study of *Demos*’s love-life supports his

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thing close to what I designate the political “imaginary” (1991.5, 20–22). She elaborates on this notion in Berlant 1997, an analysis of sexuality, politics, and national fantasy in contemporary America.

<sup>50</sup> Althusser 1971.162.

<sup>51</sup> Žižek 1989.33. This is why, Žižek argues (1989.36–43), it makes no difference if one is cynical toward ideology or in what spirit one complies with its commands: to pray is to believe, he says (playing on Pascal’s idiom) because that action materializes a prior *unconscious* belief. Thus ideology is not a matter of false consciousness, and Žižek reinterprets Marx’s definition of ideology (“they don’t know what they do, but they do it”) in light of subjects’ nonknowledge of the unconscious (they know, in Freud’s phrase, but do not know they know).

<sup>52</sup> Žižek 1989.114–15, 127.

<sup>53</sup> Silverman 1992.16–35. On fantasy and the social, see further J. Rose 1996.1–15.

<sup>54</sup> Ober 1989a (esp. 293–339), 1989b, 1994.102–4. See also Meier 1990.140–54.

<sup>55</sup> Ober 1989b.332–33, 1994.109, 1996.117–20. His concept of *Demos* as an imaginary construct is useful so long as we remember that it was not a Platonic Form, but the object and product of ideological contestation (and hence might conceal as much as it reveals about the ways in which democratic ideology was constructed). For a theorization of the *demos*

claim and, I think, strengthens it by showing that it was not just shared ideas and values that united the polis but also shared fantasies and desires, and by stressing the location at the level of the imaginary of the ideology that formed this “imagined” community.<sup>56</sup> If ideology is an essentially phantasmatic structure—and thus the space of its emergence is not only political contest but the citizen psyche—then any account of Athenian ideology must include not just easily recognized and officially declared attachments (freedom, equality, the power of the demos) but also their unconscious refractions. Or, to put it differently, if democracy is based on the will of the demos and the demos’s will in turn reflects its desire, then by giving that desire its full psychological valence—attending to its contradictions and repressions, its fixations and perversions—we will most fully understand democracy.

The site of this study—a difficult but fruitful terrain—is the Athenian unconscious. Butler proposes that the unconscious is precisely that which exceeds ideology: ideology hails the subject, but its demands are always exorbitant and its interpellation always constricting as well as enabling. Subjects assent to what they can; and what they cannot, they repress. That repressed remainder becomes the unconscious.<sup>57</sup> The “democratic unconscious,” then, appears at and as the limit of democratic ideology.

Further, if with Butler we understand the unconscious as the remainder of ideology, then perhaps it will not seem strained to speak of the unconscious of an entire polis or people. When I refer to the “Athenian unconscious” or the “unconscious of the demos” I mean by this not the unconscious of the individual Athenian, for that is a truly unknown entity and will always elude our desire to know it, but that of his imaginary

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as collective agent, see Wolin 1996, and on the dangers of reifying the people, Lefort 1988.132–34.

<sup>56</sup> Ober takes this term from Benedict Anderson. For Anderson the imagined is not strictly imaginary: communities are “imagined” in that those who belong to them hold an image of them in mind (1983.6; “imagined community” and “national consciousness” seem to be synonymous). This image is fostered (“unselfconsciously,” but never, as he presents it, unconsciously) through such symbolic means as language and commerce. Ober defines ideology as “the set of ideas about the public realm common to most citizens, sufficiently coherent to lead to action but less formally organized than theoretical principles” (1989b.327; cf. 1989a.38–40). This would seem to situate it firmly within the symbolic order of discourse and political relations, but his differentiation between a principle of equality and a social reality that often included practical inequalities suggests a more Althusserian notion of ideology, with ideology oriented in a more imaginary direction.

<sup>57</sup> Butler 1997.86: “The psyche is precisely what exceeds the imprisoning effects of the discursive demand to inhabit a coherent identity, to become a coherent subject. The psyche is what resists the regularization that Foucault ascribes to normalizing discourses.” Cf. Žižek 1999.261–62 and n.18.

avatar “Demos.” This figure is, of course, itself a fantasy, a figment produced by Athenian civic discourse: even when these terms—“Demos,” “the polis,” “Athens”—appear as the subject of a verb like “loves,” we should not mistake these fictions for real human subjects.<sup>58</sup> That said, the line between the two is not absolute. Postmodern theory (not least psychoanalysis) has posited that the “real human subject” is in many ways itself a fictional character, as much a discursive construct as “Demos.” Likewise if, as Lacan says, the unconscious is the speech of the Other (law, ideology) within the self, then the individual unconscious is already in essence transpersonal—“collective”—as well as fully discursive. To speak of a civic unconscious thus does not necessarily mean reifying an abstraction or imposing a mechanical analogy between individual and collective; instead, it means taking seriously the discursive nature of the unconscious (“individual” or “collective”) and trying to delineate the repressed of Athenian discourse in both its ideological specificity and its psychological complexity.

Because the civic unconscious is discursive, it is difficult to distinguish from the unconscious of the text that is the site of its articulation.<sup>59</sup> Indeed, we can see this slippage already in Thucydides’ digression, where the text’s unspoken association between Herms and tyrannicides corresponds to the demos’s own partial and uncertain knowledge of its past. Whose unconscious fantasies are we glimpsing in the symptomatic silences of a text? While it is important to be precise about the object of analysis, this question rests upon a false dichotomy between the text and the larger cultural discourse in which it participates. The relation between these two is not properly oppositional but synecdochic: the text is a part of that discourse and the discourse, in turn, nothing but the sum of its texts. Thus the democratic unconscious is inseparable from the text. It does not stand outside the text (“is this Thucydides’ fantasy or the demos’s?”) but is immanent within it, both in its local equivocations and in its conversation with other texts. When I analyze the textual unconscious of Thucydides’ *Peloponnesian War* (as I do often in the pages that follow) or other works, I also suggest that the fantasies we find there are not isolated utterances, but rather one enunciation of the language that is the Athenian unconscious—a language spoken only through such enunciations.

Inasmuch as this unconscious is both textual and cultural, our (psycho)-analysis will also be a literary analysis that seeks to uncover the text’s

<sup>58</sup> As Loraux points out, however, in justification of her psychoanalysis of the civic psyche, the Greeks themselves analogized the city to an individual (1987.47–54).

<sup>59</sup> A textual unconscious is not the same as the author’s unconscious, which, like that of the individual citizen, is off limits to us. Compare F. Jameson 1981, for whom the “political unconscious” is located within the formal structures of the text.

repressed and to read the displacements and condensations behind its metaphors and metonymies, and a historical analysis that attempts to reconstruct from the gaps and illogic of our records a history of what Nicole Loraux calls “imaginary Athens.”<sup>60</sup> Finally and perhaps obviously, this analysis is hermeneutic, not therapeutic. It aims to “cure” neither the Athenians nor us. That said, we must always be alert to our transference relation with the past, the cure we seek in returning to it.<sup>61</sup> Karen Bassi (1998) has recently argued that the study of ancient Greece is driven by a nostalgic desire for a hegemonic masculine subject. Likewise, part of the “erotics of democracy” is our eros for Athenian democracy and for the democratic citizen. What is the nature of our desire for Athens? The Athenians’ fantasies still arouse us, but what is it we are responding to? Are we in love with *dikaios erōs* and the fiction of a noble, democratic citizen-lover? Or do we fantasize about a perverse Athens? We may not be able to answer fully these questions about our unconscious desires (any more than the Athenians could about their own), but we can at least seek that our love not be blind.

<sup>60</sup> E.g., Loraux 1986a.328–38.

<sup>61</sup> On historiographical transference, see LaCapra 1985.11, 40, 69, 72–73, 123–24.