

## ANTERASTAI: COMPETITION IN EROS AND POLITICS IN CLASSICAL ATHENS

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The purpose of this paper is to restore the competitive dimension to our understanding of the institution of pederasty, and thereby enhance our understanding of the erotic metaphors applied to Athenian politics by authors in the classical period. The pederastic *erastes-eromenos* pair has often been treated in scholarship as if it existed in a vacuum,<sup>1</sup> when, of course, ancient Greece was an intensely agonistic society and competition over a desirable *eromenos* was fierce, as our ancient sources acknowledge. I hope to show that this aspect of competition helps to explain why metaphors derived from the elite practice of pederasty were so well suited to describing the politics of the Athenian democracy. First, however, I will examine the literary evidence for competition in pederasty and the association of competition with both pederasty and athletics.

### I. COMPETITION IN ATHLETICS AND PEDERASTY

Pederasty, as Thomas Scanlon puts it, seems to have “come out of the closet in the seventh century,” closely followed and fostered by the convention of competing in the nude (around 650–600).<sup>2</sup> Competition was a

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1 For example, the controversy over the categories of active vs. passive or penetrator vs. penetrated and the question of what actually went on physically in a pederastic relationship have served to focus attention on the dynamics between a pederastic couple.

2 Scanlon 2002.96: “Pederasty seems to have ‘come out of the closet’ in the seventh century, perhaps as a measure for birth control spurred on by a population expansion in eighth-century Greece. Then comes the real ‘boom’ in athletics in the early sixth century. Athletic

vital characteristic in the expansion of both athletics and pederasty.<sup>3</sup> There were two main forms of athletic competition in ancient Greece: individual vs. individual (as in boxing or wrestling), and individual vs. a field of other individuals (as in footraces).<sup>4</sup> The first holds obvious analogies to an erotic relationship, which have been well observed since antiquity.<sup>5</sup> What has been less clear is the application of the second type, the “field competition,” to erotic relationships, specifically within a pederastic context. In a running event, one athlete is competing against many for the same goal, much as *anterastai* compete for a desirable *eromenos*.

In ancient Greece, it was easy to find eros, athletics, and competition mingling together in the same place; most commonly, perhaps, in the unofficial election of the “most beautiful boy” at each palaestra.<sup>6</sup> Sometimes there was too much mingling: the Hermaia, the Athenian festival for boys, apparently became such a “pick-up” opportunity that adults were eventually banned from attending.<sup>7</sup> Also noteworthy is the kissing contest for boys that was held at Diocles’ tomb at Olympia. As Scanlon (2002.95) comments: “The Olympic victor and beloved is aptly remembered in an event which puts *eros* itself into an agonistic context.”

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nudity, it has been cogently argued, appeared 650–600 B.C., likely fostering and simultaneously fostered by the newly open homosexuality, though both openly displayed pederasty and formal Olympic athletics precede the custom of nudity.” (The birth-control argument was first made in Percy 1996.)

3 Scanlon 2002.68: “Athletics and overt homosexuality . . . arose contemporaneously in a context of heightened social competition for status.”

4 Scanlon 2002.279 describes three categories of athletic competition: “competition directly between two individuals (as in wrestling), competition of one individual with ‘the others’ in the field (as in footraces), and competition between two (or more) groups (as in torch races).” The last type of team contest, however, was “exceptional in athletics.”

5 Scanlon 2002.216: “Wrestling is, for obvious physiological reasons, the favored metaphor for making love in the literary sources.” In Anacreon 369 (Diehl), the poet describes himself as boxing with Eros (cited in Scanlon 2002.260–61). Cf. the various depictions in vase paintings of Eros with athletes (Scanlon 2002.239–49) and fifth-century depictions of Eros wrestling Anteros (Scanlon 2002.259–60), though this last trope seems to apply to the reciprocity felt in heterosexual relationships.

6 In the *Lysis* (204B), Socrates, on being invited into a new palaestra, asks “the name of the best-looking member.” Cf. *Charmides*, where Socrates asks the young men of the palaestra (153D) “whether there were any who had become distinguished for wisdom or beauty or both.” (Translations of Platonic works are taken from Cooper 1997.)

7 Scanlon 2002.92: “The focus on the erotic attraction of the Hermaia, both before and after the attendance law, provides a good illustration of the conjunctions of pederasty and athletic *paideia* in Athenian culture.”

In pederasty (as practiced in classical Athens), restrictions existed that guaranteed the intense competition of aristocratic *anterastai* over a small, select pool of prized *eromenoi*. To win such an *eromenos* enhanced the honor of the *erastes* and shamed his rivals. As Pausanias declares in Plato's *Symposium* (182E): "conquest is deemed noble, failure shameful." A "trophy" *eromenos* was rendered such by his socio-economic class, physical beauty, and youth. He was maintained as such by the vigilance of older male relatives and guardians<sup>8</sup> and the cultural expectation that he would play hard to get and finally yield to only one worthy *erastes*.<sup>9</sup>

Even if an *eromenos* was one of the select few being fought over, his desirability (itself enhanced by competition)<sup>10</sup> did not last for long; he had only a small window of prepubescent attractiveness. For a select few boys, for a short time, elite *anterastai* would become "slaves to love,"<sup>11</sup> and engage in "slavish" behavior.<sup>12</sup> Beyond this window, all desire and pursuit dropped away, and the *eromenos* was abandoned.

This small window of opportunity finds expression in lyric poetry as warnings or taunts concerning the onset of puberty and its accompanying body hair (considered unattractive) directed at a handsome and popular *eromenos*. Thus Alcaeus (*Greek Anthology* 12.30): "Your legs, Nicander, are becoming hairy; / Take care this doesn't happen to your ass, / Or you will find your lovers getting very / Scarce. Irrevocably, your youth will pass."<sup>13</sup>

8 Pausanias in *Symposium* 183C: "Recall that fathers have attendants for their sons as soon as they're old enough to be attractive, and that an attendant's main task is to prevent any contact between his charge and his suitors."

9 As Dover 1989.103 memorably describes the ideal *eromenos*'s resistant behavior: "He does not seek or expect sensual pleasure from contact with an *erastes*, begrudges any contact until the *erastes* has proved himself worthy of concession, never permits penetration of any orifice of his body, and never assimilates himself to a woman by playing a subordinate role in a position of contact."

10 Scanlon 2002.295 quotes Girard's observation on mimetic desire: "The subject desires the object because the rival desires it."

11 Meleager (*Greek Anthology* 12.81) beseeches his "fellow slaves" (ὁμόδουλοι) for relief from the erotic torture resulting from a mere glance at the boy Dionysius. Cf. *Greek Anthology* 12.158 (Meleager), 12.160 (anonymous), 12.169 (Dioscorides). Halperin 1990.32, n. 1 refers to the *erastes*'s "self-abandonment" as a "chosen strategy."

12 Pausanias's description of erastic behavior from Plato's *Symposium* (183A): "Imagine that in pressing his suit he went to his knees in public view and begged in the most humiliating way, that he swore all sorts of vows, that he spent the night at the other man's doorstep, that he was anxious to provide services even a slave would have refused."

13 Ἡ κνήμη, Νίκανδρε, δασύνεται· ἀλλὰ φύλαξαι, / μή σε καὶ ἡ πυγὴ ταὐτὸ παθοῦσα λάθῃ· / καὶ γνώσῃ φιλέοντος ὅση σπάνις. ἀλλ' ἔτι καὶ νῦν / τῆς ἀμετακλήτου

Body hair was even in a sense liberating: “the beard, appearing on the *eromenos*, ‘liberates the *erastes* from the tyranny of eros.’”<sup>14</sup>

Likewise, Socrates is admonished for still chasing Alcibiades, though he is already growing a beard (*Protagoras* 309A). In the pseudo-Platonic *Alcibiades*, this pursuit is expanded upon, so that Socrates is the last of Alcibiades’ *erastai*: even the delectable Alcibiades is abandoned by his legion of lovers at puberty. Compare the passage from ps.-Lucian, quoted by Halperin 1990.88: “By the age of twenty, a boy is already ceasing to be desirable, ‘for then the limbs, being large and manly, are hard, the chins that once were soft are rough and covered with bristles, and the well-developed thighs are as it were sullied with hairs.’” Halperin comments: “Each detail in this description of over-ripe boyhood is intended to produce revulsion and disgust.”

Lyric poetry, while testifying to the *eromenos*’s limited window of desirability, can also provide a false picture of “cocooning” between *erastes* and *eromenos*. The lyric poets tend to emphasize one level of competition, that between *erastes* and *eromenos*, while glossing the other, that between *erastes* and *anterastes*. The only common references to competing *anterastai* in lyric poetry come in the forms of (1) mock fear of Zeus as *anterastes*, and (2) abuse of a promiscuous *eromenos*. The first, in which the *eromenos* is imagined as being so attractive as to tempt Zeus from his Ganymede, serves merely as a graceful compliment to the *eromenos*. For example, Alcaeus beseeches Zeus: “Like an eagle pray don’t grab this one / to pour your drinks instead of Ganymede” (*Greek Anthology* 12.64.3–4).<sup>15</sup> The second comes into play when an embittered *erastes* discovers that he is not the only one to enjoy his *eromenos*’s favors. Callimachus despises a “common” (περίφοιτον) beloved, among other such things (*Greek Anthology* 12.43).<sup>16</sup> In both situations, true competition is excluded: in the first case, competing with a god is impossible; the fantasy functions as thinly-disguised praise of the *eromenos*’s beauty. In the second case, the sexual commodity has been spoiled and is no longer exclusive; there is no need and less desire to compete for access to it.

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φρόντισον ἡλικίης. Cf. Strato *Greek Anthology* 12.229. (Translations of poems from the Greek Anthology are taken from Hine 2001.)

14 Dover 1989.86, quoting Plutarch *Dial.* 770bc.

15 μηδέ μοι οἰνοχόον κυλίκων σέθεν αἰετὸς ἀρθεῖς / μάρψαις ἀντὶ καλοῦ, κοίρανε, Δαρδανίδου. Cf. *Greek Anthology* 12.65 (Meleager), 12.67 (anonymous), 12.68 (Meleager), 12.194 (Strato).

16 Cf. *Greek Anthology* 12.104 (anonymous), 12.184 (Strato).

Therefore, we will need to turn to prose to find illustrations of explicit competition among *anterastai* over an *eromenos* who has not yet yielded his favors. The first example to be considered is actually titled *Anterastai*,<sup>17</sup> a dialogue attributed to Plato (probably falsely), but still thought to have been written in the fourth century. In this dialogue, two young men, an athlete and a “philosopher,”<sup>18</sup> are competing for the attentions of a boy. They follow him to school, where Socrates encounters them and engages them in a discussion. The philosopher only too gladly seizes upon this opportunity to score points against his rival, confident in defeating the athlete in a war of words before an audience that includes the boy in question. Socrates, however, overturns his expectations and seems to favor the athlete, who is at least free of intellectual pretensions.<sup>19</sup>

Another example of erastic competition is found in Plato’s *Lysis*.<sup>20</sup> Lysis, like Clinias in the *Euthydemus* (273A), is described as thronged by admirers. Here, Socrates admonishes the young man Hippothales, who is attempting to win the affections of the beautiful Lysis by composing poems that abjectly flatter the youth. He recommends instead a more critical stance of advising and reproving the youth when necessary. The strategy of abject flattery will, at best, turn out to be self-congratulatory: “You are really what these songs are all about,” Socrates tells Hippothales. “If you make a conquest of a boy like this, then everything you’ve said and sung turns out to eulogize yourself as victor in having won such a boyfriend” (205E). This criticism of flattery is very similar to the criticism of rhetoric in the *Gorgias*, as we shall see.

Our next example of erastic competition comes from an unexpected quarter: Aeschines’ *Against Timarchus*. In contrast with Timarchus’s wanton ways as a male whore with myriad clients, Aeschines establishes a

17 Commonly titled *Erastai* in our manuscripts of Plato, but referred to as *Anterastai* in all lists of Platonic works occurring in ancient authors. Cooper 1997 also translates the title “Rival Lovers.”

18 One may compare Euripides’ *Antiope*, in the debate between Amphion (the life of the artist and intellectual) and Zethus (practical man of affairs), and how it provides a subtext for Plato’s *Gorgias*. See Nightingale 1995, ch. 2.

19 Socrates, towards the end of the dialogue (139A): “The wise fellow was ashamed at what he’d said before and fell silent, while the unlearned one said that I was right.”

20 While Plato’s reservations about the institution of pederasty are familiar from the *Symposium* and other works, he is also, as Wohl 2002.89 remarks, “the locus classicus of elite pederasty.”

picture of “proper” pederasty. He includes himself in this picture as a battle-scarred *anterastes*. He anticipates allegations of “making myself a nuisance in the gymnasia” and involvement in “hard words and blows arising out of this activity.”<sup>21</sup> In Aeschines, we catch a glimpse of erastic competition become violently physical, as Ludwig 2002.178–79 observes: “[Aeschines] himself had often been involved in beatings, shouting matches, and fights with other men over boys . . . involvement in beatings is a badge of honor [for aristocrats], like a duelling scar.” We may well believe that this is the more common manifestation of intense erastic competition, rather than Plato’s genteel and sophisticated pursuit of genteel and sophisticated youths. In Plato, even an athlete competes by means of argument rather than by the more obvious means of beating his rival into a bloody pulp.

Our final example comes from the pages of Thucydides and shows how easily pederastic competition can slide into political competition. The story is that of the founding pair of the democracy, the lovers Harmodius and Aristogeiton. The action of the legendary tyrannicides is triggered by the unwelcome overtures of an *anterastes*, Hipparchus. But this is no ordinary *anterastes*; he is a tyrant, possessing so much personal power as to completely obviate the rules of erastic competition. Thucydides emphasizes the unequal footing between *erastes* and *anterastes* by making Aristogeiton a “middling citizen”;<sup>22</sup> he is, exceptionally, of lower socio-economic status than his *eromenos*, the noble and wealthy Harmodius. There is no possibility of competition between the commoner and the tyrant over the *eromenos*, and when the tyrant adds insult to injury by verbally humiliating Harmodius,<sup>23</sup> Aristogeiton has almost no choice but to kill his rival. This assassination of an *anterastes* is embraced as a founding myth by the democracy, one of the few instances of the aristocratic institution of pederasty being appropriated wholesale by the democracy.<sup>24</sup>

It will also be important to consider the inherent political baggage of pederasty before examining the application of pederastic metaphors to

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21 *Against Timarchus* 135, referred to by Dover 1989.54.

22 Thuc. VI.54.2: μέσος πολίτης. See Wohl 2002.7.

23 In Aristotle’s version, Hipparchus insults Harmodius by calling him *malakos*, “soft” (*Ath. Pol.* 18.2, cited in Wohl 2002.9). The more common version before Aristotle has Hipparchus insulting Harmodius by barring his sister from marching in the Panathenaic procession (Wohl 2002.3).

24 Wohl 2002.8: “Through this identification [with Aristogeiton] the demos can imagine itself as both an erotic and a political elite, lover of pretty aristocratic boys and slayer of tyrants.”

political contexts. The elitist associations of pederasty, confined as it was mainly to aristocrats, immediately gave it an anti-democratic cast. Hubbard has rightly brought these social and political tensions to the fore,<sup>25</sup> particularly in comedy's mockery of pederasty.<sup>26</sup>

Class friction over pederasty was further exacerbated by the opposing sexual strategies employed by aristocratic (i.e., oligarchic) and democratic ideologies. The aristocrats strove to create intense competition over a very limited pool of prized *eromenoi*, as discussed above. Democracy, on the other hand, was associated with the universal availability of sexual resources for all male citizens. Most famously, Solon was credited with the institution of cheap brothels. Halperin 1990.100 describes the political significance: "By insuring that there would always be a category of persons for every citizen to dominate, both socially and sexually, Solon underwrote the manhood of the Athenian citizen body." Kurke 1997.145 (on female prostitutes) encapsulates these opposing ideological strategies towards sex, that of aristocratic limitation versus democratic expansion: "Egalitarian discourse . . . (at least by the fourth century) can embrace precisely what the aristocratic texts revile, celebrating the universal availability of *pornai* as an emblem and badge of democracy."

In light of the democratic hostility towards pederasty, it is interesting to note that even more hostility towards pederasty was supposed to emanate from the other end of the political spectrum: tyranny. Pausanias in the *Symposium* observes that pederasty is hateful to tyranny.<sup>27</sup> Aristotle confirms this in the *Politics*: "Tyrants outlaw these activities because they give rise to two virtues, one competitive, the other cooperative."<sup>28</sup> This sentiment is echoed later by Athenaeus: "Because of such love-relationships, then, the tyrants, to whom these friendships are inimical, used to forbid

25 Hubbard 1998.49 on the elitism of pederasty: "Athenian pederasty was a social practice especially characteristic of the upper classes—the young men who had the time and leisure to lounge about the gymnasia watching beautiful boys in all of nature's glory, who had the financial resources to offer them the conventional gifts of courtship, who had the intellectual and social skills necessary to offer pleasing companionship."

26 Hubbard 1998.50: "To the extent that a comic poet or orator could cast this upper-class predilection in a negative light as an instrument of defamation against elite opponents, it could be counted on to impress the masses as a distinguishing 'us versus them' criterion."

27 Pausanias in *Symposium* 182BC: "The Persian empire is absolute; that is why it condemns love as well as philosophy and sport. It is no good for rulers if the people they rule cherish ambitions for themselves or form strong bonds of friendship with one another."

28 Ludwig 2002.342, drawing on *Politics* 5.11.5, 1313a39–b6.

pederastic relations entirely, extirpating them everywhere.”<sup>29</sup> These views were no doubt influenced by the status of the lovers Harmodius and Aristogeiton as tyrannicides,<sup>30</sup> but the animosity of tyrants towards pederasty ran deeper.

The tyrant’s unbridled sexual lust and license<sup>31</sup> threatened the aristocratic limitation of sex, and vice versa. Pederasty embodied aristocratic competition. Democracy devalued aristocratic sexual competition by making sex freely available to all male citizens. Tyranny negated aristocratic sexual competition by eliminating all sexual competitors; the tyrant is the only *erastes*. Thus tyranny even negated aristocratic manliness, as Ludwig 2002.54 observes: “The manliness of a leader, in extreme form, would tend to feminize all around it; that is, one man’s manliness presents a threat to every other man’s manliness and to the city itself.”

Thus while a tyrant’s rise to power in a city may be considered analogous to one *anterastes* finally winning a desired *eromenos*,<sup>32</sup> the institution of pederasty was thought to be hated and feared by tyrants. Tyranny, like a handsome *eromenos*, has many *erastai*;<sup>33</sup> but when one *erastes* wins the battle, competition is eliminated and a tyrant is created. Democracy exists in the state of perpetual competition among *anterastai*; to win the competition is to destroy democracy.<sup>34</sup>

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29 Athenaeus 13.602d, quoted by Scanlon 2002.268. Athenaeus continues: “Some even set fire to and demolished palaestras, regarding them as counter-fortifications against their own citadels.”

30 As Pausanias in *Symposium* 182D makes clear: “Didn’t [the Athenian tyrants’] reign come to a dismal end because of the bonds uniting Harmodius and Aristogeiton in love and affection?”

31 Wohl 2002.9: “The lust and sexual licence 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.”

32 As Ludwig 2002.331 notes, the city choosing one leader to lead it is like a boy choosing a lover: “One politician taking over the beloved city permanently and to the exclusion of rival politicians, no longer ruling and being ruled in turn: tyranny.”

33 “Tyranny has many *erastai*”: Herodotus 3.53.4 (noted by Ludwig 2002.141).

34 Likewise, in Plato’s very undemocratic Kallipolis, there is no conflict among rival lovers (*Republic* 521b4–5). Wohl 2002.282, n. 15 observes: “Political desire and political contestation are eliminated together from his city.”



## II. PEDERASTY IN POLITICAL METAPHORS

In these metaphors, the *demos* itself is imagined as an eternally young, always desirable, “trophy” *eromenos* sought by many *anterastai*—in this case, politicians seeking power. The *demos* as ideal, perpetual *eromenos* enjoys much more power over its *anterastai* than any actual *eromenos* would have. A real *eromenos*, no matter how handsome, would probably have to choose an *erastes* eventually, before his own desirability faded away; but the *demos*’s power lay in the eternal postponement of this choice. The *demos*’s power, and democracy itself, is coterminous with the intense competition of *anterastai*.<sup>35</sup>

Our first example of a pederastic metaphor in a political context is drawn from Pericles’ Funeral Oration in Thucydides (II.43.1), purported to be delivered in 431/30. Here, Pericles exhorts all citizens, not just politicians, to be *erastai* of the polis. This startling image, probably to be attributed to Pericles himself,<sup>36</sup> casts the assembled citizens, great and small, into the role of aristocratic *anterastai*<sup>37</sup> competing for the attentions of a particularly beautiful and desirable *eromenos*. While this image undeniably has a “cohesive” aspect,<sup>38</sup> its cohesiveness lies in identifying all citizens as aristocrats, a class virtually synonymous with intense competitiveness. Competition is rife in Pericles’ Funeral Oration; the citizens compete not only with each other as *erastai* of the polis,<sup>39</sup> but also with the war dead,<sup>40</sup> who have offered the ultimate gift to their *eromenos*.<sup>41</sup>

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35 In a similar vein, Wohl 2002.4 remarks about the erotic autonomy of the Athenian citizen: “Democracy and democratic eros are coterminous.”

36 Suggested by Dover 1989.91, Rothwell 1990.39, Monoson 2000.66, et al. Ludwig 2002.330 refers to this image as “Pericles’ innovation.”

37 Wohl 2002.41: “The ideal citizen in Thucydides’ Epitaphios is both a man and a gentleman.”

38 Wohl 2002.37: “The dynamic of the oration may be cohesive in that it creates a unified community out of disparate interests.”

39 Ludwig 2002.7: “[The Greeks] were keenly aware that people often perform acts of service in hopes of winning favor in the eyes of their beloved. The arguments for the political unity of eros relied on precisely this psychology.”

40 Wohl 2002.59 (translating Thucydides 2.45.1): “For everyone always praises those who are gone, and even if you excel in *arete*, it will be difficult for you to be deemed equal to the dead, or even slightly inferior.”

41 Ludwig 2002.336 describes the trope of the beautiful death: “By risking, and receiving, death, the young citizen-soldier seeks to awaken a yearning on the part of the community, a yearning for himself.”

Monoson 2000.68 notes the power with which the average citizen is invested by this image: “The purely sexual dimension of the image of citizen as *erastes* strongly associates being a citizen with being an active and, in some respects, dominant, rather than passive and submissive, participant in some affair.” She sees a worry harbored by this metaphor, however, “that citizens (*erastai*) might act shamefully and abuse the polis (*eromenos*) in an effort to service their own desires” (83). The greatest danger, however, lies in the possibility that the city will choose one *erastes* from this field of admirers. When the choice is made and all competition is eliminated, so is democracy itself.

Aristophanes’ *Knights*, produced in 423, represents Pericles’ metaphor of citizen as *erastes* turned upside down.<sup>42</sup> While we do have two *anterastai*<sup>43</sup> competing for the favors of Demos, everything about this pederastic set-up is quite skewed. Instead of aristocratic *anterastai*, we have two of the basest, most uncouth characters imaginable—the Paphlagonian, a slave, and the Sausage-Seller—flattering and fawning upon Demos. The “chosen strategy”<sup>44</sup> of the *anterastai* to “act the slave” is debased even further in the Sausage-Seller’s history of prostitution. This experience makes him perfectly suited for a political career: politicians in the Aristophanic world are *kinaidoi*.<sup>45</sup> Nor is Demos exempt from ridicule: Wohl (2002.75) also notes how far removed he is from the citizen-lover of Pericles: “No longer is Demos the proud lover of a beautiful city and its glorious dead; instead, he has become the *eromenos*, and a gluttonous and decrepit one at that.”

Even in Aristophanes, however, this competition of *anterastai* (politicians), no matter how warped, is essential for the existence of democracy. When one *erastes* wins the *eromenos*, the polis is now in the possession of a tyrant. The triumph of the Sausage-Seller reflects this at the end of the *Knights*, except that it is Demos who is depicted as the tyrant. Wohl

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42 Wohl 2002.86: “*Knights* parodies Pericles’ exhortation that the citizen become *erastes* of the polis.”

43 732, the Paphlagonian to Demos: ἐράστης τ’ εἰμι σός. In 733, the Sausage-Seller counters that he is Demos’s ἀντεράστης.

44 See Halperin’s remark in note 11.

45 The *kinaidos* is a male who enjoys the passive role in sex, contrary to all cultural expectations of male citizen behavior. As Winkler 1990b.186 puts it: “The *kinaidos* simply and directly desires to be mastered.” Henderson 1991.209: there is “a running joke in Aristophanes and other comic poets [which] holds that most successful statesmen are those with the widest πρῶκτοί [assholes].”

2002.112–13 comments on Demos's transformation: his costume at the end of the comedy "is downright antidemocratic . . . he becomes a king . . . a figure antithetical to the democracy." No matter who is the tyrant, democracy is still extinguished: "Salvation from Cleontic demagoguery [embodied by the Paphlagonian] is bought at the price of democracy" (115).

Plato's *Gorgias* revisits many of the same themes as the *Knights*. Callicles, a young, ambitious Athenian aristocrat, ultimately desires to be some sort of tyrant. In the meantime, however, he must compete against other politicians in an attempt to win the demos's favor. Callicles' strategy, like that of any politician, is to please and flatter the demos until such time as the demos selects him as its sole *erastes*, or tyrant. This is much like the "slave" behavior adopted by actual *anterastai* in pursuit of a desired *eromenos*, but with one catch: the demos cannot allow anyone to win this competition. Callicles is oblivious to this, however; he declares that a "man with sufficient nature" will one day throw off his shackles, and the slave will reveal himself as master (484A). Ober 1998.202 observes that "Callicles thinks himself a master and a predator while revealing himself to be a slave and a victim of popular ideology."

Socrates attempts to bring Callicles to the rude realization that the perpetual competition of democracy serves to keep its *anterastai*, the young, ambitious nobles, in its service. In Plato's representation, what may be a "chosen strategy" of powerlessness for an *erastes* becomes an enforced strategy of real powerlessness for the *anterastai* of the Athenian demos. Like the pathetic *anterastai* of the *Knights*, Callicles can deny nothing to the demos (482A): "If you say anything in the Assembly and the Athenian *demos* denies it, you shift your ground and say what it wants to hear." Socrates tries to impress on Callicles, moreover, that this powerlessness is *not* temporary, even if he does ultimately become a tyrant, "both orators and tyrants have the least power in their cities" (466D).

As in the *Knights*, the powerlessness of Callicles' position is driven home by reference to the *kinaidos*. Socrates suggests that if one ought to indulge one's appetites as far as possible, as Callicles believes, then the *kinaidos* would fulfill this requirement just as readily as the tyrant. Callicles very reluctantly agrees (494E).<sup>46</sup> Callicles thereby acknowledges that, rather

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46 An admission that would have been especially repugnant to Callicles. As Dodds 1959.294 observes, "For the school to which Callicles belongs 'unmanliness' was (and is) the most damning reproach: they pride themselves on being 'real he-men.'"

than assuming the erastic pose of “willing slavery” in anticipation of eventual triumph, he has actually been forced by the demos into passive servility of the worst sort. In comedy, being a *kinaidos* is the perfect qualification for a political career, but in reality this admission is deadly for Callicles’ political ambitions.<sup>47</sup>

Unlike Aristophanes, however, Plato finds democracy itself at fault in creating a perpetual field competition among aristocrats, thereby reducing them to servitude.<sup>48</sup> Tyranny, the position of sole *erastes* to the city, is dangled in front of the aristocrats’ noses, a tantalizing carrot that always remains just out of reach. For the sake of this prize, aristocrats are willing to pander to the demos: just as Socrates had criticized Hippothales for flattering his beloved in the *Lysis*, he criticizes rhetoric for teaching aristocrats to flatter the demos in the *Gorgias*.<sup>49</sup> As Ober 1998.190 observes: “Democratic hegemony is strengthened by a rhetorical training that prepares ambitious men for menial service rather than for engagement in critical resistance, battle, and therapy.”

Finally, let us consider the example of Pericles, whom we may think of as an “actualized” Callicles, the aristocrat who does reach the carrot. According to Thucydides’ famous description, Pericles “led the people and never catered to their pleasure” (II.65.8). In contrast, Thucydides blames the demagogues who succeeded Pericles, especially Cleon, for turning “to pleasing the demos and relinquish[ing] affairs to it” (II.65.10).

Plutarch, however, records an alternate account of Pericles’ rise to power. As noted by Wohl, this account depicts a young Pericles attempting to win the field competition for the demos’s favor in a very “Calliclean” way: “Others said, however, that the people were first led on by him with cleruchies and festival subsidies and distributions of payments, so that they got used to bad habits and became extravagant and uncontrolled through these policies instead of moderate and self-sufficient.”<sup>50</sup> Plutarch goes on to say that after Pericles won this competition, he showed his true self: “after

47 Kahn 1983.106–07: “What Callicles is being asked to count among the logically possible constituents of the *aretê* and happiness of superior men is the pleasure taken from an experience which is not only regarded as unmanly and humiliating but as legally depriving the person in question of his citizenship rights and his chance at a political career.”

48 Dodds 1959.262: “The politician in a democracy is in the position of a suitor—or a κόλαξ (463c), or a δῖάκονος (517b)—in relation to the Sovereign People.”

49 At *Gorgias* 463AB, Socrates famously asserts that rhetoric is flattery.

50 *Per.* 9.1, quoted by Wohl 2002.102.

the ostracism of his elite opponent, Thucydides son of Melesias, Pericles ‘was no longer the same man’” (Wohl 2002.102). Pericles now behaves like the Calliclean “slave” who reveals himself to be the “master”: “He was not submissive to the demos and he no longer yielded easily, bending in the wind of the multitude’s desires. In place of that slack and somewhat effeminate leadership . . . he exerted an aristocratic and royal governance.”<sup>51</sup> While Wohl observes that chronology does not exactly support this picture, it is interesting to note that Plato had voiced similar criticisms of Pericles as well. He implies that Pericles had catered to the whims of the demos, rather than restraining them, with this comment: “Pericles certainly showed them to be wilder than they were when he took them over” (*Gorgias* 516C).

In conclusion, I hope to have shown that a consideration of “field competition” is essential to a full appreciation of pederasty. In a society in which aristocrats defined themselves by their competition with each other, pederasty was another battleground, the *eromenos* another prize to be won—to the enhancement of the victor’s status and the shame of his rivals.

Competition was also essential to the Athenian democracy, as the application of pederastic metaphors to political contexts makes abundantly clear. What is equally clear, however, is that the demos, as idealized, perpetual *eromenos*, could not afford to let anyone win this particular competition. A winner would be declared tyrant, and democracy would no longer exist. The demos’s power, and the democracy, depended on the eternal competition of aristocratic *anterastai* for its favors, and its eternal postponement of choosing a victorious *erastes*.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> *Per.* 15.1, quoted by Wohl 2002.104.

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