

Competing Masculinities in Thucydides' *History*

Traditionally, patriots have been men; masculinity has therefore significantly shaped patriotic identities. The persuasive trope of manhood has been studied in the logographers' speeches (Roisman 2005; Balot 2010), but masculinity's place in Thucydides' speeches remains underexplored. In this paper, I suggest that Thucydides offers a theory of masculinity in his examination of stasis in Corcyra. As Price has argued, *stasis* subverts the natural order (Price 2001). The transgression of civil society's norms produced competing discourses of masculinity, a "constrained masculinity" bounded by the norms of community and a "hyper-masculinity" shaped by reckless and unbridled action. Tracing the language of 3.82.4 in the speeches of Pericles, Nicias, and Alcibiades reveals how Nicias' rhetoric in the Sicilian Debate, reflecting a constrained masculinity that prevailed during Pericles' time, ultimately fails to persuade an audience enchanted by the bold promises engendered by Alcibiades' hyper-masculinity.

At 3.82.4 Thucydides states that the effects of stasis, not limited to individuals and cities, could also be witnessed in words and speech. As examples, Thucydides provides "unstable equivalencies," which, Bassi (2003) argues, reveal ambiguities in key ethical terms signifying destabilized social and political institutions. According to Thucydides, "thoughtless daring was considered partisan manliness, a delay shaped by forethought was an appealing disguise for cowardice, self-control was a pretext for unmanliness, intelligence with regard to the whole was laziness in everything, impulsive haste was enlisted among the manly virtues, while full consideration in light of possible dangers was a specious excuse for backsliding" (Thuc. 3.82.4). Three of these six equivalencies include words with the *andr-* stem: *andreia*, "manliness," *anandros*, "unmanly," and *moira androu*, "the custom of man." If perceptions of manhood

change, then gender norms are not natural, thus allowing for the co-existence of competing masculinities and patriotisms.

Several qualities Pericles praises in his speeches (2.35-46, 60-65) appear at 3.82.4. However, at 3.82.4 these qualities represent not manliness, but unmanliness. Pericles emphasizes the Athenians' combination of daring and deliberation, *tolman* and *eklogizesthai*, intelligent use of confidence, *sunesis*, and rational conclusion from facts as a basis for forethought, *pronoia* (2.40.2-3, 62.4-5). Both Pericles and Nicias (6.9-14) employ language and rhetoric characteristic of "constrained masculinity," following the schema of 3.82.4. Alcibiades, alternatively, privileges bold action, sophisticatedly constructing his own thoughtlessness as a virtue (6.16-18). Nicias urges the Athenians not to be embarrassed into thinking that voting against the war will brand them *malakoi* (6.13.1), admitting his own proposals' emasculating potential.

While Ober notes that Alcibiades' embodiment of the Athenian national identity functions as tool of persuasion (1998), I suggest that Alcibiades also signifies masculinity's transformation from an identity proven through physical acts to one enacted in speech. Democratic Athenians' normative sexual ideology necessitated that citizen men play the proper, penetrating role (Winkler 1990). Wohl (1999) attests to the tradition of Alcibiades as *kinaidos*, a man unable to temper his sexual proclivities, seeking pleasure in being penetrated. The least compelling person to argue from a position of traditional manliness, Alcibiades' rhetorical power suggests that rhetorically invoking this new hyper-masculinity, trumps all facts or reasonable arguments, rendering competing masculinities inferior. Unconstrained by reality, rhetorical masculinity took an exaggerated form limited only by imagined possibility and the persuasive skill of the speaker.

Thucydides may not have been an impartial witness to masculinity's crisis. In his eulogy of Pericles, he notes that the foresight (*pronoia*) Pericles "had shown in regard to the war could

be recognized yet more clearly" after his death (2.65.7). While Athens was well run under Pericles, eventually speakers echoed what the masses wanted to hear in order to gain prestige, which, according to Thucydides, led to great disasters, including the Sicilian Expedition. Thucydides' presentation of Alcibiades reveals the pernicious relationship between patriotism and unbridled masculinity. In a hyper-masculine world, national security became not an end but a means of acquiring fame by goading men to action. Man unbridled let lose an unbridled masculinity. In that moment, when each offered support, not only was his patriotism proven, but also his manhood.

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