

Plutarch, as is well known, explored in his magnum opus, the *Parallel Lives*, multiple factors which contribute to the success of statesmen. While he clearly singles out such factors as rhetorical ability, a readiness to compromise as the situation demands, as well as appropriate and inappropriate forms of euergetism (cf. *Praec. ger. r. p.*), his stance on what influence if any the possession of erotic allure may have on political effectiveness is less clearly discernable. Most studies tend to examine sexual behavior and ignore the less tangible projections of eroticism (Stadter 1995, Walcot 1998, Duff 1999, Beneker 2003). No studies have noted the differences in Plutarch's discussions of this realm of human behavior in the Greek versus the Roman *Lives*.

My analysis will include discussion of various techniques employed by political figures which have erotic appeal in homoerotic and heteroerotic contexts, such as Cimon's use of *neaniskoi* (*Cim.* 10.2-4), the role of gossip (*Cim.* 4.6-10, 14.3-5, *Per.* 10.6, 13.15-16), and relationships with questionable women, such as Aspasia (*Per.* 24-25). Interestingly Plutarch is most interested in delineating Aspasia's impact on Pericles's policies. Their relationship, which is described as a loving one, does not occasion the type of moral criticism one would have expected, given the biographer's sexual conservatism and Aspasia's profession. In fact he allows that Aspasia used her power not just to dominate Pericles but also other foremost men of the state. Perhaps the most overt instance of the relationship between erotic appeal and political power is to be found in Plutarch's *Life of Alcibiades*.

A comparison of the role of eroticism in these Greek *Lives* (and others) with the Roman side of the equation is instructive. In his constellation of Roman heroes living in a society, where male homosexuality did not have the same significance or appeal, no comparable examples of the power of eroticism in political affairs are cited by Plutarch, even in such reputedly sexually omnivorous figures such as Julius Caesar. When scanning the major Roman *Lives* for reports of heterosexual erotic behavior in tandem with political activity one generally meets with disappointment. We mostly encounter seemingly cool operators. There is a strong sense that the Romans overly control their feelings and undervalue the sanctity and companionship of the marriage bond which is so highly instrumentalized. The differential treatment of Greeks and Romans vis-à-vis eroticism is indicative, as I will show, of an ideological agenda, which seeks to pit Roman coarseness against Greek cultivation, an agenda that Michel Foucault (*The Care of the Self*, 1986, 174-210) does not appear to be aware of in his analysis of Plutarch's unique valorization of the marriage bond.