

This paper starts out from a contentious claim: literary depictions of ancient Greek sexual practices are essentially metaphorical. As part of a larger ancient discourse about social behaviors and the appetites, these depictions may indicate attitudes toward actual sexual practices in ancient Greece, but within the frame of literary representation they usually serve as vehicles (in the strict metaphorical sense) for a more general and pervasive concern: the regulation of citizen behaviors. Thus, for instance, in *Clouds* Aristophanes predicates the visceral adjective *euruprōktos* ("gape-assed") of poets and politicians. That is, it demarcates those with preternaturally open mouths, who talk too much and who "prostitute" themselves thereby (*Nub.* 1085-1100). Despite all appearances, the metonymy does not make a claim about actual homosexual practices; it only references them as a figure for other activities (contrast Henderson 1991: 210).

This "open-assed" image highlights one of the two orifices that are central to the depiction of homosexual appetites in ancient reference. Much of comic discourse about the body effectively collapses it on its holes, forging patterns of succinct metonymies that focus on the male body and most commonly calibrate mouth and anus. This emphasis on holes means that certain bodily types and deportments become central vehicles for Athenian anxiety about citizen appetites: in essence, those marked as "open" and sometimes as feminized, ready for penetration at either end. This should sound familiar. But curiously, while these metonymies do indicate oral and anal sex, they do not necessarily indicate passivity or feminization. (In any event, Attic comedy and oratory depict female appetites, especially those for sex, as rapacious and insatiable rather than passive.) Against Foucault's emphasis on the oppositions active/passive and dominant/submissive (following Dover 1978), which both Halperin (e.g., 1990: 30) and Winkler (e.g., 1990: 70) accept as generally descriptive, this openness does not coincide with what it might seem naturally to suggest: namely, passivity and submissiveness (contrast Davidson 1997: 177-80; Wohl 2002: 12-20). Instead, in comic discourse and in other settings that appropriate comic schemes (especially oratory), it tends to point up behaviors that are excessive in one way or another.

The approach that I am advocating, then, may mean less talk about "real" sex and more about a sexual semiotics forged from a wide-ranging network of figures and referents (many of which are not sexual at all). But it also calls for a recommitment to the Foucauldian understanding of ancient sexual practices as part of a larger set of social behaviors. That is to say, my general argument is one for which Foucault (as well as Halperin and Winkler, if not Davidson [2007]) would have had sympathy. Both Aristophanes' "Sausage Seller" and Aeschines may suggest (the latter euphemistically) that a penchant for fellatio marks certain orators, but this should not be construed as evidence of indulgence in oral sex in the Prytaneum or elsewhere (*Knights* 167; cf. Aeschines 2.23, 88). Rather, such mocking references mark the Sausage Seller and Demosthenes as clever prattlers who use their mouths to notably effective ends. Within the discursive space demarcated as comic and/or abusive, these insults index citizen behaviors by means of a set of contrasting excesses: loud versus chattering, say, or pushy versus pandering. Any type of excessive behavior, including those explicitly sexual, marked a failure of moderation and self-restraint, and in this regard was unmanly (i.e., feminine or soft). This schematic regulation of behaviors and the appetites is what Foucault refers to as "a stylization of attitudes and an aesthetics of existence" (1985: 92). I am advocating a more concerted engagement with the literary theoretical ramifications of this crucial insight.