

Sympotic Conduct in a Political Space: Theognis 309-314

Theognis' eponymous elegiac work is one of the richest extant metasympotic texts for archaic Greece. The *Theognidea* is a didactic and moralizing *paideia* that dates to 640-479 BCE; it was apparently so popular that other authors took on Theognis' persona, adding elegiac couplets to this work (Cobb-Stevens, Figueira, and Nagy 1985: 1-7). The *Theognidea*'s moralizing tone admonishes citizen symposiasts to drink with moderation and engage with their fellow aristocratic community in order to perpetuate a harmonious cohort and, by extension, a harmonious *polis*. The idea that the symposium functioned as a microcosm of the *polis* is generally agreed upon by most scholars (Levine 1985; Hammer 2004; Blok, van den Eijnde, and Strootman 2018); although there are those who certainly disagree (Kurke 1999 and Morris 2000). This seemingly cut-and-dry distinction between the symposium as a *pro-polis* or *anti-polis* event is not always clear, Bowie argues that its political role is secondary and that the symposium was not entirely political and hostile to democratic pursuits (1997: 3). Part of this issue is due to the classification of the *andrōn* and how sharply this male-dominated space divides the public and private. Although a space in a private household, the *andrōn* becomes a more public space during a symposium since participants would engage with their peers, community members, and potential political allies. In order to get a better sense of the nature of the symposiastic space and how a citizen navigates the space as political citizen and symposiast as a guest, I analyze Theognis 309-314, which grapples with these concepts.

Theognis' encouragement to act moderately in order to preserve one's socio-political position within a group is conveyed to the young aristocratic pre-citizens so that they may grow up to be *agathoi*, or "noble men," rather than *kakoi*, or "base men." The message to be a part of

the *agathoi* is emphasized throughout the *Theognidea* (e.g., 43, 57, 111, 148, 212, 319, 510, 614, 930, and 1109). An *agathos* is distinguished by his conduct within the drinking space as well as his conduct publicly. For the purposes of this paper, I critically analyze lines 309-314 which precede Theognis' encouragement to be an *agathos* in 319. These verses provide a rare focus on a personal perspective of the individual's behavior at an event, at least through a Theognidean persona.

In 309-314, Theognis describes appropriate conduct at a communal meal (literally *ἐν συσσίτοισιν*, 309) by distinguishing what kind of behavior is appropriate for an individual at this event, both within the space of the *andrōn* and the outside of it. The dichotomy between public and private in these verses is complex, as I show, much like the physical space. In this passage, Theognis encourages his companions to be *πεπνυμένος*, or "levelheaded" (309), at the party while not revealing his innermost thoughts (310-11) and remaining strong outside with the knowledge of every other participant's character (310-11). Theognis encourages the *agathoi* to be vigilant about how they navigate this complex space due to the apparent schism between the aristocrats who are *kakoi* or *agathoi*; one must check his own behavior while observing the conduct of others lest he fall into the wrong aristocratic group. Although the guests at a symposium are in a space that is exclusive and inaccessible to most, they are participating with a politically involved aristocracy and must maintain a certain decorum so as not to be associated with the wrong group, the *kakoi*. This paper examines this passage and how Theognis demonstrates that the sympotic space was dynamic, compelling the politically involved male citizen to maintain a level of awareness within a space that cannot be definitively defined as private.

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