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 συσσίτουσιν, 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.
Bibliography


