

## TYRANNICIDES, SYMPOSIUM AND HISTORY: A Consideration of the Tyrannicide Law in Hyperides 2.3

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For Romans of the imperial period, classical Athens could be cast with some justice as a society in which freedom of expression went largely unfettered by legal restraint. Thus among the Greeks

*non modo libertas, etiam libido impunita; aut si quis advertit, dictis dicta ultus est.*

not only freedom but also obscenity went unpunished – or at most, words were countered by words.

So *Annals* 4.35, in a defence speech given by Tacitus to the historian Cremutius Cordus. But while Athenian democratic ideology enshrined not only *isēgoria* (equal access to speech) but also *parrhēsia* (freedom of speech), the Athenians did on occasion pass laws that curbed freedoms of speech. Of these rare instances, one concerns the tyrannicides, Harmodius and Aristogeiton; predictably enough, the democratic city was concerned to suppress malicious reference to the pair who were nostalgically, if rather inaccurately, regarded as democracy’s founding fathers. The Athenian censorship law is attested only once, in Hyperides’ fragmentary speech from c. 337 BCE *Against Philippides*. Hyperides refers in passing to the fact that

... ἐν νόμῳ γράψας ὁ δῆμος ἀπεῖπεν μήτε λέγειν ἐξεῖναι [μηδενὶ] κακῶς Ἀρμόδιον καὶ Ἀρ[ισ]τογείτονα, μήτ’ ἄσα[ι] ἐπὶ τὰ κακίονα.

the people wrote a prohibition in a law, forbidding anyone either to slander Harmodius and Aristogeiton or to sing things to their detriment. (Hyp. 2.3)

This tantalising allusion to a prohibition against ‘singing detrimental things’ about the tyrannicides takes us into the world of Attic symposia – a world which has bequeathed to us substantial parts of at least four *skolia* about Harmodius and Aristogeiton. The surviving songs are essentially laudatory, as the following exemplum illustrates:

ἐν μύρτου κλαδὶ τὸ ξίφος φορήσω,  
ὡσπερ Ἀρμόδιος καὶ Ἀριστογείτων,  
ὅτε τὸν τύραννον κτανέτην  
ἰσονόμους τ’ Ἀθήνας ἐποίησάτην.

I’ll wreath my sword in myrtle bough,  
As Harmodius and Aristogeiton did,  
When they laid the tyrant low,  
And to Athens gave equality.<sup>1</sup>

In their targeting of an oral tradition, the Athenians were attempting something rather different from the situation that had prompted Tacitus’ Cremutius Cordus to comment on Athenian license. Cordus was, rather ironically, on trial for his praise within his historical work of Rome’s own tyrannicides, Brutus and Cassius;<sup>2</sup> his impeachment thus represents an attempted suppression of a written rather than oral record of the

<sup>1</sup> The four are collected as Page *PMG* nos. 893-96.

<sup>2</sup> The Athenians themselves made much of the Roman liberators’ likeness to their own famed tyrannicides, celebrating Brutus’ arrival in Athens by displaying statues of the Roman pair next to the iconic Harmodius and Aristogeiton group in the agora. So Dio 47.20.4 (also, with much less detail, Plut. *Brutus* 24).

past. The action against him culminated in the (attempted) erasure of his version of the historical record: the aediles burned all the copies of his work that they could muster – an action rendered ineffective by Cordus' daughter, Marcia, who succeeded in concealing a copy for later dissemination.<sup>3</sup> The scope of the Athenian tyrannicide measure might seem rather different from this, at least in its application to the sympotic singing of *skolia*. The audience for such songs was, after all, potentially more circumscribed: while Athenaeus documents a corpus of Attic *skolia* (15. 694c-695f) that was presumably widely known,<sup>4</sup> and while many lyric pieces from the great poets provided material for sympotic recitation, many songs must surely have been extemporised within the confines of individual sympotic gatherings.<sup>5</sup>

This private nature may, however, disguise the influence that such songs could, over time, exert on public perceptions of political and historical events beyond the confines of the drinking party. As we shall see, the memory of historical deeds might just as properly be the preserve of the symposium as it is of historical records, suggesting that the boundary between historical prose and sympotic memory may have been a fluid one.<sup>6</sup> It is the purpose of this paper to touch on the cross-fertilisation between *skolia* and historical prose, and to explore the role of sympotic song in the shaping of collective memory – a role that, as some have already suspected,<sup>7</sup> may have been particularly pronounced in the fashioning of the very history of the liberation of Athens in the late sixth century. The close nexus between history and sympotic celebration in forging the memory of the tyrannicides may, in turn, afford some speculation into the context of the Athenians' attempt to ban the singing and saying of things 'to the detriment of the tyrannicides' with which we began.

It may be useful to begin with a general observation about the similarity of purpose between history on the one hand, and sympotic song and conversation on the other. The preservation of memory is isolated as being central to the purpose of history by the 'Father of History' himself in the opening line of his work:

Ἡροδότου Θουρίου ιστορίας ἀπόδεξις ἦδε, ὡς μήτε τὰ γενόμενα ἐξ ἀνθρώπων τῷ χρόνῳ ἐξίτηλα γένηται, μήτε ἔργα μεγάλα τε καὶ θωμαστά, τὰ μὲν Ἕλλησι, τὰ δὲ βαρβάροισι ἀποδεχθέντα, ἀκλέα γένηται ...

Herodotus of Halicarnassus, his *Researches* are here set down so that the astonishing achievements of men not be forgotten over time, neither those of the Greeks nor of the barbarians (Hdt 1.1).

<sup>3</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 4.35. Sen. *Dial.* 6 (*Ad Marc.*).

<sup>4</sup> On the corpus of Attic *skolia* see Van Der Valk (1974). Aristophanes' multiple allusions to the 'Harmodius song' (*Vesp.* 1224; *Ach.* 978, 1093; Kassel-Austin *PCG* F444) suggest that these *skolia* in particular were widely disseminated; it is with some merit that they have been dubbed 'the national anthem' of ancient Athens. Similarly widespread in their transmission were epigrams about the tyrannicides. Inspired by Athenian inscriptional prototypes (from the statue base for the tyrannicide group in the agora or from the public tomb of the tyrannicides in the Kerameikos (Paus. 1.29.15), epigrams for the Athenian tyrannicides have been found at sites as diverse as Chios (*SEG* 17.392) and Olbia (on which see Lebedev [1996]).

<sup>5</sup> See below, p. 4 on the Leipsyrion *skolion* of the Alcmaeonids.

<sup>6</sup> While the emphasis here will be on the formative role of *skolia* on history, the possibility of a counter-flow – from history to symposium – might briefly be noted. Thucydides famously alludes to a performative aspect of historical prose (at 1.22 admitting that the lack of *mythoi* in his work may 'detract somewhat from the pleasure that it gives in hearing [ἐξ ἀκρόασιν]') and declaring it to be 'an everlasting possession rather than a prize composition which is heard and then forgotten'. Such performance may be located not just in public displays such as those undertaken by the sophists, but also in sympotic recitation; it has been suspected, at any rate, that parts of Thucydides' work, for example his account of the *stasis* at Corcyra, could have been performed in symposia: Hornblower (1987) 29.

<sup>7</sup> See below, pp. 3-4.

*Skolia* too, just like historical narratives, could serve to preserve the memories of great deeds.<sup>8</sup> This capacity of the symposium to act as a repository of collective memory, chiefly through the celebration of great deeds in song and through the subsequent re-performance of those songs, is intimated by many sources. It is there, for example, in an elegy by Xenophanes in which the poet sets forth an idealized template for sympotic behaviour; delineating the topics fit for expression within the drinking-party, Xenophanes urges symposiasts:

ἀνδρῶν δ' αἰνεῖν τοῦτον ὃς ἐσθλὰ πίων ἀναφαίνει,  
ὡς ἢ μνημοσύνη καὶ τόνοσ' ἀμφ' ἀρετῆς

Praise the man who, when he has taken drink, brings noble deeds to light, as memory and a striving for virtue bring to him ... (Xenophanes 1.19-20)

The concern of the symposium for the recollection of men's deeds in conversation is present too (in humorous guise) in Aristophanes' *Vespae*, in which Bdelycleon counsels his cantankerous father not to entertain the party with ludicrous mythological episodes (such as the story of a flatulent Lamia that Philocleon has just proposed), and encourages him instead to talk 'of realities, of domestic facts as is usually done' (1.1180).<sup>9</sup> More obliquely, Critias implies that memory is an important part of the symposium, when he draws unfavourable contrasts between the moderation of Spartan drinking practices and the dissolute license of contemporary Athenian symposia. Writing about the Athenians' passing of the wine cup around the party and making toasts, the sophist observes

εἴτ' ἀπὸ τοιούτων πόσεων γλώσσας τε λύουσιν εἰς αἰσχροὺς μύθους ... πρὸς δ' ὄμμ' ἀχλὺς  
ἀμβλωπὸς ἐφίξει, λῆστις δ' ἐκτῆκει μνημοσύνην πραπίδω ...

... as a result of such drinking, they loosen their tongues for shameful tales ... And a sight-blunting fog sits before one's eye and forgetfulness wastes away recollection from one's heart. (Critias 88 B6 DK)

There are, then, indications that the memory of historical deeds might just as properly be the preserve of the symposium as it is of historical records.

That influence was notably profound in the forging of the tyrannicide narrative in the democratic Athens of the fifth century.<sup>10</sup> Thomas indeed isolates the traditions around the liberation of Athens from the Peisistratids as 'perhaps the best known, indeed most notorious, of [Athens'] oral traditions';<sup>11</sup> within this sweep of 'oral traditions' more broadly,<sup>12</sup> the *skolia* sung around the events of the Peisistratid ouster seem to have achieved a particular prominence and to have shaped the historical

<sup>8</sup> See in general Rösler (1990).

<sup>9</sup> Compare Xenophanes' similar disdain for fantastical subjects of the remote past at 1.21-22 (although his aversion is more particularly to do with *mythoi* that deal with *stasis* such as centauremachies and gigantomachies) and that implied also by Critias' criticism (cited above) of 'shameful *mythoi*'.

<sup>10</sup> By 'tyrannicide narrative', I mean the traditions concerning the resistance to the Peisistratid tyrants of the sixth century and the creation of democracy in the wake of their ouster.

<sup>11</sup> Thomas (1989) 238. It is not assumed here that all singing, even of songs that constituted a strand of 'family history' among the aristocratic clans, were exclusively sympotic: see note below, and compare also the reference to the songs of family history sung by 'old women' at Plato *Lysis* 205b-e, where the performance context cannot be that of the symposium.

<sup>12</sup> Material belonging probably to oral family traditions, but not demonstrably sympotic in origin, is the narrative of the tyrannicides' family, the Gephyraei, and the introduction of writing at Hdt 5.57. Note too Thuc. 5.53, on the late fifth-century *demos*' awareness of the oppressiveness of the declining years of Peisistratid tyranny and the involvement of Sparta in its overthrow: ἐπιστάμενος ὁ δῆμος ἀκοῆ ... (The *demos*, who understood by hearsay ...)

tradition. The direct influence of these *skolia* is nowhere more evident than in Aristotelian *Athenaion Politeia*, where a drinking-song is cited for the doomed resistance of the Alcmaeonid exiles and their partisans to the regime of the tyrant Hippias:

οἱ φυγάδες ὧν οἱ Ἀλκμεωνίδαι προειστήκεσαν, αὐτοὶ μὲν δι' αὐτῶν οὐκ ἐδύναντο ποιήσασθαι τὴν κάθοδον, ἀλλ' αἰεὶ προσέπταιον. ἔν τε γὰρ τοῖς ἄλλοις οἷς ἔπραττον διεσφάλλοντο, καὶ τειχίσαντες ἐν τῇ χώρᾳ Λειψύδριον τὸ ὑπὲρ Πάρνηθος, εἰς ὃ συνεξήλθόν τινες τῶν ἐκ τοῦ ἄστεως, ἐξεπολιορκήθησαν ὑπὸ τῶν τυράννων, ὅθεν ὕστερον μετὰ ταύτην τὴν συμφορὰν ἦδον ἐν τοῖς σκολιοῖς [αἰεὶ]

αἰαὶ Λειψύδριον προδωσέταιρον,  
οἶους ἄνδρας ἀπώλεσας, μάχεσθαι  
ἀγαθοὺς τε καὶ εὐπατρίδας,  
οἱ τότε' ἔδειξαν οἶων πατέρων ἔσαν.

The exiles under the leadership of the Alcmaeonids could not by their unaided efforts recover their native land, but met with constant disaster. Not to mention other misadventures, Leipsydriion, on the flank of Mt Parnes, which they fortified, and where their garrison was joined by partisans from Athens, fell by storm into the hands of the tyrants, a catastrophe commemorated in one of their drinking songs:

Woe, woe is me, Leipsydriion, betrayer of thy friends. What gallants fell beneath thy walls, the foremost in the fray and noblest of the land, who proved that day of what sires they came! ([Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 19.3)

The Alcmaeonid action at Leipsydriion took place shortly after the abortive attempt of our more famous anti-tyrannical pair, Harmodius and Aristogeiton,<sup>13</sup> and the *skolion* commemorating it confirms that different family groups were preserving portions of the 'anti-tyrannical story' relevant to their own interests through the medium of the symposium.<sup>14</sup> That this portion of the anti-tyrannical story was being promulgated by the Alcmaeonids themselves is implied if we take the person of the verb in ἦδον ἐν τοῖς σκολιοῖς as referring to the Alcmaeonids themselves and their partisans.

From its origins within the drinking clubs of the Alcmaeonids, the Leipsydriion *skolion* became available more widely to inform the later historical record. The tyrannicides similarly had been sung into the Athenians' narrative about the beginnings of their own democracy, and indeed – given the elevation of Harmodius and Aristogeiton as champions of democracy *par excellence* over the Alcmaeonids, with their commemoration in both public statue and civic cult – even more successfully so.<sup>15</sup> The performance at Attic symposia of the many versions of the 'Harmodius song' had not, of course, erased the memory of other contributors to the overthrow of the tyrants (Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*, for example, vigorously reminds her audience in 411 that the Spartan hoplites had had a big part to play: see *Ar. Lys.* 1150-56), but it had enshrined the slaying of Hipparchus by Harmodius and Aristogeiton as a pivotal moment in the emergence of democracy.

### Rewriting History: Singing Bad Things about the Tyrannicides

What, then, of the saying and singing of bad things about the tyrannicides – those activities targeted by the law with which we began? Can we find a historical context

<sup>13</sup> Moore (1983) 233 argues for a date of 513 BCE.

<sup>14</sup> The Alcmaeonids subsequently seem to have contrived a more extreme version of their own resistance to the tyrants, a version repeated by Herodotus and present also in Isocrates, in which the family was in exile throughout the entire period of Peisistratid tyranny and had its ancestral homes and graves destroyed by the tyrants. See Bicknell (1970).

<sup>15</sup> [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 58.1. The process which saw the elevation of the tyrannicides as 'official liberators' at the expense of the Alcmaeonid claim (an elevation which prompted some dissent: see *Hdt* 6.123) is a controversial one; Podlecki (1966) remains the fundamental treatment.

for the sympotic performance of denigration of the tyrannicides, and thus for the enactment of a law restricting such song? As already noted, the one reference we have to the law is a passing mention by Hyperides in a speech of c. 337 BCE; nothing he says hints that the law was a new creation, but he offers no clues as to the law's date at all. Aligning the prohibition with the emergence of the very democracy that adopted the tyrannicides as its figureheads, MacDowell ventures a very early date – late sixth century / early fifth – for the law.<sup>16</sup> There may, however, be another more promising context, for the period of the Peloponnesian War and its aftermath offers *prima facie* possibilities. It is a context in which the threat of renewed tyranny and of the overthrow of the *demos* was felt to be particularly acute; it is a period too in which the existence is attested of dining clubs whose behaviour was perceived to betray oligarchic and tyrannical intent, and whose political mobilization did indeed contribute to the suppression of democracy in 411 BCE. Thucydides' excurses on the tyrannicides and on the competing claims of the Alcmaeonids hint, moreover, that this was a period in which the figures of the tyrannicides were attracting particular attention (see esp. Thuc. 6.60, cited below);<sup>17</sup> it is, moreover, notably the Peloponnesian War which provides the context in which the tyrannicide *skolia* themselves are first referred to in extant literature – both in their celebratory, 'pro-Harmodius' forms and, in one instance, in more mocking guise, when Aristophanes' irascible Philocleon threatens to complete the opening verse of one version of the Harmodius song, 'there never yet was seen in Athens....' with the words 'such a rogue or a thief' (*Vesp.* 1226-27).

The importance of oral tradition in shaping the literary narratives of the tyrannicides, as detailed above, might encourage us to look for possible influences of 'derogatory' *skolia* within the historical record of this period. Thucydides is, of course, vital here. In a renowned excursus in Book Six, Thucydides sets out to correct what he perceives as inaccuracies in the popular view of the Harmodius and Aristogeiton. Most frequently noted is Thucydides' reminder that the victim was Hipparchus, merely the younger brother of the true ruler Hippias and thus not technically qualifying the assailants for the title of tyrannicides at all (Thuc. 6.64; Herodotus' treatment of the fall of the Peisistratids makes essentially the same point). More important, however, because more pervasive, is the colouring that Thucydides gives to the entire story, one that distinguishes his account from the version circulated by the various *skolia*. His tyrannicides are spurred on not by any essentially political or ideological objection to the Peisistratids – thus not, as the traditional *skolia* might imply, by the desire to establish *isonomia* at Athens – but by sexual jealousy. It is because of Hipparchus' unwanted attentions to the beautiful Harmodius, and the anxiety that this produced in Harmodius' lover, Aristogeiton, that the pair hatched their plot; this sexual motive emphasizes the lack of political motivation, for it makes clear that the younger Hipparchus, and not the elder and ruling brother Hippias, was the target from the outset. This is the key point with which Thucydides in fact introduces the excursus proper:

<sup>16</sup> MacDowell (1978) 127. If the law were indeed in effect this early, it would seem that sympotic sporting with the image of the tyrannicides continued in a different medium. On a column krater by Syriskos (c.470 BCE), *komasts* assume attitudes that borrow from the agora tyrannicide statue group (then but recently erected: Marmor Parium *FGrH.* 239 B54, for 477/76 BCE), but with the slaying sword replaced with a wine-skin: see Kinzl (1978) 125-26; also Neer (2002) 180-81 with fig. 90.

<sup>17</sup> Right from the start of the war, indeed, the Spartans' evocation of Pericles' Alcmaeonid ancestry may have bestowed a new topicality on such debates (see Fornara (1970) 156ff).

Τὸ γὰρ Ἀριστογεΐτονος καὶ Ἄρμοδιου τόλμημα δι' ἐρωτικὴν ξυντυχίαν ἐπεχειρήθη, ἣν ἐγὼ ἐπὶ πλεόν διηγησάμενος ἀποφανῶ...

In fact the bold action undertaken by Aristogeiton and Harmodius was due to a love affair, as it happened. I shall deal with this in some detail ... (Thuc. 6.54)

The complete absence of this sexual dimension, so central to Thucydides, from Herodotus' account may stem in part from Herodotus' general reticence about Greek homosexuality;<sup>18</sup> might not its presence in Thucydides, however, also betray a theme newly controversial when Thucydides was constructing his text?<sup>19</sup> More particularly, could this view of the tyrannicides have been influenced by *skolia* in circulation in Thucydides' day – and might these have prompted the Athenians to regulate the singing and saying of things 'to the detriment' of the tyrannicides?

The emphasis on the homoerotic bond between Harmodius and Aristogeiton in the Thucydidean account is certainly appropriate to the world of the symposium and of sympotic song; one of the tyrannicide *skolia* preserved in Athenaeus' Attic collection does in fact adopt this stance, addressing Harmodius alone and hailing him as *philtatos*. This concentration on the erotic motivation might also be deemed to constitute some degree of denigration of the tyrannicides themselves. The connotations of the sexual bond are, of course, not in themselves pejorative in every context – indeed Aristogeiton's defence of his young lover's reputation is entirely laudable within the elitist and aristocratic world of the symposium.<sup>20</sup> Nor is the inclusion of aristocratic ideals itself necessarily at odds with a 'pro-democratic' version of Athenian history. A fusion of aristocratic and democratic tendencies is well evidenced in the Leipsydriion *skolion* quoted above, where the attempt by the Alcmaeonid exiles to oust the tyrants is entirely laudable within democratic thinking and yet at the same time is celebrated in a fashion that appeals to fundamentally aristocratic values of nobility and familial prestige: thus the fallen Alcmaeonids and their associates are *agathoi* and *eupatridae*, their deed consistent with the status already conferred by their paternity. In this respect, the Leipsydriion *skolion* is notably similar to those surviving drinking-songs that valorize Harmodius and Aristogeiton themselves. These *skolia* are also framed in the aristocratic and sympotic worlds – thus the mention of the myrtle bough in the opening line of the Harmodius *skolion* cited above serves not merely as a reference to the festivities of the Panathenaea at which the tyrannicide took place, but also as an allusion to the sympotic praxis of singing with a myrtle bough in hand<sup>21</sup> – but they were nonetheless readily accommodated into the narratives of the democratic city.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Hornblower (2008) 436 for this major divergence and for Herodotus' lack of reference to homosexual relationships generally.

<sup>19</sup> [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 18 has a similar version. Given that the author of this text does cite a *skolion* for this period of history, it is tempting to wonder whether there is such sympotic material at use here too. It is more economical to suppose the direct influence of Thucydides, although one might note that *Ath. Pol.* diverges from Thucydides at several points and does report detail not known from other sources (see for example 18.2, Hipparchus' alleged insulting of Harmodius as effeminate, with Rhodes [1993] 231).

<sup>20</sup> Neer (2002) 172 contends that Thucydides' own view of the tyrannicides is not actually negative: that is to say, for Thucydides the sexual motivation of their act is not a slur upon them, but rather shows them acting as befitted aggrieved aristocrats.

<sup>21</sup> Van Der Valk (1974) 9.

<sup>22</sup> Neer (2002) 170-81 treats this negotiation between elite values and democratic ideology not only in the tyrannicide *skolia* but also in the agora statue group of the pair (470's BCE) by Critius and Nesiotes and in a number of fifth-century representations on Attic sympotic vessels.

Any casting of the tyrannicides as being motivated by sexual jealousy might, however, be deemed within democratic circles as tending ἐπὶ τὰ κακίονα (to borrow from Hyperides). For one, the homoerotic explanation constitutes an implicit denial of the *political* impetus for the tyrannicides' action – their guiding concern for *isonomia* – which strikes at the iconic status granted to them in democratic ideology.<sup>23</sup> Such distance between the politically and erotically charged views of the tyrannicides is observable in Athenaeus' collection of *skolia*, for the one song in which Harmodius is *philtatos* contains no evocation of the new political order initiated by his death. In addition, the homosexual partnership itself and more particularly the passivity of the younger partner in such a relationship, so acceptable within the aristocratic confines of the sympotic world, were more problematic within the ideology of the *demos* at large.<sup>24</sup> (Again, it is notable that the one sexualized *skolion* focuses on just the most contentious of the pair of tyrannicides, the *erōmenos* Harmodius.) Explicitly democratic rejections of the homoerotic version of the tyrannicides may be traced in the fourth century: witness, for example, the denial in Aristotle's *Rhetoric* 1401b that aristocratic homosexuality can be democratic (with specific reference to the Athenian tyrannicides), or again the dismissive treatment of the tyrannicides' relationship by Aeschines (*Against Timarchus* 1.132-33, 140).

The version of the tyrannicides known to Thucydides is thus both appropriate to sympotic culture and potentially unpalatable to the canonized democratic version of their myth. Such considerations cannot constitute proof of a sympotic influence on the Thucydidean tradition, but it is notable that his excursus on the tyrannicides itself is framed by explicit statements of the oral basis of the Athenian people's knowledge of these events. Returning to the recall of Alcibiades from the tyrannicide exposition, Thucydides concludes:

Ἦν ἐνθυμούμενος ὁ δῆμος ὁ τῶν Ἀθηναίων, καὶ μιμνησκόμενος ὅσα ἀκοῆ περι αὐτῶν ἠπίστατο, χαλεπὸς ἦν τότε καὶ ὑπόπτῃς ἐς τοὺς περι τῶν μυστικῶν τὴν αἰτίαν λαβόντας ...

Reflecting on these events [the killing of Hipparchus and its aftermath] and recalling everything that they knew by hearsay about them, the people of Athens were now in an angry and suspicious mood with regard to those who had been accused in connection with the Mysteries ... (Thuc. 6.60<sup>25</sup>)

(It must be emphasized here that the version of events which the *demos* is said to be recollecting is not the version of the traditional, 'pro-tyrannicide' *skolia*; those *skolia* make no mention of the events to which Thucydides has just referred in the sections prior to 6.60, namely the death of Hipparchus, the affair between Harmodius and Aristogeiton, the worsening of Peisistratid rule after Hipparchus' death, and the eventual Spartan military intervention against Hippias.) It is significant too that Thucydides' very treatment of the tyrannicide story is located within the wider context of political instability generated by sympotic behaviour. It is the recall of Alcibiades amidst the confusion of the affair of the Hermai and profanation of the

<sup>23</sup> On democracy and *isonomia*, Vlastos (1953); Ehrenberg (1956); Taylor (1991) 24-7; the aristocratic origins of *isonomia*, as a principle of aristocratic parity after the liberation from tyrannical oppression (on which see Fornara [1970] 171-77) do not detract from the association of *isonomia* with democracy for those Athenians who sang the Harmodius *skolion* from the mid-fifth century onwards.

<sup>24</sup> Dover (1978) 100-9. The stance taken above is opposed to that of Davidson (2007) 459-61, for whom the example of the tyrannicides themselves is proof that the homosexual bond was not regarded askance by the *demos*; Davidson's argument does not distinguish, however, between the very different strands of the tyrannicide story, and seems to regard it as a monolithic whole. The *demos*' approval of the tyrannicides need not equate to an approval of every casting of them.

<sup>25</sup> Note also Thuc. 5.53, quoted above, for the reference to hearsay in the introduction of the tyrannicide excursus.

mysteries that frames the tyrannicide excursus, and a direct causal connection is drawn between the people's recollection of the tyrannicide story itself (as given by Thucydides) and their intense apprehension about the mutilation of the Hermai and the profanation of the Mysteries: offences which, so Thucydides avers, the people perceived as indicative of 'some conspiracy aiming at oligarchy and tyranny' (so again 6.60). These recent events, and indeed the character of one individual implicated in them – Alcibiades – had brought sexual identity to the fore in political discourse,<sup>26</sup> and will have rendered even more politically sensitive any recasting of the tyrannicides as aristocratic symposiasts rather than as democratic champions; both the mutilation and the profanations were (allegedly) performed by sympotic groups, while Alcibiades' personal identification with the aristocratic license of the symposium loomed large in the *demos*' suspicions of his own tyrannical leanings.<sup>27</sup>

Can we perhaps take the construction of Thucydides' narrative in 6.53-60 as a hint that the (multiple) sympotic clubs implicated in anti-democratic activities leading up to the revolution of 411 BCE may have been also engaged, through their *skolia* and their oral traditions, in the promotion of a less flattering view of those icons of Athenian democracy, the tyrannicides? A devaluing of the tyrannicides' role in the establishment of democracy at Athens and its corollary (that is, the recognition of the Athenians' inability to rid themselves of tyrants through their own efforts and of the debt to Sparta in this regard) would have been quite consistent with the interests of such oligarchic groups. At the same time, the recasting of the tyrannicides as motivated by an aristocratic homoerotic bond served to reappropriate the pair from the clutches of the *demos*, and to reclaim them for the world of the aristocrats themselves. The consequences of this version of the tyrannicide story will thus have well suited the agenda of those *hetaireiai* which went on to seize power in 411 BCE.

The circulation here suggested of an oral tradition hostile to the tyrannicides by certain sympotic groups in the contexts of the oligarchic coup of 411 would give added edge to the move by the restored democracy of 410/09 to reaffirm the status of the tyrannicides as champions of democracy. In accordance with a decree moved by Demophantus, the Athenians undertook to show to the descendants of anyone who died attempting to slay a tyrant the very same generosity as shown to Harmodius and Aristogeiton and to their children;<sup>28</sup> that kindness was an entitlement to *sitesis* at the Prytaneum.<sup>29</sup> Their reputations forged and in turn challenged within private symposia, Harmodius and Aristogeiton were thus again advertised as paragons of the democratic *polis*, their status affirmed within Athens' most exclusive – and *civic* – dining club.<sup>30</sup> It is thus possible that it was in this very context of the legislative flurry of the restoration of 410/09 that the Athenians moved to prohibit the slander of their beloved tyrant slayers.

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<sup>26</sup> This is especially so of the mutilations, in which rowdy *komasts* castrated what were, as Crawley Quinn (2007) argues, effectively stone representations of the adult Athenian citizen.

<sup>27</sup> On the sympotic groups, the mutilations and the Mysteries, see Murray (1990). On Alcibiades, note Thuc. 6.15 (Alcibiades' private life linked with the fears about his 'tyranny'), and see Seager (1967); for discussion of the sexual politics around Alcibiades, see also Shapiro (2009).

<sup>28</sup> Andoc. 1.98; Dem. 20.159.

<sup>29</sup> *IG* i<sup>3</sup> 131.

<sup>30</sup> For parallels between state dining at the Prytaneum and private symposia, see Steiner (2002).

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