

SOLON OF ATHENS: THE MAN, THE MYTH, THE TYRANT?

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To my mother, who always believed in me, and kept me well-supplied with books.

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ABSTRACT

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I argue that, despite Solon's reputation as an enemy of tyranny, his approach to solving the political discord in Athens in 594 B.C. very closely resembles the way that archaic Greek tyrants succeeded at dealing with similar problems in other city-states. Because tyrants were often popular figures with widespread support, I suggest that Solon's anxiety to avoid the label of tyrant stemmed from the political unrest and bloodshed that arose from the attempted tyranny of Cylon in 632 BC, followed by the harsh and unsuccessful legislation of Dracon in 621. In the dissertation, I first establish that there are two traditions about Solon's motives and actions, indicated by many contradictions in our sources. In one version, Solon appears as a moderate politician who paved the way for the rise of democracy, in part because of his refusal to become a tyrant. In the other, Solon's actions were at times indistinguishable from those of contemporary tyrants, which later sources explain by referring to Solon's assertions in his own poetry to "prove" that these stories were false. I then analyze Solon's poetry, noting that Solon both linguistically distances himself from the concept of tyranny and emphasizes that he does, in fact, possess autocratic powers. The result is a kind of verbal dance, wherein he reminds people: "I am not, nor do I wish to be a tyrant; but I could be, and if I were...." Finally, I examine various tyrants who, like Solon, had reputations as legislators. I consider Solon's agricultural reforms, known as the *seisachtheia*, concentrating in

particular on the abolition of debt-slavery, the cancellation of debt, and Solon's refusal to^v redistribute land. I find that debt cancellation in particular is one of the most common measures used by tyrants as a means of gathering political support from the demos. I also proffer the notion that doing away with debt-slavery may have done more damage than good, concluding that, despite his protests to the contrary, Solon was a tyrant in all but name.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction.....	1
I. Outline.....	3
II. Sixth-Century Attica in Context: The Political Background.....	7
III. Tyrants: Bad or Just Drawn that Way?.....	12
IV. Solon's Life.....	20
V. Solon's Poetry.....	25
VI. Solon's Legal Code.....	28
VII. Aristotle, Plutarch, and Solon on the Agrarian Crisis.....	37
VIII. Historical Interpretations of the Agrarian Crisis.....	40
2. Solon's Contradictory Legacy.....	47
I. Solon as Philosopher and Sage.....	48
II. Solon as Nomothetes.....	60
III. Solon as Misotyrannos.....	66
IV. Conclusion.....	75
3. Solon the protodemocrat.....	76
I. Solon as an Authority Figure in Fourth-Century Oratory.....	90
a. Solon, Demosthenes, and Aeschines.....	91
b. Solon and Isocrates.....	94
c. Solon and Plato.....	97
II. Conclusion.....	101
4. Politics and Poetry: Solon and the "Language of Tyranny".....	103
I. κόρος: Too Much of a Good Thing?.....	107
II. βίη and δίκη: An Uneasy Alliance?.....	113
III. Honor to the People: δήμωι ἔδωκα τόσον γέρας.....	119
IV. Tyranny: κλέος or αἰδώς?.....	126
V. Wolf Imagery in Solon's Poetry.....	133
VI. Conclusion.....	143
5. Benevolent Tyranny?.....	145
I. Tyrants as Legislators.....	146
II. Tyrants, Debt Cancellation, and Land Redistribution.....	152
a. Further Sources of Discontent.....	160
III. Potentially Negative Consequences of Abolishing Debt-Slavery.....	163
IV. Recall of Exiles.....	167
V. Solon's Military Activities.....	169
VI. Conclusion.....	172
6. Concluding Remarks: An Accidental Democrat?.....	174
7. Appendix I: Peisistratos: Cleaning up after Solon?.....	182
8. Appendix II: History of Scholarship on the Seisachtheia.....	191
I. Inalienable Land and Debt-Based Hektemorage.....	191
a. Private vs. Public Land.....	196
b. Economic Restructuring.....	196
i. Ownership vs. Possession.....	197
ii. From Hektemoros to Debt-Slave.....	198
c. Inalienable Land and Class-Based Hektemorage.....	199
d. Alienable Land and Debt-Based Hektemorage.....	201

e. Alienable Land and Class-Based Hektemorage	204
f. Economic Revolution.....	205
i. Aristocratic Desire for Luxury Goods	205
ii. Aristocrats vs. Rising Middle Class	206
g. Intra-Elite Conflict	207
h. Agricultural Disaster	207
i. Agricultural Sophistication.....	209
j. Solon's Reforms: Cui Bono?	210
9. Bibliography	212

To be a lawgiver is a sublimated form of tyranny.
—Nietzsche, *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* (1886)

Chapter 1

Introduction

The legacy of Solon of Athens is far-ranging. He was the chief of the seven sages, a fierce opponent of tyranny, and a steadfastly moderate politician with the good of both rich and poor at heart; he was a philosopher, a poet, or any combination of the above. This blending of characteristics makes Solon a versatile and complicated figure, yet we have distressingly few contemporary sources about him. No source survives from the sixth century except his own poems, and his only extended appearance in the fifth century is in Herodotus, who gives his political activities a backseat to his persona as a wandering philosopher.¹ By Herodotus' day, more or less a century after Solon's death, he had taken on the character of a mythological wise man. By the time Plutarch wrote his biography of Solon some seven hundred years later, he was cast as one of the seven sages of antiquity—and the only sage to make every single iteration of the canon. By the end of the fifth century and throughout the fourth, however, source after source focuses not on Solon's wisdom, but on his constitutional reforms. Within a century, Solon changed from a wandering wise man to the political visionary whom the Aristotelian *Athenaion Politeia* calls the father of democracy (41.2).² Meanwhile, he retained his reputation as a

1. All dates are B.C. unless otherwise specified. Aristophanes mentions Solon briefly in *Clouds* (1187), where Pheidippides explains to his father how they can exploit a law of Solon's to avoid creditors, on which see p. 164 n. 441. Other than a few scattered references like this, he is absent from any surviving fifth-century source except Herodotus. Szegedy-Maszak (1993: 203-05) argues that Solonian philosophy and motifs are present in Thucydides, going so far as to wonder if Solon is Thucydides' model for his depiction of Pericles, but this is a very tenuous assertion based on perceived similarities between Thucydides' discussion of the Spartan constitution and generalized statements opposing tyranny and civil discord.

2. Henceforth *Ath. Pol.* Though passed down under his name, this work was probably not by Aristotle; rather, it was likely written by an associate who was intimately familiar with Aristotle's political

philosopher, becoming a symbol of the moral compass of Athens as a city-state.³

Solon is most famous for his appointment to a special magistracy (the eponymous archonship) in 594 B.C. In a rare moment of agreement between warring factions, Solon was commissioned to draw up a new code of laws in order to solve a civil crisis that was threatening the very fabric of Athens as a city-state. His goal was to stem a rising tide of class warfare, which had reached a critical point because wealthy landowners had enslaved or impoverished most of the poor farmers. To deal with this, he canceled all debts and ended the apparently wide-spread practice of debt-slavery. Unfortunately, no one was happy with Solon's new law code. The wealthy were upset at their losses from the debt cancellation, and the poor were not content because they wanted Solon to redistribute land in addition to canceling debt, which he refused to do. Solon was forced to leave Athens amid the resulting unrest.

Solon garnered much praise in antiquity for his categorical refusal to use his initially widespread popularity to become a tyrant, despite the urging of various supporters—a stance he espouses in several of his surviving poems.⁴ Scholars since antiquity have taken these assertions at face value, spending very little time examining the implications of the fact that the only source we have for Solon's motives is Solon himself. This dissertation re-examines what we know of Solon, from both his own writings and those of later biographers and political historians, and re-contextualizes his

philosophy. For a summary of the debates on the authorship of the *Ath. Pol.* and a convincing argument that the author was one of Aristotle's associates rather than Aristotle himself, see Rhodes (1993: 61-63). Day and Chambers assume the work to be genuine, but not without reservation. For a summary of the inconsistencies and arguments for and against authenticity, see Day & Chambers (1962: 1-4).

3. This is not necessarily a contradiction. Pelling (2006: 104-05) describes how Herodotus (and presumably his readers of the fifth and fourth centuries) did not distinguish moral from political; therefore, Solon's morals and philosophy were indicative of his skill as a politician.

4. Most notably, frs. 32, 33, and 34. All references to Solon's poems use the numbering in West 1972.

reforms in the larger realm of archaic politics. Ultimately, I hope to show that Solon was operating within a political framework in which tyrants were often popular and arose out of exactly the kinds of conditions that Solon faced in Athens. The vilification of tyrants, both in his own poetry and in our later sources about him, arose from Athens' particularly violent experience with the attempted tyranny of Cylon, necessitating a rhetorical denial of the office. I show that, despite Solon's protests to the contrary, his attempted reforms have a more than passing similarity to those successfully employed by contemporary tyrants. I conclude that, despite his reputation and anxiety not to be labeled as such, Solon was a tyrant in all but name.

I. Outline

The goal of this study is to re-examine our evidence for Solon's life and career in the context of archaic Greek tyrannies, eschewing the more usual approach of focusing on the place of his reforms in the constitutional history of Athens. It is the goal of this dissertation to address the discrepancies in the historical record and examine the way Solon's persona has been distorted by a too-heavy reliance on his poetic self-justifications. I conclude that Solon's approach to solving the political discord (*stasis*) in Athens very closely resembles that of archaic tyrants elsewhere in the Greek world, who dealt (often successfully) with the same social and economic issues.

In this introductory chapter, I first contextualize Solon's political activities by describing in detail the events that led to his appointment as mediator, or *diallektes*, along with a rough summary of the various traditions about his life. I then examine the chronology and content of Solon's poetry, before moving on to specifics of his legal code. I next discuss the nature of the agrarian crisis that was the catalyst for his appointment as

reformer. I start with what we learn from Aristotle, Plutarch, and Solon himself, then give a brief overview of the history of modern scholarship on the nature of the crisis. Finally, I examine the changing perceptions of tyrants and tyranny from the archaic period through to the classical, examining evidence that tyrants were popular in many parts of Greece. Many tyrants actually had the reputations, like Solon, of being lawgivers and passing legislation for the benefit of the citizens, and for implementing civic renewal projects which revitalized flagging economies and forged civic identity among their citizens. We shall see that whether Solon was aiming to be a tyrant outright, or merely trying to use methods of tyrants who had been successful at solving civil crises elsewhere, his contemporaries would not necessarily have considered his claiming a tyranny to be the act of self-serving treachery that sources from democratic Athens would have us believe.

In chapters 2 and 3, I establish that there are two traditions about Solon, which we can still see in our sources if we look carefully. In one version, Solon appears as I described him initially: a moderate politician who assiduously refused a tyranny because he had the best interests of the people in mind; even if he was not the actual "father," he paved the way for the rise of democracy.⁵ In the other version, Solon's program was much closer to that of a tyrant, a tradition persistent enough to require sometimes convoluted explanations by sources promulgating the view of him as a moderate. They invariably do this by referring to Solon's assertions in his own poetry to "prove" that these stories of Solon as a tyrant or associate of tyrants could not be true.

In chapter 2, I begin by looking at traditions about Solon's more mythical aspects.

5. Here and throughout the dissertation, I use the term "moderate" to indicate a stance that opposes drastic changes to the status quo in relation to the balance of power. Conversely, I use the term "radical" to describe a program of extreme change in the base of power or existing laws.

I examine the literary traditions about Solon as philosopher and sage, as lawgiver (*nomothetes*), and as tyrant-hater (*misotyrannos*). In the first section, I focus on Herodotus' story of Solon and Croesus. I compare Herodotus' portrayal of Solon's thought to the philosophical concepts expressed in Solon's own poetry, which are usually assumed to be the major source for the ethical guidelines laid out for the unfortunate Croesus by Herodotus' Solon. I conclude that Solon's life and activities were altered to fit into existing folkloric genres about wandering philosophers, which shows that, already in the mid-fifth century, authors were manipulating the tradition about Solon to serve literary ends.

The second section examines the tradition that regards Solon as a lawgiver, a designation with almost as many mythological connotations as that of sage. I find that while Solon technically fits all the criteria for a *nomothetes*, his story has to be twisted to make him qualify for this position—most obviously, because his constitution failed and plunged Athens back into civil strife for three decades. I conclude that the figure of Solon was grafted retroactively onto the lawgiver *topos* much the same way as with the trope of sage.

In the final section of chapter 2, I find that Solon's reputation as a tyrant-hater is completely based on his own assertions, which in several places actually contradict what we know of his activities from other sources. In fact, our tradition of Solon as *misotyrannos* is filled with stories about his connections with different tyrants, connections that are, once more, explained away by appeals to his poetry. This suggests that an interpretation of Solon's associations existed that placed him firmly in the realm of the archaic tyrant, but was suppressed by the anti-tyrannical rhetoric of later times,

assisted by Solon's own denials of desire for a tyranny.

Chapter 3 continues the examination of inconsistencies in later portrayals of Solon, but moves away from mythological treatments to consider the way that fourth-century authors in particular used Solon as a figure of appeal for matters of morals and politics. There is widespread agreement among ancient sources that Solon had a fundamental part to play in the foundation of democracy. In a political climate where democracy had prevailed and become almost a byword for integrity, Solon's stature grew accordingly, and he became a convenient precedent to lend authority to an almost absurd number and variety of arguments and assertions. I show that the political climate, combined with continual reliance on Solon's own poetry, caused this idea of Solon as a sort of protodemocrat to prevail over another tradition painting Solon as an aristocratic partisan, which we can still discern in our sources if we look carefully.

In chapter 4, I move to Solon's poetry. Ancient as well as modern scholars have used his writings to back up assertions about his moral character and philosophy, and as a source for his political reforms and laws. I draw on the work of Elizabeth Irwin in noting that much of the language and vocabulary in Solon's poetry has more associations with tyranny than with that of more the *polis*-oriented sympotic poets with whom Solon is usually classed.⁶ I conclude, after Irwin, that Solon exploits a "language of tyranny" while at the same time seeming to reject it. The result is a kind of verbal dance, wherein he reminds people: "I am not a tyrant; I do not wish to be a tyrant; but I *could* be, and if I *were*...." While Solon linguistically distances himself from the concept of tyranny, he simultaneously emphasizes that he does, in fact, possess autocratic powers.

6. Irwin 2005 and 2006.

In the fifth and final chapter, I consider Solon's agricultural reforms, known as the *seisachtheia*. These measures are almost always given as evidence that Solon was on the side of the lower classes (the *demos*). I concentrate in particular on the abolition of debt-slavery, the cancellation of debt, and land redistribution. I find that the latter two reforms are closely linked with each other almost everywhere else they are mentioned in ancient literature, and are typically used by tyrants as a means of gathering political support from the *demos*. I also proffer the notion that doing away with debt-slavery was not an unmitigated good. Abolition of debts did not negate the need for loans, and the prohibition against offering oneself as collateral, combined with an understandable wariness on the part of the wealthy to lend after their losses in the *seisachtheia*, would have made loans nearly impossible to get. This would have resulted in a situation in which wealthy landowners had a shortage of labor to work their land, and poor farmers lost the ability to plant crops because they could not get loans to acquire seed. I conclude that, despite protests of moderation, most or all of these reforms were quite radical, and typical of tyrants elsewhere in the Greek world. Finally, there are two appendices, the first of which is a discussion of how the Athenian tyrant Peisistratos was able to adapt Solon's failed law code and stabilize the warring factions after Solon's departure from Athens. The second covers the extensive history of scholarship on agrarian reforms in the archaic period, going into more detail than I can easily address in this brief introduction.

II. Sixth-Century Attica in Context: The Political Background

The beginning of the sixth century in Athens saw a period of unrest following several political upheavals. Around 632 B.C., a popular Olympic victor named Cylon

gathered a group of young men around him, intending to make himself tyrant of Athens.⁷ With the help of his father-in-law Theagenes, the tyrant of Megara, he attempted to seize the Acropolis, but the Athenians banded together and surrounded his forces.⁸ Besieged, starving, and with no chance of victory, most of the would-be revolutionaries took sanctuary at the statue of Athena Polias. The magistrates promised them clemency if they surrendered, but then, at the urging of the wealthy and influential Alcmaeonid clan, impiously slaughtered them.⁹ Plutarch elaborates that, not trusting the archons, the erstwhile conspirators had tied a braided thread to the statue of the goddess and kept hold of it to remain under her protection, but the thread snapped when they reached the temple of the Furies. Megacles, the leader of the Alcmaeonid clan, declared this to be an omen that the goddess had denied the conspirators the rights of suppliants, and he massacred even those supporters who remained at various altars scattered throughout the city and countryside (Plut. *Sol.* 12). For their sacrilege and treachery, the entire Alcmaeonid family was exiled and incurred a blood curse that would haunt them for centuries. While Plutarch and others specify that the Alcmaeonids did not act alone, but rather in conjunction with their fellow archons, the lasting opprobrium attached only to the Alcmaeonids.

Plutarch tells us that Solon managed to convince the Alcmaeonids to stand trial

7. Hdt. 5.71, Thuc. 1.126, and Plut. *Sol.* 12, 17; see also Podlecki (1984: 120-21).

8. Thucydides tells us that Cylon thought he was acting on instructions from Apollo via the oracle at Delphi, who had told him to seize the Acropolis during the grand festival to Zeus. Being a champion athlete himself, he assumed that the god referred to the Olympics. Apparently, though, the oracle had meant the festival to Zeus Melichios that took place in the Attic countryside, a misunderstanding that led to Cylon's defeat and death (Thuc. 1.126.4-6). See Podlecki (1984: 121).

9. Herodotus claims that Cylon was among the murdered suppliants, while Thucydides tells us that Cylon and his brother escaped.

and go into exile voluntarily (*Sol.* 12).¹⁰ He also tells us that the surviving partisans of Cylon rebuilt their base of support and carried on a feud against the descendants of Megacles, which of course implies that not all the Alcmaeonids actually left Athens (*Sol.* 12).¹¹ This conflict was so violent that the entire city was on the brink of civil war, with bloody fighting in the very streets. To complicate matters further, the Megarians took advantage of the instability to attack Athens and retake their former possession, the island of Salamis (*Sol.* 12). I argue that this years-long experience of bloodshed and strife at the hands of supporters and opponents of tyranny resulted in the Athenians having a very particular, and particularly violent, conception of tyrants. Solon, therefore, had to take special care not to be associated with tyranny, a degree of caution that would not have been necessary in other cities.¹²

In 621/0, after almost a decade of conflict, the Athenians appointed Drakon to draw up a constitution to quell the *stasis*.¹³ The result was a law code so "draconian" that a sense of its harshness lingers in modern English vocabulary. Some traditions say that death was the penalty not only for crimes like sacrilege or murder, but for offenses as

10. On the implausibility of the story of Solon and the Alcmaeonids, see Podlecki (1984: 141). The blood curse, however, was a genuine problem for the Alcmaeonids right through the fifth century. The Athenians' refusal to "drive out the curse of the goddess" (i.e., exile the half-Alcmaeonid Pericles) was one of Sparta's pretexts for declaring hostilities at the beginning of the Peloponnesian War (Thuc. 1.126). Cf. Diog. Laert. 1.10.

11. This implication is further supported by the late fifth-century inscription listing archons from the sixth century, which contains the names of aristocrats from the Alcmaeonid family (SEG 28.19, 33.23 = ML 6 = Fornara 23). On the archon list, see Meiggs & Lewis (1988: 9-13); see further p. 185 n. 478.

12. To be discussed further in ch. 5.

13. *Ath. Pol.* 4, Plut. *Sol.* 17. On Drakon's law code, see generally Stroud 1968 and Gagarin 1989 and 1981. Though no ancient source explicitly lists Cylon's conspiracy as the reason for Drakon's appointment as lawmaker, the closeness in chronology leads most scholars to assume this was the case. See Gagarin (2008: 94-95). Humphreys (1991: 21-22) makes this connection most explicitly; see also Stroud (1968: 70-74) (with references), Thür (2002: 397-404), and Forsdyke (2005: 84-90). For problems associated with the wording of the *Ath. Pol.*'s description of the chronological relationship between Cylon's attempted tyranny and Drakon's law code, see von Fritz & Kapp (1950: 8 ff. and 152-53).

petty as idleness and stealing cabbage (Plut. *Sol.* 17).¹⁴ When asked why he ordained the same punishment for vegetable theft as for murder, he replied that the lesser crimes deserved death, and he could think of no harsher penalty for the more serious ones, inspiring the witticism that Drakon's laws were written in blood instead of ink (Plut. *Sol.* 17; Arist. *Pol.* 1274b17). Despite (or perhaps because of) Drakon's ruthlessness, his laws did nothing to end the strife. By 594, the situation had deteriorated so much that the Athenians appointed Solon as *diallektes*. He had a special commission to write another constitution to solve the problems, which he published in the Agora.¹⁵ His particular focus was to address what amounted to class warfare between the aristocrats and the common people over the wielding of political power and inequities in landowning practices, as a result of which "the many [i.e., the poor] were enslaved to the few [i.e., the rich]."¹⁶

Solon's reforms were unsuccessful, in implementation if not in concept. The rich were unhappy because of their diminished control over affairs of state, and in particular the losses they sustained under the *seisachtheia*, or "shaking off of burdens," the name for the sweeping measures that cancelled all debts and abolished the apparently widespread practice of debt-slavery.¹⁷ The poor were unhappy because Solon failed to redistribute land along with revoking debt. The *Ath. Pol.* and Plutarch tell us that Solon somehow

14. For the law on idleness, see Diog. Laert. 1.55 and Pollux 8.42. On Drakon's penalties for theft, see also Xen. *Oec.* 14.4 and Philodemos *Oec.* col. 7.14-21. Gell. *NA* 11.18.3, Paus. 9.36.8, and Athen. 13.569d also report that Drakon declared it legal to kill a man caught in the act of adultery with a female relative.

Gagarin (1981: 116-21) has argued that Drakon probably did not set death as the penalty for most crimes, and that traditions of his severity descend from stipulations for *atimia* ("outlawry"), where death was the penalty for not going into exile. See Stroud (1968: 77-82) for the authenticity of a Drakonian code and for evidence for Drakon's laws other than that on homicide, which was supposedly the only law of Drakon's that Solon kept in force, and which was re-inscribed in 409 B.C.

15. Plut. *Sol.* 25.

16. *Ath. Pol.* 5; cf. Plut. *Sol.* 13-14.

17. Harris (2002: 415-30) distinguishes between debt-slavery and debt-bondage, and argues that Solon only abolished enslavement for debt, not the institution of debt-bondage.

extracted a promise from all the citizenry to uphold his code, after which he took a sabbatical to escape the repeated requests by friends and foes to modify his law code in favor of their special interests.¹⁸ After his departure, the state dissolved once more into *stasis* for three decades.

Solon was followed by Athens' first real (or at least overt) tyrant. The factional leader Peisistratos rose to power in a series of attempted coups d' état that saw him finally take control permanently in 546 B.C. After his death, his son Hippias ruled until 511, when he was driven out of town because of the harsh retaliatory measures he took following the assassination of his brother Hipparchos in 514. In 508, the popular leader Cleisthenes instituted the radical democracy that we associate with Classical Athens. Despite evidence that they had in fact been popular, after the democracy had taken hold in the early fifth century, the Athenians vilified the Peisistratids. At the same time, there was a corresponding elevation of Solon to almost mythical status. His law code became hallowed by a patina of antiquity, and many considered it synonymous with democracy and moderate rule, to the point of Solon being associated with the foundation of democracy in very public ways.¹⁹

This exaltation of Solon gained momentum in the course of the fifth century, when his laws started being cited as a precedent for all things good and democratic.²⁰ Their veneration became most apparent following the oligarchic coup of the Four Hundred in 411, a bloody regime that seized power after two decades of fighting in the Peloponnesian War, but which was overthrown in less than a year. Following the

18. *Ath. Pol.* 11.1. Plutarch adds the detail that he left the city to pursue commercial ventures (*Sol.* 2.1).

19. To be discussed more fully in ch. 3, p. 90-101. See also Shear 2011.

20. *Ibid.*; see also Shear 2011.

restoration of democracy, an otherwise poorly attested official named Nicomachus was charged with heading a board of ten *anagrapheis* for the purpose of recording the laws of Solon and Drakon. Several fifth-and-fourth-century speech writers, including Lysias and Andocides, attacked Nicomachus, accusing him of changing the laws and exceeding his term of office.²¹ The vehemence of these accusations shows the seriousness with which the Athenians took the provisions of their ancestral lawgivers.²²

III. Tyrants: Bad or Just Drawn that Way?

In order to have a meaningful discussion about Solon's relationship to tyranny, we must first discuss the phenomenon itself. Robin Lane Fox called the study of tyranny "one of Greek history's most challenging black holes."²³ Since all of our primary sources date from after the rise of democracy, they are filled with anachronistic assumptions and prejudices, generally portraying tyrants as evil-minded and immoral, and making their ejection by a freedom-loving populace all but inevitable. Anderson reminds us that "even for writers of the fifth and fourth centuries, events before ca. 500 B.C. belonged essentially to prehistory. For source material these authors were forced to rely on the largely mute testimony of timeworn monuments, on the often opaque musings of early poets, and above all on the vagaries of oral traditions."²⁴ Aristotle associates tyranny with

21. Lysias 30.2 (in 410) and Andocides 1.82 (in 403).

22. Ruschenbusch does not believe that Solon's reputation took off until 356 B.C. (when Philip II of Macedon began playing a large part in Greek politics), observing that there were only 4 citations of Solon's laws among Attic orators, while after 356 there are 32. See Ruschenbusch (1958: 398-424). For Solon's rise to his reputation as "father of democracy," discussed more fully in ch. 3, see also Mossé (1979: 425-37), Szegedy-Maszak (1993: 201-14), and Hansen (1989: 71-99). Hignett (1952: 2-8) argues that Solon was regarded as a hero of democracy in the fifth century, as does Shear (2011: 19-69).

23. Lane Fox (2000: 38).

24. Anderson (2005: 174 n. 2). See also McGlew (1993: 2-13). For difficulties with the reliability of sources for the archaic period, see Raaflaub (1988: 197-225) and Osborne (2009: 4-15). On specific problems with sources for tyrants, see Osborne (2009: 192-97) and Dewald (2003: 25).

operating outside the law, and tyrants develop certain stereotypical characteristics in the fifth century in particular.²⁵

Herodotus gives us an ideological denunciation of tyranny in the so-called "Constitutional Debate" preceding Darius' succession to the throne of Persia (3.80-82). In his account, the conspirators who had assassinated the usurper Smerdis meet to decide what sort of government they should institute, and each gives a speech advocating democracy, oligarchy, and monarchy in turn. Otanes, who favors democracy, gives a thorough denunciation on the evils of sole rule (3.80), with which Megabyzus agrees, though he ultimately champions oligarchy (3.81). Otanes claims that the absolute power of tyrants corrupts even the best of men, so that they become proud and envious, the result of which is violence. He elaborates that monarchs despise virtue and listen to slander, overturn the ancestral laws of the land, put men to death without trial, and rape women.²⁶

Periander provides us with perhaps the best example of this type of negative portrayal. This infamous tyrant of Corinth became the embodiment of the tyrannical clichés of greed, violence and sexual depravity. According to Herodotus, he first tried to steal his friend's buried treasure (Hdt. 5.92), then sent young boys from Corcyra to be castrated (Hdt. 3.48), and finally he murdered and sexually defiled his wife (in that

25. On equating tyranny with lawlessness: Arist. *Pol.* 3.1285a18-19, 4.1292a7-30, 1292b5-10, and 1259a1-24. On stereotypical behavior of tyrants: Arist. *Pol.* 5.1311a36-1313a17; see also Anderson (2005: 174, esp. n. 2), and Stein-Hölkeskamp (2009: 101, 112-14).

26. See Lateiner (1989: 164-67) on Herodotus' programmatic characterization of tyrants, and 167-170 on the constitutional debate in particular. He refutes Waters (1985), who argues that Herodotus does not employ this sort of patterning and that the characteristics of monarchs and tyrants are naturally repetitious. See also Hartog (1988: 325-39), who argues that Otanes speaks from a Greek perspective, and sees monarchy/tyranny as a form of government that directly opposes the ancestral customs (*patrios politeia*). Darius, on the other hand, speaks from a Persian perspective, and sees democracy as contradicting the traditional forms of government (326-7). Waters (1971: 41) uses Darius' speech to argue that there is no theory of tyranny in Herodotus' day, and that the historian himself shows no antipathy toward tyrants.

order), "putting his loaves in a cold oven" (Hdt. 5.92). Herodotus also tells us of the violent tendencies of Thrasybulus of Miletus, who advised Periander to lop the heads from the tallest stalks of grain as a metaphor for executing influential citizens who might destabilize his power (Hdt. 5.91-92).²⁷ He also describes the sexual deviancy of Peisistratos, who married the daughter of his on-again, off-again political rival Megacles. After the bride's mother asked her some pointed questions, Megacles discovered that Peisistratos' marital relations with his daughter were *ou kata nomon*, that is, "not according to custom." This offense was so severe that even Megacles' enemies joined forces with him to drive Peisistratos out of Athens (Hdt. 1.61).²⁸

The abuse that tyrants received in later literature, however, is not consistent with the attitudes that we see towards them in earlier times.²⁹ More recent scholarship has been critical of the tradition of the "bad tyrant" and has produced a picture that is quite different from that presented in our ancient sources.³⁰ Many scholars now see tyranny as an important transitional phase from traditional oligarchies to democracy, and there have been earnest attempts to rehabilitate the reputations of various individual tyrants, in particular the Peisistratids of Athens.³¹ Despite the dawning realization that there were many benevolent tyrants, scholars have achieved a rare unanimity in their understanding of the nature of tyrants' power: they were illegitimate rulers. Whatever good they may

27. Aristotle tells the same story in *Pol.* 3.1284a and 5.1311a, but with the roles reversed.

28. Herodotus tells us that Peisistratos committed this grave insult as a way to avoid fathering children with familial ties to his political rivals.

29. See below p. 150, n. 399 for positive associations with tyranny. See Andrewes (1956: 20-30), Podlecki (1984: 130-34), and McGlew (1993: 52-61) on the changing definition of a tyrant from Homeric through Classical times, and Anderson (2005: 203-11) on the fluctuating connotations of the word in the early poets.

30. Ibid. On the relationship between desire, sexual domination, and tyranny, with particular reference to this episode, see Hartog (1988: 331-32).

31. On the necessity of tyranny as part of the transition from rule by the elite to democracy, see Anderson (2005: 174-75), Stein-Hölkeskamp 1989, and De Libero 1996. For an excellent re-evaluation of the activities of Peisistratos in economic, political, social, and military spheres, see Sancisi-Weerdenburg 2000.

have accomplished, they were first and foremost tyrants; that is, extraconstitutional usurpers who either overturned or ignored the existing governmental systems.³²

There are indications that this was not always the case.³³ We see hints in Aristotle's *Politics*, in which he states that tyrants (including Peisistratos) were often merely demagogues with extraordinary power (1310b14-16, 29-31). We hear from multiple ancient sources that the Athenian people, both rich and poor, were eager for a tyrant to right the social ills that had befallen them. Solon himself explicitly states that he was voluntarily offered a tyranny (frs. 32.2, 33.6, 34.7-8), and Plutarch tells us, "At that time, the disparity between the rich and the poor had reached such a high point, and the city was in an altogether perilous condition; it seemed as if the only way to restore order and stop the turmoil was to establish a tyranny" (13.2; τότε δὲ τῆς τῶν πενήτων πρὸς τοὺς πλουσίους ἀνωμαλίας ὥσπερ ἀκμὴν λαβούσης παντάπασιν ἐπισφαλῶς ἢ πόλις διέκειτο, καὶ μόνως ἂν ἐδόκει καταστῆναι καὶ παύσασθαι ταραττομένη τυραννίδος γενομένης).³⁴ Plutarch also reports that Solon's friends and family, when urging him to seize sole power, pointed to the virtues of the tyrants Pittacus and Tynnondas to further their argument (*Sol.* 14.4):

And above all, his most intimate friends rebuked him with respect to the monarchy, for being averse to it because of a name, as though because of the virtues of the one who seized it would not straightaway become a [hereditary/ lawful] kingship, as had happened formerly in Euboea with Tynnondas, and as

32. Drumann 1812 gave one of the first methodological studies on ancient tyranny in which he presented tyrants as illegitimate monarchs, which has remained the basis for the modern consensus; see Andrewes (1956: 7), Finley (1970: 107), Snodgrass (1980: 96), and Murray (1993: 137), to name a few examples. For further analysis of the "legality" of tyrants' regimes, see p. 19.

33. For fuller discussion of the ways tyranny arose naturally out of the existing aristocratic system, see McGlew (1993: 8-10) and Anderson (2005: 173-222).

34. Cf. *Ath. Pol.* 11.2, which suggests that the people were discontented with Solon because he had not done as they expected, which seems to indicate that they had wanted him to take up a tyranny.

was the case now with Pittacus, who had been chosen as tyrant by the Mitylenaeans.

μάλιστα δὲ οἱ συνήθεις ἐκάκιζον εἰ διὰ τοῦνομα δυσωπεῖται τὴν μοναρχίαν, ὥσπερ οὐκ ἀρετῇ τοῦ λαβόντος εὐθὺς ἂν βασιλείαν γενομένην, καὶ γεγενημένην πρότερον μὲν Εὐβοεῦσι Τυννώνδαν, νῦν δὲ Μιτυληναίοις Πιττακὸν ἡρημένοις τύραννον.

In other words, even if the designation of the regime was distasteful, this was more than counterbalanced if the ruler were of excellent moral character and ability. Diogenes Laertius also tells us that, "Henceforward the *demos* looked up to him [Solon] and gladly would have had him rule over them as a tyrant" (2.49; τοῦ δὲ λοιποῦ προσεῖχον αὐτῷ ὁ δῆμος καὶ ἡδέως κἂν τυραννεῖσθαι ἤθελον πρὸς αὐτοῦ). In fact, tyrants made many positive contributions to society and political development.³⁵ If Solon were aiming to become a tyrant, it would not necessarily have diminished his popularity, since tyrants in many other *poleis* brought stability and peace. It is not even clear that all of the men whom history remembers as tyrants were recognized as absolute rulers by their contemporaries, especially as some of them seem to have been elected to their positions of power, just as Solon was appointed to his special archonship.³⁶

The eagerness of so many Athenians for Solon to become an acknowledged tyrant suggests that tyrants had successfully resolved *stasis* elsewhere. There were several tyrannies contemporary to Solon, most of which were already in a second or third generation of a dynasty—most notably, Periander of Corinth and Cleisthenes of Sicyon, with whom Solon had close dealings.³⁷ Just as we saw hints of negative stories about

35. See below p. 150, n. 399.

36. See below p. 19.

37. For Solon's association with Periander and Cleisthenes, see below p. 171. For a more dubious connection between Solon and Periander in an odd sort of "wisdom contest," see ch. 2, pp. 58-59.

Solon in chapter 2, we also find remnants of positive stories about tyrants.³⁸ However, it is common for later sources writing about these autocrats to qualify any of their worthwhile achievements. Sometimes these positive contributions are part of some sort of devious power-grabbing ploy, as when Plutarch lambasts Peisistratos for pretending to be a beneficent leader of the people for his own nefarious ends, making it seem as though any real benefits the tyrant provided were incidental to his quest for power (*Sol.* 29). Other times authors bury or invalidate any useful actions by stressing the tyrants' moral depravity. For example, Herodotus first implies that Cypselus' rule had divine sanction (5.92b-e), then, after a long recitation of Cypselus' sins, grudgingly admits that he made Corinth extremely prosperous. Herodotus then immediately allows that Cypselus' son Periander was "less violent than his father," but qualifies that statement with a lengthy account of Periander's bloodthirstiness (*Hdt.* 5.92g). Still other times, sources flat-out contradict themselves with little or no qualification. Diogenes Laertius, who glowingly relates Solon's categorical opposition to violence and the methods Peisistratos used in securing the tyranny, immediately records a letter that Solon wrote to Periander advising him to maintain his tyranny by brute force (2.49-52; 64-5).³⁹

The preservation of these positive stories, despite the obvious reluctance of later authors to admit that tyrants could have accomplished anything good, suggests that the traditions were too persistent to deny. Later sources would have struggled to reconcile stories of useful contributions with what they "knew" of the character of tyrants by making them fit the stereotype of the diabolical despot any way they could. We may

38. On the tradition of the "good tyrant" in later literature, see Osborne (2009: 196-97).

39. See below p. 148 n. 386 for citations of specific legal measures of tyrants that were characterized as negative despite positive consequences.

therefore cautiously suggest that anything beneficial about tyrants preserved in the literary tradition, no matter how tortuously qualified, is likely genuine.⁴⁰ I will even go so far as to suggest that the more convoluted the attempt to make beneficial actions of tyrants part of some nefarious ploy, the *more* likely the story is to be authentic.

According to Aristotle, tyrants almost always gained power by championing the people against the rich, and often arose as part of a general trend of opposition to extreme oligarchies (*Pol.* 1306a6, 1308a19, 1310b12). He classifies tyrannies by four types. The first stems from the rise of a demagogue, the second from the abuse of the prerogatives of a normal political office, the third from the breakdown of a hereditary kingship and neglect of ancestral customs, and the fourth from the voluntary delegation of power that was previously in the hands of a narrow oligarchy to an individual. Each type, though, essentially began as a leader of the people against the elite. Different *poleis* also found different ways to put an end to oppressive regimes that were not necessarily considered tyrannies, despite outward similarities.

The basis of a tyrant's claim to power varied from city to city, as did the mechanism by which he secured power in the first place. For instance Lycurgus, though not called a tyrant, invoked the authority of Apollo when he solved Sparta's *stasis* with his *Great Rhetra* (Plut. *Lyc.*). At Corinth, Cypselus rested his right to rule on his Bacchiad roots and a series of Delphic oracles (Hdt. 5.92b-e). Though ultimately unsuccessful, Drakon and Solon in Athens used their authority as elected legislators to attempt to quell civil turmoil fueled by aristocratic infighting (*Ath. Pol.* 1-11). Pheidon appealed to the

40. See also Salmon (1997: 62) on the likelihood of the authenticity of stories about positive contributions of tyrants.

family precedent of hereditary kingship to gain enough support to institute reforms that stabilized Argos (Hdt. 6.127; *Ath. Pol.* 1.10).⁴¹ Aristotle also mentions a class of tyrants called *aisymnetes* who were elected to powerful office, including Phalaris of Agrigentum and the Ionian tyrants.⁴² This sounds very much like Solon's extraordinary appointment as eponymous archon in 594, especially since Aristotle specifies that *aisymnetes* often arose because of social *stasis*.⁴³

Thus we see that, despite Solon's apparent aversion to tyranny, tyrants often (though not always) were viewed positively by archaic contemporaries. This means that Solon's vehement condemnation of tyranny requires some explanation, which we can find in the troubles caused by the Athenians' only experience with tyranny—the bloodshed and strife that arose as a result of Cylon's actions. But since tyrants often managed to quell the same sort of *stasis* that plagued Athens, it was reasonable for Solon to desire to emulate the successful measures taken by tyrants while avoiding the politically dangerous label. After the rise of democracy, the political climate condemned tyrants, which assured that Solon's legacy as an enemy of tyranny endured, despite the similarity of many of his reforms to those of tyrants, including those of the Athenian Peisistratos, who explicitly claimed continuity with Solon.

41. Pheidon possibly only instituted informal changes in the distribution of power, since there is no evidence of lingering alterations in the Argive constitution. Likewise the Orthagorid dynasty at Sicyon seems to have instigated few formal changes in the constitution until Cleisthenes. On the Orthagorid dynasty, see further Stein-Hölkeskamp (2009: 104-07).

42. For *aisymnetes*, see Arist. *Pol.* 5.1301b18-20, 25-28; 3.1285a31-34; cf. 3.1285b25-26.

43. For more examples of elected tyrants see Salmon (1997: 62). Goušchin (1999: 21-22) discusses the elective tyrannies of Pittacus (Arist. *Pol.* 1.1285b25-26) and Dionysius of Syracuse (Arist. *Rhet.* 1.1357b30-36), the latter based on his being appointed a bodyguard similar to Peisistratos' *korynephoroi*. Goušchin also suggests that Solon was actually elected as a tyrant but turned it down in favor of taking the position of a *diallektes*, though as we shall see the difference between the two positions was mostly semantic.

IV. Solon's Life

Given the political context in which Solon was operating, we now turn to what we know of his personal life. We are fortunate to have many more detailed sources about Solon outside of his own writings than about any of the other archaic poets.

Unfortunately, though, Solon's life has been reconstructed from much later accounts, which are also our main sources for the surviving fragments of his poetry. As always when investigating historical periods with scant written evidence, we have to establish carefully what our extant sources are, what problems are connected with them, and how we may extract as much reliable information as possible from them. Because many of the later stories about Solon became fanciful (and in some cases, outright fantastic) as time went on, we must be cautious in too firmly asserting facts about his life. Ancient authors tended to present information about poets gleaned from their own poetry as fact, or to state with confidence things which were likely interpolation or conjecture. We must remember this when we talk about the life of Solon and be aware that much of what we "know" may be the result of later embellishment. We run into further trouble when we confront our lack of knowledge about the sources for these authors beyond Solon's poetry. In the fifth and particularly fourth centuries, he became something of what Noussia-Fantuzzi calls a "culture hero," the subject of a wide array of legends portraying him as sage, lawgiver, and founder of Athenian democracy, attributing to him many feats also credited to other archaic figures.⁴⁴

Though Solon makes his first extended appearance in Herodotus in the mid-to-late fifth century, his character in this work is steeped in folklore that largely ignores his

44. Noussia-Fantuzzi (2010: 3).

political reforms, and which gives us next to no biographical details.⁴⁵ Our invaluable next source is the *Ath. Pol.*, which details the history of Athens' constitution from the mythical reign of King Theseus to the author's present day, and contains a substantial section on the reforms of Solon. The *Ath. Pol.* gives us a very clear and precise discussion of Solon's life and political activities, providing an excellent framework in which to view his legislation. But we must remember that the author was working in the heyday of democracy, and we see constant appeals to Solon's poetry for explanations of his various actions.⁴⁶ Diodorus Siculus, writing in the mid-to-late first century B.C., fills his account with anecdotes and *bon mots*. His work, while a valuable collection of popular and current stories about Solon, is rife with contradiction and historical anachronism, and promulgates wholesale the picture of Solon the sage and *misotyrannos*. Diogenes Laertius, who lived in the third century AD, writes in much the same vein.

The fullest record is Plutarch's *Life of Solon*, written in the late first/early second century A.D., approximately 700 years after Solon's death. As a biographer, Plutarch is most interested in Solon as an example of how to lead a good life, which makes his account susceptible to the sort of romanticization that I will address in chapter 2. While the lateness of the source and its high-minded tone necessitate caution, Plutarch does preserve much valuable information about Solon's life, laws, and poetry, particularly when we consider that he had access to many sources closer to Solon's time that are now lost to us. But because of the highly biased nature of Plutarch's moralizing biography, we

45. Other fifth-and-fourth-century sources include scattered references in Aristophanes and small fragments in other comic poets; see Martina (1968) for a full collection of references. See Monedero (2001: 156-207, 208-10) on Solon in other comedians, Plato, and various fourth-century orators.

46. Discussed in detail in ch. 3.

must be careful in differentiating between what comes from preserved earlier sources and ideas in Plutarch's own day about what constituted an ideal lawgiver and statesman.⁴⁷ We also have many passing allusions to Solon and his reforms in fourth-century oratory, but I will discuss problems with these in chapter 3.

Solon's own poetry tells us that he was an Athenian by birth, though Diogenes Laertius claims that he was born on Salamis.⁴⁸ Plutarch tells us that he was of a noble family and related to the Peisistratids, both of whom claimed descent from Kodrus, the last Athenian king, through whom they were related to Neleus and ultimately Poseidon.⁴⁹ Plutarch tells us that, although from an aristocratic family, he was of modest means, which obligated him from a young age to take up a career in commerce.⁵⁰ We can identify two periods during which Solon may indeed have spent time abroad, inferred from two vague references in his poems.⁵¹ All our sources agree that Solon left Athens immediately after implementing his law code, the completion of which is usually dated to the archonship of Eukrates in 592/1. Solon extracted a promise that his laws would not be changed for either one hundred years (according to the *Ath. Pol.* and Plutarch), or ten years (according to Herodotus).⁵²

The dates of Solon's life are a matter of some controversy. The primary issue is

47. On differentiating between reliable tradition and Plutarch's ideas about proper statesmanship, see de Blois (2006: 429-40).

48. Sol. fr. 2; Diog. Laert. 3.1, quoting Thrasylos.

49. Plut. *Sol.* 1.1 mentions his relationship with Peisistratos; Diog. Laert. describes his descent from Kodrus (1.53).

50. That he was from an aristocratic background but of only moderate wealth is something on which our sources concur (see, for example, *Ath. Pol.* 5.3 and Plut. *Sol.* 1.2). It is possible, though, that this is an invention, since Plutarch and the *Ath. Pol.* both "prove" this using fragments of Solon's own poetry that criticize the wealthy as well as the poor. See further below, p. 152 n. 408.

51. Fr. 19, which refers to a voyage on a ship, and fr. 28, which mentions the mouth of the Nile.

52. *The Ath. Pol.* (7.2) and Plutarch (*Sol.* 25.1) give the length of time as one hundred years; Herodotus (1.25) tells us it was ten years. This may have been an element inserted later to make Solon fit the stereotype of the lawgiver leaving after the implementation of his laws, on which see ch. 2, p. 63.

the date of his reforms in relation to his archonship, which gives us a very tenuous basis for guessing the dates of his life. 594 is one of the only secure dates we have for Solon's life and political career.⁵³ We can only surmise his age based on tenuous speculation—for instance, all of our sources agree on his involvement as a general in the war with Megara and the Salamis campaign. According to the *Ath. Pol.*, for a man to be chosen as general in the late seventh century, he had to have at least two sons who were no younger than ten years of age. If he was elected general around 601/0, the most commonly accepted date for the Salamis campaign, he must have met this requirement (*Ath. Pol.* 4.2). For a man to have two (legitimate) ten year old sons, he must have been married for at least twelve years. In fragments of his poetry Solon suggests that a man should marry in his early thirties (fr. 27.8-9), as does Hesiod in his advice to Perses (*Op.* 695-7). In later times, Aristotle and Plato both agree that a man should marry between thirty and thirty-five years of age.⁵⁴ If we guess that he married at thirty, and accept the date of his eponymous archonship as 594, he could not have been younger than forty-five when he was appointed mediator, though Rhodes speculates that being elected as such when he was as young as thirty or thirty-five is not impossible; though it is apparent from this extremely qualified assessment that his age is far from secure.⁵⁵

More broadly, we know that Solon lived between the second half of the seventh century and the first half of the sixth, but we do not have precise dates for his birth or death. In fact, there are almost as many versions of the circumstances of Solon's death as there are sources.⁵⁶ The *Ath. Pol.* (14.2) states that he was still alive when Peisistratos

53. This is based on the Athenian Archon list (see above p. 9 n. 11); see also Rhodes (1993: 120-21).

54. Plat. *Rep.* 460e; *Leg.* 721b; Arist. *Pol.* 1335a28-30.

55. For further arguments for his age, with citations, see Owens (2010: 63-66) and Rhodes (1993: 121-22).

came to power (an event he supposedly attempted to derail), but Peisistratos became tyrant during the archonship of Comeas (561/0), with Solon reportedly dying less than two years later, in 560/59.⁵⁷ Diogenes Laertius (1.62) tells us that Solon died on Cyprus at age 80, though others claim that he died on Salamis.⁵⁸ There is also a tradition (which even Plutarch doubts) that his ashes were scattered over Salamis.⁵⁹

Others use his supposed visit to Croesus of Lydia, detailed in the first book of Herodotus, to fix the dates of his life, archonship, and reforms. If he did in fact interact with Croesus, the date of his archonship would have to be moved some twenty to thirty years later, as Miller in fact does argue.⁶⁰ She bases this on his reference to a law borrowed from Amasis of Egypt and a reference in the *Ath. Pol.* to the introduction of coinage (10.1), but scholarly consensus is against her.⁶¹ Hignett and Sealey believe that there was a separation between Solon's archonship and his constitutional commission, based on gaps in the archon list, placing the former in 594 and the latter in the mid-to-late 580s, but given the unreliability of the evidence, I find it more plausible that Solon was special archon in the same year that he wrote/enacted his reforms.⁶²

56. The *Ath. Pol.* follows the account of Phantias (fr. 21 Wehrli = Plut. *Sol.* 32.3).

57. Phantias contradicts the account of Heraclides Ponticus (fr. 148 Wehrli), who claims that Solon died a long way into Peisistratos' tyranny, but this information is highly suspect. See Rhodes (1976: 219-33) and Davies 1971.

58. For Solon's death on Salamis, see Cratinus, *PCG* 246; *Anth. Pal.* 7.87)

59. See Linfoth (1919: 308 ff.) and Freeman (1926: 194).

60. See Miller (1959: 29-52), 1968, 1969, and 1971) for the historicity of Solon's visit to Croesus.

61. On the impossible chronology of Solon's visit to Croesus, who could not have come to power earlier than the 560s, see How & Wells (1912b: 66-67) and Asheri, Lloyd, & Corcella (2007: 99). For sources on the possibility of Solon's visit to Egypt and his possible relationship with Amasis, see Martina (1968: nos. 33, 62-9).

62. Hignett (1952: 317); Sealey (1976: 121). For defense of the traditional date of his reforms, see Podlecki (1984: 141-42), Rhodes (1993: 120), and Linfoth (1919: 265). On the archon list, see further p. 9 n. 11 and p. 185 n. 478.

V. Solon's Poetry

As mentioned above, our most important source for Solon's life and the motives behind his reforms is his poetry, fragments of which have come down to us via quotations in later sources. There are thirty extant fragments of poetry attributed to Solon, spanning the genres of dactylic hexameter, elegy, iambus, and trochaic tetrameter. The best and most thorough edition of these fragments remains that of West, complemented by his widely-used translations of the Greek lyric poets.⁶³ Five of Solon's fragments are doublets with poems in the corpus of poetry that has come down to us under the name of Theognis.⁶⁴ According to Plato, Solon was the "the noblest of poets," who could have been a second Homer had he not diverted his attention to politics (*Timaeus* 21c).⁶⁵ Modern scholars have been less kind, preferring to mine his poetry for information about his political reforms. The poetry itself, while an effective vehicle for moral philosophy and justification of his constitutional reforms, has been condemned by many eminent scholars as second-rate in style and quality. Campbell is particularly harsh, calling Solon's poetry infelicitous, clumsy, and uneven, and sees his value almost exclusively as a historical source.⁶⁶ Gerber damns Solon with faint praise, saying that his importance as a

63. West 1972 and 1993, respectively.

64. The 2,800 verses that have been attributed to Theognis probably contain poems by other authors, especially since we have doublets of verses attributed to more than one person (including Solon). The collected passages attributed to Theognis are therefore known as the *Theognidea* to reflect the probability that some of them are spurious and/or wrongly attributed. For Theognis' dates and relationship to Solon, see Podlecki (1984: 143-44); on Theognis and the *Theognidea* more generally, see Podlecki (1984: 143-51) and Lardinois (2006: 15-16). On double attributions with Solon, Lardinois (2006: 18) cautions us, "Theognis may have borrowed these lines from Solon or Solon from Theognis or the material in both may derive from a common source of some generic and (previously) anonymous elegiac couplets," though most scholars consider the *Theognidea* to be the derivative text, as does Noussia-Fantuzzi (2010: 58). West has reduced the number of demonstrably authentic verses to a little more than 300 (1993: 64-73).

65. Barnstone (2010: 84); Podlecki 1984. Late Antique commentators credited Solon with 5,000 verses, though this high number may be due to attribution of verses that have come down to us in the *Theognidea*. See Podlecki (1984: 143).

66. Campbell (1982: 231-253, esp. 233).

political figure has led scholars to "an undeservedly low opinion of him as a poet... [but] it would certainly be unjustified to include him among poets of the first rank..."⁶⁷ Before this tepid endorsement, he thoroughly disparages Solon's poetry, commenting on fr. 13 that Solon "rambles at times and the transitions are not always smooth," leaving "the impression that Solon has not thought out fully what he wishes to say before he says it," and that "it is hard to disagree with those who disparage the poetic quality."⁶⁸ More recently, there has been a resurgence of interest in Solon. Christoph Mülke in 2002 and Maria Noussia-Fantuzzi in 2010 published exhaustive (and kinder) commentaries on his poetry, and Josine Blok and Andre Lardinois in 2006 edited an exhaustive volume on his political and literary activities, covering everything from his poetic endeavors to his reception to the authenticity of his laws.⁶⁹ Ron Owens also published a book detailing Solon's life, philosophy and reforms, with a new commentary and translation of his poetry.⁷⁰ Elizabeth Irwin also published a 2005 book dealing with Solon's place in archaic politics, which I will discuss in some detail in chapter 4.⁷¹

In the seventh and sixth centuries B.C., elegy and iambus were prominent media for poetry, which were usually transmitted publicly and privately as vehicles for philosophy, morals, and doctrine. Poetry was the foremost means of communicating with and persuading the public or politically influential members of the aristocracy.⁷² Solon began writing poetry sometime before 600 B.C., since three fragments refer to the

67. Gerber (1997: 13).

68. Gerber (1997: 116). Fränkel (1962: 272-73) and Spira (1981: 177) similarly criticize the quality of Solon's poetry.

69. Noussia 2001, Noussia-Fantuzzi 2010; Mülke 2002; Blok and Lardinois 2006.

70. Owens 2010.

71. Irwin 2005.

72. Owens (2010: 84).

Athenian campaign against Salamis, which was part of a larger war with the Megarians that took place in the late seventh century (frs. 1-3). In the fragments of Solon's poems that were written before his reforms, there is a concentration on the social and political problems that were plaguing the state.⁷³ These mostly use the present tense, and are written in the elegiac meter. Others of Solon's poems were obviously composed after his reforms, since they refer to them, though usually without mention of specific measures. Still others highlight the continuing sociopolitical problems of Athens in general. This post-reform group includes poems mostly composed in tetrameters and iambics, employing the past tense, and providing rationale of Solon's actions in the wake of widespread dissatisfaction.

Solon's poetry was apparently composed as a conduit for political and moral advice.⁷⁴ One of his goals seems to have been to place the problems in Attica within a new framework of justice and what was best for the community as a whole, which he did by repeatedly referring to the doctrine of the mean: that is, the idea that the best way to live is to have "nothing in excess," the maxim made famous by the inscription "μηδέν ἄγαν" at Delphi.⁷⁵ This idea seems to have been part of an attempt by Solon to present a framework for a new morality for the *polis*, which can be seen as a sign of the prevalence of elegiac poetry as a medium through which to communicate with a larger public.⁷⁶ It also indicates that archaic Athens was still largely an oral society, lacking a prose tradition, which should be borne in mind when considering the impact of Solon's literary

73. To be discussed in more detail in ch. 4.

74. Owens (2010: 86-87); Adkins (1972: 49).

75. See ch. 2, p. 48-60.

76. See further ch. 4, p. 113-119. On justice as a concept in archaic politics, see Owens (2010: 86-87), Almeida 2003, and McGlew 1993.

activities.⁷⁷

VI. Solon's Legal Code

Solon's poetry is our oldest concrete evidence for archaic legislation. Literary sources cite a plethora of Solonian laws, often taken from quotations of the poems in later sources.⁷⁸ The corpus of Solon's laws edited by Ruschenbusch has remained the standard point of reference since its publication in 1966, though various revisions have been proposed.⁷⁹ Many of the laws referred to as Solonian were surely later interpolations, but at least some were certainly authentic.⁸⁰ Ruschenbusch in particular is optimistic about the genuineness of Solon's law code, which he believes remained unaltered until it was updated in 411.⁸¹ The laws were supposedly written down on 16, or as many as 21 whitewashed wooden boards called *axones* displayed publicly in front of the Stoa Basileus, or "Royal Stoa," a prominent building in the Agora.⁸² The scope of the laws covered legal procedure and the penal code, regulation of imports and exports, inheritance laws, funerals, religious practices, social and moral behavior, and an extensive reorganization of the entire structure of the government.⁸³ The Athenians revised their law code at the end of the fifth century, including the "ancestral" laws of

77. Owens (2010: 86); see also Thomas 1989 and 1992 on the transition from an oral to a literate society in this period. Noussia-Fantuzzi (2010: 48-55) discusses the possibility that Solon's poetry was actually composed orally.

78. See Sickinger (1999: 8-10) on the relationship between the original laws of Solon and the version reported in later sources; see also Hölkeskamp (1992: 87-89).

79. For proposed revisions, see Scafuro (2006: 179), who adds to Ruschenbusch's black-and-white categories of "genuine" and "false" a third category, that of laws with a "kernel" of the original laws of Solon. For another optimistic view of the reliability of our record of Solonian legislation, with citations of controversies, see Rhodes (2006: 249-60).

80. On identifying genuine laws of Solon, see Scafuro (2006: 175-96).

81. Ruschenbusch (1966: 57 ff.). Hignett (1952: 17-27), however, argues that the false attribution of laws to Drakon and Solon (to be discussed in chapter 3) indicates that Athenians of the fifth and fourth centuries had no actual laws preserved.

82. See Stroud 1979 on the historicity of the *axones*; see also Rhodes (2006: 256 and n. 66).

83. See Noussia 2010: 23 for citations.

Solon, so we must treat evidence from later authors cautiously.

Modern historians generally divide Solon's legislation into two categories, economic and constitutional. Evidence for Solon's economic legislation comes mainly from his own work, together with the commentary supplied by Plutarch, Aristotle, and the *Ath. Pol.* While the primary reforms seem to have been the cancellation of all debts and the abolition of debt-slavery, perhaps the most important was the introduction of formalized property classes on the basis of wealth, which determined eligibility for public office.⁸⁴ The *pentakosiomedimnoi* were those who produced 500 or more wet or dry measures (*medimnoi*) per year, followed by the *hippeis*, who produced at least 300 *medimnoi*; the *zeugitai*, who produced 200 or more; and finally, the *thetes*, or everyone else. Various scholars have associated these property classes on the basis of etymology with different military divisions, with the *hippeis* being equated with knights, or cavalry.⁸⁵ Since horses were expensive to maintain, cavalry required the sort of wealth that only a *hippeis* or *pentakosiomedimnos* possessed. Various explanations for the identity of the *zeugitai* have been proposed. Originally, many scholars assumed that the "yoke men" were a broad middle class who were wealthy enough to own a yoke of oxen.⁸⁶ Now many scholars believe that the term refers to hoplites, who consisted of men who were "yoked" in a phalanx and were wealthy enough to provide their own panoply, and the *thetes* were either men without military duties or light-armed troops.⁸⁷

84. This reform is not considered genuine by all scholars; however, see Mossé (1979: 425-37). For descriptions of the property classes, see *Ath. Pol.* 73-4 and Plutarch *Sol.* 18.1. On differences between debt-slavery and debt-bondage, see Harris (2002: 415-30) and Noussia-Fantuzzi (2010: 29 n. 58), with citations.

85. For further discussion of the etymology of the property classes, and ambiguities over which classes were allowed to hold which offices, see von Fritz & Kapp (1950: 155).

86. E.g. Frost (1984: 283-85), Hansen (1991: 43-46), Foxhall (1997: 131), and Raaflaub (1997: 55).

87. See, as a representative sampling, Ehrenberg (1973: 52-53), Van Wees 2006352-54), Foxhall (1997: 70-71), and Stahl & Walter (2009: 146-47). For further citations on both sides of the debate, see van Wees

It seems that only the top two property classes could hold magistracies (archonships), and only the *pentakosiomedimnoi* could hold the office of the Treasurer of Athena or be selected as eponymous archon (the highest magistrate).⁸⁸ It is unclear which political offices were open to the lower classes, but it seems that even the *thetes* at least had the right to vote on laws proposed in the assembly.⁸⁹ The prestigious council of elders, known as the Areopagus, remained composed exclusively of ex-archons (and therefore only members of the *pentakosiomedimnoi* and *hippeis*), a role they retained until 462, when the reforms of Ephialtes transferred a large part of their powers to the Cleisthenic Council of Five Hundred.⁹⁰

A passage in the *Ath. Pol.* tells us that Solon retained the four ancestral tribes and the four "tribal kings," and that within each tribe there were three *trittues* and twelve *naukrariai*, who controlled contributions and expenditure; further, many of the existing laws of Solon made reference to the latter no-longer-existing officials (*Ath. Pol.* 8.3). Various scholars have had differing opinions on the exact role of the *naukrariai* in pre-Classical Athens. This confusion is exacerbated by our lack of sources and conflicts in the accounts that we do have.⁹¹ Herodotus mentions the *prytanies* of the *naukraroi* (5.71), but Thucydides contradicts him, telling us that the archons had control of the entire

(2006: 352-54).

88. On the election of archons, see Develin (1979: 455-68).

89. *Ath. Pol.* 7.3 and Plut. *Sol.* 18.2 tell us that Solon allowed *thetes* to vote in the assembly, but Hignett (1952: 117 n. 23) believes that this is a later interpolation based on the Cleisthenic reforms. Rhodes (1993: 140 ff.) makes the compelling point, though, that Thersites' abuse of Agamemnon (*Hom. Il.* 2.210-44) indicates that even the lowest classes were allowed to speak in assembly. While of course this scenario comes from epic, it would have had to resonate with contemporary audiences in order to make sense. See also Noussia-Fantuzzi (2010: 26).

90. See Plut. *Sol.* 19.2; also Freeman (1926: 79 n. 1) and Wade-Gery (1933: 24 n. 1), contra Hignett (1952: 93) and Hansen (1989: 98 n. 121). On the possibility that Ephialtes' reforms were actually Solonian, see Ostwald (1986: 73). On Ephialtes' reforms more generally, see Ostwald (1986: 36-42, 62, 71, and 180).

91. Rhodes (1993: 151) and Amit (1965: 104) comment on problems arising from the scantiness of our evidence.

administrative apparatus (1.126.8). Later we hear that Cleisthenes replaced the *naukrariai* with demes and turned their functions over to officials called demarchs (21.5).⁹² This gives us forty-eight *naukrariai*, which were subdivisions of *trittues* that were created by Solon and dissolved by Cleisthenes. The Atthidographer Kleidemos makes no mention of Solon, but tells us that it was Cleisthenes who created this system, replacing the previous four tribes with ten new ones, which he then divided into fifty parts called *naukrariai* (*FGrH* 323 F8).⁹³ Others give the credit to Peisistratos, theorizing that he created the *naukraria* as local administrative bodies, rather than in connection with the creation of a navy.⁹⁴ Orthodox scholarship usually assumes that these were (at least partly) military divisions responsible for members of the navy and a logistical network for supplying, maintaining, and commanding warships.⁹⁵ Whatever the specifics, the *trittues* and *naukrariai* seem to be some sort of administrative subdivision, possibly instituted (or at least exploited) by Solon, but we know virtually nothing about them.

Plutarch and the *Ath. Pol.* both credit Solon with setting up the *boule* of Four Hundred, made up of one hundred members from each of the four ancient tribes of Attica, which examined proposals before they were discussed in the popular assembly (Plut. *Sol.* 19.1; *Ath. Pol.* 8.4, 21.3). While several scholars contest the existence of this council,

92. The *Ath. Pol.* also tells us that, when the demes replaced the *naukraria*, people began using their deme designation in place of the traditional patronymic as an official part of their name. If the deme (one of the major features of Cleisthenes' democratic reforms) was so important, and it was a direct descendant of the *naukrariai*, this suggests that the post was a division of considerable importance (21.4).

93. On the account of the *naukrariai* in Kleidemos, see further Jacoby 1949 *passim*, and McNerney (1994: 32-34). For a complete list of references to *naukraroi* in ancient sources, see Wallinga (2000: 131-34).

94. See Hignett (1952: 69 ff., 115), but others have discredited this theory on lack of evidence; for instance, see Welwei (1992: 258 ff.) and Wallinga (2000: 131-32).

95. E.g. Böckh 1886, Thompsen 1964, and Wallinga 2000. Alternatively, Billigmeier and Dusing 1981 suggest that rather than a naval office, the *nau*-prefix comes from *naos*, or "temple," and is therefore some sort of religious division. On this possibility see further McNerney (1994: 32, esp. n. 56) and Jordan 1970.

most recent scholarly opinion gives credence to its historicity.⁹⁶ Solon also opened access to the courts (*dikasteria*) and introduced the right of appeal, the reform that the *Ath. Pol.* calls his most democratic (9.1).⁹⁷ Even the poorest citizens were given the right to appeal a sentence passed by the magistrates in a tribunal known as the *heliaia*.⁹⁸ However, the *Ath. Pol.* tells us that, "In the time of Solon all [of the archons] were brought together in the *Thesmotheteion*. The archons had complete power to judge cases themselves, not just to hold preliminary hearings as now. Such then were the powers of the archons" (3.5; ἐπι δὲ Σόλωνος ἅπαντες εἰς τὸ θεσμοθετεῖον συνῆλθον. κύριοι δ' ἦσαν καὶ τὰς δίκας αὐτοτελεῖς κρίνειν, καὶ οὐχ ὥσπερ νῦν προανακρίνειν. τὰ μὲν οὖν περὶ τὰς ἀρχὰς τοῦτον εἶχε τὸν τρόπον). So it seems that, while the lower classes could appeal, their fate was entirely in the hands of the aristocracy, or those wealthy enough to qualify for archonships.⁹⁹ He is also said to have written a law of denunciation (*eisangelia*), which prosecuted anyone attempting to bring down the democracy, though the anachronism of this sort of terminology suggests that this was actually a law of Cleisthenes that was wrongly attributed to Solon.¹⁰⁰

In the social sphere, Solon also passed many laws regulating public and private behavior. These laws seem to have been quite detailed. For example, slaves were not allowed to exercise in the palaestras or practice pederasty; a widow could only remarry

96. One of the first to question the Solonian origin of this council was Beloch (1912). De Sanctis (1975) expresses similar doubts, as do Hignett (1952: 92-96) and Sealey (1976: 120 ff.) Among those who believe the council existed are Rhodes (1972: 208 ff.) and de Laix (1973: 13-17); see also Noussia-Fantuzzi (2010: 25, esp. nn. 38 and 39).

97. See Ruschenbusch (1957: 257-74) and Ostwald (1986: 5 ff.)

98. See Plut. *Sol.* 18.3, and also laws 15b and 23c in Ruschenbusch. It seems that this process of appeal was also set in motion automatically if the sentence passed down by the *heliaia* exceeded the maximum penalty that Solon's laws allowed for a particular crime; see Wilamowitz (1893: vol. 1 60 n. 29), Hignett (1952: 97 ff.), Ruschenbusch (1961: 386-90), 1965, and (1968: 72-74); see also Noussia-Fantuzzi (2010: 27-28).

99. For further explication of this passage, see Moore (1975: 211-12).

100. See in general Noussia-Fantuzzi (2010: 27-28), and in particular Hansen (1975: 17-19).

from the family of her former husband; a wife was limited as to the size of the wardrobe she could bring along with her dowry; and the husband of an *epikleros* (roughly "heiress") was required to have sexual intercourse with her at least three times a month. Further, sons had to support their fathers (but only on the condition that the fathers had taught their sons a viable trade); no one was allowed to speak ill of the dead or slander the living when near public or religious buildings; women could not tear their clothes or beat their breasts at funerals; and no one was permitted to mourn a foreigner.¹⁰¹ Individuals were allowed to will possessions to people other than family members, but only if witches had not interfered with their final bequests.¹⁰² Plutarch also reports a law forbidding the export of anything except olive oil, on pain of being cursed by the archon or paying a hefty fine.¹⁰³

Particularly relevant to the present project is the so-called Solonian "law against tyranny." This provision, reported in *Ath. Pol.* (8.4), gave the Areopagus leave to prosecute anyone attempting to put down the democracy (τοῦ δήμου συνισταμένους). Swoboda believes that this law was passed in one of the two periods of Peisistratos' exile, and renewed after the final expulsion of the Peisistratids.¹⁰⁴ Ostwald attributes this law to Drakon, arguing that it was renewed in the period following the expulsion of the Peisistratids, which requires us to abandon Plutarch's statement that Solon repealed all Drakon's laws except the one on homicide (*Sol.* 27.1).¹⁰⁵ Gagarin cites it as a new law of

101. On the authenticity and function of Solon's funerary laws, see Blok (2006: 197-247).

102. See Noussia-Fantuzzi (2010: 40-42); for the text of the laws, see Ruschenbusch 1966.

103. Plut. *Sol.* 24.2 = Ruschenbusch fr. 65. Osborne (2009: 211) doubts the historicity of this law based on the reference to a fine in drachmae. For different views on the meaning of references to fines in drachmae in sixth-century laws, see Blok (2006: 197-247) and Scafuro (2006: 175-96).

104. Swoboda (1893: 60).

105. Ostwald (1955: 105-09).

Solon, while Wallace believes that it was taken from a later inscription of an archaic law.¹⁰⁶ Sickinger distinguishes between *thesmia*, or decrees enacted by a body of individuals called *thesmothetai*, and *nomoi*, or laws passed by the assembly. The *thesmothetai* were officials responsible for publishing decrees in response to a specific situation, which were not part of a larger law code, and argues that one of the *thesmia* against tyranny from the archaic period survived to be incorporated into the later law codes of the fifth and fourth centuries.¹⁰⁷ McGlew believes that the genuineness of this law is "very nearly certain" based on a passage in Plutarch stating that Solon gave amnesty to all Athenians convicted of crimes before the passage of his legislation, except those whom the Areopagus had convicted of tyranny or homicide (*Sol.* 19.3).¹⁰⁸ He vaguely cites "historical probability" as the grounds for this assertion; but, given the lateness of the source, the same argument for historical anachronism applies, especially given the contradictory statement in the *Ath. Pol.* that tells us that the laws about tyrants and establishing tyrannies were mild at the time (16.10).¹⁰⁹ We must remember that the *demos* did not then have the control over the state that it did after the establishment of democracy, and further, that Solon clearly did not wish the *demos* to possess primary, much less exclusive political power.

The second Solonian law that many believe "proves" Solon's negative attitude toward tyranny is his puzzling law against neutrality. This law supposedly strips of citizenship any person who refrains not only from choosing a side during periods of civil

106. Gagarin (1981: 71-77); Wallace (1985: 23, esp. n. 73).

107. Sickinger (1999: 10-14).

108. McGlew (1993: 112).

109. McGlew (1993: 112-14).

stasis, but from actively fighting (*Ath. Pol.* 8.5):

Seeing that very often the *polis* was in *stasis*, while some of the citizens through laziness were content to be satisfied with whatever happened, [Solon] set down a special law against them such that, whenever there was *stasis* in the city, whoever did not join one side or the other was to be disenfranchised and no longer have a share in the *polis*.

ὄρων δὲ τὴν μὲν πόλιν πολλάκις στασιάζουσαν, τῶν δὲ πολιτῶν ἐνίους διὰ τὴν ῥαθυμίαν ἀγαπῶντας τὸ αὐτόματον, νόμον ἔθηκεν πρὸς αὐτοὺς ἴδιον, ὃς ἂν στασιάζούσης τῆς πόλεως μὴ θῆται τὰ ὄπλα μηδὲ μεθ' ἑτέρων, ἄτιμον εἶναι καὶ τῆς πόλεως μὴ μετέχειν.

This law caused much confusion in ancient times and remains a source of puzzlement for modern scholars. The *Ath. Pol.* asserts that it was a measure intended to encourage civic involvement, but the penalty seems entirely too harsh for such a goal. Plutarch finds it mystifying, going so far as to call it a paradox (παράδοξος), but in the end explains it in the same way as the *Ath. Pol.* (*Sol.* 20.1):

He probably wishes that a man should not be apathetic or indifferent towards the common good, arranging his private affairs safely and priding himself on the fact that he does not share in the suffering and ills of his country, but should on the spot add to the better and more just cause, share its dangers and lend it aid, instead of waiting in safety to see which side prevails.

βούλεται δ' , ὡς ἔοικε, μὴ ἀπαθῶς μηδ' ἀναισθήτως ἔχειν πρὸς τὸ κοινόν, ἐν ἀσφαλεῖ θέμενον τὰ οἰκεῖα καὶ τῷ μὴ συναλγεῖν μηδὲ συννοσεῖν τῇ πατρίδι καλλωπιζόμενον, ἀλλ' αὐτόθεν τοῖς τὰ βελτίω καὶ δικαιότερα πράττουσι προσθέμενον, συγκινδυνεύειν καὶ βοηθεῖν, μᾶλλον ἢ περιμένειν ἀκινδύνως τὰ τῶν κρατούντων).

(*Sol.* 20.1). Diogenes Laertius is also puzzled, citing Solon's famed neutrality and moderation (1.58). This confusion is understandable, especially since this law would have indicted Solon himself, who built his reputation on neutrality and the refusal to take one side over another. McGlew explains this inconsistency in theoretical terms, asserting that Solon's ultimate goal was to make the law sovereign: once that happened, his own role as

diallektes became unnecessary.¹¹⁰

However, I find this explanation unnecessarily convoluted. A law is not a theoretical construct; it is a specific enjoinder, the violation of which reaps a specific penalty, and in Athens' case, the problems were such that concrete solutions were needed.¹¹¹ McGlew's rationalization strikes me as the same sort of grasping at straws that we see in Plutarch and the *Ath. Pol.*; thus, I agree with the many scholars who declare the law not genuine and a later interpolation.¹¹² Consider in particular a speech of Lysias against a man called Philon, who had retired to Oropos during the civil war in 404/3. Philon's unpatriotic behavior was used against him when he tried to gain admission to the council. He argued that if it were a crime to absent oneself from the state during civil strife, there would have been a law against it, to which Lysias responded that this was such a heinous crime, that no lawgiver had ever imagined that a citizen could be guilty of it—an exchange that only makes sense if the neutrality law is not historical (Lys. 31.27-8).¹¹³

110. McGlew (1993: 117-20).

111. See Sickinger (1999: 9-10) on laws in the archaic period being a response to specific situations and crises.

112. See below n. 114.

113. For further arguments for the genuineness of the law, see Bers (1975: 493-98) and von Fritz (1940: 91-126). See also Goldstein (1972: 538-45), who believes in the law's authenticity, but provides extensive bibliography for both sides of the debate. For an argument against the authenticity of the law, see Hignett (1952: 27), where he concludes, "whether the writer who first gave currency to [Solon's neutrality law] simply invented it or drew an over-hasty inference from some passage in Solon's poems on the dangers of neutrality in party strife, the fact remains that he had no documentary evidence for his assumed law, and had not the speech of Lysias against Philon been preserved the invention might have passed unchallenged." On this speech see also Bers (1975: 493-98). Van't Wout (2010: 289-301) argues that this law actually promotes rather than punishes neutrality, based on a misunderstanding of the phrases "ὄπλα τίθεσθαι" and "μεθ' ἑτέρων."

VII. Aristotle, Plutarch, and Solon on the Agrarian Crisis

This dissertation focuses on laws pertaining to the agrarian crisis, since this was the legislation that was a) most likely actually passed by Solon, b) the most sweeping and wide-ranging, and c) the most reminiscent of the methods employed by archaic tyrants for resolving civil *stasis*. Before discussion of Solon's response to the crisis, it is first necessary to understand the nature of the conflict; and, as it is the main focus of chapter 5, I will go into some detail on the scholarship surrounding the agrarian reforms, beginning with the ancient evidence.

There is considerable confusion over the nature of the land encumbrances in Solon's day. We know that the land was broken up by *horoi*, or boundary stones, which seem to have been mortgage markers of some sort.¹¹⁴ The *Ath. Pol.* and Plutarch make it clear that this practice was at the heart of the crisis that the Athenians called Solon to address. Solon himself only refers to the situation in vague and poetical terms in relation to his removal of the *horoi* and his refusal to redistribute land and thus become a tyrant (frs. 36 and 34, respectively). The breakdown of the land crisis according to Aristotle and Plutarch is as follows: the disparity between the rich and poor elements of society was so great that the entire *demos* was indebted to the wealthy, with some of the poor actually enslaved to the rich.¹¹⁵ This led to discontent that put the entire city in danger (Plut. *Sol.* 13.2; *Ath. Pol.* 2.2, 7), though there is some confusion over the original causes of the

114. On the *horoi*, see Forsdyke (2006: 339-40), Ober (2006: 441-56), Noussia-Fantuzzi (2010: 37-41), and p. 38 n. 117 below.

115. Parallels for debt-slavery for default on loans and the use of one's person as collateral exist in early Crete, Sumer, Assyria, Ptolemaic Egypt, Palestine, and early Rome; it was also codified by Hammurabi (see below p. 154). See also Willetts (1955: 36) for mortgage with one's person as surety and enslavement due to debt on Crete; see Willetts (1955: 50) and Kristensen (2004: 73-79) for a discussion of debt-enslavement for Cretan serfs in the Gortyn law code of the early fifth century (*IC* 4.41.4). See Eder (2005: 241-42) on the difficulty in determining the original elements of the Gortyn code from later additions.

lending crisis. The poor, known as *hektemoroi*, either worked the fields of the rich for a rent of one-sixth of the produce (*Ath. Pol.* 2.2, 9-10; *Plut. Sol.* 15.3), or, in addition to the one-sixth payment, pledged their person as collateral for debts (*Plut. Sol.* 13.2).

If the poor could not pay their rent, they were subject to seizure and enslavement, either at home or abroad (*Ath. Pol.* 2.2, 11-13; *Plut. Sol.* 13.2). Solon outlawed debt-slavery for non-payment of rent and canceled public and private debts, which was called the *seisachtheia*, or "shaking off" of burdens (*Ath. Pol.* 6.1-3; *Plut. Sol.* 15.4-5).¹¹⁶ Solon addresses the removal of the *horoi* in connection with the cancellation of debts and abolition of debt-slavery (fr. 36):¹¹⁷

Of the purposes for which I brought the people together,
Which did I stop before accomplishing?
The great mother of the Olympian
gods, the Black Earth, from whom I drew
up the *horoi* stuck in everywhere,
witnesses these things in the court of time.
Before she was enslaved, but now she is free.
I brought many back to Athens, their divinely-founded
city, men sold, one unjustly,
another justly, and others fleeing
under compulsion of debt, who had wandered so wide that
they no longer spoke the Attic tongue,
and others at home suffering shameful slavery,
now trembling before their masters,
these I set free...

ἐγὼ δὲ τῶν μὲν οὐνεκα ξυνήγαγον
δῆμον, τί τούτων πρὶν τυχεῖν ἐπαυσάμην;
συμμαρτυροίη ταῦτ' ἂν ἐν δίκῃ Χρόνου
μήτηρ μεγίστη δαιμόνων Ὀλυμπίων

116. On the origins of the term, see Woodhouse (1938: 168-69).

117. On the nature of the *horoi*, see Woodhouse (1938: 75-77) and esp. (1938: 98-116); Andrewes (1982: 377-78); Fine 1951; Ober (2006: 441-56). Harris (1997: 104) denies the connection between *horoi* and the *seisachtheia*, arguing instead that this is an anachronism found in the *Ath. Pol.* because there are no archaic parallels for the meaning; but this is a minority view. On ways that the *horoi* may have functioned as mortgage records based on fourth-century analogies, along with cautions on applying anachronistic economic principles to sixth-century Attica, see Andrewes (1982: 379).

ἄριστα, Γῆ μέλαινα, τῆς ἐγὼ ποτε
 ὄρους ἀνεῖλον πολλαχῆι πεπηγότας,
 πρόσθεν δὲ δουλεύουσα, νῦν ἐλευθέρη.
 πολλοὺς δ' Ἀθήνας πατρίδ' ἐς θεόκτιτον
 ἀνήγαγον πραθέντας, ἄλλον ἐκδίκως,
 ἄλλον δικαίως, τοὺς δ' ἀναγκαίης ὑπὸ
 χρειοῦς φυγόντας, γλῶσσαν οὐκέτ' Ἀττικὴν
 ἰέντας, ὡς δὴ πολλαχῆι πλανωμένους·
 τοὺς δ' ἐνθάδ' αὐτοῦ δουλίην ἀεικέα
 ἔχοντας, ἦθη δεσποτέων τρομεομένους,
 ἐλευθέρους ἔθηκα...

We read that Solon refused to redistribute land, which led to discontent with his reforms among the poor (Plut. *Sol.* 15.1). The reason for the refusal to redistribute land was supposedly his resistance to the possibility of becoming a tyrant, an explanation accepted by almost all of our later sources (Solon fr. 34).¹¹⁸ If we rely exclusively on Solon's poetry, the unadorned particulars of the crisis were debt, some sort of slavery involving the persons and land of the debtors, and some sort of class conflict between what is termed the *demos* and a class variously called rulers, leaders, and "the greater/better." The crisis was so violent, both sides agreed that a radical solution was called for.

This description may seem straightforward, but there are a number of questions about the nature of the crisis and the structure of Athenian society that still provoke considerable scholarly debate. For instance, scholars quarrel over the imprecise language used by Aristotle and Plutarch. Both imply without explicitly stating that the *demos* was entirely comprised of debt-slaves and *hektemoroi*, with no free peasant farmers left in the

118. While few scholars question Plutarch's version of "rich" versus "poor" (πλουσίοι and πένηται), Solon actually uses the terms *kakoi* and *agathoi* in fr. 15, which Plutarch takes to mean "poor" and "rich," respectively (*Sol.* 13.2). These terms merely describe opposing factions in the actual fragment, and in fr. 5, the opposition is between the *demos* and those who have power (οἱ δ' εἶχον δύναμιν). Fr. 6 speaks of the *demos* and their leaders (δῆμος δ' ὄδ' ἄν ἄριστα σὺν ἡγεμόνεσσιν ἔποιτο), and fr. 37 uses the vague terms *demos* vs. "those of greater and stronger power" (ὄσοι δὲ μείζους καὶ βίην ἀμείνονες). See Wallace 2007: 51 on the use of the word *kakoi* in Solon and in Homer. On the use of the same terms in the *Ath. Pol.*, see von Fritz & Kapp (1950: 157-58).

whole of Attica. This implies a confusion of tradition in *their* sources. Aristotle distinguishes the *hektemoroi* from the debt-slaves by assuming that the latter were defaulted *ex-hektemoroi*.¹¹⁹ Plutarch, however, merely categorizes them as debt-slaves with no explanation of how they became enslaved.

Whatever the details, the situation put all the land in the hands of a few (*Ath. Pol.* 2.2, 10-11), so that tyranny seemed to be the only solution (*Plut. Sol.* 13.2).¹²⁰ These sources' vague language, along with an alternate theory propagated by Androtion and "some other writers" (*Plut. Sol.* 13.4) that the *seisachtheia* merely consisted of interest reduction on loans, suggests that there were several versions of the exact nature of the reforms, and that Aristotle and Plutarch did not have reliable data on which to base their explanations.

VIII. Historical Interpretations of the Agrarian Crisis

While the starting point for any study of the *seisachtheia* must be the facts outlined by our ancient sources, modern interpretations vary widely as to the origins and nature of the emergency and their effects on Athenian society.¹²¹ We are hindered by the fact that Solon himself makes reference to these reforms only in vague and ideological terms, suggesting that his poetry was less a vehicle for leaving a record of specific solutions that threatened to cause negative reactions than in cultivating a reputation as the

119. As opposed to Ruschenbusch (1972: 753-55), who disregards the *Ath. Pol.* as implausible, and posits that *hektemoroi* were former debt-slaves who had been given a sort of reprieve or second chance.

120. Our report that the dissatisfied populace's first reaction to problems with social and economic inequalities was to install a tyranny implies that democracy did not exist as a concept at this time. Rather than credit him as the father of democracy, we can at most call Solon anti-aristocratic, though given his efforts to court the nobility even this strains credibility.

121. For a more detailed summary of scholarly debates on the nature of the *seisachtheia*, with references, see Almeida (2003: 26-56) and Appendix II.

man who saved the state from the hubris of the rich and the rapacity of the poor.¹²² Most scholars formulate their theories from attempts to make logical sense of the written historical record by applying social or economic theory to explain the scenario recorded in our sources. From the late 19th to mid-20th centuries, debates crystallized over whether land in archaic Attica could change ownership, though belief in the inalienability of land has grown less and less common. The body of scholarship on the possible scenarios of land ownership is so extensive as to be, at times, frankly bewildering. To simplify matters for the purpose of this introduction, I will here give an overview of what has become a fairly wide consensus about the situation in Attica in Solon's day, since it is the framework in which I assume Solon's reforms to have taken place. I leave a detailed history of the scholarship on the different species of land tenure for Appendix II.

Current historical studies on the sixth-century crisis cite the dual factors of population growth and expansion of trade markets as the driving forces behind a breakdown of the traditional relationship between the elites and the masses in the late seventh and early sixth centuries, an expansion in part fueled by a shift from a barter to a monetary economy.¹²³ Previously, the aristocracy had supported the poorer elements of society with aid in times of crisis, in return for which the *demos* granted the elite social and political leadership, privileges, and status. However, by the late seventh century, the elite had begun ignoring their traditional obligations to the *demos* in favor of pursuing personal profit.¹²⁴ In this view, the elite classes and a subset of wealthy non-aristocracy

122. See Podlecki (1984: 124) and Noussia-Fantuzzi (2010: 32, 40-41).

123. For evidence of this sort of reciprocity between mass and elite and its breakdown in the archaic period, see Forsdyke (2005: 30-78).

124. Ibid.

began the wholesale appropriation of common, private, and formerly uncultivated land to increase agricultural production for lucrative export markets in a fledgling monetary economy.¹²⁵

In this climate of expansion and increased available labor sparked by population growth, the wealthy began to ignore their ancestral obligations to the poor, placing ever higher demands on their labor.¹²⁶ In the most extreme cases, the elite actually enslaved the poor or sold them into slavery in order to confiscate their lands. The growing population in Attica, combined with increased use of chattel slaves, supplied the need for more labor required by new methods of intensive farming.¹²⁷

Much ink has been spilled over the exact nature of the relationship between the size and growth of the population and the archaeological data, but most people agree that Greece saw steady population growth from the tenth through the fourth centuries, mostly based on archaeological evidence for an increased number of both settlements and burials all over Greece in the tenth century.¹²⁸ Evidence for this includes the increased presence of Attic black-figure pottery in the Black Sea region as well as in Sicily at the end of the seventh century.¹²⁹ From the eighth century onward, we also find more so-called SOS

125. Mannville (1990: 83) discusses modern scholarship advocating this view. Forrest (1966: 154) argues that Athens was "catching up" to neighbors like Corinth, who had already made the shift from a primarily agrarian to a commercial economy; see also Podlecki (1984: 119-20). Murray (1993: 240) broadens this characterization to the entire Mediterranean, tracing development of an international market economy based on exchange, particularly of luxury items, on a large scale by the mid-sixth century. See also Polanyi (1968: 84) on ways in which the archaic Greek economy was embedded in social and other non-economic institutions. Kurke (1999: 13) actually argues that disparity in economic circumstances was one of the factors spurring the use of coinage as a means of the polis wresting control of the polis away from the elite, who had formerly had a monopoly on retail trade in the agora.

126. Morris (2002: 36-41).

127. For the growth in slave labor in the archaic period, see Finley 1981, Rihll (1996: 89-111), and Cartledge (2002: 162-63); see further p. 205.

128. See Snodgrass (1980: 15-24), Podlecki (1984: 118-20), Morris 1987, Osborne (1996: 31-44) and (2009: 37-46), and Scheidel (2003: 120-40).

129. Osborne (1996: 31-44).

amphorae, which would have carried luxury agricultural products like wine and olive oil, allowing us to speculate that Solon's law banning all exports except olive oil was an attempt to stem the export of agricultural produce at the expense of the masses.¹³⁰

Scholars have also recently interpreted the eighth-century increase in Greek settlements overseas as a sign of increased trade (and therefore increased opportunity and/or desire for profit).¹³¹ These overseas ventures are now frequently interpreted as private enterprises in pursuit of lucre rather than a state-sponsored response to overpopulation.¹³² A good indication of Athenian interest in trade in the archaic period is the late seventh-century conflict between Athens and Mytilene for control of Sigeion, which guarded the entrance to the Hellespont and the grain-rich Euxine region.¹³³ One could also argue that Athens' war with Megara for control of Salamis indicates interest in overseas trade, since an island in such close proximity to the Attic coast would provide ships and convenient access to the sea in the time before Piraeus was a viable port.¹³⁴

Literary texts complement this archaeological evidence for increased interest in trade in archaic Greece, mostly seen in lyric poems lambasting the elites' greed and quest

130. For this argument, see Forsdyke (2006: 336). On SOS amphorae, see Johnston & Jones (1978: 103-41). On Solon's law banning the export of olive oil, see above p. 33.

131. Among others, Forsdyke (2006: 336-37), de Angelis (1994: 87-110), Osborne (1998: 251-69), and Foxhall (2003: 75-92).

132. Ibid.

133. On the presence of black-figure pottery abroad, see Bailey (1940: 62). For grain and oil export in the early sixth century, see Forrest (1966: 154), contra Garnsey (1988: 107-20), who argues that dependence on Black Sea grain was not significant until the fifth century, and even then, it was less than most scholars assume. Also consider Plutarch *Sol.* 2.1 and 3.1, on Solon's own trade activities. Others, such as Starr (1977: 94), see such trade and commercial activities as more gradual, and not a direct or dramatic threat to the traditional agrarian way of life, citing a paucity of evidence for a large-scale conversion. Starr also argues against the evidence for an overseas grain trade in the seventh century. See also Forrest (1966: 155) on the lack of correlation between the period's distribution of pottery and a dramatic change in the basis of the economy. For the conflict over Sigeion and arguments for trade interests in the Black Sea region, see Alc. fr. 428 (Lobel-Page) and Hdt. 5.94-5, discussed by Forsdyke (2006: 337).

134. The connection between Salamis and increased trade must remain speculation, but see Podlecki (1984: 122).

for profit at the expense of the well-being of the *polis*.¹³⁵ Theognis, for example, complains that bad men harm the people because they chase personal wealth and power to the detriment of the *demos* (44-50). Solon also chastises the citizens who destroy the city because of their desire for wealth (fr. 4.5-6), and who grow wealthy through dishonorable means (4.11).¹³⁶ If the subject matter of these poets is any indication, the traditional, reciprocal relationship between the elite and the *demos* was being undermined by an upper-class pursuit of material gain.¹³⁷

Other agrarian societies provide useful parallels by which to draw a picture of the specific way in which the changing mindset of the elite threatened the balance of power and the livelihoods of the poorer strata of society. On this basis, we may first speculate that the rich were appropriating private as well as public land, including land that was previously uncultivated, in order to gain more goods for trade.¹³⁸ We may also posit that the wealthy were forcing the poor to work for them, on harsh terms that became more and more untenable.¹³⁹ This seems to be the situation Solon describes in fr. 4.12-14: "They steal from each other through violent seizure, sparing neither sacred nor public property, nor preserving the foundations of Justice" (οὐθ' ἱερῶν κτεάνων οὔτε τι δημοσίων | φειδόμενοι κλέπτουσιν ἀφαρπαγῆι ἄλλοθεν ἄλλος, | οὐδὲ φυλάσσονται σεμνὰ Δίκης θέμεθλα). Mannville has compared the sentiments expressed in this poem with parallels in agrarian societies in modern Africa, and concluded that much of the arable land in

135. See Forsdyke (2006: 337-40). Morris (2002: 36) calls it a "transformation of the ideology of gain"; see also Von Reden (1995 and 1997: 154-76), Tandy (1997: 2-6, 166-227), and Balot (2001: 73-98).

136. See ch. 4, pp. 107-113.

137. Forsdyke (2006: 337-38).

138. Forsdyke (2006: 338), with citations.

139. Ibid.

archaic Attica was actually public.¹⁴⁰ If this is true, it seems that by the end of the seventh century, the elite were forcing the poor to work private as well as common land in order to gain a surplus for profitable trade.

Aristotle discusses two classes of laborers—the *pelatai*, who seem to have been hired workers, and the *hektemoroi*, more in the mold of sharecroppers, who were required to surrender one-sixth of their produce to the elites who controlled most of the land (*Ath. Pol.* 2.2).¹⁴¹ However long or to whatever degree of formality the two classes of dependent laborers had existed, by Solon's day it is clear that the terms of their dependent arrangements had become so oppressive that they reached a breaking point.¹⁴² Solon's response was to abolish debt and remove the *horoi* that had been "fixed everywhere," thereby freeing land "which was formerly enslaved" (fr. 36.3-7).¹⁴³ While the meaning of the "enslaved land" is not exactly clear, it is reasonable to interpret these *horoi* as some sort of tangible indicator of the elite's claim on both the land and its laborers—that is, the *hektemoroi*.¹⁴⁴

Thus the literary evidence dovetails with the archaeological in suggesting that the aristocrats were increasingly interested in securing profit by increasing production, which they accomplished by seizing not only private but also public (including previously uncultivated) land. This would not have been possible without wide-scale exploitation of

140. Mannville (1990: 110-11).

141. Since Athens was pre-monetary at this point, obviously the *pelatai* would have been paid in kind.

142. For the argument that the classes of *pelatai* and *hektemoroi* had been around since the Dark Ages, see Bintliff (2006: 321-33).

143. Cf. Megara's similar problems with land and debt, discussed by Van Wees (1999: 1-51) and 2000, and Forsdyke 2005.

144. For this line of reasoning, see Forsdyke (2006: 340-41), Rhodes (1993: 175), Mannville (1990: 112), and Sancisi-Weerdenburg (1991: 22). Harris (1997: 55-60), though, argues that the *hektemoroi* and the *horoi* were unconnected.

poor agricultural laborers, who were necessary to make the land that had already been cultivated more profitable and to cultivate fallow land, thus landing Athens in the dire situation that our sources describe at the beginning of the sixth century.

Chapter 2

Solon's Contradictory Legacy

By Herodotus' day, more or less a century after Solon's death, Solon had taken on the character of a mythological wise man, and by the time Plutarch wrote his biography, Solon was one of the canonical seven sages of antiquity. Around the same time, characterizations of Solon as one of the great lawgivers like Lycurgus made their appearance. By the fourth century, popular imagination had cast Solon as an impartial lawgiver who worked tirelessly against the forces of tyranny, ultimately instituting the reforms that paved the way for democracy. Ancient and modern authors, when evoking his authority, pick and choose which aspect of the man best suits their purpose, often with confusing and self-contradictory results. This chapter and the next will explore how this *mélange* is presented in the literary tradition. Both chapters will point out contradictions in the literature that demonstrate that alternate traditions of Solon's activities and motives existed in antiquity than those most commonly associated with him. I begin in this chapter by examining representations of Solon that show him in a mythological, philosophical, and moral realm: as wise man, lawgiver, and tyrant-hater. In doing so, I will demonstrate that by the fifth century, Solon's legacy had become so malleable that later authors could evoke his authority in a wide array of contexts, some of which directly contradicted other traditions. The next chapter, closely related to this one, will examine the specific use that sources made of Solon in the political realm as a precedent for the foundation of democracy in the late fifth and early fourth centuries.

I. Solon as Philosopher and Sage

In Herodotus' story of Croesus and Solon, the latter is portrayed as a wiseman and a sage (1.29-32).¹⁴⁵ Herodotus' Solon expounds the philosophical doctrine of the mean: one does not want to be poor and wretched, but grasping for wealth leads to hubris, which calls down the wrath of the gods. The best course is to aim for middling circumstances, so as to be comfortable, yet not attract too much divine attention. Herodotean scholars have either regarded Solon's speeches as an invention by which Herodotus espouses his own political philosophy, or an accurate representation of Solon's thought based on Herodotus' knowledge of Solon's poetry.¹⁴⁶ I shall contend that, while Solon's thinking was a fundamental influence on Herodotus, close examination reveals a philosophical outlook not found in Solon's poetry. Rather than pure invention or accurate rendition of Solon's thought, we end up with what Chiasson calls "a recognizably Herodotean adaptation of Solon, in which the views of both authors are discernable."¹⁴⁷

I argue after Chiasson that the portrait we see in Herodotus, which was so influential on later interpretations of Solon's philosophy, does not entirely correspond with the figure we see in Solon's poetry. If we look closely, we can see inconsistencies that make it clear that what we are dealing with in Herodotus is a refashioning of the figure of Solon as a wise man that became entrenched in and inseparable from the historical tradition about him. To demonstrate this, it is necessary to examine the larger mythological traditions about sages to see how Solon became grafted onto this *topos* in a

145. The scholarship on Herodotus' dialogue between Solon and Croesus is vast. For bibliography on Solon in Herodotus see Martina (1968: 430 ff.) and Asheri, Lloyd, & Corcella (2007: 99-100). For discussion of the historical Croesus, see Bichler (2000: 244-54).

146. On Herodotus using Solon to describe his own views, see Shapiro (1996: 348), How & Wells (1912a: 49 n. 1, 68), Lattimore (1939: 30-31), Nawratil (1942: 1-8), and Rémillard (2009: 11).

147. Chiasson (1986: 249), Asheri, Lloyd, & Corcella (2007: 97-98), and Rémillard (2009: 11-20).

way that does not quite fit our historical data. Additionally, we must examine where Herodotus' and Solon's philosophies differ, in order to trace the changing of some of the traditions about Solon's ideology.

When Herodotus describes Solon's visit to Croesus's court, he first relates the famous episode where Croesus gives Solon a tour of his treasuries to display his vast wealth, and then asks who, in Solon's opinion, is the happiest of men. Solon confounds his host when he replies that Tellus the Athenian wins the prize. He angers Croesus further by denying him even second place, reserving that honor for the Argive brothers Cleobis and Biton (1.29-33).¹⁴⁸ The former earned his pre-eminence by being a moderately wealthy member of a successful *polis*, who produced well-brought-up sons who in their turns sired further offspring. The crowning achievement of Tellus's life, however, was his death—he died nobly in battle while routing the enemy, after which his fellow Athenians honored him with a modest public burial.¹⁴⁹

Cleobis and Biton earned their rank as the second happiest of men because they too were moderately wealthy, and because they had the strength of champion athletes, which allowed them to draw their mother's chariot to a festival at the temple of Hera when no oxen were available.¹⁵⁰ This earned them the praise of their fellow citizens and their mother's earnest request to the goddess that her sons be given the greatest happiness

148. Asheri raises the possibility that Tellus, Cleobis, and Biton were mentioned in poems of Solon's that are no longer extant, and suggests that Tellus actually existed and died in the war between Athens and Megara at the end of the seventh century. See Asheri, Lloyd, & Corcella (2007: 100), after Weber (1927: 154-66).

149. Diog. Laert. 1.51 mentions the stories of Tellus and Cleobis and Biton. His Solon also displays a similarly modest outlook when he has Croesus ask Solon if he has ever seen any thing more beautiful than his royal garb, to which Solon cheekily replied that cocks and pheasants and peacocks, who came by their adornment naturally, were ten thousand times more beautiful.

150. On this festival, see Asheri, Lloyd, & Corcella (2007: 101-02), with citations.

it was possible to receive in gratitude for the honor they had shown her. The goddess responded by not allowing the two to wake after they had lain down to sleep in her temple, a variation on the philosophy Hesiod espouses in *Works and Days*, and an archetype for the idea that it is better to be dead than alive.¹⁵¹ Their fellow Argives acknowledged the truth of this nugget of folk wisdom by dedicating statues to the brothers at the temple of Apollo at Delphi.¹⁵²

The Herodotean Solon's concept of ὄλβος ("happiness" or "blessedness") is that wealth plays a secondary role, which was a particularly stark contrast to the legendary oriental decadence of Croesus's court.¹⁵³ Further, it is essential for a happy man to participate in the activities and values of his family and his *polis*, and most importantly that he die a glorious death and receive posthumous honors from his fellow citizens. Solon goes on to explain the difficulty of achieving true happiness because a) the god is "utterly resentful and troublesome" (1.32.1; τὸ θεῖον πᾶν ἐὸν φθονερόν τε καὶ παραχῶδες), and b) mankind is "utterly subject to chance" (1.32.4; πᾶν ἐστὶ ἄνθρωπος συμφορῆ). He follows up by expounding on the unpredictability of a jealous deity who

151. Cf. Hesiod *W&D* 1.1-5 on the ease with which Zeus raises men up and smites them down again, 248-270 on wicked men not being able to escape the justice of Zeus, and 320-325 on divine retribution for greed; see also Aristotle's exegesis on happiness (*Eth. Nic.* 1099b8, 1178b33), further discussed by Asheri, Lloyd, & Corcella (2007: 98).

152. These larger-than-life-sized kouroi were discovered at Delphi by Homolle, along with inscribed bases that verify the identification, in the excavations of 1893, 1894, and 1907. Though the inscription names Cleobis and Biton, some speculate that the statues are actually of two anonymous athletes or of the Dioskouri. See Asheri, Lloyd, & Corcella (2007: 101), with citations, on the identity of the statues; on the excavations see Themelis (1991: 33). Jeffery (1961: 154-6. and pl. 26.4) dates the lettering of the inscriptions to the first half of the sixth century, and identifies the dialect and alphabet as Argive, which supports the identification of the statues with the two brothers.

153. This definition also differs in the earliest Greek poets, in which ὄλβιος and ὄλβος mainly refer to material possessions. See de Heer (1969: 32-38). Herodotus also expresses the view that the fruitful eastern lands produce men of lesser quality and character, that "soft lands breed soft people," which explains his evident distaste for the excesses of Croesus' court (Hdt. 9.122.4). On the conflict between ideas of Western freedom vs. Eastern despotism, see Asheri, Lloyd, & Corcella (2007: 98).

resents human success, therefore limiting the duration of Croesus's ability to enjoy his present riches. He explains that moderately wealthy people blessed with good luck are much more likely to escape the notice of the gods because their lower profile protects them from the ἄτη ("destruction") and ἐπιθυμία ("jealousy") that is the manifestation of divine envy. Herodotus *qua* Solon makes no effort to explain why the divine fosters such hatred of human happiness; rather, it seems a self-evident truth that hubris brings down the wrath of the god(s). The historical Solon, however, insists that it is only those who gain wealth unjustly who are in danger (fr. 13.7-13):

χρήματα δ' ἰμείρω μὲν ἔχειν, ἀδίκως δὲ πεπᾶσθαι
οὐκ ἐθέλω· πάντως ὕστερον ἦλθε δίκη.
πλοῦτον δ' ὄν μὲν δῶσι θεοί, παραγίγνεται ἀνδρὶ
ἔμπεδος ἐκ νεάτου πυθμένος ἐς κορυφήν·
ὄν δ' ἄνδρες τιμῶσιν ὑφ' ὕβριος, οὐ κατὰ κόσμον
ἔρχεται, ἀλλ' ἀδίκους ἔργμασι πειθόμενος
οὐκ ἐθέλων ἔπεται, ταχέως δ' ἀναμίσγεται ἄτη.

I desire wealth, but not to hold it unjustly;
for justice assuredly comes later.
Wealth which the gods give accrues to man,
steadfast from the deepest foundation to the top,
but that which men honor out of hubris, that does not come
according to its proper order, but is persuaded by unjust deeds
and does not follow willingly, swiftly mixes with disaster.

The final part of Solon's speech is firmly grounded in the political and philosophical discussions of the late fifth century.¹⁵⁴ In the same way that no land can survive completely self-sufficiently, no man alone has every advantage, and therefore only the man who maintained a good number of benefits and *died retaining them* deserved to be called ὄλβιος (1.32.8).¹⁵⁵

154. Cf. Thuc. 1.37: 2.36 and *Ath. Pol.* 2.6, 11.

155. For the similarity of these themes to contemporary tragedy, see Griffin (2006: 51-55).

At first glance these themes—namely, that wealth is not a guarantor of happiness and one cannot be called happy until after death—seem to resemble one another. But there is an inconsistency in these two examples that indicate that Herodotus is transposing his own philosophy onto that of Solon. If Cleobis and Biton, despite their youth and strength, were better off dead at a young age, why did Solon think that Tellus was happier than either of them?¹⁵⁶ There is no explicit answer, but when we think of Solon's assertion immediately following this exchange that an ideal life spans seventy years, it is tempting to assume that Tellus wins first place in the happiness hierarchy simply because he led a full life. Therefore Cleobis and Biton's deaths are premature rather than a great gift. Chiasson argues that this inconsistency of Solon's is because of tension inherent in Herodotus' combination of material from different sources, including but not limited to Solon's poetry.¹⁵⁷

Herodotus's Solon clearly alludes to the historical Solon's poem about the natural span of a human life being seventy years and the activities appropriate to each heptad of life.¹⁵⁸ In the poem, Solon explains the proper activities for each age of life, and the last couplet proclaims, "and if a man completing the full measure should arrive at the tenth [heptad] | then he will not meet with the fate of death before his time" (27.17-18; τὴν δεκάτην δ' εἴ τις τελέσας κατὰ μέτρον ἴκοιτο | οὐκ ἂν ἄωρος ἐὼν μοῖραν ἔχοι θανάτου).

The idea from the poem that there are useful and good things to be had in one's

156. For further discussion on pessimism in Herodotus, and the idea that these ideas were more Herodotean than Solonian, see Campbell (1898: 183), How & Wells (1912b: 49), Shapiro (1996: 348-64), and Rémillard (2009: 11-20).

157. Chiasson (1986: 252-55) gives a more detailed analysis of the discrepancies between Solon's poetry and Herodotus' description of the themes in the Cleobis and Biton story; cf. How & Wells 1912: 68 and Rémillard (2009: 11-20).

158. See Asheri, Lloyd, & Corcella (2007: 103) for the significance of the hebdomads and echoes of this idea in other ancient authors, and for the function of this idea in historiography more generally.

old age clashes with Herodotus' formulation of death being the greatest good. Indeed, in Solon's poem man does not hit his stride until his forties, and is not at his best until his fifties or later (27.11-14):

τῆ δ' ἕκτη περι πάντα καταρτύεται νόος ἀνδρός,
οὐδ' ἔρδειν ἔθ' ὁμῶς ἔργ' ἀπάλαμνα θέλει.
ἑπτὰ δὲ νοῦν καὶ γλῶσσαν ἐν ἑβδομάσιν μέγ' ἄριστος
ὀκτώ τ'. ἀμφοτέρων τέσσαρα καὶ δέκ' ἔτη.

In the sixth [heptad] the mind of man is most disciplined in all things, nor does he desire to do foolish things. He is at his best in the seventh and eighth, for fourteen years—when his mind and eloquence are at their peak.

Elsewhere, the Solon of the poetic fragments celebrates old age: "I grow old always learning many things..." (fr. 18; γηράσκω δ' αἰεὶ πολλὰ διδασκόμενος...). Finally, rather than rejoice at his death, Solon prays that his friends will mourn his passing, not celebrate his exit from life, as Herodotus' Solon would desire. Solon the poet, unlike Solon the sage, does not want to die: "Let death not come to me unwept, but to my friends, | in dying, may I leave behind grief and sorrow..." (fr. 21; μηδέ μοι ἄκλαντος θάνατος μόλοι, ἀλλὰ φίλοισι/καλλείποιμι θανῶν ἄλγεα καὶ στοναχάς).

This combines to leave us with an impression of a man who thinks highly of life and displays an especial regard for old age, exactly the opposite of the Solon in Herodotus, who espouses that death, and death as soon as possible, is the highest attainable good.¹⁵⁹ In fact, it runs counter to the Hesiodic wisdom that celebrates the early demise of righteous youths like Cleobis and Biton.¹⁶⁰ We see here a clear intrusion of

159. Cf. Sophocles, who laments the advent of "friendless old age, wherein dwells every evil among evils" (*OC* 1237-8; γῆρας ἄφιλον, ἵνα πρόπαντα | κακὰ κακῶν ζυνοικεῖ). See also Rémillard (2009: 16).

160. Cf. Hes. *Works and Days* 174-9 and *Bacchyl.* 3.47 on death being preferable to toil, which is the inevitable lot of man; see also Soph. *OC* 1225-1235 and *Thgn.* 425-8: which both say that it is better never to have been born, but since that cannot be helped, it is best to die as quickly as possible. Similar stories occur in Plut. *Cons. ad Apoll.* 14, but it is Apollo rather than Hera (as with Cleobis and Biton) who bestows

Herodotus' philosophical outlook, perhaps influenced by his research at Argos and his viewing of the statues at Delphi, that uneasily overlays motifs from the historical Solon's writings.¹⁶¹ Nowhere in the preserved poetry do we find the ideas that are so prevalent in Herodotus: wealth is intrinsically evil because it invites the envy of the gods, and no man is happy until he is dead (therefore no man is happy).¹⁶² As Murray phrases it, "prosperity causes the envy of the gods, regardless of the hero's moral status."¹⁶³ Instead, the historical Solon contrasts the transient state of wealth with the persevering quality of *arete* (fr. 13.7-10).¹⁶⁴ Riches can indeed make a man happy—provided that they are god-given. It is only when they are acquired through hubris that they invite destruction by the gods. Divine envy has no place in the poems of Solon.

Another place where the Solon in Herodotus and the historical Solon show similarity is in their conception of *telos*, or "the end." In fr. 13, known as the *Hymn to the Muses*, Solon stresses the importance of looking towards the end, which is also very much present in Herodotus' Solon.¹⁶⁵ However, the two teleologies have different implications. Solon stresses the inability of mortals to know the outcome of their affairs:

Fate brings both good and bad to mortal men;
The gifts the immortals give are not to be shunned.
There is danger in every endeavor. No one knows
how a thing once started will end.
One man tries to do noble deeds,

the gift of death on Trophonius and Agamedes as a reward for building his temple at Delphi, and on the poet Pindar after he inquired about the greatest good man can receive.

161. On Herodotus' findings at Argos and Delphi, see above p. 50 n. 152.

162. On Herodotus' use of the doctrine of nemesis and *phthonos*, as well as personal and inherited guilt, see How & Wells (1912b: 49-50).

163. Murray (2001: 32).

164. On the inconsistencies of Herodotus' portrayal of historical figures, see How & Wells (1912b: 47-48). They assert that Herodotus' tendency is to bring out individual traits rather than cohesive characters. The more remote the character, the freer Herodotus becomes in his portrayal, which is "not the result of adherence to historic fact, but rather the work of creative imagination."

165. Rémillard (2009: 17-18).

but all unknowing, falls into great and harsh disaster.

Μοῖρα δέ τοι θνητοῖσι κακὸν φέρει ἠδὲ καὶ ἐσθλόν,
 δῶρα δ' ἄφυκτα θεῶν γίγνεται ἀθανάτων.
 πᾶσι δέ τοι κίνδυνος ἐπ' ἔργμασιν, οὐδέ τις οἶδεν
 πῆι μέλλει σχήσειν χρήματος ἀρχομένου·
 ἀλλ' ὁ μὲν εὖ ἔρδειν πειρώμενος οὐ προνοήσας
 ἐς μεγάλην ἄτην καὶ χαλεπὴν ἔπεσεν.

Consider also fr. 16: "It is very difficult to see the furthest boundary of wisdom, where lies the end of all things" (γνωμοσύνης δ' ἀφανὲς χαλεπώτατόν ἐστι νοῆσαι | μέτρον, ὃ δὴ πάντων πείρατα μοῦνον ἔχει). Both of these poems attribute the uncertainty inherent in human affairs to lack of foreknowledge, as opposed to the all-knowing gods. The gods are omniscient; human knowledge is limited. For Solon, this is why innocent people suffer misfortune. Even if they try to do good deeds, because they have imperfect knowledge of the future, they may unwittingly or unwillingly commit an injustice. The remedy for misfortune suffered through ignorance, therefore, is wisdom.¹⁶⁶ Herodotus' stress on the same notion of looking toward the end of things may well imply that he is borrowing this idea from Solon. But when Herodotus looks to the end, he looks to the end not of a chain of events, but to life. For Solon the *telos* of securing ὄλβος is wisdom, but for Herodotus the only way to secure happiness is the ultimate *telos*; that is, death.¹⁶⁷

In Herodotus, we see explicit references to Solon's poetry in many of his motifs. These thematic affinities suggest very strongly that Herodotus was not only intimately familiar with Solon's writings but also that he consciously tried to incorporate many of Solon's strongest thematic elements in his story of Croesus and Solon. We see in

166. Ibid.

167. Ibid.

Herodotus's Solon the same man who emerges in the poetry as one who is fascinated with wealth and its limitations, who believes that riches are only one aspect of prosperity, who encourages men to take the long view, and who thinks that being a good citizen and serving one's *polis*, as well as producing civic-minded offspring, are of the utmost importance.¹⁶⁸ But the discrepancies are significant—the obsession with death, the hopelessness of the human condition, the vengefulness of an un-named deity waiting to strike down any human who attains worldly happiness—these are distinctly Herodotean.¹⁶⁹ Solon the statesman's Zeus only punishes those who unjustly gain wealth; the god of Herodotus' Solon smites the financially fortunate indiscriminately, because the very fact of having wealth is somehow an injustice.¹⁷⁰

Further evidence that the tradition of Solon the sage was altered by the time Herodotus wrote comes from examining his *theoria*. The descriptions of Solon's travels reveal philosophical doctrines at odds with what we know of the historical Solon, because they were an attempt to fit Solon into a pre-existing genre of traveling wise men.¹⁷¹ Sages typically traveled and interacted with one another, and at some point ended up at the court of Croesus, usually contemporaneously.¹⁷² Herodotus stretches the limits of

168. Rémillard (2009: 11-20) discusses further ways in which the historical and the Herodotean Solon's philosophies overlap and differ.

169. Some have argued that Herodotus himself does not endorse the views that his Solon espouses, most notably Lang (1984 and 1985), but Shapiro (1996: 348-64) convincingly counters these objections point-by-point.

170. See Chiasson (1986: 261-62) for a discussion about wealth equaling injustice in and of itself.

171. Ancients have submitted at least seventeen names for the "canon" of the seven sages, but the most common list is: Solon, Thales, Pittakos, Bias, Cleobulus, Chilon, and Periander, who in many stories interacted with each other, and all of whom seem to have ended up at the court of Croesus at the same time in order to have a sort of wisdom competition. The most coherent list and account is in Diog. Laert. 1, written more than 800 years after most of these men (possibly) lived, which of course brings up serious problems of source criticism and transmission. On the inextricable association between wise man and wanderer, and Solon's pivotal role in inaugurating that tradition, see Montiglio (2000: 88). For more on the origins of the legends of the seven sages, with particular reference to Herodotus and Plutarch, see Busine (2002: 15-46).

chronological credibility about Solon's activities in order to associate him with folkloric itinerant sages, for which Solon's very act of leaving Athens makes him a candidate.¹⁷³

Other features of his career suggest that he belongs to this category.¹⁷⁴ One shared feature of many of these sages was that they were tyrants or in positions of political power in their home cities, and many besides Solon were constitutional reformers.¹⁷⁵ In addition to Solon, Chilon was a Spartan ephor in 565, a position of considerable influence in the running of the Lacedaimonian government, which was almost universally admired in antiquity as a shining example of *eunomia*, or "good law." Periander was of course the tyrant of Corinth, known for being extremely volatile, even killing his own wife by either throwing a footstool or kicking her while pregnant. Anacharsis the Scythian was the brother of the king of Scythia and a houseguest of Solon, and in a position of such political influence in Scythia that his own brother assassinated him because he introduced Greek customs to his famously xenophobic people. Myson came from a family of tyrants in Chen, and Solon himself crafted the constitution of Athens that was meant to resolve civil strife in the wake of the Cylonian conspiracy, an act that required considerable personal and political power.¹⁷⁶ The fact of Solon being a wise man, therefore, does not exclude my interpretation of him potentially aiming for a tyranny, though this is often the

172. Diod. Sic. 9.2.2 follows Herodotus both in chronology of the contemporaneous appearance of the sages at Croesus' court and the philosophy that no man can be called happy until he is dead.

173. On the unreliability of Herodotus' chronology of the sixth century, see How & Wells (1912b: 441-42). Herodotus gives few actual dates, instead relying on figures, i.e., ten years for Peisistratos' exile and thirty-six for the dynasty up until the assassination of Hipparchos, and roughly synchronizes events, usually leaving the date completely uncertain. On problems with the specific chronology of Solon, see ch. 1, p. 22.

174. On Solon's chronology with specific reference to his visit with Croesus, see ch. 1, p. 24, esp. n. 61.

175. See Martin (1998: 115-20) for more detailed descriptions of the activities of each individual sage.

176. Martin (1998: 120) argues that the real glue that held the tradition of the sages together was the shared performative aspects of their careers—they were all poets, involved in politics, and had artistic endeavors wrapped up in their practical lives. He uses in particular the example of Solon feigning madness to recite in public the poem that shamed the Athenians into attacking Salamis, described in Plut. *Sol.* 8.

implication in literature speaking of him as being opposed to tyranny because of his fabled wisdom. Among a people who had programmatically begun rejecting tyranny in favor of democracy, it was easy to remember the philosopher and forget the tyrant.

Further, all of the sages acted agonistically—they all tried to “out-wise” one another, which necessitated that they all live at the same time and interact with each other frequently. This is why we have them all situated at the palace of Croesus, the famous Lydian hellenophile who was fascinated with Greek oracles and customs, and delighted to have traveling philosophers visit his court.¹⁷⁷ Of course, even the men whom we can say with some certainty actually existed, cannot have met. But in the popular tradition they still had to be in competition with one another, because as Martin puts it, “There had to be an idealized corporate body of sages for the very notion of archaic sage to make sense. One wise man doesn’t work.”¹⁷⁸

An example of this combative element is the tale of the tripod, which involved all seven of the sages.¹⁷⁹ The most common version says that a band of Ionian youths purchased a catch of fish from a Milesian fisherman, and got involved in a dispute over a tripod that had accidentally been hauled in with the catch of fish. They appealed to Delphi as to who should get it, and were told “whoever is most wise”. So they gave it to Thales, who gave it to another, and so on, until it came to Solon, who remarked that the

177. Unfortunately the wisdom of his frequent guests did not have their effect until the moment of his impending death on a pyre, which landed him in his turn the role of sage and advisor to his conqueror, Cyrus (Hdt. 1.86-8).

178. Martin (1998: 120).

179. There are 11 variants on the tale of the tripod. Among others, Diog. Laert. 1.27-33, Diod. 9.13, Val. Max. 4.1, and Plut. *Sol.* 4 relate this story. For a more complete list, with the texts from all of the variants, see Wulf (1896: 12-20); see also Snell (1971: 114-27) and Martin (1998: 120-22). On the more general concept of an *agon sophias* see Busine (2002: 47-89).

god was most wise, and dedicated it to Apollo at Delphi.¹⁸⁰ Once Solon was established as a wandering wise man on equal footing with the rest of the sages, it was no problem to insert him into such popular traditions, and even to give him the edge over others of his ilk by figuring out the riddle—no man can be wiser than a god; therefore the tripod belonged to Apollo. The Athenians by association gained prestige because their sage beat out the others in the wisdom competition.

The importance of this analysis is to show that there was a certain fluidity to the characterizations of Solon floating around in the early-to-mid-fifth century, visible in the inconsistencies of Solon's portrayal in Herodotus (our earliest independent treatment).¹⁸¹ We see his legend adapted within a century of his lifetime to fit preconceived notions about the mythological *topos* of the wise man, which continued and grew in later literature with stories like that of the tripod.¹⁸² This means that Solon's legacy was malleable, making it ripe for alteration and adaptation, which later became entrenched in the record as fact. Busine argues that Herodotus was instrumental in the beginnings and development of legends surrounding an unspecified number of wise men, and that it is only in Plato that we find an increasing awareness of and familiarity with a group of seven sages.¹⁸³ She assigns the key role in the genesis of the legends to the sanctuary of Apollo at Delphi. Most importantly for our study, she describes the process by which

180. On the expansion of localized wisdom to panhellenic norms and long-distance competitions, see Nagy (1990: 143-45).

181. On Herodotus' methods of "generating local history" to suit his own ends, see Hornblower (2006: 309), and esp. Jacoby (1909: 118, 506).

182. On Solon as the "tragic warner" in Herodotus, see Lattimore (1939: 34-35), following Bischoff (1932: 78). The similarity in the treatment of Solon to that of Bias and Pittacus, all three of whom warn Croesus of impending disaster, is in itself an indication that the story of Solon has been manipulated to fit this stock character.

183. Busine (2002: 15-46). On the influence of Herodotus in the fifth century, see Hornblower (2006: 306-18).

individual *poleis* appropriated and modified the legends for their particular interests and ideological concerns. Since fifth-and-fourth-century Athens had become widely acknowledged as a center for learning and art from all over the Hellenic world, the Athenian version of the seven sages, led by Solon, would have become the standard version handed down to posterity. In the process the sages transformed from their original role of political actors to men whose penchant for pithy sayings took on an almost exclusively moralizing and philosophical turn. Historians and ethnographers did not feel compelled to confine Solon to a political sphere, and felt free to embellish his activities after his reforms, particularly those after leaving Athens. This makes it easier to understand how Solon, famed for his political reforms and philosophy, became attached to the mythological paradigm of a sage. As Lattimore put it, "It is not that the stories and situations adhere to the great names, it is the names that adhere to them" (1939: 34-35).

II. Solon as *Nomothetes*

An aspect of Solon's wisdom that is closely related to his reputation as a sage is that of him as a lawgiver. For a lawgiver to be so highly respected that he is chosen to write a new constitution, he must in some sense be a sage. However, not all sages are lawgivers. The tradition that places Solon as a wise man overlaps significantly with his role in forming a new constitution, but the two aspects of the man are often treated separately, as we shall do here. In this context Solon once more has a story that does not quite fit the expected forms, and seems to be artificially inserted into the tradition based on elements in his circumstances that have been stretched to fit those of other famous lawgivers. Only with manipulation can Solon fill the requirements to pave the way for democracy despite the "hiccup" of the Peisistratid tyranny between his reforms and

Cleisthenes' reorganization of the state.

Solon does in fact share many elements in common with *nomothetai* in the tradition of Lycurgus of Sparta, Lygdamis of Naxos, Charondas of Catania, Diokles of Syracuse, Zaleucus of Lokri, and others.¹⁸⁴ Aristotle makes a distinction between people who merely make laws and those who frame constitutions, and he puts Solon in the latter category when he credits him with founding democracy (*Pol.* 1273a). He even equates him to Lycurgus, the prototypical ancient *nomothetes* whose legend contains many elements of folklore.¹⁸⁵

The typical Greek lawgiver instigates a process that results in a *polis'* journey from *anomia* to *eunomia* in three stages.¹⁸⁶ First, there is a crisis, usually in the form of *stasis* or active internecine conflict, as in the case of Athens post Cylon/Drakon and in pre-Lycurgus Sparta. Enter the lawgiver, who is uniquely qualified to assist because of his character, education, and exceptional virtue and wisdom. There is a consistent pattern on how they garner this wisdom, which comes in two principal methods, both of which are essential: extensive travel and study with one of the great philosophers. For example, Lycurgus went to Crete, Egypt and Ionia and met Thaletas to study constitutions; Zaleucus and Charondas were pupils of Pythagoras, with the variant that Thales instructed Zaleucus, who then served as teacher to Charondas. The *Ath. Pol.* complains of

184. Lygdamis had a more direct connection to Athens than these others. He was friendly with Peisistratos, who allegedly installed him in his position of tyrant; he was also connected with Polycrates, the tyrant of Samos, who was a fellow sage and ally of Solon. See also Arist. *Pol.* 1274a. On similarities in characteristics of early lawgivers, as well as the question of the historicity of Zaleucus, see Gagarin (1989: 52-66).

185. The most coherent accounts of the life and activities of Lycurgus can be found in Plut. *Lycurg.* and Xen. *Lac.*

186. See Gagarin (1989: 58). Eder (2005: 241-42) discusses the similarities between Solon's persona as *nomothetes* and the genesis of the Twelve Tables in Archaic Rome.

the impossible timelines of such intellectual genealogies (17), but absence of intelligible chronology is itself a hallmark of myth.

In the second or medial stage, the citizens elect the lawgiver to establish order, who then applies the knowledge gained during his travels and interactions with other wise men to make a new set of laws. This travel is crucial in its influence on the composition of the constitution—the *nomothetes*' examination of codes of other peoples allows him pick and choose the best elements from each code he encounters.¹⁸⁷ Many lawgivers also had divine assistance, most notably Lycurgus, whose Great Rhetra encompassed principles handed to him by Apollo at Delphi.¹⁸⁸

The code is always severely tested soon after its implementation. Sometimes the lawgiver is attacked and solves the problem by his personal authority, as in the cases of Lycurgus and Alkander. Often the new laws are tested when the lawgiver falls afoul of his own code. For instance, we hear that Zaleucus decreed that anyone taken in adultery be blinded. When his own son was caught and convicted, Zaleucus gave up one of his own eyes so that his son would not be totally sightless rather than try to bend the law to make an exception for his own family (Val. Max. 6.5.4). Likewise Charondas declared it a capital offense to enter the assembly armed, but he forgot about the dagger he carried as protection against robbers on the road. When he was called out on this offense, he killed

187. On the close association of *theoria* and lawgivers in Athens, as well as their political functions, see Ker (2000: 304-06). Ker also characterizes the presence of the *axones* and *kyrbeis* on the Stoa Basileus as a visual reminder of Solon and his legislative activities.

188. Plutarch comments that such stories might be true, but that some merely pretended to be acting on divine instruction in order to gain acceptance for decrees (*Num.* 4.6-8). He also connects Solon to Delphi, giving Apollo credit for setting Solon on the path to create a new law code, much like the stories we hear about the Spartan Lycurgus (Plut. *Sol.* 14.6). On the divine origin of these early law codes, see Gagarin (1989: 60-61).

himself with his own weapon (Diod. 12.19; Val. Max. 6.5.4).¹⁸⁹ This *topos* of the lawgiver adhering to his provisions to his own detriment showed that law had become supreme.¹⁹⁰

In the final stage, the crisis is resolved by the stability of the new constitution—all of the legends contain provisions to ensure continuation in its original form, with specifications for the permanence of the code. There was always the threat, however, that the lawgiver would retain enough power to change the laws; therefore he was a potential threat to their enforcement. This danger was usually resolved by either the death of the lawgiver or self-imposed exile.¹⁹¹

The problem with this narrative in the case of Solon is that while all of the elements of the legendary lawgiver are in place with, they are in the wrong order. We do have a crisis—civil *stasis* sparked by the harshness of Drakon's laws, implemented after the failed Cylonian conspiracy. The situation in Attica had deteriorated into what amounted to class warfare, with the rich holding most of the land and the poor condemned in many cases to using their own persons as collateral against unpayable debts. Solon does seem to have been elected to a special archonship, during which he was commissioned to solve the rising civil *stasis*.¹⁹² This all sounds like it fits the model, but the traditional wise man is qualified for the position because he has traveled widely, studied other law codes, and consulted with other wise men.

189. Diodorus tells us that some attribute this act to Diokles (12.19).

190. For echoes of this attitude in Herodotus, see the speech Demaratus gives to Xerxes on the Spartans' legendary bravery stemming from their submission to law (Hdt. 7.104.4). Also see Hartog (1988: 334) on the similarity of language describing the relationship of masters and slaves and the status of citizens in a state that acknowledges the supremacy of law.

191. For examples, see Szegedy-Maszak (1978: 207).

192. The very fact that Solon drew up a law code with equal punishments for every social class is suspect, since the other early law codes that survive in physical form draw sharp distinctions in the severity of penalties based on class. For instance, the inscription containing the Gortyn law code, dated to the first half of the 5th century, has markedly reduced fines for adulterers caught seducing a woman from the lower classes than one from the wealthier. See Adcock (1927: 95-96).

Solon supposedly did his traveling by entering a career in commerce. This is not at all the same as a trip taken solely for the purpose of learning and associating with other wise men. Plutarch hedges by saying, "Some say that he travelled to get experience and acquire information rather than to make money, for it is certainly true that he was a lover of wisdom..." (2.1-2; *καίτοι φασὶν ἔνιοι πολυπειρίας ἔνεκα μᾶλλον καὶ ἱστορίας ἢ χρηματισμοῦ πλανηθῆναι τὸν Σόλωνα. σοφίας μὲν γὰρ ἦν ὁμολογουμένως ἐραστής*).¹⁹³

The rest of the chapter is devoted to a rather tortuous and convoluted defense about why trade and acquisition of wisdom are not mutually exclusive. The vehemence of these justifications indicates that Solon's career in commerce counted against him in some quarters, and we are seeing a later attempt to square the traditions about him as a trader with those about him as a sage. Trade was not considered a completely respectable occupation for a member of the upper classes; in fact, it was considered rather vulgar. We know that Plutarch was heavily influenced by Plato, who claimed that "work" crushed souls and deformed bodies (*Rep.* 495d-e), and Aristotle, who more specifically addressed trade: "The citizen must not lead the life of mechanics or tradesman, for such a life is ignoble and an enemy of virtue. Neither must they be farmers, since leisure is necessary both for the development of virtue and the performance of political duties" (1328b-1329a; *οὔτε βάνουσον βίον οὔτ' ἀγοραῖον δεῖ ζῆν τοὺς πολίτας (ἀγεννῆς γὰρ ὁ τοιοῦτος βίος καὶ πρὸς ἀρετὴν ὑπεναντίος), οὐδὲ δὴ γεωργοὺς εἶναι τοὺς μέλλοντας ἔσεσθαι (δεῖ γὰρ σχολῆς καὶ πρὸς τὴν γένεσιν τῆς ἀρετῆς καὶ πρὸς τὰς πράξεις τὰς πολιτικάς)*). In the end, it is highly unlikely for anyone to embark in trade with no intent to

193. The tradition is further corrupted by the time of Diog. Laert., who adopts the later tradition by placing Solon's travels after Peisistratos has seized power, as well as making the tyrannies of Peisistratos and Periander contemporaneous (2.50).

make money, so these attempts to plead a special case for Solon seem inconsistent.¹⁹⁴

According to the next stock characteristic of an ancient lawgiver, Solon was supposed to write a constitution that solved the civil strife; instead he drew up a law code that made everyone, rich and poor alike, angry. He then left Athens and wrote self-exculpatory poetry about how he was only trying to do his best and how he never wanted to be a tyrant. Solon never had to undergo the test of falling afoul of his own law code. He did take the required *theoria*, but he seems to have attained his wisdom in the travels he made *after* leaving Athens to implement his laws, not before (except possibly as a trader, which as mentioned above is an extremely suspect example). He did make provision for the permanence of the law code by extracting a promise from the Athenians not to change his laws for ten years, but as we have already seen, this did not happen amid a period in which the law code solved the problems of internecine conflict. Instead, he left town in the midst of turmoil even greater than before he drew up the new regulations, which was never in fact resolved until an actual tyrant, Peisistratos, stepped into the breach and took the reins of the state. Because of the turmoil caused by his reforms, the uprisings and unrest of people angry that their particular interests were slighted according to the new statutes, I suggest that Solon departed by necessity rather than choice.¹⁹⁵

In fact, there is actually a tradition of the exiled philosopher, forced from home because of the hatred of his fellow citizens, that is glossed over in our stories about

194. Cf. the *Ath. Pol.*, which of course focuses on the political activity, and in which travels of Solon prior to his archonship are not mentioned at all. Ste Croix (1981) categorically denies the possibility that Solon engaged in trade.

195. Contra Ker (2000: 304-29), who contends that Solon's exile was explicitly connected to his desire to retain his authority as legislator, and a deliberate reference to the tradition connecting lawgiver to *theoria*.

Solon.¹⁹⁶ The elements of the story are there, but they must be forced into the existing paradigm. Solon did not gain a reputation as a traveling wise man until after he implemented a law code that failed. *Eunomia*, that ultimate good, the final goal of all archaic and classical law codes, was ultimately no part of Solon's creation. This indicates that the figure of Solon was grafted retroactively onto the *topos* of lawgiver, in contradiction to the ultimate failure of his reforms.

III. Solon as *Misotyrannos*

Authors since antiquity have written about Solon as a man who opposed tyranny in everything he did. He refused out of principle to set himself up as a tyrant despite his supporters' urging, earning the *Ath. Pol.*'s endorsement as the father of democracy.¹⁹⁷ He refers to his refusal to become tyrant despite urgings by his supporters in three of our surviving poetic fragments. In fr. 34, he claims that he did not want a tyranny, without elaboration. In fr. 32, we find a more vehement opposition, with an emphasis on the dishonor he would have brought on himself and his legacy by setting himself up as a tyrant (fr. 32). Finally, in a sarcastic commentary on how others must view his refusal to become tyrant, he implies that he would rather be skinned alive (fr. 33).¹⁹⁸

196. Empedocles, for example, describes himself as an exile from the gods and a wanderer, hated by all (Diels & Kranz (1951: 115b). Montiglio (2000: 90-91) expounds on the connections between wandering sages and non-voluntary exile, and the pervasive association between wandering and suffering in Greek literature.

197. See *Ath. Pol.* 9.1: which specifies that Solon's court reforms were the single most influential feature of his legislation for the foundation of the eventual democracy. Plutarch concurs, stressing the importance of access to courts by the *demos*, going so far as to say that Solon deliberately made the wording of his laws vague so that they would have to go to court for interpretation by juries of commoners, thus making magistrates ultimately accountable to the people (*Sol.* 18). Aristotle also, without quite declaring that Solon's constitution was an actual democracy, admits that the jury-courts were the foundation of the later, more radical constitution, and stresses that access to and control of courts gave the poorer elements of society the necessary *minimum* of power to enable them to be politically enfranchised (*Pol.* 1273b-12744a; 1256b).

198. I discuss these specific poems in detail in ch. 4, p. 126-132.

The very number of denials of desire for tyranny on Solon's part warrant attention. Besides stressing that he could have taken up a tyranny had he wished, there are any number of mentions of the evils of greed and absolute power.¹⁹⁹ The *Ath. Pol.* assumes that Solon had no intention of becoming a tyrant, since he could have seized power by allying himself with whatever party he liked, but instead chose to be the savior of Athens and an honest lawgiver despite knowing that he would incur enmity on all sides (*Ath. Pol.* 11). Once more, the source for this assumption is Solon's own poetry, yet this interpretation does not quite dovetail with statements that the *Ath. Pol.* and Aristotle make elsewhere.

This idea of Solon as anti-tyrant is cemented by stories of his antagonistic relationship with Peisistratos, his much younger contemporary and possible relative and/or lover.²⁰⁰ According to several ancient sources Solon actually warned the would-be tyrant about the evils of a tyranny and a totalitarian state (*Ath. Pol.* 14.2). Upon realizing that Peisistratos wanted to seize the tyranny, Solon supposedly tried to warn the *demos* of the danger. Most sources cite frs. 9-11 as "proof" that Solon wrote admonitory poetry warning against Peisistratos' impending tyranny, but this is far from secure.²⁰¹ Different sources depict different reactions to Peisistratos' various coups. Plutarch has Solon try to convert Peisistratos to a democratic way of thinking (*Sol.* 29.2). He denounced Peisistratos' request for a bodyguard in the assembly, but when he was outvoted he armed himself and tried to lead an insurrection in the Agora (Diod. 9.4.1, 9.20.1; Plut. *Sol.* 30.6).

199. On slavery stemming from the greed of the upper classes, see frs. 4.9 and 11.

200. See Plut. *Sol.* 1 on Solon's familial relation to Peisistratos, as well as the friendship between the two; cf. *Ath. Pol.* 17.2, where the author manifestly declares a love-relationship to be impossible based on chronology. Though the *Ath. Pol.* condemns it as hearsay (17), this is proof that the tradition was persistent and early.

201. See, for example, Rihll (1989: 277-86), who argues that these poems actually refer to Drakon.

Unable to win any support, he laid his armor outside his front door in protest and went into retirement, ignoring the danger of having a tyrant as an enemy and refusing to go into exile despite his friends' urging (Plut. *Sol.* 30.7-8).

Some say that despite his distaste for Peisistratos' rule, the tyrant pardoned Solon on the grounds that they had been old friends and lovers (Ael. 8.16), and Solon then became Peisistratos' trusted advisor (Plut. *Sol.* 31.2).²⁰² Others had him seek refuge at the court of Periander (ps. Dio Chrys. 37.5) or in Ionia (*P. Oxy.* 4.664). Diogenes Laertius tells us that he sent letters to Peisistratos from exile trying to convince him to give up his tyranny, even though he called him the best of tyrants (1.66-67). However, Solon refused to return to Attica despite Peisistratos' entreaties (1.53-54) and died in exile on Cyprus (1.62), after which his ashes were scattered on Salamis, and he was publicly honored at Athens (Ael. 8.16).²⁰³

These stories about Solon and Peisistratos stretch the bounds of believable chronology, as they would probably put Solon in his 90s in the 560s.²⁰⁴ It is more likely a later effort to place Solon, the moderate who assiduously resisted tyranny under the direst of temptations, in a position to mentor the young Peisistratos.²⁰⁵ This contortion of chronology and plausibility is further evidence that the character of Solon, particularly as an anti-tyrant, was being manipulated for literary ends.²⁰⁶

202. Cf. the story of Croesus and Cyrus in Herodotus (1.86-90). On the figure of Solon as tragic "warner" to Croesus see Lattimore (1939: 34-35), following Bischoff (1932: 78).

203. Plutarch dismisses this story, though he notes that Aristotle accepts it (*Sol.* 9). See also Podlecki (1984: 124) and (1987: 9-10). For Solon's death on Cyprus, see also Val. Max. 5.3. Linfoth (1919: 308) provides further ancient references.

204. On the violence done to chronology in creating a relationship between Solon and Peisistratos, see also Adcock (1927: 108-09) and Rihll (1989: 277-78).

205. Rhodes (1993: 202), for example, dismisses the story as complete fabrication.

206. On the relationship between Solon and Peisistratos as a literary device, see Adcock (1927: 109).

Whatever spin one puts on Solon's character and activities, however, there is agreement that despite his refusal of a tyranny, in the wake of his reforms neither the wealthy nor the poor elements of society were happy. The state dissolved into civil *stasis* that was only solved when Peisistratos stepped into the resulting power vacuum and cemented the contradictory reputation of harsh tyrant and congenial ruler. His popularity stemmed from the fact that he ruled moderately and constitutionally, a vague phrase which is usually presumed to refer to the law code of Solon.²⁰⁷ In fact the *Ath. Pol.* cites the reign of Peisistratos as a Golden Age, mainly due to his respect for the law, citing the example of his appearance in court to defend himself against a commoner's charge of murder (*Ath. Pol.* 16.8):

For he was willing to administer everything according to the laws in all matters, never giving himself any advantage; and once in particular when he was summoned to the Areopagus to be tried on a charge of murder, he appeared in person to make his defence, and the issuer of the summons was frightened and left.

ἔν τε γὰρ τοῖς ἄλλοις ἐβούλετο πάντα διοικεῖν κατὰ τοὺς νόμους, οὐδεμίαν ἑαυτῷ πλεονεξίαν διδοῦς, καὶ ποτε προσκληθεὶς φόνου δίκην εἰς Ἄρειον πάγον, αὐτὸς μὲν ἀπήντησεν ὡς ἀπολογησόμενος, ὁ δὲ προσκαλεσάμενος φοβηθεὶς ἔλιπεν.

There is no mention anywhere of whom Peisistratos allegedly murdered. Despite Peisistratos' popularity, his star fell after the assassination of his son Hipparchos in 514, and his regime became synonymous with the harsh rule of his other son Hippias, which grew more autocratic after the death of his brother.

We see further contradiction in Herodotus about Peisistratos' adherence to

207. "Peisistratos' administration of the state was, as has been said, moderate, and more constitutional than tyrannical" (*Ath. Pol.* 16.2; διώκει δ' ὁ Πεισίστρατος, ὥσπερ εἴρηται, τὰ περὶ τὴν πόλιν μετρίως καὶ μᾶλλον πολιτικῶς ἢ τυραννικῶς).

established laws and the warm welcome he received on his return to Athens after his first exile (1.60), versus the depiction of a sexually dissolute tyrant in his unnatural (οὐ κατὰ νόμον) relations with Megacles' daughter (1.61). Plutarch also paints Peisistratos as a master deceiver, fooling everyone except Solon into thinking he was a moderate and civic-minded demagogue, when in actuality he was a depraved monster. Despite formidable acting skills, though, he could not fool the master anti-tyrant, Solon. (*Sol.* 29.2-3). In other words, Peisistratos *seemed* to be everything that Solon actually *was*; the harsher the portrait of the tyrant, the more vehement and admirable Solon's *misotyrannos* position became. Plutarch is obviously aware of the tradition that Peisistratos was a good and popular ruler, but by Plutarch's day tyranny was an evil; therefore Peisistratos must have been pretending to any good qualities in evidence from earlier literary depictions.²⁰⁸ This of course made his contrast with Solon all the more striking.

Another echo of this attitude is in Aristotle's acknowledgment that Solon actually did have absolute power because of the disturbed state of the country, even saying that all agree that this is indisputable (*Ath. Pol.* 6). At the same time he maintains that Solon refused absolute power because of his moderate nature and civic-mindedness. Aristotle once more explains away the inherent contradiction in this situation by referring to Solon's poetry, and stating that his intentions were in the best interests of both the rich and the poor. Further, the fact that Solon had a reputation as a philosopher contributed to views about him as a tyrant-hater.

Diodorus Siculus, writing in the second half of the first century, more explicitly connects Solon with the downfall of tyranny. As a preface to a version of the story of

208. See ch. 5, p. 14 on stereotypes of tyrants.

Solon at Croesus' court, he addresses Solon's childhood and claims that he strove to attain wisdom from a very young age, with his fellow citizens marveling at the sageness of his advice and reasoning (9.1.3). He claims that Solon worked to make the effeminate and dissolute Athenians a more virile people, like others equating Solon's activities with morality as well as learning and legislation. It was directly because of Solon's anti-tyrannical and moral bent, Diodorus claims, that Harmodius and Aristogeiton rose up and assassinated the tyrants (9.1.4), rather than Thucydides' more sordid version describing the murder as resulting from a messy love affair.

Another episode conjures ghosts of Solonian anti-totalitarian philosophy, though it does not explicitly mention him. In this anecdote about Plato, Diodorus equates philosophy with anti-tyranny. He tells a story of Dionysius, the tyrant of Syracuse, imprisoning Plato and arbitrarily selling him into slavery because some offhand remark displeased him. Plato's fellow philosophers, however, pooled their resources and bought his freedom. When they sent him back to Greece they admonished him that, "a wise man should associate with tyrants either as little as possible or with the best grace possible" (15.7.1; *διότι δεῖ τὸν σοφὸν τοῖς τυράννοις ἢ ὡς ἥκιστα ἢ ὡς ἥδιστα ὀμιλεῖν*). Here there is clearly an association between wise men and distrust of tyrants.

Diogenes Laertius, writing in the third century C.E., gives us a rather jumbled account of Solon's refusal to be tyrant. His demurral seems to have been entirely for the purpose of foiling Peisistratos, whose designs he had smoked out, but this makes little sense as a reason for refusing to become a tyrant himself (1.49). It appears that by the third century he was so inextricably bound with hatred of tyranny that even his philosophical principles, originally the reason for his refusal of a tyranny, take a backseat

to his working publicly against Peisistratos. His failure to prevent the tyranny was the reason for his leaving Attica, presenting even more chronological problems than have already been discussed. Diogenes also makes much of the fragment of Solon's poetry in which he seems to be predicting the tyranny of Peisistratos (fr. 9).²⁰⁹ Peisistratos even wrote Solon a letter while he was in exile, justifying his seizure of power by claiming he was not the first to aim for such. Peisistratos promised him to leave in place the new constitution if Solon would come back and advise him, because, "they were better governed than they would be under a democracy" (1.53; καὶ ἄμεινόν γε πολιτεύουσιν ἢ κατὰ δημοκρατίαν), which is of course an anachronism referring to a form of government that did not yet exist.

Peisistratos was also not the only tyrant with whom Solon corresponded. Diogenes also includes a purported letter of Solon to Polycrates advising him on how to remain in power. He says that if he wanted to be free of reproach he should resign power, but if he wanted to keep it he should get rid of all conspirators by making his personal mercenary force stronger than that of the citizens' (1.64).²¹⁰ Contradictorily, at the very end of the chapter Diogenes has Solon explain to Croesus that he desired above all else to live in a democracy, which shows considerable confusion and alteration of the traditions surrounding Solon and tyranny within a single source. Pausanias, writing in the second century AD, also associates Solon with tyrants and warfare, despite an earlier

209. Rihll (1989: 277-86) contends that in fact these fragments refer to Drakon. She suggests that the problems that riddle discussions of Solon's relationship to Peisistratos can be reconciled if we understand these poems to be products of Solon's youth, referring to the harsh rule of Drakon, rather than to Peisistratos with all of the chronological problems that accompanies this assumption.

210. This of course also suggests a military bent, more closely aligned with activities of other tyrants, than other sources. Cf. Herodotus 1.64, where Solon describes Peisistratos' army of *epikouroi*, or foreign mercenaries. Frost (1984: 283-84) examines and dismisses the idea that Solon's four property classes were a way of mobilizing a citizen army.

juxtaposition of Solon with domesticity and peace.²¹¹ He then describes the maxims γνῶθι σεαυτὸν, "Know thyself" and μηδὲν ἄγαν, "Nothing in excess," both written in the fore-temple at Delphi, by Thales, Bias, Pittacus, Cleobulus, Solon, and Chilon (10.24).²¹² All of these men were on one or other of the lists of seven sages, and two of them were also tyrants: Pittacus of Mytilene and Cleobulus. Immediately after this, Pausanias describes how the sages helped the Amphictyons conduct a war against the Cirrhaeans, putting Cleisthenes, the tyrant of Sicyon, at the head of their army. He allegedly brought Solon over as his advisor on the conduct of the war, in contradiction to Solon's earlier principled refusal to advise Peisistratos as long as he held the tyranny. There follows a list of the stratagems that Solon employed to defeat the Cirrhaeans, including diverting their water supply during a siege and eventually poisoning their wells with hellebore.

This indicates that a tradition about Solon's association with violence and/or tyrants remained even into late antiquity. Though such stories may not have raised eyebrows during the so-called "Age of Tyrants" in the seventh and sixth centuries B.C., democracy had been overthrown and restored twice in the last decade of the fifth century. Demonstrating continuity between the legislation of Solon and democracy gave the present political climate the authority of the past. Because authors like that of the *Ath. Pol.* and Plutarch wrote after democracy had been firmly (re)established, they were required to explain away the persistent stories of Solon's less-than-democratic activities,

211. He describes the laws of Solon that are inscribed in the Prytaneum, near the statues of the goddesses Eirene (Peace) and Hestia (Hearth).

212. The theme of moderation implicit in these bits of wisdom rest particularly uneasily with the descriptions of Solon's tactics in the First Sacred War in Paus. 10.37. The historicity of the entire war, however, has come under much scrutiny—see Cassola (1964: 26-34) and Davies (1984: 285-90). Elsewhere, Pausanias firmly locates Solon among the great lawgivers, describing the bronze statue of Solon on the Stoa Poikile in the agora (1.16).

allowing the *demos* to sustain the fiction that their forebears—with the important exceptions of the Peisistratids, the Four Hundred, and the Thirty—had always valued democratic principles.²¹³

Solon's reputation as a mild and moderate politician working for the good of the people and standing up to anyone who tried to seize absolute power is not consistent. We see ghosts of a different tradition, often side-by-side with denials of any other motive for Solon's actions. An excellent parallel case wherein a sage has explicit alternate reputations as a democrat and a tyrant is Cleobulus. Cleobulus is in places merely a wise man, but Clement of Alexandria calls him "king of the Lindians" (*Stromata* 4.19). Plutarch explicitly calls him a tyrant (*de E ap. Delph.* 3). Diogenes Laertius, however, quotes a letter from Cleobulus to Solon offering him refuge from tyranny, claiming that Lindus is a democracy (1.93). Upon close examination, even the stories attributed to Solon about his hatred of tyranny suggest a different reality, or at the very least a co-existing tradition, even as late as the third century AD. On the surface incompatible, the two versions become so entwined as to be inseparable, with the idea of Solon as a moderate winning out and stories of Solon as a grasping politician or a collaborator with tyrants explained away as slander, usually by citation of his poetry. In a remarkably short period of time, the moralizing tone of the poetry and frequent assertions of hatred of tyranny come to overshadow any other interpretation or account of his activities.

213. On the overthrow and restoration of democracy, see ch. 1, p. 77. On the invention of tradition for the purpose of legitimacy, see generally Hobsbawm & Ranger (1983), Hobsbawm (1983: 1-9), Thomas (1989: 13), Strauss (1993: 58-99, 181-2), Hobsbawm (1997: 11), and Shear (2011: 11-15).

IV. Conclusion

Solon's persona changes drastically over time, becoming whatever aspect of the man best fits the needs of the author.²¹⁴ This is not surprising in view of the far-reaching political changes that took place in the Athenian state after the time of Solon. Studies of oral tradition and social memory have shown that group memory is mutable and based on the particular needs of a group at any given time, particularly with respect to justifying the contemporaneous political order and legitimizing current social and political ideologies.²¹⁵ As groups change, so versions of the past change, sometimes by wholesale invention.²¹⁶ In Solon's case, rather than replacing older themes and characterizations, newer stories and themes accrete to the existing traditions, even if contradictions and anomalies had to be (often tortuously) explained away. Solon's own poems were the main source for explanations of his motivations for his political reforms and philosophy, but close examination shows that his representations as philosopher, lawgiver, and *misotyrannos* do not entirely square with our historical evidence. The stock characteristics of these types of figures instead provide a foundation for Solon's eventual persona as a mythological precedent for a wide variety of activities—most importantly his relationship to the foundation of democracy, to which we now turn.

214. A good comparandum is the changing biographical depictions of Aspasia over time. See Henry 1995. See also Lefkowitz (2012: 47-49) on later biographers and historians inventing a sort of mythology about Solon based on his own poetry. She points out that many of the poems and epigrams that later authors point to as "proof" of their version of Solon are so general in nature that they do not always even have certain attributions.

215. See Thomas (1989: 4) and Forsdyke (2006: 226, 238 n. 7) for bibliography of the most important recent studies on oral and group memory.

216. *Ibid.*

Chapter 3

Solon the protodemocrat

At the end of the fifth century and throughout the fourth century, accounts of Solon focused on the political aspects of his activities and his constitutional reforms. At this point the democracy was firmly (re)established and studies of constitutional history abounded, and it was appropriate to examine Solon's activities in light of their place in the development of democracy. This was also the heyday of the logographers and orators, and the laws of Solon were a convenient antecedent for more or less anything the orators wanted to argue, particularly laws that had explicit democratic overtones. Speechmakers used lawgivers such as Solon as authorities to support contemporary political conflicts and positions.²¹⁷ The simple fact of the triumph of the democracy after the turmoil of the fifth century and the Peloponnesian War ensured that records of these reforms and ideas, as well as the supporting fragments of Solon's poetry, survived as the ones most akin to contemporary politics. In this climate Solon became a lodestone for political discussions regarding democracy. The goal of this section is first, to demonstrate that there is a widespread agreement among ancient sources that Solon had a fundamental part to play in the foundation of the democracy, and second, that this interpretation ultimately prevailed over an alternative tradition that painted Solon as more of an aristocratic partisan.

The most famous treatment of Solon and his "constitution" is of course the *Ath. Pol.*, likely composed in the 320s, the author of which was a contemporary of Aristotle,

217. Eder (2005: 242) points out that after the destruction of written records during the Persian sack of Athens there may well have been "nothing to limit the imagination of later authors and commentators."

who also has much to say about democracy and tyranny as forms of government more generally in his *Politics*.²¹⁸ The *Ath. Pol.* details eleven major changes in the Athenian constitution, from the monarchy under Theseus to the fall of democracy in 411 and its restoration after the tyranny of the Thirty in 403. Finally, he gives an exhaustive overview of how the democracy functioned in his own day. It is worthwhile to examine the *Ath. Pol.* closely because it intimately associates Solon with the foundation of the Athenian constitution, the *telos* of which is the democracy under which Aristotle and his contemporaries wrote. He sees democracy as a process beginning with Solon and arising naturally out of Solon's reforms, with minor blips in the form of the tyranny of the Peisistratids and that of the Thirty: "The third [constitutional change] was the one following the *stasis* in the time of Solon; from this the democracy arose. The fourth was the tyranny of Pisistratus; the fifth the constitution of Cleisthenes, after the overthrow of the tyrants, which was of a more democratic character than that of Solon" (*Ath. Pol.* 41.2; τρίτη δ' ἡ μετὰ τὴν στάσιν ἡ ἐπὶ Σόλωνος, ἀφ' ἧς ἀρχὴ δημοκρατίας ἐγένετο. τετάρτη δ' ἡ ἐπὶ Πεισιστράτου τυραννίς. πέμπτη δ' ἡ μετὰ τὴν τῶν τυράννων κατάλυσιν ἡ Κλεισθένους, δημοτικωτέρα τῆς Σόλωνος). This formulation of a road to democracy beginning with Solon would set the stage for treatments of his political activities for millennia.²¹⁹

Aristotle believed that the *polis* was a natural phenomenon, resulting from man's status as a "political animal" (ζῷον πολιτικόν), which he describes in detail in the

218. There is widespread agreement that the *Ath. pol* was published in the period between 329/8 and 323/2. For a summary of discussions on the dating, see Keaney (1970: esp. 326 n. 1). Holkeskamp (2005: 280-93) is more cautious in calling Solon's reforms a "constitution," positing that the legislation amounted more to a "collection of laws" rather than a code.

219. For more on Aristotle's political teleology, see Day & Chambers (1962: 50-54).

Politics.²²⁰ In Aristotle's view, political phenomena could be explained in the same ways as natural phenomena, and since nature always acts with purpose, the development of various types of government can be explained in natural terms. Any type of government, then, is the result of a natural process.²²¹ In Aristotle's view, democracy is a corrupt form of government, a deviation from the natural *telos* of government, the ultimate goal of which is to live well (ζῆν καλῶς).²²² Democracy, however, has its own *telos*, which is freedom.²²³ Despite Aristotle's views expressed here and elsewhere on the pitfalls of democracy as a form of government, the view of democracy as an organic result of a process that took nearly three centuries is striking in that it began with Solon. If any form of constitution has its own *telos*, then, it can be argued that the history of the Athenian constitution had been moving toward its final form of democracy from the beginning, and that tracing the history of the constitution would demonstrate how this phenomenon reached its inevitable fulfillment.²²⁴ He even admits in the *Politics*, in a description on the natural evolution of governments from monarchy, to aristocracy, to oligarchy, to tyranny,

220. *Pol.* 1.1252b27-1253a18; 3.1278b15-30.

221. Keaney, Wilamowitz, and Jacoby all comment on the differences between the views expressed in the *Ath. Pol.* and the *Politics*, assuming that Aristotle authored both works. See Keaney (1963: 115-16) on distinctions between Aristotle on political philosophy in the *Politics* and Aristotle the historian in the *Ath. Pol.* He argues that Aristotle's philosophical beliefs about teleological principles invade his historical writing as well as his philosophical writing, a position similar to that of Jacoby (1949: 210), who says that he was a philosopher who was only accidentally an historian. Wilamowitz (1893: 356), who calls Aristotle primarily an historian.

222. *Pol.* 3.1278b. See also 1.1252-24 where he specifies that the best method of investigating the rise of constitutions (along with everything else) is to study the process of development from the beginning.

223. *Rhet.* 1.1366a2-7; see Day & Chambers (1962: 66-67).

224. See Rhodes (1993: 7 and 1962) for the argument that Aristotle constructs history based on his philosophical doctrines. See also Keaney (1963: 136-38), who argues that Aristotle's goal was to explain how the radical democracy came into being, employing a characteristic stylistic pattern wherein he discussed notions of beginning, development, and maturity. If his end goal was to explain the growth of democracy, he had to begin with Solon as the founder, subordinating the pre-Solonian constitutions to his main topic except as they made contributions to the democratic phases of development. However, he does not believe that this structure necessitates the idea that the development of the state was a phenomenon predetermined by nature; rather, that Aristotle uses teleological principles merely as a literary pattern. Cf. Bloch (1940: 372).

to democracy, that "perhaps it is not easy for another form of constitution beside democracy to evolve" (3.1286b, 20; ἐπεὶ δὲ καὶ μείζους εἶναι συμβέβηκε τὰς πόλεις, ἴσως οὐδὲ ῥάδιον ἔτι γίγνεσθαι πολιτείαν ἑτέραν παρὰ δημοκρατίαν).²²⁵ It is unlikely that Aristotle believed that Solon intended the eventual democracy that arose partly because of his reforms, as he is swift in pointing out that Solon himself was not a democrat, but instead a "moderate politician," but this is irrelevant.²²⁶ Despite the vicissitudes of the Athenian government in the fifth century, democracy inevitably won out. He summarizes (*Pol.* 1273b 35-40):²²⁷

As for Solon, some people consider him a good lawgiver, as having put an end to oligarchy when it was too unqualified and as having liberated the people from slavery and restored the ancestral democracy with a skillful mixing of the constitution: the Areopagus as an oligarchic element, the elected archonships an aristocratic one, and the law-courts as democratic.

Σόλωνά δ' ἔνιοι μὲν οἴονται νομοθέτην γενέσθαι σπουδαῖον: ὀλιγαρχίαν τε γὰρ καταλῦσαι λίαν ἄκρατον οὖσαν, καὶ δουλεύοντα τὸν δῆμον παῦσαι, καὶ δημοκρατίαν καταστήσαι τὴν πάτριον, μείζαντα καλῶς τὴν πολιτείαν: εἶναι γὰρ τὴν μὲν ἐν Ἀρείῳ πάγῳ βουλήν ὀλιγαρχικόν, τὸ δὲ τὰς ἀρχὰς αἰρετὰς ἀριστοκρατικόν, τὰ δὲ δικαστήρια δημοτικόν.

This conception of the democratic bent of Solon's activities and intentions is born out in the way that the *Ath. Pol.* describes his reforms (5-13).²²⁸ In addition to the general tenor of giving more power to the people, the author flags several of Solon's actions as especially democratic ("τὰ δημοτικώτατα"): the *seisachtheia*, that is, his cancellation of

225. Cf. Polybius' theory of *anacyclosis* in the second c. B.C.E (6.4.7-10).

226. For Solon as a moderate, see *Ath. Pol.* 5.3, *Arist. Pol.* 1296a18-20, 1273b35-1274a21. See also Keaney (1963: 120-21) on Aristotle's views of Solon's intentions, and that his contributions to democracy were accidental (*Politics* 2.12.1274a1 ff.).

227. Cf. *Ath. Pol.* 9.2, where the author comments that one cannot judge Solon's long-term intentions from what happened at the time but only in conjunction with the rest of his law code. von Fritz & Kapp (1950: 155-56) see *Ath. Pol.* 8, in which he claims that archons were selected by lot, as a "correction" of this passage from the *Politics*.

228. Cf. his interactions with Peisistratos described in *Ath. Pol.* 14.

debts, the standardization of weights and measures in order to regulate monetary interactions such as lending and borrowing, the abolition of debt-bondage, the right of anyone to claim redress for wrongs, and most importantly, the right all classes of society to appeal to jury courts, for, "when the democracy is master of the vote, it becomes master of the constitution" (*Ath. Pol.* 9-10; κύριος γὰρ ὢν ὁ δῆμος τῆς ψήφου, κύριος γίγνεται τῆς πολιτείας).²²⁹

It seems clear that the view of Solon as protodemocrat was clearly already present in the sources of Aristotle and his contemporaries, as are alternative views for Solon's motives and activities, usually at odds with one another. There are many instances in the *Ath. Pol.* where Solon is presented as having the good of the common people foremost in his thoughts during his year as διαλλακτής. There seems, however, to be a discrepancy in the traditions and sources that the *Ath. Pol.* uses, which he glosses with his own opinions to make them more consistent, often not entirely successfully. One source seems to paint Solon as a protodemocrat; and a second shows him to hold sympathy mainly with the wealthy classes.²³⁰ Aristotle and the author of the *Ath. Pol.* themselves seem to interject their own opinions frequently in order to portray Solon as, if not a democrat, at least an impartial moderate in cases where the evidence suggests otherwise. Upon closer scrutiny, it seems that the main thrust of the *Ath. Pol.*'s major source(s) were pro-democratic. But

229. Cf. Lycurgus the orator's reiteration and expounding upon of these points in *Leocr.* 3-4, though he does not specifically name Solon. He says that the three most important features of the democracy are: "first the system of law, second the vote of the jury, and third the method of prosecution by which the crimes are handed over to them" (*Leoc.* 4; πρῶτον μὲν ἢ τῶν νόμων τάξις, δεύτερον δ' ἢ τῶν δικαστῶν ψήφος, τρίτον δ' ἢ τοῦτοις τὰ δικάματα παραδιδούσα κρίσις). On Solon's supposed reform of weights and measures, see Kurke (1999: 90), in which she suggests that the anachronistic association of coinage with Solon is a displacement of the positive aspects of a monetary economy onto the revered figure of Solon. See also von Fritz & Kapp (1950: 156-57) for the argument that the *Ath. Pol.*'s criticism of the scheme of Androtion was unfounded, and a contrasting argument for the genuineness of Solon's monetary reforms.

230. On the possibility of a "First Narrative" and a "Second Narrative," that is, two sources with opposite political leanings, see Adcock (1912: 9-13).

the presence of alternate traditions, most of which were swallowed up in the tradition of Solon as a moderate and by the *Ath. Pol.*'s own commentary on various stories, suggests that there were differing views about Solon's intentions that have been buried in the intervening centuries.

For instance, the *Ath. Pol.* tells us that the poor were slaves to the rich and calls Solon the first champion of the people (2). Then we hear that the *demos* rose up in revolt, which indicates that he had the masses in mind when he stepped into office, but in the same chapter we have a fragment of Solon's poetry in which he styles himself as an impartial moderator between the poor and the rich (*Ath. Pol.* 5.1; Solon fr. 28).²³¹ In the next chapter, the author details rumors accusing Solon of engaging in insider trading by letting his wealthy friends know about the *seisachtheia* in advance. This allowed them to borrow heavily and buy land, knowing that they would never have to repay the loans (*Ath. Pol.* 6). This was even supposedly the source of wealth for later influential aristocratic families, which they tried to pass off as having been theirs since ancient times (*παλαιοπλούτους*). It can be argued that this unsavory accusation is an attempt to discredit the most prominent members of the aristocracy as being oppressive, with Solon expressly complicit in their machinations against the poor. The author of the *Ath. Pol.*, though, calls this story a slander (*διαβάλλειν*) and offers as proof of the untrustworthiness of this tale the "fact" that Solon was moderate and public-minded in all his other actions.²³² He cites the generalized agreement on Solon's good character and the

231. Adcock (1912: 4) argues that we have an account written from a democratic bias, which is re-worked by the author of the *Ath. Pol.*, whose personal view was that Solon was moderate and an impartial arbiter rather than a champion of the poor. But it is clear that his views co-exist uneasily with those of a pro-democratic source.

232. Cf. Plutarch's account of the same rumor in *Sol.* 15.6-7, with similar reasons for dismissal as slander.

descriptions Solon himself gave of his actions in his poetry, as in the following passage

(*Ath. Pol.* 12):

ταῦτα δ' ὅτι τοῦτον τὸν τρόπον ἔσχεν οἱ τ' ἄλλοι συμφωνοῦσι πάντες, καὶ αὐτὸς ἐν τῇ ποιήσει μέμνηται περὶ αὐτῶν ἐν τοῖσδε:

δήμῳ μὲν γὰρ ἔδωκα τόσον γέρας,
ὅσσον ἀπαρκεῖ, τιμῆς οὔτ' ἀφελῶν οὔτ' ἐπορεξάμενος;
οἱ δ' εἶχον δύναμιν καὶ χρήμασιν ἦσαν ἀγῆτοί,
καὶ τοῖς ἐφρασάμην μηδὲν ἀεικέες ἔχειν.
ἔστην δ' ἀμφιβαλὼν κρατερὸν σάκος ἀμφοτέροισι,
νικᾶν δ' οὐκ εἶασ' οὐδετέρους ἀδίκως.

The truth of this view of Solon's policy is established by common consent, and by the mention he himself has made of the matter in his poems:

To the people I gave so much privilege as to suffice,
neither taking away their honor nor offering them more,
And those who had power and were magnificent in their wealth,
I made sure they had nothing shameful.
I stood throwing a mighty shield around both sides,
Not permitting either side to win unjustly.

In chapter 8 we have another problematic contradiction. The *Ath. Pol.* tells us that Solon introduced selection by lot (*kleros*) for the archonship, an indisputably democratic measure. Before, archons had been appointed by the Council of the Areopagus. Then he tells us that Solon actually founded the Council as a measure to preserve the ancient laws, but in the same sentence says that the Areopagus was founded to try anyone convicted of attempting to overthrow the fledgling democracy; that is, "to try those who conspired to overthrow the *demos* (*Ath. Pol.* 8.4; τοὺς ἐπὶ καταλύσει τοῦ δήμου συνισταμένους ἔκρινεν).²³³ Further confusion arises when we read that, "in the archonship of Telesinos [487/6] they cast lots for the nine Archons by tribes from the five hundred previously

233. Adcock (1912: 4-5) sees this ch. as the *Ath. Pol.*'s attempt to "correct" the narrative as a whole in the form of a parenthesis.

elected by the demesmen; this first happened after the tyranny; all their predecessors were elected" (*Ath. Pol.* 22.5; ἐπὶ Τελεσίνου ἄρχοντος, ἐκυάμευσαν τοὺς ἐννέα ἄρχοντας κατὰ φυλὰς ἐκ τῶν προκριθέντων ὑπὸ τῶν δήμων πεντακοσίων, τότε μετὰ τὴν τυραννίδα πρῶτον. οἱ δὲ πρότεροι πάντες ἦσαν αἰρετοί). He also outlines how nine of the ten tribes contributed archons, the tenth providing their clerk (*Ath. Pol.* 55.1). The selection of archons by lot was supposedly a feature of the constitution of Solon, but twice in the *Politics* Aristotle tells us that they were elected (1273b: 1274a16). Selection of the majority of officeholders by lot was a feature singular to the radical democracy in order to produce equal opportunity among all of the candidates, and stories of Solon's relation to the measure are extremely confused.

Selection by lot is not in accordance with the character of Solon's legislation, which was widely believed to be a compromise that preserved a significantly oligarchic element while providing just enough political enfranchisement to appease the *demos*. It is apparent, therefore that the idea of the selection of archons by lot being a feature of Solon's constitution had credence among some of the fourth-century *Atthides*. Scholars before Jacoby tended towards the assumption that the work of the Atthidographers were mostly antiquarian in nature, rather than political or historical, which would indicate that they would not have dealt with such matters in their works.²³⁴ But Jacoby, and many after him, persuasively made the case that the Atthidographers were in fact often quite politically charged and partisan; therefore, I submit that much of the material used by Aristotle and his fellow intellectuals surely came from the works of the

234. The most influential of these were Mathieu 1915, Busolt (1920: 82-97), and Bloch (1940: 303-55).

Atthidographers.²³⁵ This could be explained by a preconception that Solon was the "father of democracy" that we see early on in the *Ath. Pol.*, in combination perhaps with the close association between the use of *kleroi* and democracy.²³⁶

More inconsistencies arise as the *Ath. Pol.* further discusses the points of Solon's reforms which were considered especially democratic. One puzzling passage is on those of Solon's laws which were difficult to interpret. The author of the *Ath. Pol.* explains this by positing that the laws were left deliberately obscure in order to give a broader swath of power to the people, but interjects on his own behalf that this was an accidental byproduct, and one of the reasons that Solon left Athens (*Ath. Pol.* 9.1). The following chapters are more or less a summation of Solon's activities, depicting him as a paradigm of the ideal statesman. However, the basis for this evaluation is mostly the author of the *Ath. Pol.*'s interpolated comments denying the radical nature of the reforms based on the evaluation of Solon's character as determined from his poetry. This suggests perhaps a pro-democratic source that the *Ath. Pol.* modifies in order to make Solon's activities more in accordance with his own views.²³⁷ We see therefore that the near-universal acceptance of Solon's moderation is problematic and relies heavily on commentary on his reforms, much of which stems from his own explanations of his motives, only preserved in fragmentary verse form. If we put aside the *Ath. Pol.*'s commentary, or "corrections," we get a picture that is far less moderate than history would have us believe.

The other major source on Solon's political activities and democratic bent is

235. For this view, see Jacoby (1949: . For a summary of the debate through 1994, see McInerney (1994: 17-37). See also von Fritz & Kapp (1950: 15-16).

236. See Moore (1975: 220-21) for a more detailed discussion of the use of lots pre-and post-Solon. See also Adcock (1912: 6 n. 4) on the possibility that the fourth century tradition knew nothing of the use of lots beginning with Solon.

237. See Adcock (1912: 6).

Plutarch in his *Life of Solon*. Both Plutarch and the *Ath. Pol.* make extensive use of Solon's poems, often quoting them to back up their assertions about his character and political agenda.²³⁸ Their selections of poems often but not always coincide, and there is agreement about the content of most of Solon's reforms. Similarities in the general outline and many of the details between Plutarch and the *Ath. Pol.* suggest that Plutarch used the *Ath. Pol.* as a major source, but the fact that his selection was not identical suggests that he also had access to other (often pro-democratic) sources, probably in common with the *Ath. Pol.* and Aristotle himself.²³⁹ He does make explicit references to Aristotle in several places, so there is no question that Plutarch was familiar with Aristotle's works.²⁴⁰

Plutarch tells us that Solon first gained political prominence as a mediator between the Alcmaeonids and the followers of Cylon who had escaped the former's illegal slaughter of the latter's associates.²⁴¹ He next describes the squabbling factions that Peisistratos later exploited to gain power—the Hillmen, who favored radical democracy, the Plainsmen, who favored oligarchy, and the Shoremen, who were moderates. Because of the factionalism and the debt problems between rich and poor (*Sol.* 13.2-3),

It seemed as if the only way to establish order and end the turmoil was to establish a tyranny...But the most and strongest of [the moderate faction] started banding together and exhorting one another not to submit to their wrongs, but to choose a trustworthy man as their leader, set free the enslaved debtors, redistribute the land, and wholly change the constitution.

238. Plutarch assumes that Aristotle wrote the *Ath. Pol.*

239. Plutarch draws much more heavily than the *Ath. Pol.* on the tradition of Solon as sage and wiseman. See Adcock (1912: 7-8), on the possibility that Androtion was the major source for both Plutarch and the *Ath. Pol.*; see above p. 83 the possibility of other of the *Atthides* as sources for Aristotle, his contemporaries, and later authors.

240. Plutarch specifically mentions Aristotle at *Sol.* 25.1, *Them.* 10.6, *Cim.* 10.2, *Per.* 9.2 and 10.8, and *Nic.* 2.1. On Plutarch's sources, see Adcock (1912: 7 ff.) and Adcock (1914: 38-40).

241. See ch. 1, p. 7.

καὶ μόνως ἂν ἐδόκει καταστῆναι καὶ παύσασθαι ταραττομένη τυραννίδος
 γενομένης...οἱ δὲ πλεῖστοι καὶ ῥωμαλεώτατοι συνίσταντο καὶ παρεκάλουν
 ἀλλήλους μὴ περιορᾶν, ἀλλ' ἐλομένους ἕνα προστάτην ἄνδρα πιστὸν ἀφελέσθαι
 τοὺς ὑπερημέρους καὶ τὴν γῆν ἀναδάσασθαι καὶ ὅλως μεταστῆσαι τὴν πολιτείαν.

We see, however, the same sort of contradiction in Plutarch about Solon's agenda that we do in the *Ath. Pol.* This indicates that Plutarch was also confronted with differing accounts of Solon's intentions, and like Aristotle and his associates chose to believe the versions that stressed Solon's even-handedness, based on his own writings and assertions. While the *Ath. Pol.* perfunctorily reports and summarily dismisses rumors of under-the-table dealings with his friends in land speculation, Plutarch gives more detail about a rumor perpetrated by Phantias the Lesbian that Solon was only able to get enough support to enact the *seisachtheia* by employing a deception (χρησάμενον ἀπάτη), by promising the poor redistribution of land, and at the same time promising the rich security for their debts. Plutarch says that Phantias qualifies this double-dealing by claiming that it was to save the city (ἐπὶ σωτηρίᾳ τῆς πόλεως), implying a selfless motive for this bit of chicanery, which never had more than the smallest chance of success. Plutarch then immediately dismisses this claim by citing Solon's assertions in his poetry that he was forced only reluctantly into public life (*Sol.* 14.1-2).

Another contradiction appears immediately after this, when Plutarch says that both the rich and poor chose Solon partly because of his saying, "equality breeds no war." This suggests that he was chosen as mediator specifically because of his "democratic" tendencies. Then Plutarch asserts that citizens of both rich and poor factions, because of his ideology of equality, urged him to take a tyranny, going so far as to cite an oracle of Apollo encouraging him to take over the state (*Sol.* 14.3-4). Once more we see hints of a

different tradition that is summarily dismissed because Solon's own poetry suggests otherwise. Plutarch even reports that some say that his reform was not quite as drastic as history has passed down, indicating that he and others were uneasy with the implications about the radical nature of the reforms. Plutarch tells us that Androtion claims that Solon relieved the poor not by a complete cancellation of debt, but by a reorganization and regulation of the currency and interest reduction that would equally benefit rich and poor.²⁴² He dismisses this un-democratic notion because "most writers" agreed that the *seisachtheia* was a complete cancellation of debt, and because this interpretation is more in line with Solon's own poems, which he then quotes (*Sol.* 15.4).²⁴³

There is clearly disagreement even in the fourth century about the nature of the *seisachtheia*, which muddies the waters further for modern scholars.²⁴⁴ It has been widely claimed that the only reason Androtion could have put forth this explanation was political bias, to exculpate Solon from implementing a reform as radical as cancelling all debts.²⁴⁵ Plutarch does the next thing to outright condemnation of the cancellation of debt when he credits the Athenians for being the first to come up with euphemisms for offensive things (τὰς τῶν πραγμάτων δυσχερείας), telling us that the *seisachtheia* was the first of these circumlocutions (15.2-3). He admits that Solon, even though he rejected a tyranny, did not administer affairs in a "mild" manner, but, "as he himself says, he accomplished those

242. Kraay (1968: 9) condemns the account of Androtion quite forcibly, saying that it makes "economic nonsense," and that Aristotle's account (and therefore the versions of everyone following him) is clear and consistent.

243. Androtion, *FGrH* 324 F 34. See also *Ath. Pol.* 10.1.

244. For a comprehensive bibliography of this debate, see Kraft 1959: 21 n 1. See also Kraay 1968:9 and Harding 1974: 281-83.

245. Jacoby, *FGrH* 3b Suppl. 1.145 claims that "this interpretation absolves Solon from the revolutionary measure of a confiscation of property, a menacing idea which alarmed the bourgeoisie of the fourth century. The precedent in their own history had to be eliminated." On Androtion and the *seisachtheia*, see also Day & Chambers (1962: 76) and Harding (1994: 129-33, 46-53, and 68).

matters in which he hoped to find them open to persuasion or susceptible to compulsion, joining both force and justice" (*Sol.* 15.2; ἃ δὲ καὶ λέγων ἤλπιζε πειθομένοις καὶ προσάγων ἀνάγκην ὑπομένουσι χρήσασθαι, ταῦτ' ἔπραττεν, ὡς φησιν αὐτός, ὁμοῦ βίη τε καὶ δίκην συναρμόσας).²⁴⁶ This seems to be at odds with his statements elsewhere, in which he says that Solon worked for the good of both rich and poor as a moderate politician, with no hint of the use of violence. Further, the means by which he was able to compel the populace is unclear, though Solon does refer to a κέντρον, or "goad" in fr. 36, which implies that he had the ability to use force if he had desired.²⁴⁷ I suggest that the reason for Plutarch's confusion and contradiction of Androtion's version, which would have fit the mold of the moderate version of Solon's character, was exactly what he said it was: the fact that the tradition of debt cancellation was too pervasive among the sources to deny (15.2-3). We have already seen that Plutarch and other sources contain many contradictions about Solon's actions and motives; this is yet another example of our sources manipulating the facts to fit their preconceived narrative about Solon.²⁴⁸

We see the same rumor that Solon told his close associates about his plans to cancel debts that we read in the *Ath. Pol.*, but Plutarch puts a very different, though no less exonerating, spin on it. Whereas Aristotle reports the rumor that Solon deliberately leaked the information about the forthcoming law about debt cancellation and dismisses it based on knowledge of his character, Plutarch says that he was betrayed by his friends who took unfair advantage of him when he came to them for advice. When this brought him into bad odor with the people, he immediately demonstrated his integrity by being

246. Solon fr. 36.14. On Solon's combination of βίη and δίκη see ch. 4, p. 113-119.

247. On this fragment and the implications of the imagery of a κέντρον on the populace, see ch. 4, p. 118.

248. See above p. 17 on the ways in which ancient authors contradict themselves in these ways.

the first to cancel debts owed to himself, in accordance with his new law (*Sol.* 15.7):²⁴⁹

One of the most striking and prevalent inconsistencies is Plutarch's inability to decide whether Solon was on the side of the rich, the poor, or those whose wealth put them in the middle. In his first description of the civil *stasis* he states unequivocally that the poor were oppressed and rightly discontented, their lives made completely miserable and untenable by greedy and unjust (ἀδικία) landowners (*Sol.* 12-14). Solon was tapped as mediator because of his sympathies with the poor. But then in chapter 14 we see a different view emerging; that of Solon the moderate who tries to please rich and poor alike. It is now the middle class who receives praise.

This theme alters slightly in chapter 16, where the poor become even more greedy than the rich. We see a reiteration of Solon's stance against the greed of both the rich and the poor, praising instead those of moderate means, which of course satisfies no one (16.1). Once more, the "proof" that he refused to gratify either party on principle is further citation of his poetry (16.2). Then he complains that if anyone else had been in charge, things would have been even more unsatisfactory: "for another would not have | restrained or checked the *demos* | until he had churned the milk and skimmed the cream" (*Sol.* 16.2; οὐκ ἂν κατέσχε δῆμον, οὐδ' ἐπαύσατο, | πρὶν ἀνταράξας, πῖα ἔξειλεν γάλα.)²⁵⁰

He further castigates the *demos* in his discussion of the Areopagus council and the formation of the *boule* of 400. In Plutarch's explanation, the Areopagus was not enough to contain the boldness of the people after their release from debt, so he created the

249. See ch. 2, p. 62 about the lawgiver's mandatory adherence to his own laws.

250. Ad loc. *Ath. Pol.* 12.5 = *Sol.* fr. 34. See ch. 5, p. 176 on the violence associated with the metaphor of "churning the milk and skimming the cream."

council of 400 to oversee legislation before it was introduced to the assembly and thus control what measures which the *demos* could vote on. This seems to be of a distinctly different character from his original assertion that the people were justly unhappy and suffering. He now switches to a rather anti-democratic condemnation of the pride and discontent of the poor, instead sympathizing with the rich, not even employing the moderation of the *μεσότης* standpoint.

While Plutarch tells us that the Areopagus and the council of 400 were created as a check on the *demos* (*Sol.* 19), he asserts in the very next sentence that the Areopagus and council are meant to guard and uphold the constitution.²⁵¹ This indicates an uneasy co-existence of two sources—one democratic, which makes Solon appoint the Areopagus to help the fledgling constitution that eventually becomes the democracy survive, and the other source, which has Solon as the *μεσότης*, who helps the people by taking away debt, but also restrains their boldness by taking measures to prevent their access to every piece of legislation.

I. Solon as an Authority Figure in Fourth-Century Oratory

Beginning in the late fifth century, Solon became a figure of appeal for questions ranging from politics to morality to digestive ailments.²⁵² We especially see this sort of allure in the figure of Solon as a catch-all authority figure in the orators of the fourth century. For them, Solon became a referee on questions of morality, which by this time was equated to democracy. Not only did the orators use him as a generic democrat, they

251. Cf. *Ath. Pol.* 8.4.; see also Adcock (1912: 11-12).

252. Engels (2010: 113) discusses a late third century AD Roman wall painting from the *Terme dei Sette Sapienti at Ostia* depicting all seven of the sages, with advice from each on various intestinal issues. Under a picture of Solon, we find the following advice for those suffering from constipation, *Ut bene cacaret ventrem palpavit Solon.*

used his character as evidence for whatever they were arguing, sometimes in direct opposition to one another, and at other times with only tangential relevance to the case at hand. Thus we see the same sorts of contradictions in forensic oratory of the fourth century as we do with Aristotle, the *Ath. Pol.*, and Plutarch.

a. Solon, Demosthenes, and Aeschines

Demosthenes in particular frequently uses Solon as precedent for everything from traditional morality to democracy to divine intention. For example, in *Against Leptines*, he says that whoever does not follow or appreciate the laws of Solon is not a patriot (20.103). He further comments on the democratic nature of Solon's laws in *Against Eubulides* (57.32), and castigates the prosecutor for violating Solon's law against idleness.²⁵³ In fact, in most of the cases in which he cites Solon, democracy and good morals are inseparable. For instance, in *Against Androtion*, he solicits Solon's authority for the framing of the current constitution, which he frequently touts as democratic. Solon, he argues, had the best interests of everyone in mind, and framed his laws so that the common man would not be bamboozled out of a share in government, whereas he accuses Androtion of bias in his legislation (22.25).

He uses the same tactic against Timocrates, by accusing him of being the antithesis of Solon in his legislative activities, since he gives impunity to offenders of the type that Solon deemed worthy of punishment (24.103-106; 113-115). He blasts corrupt

253. Herodotus tells us that Solon took over an Egyptian law requiring all citizens to prove that they had means of earning a living, on pain of execution. Herodotus praises this law, calling it "faultless" and recommending that the Athenians take up the practice (2.177.2). Plutarch attributes to Solon a slightly less harsh version of this ordinance, saying that Solon instituted a law freeing sons who had not been taught a trade as well as sons born out of wedlock from supporting their fathers, and saying that Solon decreed that the Areopagus was to examine every man's means of livelihood and punish those who had no work (*Sol.* 22.1-4). But later he cites Theophrastus, who tells us that it was Peisistratos and not Solon who enacted the law (*Sol.* 31.2). For a detailed description of the ancient evidence on this law, see Stroud (1968: 79-80).

politicians who arbitrarily repeal the tried-and-true laws of Solon in order to obey their own, which are detrimental to the democracy (24.142). A bit later he makes the point that if you are justified in praising Solon, you are obligated to despise men like Timocrates (24.211). He further explicitly equates Solon with democracy in *On the Crown*, when he praises the laws which were first framed by Solon, a good democrat and friend of the people (18.6):

[The trial] being about these things, I implore and beseech all of you to listen fairly to my defence concerning these charges, just as the laws command—those laws which Solon originally set down, who, being well-disposed toward you and a friend to the people, thought essential to validate, not only by writing them down but by the oath of you who are judging...

περὶ τούτων δ' ὄντος τουτουὶ τοῦ ἀγῶνος ἀξιῶ καὶ δέομαι πάντων ὁμοίως ὑμῶν ἀκοῦσαί μου περὶ τῶν κατηγορημένων ἀπολογουμένου δικαίως, ὥσπερ οἱ νόμοι κελεύουσιν, οὓς ὁ τιθεὶς ἐξ ἀρχῆς Σόλων, εὖνους ὦν ὑμῖν καὶ δημοτικός, οὐ μόνον τῷ γράψαι κυρίουσ ᾤετο δεῖν εἶναι, ἀλλὰ καὶ τῷ τοὺς δικάζοντας ὁμωμοκέναι...

Further proof of Solon's flexibility as a rhetorical device comes from instances where he was invoked by two parties arguing against each other. Aeschines, for example, in a speech against Ctesiphon, a client of Demosthenes, dramatically implored the jury to imagine Solon himself standing on the speaker's platform. They were to picture that philosopher and good lawgiver (ἄνδρα φιλόσοφον καὶ νομοθέτην ἀγαθόν), the very man who equipped the democracy with the best laws, and not hold the words of his archrival Demosthenes as of more weight than the laws of Solon (3.257).

Conversely, Demosthenes in *On the False Embassy* lambasts Aeschines for talking about the calm demeanor of a statue of Solon as evidence of the restraint and dignity exercised by the great orators of old, while asserting that Aeschines' character could not be further from the great lawgiver's. He remarks on the audacity of the man to

bring up Solon, who helped the Athenians defeat Salamis with his clever ploys, while contrasting Solon's deeds with Aeschines' part in the loss of Amphipolis to Philip II, allegedly because Philip II had bribed him (19. 252-4).²⁵⁴ He even calls for a reading of some of Solon's elegiac verses to demonstrate how much Solon hated people like Aeschines.

Demosthenes further demonstrates the haphazard manner in which he uses Solon, cherry-picking whatever aspect of Solon's character suits his purpose, in his *Erotic Essay* (61.49-50):

...Solon, both living and dead, was deemed worthy of the highest glory. He was not disqualified for the other honors but left behind him a memorial of his courage in the trophy of victory over the Megarians, of his cunning in the recovery of Salamis, and of general wisdom in the laws which most Greeks use to this day. Yet in spite of these great claims to distinction he set his heart upon nothing as much as becoming one of the seven sages, believing that philosophy was no reproach, but brought honor to those who pursued it, being no less wise in this very judgement than in the others in which he showed himself superior.²⁵⁵

Σόλωνά δὲ καὶ ζῶντα καὶ τελευτήσαντα μεγίστης δόξης ἤξιωμένον: ὃς οὐκ ἀπεληλαμένος τῶν ἄλλων τιμῶν, ἀλλὰ τῆς μὲν ἀνδρείας τὸ πρὸς Μεγαρέας τρόπαιον ὑπόμνημα καταλιπών, τῆς δ' εὐβουλίας τὴν Σαλαμῖνος κομιδὴν, τῆς δ' ἄλλης συνέσεως τοὺς νόμους, οἷς ἔτι καὶ νῦν οἱ πλεῖστοι τῶν Ἑλλήνων χρώμενοι διατελοῦσιν, ὅμως τοσοῦτων αὐτῷ καλῶν ὑπαρχόντων, ἐπ' οὐδενὶ μᾶλλον ἐσπούδασεν ἢ τῶν ἐπτὰ σοφιστῶν ὅπως γένηται, νομίζων τὴν φιλοσοφίαν οὐκ ὄνειδος, ἀλλὰ τιμὴν τοῖς χρωμένοις φέρειν, καλῶς ἐγνωκῶς αὐτὸ τοῦτ' οὐχ ἤττον ἢ καὶ τᾶλλ' ἐφ' οἷς διήνεγκεν.

In this passage Demosthenes lauds Solon as a military hero and a lawmaker, but claims that his greatest goal was to become a philosopher. This pretty much covers any area of

254. Demosthenes refers here to Aeschines' invocation of Solon in the speech *Against Timarchus* (Aesch. 1.25).

255. See Pelling (2006: 104-05) on the inseparability of the moral and the political sphere particularly in Herodotus' episode of Solon and Croesus. Rather, Herodotus and other authors use particular political issues to demonstrate the correct moral stance to take on issues such as tyranny, free choice, or divine necessity. See also Dodds (1973: 45) and MacLeod (1983: 28-29), discussing similar themes in the *Oresteia*.

excellence one could wish for—Solon was a polymath who encompassed every virtue, and can therefore be cited as an authority for any sort of intellectual, political, or moral endeavor.

In *Against Macartatus*, Demosthenes even compares Solon to the god Apollo when he claims that the law of Solon concerning relatives uses the same wording as an oracle of Delphi. This is in context of Theopompus and Macartatus' theft: these men do not obey the laws of Solon, which are identical to the pronouncement of the god; therefore they are defying the god by refusing to acknowledge Solon's authority (43.62-67). Further association of Solon with the divine occurs in *Against Phaenippus*, when Demosthenes in the same sentence invokes a blessing on the jury members and upon Solon, who was responsible for the law on which the jury would be deliberating (42.1). He frequently slanders his opponents' morals because they engage in behavior that runs contrary to Solon's laws, which have become inseparable from his values. Aeschines similarly conflates laws with morals in *Against Timarchus*, and invokes Solon and Drakon, who legislated the steps to be taken at each age to ensure that children grew up well, who entrusted the Athenians to care for their laws as they did their children (1.16-17).

b. Solon and Isocrates

Isocrates is even more explicit about Solon's connection to democracy.²⁵⁶ In the *Antidosis* he puts Solon as the chief of a list of great orators who brought the city prosperity. He gives him credit for setting up a government and legal code, such that "even now Athens is well satisfied with the institutions that he established" (15.232; ὅστω

256. de Blois (2006: 28) notes the tendency of Isocrates and other orators to invoke Solon's verses to depict him as a "benevolent aristocrat who supported the people but did not give them real power."

ἔτι καὶ νῦν ἀγαπᾶσθαι τὴν διοίκησιν τὴν ὑπ' ἐκείνου συνταχθεῖσαν). This seems to indicate that Isocrates is equating the democracy of his time with Solon, yet in the very same sentence he gives Cleisthenes credit for establishing "that same democracy to which the cause of Hellas owes its greatest good" (τὴν δημοκρατίαν ἐκείνην κατέστησε τὴν αἰτίαν τοῖς Ἑλλησι τῶν μεγίστων ἀγαθῶν γενομένην). This sort of confusion and inconsistency is a strong indication that Solon and Cleisthenes are figureheads, almost mythical precedents so strongly associated with democracy and morality that their very names lend authority to any argument, regardless of its internal consistency.

We see the same confusion in the *Areopagiticus*, where Isocrates gives Cleisthenes credit for restoring the democracy that Solon originated. Indeed, those who lived under Solon's constitution "performed many worthy deeds, won the admiration of all mankind, and took their place, by the common consent of the Hellenes, as the leading power of Hellas (7.17; πολλὰ καὶ καλὰ διαπραξάμενοι καὶ παρὰ πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις εὐδοκίμησαντες, παρ' ἐκόντων τῶν Ἑλλήνων τὴν ἡγεμονίαν ἔλαβον). Later in the same speech he answers the charge of trying to incite insurrection (νεωτέρων) by claiming that he is merely advocating a return to the ancestral (Solonian) constitution, which was established by impeccable democrats, and it is therefore absurd to accuse Isocrates of favoring revolution (7.59). Isocrates clearly uses Solon as a figure of stature to be summoned when needed to lend weight to statements about the good of democracy, whatever the context; however, his assertions are inconsistent from speech to speech. For instance, while in the aforementioned example, he uses Solon as a model for solving civil strife, in the *Panathenaicus* he condemns debt cancellation and land redistributions as

being symptoms of *stasis*.²⁵⁷

Isocrates uses the same sort of appeal to Solon as a moral authority in the *Antidosis* when defending himself against charges of corruption of youth through sophistry. His defense is that Solon himself was a sophist. Since the name of sophist is being dishonored by this trial, by extension the Athenians are dishonoring Solon by trying Isocrates (15.235). Further, he says that their ancestors admired sophists and envied their students, so much as to put one (Solon) at the head of the state (15.313), also naming Pericles and Themistocles as venerable sophists. The obvious implication is that since Solon was both sophist and head of state, the prosecution was not only irrational but immoral to try him, a man who took after Solon. Clearly, Isocrates is here using the terms "sophist" and "philosopher" interchangeably, despite the very different implications the two terms have elsewhere, particularly in the dialogues of Plato. Lysias uses Solon in a similar manner. In *Against Nicomachus*, he accuses Nicomachus of overstepping the bounds of his commission to restore the law code of Solon, extending his original four-month term to six years. The bulk of Lysias' argument is that Nicomachus corrupted the laws of Solon, who was chosen along with Themistocles and Pericles because their laws would be in accordance with their good characters. He lists the breaking of these laws in the same context of dishonorable activities like cowardice in warfare, embezzling, and ignoring civic obligations. He ends by comparing the wisdom of the jury's ancestors in choosing as lawgivers Solon, Pericles, and Themistocles, men who were instrumental in fashioning the democracy, as opposed to their own corruption by choosing a moral reprobate like Nicomachus to set down laws inferior to those of the lawgivers of old

257. Rosivach (1992: 154).

(30.26-28).²⁵⁸

c. Solon and Plato

One of the best and clearest examples of the blending of myth, history, literature, and politics in an appeal to Solon as an authority figure is in Plato's *Timaeus*. Plato recognizes the prevalence of oral history and the manner in which it passes down through the ages, yet criticizes this practice even while indulging in it. In his *Timaeus*, he has Critias verify the authenticity of a story of Solon visiting priests in Egypt by claiming that he had the story from his grandfather, who had it from his father, who had it from his friend Solon, who was a famous wiseman and one whose word could be trusted (20d-20e):

Listen, Socrates, to a tale which, though strange, is certainly true, as it was attested by Solon, the wisest of the seven sages. He was a relative and bosom friend of my great-grandfather, Dropides, as he himself says many times in his poems; and he told the story to Critias, my grandfather, who remembered and told it to us.

ἄκουε δὴ, ὦ Σώκρατες, λόγου μάλα μὲν ἀτόπου, παντάπασί γε μὴν ἀληθοῦς, ὡς ὁ τῶν ἑπτὰ σοφώτατος Σόλων ποτ' ἔφη. ἦν μὲν οὖν οἰκεῖος καὶ σφόδρα φίλος ἡμῖν Δρωπίδου τοῦ προπάππου, καθάπερ λέγει πολλαχοῦ καὶ αὐτὸς ἐν τῇ ποιήσει: πρὸς δὲ Κριτίαν τὸν ἡμέτερον πάππον εἶπεν, ὡς ἀπεμνημόνευεν αὐτὸς πρὸς ἡμᾶς...

This convoluted fourth or fifth-hand "proof" of authenticity, substantiated by tying a story to a famous character sometimes only peripherally related to the events being discussed, is characteristic of oral history and a common manner of adding credibility to even far-fetched happenings.²⁵⁹ Critias goes on to bolster Solon's (and thereby his grandfather's and great-grandfather's) reliability by praising his reputation as a poet. He recalls the

258. On Lysias' treatment of Nicomachus, see Bers (1975: 494-95) and Carawan (2010: 71-95).

259. See generally Hobsbawm & Ranger (1983), Hobsbawm (1983: 1-9), Thomas (1989: 13), Strauss (1993: 58-99, 181-2), Hobsbawm (1997: 11), and Shear (2011: 11-15).

boys' poetry recitations at the Apaturia festival, where he and other youths recited poems of Solon. One of the audience members judged that Solon was both the wisest of men and the noblest of poets (21c).²⁶⁰ Critias' great-grandfather agreed, and added that if Solon had been only a poet instead of a statesman, he could have been a second Homer. Therefore Solon's reputation as a sage is bolstered by his skill as a poet, and vice versa.²⁶¹

What follows is a remarkable piece of perfectly circular reasoning on the credibility of Critias' story. Critias relates Solon's tale of the Egyptian priests chiding him because the most ancient tales of the Greeks are but a drop in the bucket compared to the antiquity of the stories recorded by the Egyptians, which have been entrusted to the priestly class (23b).

It leaves you and other nations without refinement, so that you become like a baby, knowing nothing of what happened either in ancient times or now, in your land or any other. As for those genealogies of yours which you just now recounted to us, Solon, concerning your countrymen, they are no better than the tales of children...

τε καὶ ἀμούσους ἔλιπεν ὑμῶν, ὥστε πάλιν ἐξ ἀρχῆς οἶον νέοι γίγνεσθε, οὐδὲν εἰδότες οὔτε τῶν τῆδε οὔτε τῶν παρ' ὑμῖν, ὅσα ἦν ἐν τοῖς παλαιοῖς χρόνοις. τὰ γοῦν νυνδὴ γενεαλογηθέντα, ᾧ Σόλων, περὶ τῶν παρ' ὑμῖν ἃ διῆλθε, παίδων βραχὺ τι διαφέρει μύθων...

260. At first this may seem to contradict Plato's position on poetry in the *Ion* and books 2, 3, and 10 of the *Republic*, but Plato (via Socrates) mainly addresses epic and deceptions perpetrated by poets that distract listeners from knowing the truth about a virtuous and moderate lifestyle. We read in Proclus' *Timaeus*, however, that Solon was an exception because he was not a "popular" poet, but blended philosophy with composition (1.90). In the *Gorgias*, where rhetoric is cast as a species of poetry, Plato (again via Socrates) defends philosophy as a discipline from the diatribe of Calicles the sophist (486a-492c). The ultimate question here for Socrates is how one should live one's life, a question that the poems of Solon address extensively (500c). Socrates even qualifies his critique of sophistry/poetry when he specifies the existence of a noble form of rhetoric (503a-b). He elaborates on this good form of rhetoric in the *Phaedrus*, where he draws sharp distinctions between form and content of discourse (235a). It becomes obvious in the *Palinode* that, according to Plato, in order for rhetoric or poetry to be good, the poet must be a philosopher, like Solon (270c1-2).

261. Critias' praise of Solon, whose reputation as a *misotyrannos* is firmly cemented at this point in time, is somewhat ironic, since Critias was one of the reviled Thirty Tyrants who were ousted from power by the Athenians in 404. In fact Critias' association with Socrates did nothing to endear him to the Athenian public and likely contributed to the latter's condemnation and death sentence.

They proceed to inform Solon that the ancient story of the great deluge and the survival of Deucalion and Pyrrha was just the tip of the iceberg. In fact, there had been many deluges and recoveries before that of Deucalion and Pyrrha, but the Greeks as a race were too young a race to remember and pass that information on. Indeed, they did not even remember the great deeds of their ancestors, who were responsible for repelling an invasion of the citizens of the lost city of Atlantis (*Tim.* 24d-25d).

This puts the story even further removed from the present day, while at the same time shoring up its credibility even more. He makes the argument that the story of Atlantis and the great deeds of the Athenians before either recorded or mythical history is true because Solon said so. Solon was the source of the story of Atlantis from which Critias the Elder passed it down to his great-grandson, yet the story is confirmation of the fact that Solon, the wisest of the Athenians, is ignorant of history. Solon therefore confirms the truth of a story which proves that he does not know the truth, an argument which is further muddled when we consider the reputation of the Egyptians as being untrustworthy and devious.²⁶² A further consideration in Plato's "proof" of the authenticity of this story is that he is using a historical figure (Solon) to authenticate a story that was widely held to be false. Posidonius, quoted by Strabo 2.3.6, compares the story of Atlantis to the building of the Greek wall in Homer, saying, "He who invented it obliterated it, like the poet in the case of the Achaean wall."

Plato then more directly and blatantly uses Solon to give weight to his theories and present them as infallible later in the dialogue when Critias marvels that Plato's discourse of the previous day on the perfect form of a city-state agrees in every particular

262. On the Athenian perception of Egyptians as being untrustworthy, see Tarrant 2007: 66-67.

with the tale of Solon. Plato's own analysis and suggestion is thus given more weight because it has the backing of Solon, who is neither present nor alive, though again his authority is invoked third-hand from Critias' great-grandfather (*Tim.* 25e). Then, when Critias proposes to Socrates the order of the dialogue which is to follow, he again gives authority to Socrates via Solon. He explains that Timaeus is to expound on primeval man, and that he himself will tackle modern man (27a-27b),

...some of whom will have profited by the excellent education which you have given them; and then, in accordance with the tale of Solon, and with his law, we will bring them into court and make them citizens, as if they were those very Athenians whom the sacred Egyptian record has recovered from obscurity, and then we will speak of them as Athenians and fellow citizens.

παρὰ σοῦ δὲ πεπαιδευμένους διαφερόντως αὐτῶν τινας, κατὰ δὲ τὸν Σόλωνος λόγον τε καὶ νόμον εἰσαγαγόντα αὐτοὺς ὡς εἰς δικαστὰς ἡμᾶς ποιῆσαι πολίτας τῆς πόλεως τῆσδε ὡς ὄντας τοὺς τότε Ἀθηναίους, οὓς ἐμήνυσεν ἀφανεῖς ὄντας ἢ τῶν ἱερῶν γραμμάτων φήμη, τὰ λοιπὰ δὲ ὡς περὶ πολιτῶν καὶ Ἀθηναίων ὄντων ἤδη ποιεῖσθαι τοὺς λόγους.

Plato uses each aspect of Solon's character and legacy to give credence both to his stories about the past and his political analysis of the perfect state. He then melds them together in a seamless fashion, progressing from mythology to history without a break. Solon the wiseman is Solon the poet, who is Solon the politician.²⁶³ Solon the sage verifies the original premise that the Greeks have incomplete knowledge and lack antiquity in their histories. Solon's wisdom fueled his poetry, which would have placed him among the great bards had he devoted his time to writing rather than politics, yet his poetry is the medium by which he explains his political program. Finally Solon the politician corroborates Plato's own platform of civic reforms because the lawgiver

263. On connections between Solon's laws and his poetry, see Yunis (1996: 223-24), Raaflaub (1993: 68-73), and Hansen (1989: 71-99). This attitude is also reflected in *Ath. Pol.* 5-12; Plut. *Solon*.

thought of them first. We see a similar treatment of Solon in Plato's *Phaedrus*, where he details the ideal characteristics of discourse and instruction (274b-277c). He differentiates between speechwriters, poets, and politicians/lawgivers.²⁶⁴ His examples for each category are Lysias, Homer, and Solon, but he qualifies these examples by saying that writers such as these who fulfill the requirements of the universal *techné* of discourse ought not to be so pigeonholed by genre, but deserve the more generic title of philosopher.²⁶⁵

II. Conclusion

Even though he did not actually pass the package of reforms that led directly to the radical democracy, in the literature of the fourth century and later, democracy as constituted by Solon became equated with morality, and his stature as a poet and philosopher contributed to his fitness as a legislator. Further, he engaged in many activities that are distinctly oligarchical, yet somehow became part of his reputation as a democrat and/or a moderate politician whose reforms were only accidentally responsible for the democracy, based exclusively on self-justification from his own poetry.²⁶⁶ We see strong evidence via contradictions in our sources that an alternate tradition existed. This other strand of narrative suggests that Solon had far less moderate and democratically minded motives than history has handed down to us. Whether true or not, this tradition was suppressed in later literature because the triumph of democracy made Solon as

264. Plato nevertheless explicitly models his ideal lawgiver on Solon, in particular with regards to his ten years of travel after implementing his law code. Ker (2000: 326) notes, "His *theoria* turned out instead to be a mode of absence from the city according to which both he and the citizens were bound to a religious observance of the unchangeability of the new *nomoi*".

265. See further Yunis (1996: 180).

266. On Aristotle's view of Solon as a moderate who only accidentally passed reforms that led to democracy, as opposed to a fully fledged democrat, see above p. 79.

anything other than the tyrant-hating father of democracy unacceptable.

Chapter 4

Politics and Poetry: Solon and the "Language of Tyranny"

Chapters 2 and 3 examined remnants in our literary tradition alluding to stories about Solon's activities and relations with tyrants that would have appeared questionable to democratic partisans. Here we shall examine the same sorts of intimations that appear in Solon's own writing, including the very poems in which he vehemently and overtly denies any connection with tyranny. This chapter will demonstrate that the poetic language Solon uses to describe political concepts as well as his own motives suggests a similarity to the way contemporary tyrants in other parts of Greece solved problems of *stasis* in their own states.²⁶⁷ I argue that Solon's poetry was a platform for reinforcing the notion that he was working in the best interests of all strata of society, while at the same time suggesting that he alone was qualified to solve the civil crisis by means of the extraordinary powers that had been voted to him. At the same time, though, he had to be very careful to avoid the label of tyrant, lest he be tarred with the same brush as the would-be usurper Cylon—from whose attempted tyranny the need for a *diallektes* partly arose in the first place.²⁶⁸

Many studies of archaic poetry focus on either the political developments of the seventh and sixth centuries that led to the so-called "rise of the *polis*," or comparison with the epic poetry that in turn colored interpretations of elegy as a developing genre.²⁶⁹ This picture of the evolution of the *polis* went hand in hand with a perceived literary turn away

267. See Irwin (2005: 206), esp. n. 2.

268. See ch. 1, pp. 7-9.

269. On elegy as a reflection of the rise of the *polis*, see Nagy (1990: , Raaflaub (1993: 41-105) and (1993), and Davies (1997: 24-48).

from the all-important values of *arete* so vital to Homeric heroes. Rather than descriptions of the *aristeia* of individual warriors seen in the *Iliad*, martial poets like Tyrtaeus exhorted the citizen hoplite soldier, who fought in a phalanx that depended on fellow citizens for success, to feats of bravery in battle.²⁷⁰ As such, Solon's political and didactic poetry rests uneasily in this tradition, at some times seeming to fit into the tradition of martial exhortation found in epic poetry, and at others falling into a somewhat disorganized justification of the motives behind his political reforms, bespeaking a sort of nebulous bridge between epic and archaic lyric.²⁷¹ Scholars often saw Solon's main literary contribution as being an indication of an intermediate phase between the "Homeric ethos" and the more abstract, civic-minded philosophy of the fifth century.²⁷² As mentioned in the introduction, scholars thought that the real value of Solon's poems was as a source for the development of Athenian law and law codes more generally, rather than as a valuable literary endeavor like those of Alcaeus, Archilochus, or other poets.²⁷³ However, this interpretation does not take into account the political complexities of archaic politics, a fact that is being recognized more and more in modern scholarship.²⁷⁴ In 1964, K. J. Dover first challenged this simple picture of a literary parallel to the rise of the *polis* reflected in lyric poetry, describing ways in which poetry was an effective means of espousing political agendas, with special reference to

270. See Gerber (1997: 102-07) and Adkins (1985: 67-92).

271. Fowler (1987: 30) cautions against expressions of generic sentiments and phrases being misinterpreted as direct allusion.

272. As formulated by Jaeger (1966) and Snell (1982).

273. Ch. 1, p. 25-26.

274. As Irwin (2005: 6) notes, "Historical developments so visible from a diachronic perspective often provide too crude a basis to contribute to finer interpretations of the poems themselves or their interaction with their contemporary context."

Archilochus.²⁷⁵

Archilochus was not alone in using poetry to make political statements. While Solon is unique in that both his own poetry and external writings about his life and reforms have survived, various contemporary tyrants also composed poetry. The writings of Pittacus, Periander, and Cleobulus (to name a few) are not preserved, but Diogenes Laertius credits these tyrant-poets with similar subject matter and many of the same themes as the laws and poems of Solon. Pittacus, for example, wrote poetry on prudence, hard work, the supremacy of law, and the need to accept one's lot in life.²⁷⁶ Cleobulus focused on marriage, education, industry versus laziness, exhortations to virtue, justice, household management, proper conduct for the prosperous and the poor, and the folly of hubris.²⁷⁷ Periander wrote a 2,000-line didactic poem, part of which explicitly outlined proper behavior for tyrants. He said that tyrants should concentrate on making citizens loyal through benevolence rather than threats, noting that it was just as dangerous to be dispossessed by force as to retire of one's own accord, calling to mind Solon's (possibly involuntary) *theoria*. Periander further cautioned against greed, rashness, and the transience of wealth.²⁷⁸

Perhaps most interestingly, according to Diogenes, Periander admitted that democracy was better than tyranny, though this is probably the same sort of retroactive attribution of democratic tendencies that we see happening with Solon.²⁷⁹ West even

275. Dover (1964: 181-212).

276. Diog. Laert. 1.78.

277. Diog. Laert. 1.89-91. Diogenes also describes the literary efforts of Cleobulus' daughter Cleobuline, who composed riddles in hexameter that were so well-known that Cratinus named a play after her.

278. Diog. Laert. 1.97.

279. Ibid.

includes Pittacus and Periander in his corpus of elegiac poets.²⁸⁰ While we do not have a source telling us that Peisistratos actually wrote poetry, he is frequently credited with introducing the recitation of Homer to the Panathenaic games. Some sources even say that he inserted verses into the *Iliad* giving Athens a presence, if not prominence, in the Trojan War.²⁸¹ Further, Peisistratos' son Hippias supposedly patronized the famous poets Anacreon and Simonides. Regardless of the truth of the matter, the persistence of these rumors in antiquity proves that the Athenian tyrants' interest in and active involvement with poetry was, at the very least, believable. The same argument applies to Hippias' patronage of poets, which even the skeptic Davison admits is "at worst not impossible."²⁸² Thus we see a common thread between archaic tyrants and Solon in the way they used literature to fashion their own legacies. In Solon's case, it worked particularly well. The man we remember is the man he describes in his poetry: philosopher, quasi-martyr, and *misotyrannos*.

There are several terms in Solon's poetry that are not typical of elegiac and lyric poets who did not engage in politics. Solon's use of the words κόπος (satiety or surfeit), δίκη (justice), γέρας (award of honor), and κλέος (fame), together with his evocation of wolf imagery (λύκος), adds a dimension that is arguably more appropriate when considered in light of contemporary or near-contemporary tyrants. By examining his poetry in the larger political context of archaic Greece, we will get a clearer picture of his political program and the strategies by which he proposed to reform the Athenian

280. West (1972).

281. For a brief and skeptical view, see Slings (2000: 74-76), with bibliography; for the contrary view, see Jensen (1980). Davison (1955: 1-21), while arguing against Peisistratid interpolation, gives an excellent summary of the ancient and modern authors' arguments for and against up until 1955.

282. Davison (1955: 11).

constitution, and the reasons that he was so eager to avoid the label of tyrant while nevertheless employing the same sorts of reforms common to contemporary archaic tyrants.²⁸³

I. κόρος: Too Much of a Good Thing?

The word κόρος occurs in epic poetry, often translated as "satiety," or "one's fill."²⁸⁴ In the seventh century, κόρος had mostly positive implications. We do not find the negative meaning of "greed" or "insatiability" until Solon's poetry.²⁸⁵ In epic, Homer and Hesiod always associate κόρος with a positive process that has natural limits, and halts when those limits are reached.²⁸⁶ Further, in epic as well as in other archaic poetry, the word always refers to the satisfaction of physical desires like food, sleep, or material comforts, while in Solon (and at times Theognis), acquisition of wealth has no natural physiological limits.²⁸⁷ For example, Hesiod in the *Theogony* (593) complains that women are not willing to share "cursed poverty" (οὐλομένη πενίη) with their men, but are quite willing to share surfeit or plenty (κόρος). He uses the verb form κορέννυμι in the *Works and Days* in the positive sense of "satisfy, fill up" when describing the pleasure of drinking wine while sitting in the shade, once his desire for food has been completely satisfied (593; κεκορημένον ἦτορ ἔδωδῆς). He uses the same word almost identically elsewhere when he refers to "being filled" with grain (33), wine (368), and a meal (fr.

283. For modern criticism about the quality of Solon's poetry, see ch. 1, pp. 25-28.

284. On uses of the word κόρος, see Anhalt (1993: 82 ff.), Balot (2001: 88-93), Mülke (2002: 114), and particularly Irwin (2005: 207-20).

285. Balot (2001: 94) argues that Solon is the first to take the notion of greed out of the realm of the individual and place it in the context of politics. On the influence of Solon's notions of greed in later political thought, see Balot (2001: 89-90).

286. E.g., Odysseus speaks of men ceasing warfare once Zeus declares that a surfeit has been reached (19.221-224). See *Il.* 13.633-639, 19.221; *Od.* 4.102-3. For the use of the word in Homer and Hesiod, see Helm (1993: 5-7).

287. Balot (2001: 90). See also Aristotle's discussion of material vs. non-material acquisitiveness (*Pol.* 1256b26-1258a14).

274.2). For Hesiod, it is not κόρος but its opposite, ἀκόρητος, that means "insatiate" or "not able to be satisfied." The latter occurs three times, all in the *Shield of Herakles*, as part of the phrase ἀκόρητος ἀυτῆς, "insatiate of the war-cry" (346, 433, 459).²⁸⁸

Homer also uses both the noun and the verb to describe satisfaction. In the *Iliad*, the verb refers to satiety of food and drink (in humans and animals; 8.379, 13.831, 17.241, 11.562, 16.747, 19.167, 22.509), of work (11.87), of war (13.635), of being confined behind the walls of Troy (18.287), and of grief (22.427). The noun only occurs twice, referring to sleep, sex, music and dancing (13.636-637), and battle (19.221). We see the same uses in the *Odyssey*, with even more explicit indications that κόρος leads to a cessation of a particular activity. The verb form refers to satiety of grief (4.541, 10.449); food, music, and wine (8.98, 10.411, 14.28, 14.46, 14.456, 18.372); and contests (23.350). Menelaus gives the clearest explanation when he says, "very often as I sit here in our palace, I yield my heart to sorrow, and then another time, I cease; for surfeit (κόρος) of melancholy lamentation comes swiftly (4.101-103; πολλάκις ἐν μεγάροισι καθήμενος ἡμετέροισιν | ἄλλοτε μὲν τε γόῳ φρένα τέρπομαι, ἄλλοτε δ' αὖτε | παύομαι: αἰψηρὸς δὲ κόρος κρυεροῖο γόοιο).

The Homeric Hymns do not contain the noun κόρος, but they do give the same connotation to the verb form, κορέννυμι.²⁸⁹ In the *Hymn to Demeter* (174-175), the daughters of Celeus run to invite the disguised goddess home, "as young deer or heifers in springtime leap through a meadow, satisfied in their hearts with fodder" (174-175; αἶ δ' ὄστ' ἦ ἔλαφοι ἢ πόρτιες εἶαρος ὄρη | ἄλλοντ' ἄν λειμῶνα κορεσσάμεναι φρένα

288. See Anhalt (1993: 82-83).

289. On κόρος in the Homeric Hymns, see Helm (1993: 7).

φορβῆ). By contrast, in the *Hymn to Aphrodite*, the adjective ἀκόρητοι negatively describes leopards as "insatiable of devouring deer" (71). The universal implication is that when a man reaches his κόρος of a thing, he wants no more of it. Conversely, the adjective ἀκόρητος is the word connoting the sort of unbridled grasping that Solon describes using κόρος in frs. 4, 4c, and 6.²⁹⁰

The first example of the word κόρος in Solon comes from fr. 4. This poem addresses the welfare of the *polis* as a whole, but is sometimes seen as "proof" that Solon mostly blames the wealthy for the *stasis* (as in *Ath. Pol.* 5.3). After speaking of the "unjust mind" of the leading citizens (ἡγεμόνων ἄδικος νόος), Solon explains how the hubris of the wealthy will lead to much suffering: "For they do not understand how to hold back their satiety, nor how to arrange the present revelry of the feast peacefully" (4.9-10; οὐ γὰρ ἐπίστανται κατέχειν **κόρον** οὐδὲ παρούσας | εὐφροσύνας κοσμεῖν δαιτὸς ἐν ἡσυχίῃ). This is the first preserved instance where the word κόρος appears negatively, as something that has been pushed beyond its natural limit. Solon here blames the wealthy for turning something that should have been joyful (εὐφροσύνη) into a prelude to disaster because of their greed.²⁹¹

Solon continues to use the word κόρος in a negative context in fr. 4c:

You who satisfied yourself of an excess of material goods,
having soothed your strong heart in your chest,
moderate your over-bearing mind; for we will not
be persuaded, nor will these things turn out right for you.

ὕμεῖς δ' ἡσυχάσαντες ἐνὶ φρεσὶ καρτερὸν ἦτορ,

290. For further examples, see Anhalt (1993: 83-85).

291. See Irwin (2005: 209-11). While many commentators have noted Solon's odd negative usage, not many have ventured to explain its singularity. See Irwin (2005: 210, esp. n. 15), and Anhalt (1993: 79-95). Adkins (1985: 114) merely notes that the word here is "pejorative," with no further comment. See Mülke (2002: 114-15) for further bibliography.

οἱ πολλῶν ἀγαθῶν ἐς **κόρον** [ἠ]λάσατε,
 ἐν μετρίοισι τίθεσθε μέγαν νόον· οὔτε γὰρ ἡμεῖς
 πεισόμεθ', οὔθ' ὑμῖν ἄρτια τα[ῦ]τ' ἔσεται.

And in fr. 6, he specifies that *κόρος* is the mother of *ὑβρις*:

Thus the people would best follow their leaders,
 not given too much freedom nor bound by too much restraint.
 For excess begets *ὑβρις*, whenever great wealth follows
 men whose understanding is unfit.

δῆμος δ' ὧδ' ἂν ἄριστα σὺν ἡγεμόνεσσιν ἔποιτο,
 μήτε λίην ἀνεθείς μήτε βιαζόμενος·
τίκτει γὰρ κόρος ὑβριν, ὅταν πολὺς ὄλβος ἔπηται
 ἀνθρώποις ὀπόσοις μὴ νόος ἄρτιος ἦι.²⁹²

In these three fragments, Solon's indictments describe a slippery slope: if not even the leaders can restrain their *κόρος*, the *demos*, which is even less equipped in intellect to deal with such excess, has no hope at all of escaping disaster.

κόρος and *ὑβρις* are both common words in Homer and Hesiod, but Solon is the first to depart from poetic tradition and associate the two in this way. Rather, in Homer, *ὑβρις* is associated with being *ἀκόρητος*, as in Menelaus' complaint to Zeus about the Trojans' fury in battle (*Il.* 13.633-639):

How you show favor to men filled with *ὑβρις*,
 to the Trojans, whose ferocity is always reckless,
 who cannot be sated of destructive war!
 Of all things there is *κόρος*, both of sleep and of love,
 of sweet song and blameless dancing,
 and of these someone would think there would be more of a desire
 than for war. But the Trojans are insatiable (*ἀκόρητοι*) of battle!

οἷον δὴ ἄνδρεςσι χαρίζεαι ὑβριστῆσι
 Τρωσίν, τῶν μένος αἰὲν ἀτάσθαλον, **οὐδὲ δύνανται**
 φυλόπιδος **κορέσασθαι** ὁμοίου πτολέμοιο.
 πάντων μὲν **κόρος** ἐστὶ καὶ ὕπνου καὶ φιλότητος
 μολπῆς τε γλυκερῆς καὶ ἀμύμονος ὀρηθμοῖο,

292. These two lines are also attributed to Theognis (*Thgn.* 1.153).

τῶν πέρ τις καὶ μᾶλλον ἐέλδεται ἐξ ἔρον εἶναι
ἢ πολέμου· Τρῶες δὲ μάχης ἀκόρητοι ἕασιν.

Notice that ὕβρις is associated with recklessness (ἀτασθαλία) and lack of satiety here.

Homer here underlines the impropriety of the Trojans' bloodlust with the verb, saying that they are unable to get their fill (κορέσασθαι) of war, and then emphasizes the point further by explaining that any sane person knows when enough is enough and reaches a κόρος of all things. The need for moderation is the same idea that appears in Solon's poetry, but the use of the word κόρος is almost completely reversed.²⁹³

The next earliest indication of κόρος in the Solonian sense is in Theognis, Solon's younger contemporary. Theognis uses the term six times, two of which are doublets of Solonian material.²⁹⁴ Like other poets, he uses the verb to mean "to satisfy" (e.g., 1.229, 2.1249, 2.1269), but agrees with Solon that κόρος produces ὕβρις (1.152). He also claims that κόρος is destructive (1.693), even more so than hunger (1.605); he calls it a bane and the worst evil for mortals (1.1174-5). But while Theognis criticizes κόρος, he distinguishes between κόρος in general and the κόρος associated with affluence, saying that "there is κόρος of everything except wealth" (596; πλὴν πλούτου παντὸς χρήματός ἐστι κόρος). Since nothing in the Theognidean corpus demonstrably predates Solon, the similar connotations of the word suggest that one or more of the authors of the *Theognidea* was familiar with Solon's poetry.²⁹⁵ At any rate, it is clear that Solon was not alone among his contemporaries in his perception about the fine line between satiety and insatiability. Whether the idea began with Solon or not, it seems to have come into

293. Irwin (2005: 213).

294. *Thgn.* 1.153, 596, 605, 693, 1174, 1175. Of five passages in the *Theognidia* with double attributions with Solon, two deal with κόρος (*Thgn.* 153-4 = Solon 6.3-4; *Thgn.* 227-32 = Solon 13.71-76). On the transmission of the Theognidean corpus, see ch. 1, p. 25 n. 64.

295. See Noussia-Fantuzzi (2010: 55-65), with citations.

existence around the time Solon wrote. Even if this negative notion of κόρος did not originate with Solon, it is no stretch to suggest that he at the very least helped promulgate this reading.²⁹⁶

After Solon, κόρος retains its negative connotations, rather than reverting to its Homeric and Hesiodic usages.²⁹⁷ Pindar nearly always uses it in a negative sense, often accompanied by αἰανής ("wearisome," or "heavy").²⁹⁸ Especially evocative of disaster is Pindar's description of Tantalus at *Olymp.* 1.56-57: "Tantalus was unable to digest his great good fortune, and with his insolence/arrogance (κόρος) he seized overwhelming destruction" (ἦν Τάνταλος οὔτος: ἀλλὰ γὰρ καταπέψαι | μέγαν ὄλβον οὐκ ἐδυνάσθη, **κόρω** δ' ἔλεν ἅταν ὑπέροπλον). Herodotus also relates κόρος to ὕβρις in the Solonian sense, though his genealogy is reversed, with ὕβρις being the child of κόρος. In an oracle, he specifies, "Heavenly Justice will quell mighty ὕβρις, son of κόρος, raging terribly, intending to devour all things" (8.77; δῖα δίκη σβέσσει κρατερὸν κόρον, ὕβριος υἱόν, | δεινὸν μαιμώντα, δοκεῖντ' ἀνὰ πάντα πίεσθαι). Thus we see that in the fifth century the connotation that Solon gives the word, that of insatiability, prevails over the earlier, more positive implications that the word generally has in epic.

Why did this definition change so drastically from the seventh century to the sixth? Irwin suggests that the difference lies in the point of view of the one possessing κόρος. It is this class perspective that makes Solon's usage unique among archaic poets. He clearly

296. On the use of κόρος in Theognis, see Anhalt (1993: 90-91).

297. Tyrtaeus 11.10 and Alcman 1.64-65 seem to adhere to the Homeric usage, but they both predate Solon. Alcman, however, makes the connection with riches by speaking of the κόρος of purple, a color symbolic of wealth, though without the overt and explicit connotation of greed. See Helm (1993: 5-11).

298. See *Pyth.* 1.82, *Nem.* 10.20, *Isthm.* 3.1; Other than *Nem.* 7.52-53, where the word seems to be neutral and imply a limit, Pindar consistently uses the word negatively, as opposed to its use in hexameter poetry. For a study of the word κόρος in Pindar, see Mackie (2003: 9-37).

sees it as a word denoting rigid social stratification, and the impropriety that he highlights reflects a view from the lower classes, thus indicating the sort of political debate involved in what Irwin calls "tyrannical discourse."²⁹⁹ In pre-Solonian usages, a positive meaning for κόρος is promulgated by people who possess (or should possess) the κόρος—warriors, κόρος of battle; farmers, κόρος of work; the bereaved, κόρος of grief; etc. Solon describes a view of κόρος from below, from those who have no claim to κόρος. From the point of view of the have-nots, κόρος is limited to the wealthy, who are then free to commit the acts of ὕβρις that Solon describes in his poetry. Those aristocrats who possess κόρος are in a position to direct social and political affairs as they see fit. This is a recipe for *stasis* among disaffected elements of society that is consistent with what we know of the political unrest that led to Solon's appointment as extraordinary archon, as well as the conditions under which tyranny was likely to arise.³⁰⁰ Solon's poetry actively encourages this view "from below," which is entirely appropriate within the phenomenon of tyranny.³⁰¹

II. βίη and δίκη: An Uneasy Alliance?

In poem 36, Solon claims to combine force and justice in carrying out his promises to the *demos*: "I joined force with justice, accomplishing these things with my own strength, and I delivered what I promised" (36.15-17; ταῦτα μὲν κράτει | ὁμοῦ βίην τε καὶ δίκην ξυναρμόσας | ἔρεξα, καὶ διήλθον ὡς ὑπεσχόμεν). Justice is not an unusual topic for archaic poetry; it is especially prominent in Hesiod. But Solon's view of δίκη is an unusually violent one. In Hesiod, force and justice are fundamentally opposed

299. Irwin (2005: 210-11).

300. See ch. 1, pp. 40 ff.

301. Irwin (2005: 218-20).

concepts. For example, Hesiod cautions Perses, "You, too, pay heed to justice; forget violence entirely" (*Op.* 275; καί νυ δίκης ἐπάκουε, βίης δ' ἐπιλήθεο πάμπαν). The *Theogony* even gives the two concepts different genealogies. In this work, Βίη and Κράτος are the children of Styx (385), while Δίκη is the daughter of Themis and Zeus (902).³⁰²

Homer also views βίη negatively, in direct opposition to δίκη. In the so-called "Hesiodic simile" of the *Iliad*, δίκη and βίη stand opposed: "Those who distribute crooked judgments by force in the agora and drive out justice, heedless of the vengeance of the gods" (16.387-388; οἱ βίη εἰν ἀγορῇ σκολιάς κρίνωσι θέμιστας, | ἐκ δὲ δίκην ἐλάσωσι θεῶν ὅπιν οὐκ ἀλέγοντες). In the *Odyssey*, βίη is equated with ὕβρις when describing the injustices committed by the suitors, "whose ὕβρις and violence reach the iron sky" (15.329 = 17.565; τῶν ὕβρις τε βίη τε σιδήρεον οὐρανὸν ἵκει). Βίη also describes activities of the suitors that earn Odysseus' revenge (3.216, 11.118, 16.255, 17.540, 23.31), and represents the behavior of the Cyclops (9.476, 12.210). Even though Odysseus' actions are frequently violent, they are never described as βίη; instead, he distributes justice. For Hesiod and Homer, βίη and δίκη are opposing concepts, never joined in a positive context.³⁰³

Therefore, Solon's claim of "fitting together force with justice" (ὁμοῦ βίην τε καὶ δίκην ξυναρμόσας) departs from poetic precedents from which his description of δίκη elsewhere draws.³⁰⁴ However, while βίη joined with δίκη is not usually found in poetry

302. See Irwin (2005: 222) for the presence of βίη vs. δίκη in the *Theogony*; see also *Thgn.* 346, 677, 835, 371, and 651 for juxtaposition of βίη and ὕβρις.

303. For further analysis of these terms in Hesiod and Homer, see Irwin (2005: 221-23).

304. See also Balot (2001: 97-98) on Solon's combination of force with justice.

prior to Solon, it *is* often present in narratives about tyrants, who frequently use δίκη as a means of winning popularity with the *demos* and as an effective way of gaining power.³⁰⁵ Perhaps the foremost example is the story of Deioeces in the first book of Herodotus (1.96-100).³⁰⁶ Deioeces became king at the behest of the people because of his harsh but fair judgments, yet his justice remained equitable even after he gained autocratic power. Herodotus even tells us that Deioeces gained his tyranny because of his reputation for δίκη (1.96.1-2).³⁰⁷ His entire tyranny was characterized by his penchant for justice, which Herodotus tells us was severe, "When he had established his affairs and secured himself in the tyranny, he was harsh in guarding justice" (1.100.1; ἐπεῖτε δὲ ταῦτα διεκόσμησε καὶ ἐκράτυνε ἑωυτὸν τῇ τυραννίδι, ἣν τὸ δίκαιον φυλάσσων χαλεπός). While Deioeces is described as χαλεπός, rather than as specifically employing βίη, the point remains that, not unlike Odysseus, his harshness was part of his justice and was opposed to ὕβρις, particularly since the men with whom Deices is harsh are described as ὑβρίζοντα. His reputation for being χαλεπός has the same sort of opposition between βίη and ὕβρις that is found in the *Odyssey*.

We also see a strong association of violence with justice in Herodotus' story of Cypselus. Cypselus was the son of Labda, the crippled daughter of a member of the Bacchiad family, which was the ruling clan of Corinth at the time. Her father married her to a non-Bacchiad, and during her pregnancy, Cypselus' eventual ascendancy as tyrant was foretold in a series of oracles. In the first, the Delphic priestess told his father that his

305. See Irwin (2005: 224), Salmon (1997: 32-38), and McGlew (1993: 52-86) on tyrants' associations with justice. For tyrants' legislative activities more generally, see pp. 146-152 below.

306. For an historical treatment of Dioces, see Bichler (2000: 235-37).

307. On which see McGlew (1993: 67).

child would be "a stone that will fall on the ruling men and bring justice to Corinth" (Hdt. 5.92.2; ὀλοοίτροχον ἐν δὲ πεσεῖται ἀνδράσι μουνάρχοισι, δικαιοῦσαι δὲ Κόρινθον). The second oracle reinforces the association of Cypselus with violence directed against unjust rulers: "An eagle has conceived in the rocks, and will give birth to a lion, mighty and savage, who will weaken the knees of many." (5.93; αἰετὸς ἐν πέτρῃσι κύει, τέξει δὲ λέοντα | καρτερὸν ὠμηστήν: πολλῶν δ' ὑπὸ γούνατα λύσει). This implies that Cypselus would repair the city-state by punishing it, strongly associating violence with justice.³⁰⁸ Pausanias describes an interesting visual representation of this concept on the so-called Chest of Cypselus at Olympia, on which Δίκη is actually physically beating Ἄδικία (5.18.2). Likewise, the oracle predicting the Orthagorid tyranny warns the Sicyonians that they will be "ruled by a scourge" for a century.³⁰⁹ Plutarch more explicitly relates that tyranny to justice, telling us that the gods sent the Orthagorids to punish the Sicyonians for the crime of murdering a victor in the Pythian games (*Mor.* 553a).

Theognis also joins force with justice when speaking of tyrants; in fact, in his advice to Cynus, just retribution is a central feature of a tyrant's platform. In his formulation, the citizens are good, but their hubristic leaders are crooked and in need of "straightening" by a powerful leader who will step in and end corruption (38-51):

Cynus, this city is pregnant, and I am afraid lest it give birth to a man
 who will be a straightener of our wicked ὕβρις.
 For the townsmen are still prudent, but the leaders
 are inclined to fall into great wickedness.
 In no way, Cynus, do good men destroy the city;
 but whenever it pleases the bad sort to commit ὕβρις
 and they destroy the *demos* and give justice to unjust men
 for the sake of private gain and power.

308. Ibid.

309. Diod. 8.24.

Do not expect that city to remain unshaken for very long,
 not even if it now lies very much in tranquility,
 whenever such things become dear to base men—
 that is, the profit coming with public evil.
 From this arises *stasis*, and the slaughter of kinsmen, and monarchs—
 May this never be pleasing to the city.

Κύρνε, κύει πόλις ἦδε, δέδοικα δὲ μὴ τέκηι ἄνδρα
 εὐθυντῆρα κακῆς ὕβριος ἡμετέρης.
 ἄστοι μὲν γὰρ ἔθ' οἶδε σαόφρονες, ἡγεμόνες δὲ
 τετράφαται πολλὴν εἰς κακότητα πεσεῖν.
 οὐδεμίαν πω, Κύρν', ἀγαθοὶ πόλιν ὤλεσαν ἄνδρες,
 ἀλλ' ὅταν ὑβρίζειν τοῖσι κακοῖσιν ἄδη
 δῆμόν τε φθείρουσι δίκας τ' ἀδίκουσι διδοῦσιν
 οἰκείων κερδέων εἵνεκα καὶ κράτεος·
 ἔλπεο μὴ δηρὸν κείνην πόλιν ἀτρεμέ' ἦσθαι,
 μηδ' εἰ νῦν κεῖται πολλῆι ἐν ἡσυχίῃ,
 εὗτ' ἂν τοῖσι κακοῖσι φίλ' ἀνδράσι ταῦτα γένηται,
 κέρδεα δημοσίῳ σὺν κακῶι ἐρχόμενα.
 ἐκ τῶν γὰρ στάσιές τε καὶ ἔμφυλοι φόνοι ἀνδρῶν·
 μούναρχοι δὲ πόλει μήποτε τῆϊδε ἄδοι.

We have here a clear statement by a contemporary of Solon that the responsibility for the immorality and *stasis* that plagues the city falls on the leaders, the *hegemones*, not the *demos*. Though Theognis does not use the word "tyrant" to describe the "straightener" (εὐθυντῆρες) of ἀδικία, it is unlikely that anyone not possessed of great personal and political power would have the influence or ability to implement sweeping changes to the state, and in fact he does specify that the result of *stasis* is a sole ruler (μούναρχος), whatever title is ultimately attached.³¹⁰ Thus we confirm that, in Theognis' formulation, tyrants/autocrats/monarchs arise as a means of bringing justice for hubristic acts,

310. Theognis more overtly lambasts tyrants, saying, "Cyrnus, honor and fear the gods, for this keeps a man from doing or saying impious things; but to destroy by whatever means possible a tyrant who devours the people, is in no way cause for vengeance from the gods" (1179-82 ; Κύρνε, θεοὺς αἰδοῦ καὶ δεῖδιθι· τοῦτο γὰρ ἄνδρα | εἶργει μῆθ' ἔρδειν μῆτε λέγειν ἀσεβῆ. | δημοφάγον δὲ τύραννον ὅπως ἐθέλεις κατακλῖναι | οὐ νέμεσις πρὸς θεῶν γίνεται οὐδεμία). However, the tyrant to be destroyed is a δημοφάγον, a "devourer of the people," which does not preclude the possibility of good tyrants. See p. 128 below on similar qualification of good vs. bad tyrants in Alcaeus. On the shifting terminology describing tyrants, see Andrewes (1956: 20-30), Hegy (1965: 303-18), Parker (1998: 145-72), Anderson (2005: 173-210) (who actually suggests that tyrants required sanction from the aristocracy), and Noussia-Fantuzzi (2010: 428-29).

sometimes by violent means.³¹¹

Solon actually describes himself as an εὐθυντήρ immediately after he claims that he has joined δίκη and βίη, saying, "I wrote laws for the base and the noble man alike, applying straight justice to each" (36.18-20; θεσμοὺς δ' ὁμοίως τῶι κακῶι τε κάγαθῶι | εὐθεΐαν εἰς ἕκαστον ἀρμόσας δίκην | ἔγραψα). Likewise, in poem 4, he claims that he has "straightened crooked justice" (4.36; εὐθύνει δὲ δίκας σκολιάς). While δίκη was present in both epic and elegy, its combination with βίη would likely have evoked associations with tyrants in Solon's audience. Indeed, in the larger context of fr. 36, Solon claims that he upheld his promises to the *demos*, while giving the implicit suggestion that he accomplished all the things a tyrant would have done, even though he is careful not to use the word "tyrant."³¹² He explains (36.18-22),

I wrote laws for the base man and the good man alike
fitting straight justice to each;
but had someone else taken up the goad,
some evil-minded man greedy for gain,
he would not have restrained the people.

θεσμοὺς δ' ὁμοίως τῶι κακῶι τε κάγαθῶι
εὐθεΐαν εἰς ἕκαστον ἀρμόσας δίκην
ἔγραψα. κέντρον δ' ἄλλος ὡς ἐγὼ λαβών,
κακοφραδῆς τε καὶ φιλοκτῆμων ἀνὴρ,
οὐκ ἂν κατέσχε δῆμον.

The fact that Solon calls his special powers a "goad" or "sharp object" (κέντρον), and seems to equate this with his δίκη in the previous line, is further suggestive of an association between justice and some sort of force. Irwin comments, "The language of fr. 36 effectively describes the speaker's actions in rhetoric that blurs the distinction between

311. Irwin (2005: 225-27).

312. Irwin (2005: 228-29).

what he in fact did do and what was expected and desired by the *demos* as he portrays them, that is, the assumption of a tyranny" (2005: 229).

Solon was so effective at controlling his own reception as a *misotyrannos* that later commentators have tried to explain away similarities between the word choices of Solon and similar language associated with archaic tyrants with an appeal to generic language. Nagy argues that the similarities between Solon's language and the description of a nascent tyrant in Theognis demonstrates that there was a panhellenic and "universalized" language of elegy, suggesting that Solon's use of the language would otherwise be inappropriate because of his anti-tyrannical stance.³¹³ Irwin argues, I think rightly, that rather than "accidentally" using such language, Solon deliberately exploited the already-prevailing association between tyrants, violence, and justice. Since tyrants frequently came to power by ending the arbitrary rule of aristocrats, such representations of harsh but fair justice made them both attractive to the lower classes and frightening to the elite, an appropriate combination considering the nature of the *stasis* at Athens.³¹⁴

III. Honor to the People: δῆμῳ ἔδωκα τόσον γέρας

In fr. 5, Solon reverses the usual formula by giving "honors to the people" (δῆμῳ γέρας), a distinction reserved elsewhere for gods, kings, and heroes. This section examines the implications of the *demos* being the recipient of privileges. I follow Irwin in arguing that by inverting this formula, Solon underscores his position relative to the *demos*; namely, that because he is the one who does the giving, he implies tyrannical authority, since no one else in his position would have given the *demos* the honor and

313. Nagy (1983: 84); cf. Rihll (1989: 283 n. 2).

314. Irwin (2005: 225-30).

consideration that he has:³¹⁵

To the people I gave so much privilege as to suffice,
neither taking away their honor nor offering them more;
and those who had power and were magnificent in their wealth,
I made sure they had nothing shameful.
I stood throwing a mighty shield around both sides,
not permitting either side to win unjustly.

δήμῳ μὲν γὰρ ἔδωκα τόσον γέρας ὅσσον ἐπαρκεῖν,
τιμῆς οὔτ' ἀφελὼν οὔτ' ἐπορεξάμενος·
οἱ δ' εἶχον δύναμιν καὶ χρήμασιν ἦσαν ἀγητοί,
καὶ τοῖς ἐφρασάμην μηδὲν ἀεικέες ἔχειν·
ἔστην δ' ἀμφιβαλὼν κρατερὸν σάκος ἀμφοτέροισι,
νικᾶν δ' οὐκ εἶασ' οὐδετέρους ἀδίκως.

In this poem, Solon tells us that he gave privilege to the *demos*, while at the same time protecting the wealthy. He ends with the famous metaphor of throwing a shield around all of the people, defending rich and poor alike from injustice. Solon's use of ἀμφιβαλὼν here is similar to Athena throwing her aegis around the shoulders of Achilles at *Il.*

18.203-6: ἀμφὶ δ' Ἀθήνη | ὅμοις ἰφθίμοισι βάλ' αἰγίδα θυσσανόεσσαν. If we extend this allusion, Solon plays the part of Athena, while the *demos* is cast in the role of the hero Achilles, who receives honors directly from the gods. This image and phrasing goes against all poetic precedent; in Homer especially, γέρας is earmarked for warriors, kings, and immortals. γέρας, along with τιμή, refers to that which is apportioned to immortals in the *Theogony*, and both the *Odyssey* and the *Works and Days* associate γέρας with honors given to kings.³¹⁶ In the *Iliad*, γέρας is given either to gods or heroes.³¹⁷ In fact, the first

315. As has been noted by, among others, Linforth (1919: 180), Anhalt (1993: 100-01), Balot (2001: 87-88), Noussia (2001: 268-69), and Mülke (2002: 184-85). See also Irwin (2005: 230-37).

316. *Thgn.* 81.201, 393-396; *Op.* 126; *Od.* 4.197, 7.10, 7.150, 11.175, 11.184, 11.534, 15.522, 24.190, 24.296. The word appears in a slightly different context in 20.297. Ctesippus chides the suitors that Odysseus-as-beggar deserves a stranger-gift, no matter his station, because he is a guest of Telemachus. This is a situation in which γέρας is meant for a man of low station, though of course the audience knows that the "beggar" is really a king.

317. *Il.* 1.118, 120, 123, 133, 135, 138, 161, 163, 167, 185, 276, 356, 507; 2.240; 4.49, 323; 9.111, 344,

book of the *Iliad* is almost entirely concerned with the injury done to Achilles' *τίμη* when Agamemnon stole the *γέρας* given to him by rest of the Greeks, attesting to the centrality of this theme in the epic. Further, the *demos* is always the party giving, never receiving, the honor. The closest connection to the use of *γέρας* in Solon 5 is the scene in the *Odyssey* where Odysseus supplicates Arete on Scheria (7.147-150):

Having suffered much toil, I approach your husband and your knees
in supplication, and these guests; to whom may the gods grant blessings
in life, and may each pass down to his children the
possessions he holds in his halls and the honor (*γέρας*) that the *demos* has given
him.

σόν τε πόσιν σά τε γούναθ' ἰκάνω πολλὰ μογήσας,
τούσδε τε δαιτυμόνας, τοῖσιν θεοὶ ὄλβια δοῖεν,
ζώμεναι, καὶ παισὶν ἐπιτρέψειεν ἕκαστος
κτήματ' ἐνὶ μεγάροισι γέρας θ', ὃ τι δῆμος ἔδωκεν.

This is the only other time in epic that *γέρας* appears alongside *δῆμος*, and even here it is clear that the honors go to the nobles from the people.³¹⁸ Thus the *demos* as the *recipient* of *γέρας* is a pronounced departure from epic usage.

This association remains true in fifth-century prose as well. *γέρας* appears frequently in Herodotus, particularly as an indicator of kingly authority, describing either what monarchs already own or are given, or what they confer upon their noble subjects.³¹⁹

367, 422; 16.54, 56, 457, 675; 18.444; 19.89; 20.182; 23.9; 24.70. The concentration of the word in book 1 indicates the centrality of the concept in the context of honor paid to warriors. On *τιμή* and *γέρας* in Homer, see Nagy (1979: 123-32).

318. Though this passage is the only one naming the *demos* as the givers, elsewhere, particularly in the *Iliad*, it is clear that it is people of lower status (e.g., the Greek army at Troy) giving *γέρας* to kings or heroes of elevated status, or nobility giving *γέρας* to other nobles of similar or higher status. See Irwin (2005: 231-32) for fuller discussion of the terms in epic.

319. Hdt. 1.114 (the boy Cyrus plays at being a king, giving his peers the *γέρας* of bringing him messages); 3.85 (Darius enlists his groom to help him win the *γέρας* of the Persian throne); 4.143 (Darius shows honor to Megabazus, the noble commander of his European army); 7.3 (Demaratus advises Xerxes that he deserves the *γέρας* of being king instead of his elder brother Artabazanes); 7.134 (the ancestral *γέρας* belonging to the descendants of Talthybius, who have the right of conducting embassies); 7.154 (the *γέρας* of the tyranny at Gela passing to Hippocrates after the death of his brother Cleandrus); and 9.27 (the

Herodotus also uses it often when singling out warriors for their martial prowess.³²⁰

Thucydides uses the word only three times, about the privileges kings used to possess (1.13.15), about the honors that colonies owe their mother-cities (1.25.17), and in the Plataeans' appeal to the Spartans for mercy, citing the γέρας that the former paid to the latter by tending the graves of the Spartans who died on Plataean soil in the Second Persian War (3.58.13). The fact that prose writers of the fifth century use the term in the same way as Hesiod and Homer further underscores the jarring nature of Solon's use of the word. While there is no literary equivalent to his transferral of honor to the *demos*, we do see a parallel in the program of various tyrants and political leaders, who frequently exploit the *demos* as a power base.³²¹

Thus we see that while Solon's poetic predecessors, as well as later prose writers, indicate that giving honors to the *demos* was the inverse of the usual practice, it makes sense in the context of archaic tyranny and politics more generally. If a tyrant presents himself as a distributor of δίκη, he takes over that function from aristocratic groups who previously enjoyed exclusive rights to such honors. Therefore he transfers to the *demos* something typically reserved for heroes, kings, and aristocrats, a practice that has historically proved effective as a way of gaining tyrannical, or at least extremely wide-sweeping power.³²² Consider the tactics of Peisistratos, who was an extreme advocate of

Athenians claim that they deserve the γέρας of leading the Greeks in battle at Plataea because of their noble deeds, though they eventually yield this honor to the Spartans).

320. γέρας for kings or tyrants: Hdt. 3.85.1, 4.162.2, 4.165.1, 6.56, 6.56-57.5, 7.3.3, 7.104.2; the pseudo-tyrant Maiandrios arguably requests a form of γέρας when he asks the people for six talents and a priesthood of Zeus the Liberator. γέρας given by kings or tyrants: 4.143.1, 7.29.2, 1.114.2. γέρας relating to martial prowess: 2.168.1 (of the Egyptian warrior caste), 8.125, 9.26.5, 9.27. For hereditary γέρας: 7.134.1. 321. See below, pp. 122 ff.

322. In Solon's case, he was trying desperately to get both aristocrats and the *demos* on his side, and he may have (wrongly, as it turned out) seen this as an effective way of doing so.

the people. The people were the source of his influence, as they were the ones who voted him the bodyguard of club-bearers that allowed him to seize power the first time (*Ath. Pol.* 14). Cleisthenes the Athenian, while not a tyrant as such, clearly had enormous power in passing his sweeping democratic reforms, and he made the *demos* part of his *hetaireia*, or "political club," as a way to gain the upper hand over his opponent Isagoras (Hdt. 5.66). It is quite possible that if Cleisthenes had not passed his reforms immediately following the downfall of a tyranny, he might have been labeled as a tyrant.³²³

There are many other instances of tyrants making the *demos* accomplices in their coups d'état. Solon's poetic descriptions bring to mind historical events in which the *demos* served as the mechanism by which autocratic power was seized. In Peisistratos' first political takeover, he pretended to have been attacked so that the *demos* would give him a bodyguard, with the implication that his safety depended on the people voting for it. His second seizure of power involved a pageant orchestrated by his enemy-turned-ally Megacles, in which they dressed up a six-foot-tall, fantastically beautiful flower girl as Athena in full battle panoply, and had her escort Peisistratos into the city in a chariot, thereby sanctifying his reclamation of power (Hdt. 1.60). This spectacle required the people's complicity in a sort of willing suspension of disbelief, and an at least pretended acceptance of a divine basis for his power.

With a similar penchant for drama, the Syracusan tyrant Gelon appeared in the assembly unclothed and unarmed after his victory over Carthage in 480, recounted his

323. See Irwin (2005: 231-32); also consider Maeandrius' subtle use of demagogic language (particularly his proclamations of equality) in order to convince the people that he was not following Polycrates' tyrannical model. Aristagoras of Miletus, too, used rhetoric that promised equality for all in a bid to gain absolute power over Naxos (Hdt. 5.37). On these tactics, see also McGlew (1993: 135-36).

services to the people, and offered himself to anyone who wanted revenge; rather than exacting retribution, the Syracusans declared him *euergetes*, *soter*, and *basileus* (Diod. 11.26.5-6). Like Peisistratos', Gelon's performance cultivated ambiguity as to the source of his power. This sort of elaborately staged political theater in which the *demos* is the source of power for tyrants suggests that Solon's language reflects a political reality—the sort of ambiguous language describes and calls to mind real events, reflected in contemporary political and social discourse.³²⁴

We can make a similar argument for Solon—had his term of office not been sandwiched between the harsh rule of Drakon and the milder, yet openly tyrannical rule of Peisistratos, he may well have been remembered as a tyrant himself. Solon's claim to transfer γέρας to the people rather than to himself suggests that his strategy was to muddy the waters and confuse notions of where power actually rested. By claiming to give honor to the *demos*, Solon linguistically distances himself from outright autocracy, while contradictorily suggesting that he is the one with the ability to allot power. Irwin notes, "In this paradox the complicity of tyrant and community comes to the fore: *demos* and political leader are mutually dependent in establishing the basis for and means of articulating their own political identity and power."³²⁵

Fr. 5, however, goes on to describe trouble that Solon has averted from the elite, ending the poem with the famous image of him throwing a shield around both rich and poor, thus emphasizing his impartiality. Combined with the ambiguous relationship described above of the relationship between his power and the support of the *demos*, he

324. Irwin (2005: 234).

325. Irwin (2005: 223-34).

seems to be speaking from both sides of his mouth. His choice of language facilitates the political stratagem of saying something to please everybody, including imagery and wording that implies a tyrannical claim supported by the lower classes. At the same time, the structure is careful to balance and articulate the even-handedness of the benefits Solon has bestowed: the first two lines emphasize privileges obtained by the *demos*, with the second describing the maintenance of elite wealth, and ending with another emphasis on his impartiality. The very structure of the poem and its language uses the fact that different audiences hear different claims in different ways. It shrewdly employs language associated with epic and tyranny and seems to express benefits that please everyone, framed in (purposefully obscure) terms of tyrannical claims. The *demos* and the aristocracy *think* they are hearing language that is politically beneficial to them, but Solon in fact leaves these questions unanswered by the abstruseness of his wording.³²⁶

As further proof of this sort of equivocation, Plutarch and the *Ath. Pol.* use the same fragments to argue opposite points. Plutarch (*Sol.* 18.5) uses fr. 5 to prove that Solon had democratic leanings because he wanted the popular court to gain sovereignty, and even substitutes the word κράτος for γέρας.³²⁷ The *Ath. Pol.* uses the same phrase to prove that Solon was a neutral party. When Solon presents himself as the only one able to give γέρας—or in Plutarch's version, κράτος—he implicitly underscores his position of power. The question is not only what it means to give γέρας to the *demos*, but what it means to be the person doing the giving; by acknowledging that he was the one with that

326. See Irwin (2005: 234-35); see also Connor (1987: 219-59) and McGlew 1993 for the interdependence of the *demos* and the tyrant for establishing political identity and power.

327. Plutarch's use of κράτος may suggest reinvention of tradition to make Solon more suitable to the more radically democratic contemporary atmosphere. See Irwin (2005: 236-37).

power, Solon made a tyrannical claim. In fr. 36, Solon says that another person taking up such power would not have restrained the people the way he has: κέντρον δ' ἄλλος ὡς ἐγὼ λαβὼν, | κακοφραδῆς τε καὶ φιλοκτῆμων ἀνὴρ, | οὐκ ἂν κατέσχε δῆμον (20-22; "But had another man than I taken the goad, an evil-thinking and power-hungry man, he would not have restrained the people"). The use of the word κέντρον reminds the audience that he had the power to use force, yet refrained because of his concern for the people. Therefore, not even the appearance of moderation asserted by the *Ath. Pol.* can camouflage the implication of this language, Solon possessed the powers of a tyrant.³²⁸

IV. Tyranny: κλέος or αἰδώς?

We now turn to the three poems in which Solon explicitly denies that he desires a tyranny. The first of these contains possibly his most vehement defense of his political program (fr. 32):

If <he says> I spared my fatherland
and did not take tyranny and implacable violence,
defiling and disgracing my reputation (κλέος),
I am not ashamed. For thus I think that I shall better
conquer all men.

εἰ δὲ γῆς <φησιν> ἐφεισάμην
πατρίδος, τυραννίδος δὲ καὶ βίης ἀμειλίχου
οὐ καθηγάμην μίανας καὶ καταισχύνας κλέος,
οὐδὲν αἰδέομαι· πλεον γὰρ ὧδε νικήσειν δοκέω
πάντας ἀνθρώπους.

In this poem, Solon is claiming that his past conduct was honorable, in contrast to aspersions cast by his critics.³²⁹ He rejects the notion he has lost honor by failing to take advantage of his position to grab whatever power he can.³³⁰ Most people translate the οὐ

328. Irwin (2005: 236-37).

329. See Noussia-Fantuzzi (2010: 427-32) for extended commentary on this poem, with references.

330. von Erfffa (1937: 62 ff.); Noussia-Fantuzzi (2010: 427). On Solon's definition of a new standard of

in line 3 as meaning that he did not befoul his κλέος by becoming a tyrant.³³¹ Irwin questions whether the opposite could be true—could Solon have "disgraced his reputation" by *not* seizing a tyranny? Archilochus gives us our earliest mention of the word tyranny. While he claims to have no desire for a tyranny himself, he says, "I do not care for the affairs of wealthy Gyges, nor has jealousy ever seized me, nor do I envy the deeds of the gods; nor do I lust for a great tyranny: for these things are far removed from my eyes" (οὐ μοι τὰ Γύγεω τοῦ πολυχρύσου μέλει, | οὐδ' εἶλέ πώ με ζῆλος, οὐδ' ἀγαιομαι | θεῶν ἔργα, μεγάλης δ' οὐκ ἐρέω τυραννίδος· | ἀπόπροθεν γάρ ἐστιν ὀφθαλμῶν ἐμῶν), he actually implies that tyranny is an enviable position, since he lists it in the same context as deeds of gods. He merely states that he, personally, does not desire a tyranny.³³²

Alcaeus, on the other hand, specifically indicates that glory (κῦδος) accrues from holding a tyranny (fr. 70.6-13):

But let that son-in-law of the Atreidae,
 consume the city as he did with Myrsilus,
 until Ares wishes to turn us to arms;
 and may we once again forget this wrath.
 Let us ease off from soul-consuming discord
 and battle among kin, which some Olympian
 has aroused, leading the people into ruin,
 but granting to Pittacus lovely glory (κῦδος).

κῆνος δὲ παώθεις Ἄτρεΐδα[.].[
 δαπτέτω πόλιν ὡς καὶ πεδὰ Μυρσί[λ]ω [
 θᾶς κ' ἄμμε βόλλητ' Ἄρευς ἐπι.ύχε..[

honor, see Mülke (2002: 332).

331. For example, this is the reading given by West (1993: 81). Some scholars disagree, however; Wilamowitz (1893: 309) and Gentili & Prato (1988: 191) read the line the opposite way. See also Vox (1983: 310); Vox (1984: 73 and 76 ff.); Pellizer (1981: 29-30) gives an overview of scholarship on this issue. See also Mayer (2001: 66-67) for more recent bibliography.

332. On the semantics surrounding tyranny from the seventh through fourth centuries, see Parker (1998: 145-72).

τρόπην· ἐκ δὲ χόλω τῷδε λαθοίμεθ.[·
 χαλάσσομεν δὲ τὰς θυμοβόρω λύας
 ἐμφύλω τε μάχας, τάν τις Ὀλυμπίων
 ἔνωρσε, δᾶμον μὲν εἰς ἀνάταν ἄγων
 Φιττάκωι δὲ δίδοις κῦδος ἐπήρ[ατ]ον.

Alcaeus derides Pittacus for his personal politics, but his problem is that Pittacus' tyranny is bringing ruin to the people, not the fact that he holds a tyranny; rather, he admits that Pittacus' tyranny brings him κῦδος. Alcaeus' treatment of Pittacus' politics suggests that even if one is an aristocrat who betrays his class and the *demos*, he can still get κῦδος for being a tyrant.³³³

Alcaeus' estimation of the honor that a tyranny can bring a person, combined with Archilochus' intimation that a tyranny brings honor comparable to that of the gods, suggests that it could actually be detrimental to one's reputation to *refuse* a tyranny. Irwin suggests that fr. 32 is consistent with this interpretation. First, it is a fragment, and must not be read as an intact poem. Therefore it is unclear if the participle is indeed the element to be negated. The force of οὐδὲν αἰδέομαι is also not indisputable—it can be read as emphatic or defiant. Most scholars read it as the former by negating the participles—that Solon did not defile his reputation by becoming a tyrant. Irwin suggests the opposite, that even though Solon did not seize a tyranny, he did not defile his reputation.³³⁴ In other words, Solon feels no shame because his κλέος remains intact for avoiding the seizure of a tyranny, even though a tyranny would have brought him honor. But this leaves an explanatory γὰρ (line 4) with nothing to explain. This problem is solved if the οὐδὲν αἰδέομαι has a defiant tone.

333. See Irwin (2005: 239-42); on tyranny as an enviable position, see Arch. 23.21, Simon. 584 PMG, Hdt. 3.52.4–5, Xen. *Hier.* 1.9 (cf. Pind. *Pyth.* 1.85); and Solon 33. For attitudes toward tyranny among the archaic poets, see Parker (1998: 145-72) and Yerly (1992: 3-32).

334. Irwin (2005: 241-44).

While Irwin's solution is ingenious, I favor the most common (and simplest) interpretation: that the participle is the negated element, and Solon declares that he did not defile his reputation by seizing a tyranny.³³⁵ To read the fragment Irwin's way would make it inconsistent with his other statements about tyranny, discussed below, which play on the anxiety that seems to have been present in his audience.³³⁶ Even though it is fairly clear from the comparanda of Alcaeus and Archilochus that there was much κλέος to be gained from such autocratic control, we must remember that tyranny was unpopular in Athens in the wake of Cylon's attempted coup.³³⁷

If, however, we allow the premise that holding a tyranny could bring much honor, our interpretation of fr. 32 as an explication of Solon's reluctance to despoil his reputation by claiming a tyranny (at least in name) still makes sense when compared to the other fragments dealing with tyranny.³³⁸ Consider fr. 33:

This Solon is neither deep thinker nor a wise man,
for he himself refused the good fortune that the gods would give.
He casts a great net around his quarry but does not draw it in, and
he lacks both good sense and the will to use it.
If I were in power, I would take all the wealth I could,
becoming tyrant over the Athenians if only for one day,
even if my family and I were later flayed into a wineskin.

οὐκ ἔφην Σόλων βαθύφρων οὐδὲ βουλήεις ἀνήρ·
ἔσθλα γὰρ θεοῦ διδόντος αὐτὸς οὐκ ἐδέξατο·
περιβαλὼν δ' ἄγρην ἀγασθεῖς οὐκ ἐπέσπασεν μέγα
δίκτυον, θυμοῦ θ' ἀμαρτῆι καὶ φρενῶν ἀποσφαλεῖς·
ἦθελον γάρ κεν κρατήσας, πλοῦτον ἄφθονον λαβῶν

335. Noussia-Fantuzzi (2010: 430) contends that the οὐ negates not just the finite verb *καθηψάμην*, but also the participles *μιάνας* and *καταισχύνας*, citing as comparanda *Hom. Il.* 5.233; *Hom. Hymn Dem.* 157; *Tyrt.* 12.10 West; *Thgn.* 371; *Pind. Nem.* 3.15. She thinks that *μιάνας*, with its implication of physical contamination, is too strong a word for a hypothetical reproach for squandering his opportunity to seize the tyranny. See also Kühner & Gerth (1890: 199), Shorey (1911: 218), and Oguse (1962: 271-73).

336. Noussia-Fantuzzi (2010: 429-30) agrees; for Cylon, see ch. 1, pp. 7-9.

337. See ch. 1, pp. 7-9.

338. Indeed, Noussia-Fantuzzi (2010: 434) speculates that fr. 32 may be part of the same poem as fr. 33.

καὶ τυραννεύσας Ἀθηνέων μοῦνον ἡμέρην μίαν,
ἀσκόδς ὕστερον δεδάρθαι κάπιτετρίφθαι γένος.

The hypothetical speaker here characterizes Solon as a fool for not seizing "good things" from the gods, a vague term that implies, yet does not outright name, a tyranny (though the latter part of the poem makes clear that this is what is meant).³³⁹ This pre-emptive response to such criticism strongly implies that Solon was fully aware that many criticized him for *not* taking hold of a tyranny when the opportunity presented itself, which is consistent with my reading of fr. 32. For Solon to put such words in the mouth of an imaginary detractor demonstrates his awareness of the fact that, by not declaring himself tyrant, he is foregoing κλέος (or κῶδος) for which most people would risk being skinned alive.³⁴⁰ By saying that he does not want a tyranny, he is preemptively addressing the question he knows he will be asked: "why on earth not?"³⁴¹ He emphasizes that it is a deliberate choice on his part, that he is not refusing autocratic power because he is weak or foolish—quite the opposite—but because he does not want the reputation of a tyrant, despite the harsh criticism he knows he will receive by refusing such an honor; his concern here is not that he will be criticized for becoming a tyrant, but that he will be ridiculed for *not* becoming one.³⁴² He further shows awareness of the possible

339. See Noussia-Fantuzzi (2010: 433) on the vagueness (or, to use her word, the "coyness") of the language in the first lines of the poem.

340. "Flayed into a wineskin" was likely a proverbial expression for an especially painful death by this time (cf. Ar. *Nub.* 442, where we have an exact parallel: Strepsiades offers to be flayed into a wineskin voluntarily if it will allow him to escape his creditors; see also Hdt. 5.25, where he tells us that this is Cambyses' favorite way to punish offenders). This is perhaps also meant to be evocative of Marsyas' arrogant challenge to Apollo and subsequent horrible punishment for his ὕβρις in claiming that he was the more skilled musician (cf. Hdt. 7.26).

341. Noussia-Fantuzzi (2010: 433) speculates that this almost hyperbolic hypothetical detraction is consistent with aristocratic ideologies, since archaic tyrannies often appear to be driven by aristocrats seeking popular support, and thus his imaginary critic is from the upper classes. Mülke (2002: 340) agrees, but tyrants also often came to power with the support of the people (see pp. 122-124 above). Solon's consistent wooing of both the *demos* and the aristocracy indicates either that he had sufficient support from all classes of society, or at the very least makes it unclear where the main basis of his support lay.

342. For further commentary, see Noussia-Fantuzzi (2010: 433-43).

consequences of tyranny: the use of ἤθελον shows that even Solon's fanciful critic is aware of the potentially deadly consequences of even a temporary indulgence of his desire for absolute power.³⁴³

The final "anti-tyranny" poem, fr. 34, runs thus:

They came as upon plunder, and hoped for riches,
and each one thought that he would find vast wealth,
and that I, prattling smoothly, would show a harsh mind.
But they spoke frivolously then, and now they are angry with me
and all look at me in disapproval, as at an enemy.
But this is not necessary. For whatever things I said, I have done with the gods,
but I did not act in vain, nor did it please me to [compel?] by force of tyranny
my rich fatherland to have equal lots between good and evil men.

οἱ δ' ἐφ' ἀρπαγῆσιν ἦλθον· ἐλπίδ' εἶχον ἀφνεήν,
κἀδόκ[ε]ον ἕκαστος αὐτῶν ὄλβον εὐρήσειν πολύν,
καί με κωτίλλοντα λείως τραχὺν ἐκφανεῖν νόον.
χαῦνα μὲν τότε' ἐφράσαντο, νῦν δέ μοι χολούμενοι
λοξὸν ὀφθαλμοῖς ὀρῶσι πάντες ὥστε δῆϊον.
οὐ χρεῶν· ἃ μὲν γὰρ εἶπα, σὺν θεοῖσιν ἦνυσα,
ἄλλα δ' οὐ μάτην ἔερδον, οὐδέ μοι τυραννίδος
ἀνδάγει βίηι τι[.]ε[ι]ν, οὐδέ πει[ρ]ῆς χθονὸς
πατρίδος κακοῖσιν ἐσθλοὺς ἰσομοιρίην ἔχειν.³⁴⁴

This poem has a particularly defensive tone, and is the first of the "anti-tyranny" poems to address the failure of a specific reform—that of the *seisachtheia*, or policies regarding land encumbrances. Lines 1 and 2 most likely refer to the disappointed aristocrats who had hoped to retain or increase their wealth, but instead suffered vast losses in the debt cancellation. He laments the universal disaffection with his reforms in lines 3-5. I read the first two lines as referring to the wealthy rather than the *demos* because, as Noussia-Fantuzzi points out, "It is...unlikely that the people who, as Solon says, had been

343. Noussia-Fantuzzi (2010: 441). On the fallacy of the arguments of Solon's critic, see Magurano (1992: 48).

344. See Noussia-Fantuzzi (2010: 445-54) for commentary.

expecting to get "great wealth" were actually the poor, since they would be more likely to think in terms of no longer being poor, not suddenly becoming rich."³⁴⁵ A close parallel for the wealthy hoping to increase their riches by the rise of a tyrant occurs at Eur. *Herac.* 588-591, which describes the supporters of the usurper Lysus as aristocrats who have become poor through squandering their riches, though they still appear to be wealthy.

Additionally, since it is most unlikely that the wealthy would have wanted land redistribution, the second class of critics whom Solon mentions separately at the end of the poem must be the *demos*. It makes more sense if we read Solon as addressing two separate classes of critics, the wealthy in the opening lines of the poem and the poor in the closing lines, becoming more specific and speaking of the disappointment of the *demos* because of his refusal to redistribute land in the last two lines. He says that he did not compel land redistribution with the powers of a tyrant; rather, he used the power delegated to him by the people *not* to redistribute land. If there were enough people disappointed with Solon's failure to redistribute land that he felt the need to placate them in his poetry, this implies that it required considerable power to *stop* such a measure from being pushed through by the *demos*, who would have been the primary beneficiaries. And since land redistribution was a common measure taken by tyrants, he can be seen as once more highlighting the fact that, although he had all the powers of a tyrant, he neither claimed the title nor took this particular action that, which was typical of tyrants elsewhere.³⁴⁶

345. Noussia-Fantuzzi (2010: 446). This reading is also put forth by Ferrara (1964: 120-22) and Rosivach (1992: 154).

346. Noussia-Fantuzzi (2010: 446) claims that "it is highly unlikely that the project of land redistribution

V. Wolf Imagery in Solon's Poetry

We will now turn to one of Solon's most famous similes, comparing him to a wolf beset by dogs (fr. 36.22-27):

...For if I yielded
to whatever was pleasing to those opposed to me,
and then changed to what the other side thought,
this city would be bereaved of many men.
On account of this, defending myself from all directions,
I stood *as a wolf among many hounds*.

...εἰ γὰρ ἤθελον
ἂ τοῖς ἐναντίοισιν ἦνδανεν τότε,
αὐτίς δ' ἂ τοῖσιν οὔτεροι φρασαίατο,
πολλῶν ἂν ἀνδρῶν ἦδ' ἐχηρώθη πόλις.
τῶν οὐνεκ' ἀλκὴν πάντοθεν ποιέομενος
ὥς ἐν κυσὶν πολλῆισιν ἐστράφην λύκος³⁴⁷.

Solon here employs vivid martial imagery and epic language in his description of the consequences of civil *stasis*.³⁴⁸ Line 25 in particular echoes *Il.* 5.642, in Tlepolemus' speech to Sarpedon about the first sack of Troy, as well as Herodotus 6.82.1, where the historian describes of the streets of Argos after the Spartan sack. The culmination of this fragment is the famous image of Solon as a lone wolf keeping hounds at bay. Similes such as this are not uncommon in Homer, particularly portraying an animal under attack. The closest parallel to the wolf image in Solon is *Il.* 12.41-2: "as when a boar or a lion will rear around among dogs and hunting men " (ὥς δ' ὅτ' ἂν ἔν τε κύνεσσι καὶ ἀνδράσι θηρευτῆσι | κάπριος ἢ ἐ λέων στρέφεται). But in Homer, wolves always fight in packs, and they are always the ones doing the attacking.³⁴⁹ So why does Solon use this particular

was conceivable in the age of archaic tyrannies," but this is simply false (see ch. 5, pp. 152-163).

347. For a detailed structural analysis of this poem, see Noussia-Fantuzzi (2010: 455-85), Maharam (1993: 451-62); cf van Groningen (1958: 137)

348. Cf. frs. 4, 5, and 37.

349. On the similarity of this image with Homeric simile see Campbell (1982: 253), de Martino & Vox

image, and what is he trying to evoke with this "Homericly un-Homeric simile"?³⁵⁰

To start, λύκος as the final word is jarring. After a suspenseful buildup, the more expected image would be that of a lion, and λέων would scan just as well. The lack of reference to the nobility and grandeur that is usually associated with lions has a dual effect—it distances Solon from the appropriation of epic language that is usual in addressing a sympotic (aristocratic) audience, while at the same time it draws from epic similes to create a puzzling ambiguity.³⁵¹ The wolf is also associated with the sort of cunning (δολός), seen in the figure of Odysseus, or even in the name of his grandfather Autolycus, which implies a wolf's cunning, intelligence, and trickery.³⁵²

Historically speaking, there are several suggestive linguistic associations between wolves and tyrants. The Peisistratids supposedly utilized a force of personal bodyguards called *lykopodes*, either because they wore shoes made from wolfskin or because they sported a wolf emblem on their shields.³⁵³ Peisistratos also supposedly built the Athenian Lykeion, a building with probable military associations, in the vicinity of a sanctuary to Apollo Lykeios.³⁵⁴ In the mythological realm, we have several associations between

(1996: 768), Linforth (1919: 187-88), Rhodes (1993: 178), and Anhalt (1993: 126). The most prominent appearance of wolves in the *Iliad* is their comparison to the Myrmidons (16.156-166). While the wolves' savagery is quite vividly described, the main emphasis remains on their collectivity.

350. Irwin (2005: 245-46).

351. Kurke (2011: 150-51) notes that one might expect Solon to be the dog defending the flocks from the wolves, rather than the wolf being attacked. She argues that Solon's use of the wolf is a deliberate evocation of an Aesopic fable. See below pp. 136-143.

352. Mainoldi (1984: 98) comments that even though the wolf represents an animal that can be associated with war, the lion is "la force guerrière, le courage dans la lutte, ce qui rend possible son identification avec le soldat homérique, dont il constitue le modèle"; with contra Anhalt (1993: 129). Further, the usual Homeric wolf-pack does not present the same nobility and majesty as a single lion, much less Solon's lone wolf. See also Irwin (2005: 264-68).

353. This is the explanation given for the name in the scholia to Ar. *Lys.* 665, but the word is frequently amended to read *leukopodes* based on metrical considerations. See Bing (1977: 308-09) on the metrical issues, and (1977: 310-11) for the view that these were foreign (probably Argive) mercenaries.

354. *Ath. Pol.* 3 and the entry for the shrine in *Suidas* tell us that this was the residence of the Polemarch; for other military associations, see Ar. *Peace* 358 and Xen. *Hell.* 1.33. See Bing (1977: 312 n. 22) for citations on the existence and nature of the shrine.

wolves and autocratic rulers. The Arcadian tradition gives us the myth of Lykaon, a king of Arcadia, who slaughtered and dismembered one of his fifty sons. He then served the child to Zeus at the dinner table in order to test the god's omniscience. In punishment, Zeus transformed him into a wolf, which explains the etymology of his name. He also supposedly founded and ruled Lykosura, where he founded a cult to Zeus Lykaeus and began the tradition of the Lykaean games, which Pausanias tells us were older than the Panathenaic games.³⁵⁵ Also, Athamas and Danaus assumed kingship over Argos based on an omen of a wolf killing a bull (Paus. 2.19.3-4).³⁵⁶ Most specifically, Plato says that when a tyrant assumes power, he turns from a man into a wolf, using the legend of Lykaean Zeus in Arcadia as an analogy (*Rep.* 8.565d-566a):³⁵⁷

When a man has tasted human flesh, a single morsel cut up among one or another sacrificial offerings, *he will inevitably become a wolf*...a leader of the people, who, once he has gained an exceedingly obedient throng, but by the usual unjust accusations does not refrain from the blood of his own people—he takes a man to court and murders him, causing the man's life to vanish; and tasting with his unholy tongue and mouth the murder of kin, he banishes and kills, and hints that he will cancel debts and redistribute land. After all this, isn't it necessary and fated for such a man as this either to be destroyed by his enemies or to *rule as tyrant and to transform from a man to a wolf?*

ὡς ἄρα ὁ γευσάμενος τοῦ ἀνθρωπίνου σπλάγχνου, ἐν ἄλλοις ἄλλων ἱερείων ἐνὸς ἐγκατατετημημένου, ἀνάγκη δὴ τούτῳ λύκῳ γενέσθαι...ὃς ἂν δήμου προεστώς, λαβὼν σφόδρα πειθόμενον ὄχλον, μὴ ἀπόσχηται ἐμφυλίου αἵματος, ἀλλ' ἀδίκως ἐπαιτιώμενος, οἷα δὴ φιλοῦσιν, εἰς δικαστήρια ἄγων μαιφονῆ, βίον ἀνδρὸς ἀφανίζων, γλώττη τε καὶ στόματι ἀνοσίῳ γευόμενος φόνου συγγενοῦς, καὶ ἀνδρηλατῆ καὶ ἀποκτεινύη καὶ ὑποσημαίνη χρεῶν τε ἀποκοπὰς καὶ γῆς ἀναδασμόν, ἄρα τῷ τοιούτῳ ἀνάγκη δὴ τὸ μετὰ τοῦτο καὶ εἴμαρται ἢ ἀπολωλέναι ὑπὸ τῶν ἐχθρῶν ἢ τυραννεῖν καὶ λύκῳ ἐξ ἀνθρώπου γενέσθαι;

355. For variations on the legend of Lykaeon, see Hyg. *Fab.* 225, Paus. 8.17.6, Pseudo-Apollodorus 3.8.1-2, and Ov. *Met.* 1.216-239.

356. On associations between wolves, lawgivers, and tyrants, see Detienne & Svenbro (1989: 158) and Nagy (1990: 272 n. 13). Irwin (2005: 250-51) gives a fuller discussion of possible connections of the names of these mythological kings with wolves.

357. On Plato's association between tyrants, wolves, debt cancellation, and land redistribution, see further ch. 5, p. 157.

While Plato is a late source on the association between wolves and tyrants, it is possible that the connection is much earlier. One possible etymology of the seventh-century Spartan lawgiver Lycurgus is "one who wards off the wolf," and in fact archaic Sparta had a reputation for producing tyrant-deposers.³⁵⁸ We are on firmer ground with Pindar.³⁵⁹ He actually compares the justice of the tyrant Hieron to that of a wolf, claiming that,

It is impossible for a deceptive citizen to utter an effective word among good men; but fawning in the same way on all he weaves complete ruin. I do not share this man's boldness. May I be a friend to a friend; but towards an enemy as an enemy; I will run him down in the manner of a wolf, at one time or another walking crooked paths. But the straight-speaking man does well amid any political system—under a tyranny, or when the impetuous people or when wise men watch over the city.

ἀδύνατα δ' ἔπος ἐκβαλεῖν κραταιὸν ἐν ἀγαθοῖς
 δόλιον ἀστὸν· ὅμως μὲν σαίνων ποτὶ πάντας ἄταν πάγχυ διαπ' λέκει.
 οὐ οἱ μετέχω θράσεος· φίλον εἶη φιλεῖν·
 ποτὶ δ' ἐχθρὸν ἄτ' ἐχθρὸς ἐὼν λύκοιο δίκαν ὑποθεύσομαι,
 ἄλλ' ἄλλοτε πατέων ὁδοῖς σκολιαῖς.
 ἐν πάντα δὲ νόμον εὐθύγλωστος ἀνήρ προφέρει,
 παρὰ τυραννίδι, χῶπότην ὁ λάβρος στρατός,
 χῶταν πόλιν οἱ σοφοὶ τηρέωντι (*Pyth.* 2.81-88).

Justin also speaks of a tradition in which Hieron was destined to rule because a wolf stole his writing tablet (23.4-9). Pindar's flattering association of Hieron's justice with a wolf has perturbed some commentators, who do not believe a wolf should be associated with positive characteristics like honesty, steadfastness, and even wisdom.³⁶⁰

When speaking of comparing animals to humans, one of our immediate

358. On this etymology of Lycurgus, see Chantraine (1968: 650), Burkert (1979: 165-6, esp. n. 24), and Nagy (1990: 272).

359. Irwin (2005: 250-51).

360. See further Catenacci (1991: 7-22). This association particularly upsets Farnell (1961: 131), who writes, "The whole passage...remains...his worst piece of composition in which he seems to lose his head and to show a weakness of brain that he never shows elsewhere." See Most (1961: 115) for other commentators unhappy with Pindar's positive depiction of a wolf.

associations is of course with Aesop. Even though we cannot securely date any of his fables, the consistency of the attributes given to wolves suggests an early and uniform association of wolves with cunning. Moreover, the figure of the wolf overwhelmingly appears in fables with a political bent.³⁶¹ When a wolf appears alone, he usually challenges the kingship of another creature, usually a lion, but it is more normal for wolves to act collectively in a context of emphasis on unity and equality of distribution of goods or power (either of which could parallel the nature of a tyrant's authority).

In one fable, wolves use highly political language to persuade a pack of dogs that they should work together and share a flock of sheep (216).³⁶² The wolves tell the dogs that the two species should be equal (*homoioi*), but that the dogs are slaves unless they can be persuaded to act like the wolves and share all things in common. The dogs agree, only to be subsequently torn apart by the wolves. The moral of the story is "that those betraying their fatherland earn this sort of payment" ("Ὅτι οἱ τὰς ἑαυτῶν πατρίδας προδιδόντες τοιούτους μισθοὺς λαμβάνουσι). This language of slavery versus freedom, and the claim for everyone to hold things in common, recalls the policy of land redistribution (to be discussed in ch. 5). The attempt to get dogs and wolves to work together recalls rhetoric of leaders like Peisistratos and Cleisthenes, who made the *demos* their *hetairiai*, or bosom companions and brokered deals between the poor and the rich.³⁶³

Another fable pitting dogs against a collective of wolves features the two species at war (215). The dog general blames the deliberations of the council for delaying battle and claims that the wolves' *homoia* gives them an advantage over the dogs, suggesting the

361. On connections between beast fables and public debate on political issues, see Kurke (2011: 142-58).

362. All fable numbers are from Chambry 1926.

363. See Irwin (2005: 252-53).

existence of *stasis* within the canine community. Another tells how wolves convinced sheep that their guard dogs were a source of disunity, and tricked the sheep into sending into sending them away (217). At this point the sheep of course get eaten by the wolves, described in politically charged language that evokes civil *stasis*. Another wolf employs *eulogos*, "fair speech," to persuade a lamb to allow himself to be eaten without putting up a fight (221). In a further fable, a wolf claims that he was guarding a cache of barley for a horse, since he enjoyed the sound of the horse's teeth chewing the barley even though the wolf himself did not eat grain (225). The suspicious horse replies, "If wolves could eat barley, you would not prefer your ears to your belly" (εἰ λύκοι κριθῶν τροφῆ χρῆσθαι ἠδύναντο, οὐκ ἄν ποτε τὰ ὄτα τῆς γαστρὸς προέκρινας). The horse thus exposes the wolf's false flattery, and calls into question his unlikely justification for appropriating the horse's rightful fodder—after all, who really enjoys the sound of chewing? This description of an illegitimate reason for taking control of someone else's possessions resonates with Aristotle's description of the way tyrants use demagogic language to come to power.³⁶⁴

The fable that most closely connects Solon with wolves involves a wolf-lawgiver, and emphasizes the wolf's political platform of unity and equality of property (228):

Having become a general over the other wolves, a wolf was establishing laws for everyone, so that he would place in the middle whatever each took in the hunt and give to each an equal share, so that they would not resort to eating each other out of need. But an ass approached and, shaking his mane, said, "It is a fine sentiment that comes from a wolf's mind, but how is it that you put yesterday's hunt in your lair? Come put this in the middle and apportion it." But upon being challenged the [wolf] dissolved the laws.

364. *Pol.* 1305b, 1310b. Cf. Herodotus' description of Deioeces (1.96-98), and Aristotle's more general theory of the methodology of tyrants (*Pol.* 1310b2-3); see also Irwin (2005: 254).

Λύκος τῶν λοιπῶν στρατηγήσας λύκων νόμους ἔταξε πᾶσιν, ἵνα ὅ τι ἂν ἕκαστος κυνηγήσῃ πάντα εἰς μέσον ἄξι καὶ μερίδα ἴσην ἑκάστῳ δώσει, ὅπως μὴ οἱ λοιποὶ ἐνδεεῖς ὄντες ἀλλήλους κατεσθίωσιν. Ὄνος δὲ παρελθὼν τὴν χαίτην σείσας ἔφη: Ἐκ φρενὸς λύκου καλὴ γνώμη. ἀλλὰ πῶς σὺ τὴν χθεσινὲν ἄγραν τῆ κοίτη ἐναπέθου; Ἄγε ταύτην εἰς μέσον ἀπομερίσας. Ὁ δὲ ἐλεγχθεὶς τοὺς νόμους ἀνέλυσεν.

The importance lies in the emphasis on sharing everything equally, of putting "everything in the middle" (πάντα εἰς μέσον), which recalls Solon's philosophy of the mean. The idea of giving of equal parts to all is often associated with wolves, in scientific writings as well as anecdotal or philosophical ones.³⁶⁵ The cannibalism that the lawgiver-wolf's actions are meant to prevent sounds very much like language associated with *stasis* and civil war, which also describes the sort of aristocratic infighting that leads to tyranny.³⁶⁶ In this story, the criticism of the wolf's methods comes from a donkey, a different species entirely. The wolf-lawgiver remains part of the group of wolves, yet holds a unique position of power over them. Thus there are two versions of the wolf, with opposing political implications: the positive collective instinct vs. the cunning, selfish nature of the wolf/tyrant/lawgiver.³⁶⁷

This fable has close parallels with the story of Maeandrius in Herodotus (3.142-3). After the death of Polycrates of Samos, Maeandrius wanted to be "most just" (δικαιοτάτος). So he built an altar to Zeus the Liberator, denounced Polycrates as an illegitimate ruler, and claimed that he, Maeandrius, would only give himself moderate rewards (τοσάδε γέρεα), placing power εἰς μέσον, as was just (δικαιῶς). He claimed only

365. For instance, Timotheos of Gaza wrote a treatise on animals, describing how wolf-packs evenly divide their kills among themselves, on which see Haupt (1869: 8) and Buxton (1986: 62). See also Detienne & Svenbro (1989: 155) on the democratic tendencies of wolves. For "fabulous" stories of the *isonomia* of wolves, see schol. *Ody.* 14.161 and *Anth. Pal.* 9.252.

366. Cf. *Thgn.* 39–52, Solon 4.22, Alc. 70.7, 129.23–4, and *Thgn.* 1181.

367. Irwin (2005: 255-56).

a small amount of money and a hereditary priesthood of Zeus the Liberator on the grounds that he gave freedom to the Samians. A nobleman called Telesarchus called him to account by pointing out that no man can be δικαιοτάτος and elevate himself at the same time. Maeandrius then realized that he could not renounce the tyranny without someone else seizing it, and so proceeded to deceive and imprison his enemies. Irwin points out the febleness of Maeandrius' basis for his power—that he wanted to be the most just of men (δικαιοτάτω ἀνδρῶν βουλομένω)—and suggests that this formulation reflects Maeandrius' justification of his assumption of the tyranny, which resembles the platform of δίκη so common in tyrants' rise to power. It is also perhaps significant that the next person to assume the tyranny was Maeandrius' brother Lycaretus, whose name suggests another link between wolves and tyrants.³⁶⁸ The similarity of detail between the wolfish fables and Maeandrius led Detienne, Svenbro, and Nagy to connect the image of the wolf as a lawgiver with both a tyrant and justice.³⁶⁹ The wolf made laws; Maeandrius wanted to be δικαιοτάτος; both figures placed things εἰς μέσον, yet attempted to retain something for themselves (meat, a priesthood). They were both denounced by outside figures (the donkey, Telesarchus), and finally they removed all pretense—the wolf dissolved his laws, while Maeandrius openly ruled as tyrant. The strategy for both rulers/lawgivers was the same—to give while keeping.

Solon's repeated emphasis on the middle, the mean, and equal protection for all, while at the same time focusing attention on his exceptional position are consistent with characteristics of the wolf, the lawgiver, and the tyrant. We must be cautious in using the

368. Irwin (2005: 256-57).

369. Detienne & Svenbro (1989: 158) and Nagy (1990: 272 n. 13).

Aesopica as evidence for this association, since it is of uncertain date, but it is far more likely that Solon used existing imagery than it is that the *Aesopica*, a much larger body of literature, was influenced by a passing and highly ambiguous reference in a single poem; it is therefore difficult to imagine Solon evoking such imagery if these connections did not already exist.³⁷⁰ Without the commentary on the dissolution of the laws at the end of the fable, the career of Solon echoes the story of the wolf even more strongly.³⁷¹ While Solon does not dissolve his laws, he removes himself from their jurisdiction when he leaves Athens for his so-called *theoria*.³⁷² This interpretation is also suggested by Plutarch's report of a joke of Aesop's: "But this drinking cup does not appear to be shared by the people," he said, "For it has sat by Solon alone for a long time" (*Sept. Sap. Conv.* 155f; ἀλλ' οὐδὲ τοῦτ', ἔφη, τὸ ποτήριον δημοτικόν ἐστι· Σόλωνι γὰρ ἔκπαλαι παράκειται μόνῳ).

If we accept these associations of a wolf with tyrants, we must ask what benefit Solon gains from evoking this connection. He implies that he actually was a tyrant in the sense that he provided all of the things that a tyrant was expected to provide by the *demos* who had given him power, but does not say so outright, bringing to mind his joining of δίκη and βίη. Also, the wolfish associations of cooperation and equality of distribution fit well with my analysis of fr. 36, wherein I claim that Solon insinuates that his measures are close to those of a tyrant, while at the same time avoiding use of the term. However, Solon in his poem is not merely a wolf—he is a wolf struggling to keep hostile dogs at

370. In the *Theognidea*, for example, we also see the phrase εἰς μέσον in the context of equal distribution (677-678). See also Irwin (2005: 258-60).

371. Unless, of course, the parallel is that the unhappiness of the factions about which Solon frequently complains, was already leading to the dissolution of his laws.

372. On inconsistencies in the story of Solon's *theoria*, see ch. 2, pp. 65-66.

bay, which presents himself from the perspective of his political enemies. The fact that they are many suggests that he is acknowledging how widespread criticism of his program is, yet his use of Homeric simile deprecates this group as launching an unjustified attack on a single (heroic) wild beast, who ought to recognize that their interests have, in fact, been looked after by Solon the wolf. This imagery also serves to scold members of the *demos* who criticized him for not making his reforms more radical. The message is that in essence he is a wolf (tyrant?), which is proven by the fact that he is being attacked by hunting dogs. Yet he cleverly leaves open the alternate interpretation—that he is not a wolf (tyrant?); rather, this is merely what his critics among the elite say about him, which also shapes his future reception.³⁷³

Evoking the wolf simile at the end of fr. 36 creates an odd dichotomy—it portrays him as both Homeric and un-Homeric, as tyrant and not-quite-tyrant. The strategy of playing both sides resembles the tactics inherent in a lot of tyrannies and tyrannical rhetoric, but Solon does it so well that his seeming rejection of tyranny earned him a universal place in posterity as a *misotyrannos*. His espousal of the famous "middle ground" can thus be seen in a different light, as a manipulation of the viewpoints of two opposing factions. This suggests that the middle was constantly shifting, and that tyrants could well have been operating from a stance that placed them in this territory.³⁷⁴

McGlew writes,

As much as [Solon] wanted to avoid the dangers of tyranny, he also wanted to exploit its political strength...Solon took on this very persona, canceling old laws and imposing new ones no less autocratically than Pittacus or any tyrant...More important still, when Solon's laws and *politeia* were no longer dependent on him,

373. Irwin (2005: 259-61)

374. Irwin (2005: 261).

they retained some of the more important aspects of the tyrant's power: his demand for unquestioned obedience, his authority, and his exclusive hold on political matters, [and] demanded fully as much as any tyrant."³⁷⁵

VI. Conclusion

Solon managed to broad reforms so broad as to require the authority of a tyrant, while avoiding the κλέος (whether good or bad) of being one. Yet his poetry deliberately makes clear that he had (or could have had) such powers. Because he was granted the authority to make such sweeping changes, his position was nearly indistinguishable from that of tyrants elsewhere in the Greek world. The very fact that he was in a position to refuse a tyranny indicates that he had vast personal power and widespread support among the population of Athens. Yet Athens' singular association of violence with tyranny required avoidance of any appearance of tyranny, in a way that was not necessary in other *poleis*, despite the clear stability and benefits that tyrants could bring.³⁷⁶

Solon's concept of κόρος, his joining of δίκη with βίη, and his position as one who gives honors to the people invert what we expect of these words and concepts from other contexts, all of which fit much better in the realm of tyrannical discourse than in traditional epic or elegy. He further associates himself with tyrants with his evocation of himself as a wolf, an animal frequently featured in politically-slanted fables, as well as semantic and conceptual associations with rulers and tyrants. Solon cleverly claimed the accomplishments and κλέος of a tyrant, while at the same time being careful to deny the title. His exploitation of language associated with tyranny and simultaneous rejection of the concept worked—no one remembers him as a tyrant, despite the clear affinities

375. McGlew (1993: 111).

376. See ch. 5, pp. 150-152.

between his activities (and the language he uses to describe them) and those of tyrants.

In order to ensure his reputation as an anti-tyrant and a moderate, Solon had a delicate line to walk. He had to maintain a favorable relationship with the *demos* and preserve a positive relationship with the aristocracy, while at the same time obliquely acknowledging the autocratic nature of his position. Solon constructed his poems in such a way that all classes of people would interpret them as sympathetic to their particular concerns. He attempted to court those on both sides of the conflict, while suggesting that the best solution was to continue to look to him for guidance.³⁷⁷ The feat of binding the Athenians to uphold his legislation even after he left Athens further suggests that he possessed the sort of power that only a tyrant could command.³⁷⁸

377. For further discussion of contradictory interpretations of Solon's sympathies, see ch. 3, pp. 89-90.
378. *Ath. Pol.* 11.1 and Plut. *Sol.* 25.5 state that Solon's laws were established for 100 years; Herodotus, perhaps more realistically, puts the limit at ten years (1.29.1). On the length of time, see Manfredini & Piccirilli (1977: 254-55). See also ch. 1, p. 22 n. 52.

Chapter 5

Benevolent Tyranny?

In chapter 3, we explored contradictory statements in the ancient sources about Solon's reputation as a champion of the *demos*. Because the political climate of the fifth and fourth centuries equated democracy with a fierce enmity towards tyrants, a more populist reading of the Solonian constitution prevailed, the result of which was Solon's firm association with the origins of democracy. Since much of what we know or assume about the motivations for Solon's activities derives ultimately from his own repeated and vehement denials of a desire for a tyranny, our testimony is skewed and must be used much more cautiously than it has been over the last two and a half millennia. Because our evidence is so biased, we must accept that whatever his actual goals, motivations and intentions may have been, they are lost to history. What we *can* do is examine what he actually did in in the context of archaic politics and compare his strategies with those of figures of similar stature in other *poleis*.

The first part of this chapter will examine evidence that tyrants were popular in many parts of Greece. Many tyrants actually had the reputations, like Solon, of being lawgivers and passing legislation for the benefit of the citizens, and for implementing civic renewal projects which revitalized flagging economies and forged civic identity among their citizens—all things that Solon was trying to do for Athens. We shall see that whether Solon was aiming to be a tyrant outright, or merely trying to use methods of tyrants who had been successful at solving civil crises elsewhere, his contemporaries would not necessarily have considered this the act of self-serving treachery that sources from democratic Athens would have us believe.

The next part will examine Solon's legislation on debt cancellation, the abolition of debt-slavery, and the recall of exiles, demonstrating that all of these measures were common features of contemporary archaic tyrannies. Finally, we will explore the seldom-mentioned evidence for Solon's association with tyrants in the military sphere. Whether or not Solon was trying to become a tyrant in the overt manner of other statesmen of his era, his reforms greatly resembled the political maneuverings of tyrants elsewhere in the Greek world. After all, revoking the existing law code of Drakon and imposing a new one, despite near-universal opposition, is an action that would require the sort of social and personal influence that only a tyrant was likely to command.³⁷⁹

I. Tyrants as Legislators

Despite most tyrants' reputation for operating outside the law, many based their claims to power on existing legal institutions rather than by instituting new ones (as Solon tried to do).³⁸⁰ Any transition to an entirely new governing apparatus would inevitably cause more turmoil than an alteration of existing power structures, which goes a long way towards explaining Solon's difficulty at stabilizing the warring factions.³⁸¹ In several cases tyrants even seem to have been responsible for setting up legal codes and (re)establishing the rule of law. But because tyrants are so frequently depicted as power-

379. See McGlew (1993: 111).

380. Anderson (2005: 173-222) argues that tyrants merely operated within established oligarchies as influential individuals, rather than out-and-out establishing any sort of new regime. Solon also praises the rule of law in fr. 4.

381. For tyrants taking over existing power structures rather than creating new ones, see Snodgrass (1993: 34). Salmon (1997: 60-61) partially agrees, but qualifies Snodgrass' argument by identifying a substantial subset of tyrants who created entirely new systems. Snodgrass (1980: 96) comments, "tyranny has no specific constitutional framework...but was simply superimposed on whatever constitution the state in question already had." Anderson (2005: 173) argues that there was very little difference between *turannoi* and more orthodox aristocratic leaders, and that the former merely sought to dominate, rather than overthrow, established oligarchies: "A *turannis* [in the sixth century] was not yet a species of political regime, illegitimate or otherwise. Rather, it was mainstream oligarchic leadership in its most amplified form, conventional de facto authority writ large."

hungry scofflaws in our ancient sources, modern scholars also tend to gloss over reports of tyrants as legislators.³⁸² However, we find ample evidence that tyrants could and did make laws that lasted far beyond their tenure as autocrats.³⁸³

For example, Herodotus tells us that Peisistratos ruled according to the *thesmia* (1.59.6). Thucydides concurs, saying that even under his sons the city used the pre-existing laws (6.54.6). Peisistratos himself seems to have adhered to these laws, even appearing before the Areopagus when charged with murder (*Ath. Pol.* 16.8; *Arist. Pol.* 1315b21-22). Cleisthenes of Sicyon rewarded a judge who, refusing to flatter him, awarded a victory crown to another (*Arist. Pol.* 1315b11).³⁸⁴ Pheidon is credited with reforming Argive weights and measures (*Hdt.* 6.127.3). Aristotle also ascribes the establishment of laws to Pittacus of Lesbos (an elected tyrant), including the principle that the punishment for any crime would be greater if committed while intoxicated (*Pol.* 2.1274b18-23). Diogenes Laertius (1.79) tells us that Pittacus also wrote a prose work, *On Laws*, "for the use of citizens," which suggests that the *demos* had access to some sort of law code, much like Solon's publicly displayed *axones*. Cypselus also seems to have made a concerted effort to correct injustices perpetrated by his Bacchiad relatives before he came to power by recalling their exiles and restoring their citizenship (*FGH* 90 F 57.7). Less explicitly, the oracle to Cypselus at Delphi said that he would "bring justice to Corinth" (*Hdt.* 5.92.2; δικαιώσει δὲ Κόρινθον). This suggests that he also established, or at least enforced laws; as Salmon surmises, it is difficult to distribute justice without first

382. For the tradition of "bad" tyrants, see above discussion on pp. 12-14; see also Osborne (2009: 193-96) and McGlew (1993: 14-51).

383. Contra Stein-Hölkeskamp (2009: 113).

384. On tyrants as lawmakers, see Salmon (1997: 32-38) and McGlew (1993: 87-123).

reforming the system of justice.³⁸⁵ At any rate, it is generally agreed that the Corinthian tribes, a long-lasting feature of the *polis*, were introduced by tyrants, though arguments about the details of the organization remain.³⁸⁶

Emphasis on justice also would have been a useful platform for establishing a rapport with the common people, who were less likely to have recourse for offenses committed against them. A would-be tyrant with a reputation for fairness would have an advantage not only in establishing his power, but in exercising it.³⁸⁷ This principle is especially clear in Herodotus' account of Deioces' use of his countrymen's respect for his reputation as a just judge to become king of the Medes.³⁸⁸ In fact, Herodotus specifically tells us that Deioces' voluntary resignation caused the Medes to fall into lawlessness (Hdt. 1.96-101).³⁸⁹

At Sicyon, the Orthagorids also had a reputation for being law-abiding. Aristotle credits their long-lived dynasty to their subservience to the laws and concern for the welfare of their citizens, going so far as to call them slaves to the law (*Pol.* 5.1315b-16).³⁹⁰ Likewise, one of Peisistratos' most celebrated measures was the establishment of traveling judges to ensure that even citizens of outlying regions of Attica had access to legal recourse (*Ath. Pol.* 16.5).³⁹¹ Periander may have been responsible for sumptuary legislation, which is a possible source for the stories about him burning the

385. Salmon (1997: 64).

386. See Salmon (1997: 64, n. 16 & 17) for citations.

387. McGlew (1993: 81).

388. Hartog (1988: 324) argues that in Herodotus' view, the Deioces episode proves that the people of Asia were incapable of embracing liberty and living without some sort of ruler.

389. On the concept of justice in archaic politics, see Almeida 2003; for the concept of justice in Solon's poetry and in tyranny, see 113-119.

390. See Salmon (1984: 206 n. 80) for further discussion.

391. *Ibid.*

clothes of wealthy women (Hdt. 5.92.1-4). He restricted the ownership of slaves, and supposedly implemented a council designed to prevent individuals from spending beyond their means, which remained a Corinthian law in the fourth century.³⁹² The tribal system instituted by Cleisthenes of Sicyon, like that at Corinth, remained in place after the fall of his regime. Likewise the board of eight *probouloi* at Corinth, closely associated with the tribal system there, were central to the Corinthian government for centuries after the fall of the tyranny. Inscriptional evidence suggests that the tribal reorganization happened between the foundation of Syracuse in 733 and the end of the tyranny in 580, since the three ethnic Dorian tribes are already attested for Coreyra Melaina, which suggests that they were already in existence by the time the Corinthians colonized Syracuse.³⁹³ Nicolaus of Damascus (*FGrH* 90 F 60.2) says that on the fall of the tyranny the *demos* established a group of eight *probouloi* and a council of eight men from each tribe, though Salmon contends that this was based on the invalid assumption that since the constitution was used in post-Cypselid Corinth, it was only introduced after the fall of the tyranny.³⁹⁴ The Suidas mentions a synoecism in Corinth, in which the Corinthians split into eight tribes and divided the city into eight parts (headword πάντα ὀκτώ).³⁹⁵ This body of eight *probouloi* was one of the longest-lasting features of the Corinthian *polis*, even giving rise to the proverb "πάντα ὀκτώ," "eight of everything," and indeed, classical Corinth was unusually stable.³⁹⁶

392. Ibid.

393. *S.I.G.* 3 I, 141. For the view that the *probouloi* were in fact a Bacchiad institution, see Schaeffer (1957: 1222) and Roebuck (1972: 114-15).

394. Salmon (1984: 205-06). Because the text is corrupt, another reading suggests that the tribes may have already been in existence (see Will (1955: 609 ff.)

395. See also Hall (1997: 58-59).

396. Ibid.

Despite this plethora of evidence that tyrants were effective lawmakers, ancient authors tend to depict even advantageous legal measures as evidence of tyrants' corruption, in much the same way that they lambast tyrants' other contributions to society based on later negative stereotypes.³⁹⁷ For instance, Herodotus (5.67-68) claims that the (Sicyonian) Cleisthenic tribal reorganization was instituted in order to favor the tyrant's own tribe at the expense of the Dorian population. The *Ath. Pol.* (16.5) claims that Peisistratos' judicial measures were intended to consolidate his tax program and keep the Attic farmers away from the city. As McGlew notes, however, these interpretations are probably a confusion of motive and result based on contemporary ideas of justice and centralization.³⁹⁸

Tyrants also tended to be responsible for large-scale public works projects.³⁹⁹ Aristotle mentions the pyramids in Egypt, various monumental statues of the Cypselids, the Olympieion of the Peisistratids, and Polycrates' temples on Samos as examples of ways that various tyrants kept their subjects employed (*Pol.* 5.1313b18-25). He says that tyrants implemented such ambitious projects to keep the people too occupied and poor to plot sedition. While perhaps true that such programs would have kept people too busy to orchestrate a revolution, surely the prestige to the city, employment for the poor, and economic growth spurred by such enterprises would have benefitted the poor rather than producing widespread dissatisfaction.⁴⁰⁰

Many of the monumental temples and buildings at Corinth and Isthmia are

397. As discussed above on p. 17.

398. McGlew (1993: 78-79).

399. For tyrants fostering civic consciousness and growth through cults, building programs, festivals, etc., see Kolb (1977: 99-138) and 1981, Stahl 1987, Salmon (1997: 32-38), Shapiro 1989, Mannville 1990, and Raaflaub (2003: 59-94).

400. *Ibid.*

attributed to Cypselus, and Periander may have been responsible for the temple of Apollo at Corinth and that of Poseidon at Isthmia, which was the site of one of the four major Panhellenic games.⁴⁰¹ Periander also excavated an artificial harbor at Lechaëum and constructed the famous *diolkos*, one of the most important sources of Corinth's fabled wealth.⁴⁰² Thucydides also comments on the Peisistratid tyrants' part in embellishing Athens, specifically, the construction of the Temple of Olympian Zeus and the *Enneakrounos* in the Agora (Thuc. 2.15.5). Peisistratos is also said to have made major building contributions to the sanctuary of Demeter and Kore at Eleusis.⁴⁰³ At Sicyon, while we have no explicit evidence of monumental buildings, Cleisthenes' extensive dedications at Delphi after his victory in the First Sacred War indicate the existence of skilled Sicyonian craftsmen, who quite plausibly practiced their skills on projects in their own city.⁴⁰⁴ Polycrates supposedly constructed a harbor mole and a tunnel for water, which demonstrated his concern for merchant vessels, defense, and water supply, all vital elements of a growing city and bound up with the self-identity of a *polis*.⁴⁰⁵

Because political life revolved around the tyrant, who frequently encouraged the centralization of political institutions, this focus often continued long after his death. This indicates not only that tyrants instigated systems that were long-lasting, but that they were responsible for institutions intimately bound up with civic consciousness.⁴⁰⁶ These

401. For the Temple of Poseidon at Isthmia, see Broneer 1971. For discussion of the dating of the construction of the temples, see Salmon (1984: 59-62); for the excavation of the temples, see Salmon (1984: 228).

402. See Salmon (1984: 220-21) on the fortifications; (1984: 133-35) on the harbor; and (1984: 136-39) on the *diolkos*.

403. On Peisistratos and Eleusis, see Boardman (1975: 4-5), with citations on the history of excavation of the Telesterion in particular.

404. As Salmon (1997: 66-67) points out. On the Sicyonian treasury and dedications at Delphi, see Themelis 1991.

405. See Salmon (1997: 66-67).

406. Herodotus 5.68.2 tells us that the system lasted for sixty years after his death, which Salmon (1997:

projects and political reforms emphasize the concern Archaic tyrants had for civic identity, and fostered a sense of pride for the citizens in their *polis*.⁴⁰⁷ Our later sources, however, emphasize the bare fact that they were tyrants to the exclusion of anything they did that lasted beyond their fall. The fact that so many contemporaneous tyrants were responsible for revitalizing and stabilizing their cities makes the idea of Solon refusing power because tyranny was dishonorable in and of itself strange and inconsistent.

II. Tyrants, Debt Cancellation, and Land Redistribution

Whatever the origins of the civil strife at Athens, ancient and modern commentators concur that the political and social situation by the end of the seventh century had reached such a state of crisis that all parties agreed that something had to be done. Ancient sources agree that Solon's position as an impoverished aristocrat made him attractive to the poorer elements of society, to whose economic situation he was sympathetic, as well as the elite, who saw him as one of their own.⁴⁰⁸ The *seisachtheia* allegedly abolished all debt and ended debt-slavery, a reform supposedly undertaken as a measure to relieve the suffering of the poor, and which is usually pointed to as evidence of his deep concern for impoverished farmers.⁴⁰⁹ But rather than providing the aimed-for

66) notes is more than a generation.

407. See also Salmon (1997: 67-68) on the lasting effects of the foreign policy of the tyrants at Corinth, Argos, and Sicyon, though he doubts the significance of Peisistratid interest in the Hellespont because it predates the Athenian tyranny (Hdt. 5.95.2).

408. On Solon's aristocratic pedigree and reduced finances, see Plut. *Sol.* 1-3; on his attractiveness as a candidate to both parties on the basis of his mixed social and economic circumstances, see Plut. *Sol.* 14 and *Ath. Pol.* 5. For further discussion, see McGlew (1993: 97) and Goušchin (1999: 16-17), who both accept that Solon's confusing socio-economic position made each faction regard him as a potential supporter. Given Plutarch's description of Solon's father's bad investments and his own spendthrift tendencies, however, one wonders why the Athenians were so eager to entrust someone so lacking in financial savvy in his own affairs with solving an economic crisis of state-wide proportions.

409. See, for example, Woodhouse (1938: 173) and Owens (2010: 107-14). For more detail on the complaints of the rich and the poor, see McGlew (1993: 97-99).

stability, this measure caused chaos: no one was satisfied.⁴¹⁰ The wealthy were unhappy because the cancellation of debt meant a loss of money for lenders, while the poor were unhappy because Solon *only* cancelled debts, without redistributing land. Solon's justification for these measures was that he was trying to do what was best for everyone, as we see in this attempt at damage control (*fr.* 5):

To the people I gave so much privilege as to suffice,
 neither taking away their honor nor offering them more,
 And those who had power and were magnificent in their wealth,
 I made sure they had nothing shameful.
 I stood throwing a mighty shield around both sides,
 Not permitting either side to win unjustly.

δήμῳ μὲν γὰρ ἔδωκα τόσον γέρας ὅσον ἐπαρκεῖν,
 τιμῆς οὔτ' ἀφελῶν οὔτ' ἐπορεξάμενος·
 οἱ δ' εἶχον δύναμιν καὶ χρήμασιν ἦσαν ἀγῆτοί,
 καὶ τοῖς ἐφρασάμην μηδὲν ἀεικέες ἔχειν·
 ἔστην δ' ἀμφιβαλὼν κρατερὸν σάκος ἀμφοτέροισι,
 νικᾶν δ' οὐκ εἶασ' οὐδετέρους ἀδίκως.⁴¹¹

This cancellation of debt is often explained as a non-partisan attempt at leveling the socio-economic playing field and cooling the strife between the haves and the have-nots.⁴¹² But as Solon himself acknowledges, this did not involve as many benefits as the poor expected. Further, it entailed considerable financial and social hardship for the rich. After all, having "nothing shameful" (μηδὲν ἀεικέες ἔχειν) is a far cry from having the social or financial benefits they had previously enjoyed, despite Solon's attempt to portray his actions as even-handed. Our sources all tout the goal of this measure as an attempt at avoiding class warfare in a manner that paved the way for the later democracy; however, it was not usually democracies that enacted such measures.⁴¹³ Tyrants and

410. Ibid.

411. See ch. 4, pp. 119-126 for linguistic analysis of this fragment.

412. See n. 409 above.

monarchs in particular frequently resorted to similar maneuvers, making it is implausible in the extreme that someone hearing of a state-wide cancellation of debt would classify the author of the movement as a μεσότης or a *misotyrannos*.⁴¹⁴

Before, during, and after Solon's time, debt cancellation had always correlated closely with both tyranny and land redistribution, making it is unlikely that potential beneficiaries of this sort of agrarian reform would have dissociated these measures from either tyranny or each other.⁴¹⁵ The pattern of tyrants and monarchs canceling debts and redistributing land long predates the Greek "Age of Tyranny" of the seventh and sixth centuries. It is first recorded as a practice of the Babylonian kings. Hammurabi cancelled debts on several occasions, in 1780, 1771, and 1762 B.C., as did his grandson, Ammisaduqa in 1646.⁴¹⁶ Both issued a *misharum* ("justice") that dissolved the debts of farmers, shepherds, and the "collectors of animal carcasses." Diodorus also tells us of Boccoris, a late eighth century Egyptian pharaoh who cancelled debts and banned debt-slavery (1.79).

Nehemiah, governor of Judah and Solon's contemporary, also gained popularity by forgiving debts and redistributing land in the wake of the destruction of the temple in

413. See pp. 37-40 for the "democratic" reforms of Solon as described in our ancient sources.

414. Harding (1974: 283-85) discusses examples on the correlations between tyrants, debt cancellation, and land redistribution. He also traces the ways in which accounts of Solon's reforms became politically volatile because of class warfare in the fourth century, with political conservatives wanting to erase such precedents because they resembled those of tyrants too closely. Rosivach (1992: 154) also notes that Isocrates associates debt cancellation and land redistribution as being complementary measures that are frequently used by tyrants.

415. In Harding's discussion on the correlation between tyranny and land redistribution, he specifically says that Solon deliberately avoided conflict by limiting his actions to debt cancellation (1974: 285). "Fourth-century political theorists saw a close connection between these demands and *stasis*, out of which arose tyranny. The connection was not lost on Solon in the sixth century, who refused to redistribute land for that very reason"; but see below p. 160.

416. 5:36-41, ANET 3; SD 5, respectively.

Jerusalem in 586 B.C., when the Persian king Artaxerxes sent him to rebuild the walls.⁴¹⁷

Though Nehemiah governed Judah as a satrap to the Persians, he had a considerable degree of autonomy, especially considering the harsh reforms he instituted upon finding that his laws had fallen into disuse after a trip to Susa to report to the Great King. The forgiveness of debt was a measure meant to prevent discontent for those under his rule, demonstrating that, even in the ancient Near East and Palestine, people associated debt forgiveness with autocracy. Greeks on the mainland would most likely have been familiar with such eastern practices through trade and contacts with Ionian Greeks.⁴¹⁸

Attestations are less secure for this period in Greece proper, but we do find several instances that suggest that land redistribution and/or debt cancellation was happening in tyrannies (or, in the case of Sparta, monarchies/oligarchies) prior to or contemporaneous with Solon. For instance, we find it evidenced in Sparta at the time of Tyrtaeus, when the Spartan *kleroi* were distributed after the conquest of Messenia in the seventh century.⁴¹⁹ In eighth-century Corinth, the Bacchiad Pheidon allegedly passed legislation to the effect that each citizen should have his own plot of land, and it seems that Cypselus continued this policy in the seventh century.⁴²⁰ This also may have been the case with Theagenes in Megara in the sixth century, though this is less secure.⁴²¹ Even if

417. Nehemiah 10:31; see also Hudson (1993: 4-6). This is also evocative of the traditional Israelite practice of forgiving debts for neighboring peoples every seven years under the traditional Hebrew jubilee.

418. For contacts with the East and colonization during the early Iron Age, see Morgan 2009 and Thomas 2009 in Raaflaub & Van Wees 2009; for specific contacts between Greece and Persia in the seventh and sixth centuries, see Wiesehöfer (2009: 162-86).

419. On redistribution of land by archaic Greek tyrants as a general policy, including in Sparta and Corinth, see Austin & Vidal-Naquet (1977: 70-71). On *kleroi* and equality of shares of land and slaves in Sparta, see Tyr. fr. 1 (ref. in Arist. *Pol.* 1306b-1307a2), fr. 5; Plut. *Agis* 5; Her. Pont. *de reb publ.* 2.7; and Plut. *Mor.* 238e.

420. Arist. *Pol.* 1265b-12-16; see Salmon (1984: 154-55) and Will (1955: 477-81).

421. Though we know that there were similar problems with discontent from inequality of wealth, it is not certain whether Theagenes actually redistributed land. It is more likely that, rather than a widespread redistribution to all of the citizenry, Theagenes confiscated estates from his enemies and used them to either

the practice was not widespread in Greece itself, it would not have been unknown, and would have been associated with tyranny or oligarchy.

We see similar patterns in contemporary Greek colonies in the East and West. In Syracuse in 405-4, Dionysius I also engaged in remission of taxes for the populace and redistribution of land and houses in equal portions. Somehow his own friends received "more equal" shares, which reminds us of the stories about Solon informing his friends in advance of the *seisachtheia*, thus allowing them to seize the best properties ahead of the reform.⁴²² It continued in the machinations of Herakleides in Syracuse in his struggle with Dion for supremacy after the ousting of Dionysius from power in the mid-fourth century. Dion and Herakleides both appealed to the *demos* for support, but the people supported Herakleides on the strength of his platform of redistributing land. Dion, having gained the support of the aristocracy for the position of strategos autokrator, was opposed by the *demos*, who preferred Herakleides because he was "more a man of the people than Dion and more under the control of the multitude" (Plut. *Dion* 48.2; δημοτικώτερόν γε πάντως εἶναι τοῦ Δίωνος καὶ μᾶλλον ὑπὸ χεῖρα τοῖς πολλοῖς). Herakleides then gained support in large part by claiming that he was trying to protect the *demos* from tyranny, while at the same time plotting to restore the tyrant Dionysius the Younger to power (Plut. *Dion* 48.3-4). Herakleides then stirred up support from the people by claiming that Dion, by *refusing* to redistribute land, was aiming to make himself tyrant. The chronological and geographical differences between the Sicilian tyrants of Classical and Hellenistic Sicily

reward supporters or pay for public works projects such as the aqueduct. On political problems stemming from disparities of wealth in Megara, see *Thgn.* 53-6. On clashes between rich and poor and possible confiscation of wealthy estates, see Oost (1973: 187-8, esp. n. 12, 191) and Highbarger (1927: 125). 422. On accusations of Solon's double-dealing, see ch. 3, p. 81. On Dionysius I, see Diod. 15.7.4-5 and Justin 21.1-2; see also Harding (1974: 285). On parallels between mainland Greek, Sicilian, and Carthaginian tyrannies with respect to policies of land redistribution, see Jackman (2006: 43-45).

and Archaic mainland Greece mean that we must be careful not to draw too firm a parallel between Solon and Dion's situations. It is striking, however, that our sources claim that Solon's refusal to redistribute land indicated that he did *not* want a tyranny, while Dion's refusal of the same thing indicated that he *did*.

Klearchos in Herakleia Pontika, a contemporary of Dion and Herakleides, apparently consciously imitated Dionysius I when he abolished debts and redistributed the lands of the rich at the behest of the people, before Spartan forces deposed him (Diod. 15.81.5; Justin 16.4-5). In the Hellenistic period, Polyaeus tells us of Apollodorus in Kassandreia in 278, who, upon his seizure of power, allotted plots of land in Pallene to the people, all the while denouncing tyranny as the most dreadful evil to befall a state. In fact, we hear that before he seized power, Apollodorus cultivated a great reputation as a champion of the people and as a tyrant-hater, even helping depose the tyrant Lachares from Kassandreia (Polyaen., *Strat.* 6.7.1-2). Debt cancellation and tyrants go hand in hand even in the Roman period. Marius, for instance, forgave the debts of Sulpicius in exchange for his support in the senate to pass the legislation that led to his de facto dictatorship (Plut. *Sulla* 8.2). Forgiveness of debts was also one of the tactics used by Catiline to garner support for his attempted coup in 63 B.C. (Sall. *Cat.* 21.2; Cic. *Cat.* 2.8).

The trend of associating debt cancellation, land redistribution, and tyranny continued into the Classical and Hellenistic periods. In Plato's *Republic*, written after more than a century of democracy, Socrates details how a tyrant arises. In his formulation, the people with the least band together and raise up a champion, who then becomes a tyrant by promising land distributions and debt cancellation, thereby

transforming himself from a man into a wolf (565d-566a).⁴²³ We also see it happening in *poleis* not ruled by tyrants but with non-democratic constitutions—Agis, Cleomenes, and Nabis redistributed land in Sparta in the mid-late third century. This is especially remarkable considering Isocrates' earlier assertion in the *Panathenaicus* (ca. 340 B.C.), in which he holds up Sparta as an ideal constitution, for the reason that no Lacedaimonian tyrant had seized power by abolition of debts or redistribution of lands, both of which which he terms irreparable ills (12.259; τῶν ἀνηκέστων κακῶν).⁴²⁴ Plato concurs that the fact that the Spartans had avoided cancellation of debts and land redistribution was a good thing, and goes further in saying that the man who tried to gain power by doing so was destined to be hated by everyone for his measures (*Laws* 3.684d-e and 5.736c).⁴²⁵ We see, therefore, that even in cases where tyrants are not behind land redistribution and debt cancellation, democracy seldom comes into play. Those who engage in this practice are tyrants, aristocrats, kings, and oligarchs, but never democrats or even moderates; Solon's actions canceling debt, whether or not they were accompanied by land redistribution, cannot be seen as an attempt at instituting some sort of proto-democracy.

After Thrasybulus ousted the Thirty Tyrants and restored democracy in 403 B.C., the *demos* actually seems to have taken a decided stand against measures like debt cancellation at the same time that they begin associating Solon with democracy in very public ways. We see further evidence that debt cancellation was almost exclusively

423. See also Harding (1974: 285). Solon in fr. 36, line 27 actually describes himself as a wolf beset by hounds. On Solon's wolf metaphor, see further ch. 4, pp. 133-143.

424. On redistribution of land in ancient Greece in general, see Asheri 1966. On revolutionary societal movements, see Von Pohlmann 1925. On social revolution in the Hellenistic period, see Fuks (1966: 437-48). On the activities of Spartans redistributing land and canceling debt, see Plutarch *Agis* 5-10 and *Cleomenes* 17.

425. Even though we have seen that Agis and Cleomenes did in fact cancel debt and redistribute land.

associated with tyrants in many of the rhetorical speeches of the fourth century, despite appeals in those very same speeches to Solon as the moderate democrat par excellence. Andocides in *On the Mysteries* asserts that the democracy was best upheld by affirming the validity of decisions in private suits, "to avoid canceling debts and reopening of such lawsuits, and to ensure the enforcement of private contracts" (1.88; ὅπως μήτε χρεῶν ἀποκοπαὶ εἶεν μήτε δίκαι ἀνάδικοι γίγνοιτο, ἀλλὰ τῶν ἰδίων συμβολαίων αἱ πράξεις εἶεν). It seems that in the fourth century the majority of people in Athens opposed any measures that would affect their properties or financial securities, and Androtion even denied that Solon could have enacted such a measure on the grounds that it was too radical.⁴²⁶ According to A.H.M. Jones, Athens in the fourth century was mainly a middle class, conservative form of democracy that eschewed such measures.⁴²⁷

Demosthenes, too, automatically associated tyranny with land redistribution and debt cancellation. He quotes an oath of the Heliasts in *Against Timocrates* that lists these two measures among the offenses that constitute subversion of democracy. He also includes restoring exiles as a crime against democracy, something for which Solon was also much lauded (*Tim.* 149):⁴²⁸

I will not vote for tyranny or oligarchy. If anyone tries to subvert the Athenian *demos* or make any speech or any proposal against it, I will not obey. *I will not allow private debts to be cancelled*, nor lands nor houses of Athenian citizens to be redistributed. *I will not recall exiles or anyone condemned to death...*⁴²⁹

426. Plut. *Sol.* 15.2 = FGrHist 324 F 34. It is therefore understandable that Androtion tried to explain away Solon's cancellation of debts as devaluation of currency, a much less radical reform. It is more likely, as Harding (1974: 288-89) suggests, that Androtion was struggling to understand sixth-century politics in terms of fourth-century economic and social conditions, which would have held debt cancellation in suspicion.

427. See Jones (1986: 75-96) for a discussion on how the Athenians of the fourth century explicitly avoided mentions of debt cancellation or land reallocation.

428. For further discussion of the restoration of exiles as a tactic of tyrants, see p. 167.

429. See Solon fr. 36 on the criticism he incurred for recalling those sold into slavery abroad or exiled,

καὶ τύραννον οὐ ψηφιοῦμαι εἶναι οὐδ' ὀλιγαρχίαν: οὐδ' ἐάν τις καταλύῃ τὸν δῆμον τὸν Ἀθηναίων ἢ λέγῃ ἢ ἐπιψηφίξῃ παρὰ ταῦτα, οὐ πείσομαι: οὐδὲ τῶν χρεῶν τῶν ἰδίων ἀποκοπὰς οὐδὲ γῆς ἀναδασμὸν τῆς Ἀθηναίων οὐδ' οἰκιῶν: οὐδὲ τοὺς φεύγοντας κατὰξω, οὐδὲ ὧν θάνατος κατέγνωσται...

Before, during, and after Solon's time, debt cancellation and land redistribution were both associated with tyranny. Even if we allow that only canceling debt is more "moderate" than also re-alloting land, debt cancellation in and of itself could in no way be considered a conservative move. Therefore it is unlikely that debt abolition would have associated Solon with the middle ground of which he speaks so often in his poetry, whether or not he redistributed land along with the cancellation of debt. The immediate association would be with that of a tyrant or would-be tyrant, despite the fact that Solon is usually seen as moderate because he resisted the re-allotment of lands.⁴³⁰ Solon denounced tyranny in his poetry while at the same time using tactics to enact reforms that were characteristic of tyrants not only in Greece proper, but in the entire Mediterranean world, in all periods of history.

a. Further Sources of Discontent

If debt cancellation is usually associated with land redistribution elsewhere, why did Solon not use his extraordinary powers to re-allot land when he abolished the *horoi*, which would have gone a long way towards solving his problems with the *demos*? Plutarch implies that Solon's refusal to redistribute land was the main reason that the lower classes were unhappy with him: "He pleased neither party, however; he vexed the rich because he took away their securities for debt, and the poor even more, because he

some of whom no longer spoke Greek, and his justification that he was only trying to act for the good of all.

430. Holladay (1977: 46) suggests that the demand for Solon to become a tyrant rested in part on the clout this position would have given him in allowing him to redistribute land.

did not redistribute land as they had hoped, nor did he made all men equal and alike in their livelihoods..." (*Sol.* 16.1; ἤρεσε δ' οὐδετέροις, ἀλλ' ἐλύπησε καὶ τοὺς πλουσίους ἀνελῶν τὰ συμβόλαια, καὶ μᾶλλον ἔτι τοὺς πένητας, ὅτι γῆς ἀναδασμὸν οὐκ ἐποίησεν ἐλπίσασιν αὐτοῖς, οὐδὲ παντάπασι...ὀμαλοὺς τοῖς βίοις καὶ ἴσους κατέστησεν). I suggest that the reason Solon did not re-allot land along with abolishing debts was a failed attempt to placate both the aristocracy and the *demos* simultaneously. His frequent assertions that he had the best interests of both parties in mind suggest that he was extremely concerned with keeping all strata of society happy. He thought that cancellation of debts would satisfy the poor, and the retention of their lands would satisfy the rich.⁴³¹ After all, the aristocracy were bound to be angry about being unable to recoup their loans, without their land being confiscated and given to the very people who had defaulted on their debts as well.

It is also possible that the institution of the new property classes, rather than granting a wide swath of the population greater political rights, actually disenfranchised some aristocrats from holding office. Many scholars dismiss this as an impossibility.⁴³² However, van Wees' brilliant analysis of the economic situation of the different Solonian classes suggests that the *zeugitai* were not, as most people believe, some sort of middle class who were newly enfranchised by Solon's new property divisions, but rather were among the elite, leisured landowners.⁴³³ This would have produced (or maintained) a wide gap between the rich and poor, and in fact could have bumped some wealthier

431. On the demand for Solon to redistribute land and to become a tyrant, see *Ath. Pol.* 6.4, 11.2, and esp. 12.3. Fr. 34 of Solon's poetry justifies his protection of both rich and poor, which could be a reference to his attempt to satisfy both parties by refusing to redistribute *kleroi*. See further Hopper (1961: 195-96) on the long-term effects of loss of land by the *demos* under the regime of Peisistratos.

432. E.g. Hopper (1961: 195 n. 73) and Holladay (1977: 40-56), among others.

433. van Wees (2006: 351-89).

citizens down a rung and disenfranchised some whose riches were not based in agriculture.⁴³⁴ He maintains that Solon's property classes did not serve to enfranchise a class of "middling farmers," but confined political rights and obligations to an even narrower and more rigidly defined elite.⁴³⁵ In fact the *Ath. Pol.* suggests this very thing, and places lenders made poor by the debt cancellation as eventual supporters of Peisistratos (13.5).⁴³⁶ It is plausible that someone whose capital was tied up in the land would, when faced with such a wide-ranging debt forgiveness, find themselves without the resources they had counted on to maintain their place in the political power structure. This would make it even harder for Solon to retain any sort of support among the upper classes if, on top of losses from uncollected debts, he had also taken away land. But this concession was not enough, and his strategy of placating the wealthy by allowing them to retain their land failed.

On the other hand, while debt cancellation was doubtless a boon to those indebted, it would not help much if they immediately had to borrow in order to farm land that was insufficient to support themselves and their families. After all, cancellation of debts and the abolition of debt-slavery did not abrogate the need for loans.⁴³⁷ This may

434. On wealthy *thetes* and those whose non-agricultural wealth would have disqualified them from Solon's highest property classes, see van Wees (2006: 373-74). On the wealth census being measured by the barley standard, see van Wees (2006: 359), after de Ste Croix (2004: 33-40), whose analysis stems mainly from Plut. *Sol.* 23.3 and and Isaeus 10.10.

435. For discussion of the relative wealth of the *zeugitai*, see van Wees (2006: 351-67). McGlew (1993: 105) also argues that debt cancellation was not a measure to put the rich and poor on more equal footing, but to preserve the division between the upper and lower classes. See also Eder (2005: 240-41), who argues that the very act of codifying laws was meant to ensure aristocratic predominance, partly because the aristocrats themselves would be the ones enforcing the laws. In his view, a legal basis for existing property arrangements would also render any demand for debt cancellation or redistribution of land ineffective.

436. Hopper (1961: 195 n. 73) takes this at face value, while Holladay (1977: 40-56) asserts that the cancellation of debts "cannot in itself have caused poverty even if it is supposed that those whose debts were cancelled were also, incidentally, poor" (41), but gives no reason for this claim.

437. As McGlew (1993: 99) also notes. Cf. Ober (1989: 62).

have provided a reason for the widespread demand, particularly among the lower classes, that Solon become tyrant; only a tyrant would have the clout necessary to strip the aristocratic landowners of their property and redistribute it to the poor farmers. Additionally, this measure served to cement the power in the hands of this (now narrower) elite, which in fact did primarily direct political affairs even after the rise of democracy. Therefore the supposed political advantages to the *demos* provided by the *seisachtheia* were qualified, since the elite now had a legal and economic basis for their control of affairs.⁴³⁸ Thus did this tactic of canceling debts for the poor without redistributing land, intended to retain the support of all classes, backfire, and the careful societal balance that Solon was trying to maintain crumbled.⁴³⁹

III. Potentially Negative Consequences of Abolishing Debt-Slavery

While it may seem counterintuitive, debt-bondage was perhaps not as terrible an institution as we in the modern world assume. It is likely that many of those sold into slavery were not sent abroad, but remained to farm the same land. The only difference was that they were now toiling for masters instead of themselves, with the additional benefit that they were now working enough land to provide sustenance for themselves and their families. Those who were manumitted often continued to work for their former masters because they had proven their value and had already been employed using their expertise. It is not unreasonable to assume that the reverse happened—that free men who were enslaved retained positions on the farms they now worked for their owners. The downside of no longer being able to offer oneself as collateral is that, if one does not

438. Eder (2005: 240-41), who points out that at this period a person's political influence depended on his economic station.

439. See also Holladay (1977: 45).

retain enough land to farm, or does not have the means to obtain enough seed to plant the land one does own, there is nothing to offer as collateral, except perhaps the farm itself. This would put the poor farmer right back where he started—with encumbrances on the land.⁴⁴⁰ Further, loans would be impossible to get not only because farmers had nothing to trade as surety, but because aristocrats who had lost substantial sums to the debt cancellation would now refuse to loan money (or more likely seed) if there was no collateral to be had and no assurances that another financial measure as devastating as debt cancellation would not pass.⁴⁴¹

Another ramification of this reform is that aristocrats may no longer have had labor to work their land, whether it had been obtained through loan default or was part of their ancestral plot. If a significant part of their former labor force was now free to work their own land, even those former debt-slaves who remained with their masters as free laborers may not have been enough to manage their farms efficiently. If the number of indentured workers dropped and tillable land lay fallow because of lack of labor, this would not only be bad for the owners who would lose profits on crops that could not be farmed, but would breed extreme resentment among those who did not possess enough land to make a living. Holladay argues that it is unlikely that large numbers of people lost their farms around the same time as Solon's reforms, or that the majority of the people who did lose their farms were unable to find a different means of livelihood. In his view

440. See Finley (1981: 63-64) on the use of land as collateral in the fifth and fourth centuries.

441. Cf. Ar. *Clouds* (1187 ff.), where a law of Solon's is represented as an underhanded way of getting out of debt. The situation in the play is so ludicrous that it would have been obvious to any audience members that the scheme to get out of debt was nothing but a scam, which may have been a reference to the disastrous consequences of the real Solon's debt cancellation scheme. This allusion could be an acknowledgment of sorts that Solon's much-lauded reforms were in fact detrimental to the economy and did little to help the political situation, whatever the current rhetoric regarding Solon as a political reformer may have been.

farmers would be dispossessed of their land for various reasons and over an extended period of time: "First one, then another, of the marginal farmers would meet with disaster according to their varying circumstances. It would be a trickle, not a flood."⁴⁴² However, the widespread anger suggests that the opposite was true. If farmers were only gradually stripped of their lands, surely the *demos*' negative reaction to Solon's measures would not have been so immediate or so violent.

If, as suggested in chapter 1, there was an uptick in trade and commerce at this period, it is not unreasonable to suppose that many of the dispossessed farmers who came to the city to seek alternate work found themselves engaged in some sort of commercial venture, whether as merchants or traders.⁴⁴³ This makes sense in light of Solon's encouragement of skilled workers from abroad to come and settle in Athens and of his requirements that parents ensure that their children had a skill; yet the other side of this encouragement of immigration could be that there were more people than jobs, especially given evidence of a growing urban population in this period.⁴⁴⁴ We find an increased amount of Attic pottery being exported abroad dating to the sixth century.⁴⁴⁵ Pottery workshops did not need large numbers of people to operate, so it is difficult to equate an increase of pottery as indicative of an increase in employment opportunities. Athens was not known for seapower at this time, and the lack of evidence for Athenian shipping in this period suggests that Athenian goods were exported by merchants from other cities,

442. Holladay (1977: 46).

443. On the likelihood of an economic revolution occurring in Archaic Athens, see ch. 1, 40-46 and Appendix II, p. 205. See Plut. *Sol.* 22 on the increased population of the city at this time.

444. See Appendix II, p. 208 n. 542.

445. After 600 we see increased amounts of Attic pottery in export markets, though this only became widespread in the mid-sixth century. On the output of various known pottery workshops in the period between 600-675 B.C., see Holladay (1977: 47-49) and Webster (1972: 2).

which would also have decreased the number of jobs to be had from the shipping industry and exacerbated the situation of unemployed farmers.⁴⁴⁶

Solon's legislation on olioculture suggests that lack of exports was in fact a pressing issue, and may indicate a shift from cereal farming to olive production.⁴⁴⁷ Since olive trees take around a decade to produce a mature crop, only farmers who could afford to plant olives while still maintaining land for growing grain would be able to produce more lucrative olives.⁴⁴⁸ The reduced grain crop for smallholders wanting to make the switch to olive growing may have been insufficient to support them and their families. It may well have been the case that poorer farmers who wanted to make the switch, but who did not have enough land to survive the wait for olive crops to mature would have been among the most vehement supporters of land redistribution. Without re-allocation of farming lots and no collateral to obtain a loan, these men would fall back into debt and lose their farms.⁴⁴⁹ If there was indeed a widespread movement toward olive cultivation, this would reduce the number of agricultural laborers, since olioculture requires less manpower throughout most of the year than grain growing. This would have increased the movement of unemployed agricultural laborers toward the city, contributing to a rise in the population of urban poor who had been dispossessed of their land and now lacked a way to make a living, all as a (surely unintentional) result of Solon's abolishment of debt-slavery.

446. Holladay (1977: 40-56).

447. On the possibility of a widespread switch to olive production, see Appendix II, p. 209.

448. On the cultivation of the olive, see Hanson (1995: 74-77) and Foxhall (2007: 97-130).

449. See further Holladay (1977: 48-49).

IV. Recall of Exiles

One of the other things that Solon mentions in his poetry is that he recalled exiles and debt-slaves, some of whom, in his words, no longer spoke the Attic tongue.⁴⁵⁰ Solon (fr. 36) mentions that he not only freed the debt-slaves in Athens, but brought home those who had been sold abroad. But it is inconceivable that foreign masters would have voluntarily freed slaves on the basis of an un-enforceable decree from far-off Attica. Surely Solon would have had to purchase any slaves sold abroad in order to bring them home, and given that the Athenian economy was in a shambles, who would have paid to redeem the debtors? The aristocrats who had sold them abroad in the first place certainly would not have volunteered to bring them home, and the poor, including family members of the enslaved, would not have had the means (and could no longer get loans to do so).⁴⁵¹ Therefore this freeing of slaves and recall of exiles could have been nothing more than a public declaration that was more ideological than effective, a poetic addendum to his policy of debt-cancellation and abolishment of debt-slavery in general.⁴⁵² Westermann takes the poems at face value and concludes from them that there was a booming export market for slaves in Greece in the seventh and sixth centuries, of which Attic debt-slaves were a large part. He suggests that the widespread use of debt-slaves indicates that agriculture in Attica became somewhat dependent on slave labor at this time, but Snodgrass, in his analysis of the export of slaves from Archaic Attica, speculates that sea-transport was limited to heavier goods like stone and metal. As he says, "the fact remains

450. See for example Wallace (2007: 51).

451. Oliva (1988: 51) also questions whether Solon would have been able to redeem debt-slaves sold abroad, either financially or logistically.

452. Westermann (1955: 3-4) and Snodgrass (1983: 18).

that slaves could walk, and might therefore, unlike inanimate cargoes, be more economically moved overland in many cases." If true, this indicates that there were fewer debtors sold outside of Greece than Solon's poetry would lead us to believe, indicating further that this measure was mainly rhetorical.

We do not hear anything of the recall of exiled members of the aristocracy, so we can only speculate on whether the amnesty included members of elite families. Recalling exiles from the upper classes (most probably members of the Alcmaeonid clan after the Cylon debacle), could have eroded his support among the aristocratic factions remaining in Athens. The people responsible for exiling members of the elite in the first place would be unhappy that their enemies had been recalled. If Solon was counting on the support of the exiles and their clients, whom he recalled to offset any unrest this measure sparked at home, it is possible that he miscalculated badly. If he was hoping for the support of exiled aristocrats and their clients, this would have backfired if not enough of them returned to make up for the unpopularity among those who had exiled them in the first place. If the hoped-for exiles did not return, or did return but proved too weak politically to provide significant backing, or the other parties simply proved stronger, this would cause problems for Solon. Even the simple fact that people would have known that he was trying to recall members of influential families could have been fodder for discontent. This could also have been a possible retrojection based on blanket recalls of exiles and those who had been ostracized, which we see numerous times in the fifth and fourth centuries.⁴⁵³ Without more explicit information from our sources, of course, this

453. E.g., the recall of the 700 families exiled by Cleomenes in 507 (Hdt. 5.73); the recall of all those ostracized and exiled in advance of the Persian invasion in 480 (Plut. *Arist.* 8); the recall of Cimon from ostracism in 451 to broker a treaty with the Spartans (Plut. *Cim.* 17.2-6 and *Per.* 10.3); and Alexander the

discussion of the possible negative effects of recalling aristocratic exiles must remain conjecture.

V. Solon's Military Activities

Aristotle tells us that one of the most effective tools of tyrants in the Archaic period was their use of private military forces or bodyguards to assist in their seizure of power (*Pol.* 1311a8f).⁴⁵⁴ Beyond references to encouraging the Athenians to renew hostilities with Megara in the Salamis poems (Sol. frs. 1-3), this is not a typical feature in our reports of Solon's activities.⁴⁵⁵ It is only in our later sources that we hear details about Solon's military activities beyond Salamis, many of which are typical of (or actually involve) tyrants.⁴⁵⁶ In his chapter on Solon, Diogenes Laertius begins by attributing to Solon a glorious military career, even calling his part in the capture of Salamis his greatest achievement (1.46). Plutarch (*Sol.* 8) describes Solon's ruse to renew the war with Salamis and his subsequent trickery, which reportedly involved feigning madness to get around a law forbidding anyone from urging a renewal of hostilities. Plutarch says that following this bit of skulduggery, the Athenians appointed Solon as their military commander by vote of the assembly, which seems also to have been the case with Peisistratos.⁴⁵⁷ Solon's charade seems to have involved a complicity with the people, since

Great's recall of all Greek exiles in 324 (Diod. 18.8).

454. Cf. Diod. 11.86, in which Tyndarides attempted to set up a tyranny by first redistributing lands, and then setting up a personal bodyguard.

455. For the possibility that this war was actually waged against an independent Eleusis, see Welwei (1992: 66, 144).

456. Of course late sources like Diogenes must be used cautiously, but as Osborne (1997: 39-40) notes, the sort of biographical tradition in which Diogenes writes is already traceable in Herodotus and Aristotle. Osborne further advises caution in privileging epigraphic over literary sources on archaic law because of the confused, inconsistent, and atypical nature of the laws that get inscribed. For arguments that archaic law was ad hoc and not part of a unified code, including even Solon's reforms, see Hölkeskamp (1992: 91-92); see Osborne (1997: 39-43) for objections, *passim*.

457. If this is accurate, it is possible that the Megarian War was the first for which military commanders were elected, potentially making Solon the first elected general of the Athenians—a high military honor

it is scarcely possible that they would have allotted command to someone they thought was mad. Solon and Peisistratos colluded to lure Salamis' allies, the Megarians, to Cape Colias to kidnap high-born Athenian women as hostages, but Solon and Peisistratos dressed beardless youths in women's clothing and had them cavort on the seashore in the manner of women sacrificing to Demeter.⁴⁵⁸ When the Megarians landed on the beach and tried to seize them, the young men slaughtered the would-be kidnapers.

We hear little of Solon's military career beyond brief mentions in any of our sources; his active part in the campaign against Salamis is normally overshadowed by the wisdom of his clever ruse, described in such detail in Plutarch and Diogenes.⁴⁵⁹ The latter tells us more about his military activities than anyone else, also mentioning a campaign to capture the Thracian Chersonnese. Besides expansion of Athenian influence to Salamis and the Black Sea region, Solon also supposedly founded a city on Cyprus.⁴⁶⁰ Indeed, Diogenes tells us that he founded Soli directly after he fled Athens to escape the tyrant Peisistratos.⁴⁶¹ Diogenes also tells us that he passed laws curtailing the rewards of athletes to further honor those slain in battle; with the result that many strove harder to acquit

indeed, and one indicative of a degree of organization among the *demos* not often credited for this time. Goušchin (1999: 18-19) argues that it was mainly the hoplites who supported Solon's renewal of hostilities and elected him *strategos*, as does Hopper (1961: 206 n. 169). On the election of generals by hoplites, see Develin (1989: 4). Herodotus also called Peisistratos a *strategos* (1.59.4), and the *Ath. Pol.* mentions his leading role in the Megarian War.

458. This is one of many suspicious doublets in which Solon and Peisistratos are either linked or credited with the same actions (see Podlecki (1987: 3-10) and Irwin (2005: 263-80). It has been speculated that the source of this conflation has been the fact that there were actually two campaigns and two captures of Salamis, one led by Solon around 600 B.C. and the second led by Peisistratos in the 560s. For this possibility, see Podlecki (1984: 123).

459. In fact, a completely anachronistic inscription was even placed on a statue of Solon describing his legislative activities as having taken place after the Battle of Salamis in 480, crushing the Persian might. Of course Solon's campaign against the Megarians over Salamis was more than a century before the battle with the Persians over the same island in 480 (*Anth. Pal.* 7.86, cited in *Plut. Sol.* 62).

460. Colonization of new cities is something with which tyrants are elsewhere associated. For example, Herodotus tells us that Peisistratos installed Miltiades as a tyrant in the Chersonnese and Lygdamis as ruler of Naxos (1.64).

461. *Diog.* 1.46. On Solon's colonizing activities, see Irwin (1998: 177-83).

themselves in war.⁴⁶² Diogenes asserts that it was because of these military feats that the people looked up to him and wanted him to rule as a tyrant (1.49). These military tactics in fact do have much in common with the expansionist policies of several of the archaic tyrants, which gained them popularity with the people.⁴⁶³

Peisistratos was not the only tyrant with whom we hear that Solon worked in a military capacity. Diogenes includes a letter of Solon on how to remain in power. He says that if Periander wanted to be free of reproach he should resign power, but if he wanted to keep control he should get rid of all conspirators by making his personal mercenary force stronger than that of the citizens' (1.64).⁴⁶⁴ Solon is elsewhere associated with tyrants making war. Pausanias describes the maxims written in the fore-temple at Delphi, by Thales, Bias, Pittacus, Cleobulus, Solon, and Chilon (10.24).⁴⁶⁵ All of these men were on one or another of the lists of seven sages, and Pittacus and Cleobulus were actually tyrants.⁴⁶⁶ Immediately following, Pausanias describes how the sages advised the Amphictyons to appoint Cleisthenes, the tyrant of Sicyon, as general in their war against the Cirrhaeans. Cleisthenes then brought Solon over as advisor on the conduct of the war,

462. This might be the ghost of a tradition, preserved nowhere else, of Solon's support of a private military, like that of Peisistratos and his Argive and/or Thracian mercenaries. It may also dovetail with the discussions connecting Solon's creation of the *hippeis* with military, though of course this is conjecture. On the possibility of Peisistratos employing a private military, see Lavelle (1992: 5-23), Singor (2000: 107-29), and Viviers (1987: 193-95).

463. For instance, consider Polycrates' thalassocracy based on Samos and Peisistratos' activities in Sigeion, as well as on Naxos, Skyros, Lemnos, and possibly other parts of the Black Sea.

464. This of course also suggests a military bent more closely aligned with activities of tyrants than other sources. Cf. Herodotus 1.64, where Solon describes Peisistratos' army of *epikouroi*, or foreign mercenaries. See Frost (1984: 283-84), where he examines and dismisses the idea that Solon's four property classes were a way of mobilizing a citizen army.

465. See ch. 2, p. 73.

466. Cleobulus is in places merely a wise man, but Clement of Alexandria calls him "king of the Lindians" (*Stromata* 4.19), while Plutarch explicitly calls him a tyrant (*de E ap. Delph.* 3). Contra Diogenes Laertius, who quotes a letter from Cleobulus to Solon offering him refuge from tyranny, claiming that Lindus is a democracy (Plut. *Sol.* 1.93). This is an excellent parallel case wherein a sage has explicit alternate reputations as democrat and tyrant.

and Pausanias then gives us a list of Solon's stratagems against the Cirrhaeans, including diverting their water supply during a siege and poisoning their wells with hellebore. This indicates that an alternate tradition where Solon was not averse to associating with and even advising tyrants remained even into late antiquity, despite centuries of doctoring and almost universal suppression of stories that show Solon in a rather ruthless light. The descriptions in Pausanias and Diogenes show us that the way Solon conducted military affairs overlaps with, and is at times identical to, the way that tyrants waged war. When combined with Solon's "tyrannical" agrarian reforms, we see a pattern that Solon was operating within a political and social system that used the methods of tyrants in war and peace, whether or not he claimed the title.

VI. Conclusion

Tyrants in Solon's day were not necessarily vilified in the way that they were in democratic Athens. Tyrants in many cases were elected, or had the same sort of widespread support with which Solon seems to have started out, and despite the tyrannical stereotypes that attached to later rulers, there is a long history of such men not only operating within existing legal systems, but actively creating new ones and shoring up old laws. Tyrants frequently revitalized flagging economies with public works projects and employment opportunities, and their regimes often arose from the same sort of civil *stasis* that propelled Solon to power. So Solon's repeated assertions that tyranny was dishonorable require closer explanation.

Solon had a limited number of models when designing a solution for the internecine strife that was plaguing Athens. The aristocratic and oligarchic governments had obviously not worked in Athens' case, but elsewhere, tyranny had. Solon tried to have

it both ways: he wanted to stabilize the state by using measures that had been successful elsewhere, but he could not seem to be grasping for a tyranny. His methods, though, were just that: tyrannical. He had to have the power of a tyrant to enact the *seisachtheia*, which involved cancellation of debt—something only seen in connection with tyrants before, during, and after Solon's time. But his refusal to redistribute land, along with the abolition of debt-bondage, backfired. Poor citizens no longer able to acquire enough seed to farm their lands because they lacked collateral and/or because the wealthy were reluctant to take the risk of another debt cancellation, no longer had any means of livelihood, which was surely an unintended consequence. What is more, fourth century citizens eager to avoid a return to tyranny specifically forbade all of these provisions. Solon, by mimicking the policies of other *poleis*, showed himself willing to use models of reform that were indisputably borrowed from neighboring tyrannies—though without the accompanying label.

Concluding Remarks: An Accidental Democrat?

The goal of this dissertation has been to re-assess our conception of a man with a singular place in Athenian history. Since antiquity, the vision of Solon as the "father of democracy" has gone unquestioned by most modern scholars. But once we recognize the fallacy of relying on the poetry of someone with a vested interest in avoiding association with tyranny, and re-examine both his own work and later writings about him, we find that the record is rife with contradiction, in many places within the same source. Many of the stories about Solon's actions required a profusion of sometimes ingenious excuses, and at times creative commentary that stretched credibility to the breaking point. Because each of his apologists referred to Solon's own poetry to explain away stories that did not sit well with fourth-and-fifth century Athenians, we can infer that there was much in the tradition that many democratic partisans of the fifth and fourth centuries felt was uncomfortably close to tyranny, regardless of the effectiveness of tyrannies elsewhere in solving political, social, and economic problems.

By the fifth century, Solon's legacy had become so malleable that it was possible to dress any uncomfortable elements in the accoutrements of myth and legend. This made it easier, in the political, down-with-tyranny climate of democracy, to cast Solon as a protodemocrat and use him as a figure of appeal for questions of government and even ethics, while at the same time condemning the very reforms with which he purportedly founded the current government. This vision was helped along by his own (at least verbal) stance against tyranny, which was easy for the Athenians of the classical period to believe—in essence, he told them what they wanted to hear, and it suited their purposes to believe him. It is entirely possible that Solon did, as he said, wish to help all classes of

society by doing as he thought best for them. He may really have tried to be "a mighty shield," protecting each faction from the other. So what does this tell us about Solon?

In order to enact the sort of sweeping economic and social reforms that he attempted required the sort of power and political support only possible for someone with the stature of a tyrant. It is certainly possible that Solon actually had the even-handed concern for the welfare of all of the citizens that he claims in his poetry. But the very language he uses calls to mind stories and characteristics of tyrants and places him more in the context of archaic politics writ large than the genre of sympotic elegy, in which his poetry has garnered so much censure. The fact remains that the methods he used were those of successful tyrants elsewhere in the Greek world. As we have seen, tyranny was often regarded as a viable and desirable solution by citizens of all classes desperate for political and social stability. So why did Solon so diligently avoid the label of tyrant? We return once more to Athens' pre-Peisistratid experience with tyranny.⁴⁶⁷

Solon was very anxious to stabilize the socio-economic situation in Athens, but the difference between him and "official" tyrants was that he was equally anxious not to wear the label of tyrant. Despite the fact that tyrants often were very effective at quelling civil *stasis* and implementing reforms that benefitted their *poleis*, Athens' singular experience with the attempted tyranny of Cylon, followed by the infighting and unsuccessful law code of Drakon, made tyranny especially unattractive to Athenians. Cylon's attempt at tyranny resulted in sacrilegious slaughter that disgraced one of the most prominent families in Athens, and was followed by not only continuation, but escalation, of civil strife. The Athenians therefore had every reason to associate tyranny

467. See ch. 1, pp. 7-9.

with violence, rather than with positive effects on the city like those instigated by the likes of Periander, Polycrates, and Pheidon. Cylon irreparably damaged not only his own κλέος, but that of several leading aristocratic families, and arguably Athens itself.⁴⁶⁸

Another indicator of the association of violence with the sort of political upheaval associated with tyranny comes from fr. 37:

As for the *demos*, it is necessary to chastise them openly;
I say that they have things now that they have never seen
even in their dreams.
And those who are greater and stronger
might praise me and make me their friend,
for another would not have
restrained or checked the *demos*
until he had churned the milk and skimmed the cream,
but I stood as a boundary stone (ὄρος) between two armies.

δήμῳ μὲν εἰ χρὴ διαφάδην ὄνειδίσαι,
ἃ νῦν ἔχουσιν οὐποτ' ὀφθαλμοῖσιν ἄν
εὐδοντες εἶδον ...
ὅσοι δὲ μείζους καὶ βίην ἀμείνονες,
αἰνοῖεν ἄν με καὶ φίλον ποιοίατο.
οὐκ ἄν κατέσχε δήμον, οὐδ' ἐπαύσατο
πρὶν ἀνταράξας πῖαρ ἐξεῖλεν γάλα·
ἐγὼ δὲ τούτων ὥσπερ ἐν μεταίχμῳ
ὄρος κατέστην.

The image of churning milk and skimming cream (i.e., forcibly removing the best part) is quite a violent one, as is the evocation of the *demos* and the aristocracy as armies.⁴⁶⁹

Solon would have caused turmoil similar to that instigated by Cylon if he had attempted to claim the title. The "cream" obviously refers to the aristocrats, who were in the class that was typically targeted by tyrannical takeovers in other *poleis*. This fragment strongly suggests that tyranny was associated with violence in Athens in a way that it was not

468. This connection is further supported by Solon's direct association of violence and tyranny in line 2 of fr. 32, discussed in ch. 4, p. 126.

469. See Noussia-Fantuzzi (2010: 487-96) for commentary.

elsewhere. Therefore Solon's methods had to be couched in terms that would not recall the violence and chaos associated with the Athenians' only experience of tyranny, even as he designed his constitution with elements similar to or identical with those of successful tyrants in other parts of Greece.

Yet within the political framework of archaic Greece writ large, tyranny was often seen as a positive phenomenon and the most effective way of stabilizing dangerous political and social conflict. Despite his frequent assertions to the contrary, Solon's methods to quell the civil *stasis* were borrowed from contemporary tyrants elsewhere in Greece who had successfully stabilized their own *poleis*. Because of the danger of being viewed as a tyrant by his contemporaries, Solon made very sure to control his own reception by stressing his rejection of tyranny in his poetry, which formed the basis for history's memory of his as the father of democracy and a proponent of moderation and "the mean." In democratic fifth-century Athens, a political climate that encouraged the vilification of tyranny in general and the Peisistratid tyrants in particular, the fragments of Solon's poems that tended to be preserved were those that seemed most sympathetic to democracy, and were taken at face value by later commentators who uncritically accepted Solon's own assertions about his program and motivations.

Solon certainly knew the history and benefits of various tyrannies outside of Athens, which meant that he very plausibly could have wanted to use the methods of tyrants while denying the reality of his actions. In fact, Aristotle comments that an effective way of gaining a tyranny is by pretending not to be a tyrant.⁴⁷⁰ Further, a tyrant could seize power by promulgating the fiction that he was in fact a moderate, and that

470. Arist. *Pol.* 1314b, 1315b.

tyranny was the last thing he was aiming for, as Aristotle clearly lays out:

...ὅτι δεῖ μὴ τυραννικὸν ἀλλ' οἰκονόμον καὶ βασιλικὸν εἶναι φαίνεσθαι τοῖς ἀρχομένοις καὶ μὴ σφετεριστὴν ἀλλ' ἐπίτροπον, καὶ τὰς μετριότητας τοῦ βίου διώκειν, μὴ τὰς ὑπερβολάς, ἔτι δὲ τοὺς μὲν γνωρίμους καθομιλεῖν, τοὺς δὲ πολλοὺς δημαγωγεῖν. ἐκ γὰρ τούτων ἀναγκαῖον οὐ μόνον τὴν ἀρχὴν εἶναι καλλίω καὶ ζηλωτοτέραν τῷ βελτιόνων ἄρχειν καὶ μὴ τεταπεινωμένων μηδὲ μισούμενον καὶ φοβούμενον διατελεῖν, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὴν ἀρχὴν εἶναι πολυχρονιωτέραν, ἔτι δ' αὐτὸν διακεῖσθαι κατὰ τὸ ἦθος ἥτοι καλῶς πρὸς ἀρετὴν ἢ ἡμίχρηστον ὄντα, καὶ μὴ πονηρὸν ἀλλ' ἡμιπόνηρον (*Pol.* 1315b).

...that it is necessary to appear to the subjects to be not tyrannical but a steward and a kingly, and not an appropriator of wealth but a trustee, and to pursue the moderate things of life and not its excesses, and also to win the favor of the notable citizens and to be a leader of the *demos*. For the result of these methods must be that not only the tyrant's rule will be better and more enviable because he will rule better men and not ones who have been lowered, nor will he be continually hated and feared, but also that his rule will endure longer, and also that he himself in his personal character will be well disposed towards excellence, or at least half-virtuous, and not base but only half-base.⁴⁷¹

Aristotle could be quoting from Solon's poetry. Solon, whether sincere or not, claims to be a moderate, and to be working in the best interests of the common people and of the elite. His virtue and personal integrity are universally stressed by our sources as well, which are all things that Aristotle deems effective tactics for establishing a tyranny. Consider Aristides, an arguably similar case in the mid-fifth century. He was universally famed for his integrity, yet was the architect of the policy of collecting *phoros* (tribute) from the "allies" of the Delian League, which allowed the rise of the oppressive Athenian empire, and which sparked the revolts that contributed to the downfall of Athens in the Peloponnesian War.⁴⁷² Solon followed tyrants in his laws regulating weights and measures, his sumptuary legislation, institutions of government, debt cancellation,

471. Cf. 1314b.

472. The most famous story of Aristides' honesty occurs in Plutarch, in which he tells us that Aristides' wrote his own name on the *ostrakon* of an illiterate man who did not know it was Aristides to whom he was speaking (*Arist.* 5-6). On his arrangement for tribute payments, see Plut. *Arist.* 24.

recall of exiles, and probably many other areas for which we lack evidence. He criticizes the elite (fr. 4), but refuses to use violence against them, which was the key to success for tyrants everywhere else.⁴⁷³ Even though his attempts at reform failed, the reputation of being an enemy to tyranny endured in his own writings and in those of others, regardless of the truth of his methods. While making definitive claims about Solon's intentions goes beyond the evidence, it is clear that in order to enact the sort of reforms he attempted required him to be a tyrant in all but name.

Solon may or may not have had the hunger for power associated with tyrants by later generations; he may simply have wished to employ techniques that had worked in other *poleis* in similar crises. Solon's particular wish to avoid the label because of Athens' experience with Cylon, combined with the tendency to condemn tyranny uncritically after the rise of democracy, cemented literary characterizations of Solon as a *misotyrannos*. Stripping the literary evidence of the philosophical moralizing and democratic overtones that have accreted over the millennia gives us a reading that is at least as plausible as the more common interpretation of Solon as protodemocratic reformer, and in many cases actually makes more sense. Because his reforms were sandwiched between Drakon's harsh control of the state and the open tyranny of Peisistratos, and because some of his reforms did indeed provide the foundation for Cleisthenes' expansion of political power to even the poor citizens, he was remembered as a sort of anti-tyranny crusader, that is, everything that Drakon and Peisistratos were not.

In this dissertation, I have demonstrated that by asking different questions and

473. See Salmon (1997: 68-69), and Lewis (2009: 26-27) on various methods for successful takeovers by tyrants, with references.

looking at the evidence in new ways, we find different answers, without straining or violating our sources. What we end up with is a picture of a man who was a product of his times and his particular situation. Solon's reforms may have been unsuccessful, but because of what he says about himself in his poetry, he assured that his legacy was exactly what he wanted it to be—that of a tyrant-hating, persecuted political visionary whose attempted to cure the ills of the state backfired because of the stubbornness of a citizenry too stiff-necked to recognize measures put in place for their own good.

While the scholarship on the crisis of the sixth century is vast, the value of this project is that it recognizes and attempts to correct a methodological flaw that has plagued much of the scholarship on Solon for the last two-and-a-half millenia. In no way do I wish to minimize the importance or the value of previous excellent work on Solon and archaic tyranny, without which I could not have completed this project. Many scholars before me have noted inconsistencies in the ancient literature about Solon.⁴⁷⁴ But they frequently fail to follow up on these observations by examining the larger context of archaic politics in which Solon operated, and do not question characterizations of Solon that ultimately derive from himself. By doing so, I have created a different picture not only of Solon's activities, methods, and motives, but complicated the picture of the "Age of Tyrants" in general and the constitutional history of Athens in particular.

Much work remains to be done. While I have examined *what* happened to the figure of Solon in literature and in the popular imagination, the next step is to explore *why* such a change took place. I intend for this dissertation to serve as a starting point for future inquiries not only into the methods and reception of Peisistratos, but into the

474. Adcock (1912: 1-16) and 1927, while two of the earliest, remain two of the best.

changing sociopolitical climate associated with the rise of democracy after the tyrannicide and the reforms of Cleisthenes. We have seen the ways in which Solon's persona changed from that of failed constitutional reformer in the sixth century to the philosopher, poet, sage, *nomothetes*, *misotyrannos*, and protodemocrat that emerge as early as Herodotus. I propose to explain this phenomenon in terms of the oral tradition associated with the rise of democracy, in terms of a shift in cultural *mores* in the last decade or so of the fifth century.⁴⁷⁵

The need for stability after the turbulence and civic upheaval caused partly by young hotheads like Alcibiades, the prime mover of the disastrous Sicilian Expedition that resulted in the loss of the Peloponnesian War, sparked a desire to return to the *patrios politeia*, or "ancestral constitution," a well-documented and widespread phenomenon. It is only then that Solon took his place in the constitutional history of Athens as the founder of democracy, and so filled this niche and became the focus of much of the rhetoric surrounding the need for a return to the "good old days" of the Athenian forefathers. Solon thus became a generic and ubiquitous figure, whom authors from the fourth century on cited to verify whatever argument they happened to be making, and who has come down to us as inextricably tied to the rise of democracy.

475. I intend to build partly on the valuable work of Shear 2011, who explores evidence for this phenomenon in particular from an archaeological standpoint. Irwin remains one of the only scholars to associate Solon with deliberate attempts at tyrannical power, focusing on his poetry (2005 and 2006), and whose work greatly influenced ch. 4 of this work.

Appendix I

Peisistratos: Cleaning up after Solon?

Because we derive most of our traditions from Solon's poetry, we can say with some certainty that Solon played an active part in controlling his own reception. Conversely, we have no contemporaneous sources for the Peisistratids—we must rely exclusively on accounts that were written down long after the fall of the tyranny, when the political climate made defense of tyranny impractical if not impossible. Our sources report that Solon made valiant efforts to prevent the tyranny, and he is even depicted as being a tyrant-hater in all of his actions and attitudes—though as we have seen, this tradition contains many contradictions and even confusion about which activities and reforms were made by him and which by Peisistratos. We read that Peisistratos stabilized the turbulent political situation largely by retaining Solon's constitution and methods for ordering society. The looming question is, if Solon and Peisistratos had so many associations in the traditions, and were even in some cases indistinguishable, why did Solon fail and Peisistratos succeed? If Peisistratos used Solon's laws, why was he able to make them work while Solon was forced to leave town? Much of what follows is speculation, though I believe it is a plausible alternative interpretation of the situation in post-Solonian Athens, and does not violate our evidence, particularly give the biases against tyranny that we know affected the objectivity of our sources about Peisistratos.

I argue that Peisistratos recognized that Solon's attempts to conciliate both wealthy and poor at the same time was the major reason for his downfall, and saw that it was much easier to mend fences once he was firmly in power than to walk such a fine

line at the beginning.⁴⁷⁶ Contemporary tyrants tended to come to power with the support of one class or the other, but most often with the support of the *demos* against an oppressive aristocracy—as indeed was the case (at least initially) with Peisistratos.⁴⁷⁷ Peisistratos' genius was that he managed to retain the support of the *demos* and conciliate the aristocracy after the fact. His initial enmity with Lycurgus and Megacles and their respective partisans, while fierce before and during his first two takeovers, seems to have melted away after he took power for the third time. As the saying goes, it is easier to ask forgiveness than permission. Peisistratos first secured power via support of the *demos*, and only then concentrated on winning over the nobility. Solon's mistake was that he tried to retain the support of everyone from the beginning. Thus Peisistratos was able to come to power using the very laws that were (supposedly) designed to prevent tyranny. He changed the implementation of the laws just enough so that they were effective, but not so much that their rhetorically valuable continuity with Solon was compromised.

One of the main sources of animosity against Solon was the dissatisfaction of the *demos* with his agrarian reforms. The *demos* wanted a redistribution of land, which Solon refused to do for fear of alienating the upper classes, who had already suffered significant losses with the cancellation of debt. We have seen that both redistribution of land and debt cancellation were normally associated with tyrants from pre-through-post classical times, and that Solon's halfway measures were unsuccessful. By contrast, we read that one of Peisistratos' most popular reforms was his support of the common people and the

476. See ch. 5, pp. 160-163.

477. See Salmon (1997: 68-69) and Lewis (2009: 26-27) on various methods for successful takeovers by tyrants, with references, and Holladay (1977: 44-45) on Peisistratos' attempts to conciliate the aristocracy only after he had firmly established his power with the help of the *demos*.

farmers. For instance, we have an anecdote of a time when the tyrant, while traveling the countryside in disguise, spoke with a man who criticized Peisistratos' tax laws without knowing it was the tyrant to whom he spoke. Peisistratos appreciated the man's frankness and exempted him from paying taxes (*Ath. Pol.* 16). The *Ath. Pol.* (16.2-5) also tells us that Peisistratos

advanced money to the bankrupt to further their work so they could make a living as farmers. He did this for two reasons: he did not want them in the city, but scattered in the country, and if they had enough to live on, and were busy with their own affairs, they would neither want nor have time to interfere with state matters. The working of the land increased his revenues, for he took a ten per cent tax from the yield. He also had the same motive for establishing the magistrates of the demes and for travelling around the country often, inspecting and settling disputes, so that the people would not have to come into the city and neglect their work.

καὶ δὴ καὶ τοῖς ἀπόροις προεδάνειζε χρήματα πρὸς τὰς ἐργασίας, ὥστε διατρέφεσθαι γεωργοῦντας. τοῦτο δ' ἐποίει δυοῖν χάριν, ἵνα μήτε ἐν τῷ ἄστει διατρίβωσιν, ἀλλὰ διεσπαρμένοι κατὰ τὴν χώραν, καὶ ὅπως εὐποροῦντες τῶν μετρίων καὶ πρὸς τοῖς ἰδίοις ὄντες, μήτ' ἐπιθυμῶσι μήτε σχολάζωσιν ἐπιμελεῖσθαι τῶν κοινῶν. ἅμα δὲ συνέβαιεν αὐτῷ καὶ τὰς προσόδους γίνεσθαι μείζους, ἐξεργαζομένης τῆς χώρας. ἐπράττετο γὰρ ἀπὸ τῶν γιγνομένων δεκάτην. διὸ καὶ τοὺς κατὰ δῆμους κατεσκεύασε δικαστάς, καὶ αὐτὸς ἐξῆει πολλάκις εἰς τὴν χώραν, ἐπισκοπῶν καὶ διαλύων τοὺς διαφορομένους, ὅπως μὴ καταβαίνοντες εἰς τὸ ἄστυ παραμελῶσι τῶν ἔργων.

It would not make sense for Peisistratos to take these measures unless they were meant to address very specific problems—that is, problems caused by Solon's agrarian legislation. Not only did Peisistratos visit farms and relieve at least one poor farmer from his tax burden, his tithe of one-tenth from the produce of farmers likely provided the original revenue for these bailout loans, which would have pleased (or at least appeased) poor farmers, since a tax of one-tenth would be much less of a burden to supply than the former rate of one-sixth that the *hektemoroi* had to pay. It would also have appeased the aristocrats because they would not have to shoulder the burden of the *demos'* debt the

way they had during the *seisachtheia*, with their loss of capital from the abolition of debt.⁴⁷⁸ Given that we hear nothing of such loans under Peisistratos' sons or in our fifth century sources, it seems that this loan policy was of limited duration, which would be consistent with the period of time that it would take a small farmer either to revive a fallow farm or to change to a more remunerative cash crop, either of which options would help stimulate a flagging economy.⁴⁷⁹ Later commentators would not have preserved these details unless they had proved significant, most likely by addressing something that had become a major problem.

The fact that Peisistratos advanced money to bankrupt people and encouraged them to farm strongly suggests that these people could get money no other way—they could no longer offer themselves as surety for loans and were thereby destitute until Peisistratos stepped in and bailed them out with support for farming. The fact that he was targeting unemployed members of the *demos* to pursue agriculture because he did not want them in the city suggests overcrowding, as would be expected of people fleeing the countryside in hopes of a more lucrative urban existence. He did not want them to meddle in affairs, which could also mean that he wanted his political rivals to have less manpower on which to draw to avoid the sort of armed factional strife that surrounded his

478. Even though Aristotle writes of Peisistratos' enmity to the rich (*Pol.* 5.1305a 22-24), this is unlikely to be as cut-and-dry as our later sources would have it, considering the various alliances between Peisistratos, Lycurgus, and Megacles. Even though this affiliation dissolved when Megacles learned of Peisistratos' mistreatment of his daughter, it shows that rival aristocratic clans were willing to ally with Peisistratos. The archon lists give us even more concrete evidence that the Peisistratids retained prominent members of various aristocratic clans in high office, though some scholars, like Goušchin (1999: 18), take Aristotle's statement about Peisistratos' unremitting enmity of the rich at face value. Peisistratos further gained credit with the *demos* because of his military successes at Nisaea (*Hdt.* 1.59.4, *Ath. Pol.* 14.1), which earned him the title of *demotidotatos*. On the archon list, see ch. 1, p. 9 n. 11.

479. See Holladay (1977: 50). These measures seem to have ceased before the end of the tyranny, at which point we hear nothing further of either such a tax or of agricultural crises among the population of rural Attica. This would seem to indicate the success of Peisistratos' program.

own final seizure of power. His travels around the countryside made it unnecessary for people to take time off of work to settle disputes, and would also have had the effect of discouraging idle and unemployed country dwellers from loitering in Athens proper to get justice.

Hence we see Peisistratos using a variation on Solon's legislation more successfully than Solon did—he managed to avert an agrarian crisis without redistributing land, something Solon failed to do. Moreover, he conciliated the wealthy while helping the poor. Rather than a sweeping debt cancellation, he instituted the tithe. This was probably not popular among the wealthy, but was a better alternative than another blanket debt cancellation or the confiscation and redistribution of their estates, both of which were more typical moves of tyrants.⁴⁸⁰ Solon, by making wealth rather than birth the determining factor in political power, paved the way for Peisistratos' agricultural program, and this allowed him to maintain the status quo, make as few enemies as possible, and preserve a reputation for ruling according to the "old ways."⁴⁸¹

If, as I have argued, the *seisachtheia* resulted in a large part of the population having no means of livelihood, as in all times of economic strife throughout history there would have been an influx of people from the countryside to urban centers looking for alternate means of supporting themselves. Given the aristocratic infighting that we know was taking place at this time, it is not unlikely that some of the people from rural Attica who came to Athens looking for work were employed as (perhaps armed) servants. We

480. We have no evidence of land redistribution by Peisistratos, and given the already discussed connections between tyrants and land redistribution, it stretches belief that all trace of such an action would have disappeared, especially in the tyrant-hostile society of fifth-and fourth-century Athens and later, with their associations of land distribution with tyranny.

481. Holladay (1977: 50-51) discusses the relationship of Peisistratos with the wealthier classes, and the delicate balance he struck while looking after the interests of the rich and the poor.

have several mentions of bodyguards for aristocrats, and even more oblique mentions of "supporters" or "partisans," where the nature of the association with their party leader is unclear, but could plausibly be that of armed supporter or hired thug. Scholars have long debated the identity of these supporters, but an answer may lie in the high poverty rates that would have set in after the *seisachtheia*'s unsuccessful attempts to prevent this very thing.

For example, Peisistratos' first seizure of power ca. 561/0 involved his bodyguard of κορυνηφόροι, or "club-bearers," which was a substantial enough force to allow him to seize and hold the acropolis, and eventually take control of the entire city (Hdt. 1.59). Peisistratos supposedly collected partisans (συλλέξας στασιώτας) to champion his cause. He wounded himself, went to the agora, and claimed that he had been attacked on his way out of town. As he was a popular war hero, the people gave him a bodyguard of club-bearers instead of the more expected spearmen: "Deceived, the Athenians gave him a guard of chosen citizens, whom Peisistratos made club-bearers instead of spear-bearers: for the guard that followed him carried wooden clubs" (Hdt. 1.59.5; ὁ δὲ δῆμος ὁ τῶν Ἀθηναίων ἐξαπατηθεὶς ἔδωκε οἱ τῶν ἀστῶν καταλέξας ἄνδρας τούτους οἱ δορυφόροι μὲν οὐκ ἐγένοντο Πεισιστράτου, κορυνηφόροι δέ: ξύλων γὰρ κορύνας ἔχοντες εἶποντό οἱ ὀπισθε).⁴⁸² These club-bearers helped Peisistratos seize the acropolis and thus control the entire city, after which he ruled well according to the established constitution:

482. Plutarch adds the dramatic details that the assembly voted him fifty men, a motion formally opposed by Solon, whose prophetic warnings about the danger of tyranny were shouted down (*Sol.* 30.1-3). Goušchin (1999: 21) (with references) argues that Herodotus is mistaken, and that Peisistratos' supporters were *doryphoroi*, "spearmen." Plato (*Rep.* 566b) also makes it clear that tyrants often established themselves using bodyguards of *doryphoroi*. Boardman (1975: 1-12) suggests that the club-bearers were a symbolic, rather than a literal force, and that they modeled their choice of weapon on that of Herakles, whom he argued was a prominent figure in Peisistratid propaganda; see also Boardman (1984: 239-47) and 1989, in which he answers critics of his interpretation.

"Peisistratos ruled the Athenians, not at all disturbing the magistracies or changing the laws, but governing the city according to its established constitution and arranging all things fairly and well" (Hdt. 1.59.6; ἔνθα δὴ ὁ Πεισίστρατος ἦρχε Ἀθηναίων, οὔτε τιμὰς τὰς εἰούσας συνταράξας οὔτε θέσμια μεταλλάξας, ἐπὶ τε τοῖσι κατεστεῶσι ἔνεμε τὴν πόλιν κοσμέων καλῶς τε καὶ εὖ).⁴⁸³ Aristotle specifies that Solon did not dissolve existing institutions, and kept select laws like that of Dracon on homicide (*Pol.* 1273b 42-74a). Peisistratos also seems to have taken care not to upset existing laws, as this is emphasized in our sources.⁴⁸⁴ Plutarch goes so far as to report that Peisistratos deliberately cultivated Solon, treating him with respect and having him as a guest in his home, and eventually winning him over as an advisor who approved many of his laws (*Plut. Sol.* 31.2-3). He then tells the story of Peisistratos appearing before the Areopagus to answer a charge of murder.⁴⁸⁵ This evokes another connection with Solon, the supposed creator of the Areopagus.⁴⁸⁶ It was not until his rivals, Megacles and Lycurgus, combined their

483. Plutarch elaborates on the nature of the political parties. He differs from Herodotus in saying that the city was divided into factions before Solon's reforms, which caused the tensions leading to the crisis. He classes the hillmen as extreme democrats, the plainsmen as extreme oligarchs, and the shore party as moderate and mixed, and as preventing either of the other two groups from gaining absolute control (*Sol.* 13.1). He says that after Solon left the city, the citizens slipped back into the same factions, with Lycurgus leading the plainsmen, Megacles the Alcmaeonid leading the shore men, and Peisistratos leading the hill men, who mostly consisted of *thetes*, and were bitter enemies of the rich (29.1). Cf. *Ath. Pol.* 13.4, which outlines the same divisions. Herodotus calls the parties οἱ ἐκ τοῦ πεδίου, *πάραλοι*, and *υπεράκριοι* (1.59.3); and the *Ath. Pol.* calls them *πεδιακοὶ*, *παράλιοι*, and *διάκριοι* (13.1). For a fuller account of the use of these terms, see Hopper (1961: 189 ff.)

484. *Ath. Pol.* 7.1, Hdt. 1.59.6, Thuc. 6.54.6, and *Plut. Sol.* 31.2-3.

485. See Podlecki (1987: 8).

486. As reported by Plutarch—who, however, is not completely convinced (*Sol.* 19.1-5). Another (though admittedly much more speculative and tenuous) link is the length of time of exiles. After his legislation Solon is supposed to have left Athens for ten years of self-imposed exile, a story which becomes integral in the seven sages tradition wherein Solon wanders the world in a sight-seeing tour (*theoria*). I simply note, after Podlecki (1987: 8), that ten years is the precise length of Peisistratos' second exile, after which he returned for a final time and finally seized the tyranny permanently. Also consider that ten years is the length of time Odysseus wandered the world en route from Troy to Ithaca, and the length of time that an ostracized person was banned from Attica in the fifth century and later.

resources and followers (ὄμοφρονήσαντες) that they were able to drive Peisistratos out (Hdt. 1.60).⁴⁸⁷

The identity of the club-bearers has long caused scholars puzzlement; perhaps they were part of the element of unemployed in the city, who would have flocked to Peisistratos if he promised them the sort of financial and social support that he in fact delivered after his power was firmly established. We can find parallels in the bodyguards of other tyrants as well—later sources tell us that Cleisthenes of Sicyon also had club-bearers, and Megacles of Mytilene actually defeated the ruling Pentilid clan, who were unjustly bludgeoning opponents to their power.⁴⁸⁸

Aristotle says that demagogues, which he elsewhere closely associates with tyrants (*Pol.* 1305a6, 1308a19, 1310b12), gained power by pretending to speak on behalf of the *demos*. Solon tried to have it both ways; Peisistratos tried twice to use his connections with the aristocracy to secure power and failed, but on his third attempt he realized that he must use force and overthrow the aristocrats. After he was established in power, he made overtures to the elite and managed to achieve the sort of balance that

487. On these factions, see Hdt. 1.59.3. He outlines three competing parties: the men of the coast, led by Megacles the Alcmaeonid, the men of the plain, led by Lycurgus, and those of the hills, led by Peisistratos. Many scholars assume that these were merely personal followers of various aristocrats who were vying for power, with the goal being reward for individual partisans, rather than any political stakes. See Holladay (1977: 43), Sealey (1960: 155 ff.), and Hopper (1961: 189 ff.). Holladay (1977: 43-45) also discusses the likelihood of support for each party clustering around the ancestral lands of the leaders, as it is likely that they would have the most solid support in the area of their own estates in the form of kinsmen, neighbors, dependents, and employees, especially when considering control of cult centers and religious influence, as when Peisistratos taking care to build new centralized religious cults in the city, and Cleisthenes' attention to the boundaries in his new scheme of demes, though he stresses that political support need not have been purely along geographic lines. He does note that the people in the city of Athens were a very valuable voting bloc to control, since they could attend the assembly often and easily, adding a political following to an already existing personal one; see also Lewis (1963: 22-40)). If, as I argue, there was an influx of dispossessed farmers to the city, this would have increased any candidate who promised support of the poorer elements of society increased influence.

488. On Cleisthenes' club-bearers, see *Poll.* 3.83, 7.68; on Megacles, see *Arist. Pol.* 1311b26-28. See also McGlew (1993: 78) on association of retribution and justice with the establishment of tyrannical rule.

Solon had failed to create by trying to introduce equanimity in the first place.

History of Scholarship on the *Seisachtheia*

From the late 19th century through about the 1960s, scholarship on the *seisachtheia* largely revolved around the question of whether Attic land in the archaic period was alienable or inalienable. Not many scholars still believe that land was inalienable, but the issue was integral to early studies of the agrarian problem, so I will outline it in considerable detail here. Very broadly, we can assign the theories on the *stasis* that led to the warring factions between the *demos* and the elite to two major axes. Some scholars focus on the problem of debt-bondage, stemming from aristocratic abuses brought on by the booming economy of the Archaic Age, which led to the debt crisis.⁴⁸⁹ Others believe that the basic problem was one of status struggles between the elite and an emerging "middle class" of wealthy farmer, coinciding with a rise in overseas trading and a new commercial class.⁴⁹⁰ These theories are variously put in context of overpopulation/demographic instability, agrarian crises, chattel slavery versus some form of sharecropping, and sweeping redistributions of land.

I. Inalienable Land and Debt-Based Hektemorage

For scholars who believe that the root of the *stasis* was a debt crisis stemming from sweeping changes in the Archaic economy, one of the most contentious areas of debate has historically been whether or not (particularly arable) land was inalienable or

489. For evidence of the rise of commerce and overseas trade in the Archaic period, cf. Hesiod *W&D* 615-640 on the proper season to sail and embark on trading missions. For the suggestion that the rise in overseas trade would have allowed the peasants to take up commerce, were it not for their reduction to serfdom from debt, see von Fritz & Kapp (1950: 154). See Rhodes (1993: 89-97) on the puzzling distinction between metaphysical and actual debt-bondage. He argues that Aristotle (though less clearly than Plutarch; *Sol.* 13.4-5) distinguishes between two types of bondage: one that is the metaphorical enslavement of the earth, marked by the *horoi*, and the other as genuine chattel slavery in which the slave could be sold abroad at his owner's whim.

490. *Ibid.*

whether ownership of land could change. In the view of scholars who believe that land was inalienable, the situation was roughly as follows: first, the land was divided into public and private lots. The public land generally could not be farmed because of poor soil or topography, and therefore was used mainly for grazing livestock, while private land was mostly given to farming. The *hektemoroi* were probably small landowners who remained on their land if they defaulted on debts, but then worked it for the profit of their lenders. *Hektemoroi* then transferred their land to their aristocratic lenders to satisfy their un-payable debt, but land being inalienable, were retained as laborers in spite of "officially" owning the land. Aristocrats eventually took over all of the arable land at the expense of poor farmers who had previously depended on it, and the *hektemoroi* became the equivalent of hereditary serfs working for aristocratic proprietors.⁴⁹¹ Andrewes argues that the rate of one-sixth is too low to suggest either a repayment rate for borrowing or sharecropping, though parallels for similar rates elsewhere in the ancient world do exist.⁴⁹² He elaborates, "It is hard enough to see why any rich man should lend to the poor for so slight a return, and still harder to see why so many should have adopted an identical rate that their debtors acquired this specific designation" (1982: 379).

Woodhouse, speculating on how tenants who pay a quota rather than a quantity could get in arrears in payment in the first place, says (1938: 33),

...the actual yield in a particular year [may have been] so poor, or the proportion itself so excessive, that in lean years, after deduction of the quota, the balance was insufficient to tide the tenant over to his next harvest, while providing also seed-corn for his next sowing. An extraordinary run of bad seasons may thus...have

491. Cassola (1964: 26-34) surveys scholarship from the mid-nineteenth century through 1964. Solon fr. 4.12 refers to the aristocrats seizing public possessions, which suggests that they took over occupied land that had previously been available for the use of all. See further Wallace (2007: 49-51).

492. See below p. 204 n. 529.

compelled all the landlords in Attica, through sheer humanity, or enlightened self-interest, to forego exaction of their quotas, and to carry forward the amount as a debt, which then by accumulation ultimately swallowed up the entire produce of the various farms, and left the tenants of them eternally in arrears.⁴⁹³

The low rates of return may provide an explanation for why the *hektemoroi* were unable to get out of debt. If there was such poverty that the tenant could not afford a higher rate of repayment, creditors, recognizing that one cannot squeeze blood from a stone, would have been forced to accept a rate that was manageable. But if the original amount of the loan were high enough, a repayment rate of one-sixth would take many years to pay off, especially if there was need for a second loan during a bad year. In this scenario, the small farmer may have found himself forced into the situation that caused the crisis. If a borrower defaulted on his debt, a greedy lender would acquire both a valuable slave and the usufruct of the new debt-slave's land. If the system were so rigged, an aristocratic creditor may have seen this as an investment worth a low initial yield. It is also possible that low rates were legislated by some sort of usury laws in Drakon's law code, if we can believe Hesychius that Solon did away with Drakon's laws on debt.⁴⁹⁴ There are parallels for this in the biblical story of Joseph in Egypt.⁴⁹⁵

Another reason why aristocrats would make such loans is that it was more advantageous for them to loan out excess seed to destitute farmers than to have it rot in storehouses, where it would benefit no one. Unused grain would yield no profits at all, while grain lent out at even low rates could produce enough to make a loan worthwhile. By loaning out excess seed, aristocrats were also ensuring their ability to feed themselves

493. Woodhouse perhaps bases his reconstruction too heavily on enclosure and common pasture laws from the 16th-19th centuries.

494. *Sol.* 24.3; for speculation on the nature of Drakon's debt laws see Hammond (1961: 90).

495. See below p. 204 n. 529.

and their families, since their own land was as vulnerable as anyone else's to bad weather and crop failure. This leaves Woodhouse's problem of proportions. Loaning out a certain amount of seed does not guarantee a return of anything close to the same amount. For example, if one lent enough seed to sow five hundred hectares, in a bad year, a return on the entire estate may only yield the equivalent of one hundred hectares. We do not know what proportion a farmer was then obligated to pay—another reason debt-slavery would have been so widespread is that perhaps the one-sixth payment was not out of the crop yield, but out of the original amount of the loan. Even good years are unlikely to yield as much grain as was sown, especially when considering the poor soil of Attica. Loans would be difficult to repay even in good years, and the debtor would be pretty much guaranteed to default and become a *hektemoros* or a permanent serf or debt-slave.

Because we know so little about the technicalities of land ownership in archaic Attica, it is impossible to know for certain whether land was fungible, though most scholars since the 1960s have moved away from the idea that land in Attica was ever inalienable. Since the pre-monetary economy so heavily depended on peasant farming, though, many deem it unlikely that land could be sold, but rather that it was passed along from father to son as a birthright.⁴⁹⁶ Woodhouse provides the clearest and most detailed treatment of the idea that the *hektemoroi* were to be understood in the context of the inalienability of land in Attica.⁴⁹⁷ In Woodhouse's view, *hektemorage* was merely an

496. As Woodhouse (1938: 81) phrases it, selling the family estate was simply "not done," though he does not address the fact that selling one's actual family apparently *was* (Plut. *Sol.* 13). See also Westermann (1955: 4) on the sale of family members into slavery.

497. Woodhouse (1938: 74-87). Most other modern treatments of scholars who begin with the basic premise of the inalienability of land put forth some version of Woodhouse's view, many of which are very little altered, even if they do not cite Woodhouse's study—for example French (1956: 11-25). For this reason I will go into some detail about Woodhouse's scheme. Other scholars adopting Woodhouse's views, with or without modification, include Lewis (1941: 144-56), Fine (1951: 167-208), and Hammond (1961:

alternative to debt-bondage, fundamentally based on the premise that land was inalienable. He asks why any peasant farmer would embrace the possibility of becoming a slave (or at best a serf) if the option of selling his plot of land was open to him.⁴⁹⁸ French elaborates, "When there is no obvious alternative livelihood to farming, land is more or less beyond price; hence it is quite possible that in early Attica there was a traditional taboo on the sale of land..." (1963: 242). There is also a mention in Aristotle (*Pol.* 1319a) that in the "old days" many cities forbade the sale of the first lands allotted to colonial settlers, and in *Pol.* 1266b he refers to the breakdown of an analogous law at Leukas, which had mandated that the original lots remain undivided. However Aristotle was also convinced that without stringent population control similar systems could not survive long (*Pol.* 1266b 11-12).

Such comparisons with laws in colonies or cleruchies must of course be used with extreme caution when speculating about the system of land distribution on the mainland. Hammond cites Thucydides to support his argument that land was, in fact, inalienable: "Their trouble and discontent at abandoning their houses and the hereditary temples of the ancestral constitution was deep, and at having to change their habits and bid farewell to what each regarded as his native *polis*" (2.16.2; ἐβαρύνοντο δὲ καὶ χαλεπῶς ἔφερον οἰκίας τε καταλείποντες καὶ ἱερὰ ἃ διὰ παντὸς ἦν αὐτοῖς ἐκ τῆς κατὰ τὸ ἀρχαῖον πολιτείας πατρία δίαίταν τε μέλλοντες μεταβάλλειν καὶ οὐδὲν ἄλλο ἢ πόλιν τὴν αὐτοῦ ἀπολείπων ἕκαστος).⁴⁹⁹ French points out that this does not necessarily prove the inalienability of land; rather, it merely points to a stability in inheritance patterns.⁵⁰⁰ He also refers to the

76-98). For a summary of these positions see Rhodes (1993: 93-97).

498. Woodhouse (1938: 76).

499. Hammond (1961: 86).

fact that Plutarch, in his examination of fourth-century sources, was unaware of land being inalienable in the fifth century, as he mentions Themistocles' sale of a certain estate in *Them.* 18.5.⁵⁰¹

a. Private vs. Public Land

Woodhouse makes a distinction between arable land, which was allocated to farmers and passed down through generations, and non-arable or common land, such as pastures on mountain slopes that could be used by anyone for grazing livestock but not farming.⁵⁰² Since there was no institutionalized variant of serfdom, as with the helots in ancient Sparta, he sees each farmer as in possession of an ancestral piece of property, but in addition to this he had access to public land. This land could wind up under the control of the wealthier landed aristocrats by a system of division of estate rights or individual contractual agreements whereby the peasant used the public land on behalf of an aristocratic lender. This would not have prohibited transferring limited rights short of complete change of ownership, and thus would public land come under aristocratic control. This would be binding not only on the maker of the contract but on all of his heirs without violating the principle of the inalienability of land.⁵⁰³

b. Economic Restructuring

The root problem, in Woodhouse's view, is that a new sort of commerce-based economy was gradually rising in Attica in the seventh and sixth centuries, replacing the

500. French 1963: 244.

501. French (1963: 243-44).

502. Woodhouse (1938: 74-87) and Asheri (1963: 6-14).

503. Woodhouse's scheme resembles practices found in British common law regarding the division of rights in real estate. See further Almeida (2003: 31). For land inheritance, especially in cases where there are no male heirs, see Rhodes (1993: 163).

old one based on subsistence and small-estate farming.⁵⁰⁴ This new emphasis on trade and introduction of various luxuries instilled in aristocratic estate owners the desire to accumulate more and more productive land in order to take a greater role in trade for commercial profit. As the aristocratic interests in commercial profit grew, the small freeholder found it harder and harder to meet basic subsistence requirements from his land because of factors like agricultural failure due to drought, soil conditions, etc. This would put small farmers in the position of needing to borrow from wealthier aristocratic landowners in order to meet their basic needs for survival. Since there was at this time no currency-based system of trade, the small farmer could not borrow money for long-term improvements such as better agricultural tools or technology to boost crop yields, but only borrowed to avoid starvation. In other words, the poor needed money for subsistence, while the rich desired money to invest capital to control more land.⁵⁰⁵

i. Ownership vs. Possession

Woodhouse also draws distinction between ownership and possession. He sees the aristocrats as first beginning to appropriate common land to their private ownership, pushing out the smaller landowner who likely used it to pasture livestock. The elite were then poised to take advantage of small farmers in crisis, by purchasing the right of possession rather than out-and-out ownership via a sort of subsistence loan, which accrued an interest of one-sixth of the yearly produce. Because of the inalienability principle, though, the owner or his heirs had the right to repurchase the land at any time.

504. According to Thucydides, economic growth was the main factor in the rise of tyranny: "As Greece became more powerful and acquired more wealth than it had previously, tyrannies were established in nearly every city" (1.13.1; δυνατωτέρας δὲ γιγνομένης τῆς Ἑλλάδος καὶ τῶν χρημάτων τὴν κτῆσιν ἔτι μᾶλλον ἢ πρότερον ποιουμένης τὰ πολλὰ τυραννίδες ἐν ταῖς πόλεσι καθίσταντο).

505. Woodhouse (1938: 147). For a succinct summary, see Almeida (2003: 31).

Thus no technical transference of ownership took place, and further, the aristocrats were required to lease the possessory right of the land to the original owner at a rent of one-sixth of the annual yield of the land; these transactions were recorded on the famous *horoi* that dotted the sixth-century countryside.⁵⁰⁶ The owner therefore had a right to tenancy which could not be circumvented by an aristocratic lender. This effectively made the owner a tenant until he or his heirs could pay off the debt, a scenario that, realistically, was unlikely. The aristocratic lender therefore was able to invest capital for a return of one-sixth of the produce of the land, with a loan that was secured by his ownership of possessory right of the land, and most importantly, he acquired free labor by the owner of the land, who had essentially become a lifelong tenant on his own property.

ii. From Hektemoros to Debt-Slave

So how did this scenario lead to *hektemorage* and debt-bondage? So far, as long as the sixth-part interest payment never fell into arrears the tenant was not in danger of enslavement. But if he did get behind on payments, his interest would accumulate to the point where he would either face debt-slavery or *hektemorage*, in which he would stay in possession of his land, but rather than *pay* one-sixth part, only *keep* one-sixth part as a sort of subsistence dole, turning over the lion's share to his landlord. The *hektemoroi* would have become so completely dependent on the aristocracy for whom they labored that their status was de facto, if not de iure, permanent, because of the impossibility of paying off the obligations of both the original debt and the accumulated arrears. The *heketemoroi* were tantamount to, but not technically slaves. Thus the terminology in our

506. Woodhouse (1938: 147).

sources describing their status in terms of slavery was appropriate, if not literal.⁵⁰⁷ Thus the landlord, rather than garnering a portion of whatever the tenant produced on his own initiative, now had the power to dictate the use of the land; i.e., he could demand that the land be turned over from farming to the production of olives and grapes, which was a more profitable trade commodity but less useful when trying to keep one's family from starvation.⁵⁰⁸ In this way Woodhouse envisions the *hektemoroi* as separate from those in regular debt-bondage, which was merely an alternative option that the debtor could choose in place of becoming a *hektemoros*.⁵⁰⁹ Woodhouse thus sees the *seisachtheia* as destroying the *hektemorage* by prohibiting loans with the person of the debtor as collateral and the return of the right of possession to the actual, technical owners of the land.⁵¹⁰

c. Inalienable Land and Class-Based Hektemorage

Hammond begins from the same premises as Woodhouse—first, that land was inalienable and passed down from father to son as an inheritance, and that debt was the source of the *hektemorage*. However he deals much more extensively with the issue of citizenship. Woodhouse clung to the premise that, in the absence of a formal serf system, the system of debt and debt-bondage was one of advantage and obligation, a private

507. For this argument, with ancient references, see Woodhouse (1938: 44-49).

508. Woodhouse (1938: 155).

509. Ibid. Woodhouse sees a great discrepancy between the amount of the loan and the actual value of the possessory right of the land, as well as a discrepancy between the sixth-part rent's given and received values. This stacking of the deck in favor of the aristocrats, he contends, is indicative that Athens at this time was an extreme oligarchy, which fits in well with the assertions in the *Ath. Pol.* that all of the land was in the hands of a few.

510. Woodhouse allows that a possible objection to his scheme is the argument that this was a form of redistribution of land that Solon denied. He claims that this works because no technical redistribution of land occurred because the small farmer retained absolute ownership, even if he had lost possession, a situation that was visibly attested by the *horoi* stones, which would have displayed the original price of the loan (the price required for redemption of the land), and therefore would be proof that the right of redemption existed.

relationship between individuals rather than one enforced by a central authority.

Hammond, on the other hand, sees *hektemorage* as a legal system that formally discriminated based on race and class.⁵¹¹ He takes the Athenian claim of autochthony and applies it to the political situation of the seventh and sixth centuries. In his view, preservation of the ownership of land was tied to the preservation of the racial purity of the descendants of the original inhabitants of Attica, formalized by organization into tribes and phratries dating from the fall of Mycenae and the so-called Dorian invasion.⁵¹²

In his view, the post-migration "newcomers" were either adopted into a familial *genos* (γεννήται ὁμογάλακτες), which entitled them to a *kleros* of land which could not be sold, or admitted as a separate group that existed within the phratry system but did not qualify as a *genos* (ὀργεῶνες).⁵¹³ While the former were naturalized citizens, the latter remained a separate group.⁵¹⁴ The ὀργεῶνες were relegated to the non-arable, or marginal land, which could in fact be bought and sold. If one of the ὁμογάλακτες defaulted on his loans, his creditor was entitled to one-sixth of his lot, which remained otherwise inalienable. However, the ὀργεῶνες were liable to be sold as slaves to recoup the value of the loans.⁵¹⁵ Broadly speaking, Hammond's view may be broken down into three parts.

511. Hammond (1961: 76-98).

512. Contra Donlan (1997: 21-25), who does not see a complex system of tribal organization or power structures in the Dark or early Archaic Ages, but rather a social system that arose out of a collection of free farmers.

513. These words are found in Philochorus (FrGrHist 3b328 35a line 9, 35b line 12; Pollux 3.23.2, 3.52.6, 6.156.5, 8.111.6; Hesychius entry omicron 740 line 1, all discussing different types of familial descent. Pollux seems to regard the terms ὁμογάλακτες and ὀργεῶνες as synonyms, as does Miller (1953: 47).

514. On the γεννήται ὁμογάλακτες and Archaic social structure more generally, see Roussel (1976: , Bourriot (1976: , and Andrewes (1961: 1-15).

515. Hammond (1961: 90). Hignett (1952) takes Philochorus' reference to these two groups as evidence for a blocking of an attempt to exclude the ὀργεῶνες from power in the time of Solon or Cleisthenes. Andrewes (1961: 1-2), however, rejects this standard interpretation, characterizing the two groups in the context of the composition of phratries, and suggests instead that the ὀργεῶνες were a smaller group of relatively wealthy non-aristocrats who had achieved independence by the time of Solon. Bourriot (1976: also believes that to characterize all social groups of the archaic period were dominated by nobles oversimplifies what was

First, that there were two classes of citizen at the end of the seventh century, the γεννήται ὀμογάλακτες and the ὀργεῶνες; second, that the former owned inalienable land while the latter owned non-arable and therefore alienable land, and that the previous laws on debt (presumably those of Drakon) condemned ὀργεῶνες to slavery for non-payment of debt while the γεννήται ὀμογάλακτες facing default became *hektemoroi*. In this case, the land remained the property of the *hektemoroi* but was perpetually encumbered. Hammond bases his argument of such a two-tiered society largely on his perception that Plutarch distinguishes *hektemorage* from debt-bondage in Plutarch: "All the common people were in debt to the rich. For they either tilled their lands for them, paying them a sixth of the increase (whence they were called Hectemoiroi and Thetes), or else they pledged their persons for debts and could be seized by their creditors, some becoming slaves at home, and others being sold into foreign countries" (*Sol.* 13.2; ἅπας μὲν γὰρ ὁ δῆμος ἦν ὑπόχρεως τῶν πλουσίων. ἢ γὰρ ἐγεώργουν ἐκείνοις ἕκτα τῶν γινομένων τελούντες, ἐκτημόριοι προσαγορευόμενοι καὶ θῆτες, ἢ χρέα λαμβάνοντες ἐπὶ τοῖς σώμασιν ἀγώγιμοι τοῖς δανείζουσιν ἦσαν, οἱ μὲν αὐτοῦ δουλεύοντες, οἱ δ' ἐπὶ τὴν ξένην πιπρασκόμενοι). In doing this he dismisses *Ath. Pol.* 2.2, which implies that *hektemoroi* were also subject to seizure for default on rent as a fourth-century interpolation.⁵¹⁶

d. Alienable Land and Debt-Based Hektemorage

There is a third group of modern scholars arguing from the standpoint that land in the sixth century was in fact alienable, and that the aristocrats were appropriating public land.⁵¹⁷ The crisis under these circumstances would arise when a debtor forfeited

surely a sociopolitical situation far more complex than is usually assumed.

516. Hammond (1961: 90).

517. For example Starr (1977: 183); see also Noussia-Fantuzzi (2010: 32-33); cf. Wilamowitz (1893:

ownership of his land, and if not sold abroad, remained in Attica to work the land for its new owner, retaining one-sixth of the produce for subsistence, which reduced them to a status resembling a serf.⁵¹⁸ This loss of land made the *hektemoroi* more or less politically powerless. The middle-class farmer, although wealthier than the average peasant, was in danger of becoming a *hektemoros*. They would be more likely to ally with the lower tier of the aristocracy, who encouraged redistribution of land, which would have benefited their ambitions to gain more influence among the elite. Some see the issue as one of rising competition between the old-guard aristocracy and a rising middle-class of moderately wealthy farmers. Hanson identifies this class of middling farmer with the *zeugitai*.⁵¹⁹ Foxhall identifies the top two tiers of Solon's new property classes with an extremely powerful elite, while Hignett sees that less powerful aristocratic families joining forces in support of Solon, since Plutarch tells us that Solon had support from both the farming community and some of the more elite members of society.⁵²⁰ Starr contends that the more powerful aristocrats were aware of the rising power of a hoplite class, which he placed in the social echelon of a small-hold agrarian class.⁵²¹ Sealey on the other hand, argues that the crisis stemmed from warring aristocratic factions who relied on their dependent *hektemoroi* for political leverage.⁵²² Holladay doubts the existence of many wealthy non-aristocrats, but Solon's reform does not make much sense if there were not a significant number of wealthy non-elite.⁵²³ Since the *hektemoroi* had

1.56-59) and de Sanctis (1975: 247-52).

518. See Hignett (1952: 87).

519. Hanson (1995: 111).

520. Foxhall (1997: 131); Hignett (1952: 88).

521. Starr (1977: 178).

522. Sealey (1976: 114).

523. Holladay (1977: 47).

already lost their land, however, Solon's abolishment of it did not involve redistribution.

Rihll sees the *hektemoroi* as workers of the public land, but asserts that they leased it directly from the *polis* at an established rent of one-sixth of the produce, and worked it various ways as dictated by the needs of the time.⁵²⁴ She supposes that Drakon is the one who created the *hektemorage* as part of his law code in an attempt to address conflicting claims to and unregulated use of common land, by regulating the demand for this land by a lease program with the one-sixth part as rent payment to the *polis* itself, which was secured on the lessee's person.⁵²⁵ This became a catch-22 from which escape became difficult, since rent paid from a yearly harvest was necessarily one year behind, and the tenant was in a way indentured to the state during the term of his tenancy.

The conflict arose because this was a technical violation of the criminal law code, since the tenant was disenfranchised for the year of his lease. She believes that the *horoi* were markers of the tenant's disenfranchisement, as opposed to Woodhouse, who saw the *horoi* as proof that the tenants retained technical ownership of the land. The essence of the crisis that Solon was called upon to solve stemmed from the aristocratic use of this system as a way to mask their appropriation of public land and to dispose of enemies under the aegis of the laws pertaining to debt-slavery. Thus Solon's cancellation of debts and abolishment of the *hektemorage* eliminated this aristocratically perpetrated abuse of the system. The recall of exiles eliminated the rampant disenfranchisement and returned debtors to full citizenship status (Plut. *Sol.* 19.3). Solon's claim to have freed enslaved Athenians merely meant that he had returned the citizen rights of the former public

524. Rihll (1991: 101-27). Gallant (1982: 111-24), on the other hand, classes the *hektemoroi* as a hereditary group who worked the public land that was controlled by aristocrats.

525. Rihll (1991: 116-17).

tenants, and that he formally gave the public land to those who had been leasing it at the time of the *seisachtheia*. This did not qualify as redistribution because Solon was not confiscating private land, but merely privatizing land that had formerly been public.⁵²⁶

e. Alienable Land and Class-Based Hektemorage

A fourth group of scholars, who see the *hektemorage* as a status relationship, is best exemplified by Finley's exegesis on the nature of land and credit.⁵²⁷ In Finley's view, the basic problem stemmed from the creation sometime in the distant past of a population bound into servitude to an upper land-owning class.⁵²⁸ The situation was a long established and permanent one that was based on personal subjugation.⁵²⁹ The permanence inherent in their situation warranted their description as slaves in our literary sources. Because such a class had no means of ever repaying a loan, the effect of rich lenders was to create a permanent class of what amounted to indentured servants, who were needed to work the land.⁵³⁰ Finley distinguishes between the *hektemorage* and the debt-bondsmen by claiming that the former slipped into the latter status if they defaulted on their ancestral obligations to pay the one-sixth part to his landlord.⁵³¹ Because there was such dramatic inequality among different elements of the citizenry, the social discontent had reached a breaking point by the time Solon was appointed to his special archonship in 594.

526. Rihll (1991: 121).

527. Finley (1981: 150-66).

528. Finley (1981: 153) includes any sort of dependent relationship excluding a wage-labor one, including chattel slavery or helotage/serfdom, which he classes as being "between free men and slaves."

529. Forrest (1966: 149) notes a strong parallel in the Old Testament, in Genesis 47, where Joseph purchased land for the Pharaoh during a famine and distributed it to the starving peasantry in exchange for one-fifth of the produce of their land; i.e., a weaker class that voluntarily placed itself under obligation to the wealthy and powerful, a situation which then became hereditary. Finley (1981: 268 n. 28) also discusses this parallel.

530. Finley (1981: 155).

531. Finley (1981: 29 n. 29, 159).

f. Economic Revolution

We have another strand of argument stemming from the idea of a stable agrarian economy threatened by some sort of economic revolution. This revolution various takes the form of increased trade and commercial activity, the development of a monetary system, or in general a shift toward a more commercial economy.⁵³² Evidence for this is seen in the increased presence of Attic black-figure pottery in the Black Sea region as well as Sicily at the end of the seventh century. One might also point to Athens' interest in control of Sigeion and Athens' war for control of Salamis.⁵³³ Others see such trade and commercial activities as more gradual, and not a direct or dramatic threat to the traditional agrarian way of life, citing a paucity of evidence for a large-scale conversion.⁵³⁴

i. Aristocratic Desire for Luxury Goods

Even those who advocate a model of economic revolution come into conflict over the precise relationship of this new economic model to the Solonian crisis. Some see an increased desire for import luxury goods among the aristocrats as sparking a more oppressive relationship with the *hektemoroi*, citing an increase in locally produced pottery, specifically from the Dipylon workshop, and more extravagant funerary practices.⁵³⁵ There also seems to be an increased demand for eastern imports, as

532. See ch. 1, p. 42 n. 125.

533. On the presence of Black-Figure pottery abroad, see Bailey (1940: 62). For grain and oil export in the early sixth century, see Forrest (1966: 154). Also consider Plutarch *Sol.* 2.1 and 3.1, on Solon's own trade activities.

534. Such as Starr (1977: 94), who argues that the small total number of artisans and traders is not sufficient evidence to claim widespread economic overhaul. He also argues against the evidence for an overseas grain trade in the seventh century (1977: 69) and speculates that at the time of Solon more than 80 percent of the population of all of Greece relied on an agrarian way of life. See also Forrest (1966: 155) on the lack of correlation between the period's distribution of pottery and a dramatic change in the basis of the economy.

535. On the increased production of religious figurines and funerary statuary, see Starr (1977: 38, 81-2).

evidenced by the increase in the amount of Orientalizing pottery, as well literary evidence for symposia, which represents a fairly idle and luxurious lifestyle.⁵³⁶

The demand for trade goods and rise in conspicuous consumption required a control of more land to gain material to trade for these goods; therefore the large landowner pressed as much surplus production from farming as possible. Because the soil of Attica is naturally poor, more and more land was required to produce these goods, and when their own estates did not meet the demand, they instituted practices (the *hektemorage*) that allowed them to control the small holders. Snodgrass suggests that wealthy landowners needed this new land because they did not themselves engage in trade. With regard to increasing commerce, they may have purchased or financed ships but employed agents from lower classes to actually engage in the sordid business of trade, though he speculates that the main export commodity in the Archaic period was marble and metal ores.⁵³⁷

ii. Aristocrats vs. Rising Middle Class

Others focus not on the *hektemoroi*, but on tensions between the traditional landed aristocracy and a rising class of middling farmers, based on increased wealth from new

536. Starr (1977: 46).

537. Snodgrass (1983: 16-18). For this attitude of the superiority of farming as the only appropriate pursuit for aristocrats in the Archaic Age, see Hes. *W&D* 630-635 on seafaring being a last resort for the impoverished; 641 for the undesirability of seafaring, and 665-670 on the dangers inherent in sailing. For examples of this attitude remaining in the fifth and fourth centuries, see Hdt. 2.166-167 on how all Greeks looked down on traders and artisans, Xen. *Oec.* 3.5 on the variations in success of small vs. large farmers, 5.9 on the upper class pastimes which wealthy farmers pursued, 5.17 on how trade cannot exist without agriculture, 11.14-18 and 15.6-9 on Ischomachus' main duty being managing, rather than working, his farm, 20.19 on the vast difference in fortune between managers and workers on farms, and 19.23-25 on the wealthy landowners coveting more land to increase profit. See Xen. *Lac.* 7.1-5, where he actually equates trade with slavery, a fate the Spartans avoided by devoting themselves to the land under Lycurgus' *Great Rhetra*. In the third century, Athenaeus (12.526d-e; commenting on the fifth-century Theopompus' *Deipnosophistae*) connects trading with alcoholism and whoremongering. For references to this attitude remaining in Roman times, see Meijer & van Nijf (1992: 15-20).

markets for their agricultural produce, which led to a competition between the rising middle class and the inveterate aristocracy for political power that had previously been reserved exclusively for the upper echelons of society.⁵³⁸ Many scholars cite this as a catalyst for the depletion of fertility of the land from overproduction to meet the growing demand for both food and agricultural trade goods, which paved the way for the conditions of the *hektemorage* that Solon faced.

g. Intra-Elite Conflict

Still others primarily blame Aristocratic infighting for the Solonian crisis, based on seeming connection between Solon's reforms and the Cylonian conspiracy in 621. The great aristocratic clans competed with one another for influence, often by brutal means, with the turmoil of Cylon's attempted coup and the subsequent expulsion of the Alcmaeonidae from Athens being evidence of the violent extremes to which such infighting could go.⁵³⁹ In this view, the problem was more conflict among the elite, which was so severe that they may even have been willing to risk loss of power and influence by appointing Solon as and extraordinary archon.⁵⁴⁰

h. Agricultural Disaster

Others believe that as more and more public land formerly used for grazing livestock was appropriated for farming, a fertility crisis arose from the absence of crop

538. See Almeida (2003: 51-53), with citations.

539. See *Ath. Pol.* 2-3; Plut. *Sol.* 12.1-5, though these connections to the Solonian reforms are at best implicit. There is no doubt that there was significant aristocratic infighting, but even if our sources accurately portray this as part of the problem, it in no way precludes a perhaps large element of social unrest stemming from conflict between lower classes and elite. On the bitter conflicts between various elite families in the Archaic period, see Sealey (1976: 99, 114), Hignett (1952: 87), Osborne (2009: 223), Starr (1977: 135), and Anderson (2005: 173-222).

540. For this view see especially Sealey (1976: 97-98). See also Almeida (2003: 247-51) for a discussion of theories of regional conflict in Archaic Greece.

rotations and more advanced manuring techniques, which would have made the excess crop barely enough to feed all of the additional workers.⁵⁴¹ French in particular attributes soil depletion to general overuse of farmland because of a) increasing need for food to feed the population and b) and insatiable appetite for agricultural trade goods by the aristocrats.⁵⁴² This was aggravated by a general population growth at the end of the Dark Ages, which required more intensive cultivation of already poor soil. This required more of the public lands, formerly used for grazing, to be appropriated for agriculture. Gallant also places the *hektemoroi* on private land, and argues that the owners of large estates in the eighth and seventh centuries were gradually encroaching on public land, which required more labor, a need which was met by the institution of the *hektemorage*. However, increasing population in the Archaic period led to increased requirements of food, which Athenians attempted to meet by cultivating more and more of the public land.⁵⁴³ The lack of crop rotation and application of advanced manuring techniques aggravated the problem of decreasing soil fertility. The capital required for augmenting farming activity could only be provided by the wealthy land owners, but they required labor to meet these new needs. In exchange for working part-time on the nobles' estates,

541. E.g., Woodhouse (1938: 61-2, 75), and especially French (1956: 11). By contrast, scholars who argue that the problems of the *hektemorage* were more those of status relationships than poverty argue that more sophisticated farming methods came into use at this time. See Gallant (1982: 115), Hansen (1989: 175-76), as well as Starr (1977: 159).

542. French (1956: 11-25) *passim*. On such economic realities causing the social crisis of the late seventh and early sixth century, see Woodhouse (1938) and Hopper (1967: 143).

543. Foxhall's survey data (1997: 123, 127) shows no evidence of increased occupancy or use of land, and so she contends that there was no intensification of agriculture during this period. But see Forsdyke (2006: 345-47), who discusses different types of agricultural intensification that may not show up in modern archaeological survey techniques. She argues that an intensification of land use near larger settlements, combined with an increased usage of marginal land, would not be inconsistent with either the historical circumstances described in our literature or what we know from survey archaeology about the late seventh and early sixth centuries. See Forsdyke (2006: 334-50) on ways that intensified agriculture may not show up in the archaeological record.

the *hektemoroi* received one-sixth of the produce in addition to the yield from their own farms.⁵⁴⁴ This goes against the majority, who believe that the *hektemoroi* paid, not received, the one-sixth portion.⁵⁴⁵ The laborers were dissatisfied with their obligations to a wealthier class, which formed the crux of the crisis that Solon was appointed to solve.⁵⁴⁶ He is unique in not tying the *hektemorage* to the problem of debt, which leaves his vision of the nature of the *seisachtheia* unclear, nor does he address the ways in which Solon would have allocated public land after doing away with the *hektemorage*.

i. Agricultural Sophistication

Other scholars reject the notion of soil depletion altogether.⁵⁴⁷ Instead, they believe that the Attic farmers were in fact using sophisticated farming methods like crop rotation, pruning and grafting, animal husbandry, and modern fertilizing techniques which increased yield not only on the traditional, original *kleroi*, but on less arable public land.⁵⁴⁸ Rather, they see the *hektemorage* as a problem of competing social strata. General economic expansion created a rising middle class which began to compete with the traditional nobility for social influence and political enfranchisement. Because of these sophisticated new techniques, a rise of a "middle-class" farmer who, because of the new farming techniques, was able to produce profitable crops like olives and grapes, and even own slaves to help with the intensive cultivation of the land. Laertes in the *Odyssey*, for example, is described as practicing intensive cultivation of a variety of crops, some for

544. Gallant (1982: 123).

545. See Andrewes (1982: 379-80) for arguments against any payment of five-sixths, under any circumstances.

546. Gallant (1982: 124).

547. Foxhall (1997: 123-27).

548. See Gallant (1982: 115), Hanson (1995: 47-90, 127-78), and Starr (1977: 124, 159).

subsistence and some for profit.⁵⁴⁹ Laertes' situation also much resembles that of Hesiod's farmer, who seems to possess enough surplus to re-invest in his land for more profitable crops as well as engage in commercial trading ventures.⁵⁵⁰ The social crisis was thus more a result of feuding between this new class of middling farmer for larger shares in political power.⁵⁵¹ The *hektemoroi* were members of this middle class who failed in their attempts to gain power in government, and Solon's reforms leveled the playing field by distributing power to a wider swath of the citizenry.

j. Solon's Reforms: Cui Bono?

There is also debate as to the effectiveness of Solon's reforms, which varies according to individual scholars' views on the reasons for the crisis and the motivation for the reforms. For scholars who believe that the *hektemorage* was debt-based, Solon's reforms were conservative measures meant to preserve the stability of the existing order, striking a balance between import policies and the need to stimulate domestic production of grain. Of the factions mentioned in the *Ath. Pol.* and Plutarch, the plainsmen benefited from policies meant to boost domestic production, while the men of the coast benefited from expanded import policies, and the men of the hills benefited from the stimulation of domestic craft industries. The *seisachtheia* thus removed a portion of the farming population from the already depleted soil and added displaced *hektemoroi* to the largely landless party of the Hillmen. On this view, Solon was trying to preserve the status quo as much as possible while making only those changes necessary to avert disaster.⁵⁵² Those

549. Hanson (1995: 45-71).

550. Hanson (1995: 91-127).

551. See Starr (1977: 128) for comparanda of political enfranchisement of middling farmers in other societies.

552. See French (1957: 241-44). Also see Foxhall (1997: 117-19) for the view that the landless did not qualify for any of Solon's property class qualifications, even the lowest class of *thetes*, normally assumed to

who see the nature of the conflict as rising tensions between a middling class of farmer and the landed aristocracy, Solon's measures were nothing more than a legal recognition of the status already gained by the small farmer.⁵⁵³ For those who see elite feuding as the main cause of the crisis, Solon's reforms did not do much of anything to change the dominance of the elite class; rather, this reputation was given to Solon retroactively by his fourth-century hagiographers.⁵⁵⁴ A more radical view of Solon's reforms sees them as focusing on the development of Athens' economy. In this view the *seisachtheia* was a radical measure intended to obliterate a debt-based *hektemoragē* and put Athens on a more even footing with her new trading partners in different parts of the Aegean, economically speaking.⁵⁵⁵

include anyone who produced less than 200 *medimnoi* per annum, including non-property owners. This would have meant that Solon's reforms were far less sweeping and radical, keeping a fairly narrow elite in charge of government and preventing the landless from even voting in assembly or participating in the juries that the *Ath. Pol.* hails as Solon's most democratic reform. Foxhall instead identifies the landless thetes with the *demos* of Solon's poems; see also van Wees (2006: 351-89) for the view that those wealth was not agricultural did not qualify for any of the property classes.

553. See Hanson (1995: 121-24). Raaflaub (1997: 31-66) also contends that the rise of the hoplite farmer was a long and gradual process.

554. Osborne (2009: 224) and Foxhall (1997: 121). On fourth century veneration of Solon, see ch. 3, pp. 90-101.

555. Miller (1968: 69) and (1971: 25-47) go against a sizable consensus that there was no monetary economy at this time. She accepts Androtion's assertion that Solon's economic reforms revolved around reorganization and regulation of currency (*Ath. Pol.* 10.1, 8; Plut. *Sol.* 15.4), and argues that Solon introduced the first state coinage (1971: 31-35). Andrewes (1982: 379) agrees with most other scholars that coined money was not available until at least fifty years after Solon's archonship, and points out that even if Aeginetan coinage was making an appearance in Attica at this point, there would not have been enough small change present to be useful for transactions of the poor until the fifth century. For a comprehensive bibliography, see Kraft (1959: 21 n. 1), Kraay (1968: 9), and Harding (1974: 281-83), and Noussia-Fantuzzi (2010: 42-44). On the mechanisms of debts involving payment in kind, see Woodhouse (1938: 30-33) on Solon's advancement of "Athenian commercialism."

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